



## Water+ 2020 Retrospective Report



# Contents

<b>Water.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>RANO WASH Madagascar: Increase in Commune Budgets for WASH.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Strengthening Water Governance in Garissa County, Kenya.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Assessing Partnership with Government in the Afar Region of Ethiopia.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Sanitation.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Urban Sanitation in Informal Settlements and Low-Income Neighborhoods of Cote d'Ivoire..</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Sanitation Approaches in Hard-to-Reach Regions of Bangladesh.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Water and Climate.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Working Towards Climate Justice in Water+ Programming.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Hygiene.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Impacts of Menstruation and Menstrual Hygiene on Adult Women Farmers in Ghana and Malawi.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>COVID-19, 2020 and Next Steps.....</b>	<b>23</b>

## Introduction

This report is a collection of short briefs that reflect learnings from across CARE's water+ work in 2020. These briefs describe efforts to strengthen conditions and capacities – among government, communities, and service providers - for sustainable and equitable provision of water, sanitation, and hygiene services. Together, these briefs reflect CARE's emphasis on strengthening WASH systems, and the governance, accountability, investment and learning essential to sustain WASH services.

2020 was marked by a large-scale public health crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic was an inescapable context and impacted our programs in various ways. It halted or limited program and community engagement during lockdowns, but also highlighted the importance of WASH in combatting COVID-19 and drew attention to systemic inequities. As CARE shifted to emergency response, more than 69 of CARE's country offices implemented WASH for COVID-19 prevention, impacting WASH services for more than 12 million people through emergency or development WASH programs. CARE's programs across sectors incorporated handwashing and hygiene as COVID-19 prevention and response.

In 2020, CARE reflected on implementation and impact of our 2020 Program Strategy, and outlined a Vision 2030 which defines our principles, priorities, and expected impact over the next ten years. During this exercise, we re-evaluated the pillars of our water-related work and intersections with gender equality, food, health, climate, and resilience. We also expanded our global leadership spaces to include CARE Peru – an effort to bring a more diverse set of decision-makers to the Water Team and draw on decades of experience in water resources management and protection in Peru and the Latin America region.

Within this broader context, we have organized this year's Retrospective Report to include a collection of learning briefs in four thematic categories:

**Water:** Infrastructure is only a small part of ensuring sustainable water access. Much of CARE's work to increase reliable and sustainable access to safe water focuses on reinforcing water governance and strengthening the capacities of local government (service authorities) and service providers to scale,

operate and maintain services while protecting water resources. We have included three briefs that describe CARE's work to strengthen building blocks of local WASH systems in Madagascar, Kenya, and Ethiopia – resulting in increased public investment and more robust WASH policy and governance for rural WASH services.

**Sanitation:** For years, CARE has been collecting learnings related to sanitation in challenging contexts. CARE's sanitation work spans pastoralist and semi-pastoralist communities, dense informal urban settlements, areas of protracted conflict, geographies with unstable soils and weather conditions that contribute to latrine collapse, and seasonally inundated areas. In this report, we have included two pieces that reflect our work in some of these challenging contexts: dense urban settlements in Cote d'Ivoire, and seasonally flooded areas of Bangladesh. Lessons learned from these contexts can be applied to other challenging and last-mile settings.

**Water and Climate:** Water resources management and protection is vital to water security and climate resilience. As we outlined our 2030 Vision, we reviewed CARE's programs at the intersection of water resources management and watershed protection, WASH, and climate resilience to draw from and build on lessons learned. CARE has redoubled commitments to water and resilience and have institutionalized commitments to water resources management and protection as part of our Food, Water and Nutrition Strategy for 2030. In this report, we have included a brief description of lessons, and what we heard from CARE program staff about water resources management and climate resilience during our review.

**Hygiene:** the COVID-19 pandemic has again highlighted the importance of hygiene and handwashing in health and resilience. However, there are critical hygiene topics that often go unexamined. Though menstrual hygiene management (MHM) has been studied significantly in school-aged girls, we know relatively little about how menstruation and MHM impact various realms of adult women's lives. We have included a summary of findings from our recent inquiry into menstrual taboos and practices, and how they affect women farmers and livelihoods in Malawi and Ghana.

