



## Water+: Annual WASH Systems Award

In commemoration of **World Water Day 2021**, CARE’s Water+ team presents its annual WASH Systems Award to the CARE Kenya and Kenya-RAPID teams in recognition of their outstanding work in building and strengthening Water Policy and Governance in Garissa County, Kenya.

### Quick Snapshot

**CARE in Kenya:** CARE has supported development and humanitarian WASH programming in Kenya since 1968. In FY19, CARE reached over one million Kenyans across 27 projects that spanned water, sanitation, and hygiene; economic empowerment and livelihoods; climate and resilience; governance; women’s leadership; and humanitarian assistance.

**Team:** The Kenya-RAPID team in Garissa is led by Sam Ombeki, the Program Manager for K-RAPID/Garissa, and supported by Thomas Ihura (WASH Engineer), Shirwaa Noor (Livelihood, Food, and Nutrition Officer), and Daniel Kitinga (M&E Officer).

**The overarching objective of Kenya-RAPID** was to contribute to sustainable and resilient livelihoods for communities in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) by strengthening county governance frameworks for water and rangeland, developing scalable WASH and livestock business models, and increasing community access to WASH and rangeland services.

#### Project Overview: Kenya-RAPID

Dates: 2015 – 2020

Project Areas: Garissa, Wajir, Turkana, Isiolo, Marsabit Counties

Donor: USAID/Kenya; Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

Budget: \$35.5M

Partners: Millennium Water Alliance: CARE, Catholic Relief Services, World Vision, Food for the Hungry, Sweet Sense, IBM, Acacia Water

Targets: 70,000 Garissa residents reached with basic water services; 75% satisfaction with water and livestock services; development of four new WASH policies, laws, or agreements.

## Interview: Kenya-RAPID Garissa Team

Sam Ombeki, originally an Environmental Health specialist, has led Kenya RAPID in Garissa since the 2015 inception, and has supported WASH programming in Kenya for over 20 years. Thomas Ihura is a Civil Engineer who has served as the project’s WASH engineer and County Government liaison. Shirwaa Noor is an Agronomist who has led the livelihood, food and nutrition objectives of the project and has served as a key community liaison. Daniel Kitinga came to K-RAPID with a Public Health background, and has served as the project’s M&E specialist. Prior to K-RAPID, Sam and Thomas worked together on the USAID KALDRR and SDC Water for Livestock activities, which collectively fed into the vision for K-RAPID as a holistic, integrated approach to improve water and rangelands in the ASALs.

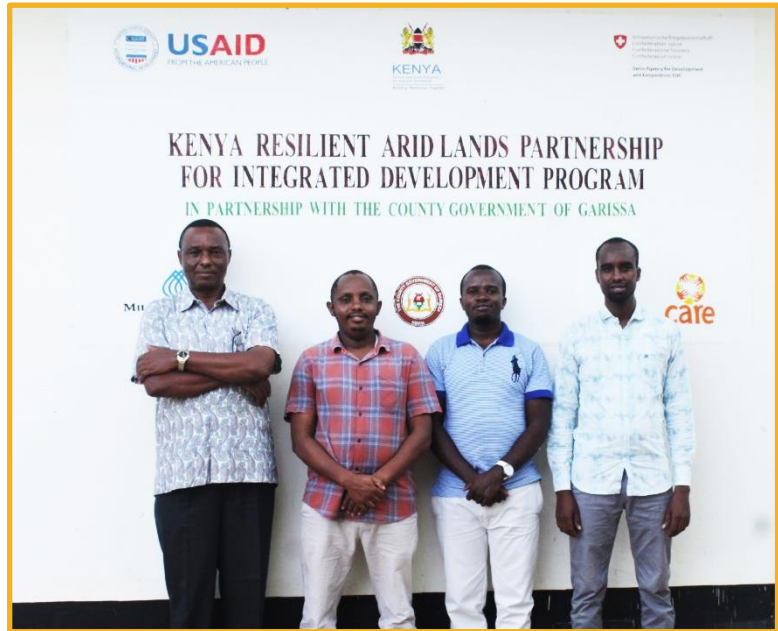


Figure 1: Kenya RAPID Garissa Team: (from left) Sam Ombeki, Thomas Ihura, Daniel Kitinga, and Shirwaa Noor.

### Despite many decades of WASH investments in Garissa and across Kenya, why do many water supply services suffer from low reliability, low quality, and fragmented delivery?

(Sam) In Garissa, a long history of humanitarian response has resulted in many WASH services funded exclusively by donors and INGOs without meaningful engagement of County Government, which has created a sense of dependency to ensure maintenance and functionality of water services. Additionally, many of these water systems were only designed to supply water for domestic needs as part of emergency response programs, and



Figure 2: K-RAPID partners, CARE and Davis & Shirliff, at the Iftin Solar Water Installation

were not appropriately designed for the harsh climate in Garissa. (Thomas) In 2002, water became the first devolved function of the Kenyan Constitution and mandated the creation of water and sanitation corporations (WASCOS) at each county, but many of the counties lacked the capacity and resources to ensure maintenance and functionality, particularly for rural water systems, which led to a fragmented service delivery approach and ultimately poor quality and reliability. Additionally, each county was charged with the responsibility to formalize rural WASCOS (RUWASCOS) for rural areas.



