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Improving the integrity of community groups managing small water supply systems

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CASE STUDY

CREATING A PLATFORM FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE AND COMPLIANCE OF SERVICES DELIVERY IN RURAL AREAS

BACKGROUND

The *Integrity Management (IM) Toolbox for small water supply systems* is an innovative participatory approach to coordinate efforts between communities and local governments to improve the quality of services provided from small water supply systems in rural and marginalized areas. Implementing partners have identified five case studies from Kenya, highlighting key achievements, challenges, and lessons learnt.



COUNTRY CONTEXT – GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES IN SMALL WATER SUPPLY SYSTEMS IN KENYA

The Olchoro-Onyokie community is located near Namanga town, in Kajiado sub-county. Most community members are Maasai and live in scattered homesteads, keeping livestock and practicing small-scale farming. Farmers do not pay for water serving the grazing areas. In contrast, the water supply in town must be paid for, but is unreliable.

Despite the existence of community groups (called committees) supposed to manage each distribution line, the water system faces major functionality

and sustainability issues. Services provision is non-commercially viable, there is no cost recovery plan, and management arrangements are quite unclear. The committees operate in isolation, outside the country accountability mechanisms and do not have any linkage with the immediate duty-bearer – the county government (Leclert et al., 2016)

Similar scenarios are taking place for rural and marginalized communities all over Kenya. Although the sector has achieved great progress in urban and commercially viable areas, challenges still remain, especially in rural and marginalized areas. A recent study in Kenya showed that one-third of the newly established community-managed water systems stop

functioning within the first three years after completion (Kwena and Moronge, 2015).

Throughout recent decades, Kenya has undergone deep-rooted reforms in the water sector. Importantly, the 2010 Constitution of Kenya delegated the responsibility for provision of water supply and sanitation services to the county governments. This new setting offers a good opportunity to bring community groups into the regulatory system, provided county governments develop adequate capacities to supervise and support them (Leclert et al., 2016).

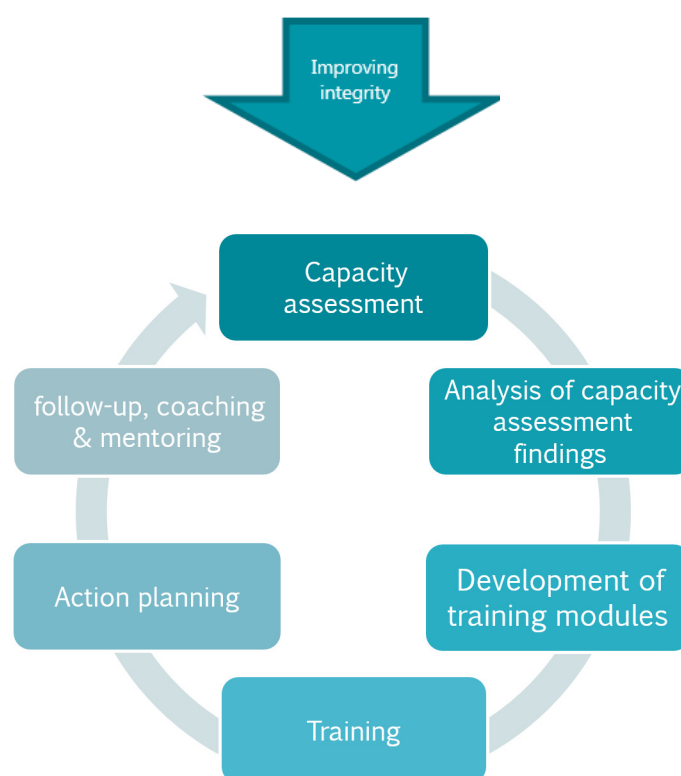
THE APPROACH – THE IM TOOLBOX FOR SMALL WATER SUPPLY SYSTEMS

Caritas Switzerland, in collaboration with WIN and WASREB, has been developing and implementing the *IM Toolbox for small water supply systems*¹ in Kenya. This approach was developed under an innovation project funded by the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) between 2014 and 2015. Currently, the Multi Country Water Integrity Programme (MCWIP) – a four-year programme funded by SDC in partnership with WIN and running from August 2015 to July 2019 – aims to work with governmental institutions at national and county level and, among others, bring the *IM Toolbox* at scale.