And, as the final chapter of this report, we have included a short reflection highlighting COVID-19 field responses and programmatic adaptations, and how the post-COVID-19 landscape will impact CARE's systems strengthening work going forward.

This collection of briefs reflects only a fraction of CARE's water+ work in 2020, but together represent valuable learning as to how we contribute to WASH systems strengthening. They represent the hard work of country office and program teams, government and civil society partners, and community members to strengthen WASH services— for health, income generation, food security, climate resilience, education, and well-being all at once.

Happy reading!

The CARE Water+ Team

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was written by members of the CARE Water Team: Kelly Alexander, Paul Demerriert-Verrone, Kyla Gregoire, Sara Hoffman, and Stephanie Ogden, in collaboration with CARE country office teams.

We are grateful for inputs from colleagues at CARE Madagascar and the RANO WASH team, CARE Kenya and the Kenya-RAPID team, CARE Ethiopia, CARE Cote d'Ivoire, the CARE Bangladesh SHOUHARDO team and iDE, CARE Peru, CARE Ecuador, CARE Tanzania and the CARE-WWF Alliance, CARE Malawi, CARE Ghana, Nick Brooks and CARE's WASH in Emergencies team, and our FWS KML guru, Colleen Farrell.

We are grateful to the Osprey Foundation for their support to CARE's water+ work, encouraging growth, reflection, and learning across our programs.

# RANO WASH Madagascar: Increase in Commune Budgets for WASH

## Overview

Madagascar has some of the most limited access to water and sanitation in the world – only 36% of households in rural areas use improved water facilities, and 57% of the population practices open defecation (UNICEF, 2019). The challenges to accelerating and expanding the use of improved, sustainably managed WASH services are three-fold: weak WASH governance, monitoring, and management capacities; weak private sector/WASH supply; and unhealthy behaviors/low demand for sanitation and hygiene.

Since 2017, RANO WASH has helped communities in rural Madagascar create solutions for sustainable and equitable WASH systems so people can live healthier lives and preserve the environment. RANO WASH has three strategic objectives: 1) support governance and monitoring at national, regional, and communal levels for sustainable WASH services; 2) increase access to water and sanitation supply through supporting private sector capacity and public private partnerships for sustainable water and sanitation supply across several regions in Madagascar; 3) increase good hygiene and sanitation behaviors by identifying and addressing multiple behavioral determinants. The project was designed using the Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) Collaborative Behaviors and is guided by a systems strengthening philosophy.

## Project Snapshot

**Dates:** 2017-2022

**Donor:** USAID; Government of Madagascar; Private Donors

**Geography:** Vatovavy Fitovinany, Atsinanana, Alaotra Mangro, Amoron'i Mania, Haute Matsiatra, and Vakinankaratra

**Partners:** CARE, Catholic Relief Services, WaterAid, Sandandrano LLC, Bushproof LLC

**Targets:** Across 250 rural communes, 300,000 people will gain access to water, 375,000 will gain access to sanitation, and 190 schools and health facilities will have improved water and sanitation services and hygiene behaviors.

## Key Impact and Achievements in 2020

Even amid a global pandemic RANO WASH consistently achieved or exceeded its targets in improving access to critical WASH services. Here are some of RANO WASH's most significant achievements in 2020:

- Publicly owned, privately operated rural water utilities provided access to safe, reliable water services to nearly 43,000 people. Nearly 120,000 people gained access to a safe and hygienic household latrine as a result of RANO WASH support to strengthen markets and sanitation enterprises, and drive demand for appropriate and sustainable latrine technologies.
- An updated WASH policy framework, strategy and sector plan is in place, and the Ministry of WASH has stronger capacity to review, plan and budget for WASH services.
- 134 WASH civil society organizations were formed, trained, and are operational at the commune level, ensuring that citizens, particularly women, have a voice in commune-level decision making. 69 of these groups successfully influenced WASH investments of commune authorities in 2020.

- 171 municipalities continue to provide timely and accurate updates to the SE&AM national WASH sector monitoring platform, exceeding the target of 150 municipalities for 2020. This ensures that national and regional governments accurately monitor WASH services and know when and where infrastructure is broken, and which communities are still in need of services.
- 75% of communities remain open defecation free six months after follow-up verification. This relatively high rate is mostly due to the use of sustainable toilets and strong local governance.
- All 250 intervention communes were trained on municipality roles and responsibilities, resulting in 139 new commune-level WASH technical agents (exceeding a target of 30), responsible for supporting and scaling rural WASH services.
- RANO WASH has also recently updated an analysis using the WASH Systems building blocks<sup>1</sup>, mapping the current status of the WASH system in Madagascar to identify leverage points and areas for improvement that the project can address.