**At the start of Kenya RAPID in 2015, what was the state of water governance and policy for Garissa?**

(Thomas) Garissa County was starting to operationalize the devolution of water, but it was largely still managed by the Ministry of Water in Nairobi. A legal framework for water did not exist, meaning that county staff were unable to use devolved funding, appoint staff, manage tariffs, or enforce any policies. The 2002 National Water Act created WASCOs which served as the de facto water law for counties until 2013 when devolution functions were rolled out to counties, but in 2015 a Garissa Water Policy had not yet been drafted. (Sam) There was nothing at the county level that spoke to the right to water or water allocations for the different user groups, like agriculture and pastoral uses, drinking and domestic uses, or institutional water needs. (Shirwaa) There was also a problem with coordination of resources and partners—many partners were investing in water across the county without a coherent strategy for service delivery. The lack of a WASH forum (under the Water Act) contributed to this challenge.

**Why did your team decide to prioritize your time and energy to develop the Garissa Water Policy and GARUWASCO? Why did you think K-RAPID’s support was critical to operationalizing these policy components?**

(Thomas) Kenya RAPID was critical because we initiated the Water Policy under KALDRR, and we wanted to demonstrate a long-term commitment. Rather than just creating policies, we wanted to demonstrate the impact and long-term benefits of a Water Act. (Daniel) At the start of Kenya RAPID, many rural communities were dissatisfied with their water services, and we wanted to demonstrate improved customer satisfaction with water services in rural communities, and show that changes can be seen at a grassroots level. For example, water users associations (WUAs) collect revenues, but the county is called upon for repairs and 20-30% of the annual county water budget was going to O&M of rural systems. (Shirwaa) We wanted to demonstrate impact at multiple levels and to address the lack of continuity and momentum around water devolution and service functionality that occurs with each election and new administration. There is strong interest and political will in Garissa for this—the County Executive Committee Member for Water was passionate about enactment of the policy.

**Can you tell me how Kenya RAPID worked with Garissa County to influence Water Policy?**

(Sam/Daniel) Engaging Garissa County officials from day one of the project meant that we built and sustained political will, and the facilitative Program Implementation and Facilitation Approach (PIFA) process we used brought county officials into the design, monitoring, and evaluation of the project. CARE’s long-term presence in Garissa also means that there was strong community trust and willingness to engage in public discourse about the Water Policy. CARE, alongside Garissa officials, the USAID AHADI project, and technical consultants facilitated development of the Water Act through:

- (1) Identification of gaps through dialogue and consultation;
- (2) Formulation of key policies (Water Bill and Strategic Plan);
- (3) Public validation of the policies through stakeholder forums;
- (4) Review of policies with the Governor’s Executive Office;
- (5) Solicitation of feedback from the County Assembly;



*Figure 3: Garissa County Program Steering Committee Chair showcasing the Water Policy and Water Act*

- (6) Solicitation of public participation and engagement; and
- (7) Enactment, signing, and endorsement of the Water Act through the County Assembly.

It was a team effort among all stakeholders, where CARE played a key role in facilitating policy formulation sessions and validation forums and providing inputs and feedback to the Water Policy and tools, which were framed and drafted by county officials, the USAID AHADI project staff, UNICEF and others.

(Thomas) While all counties in Kenya follow these overall steps, Garissa was unique because of the positive relationships between technical offices, including the sub-county and community technical representatives, and the trust between the Governor of Garissa and the overall USAID PREG program. This allowed us to create a strong consultative and collaborative process and ensured continuity even when there was a change in the County Executive for Water mid-project.

### **How can organizations make sure everyone, including women, girls, boys, and other vulnerable populations participate in decision-making for WASH service delivery?**

(Daniel/Thomas) In Kenya, the national Water Law specifies that the vice chairperson must be the opposite gender from the chair, and that public participation is key to drafting laws and implementing any project.

(Shirwaa) It's important for NGOs to advocate for gender balance within all levels of WASH services, particularly in the ASALs and other pastoral contexts, where gender equity remains a challenge. At the community level, women's engagement is critical because pastoral livelihoods mean that men migrate for significant parts of the year and women become key decision-makers in their households and communities, like for latrine construction. (Sam) CARE's emphasis on gender equity means that we deliberately include women and girls in planning and that we use tools like the Gender Marker tool to ensure CARE's impacts are gender transformative or gender sensitive. For water, this means we check to see if women's time poverty is lessened through our approaches and we track gender balance and participation at any forum.

### ***Congratulations to the CARE Kenya and Kenya RAPID teams!***

For more information, please contact:

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