



To strengthen preventive healthcare outcomes, the maintenance of rural water supply infrastructure is critical. Within the Dutch Wash Alliance partner Amref Flying Doctors has a strong track record in community health system strengthening by working closely with the communities. In the first place through improved access to WASH infrastructure and secondly, through strengthening community practices by linking community infrastructure with the WASH service delivery chain. In Northern Uganda we do this by setting up and strengthening capacities of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) with a WASH focus, and by strengthening private sector engagement in service delivery.

The challenge

Strengthening sustainability of rural water supply in Northern Uganda

Village Savings and Loan Associations bring together social and financial sustainability of WASH services by strengthening and linking community infrastructure with the WASH service delivery chain for sustained access to safe water supply.

The approach

Six-step approach to setting up and supporting Village Savings and Loan Associations

1. Creating community awareness on sustainable WASH services;
2. Setting-up and giving financial literacy training for rural water supply infrastructure maintenance;
3. Training of masons/local artisans on spare parts and system maintenance;
4. Promoting sector coordination and advocating for private sector involvement;
5. Training of government staff on budget tracking and monitoring in WASH;
6. Supporting WASH entrepreneurs to strengthen their business model and opportunities for sustained service delivery.

The activities

On the community level we undertake the following activities:

1. Empowering women through capacity building and promotion of gender equality in community groups;
2. Strengthening of awareness on the right to safe WASH;
3. Setting-up/strengthening community WASH committees and village savings and loans associations to collect, manage and invest user fees in infrastructure maintenance;
4. Lobbying the private sector to actively participate in WASH;
5. Promoting ongoing dialogue between VSLAs, microfinance institutions and banks to explore potential for larger investments and business development.

Example 1

Communities at borehole drilling sites are being sensitized about the operation and maintenance of boreholes, are trained in financial management, especially of the collected user fees, and are supported in the establishment of strengthening of village savings and loan association linked to the water point.

Example 2

District water departments are being advised to collaborate with the formal and informal women's groups like the Village Savings and Loan Associations to mobilise resources for sustainable and equitable water projects, in addition to advocacy for increasing awareness on WASH budget gaps and private sector potential.



The results

- 62 existing Village Savings and Loans Associations and community WASH groups show strong potential and good results with regard to financial sustainability;
- The combined results of effective collection of user fees and the involvement of the private sector are resulting in contracting hand pump mechanics;
- Communities are contributing towards the operation and maintenance of water sources. Some of these groups have saved between USD 1,600 to USD 2,400 with micro credit institutions to meet regular maintenance requirements;
- Economic empowerment (house hold income) among VSLA group members has increased by 70%;
- As a result of training and coordination meetings, many stakeholders are closely working together in community WASH services delivery.

About Amref Health Africa:

Amref Health Africa (Amref Flying Doctors in the Netherlands) is committed to improving the health of people in Africa by partnering with and empowering communities, and strengthening health systems. For more information visit: www.amref.org/www.amref.nl

