

SUCCESS STORY SPOTLIGHT

Bringing Safe Water and Sanitation to Communities in Kenya Through Local Partnerships

In Kenya, USAID supported over 120 communities to improve access to clean water and sanitation through locally-led approaches. Today, over 94 percent of households in these communities have latrines and more than 20,000 people have gained access to basic water services.

In Mwaeba village—a remote area of Kilifi County, Kenya—poor sanitation is a leading cause of child mortality. When communities lack access to clean water, latrines, and adequate sanitation services, preventable childhood illnesses, such as diarrhea, cholera, and polio, are prevalent. Diarrhea from poor sanitation can also contribute to malnutrition and result in weakened immune systems, putting children at further risk of serious infection and even death as a result.

Every year, 65,000 children in Kenya die of mostly preventable causes before reaching their fifth birthday.

In response to these challenges, USAID implemented a Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) initiative in Mwaeba village and other surrounding communities. Through the CLTS approach, community members mobilize to conduct an analysis of open defecation in the community and then create action plans that are specific to their local context to eliminate open defecation and improve overall hygiene behaviors, like handwashing.

Rachel Safari, a local community member in Mwaeba, became active in stewarding the installation of new water and sanitation facilities and is tasked with maintaining these vital resources.

“With the support and the training that we have received [from USAID], we are now confident in ensuring our village takes a lead in maintaining good sanitation and hygiene standards,” says Rachel.

Under Rachel's leadership, community members have constructed 1,543 new latrines in project sites, increasing those with access to latrines to over 14,500 individuals. Furthermore, 65 villages, including Mwaeba and Mwahera communities, have now been certified as open defecation free by the sub-county verification team made up of government officials and local health leaders.



Rehema Ngowa collects water from the newly rehabilitated well in her community. PHOTO: Festus Kivindu/Pathfinder International

“I now have access to clean drinking water for use in my house and kitchen garden where I grow vegetables.”

— REHEMA, MOTHER

Along with poor access to adequate sanitation facilities, access to safe water in Mwaeba has historically been limited.

“Community members would spend long hours in search of water, and women and girls in particular lost time and energy to water collection,” John Yaa Katore, the chairman of Mwaeba water management committee, says.

To address the lack of access to safe water, USAID partnered with the local health department to train community members on how to rehabilitate broken wells, manage repairs, and prevent future issues. For a small fee, community members contribute to the maintenance of the wells to ensure ongoing access to safe water.

Rehema Ngowa lives near a newly rehabilitated well and uses it to collect water every day to meet household needs. The mother of five says the project is a blessing to them in improving general sanitation and nutrition for her and her family.

Not only have Rachel and Rehema’s day to day lives changed for the better with access to clean water and improved sanitation, they are also now strong advocates in the community for good water, sanitation, and hygiene practices.



Rachel Safari gathers water from a USAID-supported safe water source in her community. PHOTO: Festus Kivindu/Pathfinder International