

Case Information Sheet

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TANZANIA

Promoting Sustainability through the Formation of Water Clubs

Background

Women and particularly children, are often forced to walk up to six hours per day to fetch water from various sources that are likely to be contaminated or insufficient. This time-consuming duty means that children are often unable to attend school and women have little time for work beyond engaging in subsistence activities. Even if people are lucky to live in close proximity to water sources, the water quality may be poor due to multi-purpose usage of the source. For example, watering cattle in close proximity to water sources poses a serious threat to the health of community members who have no choice but to draw from the same sources.

Mavuno Project¹, a local Tanzanian NGO, has been building rain water harvesting tanks for several years in order to increase access to clean water, for rural communities in Karagwe District. Since 2006, the Berlin Chapter of Engineers Without Borders Germany (EWB), has assisted Mavuno Project in both a technical and financial capacity, to support decentralised water supply systems for local communities. The project has led to significant improvements in tank construction techniques, in order to ensure better water quality and longevity of the tanks. The partnership between the two organisations



Family withdrawing water from a newly constructed water tank in Karagwe District, Tanzania
© Joseph Baraka, Mavuno Project, 2011

has been very successful, such that the Water Tank Project has now entered its' fourth phase.

During the first phase of the project in 2008, skilled Kenyan workers were invited to exchange knowledge about construction techniques, as well as train Tanzanian workers for tank construction. Thirty-one tanks had been constructed by the end of the third phase which concluded in October 2010. These tanks currently provide clean water to over 1,000 people. The fourth phase of the project, financed by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) commenced in October 2011 and is expected to be completed in July 2012. At present, 15 workers are employed for the construction of 57 water tanks targeted at local families (households) in the area, rather than communities as a whole. This targeting at household level greatly diminishes corruption risks and accountability issues they may be more prevalent in other construction projects.

Project Activities

Sustainability is crucial and adequate maintenance is necessary to ensure the

Project Information

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“Several families with a water tank not built by Engineers Without Borders - Germany and Mavuno Project came to our office and asked to join the water club even though they don't have a EWB water tank. These families have heard about the maintenance system and the advantages it brings. This positive feedback shows us, that we are doing the right thing”.

Joseph Baraka, Water Tank Project Coordinator at Mavuno Project at a meeting on 01 September 2011.

provision of good water quality, as well as the longevity of the tanks. Indeed, EWB and Mavuno Project are currently implementing a local maintenance system through the formation of Water Clubs, in which all families owning a water tank can join and contribute a small, affordable amount each month. With this money, it has been possible to employ a trained maintenance officer. The responsibilities of the officer are to conduct water quality tests - once during dry season - and to conduct necessary repairs on the water tanks. The maintenance officer is also responsible for advising and training families on how to use the water tanks appropriately.

Goals of the Water Club:

- To establish a well functioning, decentralised water supply including good maintenance and water quality.
- Raising awareness of the health risks caused by the consumption of dirty and/or polluted water.
- Providing information on water quality, maintenance, building technique, experience and best-practice examples to interested people, including those in neighbouring areas.
- To establish a small crediting scheme to finance water tanks, funded by new memberships to the water club.
- To set up a central store to buy building materials in larger quantities at a cheaper price.

Since the beginning of the current construction

phase, families have been able to submit an application for a water tank. They are selected based on an assessment of a number of socio-economic indicators such as family size, earnings etc. Families wishing to receive a water tank are currently obligated to join the Water Club and contribute between 1,000 - 2,000 Tanzanian Shillings, each month. Families, who received a water tank during the first three phases of the Water Tank Project, can also choose to participate in the Water Club. Many families have indeed recognised the many advantages that the Water Club can bring and have joined as a result.

Though in the early formation stages, it is envisioned that in the future, once a sufficient financial repository has been built up, that the Water Club could support other local families to build water tanks through a micro-financing arrangement managed in an accountable and transparent manner. Such an arrangement may help to build a sustainable local system to provide for further access to water, as well as the maintenance required to manage such systems effectively.

The current phase of the project is still underway and EWB- Germany and Mavuno Project welcome any further ideas to enhance the integrity of the Water Clubs and tanks, from the WIN readership.

Lessons Learned

- Water Clubs with qualified officers, help to ensure good water quality and the sustainability of water structures. They provide a platform to help share ideas, experiences and knowledge of water management, through regular meetings
- Targeting the construction of water systems at households, coupled with an obligation to pay affordable, recurrent fees to a Water Club, can help to build more ownership, as well as reduce corruption risks in the long-run
- Water Clubs have the potential to sustain themselves financially, as well as replicate, helping neighbouring households to secure their own access to water