The *IM Toolbox for small water supply systems* is designed for community groups managing a small water supply system to help them improve their performance and compliance by analysing the way they currently manage their water system, identifying current problems, and selecting adequate tools. From this basis, community members define action plans, which are implemented through a long-term coaching process. Tools have been reviewed under the lens of the *Human Rights to Water and Sanitation* and look specifically at the engagement of disadvantaged groups, including women.

The *IM Toolbox* is a long-term iterative process that focuses on empowerment and plans for slow withdrawal. It requires a *coach* to steer the process and provide overall guidance, and a *counterpart* to provide day-to-day coaching to the community group and linkage to the immediate oversight institutions. The *IM Toolbox* uses simple and visual tools, which helps keeping participation high. After IM workshops (see below), participants reportedly feel energized and motivated.

THEORY OF CHANGE



THE IM TOOLBOX (LONG-TERM) PROCESS HAS THREE MAIN PHASES

ONE YEAR ACCOMPANIMENT PHASE



¹Footnote 1: The methodology is based on the *IM Toolbox for water service providers*, an approach developed in 2012 by cewas, WIN and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ)

for formal Kenyan Water Service Providers that primarily serve urban areas.

THE IMPACT – FIVE CASE STUDIES

IM Toolbox for small water supply systems was implemented in five communities during a period of 1 – 1.5 years.

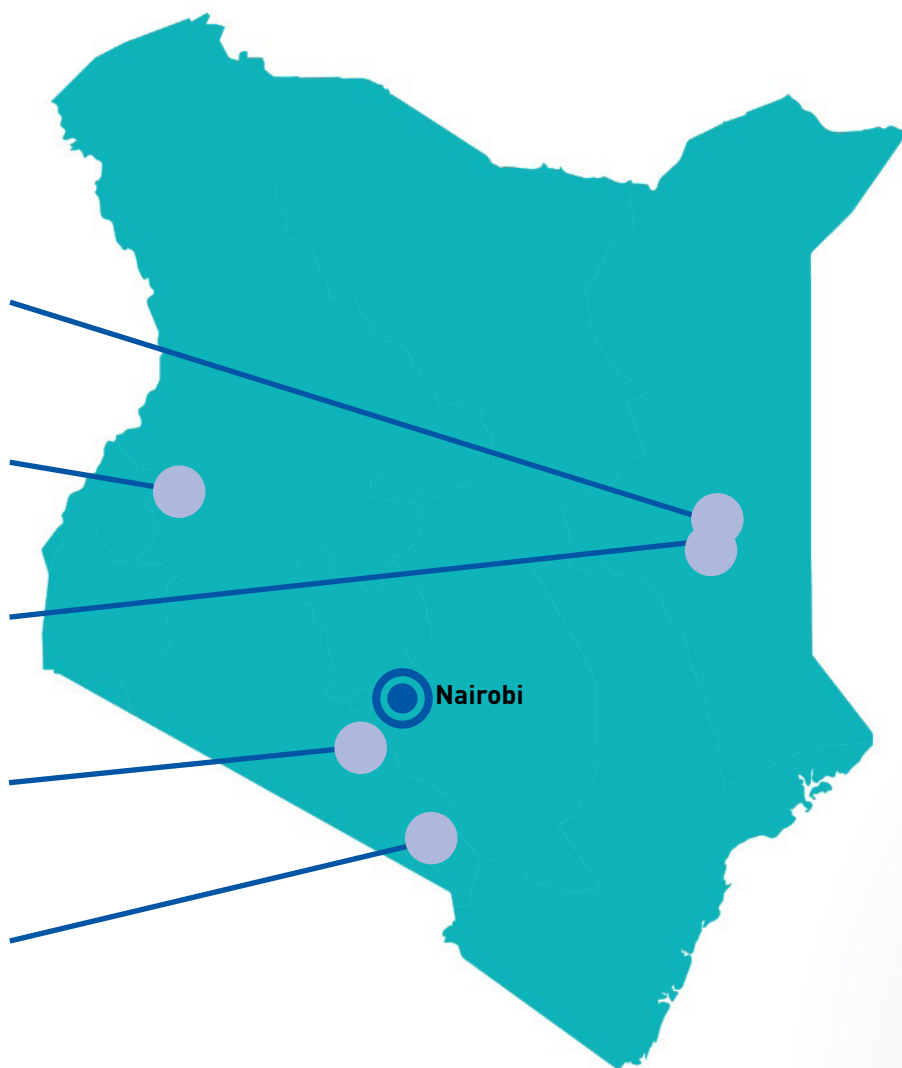
Creating a platform for accountability between the **Dagahaley community** and the water committee.

