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# Preventing integrity risks in a newly established community group in the Tabaita community

CONTRIBUTORS: LUCIE LECLERT (CARITAS SWITZERLAND),  
CATHERINE WANJIHIA (CARITAS SWITZERLAND) &  
CARMEN FERNÁNDEZ FERNÁNDEZ

## CASE STUDY

### THE COMMUNITY GROUP AND THE WATER SYSTEM



The Tabaita community is located in Kericho County, western Kenya and is accessible by a road that is partly tarmac and partly murrum. The community members are Kalenjin, and practice small-scale farming and cattle rearing.

In 2016, a gravity-fed spring protection system was constructed by Caritas Switzerland, in partnership with UNICEF, Caritas Kericho, and Unilever, to serve the community. The system provides drinking water to about 6,000 people, including one primary school and a health centre. It comprises of four kiosks, with a kiosk attendant each.

The management committee was officially registered in 2015 to oversee the future water system. It is composed of 15 community-elected members, four of them women.

### THE INTEGRITY MANAGEMENT PROCESS

Caritas Switzerland had previously worked with the local water service provider (WSP) and the Tabaita community for two years prior to the *Integrity Management* (IM) process commencing. This assisted with the community

agreeing to follow the IM training to obtain support on the management of their new water system. The coach for the process was a Caritas staff member, and the counterpart was a technical officer from the Tilitbei WSP.

The *IM Toolbox* workshop was held in July 2016. It lasted longer than usual, as Caritas also trained the community group on operation and maintenance (O&M), leadership skills, simple budgeting and bookkeeping, and more. The participants appeared eager to learn, and discussions on roles and responsibilities were thorough and helped clarify expectations of each member before starting to run as a committee. The participants were already aware of the main regulators – Water Services Regulatory Board (WASREB) and the Water Resource Management Authority (WRMA) – and the WSP, Tilitbei. They were however not aware of the regulatory framework governing the water sector, and they really appreciated this information.

The group anticipated several problems linked to integrity issues: (1) roles and responsibilities of group members and staff are not clear; (2) some customers refuse to pay water fees; and (3) some customers do not trust the committee.

The discussion also revealed discontent over other issues. Namely, the water system is constructed on land donated by a community member, who was trying to influence decisions of the community group and demanding water at no cost. Security was also a challenge, as several thefts at the system's storage room had been reported. In addition, many community members were not able to pay the one-off membership fee, in turn reducing the number of customers and the sales at the kiosks.

As the water committee was just about to start managing the system, the group chose several key tools

to allow them to perform well. However, the community needed more time after the workshop to understand the different types of management models, consult with the community and decide which to adopt.

The development of the action plan was highly participatory. The change agent was essential to motivating the group. He showed good leadership skills, and he appears to be well respected in the community, with a reputation of being transparent. He was also the community project attendant during construction of the water system. The assistant chief was very actively present throughout the process and rallied the group members to participate in the *IM Toolbox* workshop. This commitment supported the success of the process.

### OBSERVED CHANGES

After intensive follow-up meetings, workshops and trainings, the management committee now has a constitution, holds regular meetings with the community for feedback, and is reporting on issues. The committee also records payments at each kiosk, and reconciles the fees collected with the total water consumed – which is metered – has contracts with kiosk attendants, and carries out regular O&M. Moreover, the committee connected with the county government, which resulted in an investment by the county for a system extension, and an additional water kiosk.

The community group took the initiative of organizing a visit to Lake Victoria Basin Water Services Board to understand the requirements to become a community WSP, but concluded becoming a community WSP was not suitable for such a young organization.

*'I trust the committee because there is always enough water, and things were always repaired in case of broken pipes or infrastructure'* - David N'getich, school board member

The community had applied and paid for the abstraction permit for withdrawing water to WRA a year before the *IM Toolbox* workshop. After intensive follow-up with the officers in Nairobi and Kisumu, the permit was finally received in November 2017. To date (July 2018), all documents required for the registration as a Water Users Association (WUA) have been collected, and the registration is in process. Once ready, Tillibe WSP aims to sign a delegation contract with the committee. The reporting requirements and financial aspects of such contract are not yet finalised (July 2018).

The system is running smoothly with water sales accounted for, employees paid, and money deposited in the bank. The management committee conducts monthly meetings, with improving attendance. The county government has extended 1.3km of pipeline and constructed one additional kiosk. One primary school and one individual connection have been connected, and water meters installed. A second customer has applied for an individual connection, but has not yet paid fees (July 2018).

*'The construction work was not easy, I had to bring water to the construction site, and we were digging and excavating the tank foundations and pipeline trenches. Now, we can harvest the fruits of it'*  
- Ruth Kirui, School board member



### KEY LESSONS LEARNT

- The *IM Toolbox* process took place together with the construction of hardware, and with training in O&M. This combined approach has proven particularly successful.
- Active participation of women from the beginning was key to achieve inclusion, and the sustainability of the process. Women were engaged from the onset, starting with undertaking the physical work during the construction. Currently, seven out of 15 committee members are women, including the treasurer and one kiosk attendant who is also responsible for bookkeeping.

### ACCOMPANYING CASE STUDIES & RESOURCES

- Creating a platform for accountability in the **Dagahaley community**
- Building collective action in the **Sabuli community**
- Learning from failures: the challenges in the **Olmaroroi community**
- Moving towards formal water management in the **Olchoro-Onyokie community**
- Improving the integrity of community groups managing small water supply systems