

GHANA WASH PROJECT

success story



Improving Community Water Access & Management, One Borehole at a Time: Positive Impacts in Ghana's Central Region

The Ghana Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Project is a four-year USAID-funded initiative to improve rural water, sanitation, and hygiene in Ghana. The Ghana WASH Project is implemented by Relief International, Winrock International, and the Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA). Working with local actors and community members, the Ghana WASH Project is engaged in five regions, 22 districts, and more than 160 communities to assist in the achievement of Ghana's national WASH goals.

Relief International provides emergency, rehabilitation and development services that empower beneficiaries in the process. Relief International employs an innovative approach to program design and a high quality of implementation performance in demonstrating deep and lasting impact in reducing human suffering worldwide. ADRA was established by the Seventh-day Adventist Church to provide humanitarian relief and welfare. The agency's work seeks to improve the quality of life of those in need through emergency management as well as community development initiatives. Winrock International is a non-profit organization that works with people in the United States and around the world to empower the disadvantaged, increase economic opportunity, and sustain natural resources.



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hen Ama Amissah came to her husband's small village of Abaasi Nyame Bekyere more than four months ago, the community's main sources for water were the nearby stream and a well built a few years before. But neither of these was dependable for reliable, clean drinking water.

Ama, a housewife who comes from a neighboring village, spoke openly of the water challenges that she and the rest of the community faced before the construction of the borehole. The well was originally built to serve as an improved water source for potable water, but according to Ama, unsanitary practices had had a negative impact. "People washed their soiled clothes and household dishes [in the well], it was not considered wholesome," she said in a conversation translated from Twi.

Admonishments by the community's leadership had been unsuccessful in curbing behavior, and so she, along with the children and other women who fetch water for their households, returned to relying upon the nearby stream located a five-minute walk away. When the stream would dry up during the dusty harmattan season, between December and March, the community would have to resort to digging small dug-outs to find water that they could scoop up and use, mainly for washing and household activities. And de-

spite the general perception that the well water was unclear, Ama said that women and children would also fetch water from the well for bathing.

Just a one-hour drive away, the residents of Ochiso Nyame Bekyere community experienced similar water access issues. Before the community received their borehole, women and children had to source water from the nearby stream in the bush. Although the stream was not far, the path they had to take was plagued with dangers, especially if they had to collect water late at night. "You have reptiles and snakes there, which makes it scary," said Elizabeth Gyasi, a member of the community.

Big Community Improvements with Borehole Construction

As the villages' names suggest, the community members, whether on their own or with some outside help, have always worked to find a way (*Nyame Bekyere* is Twi for "God will make a way"). Earlier this year, some outside assistance came from the Ghana WASH Project, which financed the construction of a new borehole in each community, completed at the end of September 2011.

As Ama recalls, the impact of the borehole has been significant, and her face lights up with a smile as she discusses the positive changes for Abaasi Nyame Bekyere. Since first tasting the water from the borehole, she said it's the only water she and the rest of the community drink now. The water is cleaner, and in her mind, healthier as well. She proudly displays the medium-sized gray plastic container that she uses to store water from the borehole, and she said she uses the borehole water for drinking, bathing and some household chores.

For the community at Ochiso Nyame Bekyere, the new borehole has had similar positive impacts; for the women and children, fetching water no longer carries the practical threat of being bitten by a snake or other reptile. "That kind of fear is no longer there," said Elizabeth. Women and children no longer have to fear when fetching water late at night – the borehole, built inside the community, is now in a safer, more secure location.

As part of the intervention, the Ghana WASH Project also worked with each community in establishing a nine-member water and sanitation (watsan) committee, comprised of community members who are charged with promoting responsible usage of the borehole, increasing awareness of water and sanitation issues and calling the community to action to address sanitation needs. The creation of these community boards is an important capacity-building measure that also complements the borehole construction.

Steps Toward a Sustainable Future

The Ghana WASH Project encourages sustainability by supporting individual community solutions to water management issues. Introducing the new borehole and helping to establish the watsan committee is just

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Before, the most reliable water sources for the women and girls fetching water at Abaasi Nyame Bekyere communities were the nearby streams and a community well.





Ama Amisshah (center) shows the plastic container that she uses to store the clean water she fetches from the new community borehole (left).

Kwame Adabo, a member of the leadership of Abaasi Nyame Bekyere, discusses water issues and community solutions with Ghana WASH Project Field Officer Phillip Aratuo (right).

“The water is giving the community strength, more than that from the stream” - Kwame Adabo of Abaasi Nyame Bekyere

the first step. Now, with these firmly in place, the communities of Abaasi Nyame Bekyere and Ochisi Nyame Bekyere hold the reins to make their own way.

For Kwame Adabo, an member of the community leadership in Abaasi Nyame Bekyere, the next step for the community is in developing a strong management system to ensure the borehole will remain a dependable water source. “[Proper management] will help the community to put aside some funds, so that in the future, we’ll be able to maintain the facility,” he said.

To plan for future repairs and maintenance, the adults, including the women who fetch water, will soon decide – as a community – between a pay-as-you-fetch system and a monthly household levy as the best option for raising the necessary funds. As part of the project, the community was asked to create its own community-managed bank account to store funds and has done so, with funds drawn from household contributions. Now, the community will decide how it can best collect money on a regular basis to ensure continued water access in the future. The watsan committee will continue to play a large role, including caretaking for the borehole and, if the community decides on a pay-as-you-fetch system, in instituting the process.

The community must also decide how to share the borehole with the surrounding communities who did not contribute to the costs of the borehole’s construction, but now wish to make use of it as well. In the meantime, the community will appoint an adult to supervise the facility and has attached a padlock around the borehole pump to discourage unauthorized use. In Ochisi Nyame Bekyere, plans for community manage-

ment have already taken shape. “The water is giving the community strength, more than that from the stream,” said Samuel Gyasi, who has been head of the community for four years. He and the rest of the leadership have devised their own solutions to preserve the community’s strength.

The leadership instituted a monthly household levy of 1 Ghana Cedi per household in the home community and nearby communities, so that all households are equally contributing to the costs and future maintenance of the borehole. They have also appointed a community member to monitor borehole usage to prevent misuse. According to Samuel, the borehole currently serves a few hundred individuals, half of which live in the community he oversees, and the other half from neighboring settlements.

Just like in Abaasi Nyame Bekyere, the Ochiso Nyame Bekyere watsan committee will play a long-lasting role. Rosemary Baah, a committee member, discussed the strong linkages between maintaining the borehole and promoting community hygiene: “As hygiene promoters, we ensure the borehole is kept clean...we ensure that the small children don’t bathe on the platform,” she said, as an important way for keeping the area clean. The committee also saw to it that the borehole platform was surrounded by stones (to prevent erosion) and they check for erosion when it rains. By involving the community in the management of the borehole, she and the rest of the watsan committee can ensure the borehole will be in shape for the communities to use for a long time to come.