Preventing integrity risks in a newly established community group in the **Tabaita community**.

Building collective action and improving governance in the **Sabuli community**.

Learning from failures: the challenges in the **Olomaroroi community**.

Moving towards formal water management in the **Olchoro-Onyokie community**.



KEY LESSONS LEARNT

- Securing buy-in from the local government from the start is key: Engaging the county government at the highest level from the onset legitimizes the process. A responsible person from the county government can be officially commissioned to act as counterpart in the IM process. It is important that the county government perceives the *IM Toolbox* as a tool that can support them in fulfilling their mandate, rather than a one-off NGO activity or a voluntary assignment.
- Securing buy-in from community leaders, such as village chiefs and elders, is key: they are often the gatekeepers of the community, and their endorsement and participation is crucial for the success of the process.
- A stakeholders' analysis to determine the power dynamics is useful to understand the role of influential

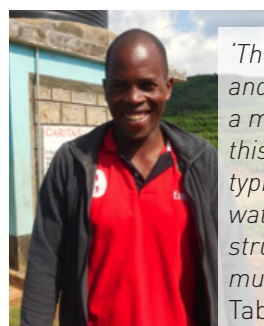


people in the community – religious, business, and political leaders, as well as other community organisations – and map out who the disadvantaged groups are. This will help include all relevant community representatives in the process and adapt the facilitation. Some basic tips on conflict resolution can be helpful for coaches.

- Motivation and eagerness to change by the community are key requirements for the success of the IM process.
- All groups are different: The process requires a high level of flexibility from the coach and the counterpart to adapt to the context and to each community group. All community groups have different problems that will require different solutions.
- Bringing customers, committee and local government together: Creating a joint platform to openly discuss challenges faced by customers and committees, such as fee collection, corruption or operation and maintenance (O&M), helps to come to a collective sense of responsibility and action. This also helps (re)linking the duty-bearer and the right-holder and may enable the

community to access government support mechanisms.

- Understanding the added value of being compliant: The *IM Toolbox* links the regulatory framework with the right to water for all, which makes it easier for communities to understand why they need to comply.
- Gender and water: experience shows that having a woman coach and/or counterpart helps women in the community to participate more actively in the discussions and in taking decisions.



'The water from the kiosk is clean, and there is no contamination, it has a much better quality. We realize this because we report less cases of typhoid. Since the construction of the water system and its management structure, the Tabaita ward has gained much more value' - Edwin Koros, Tabaita community member

ACCOMPANYING CASE STUDIES & RESOURCES

Caritas Switzerland: lleclert@caritas.ch

Water Integrity Network: info@win-s.org

- *IM Toolbox* Methodology outline: www.caritas.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Caritas_Schweiz/data/site/was-wir-tun/engagement-weltweit/wasser/IM_toolbox_Methodology_outline_v3_for_scaling_up.pdf
- Video on the *IM Toolbox*: <https://youtu.be/ggaq5Pqws40>
- Article on the *IM Toolbox*: www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214241X16300062

- Creating a platform for accountability in the **Dagahaley community**
- Preventing integrity risks in a newly established community group in the **Tabaita 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**