## Increase in Commune Budget for WASH

One of the most critical and sustainable outcomes for RANO WASH has been the increase in commune budgets for WASH. In FY20, 124 communes (exceeding a target of 15) increased and integrated WASH budget line items in their commune budget. As a result, commune investments in WASH services across the six regions increased by nearly \$400,000. This is a significant achievement at the commune level and an indicator of political will and community engagement for WASH. These significant increases were catalyzed through years of extensive capacity building, multi-sector stakeholder engagement, and the use of accountability mechanisms for communities to advocate for their WASH needs and hold service providers accountable. The momentum towards collective action took several years to achieve. RANO WASH conducted training activities for 250 commune government teams to ensure their capacity to fulfill their roles and responsibilities. To build WASH capacities at the community level, commune governments hired WASH technical agents to provide technical and financial support for WASH services. Communes are also encouraged and supported to seek partnerships with private operators to maintain and improve WASH services and coverage.

Through public dialogues and stakeholder forums, RANO WASH created opportunities for communities, service providers, commune governments, and civil society organizations to come together and collectively discuss WASH priorities, problems, solutions, and responsibilities. These local dialogue structures improve accountability and transparency, as they help communities understand their rights to WASH, and hold municipalities accountable as service authorities. RANO WASH also strengthens problem-identification through tools such as commune WASH development plans, which are participatory needs assessments for WASH planning and budgeting. This two-tiered approach builds capacity across the WASH system as commune governments and service providers strengthen their technical WASH capacities and communities are empowered through participatory tools for WASH planning and advocacy. Increases in WASH budgets at the commune level was a result of communities demanding greater WASH investments of their service authorities and commune governments increasing their capacity for planning, budgeting, contracting and overseeing WASH service delivery.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ircawash.org/resources/understanding-wash-system-and-its-building-blocks>

## Interview with RANO WASH Deputy Chief of Party, Avo Ratoarijaona

Avo Ratoarijaona has worked in CARE Madagascar since 2009 on governance, livelihoods, food security, health, and WASH programs, and most recently as the Deputy Chief of Party for RANO WASH. Here, she explains why and how RANO WASH strengthens the building blocks for sustainable WASH services in Madagascar.



### **Despite years of investment in infrastructure, why do many water supply services suffer from low reliability, low quality and fragmented delivery?**

There are various parameters to consider when we invest in infrastructure. In Madagascar, the responsibility for water services has devolved from the national to the local level and this requires additional investment in the institutional capacity and professionalization of service authorities and service providers at the local level. Thus, there is a real need for capacity building and professional support to increase technical, oversight, and managerial skills not only of commune governments, but also of water user associations (WUA), and private and community managers, so that they can carry out their functions to keep infrastructure functioning and make needed repairs and expansion of services. Despite existing legal frameworks that designate the commune government as the duty bearer for WASH, commune governments are not always involved in planning or executing water projects, and oftentimes political will to fulfill this role is low.

### **What is so innovative about the service delivery models that CARE Madagascar has implemented to bring sustainable water services to rural populations in Madagascar?**

To address challenges in institutional capacity, professionalization, and financing, CARE has been working to increase the engagement of the domestic private sector in Madagascar, to generate greater investment in improving water services through public-private partnerships (PPP) in projects like RANO-HP and RANO WASH. In 2010, RANO-HP introduced some of the first PPP models through a lease contract model, where private operators constructed the water system and kept all revenue while ensuring operation and maintenance. The project provided capacity building to private operators on technical skills —infrastructure quality, preventive and corrective maintenance, water quality monitoring—and managerial skills —customer services and financial and human resources. We learned from RANO-HP that when private operators provide a portion of the investment for construction there is a greater incentive to deliver quality services and practice cost recovery. We also learned that strengthening the capacity of private operators requires an equal investment in the public sector as well as formalized community engagement through civil society.

In 2018, RANO WASH built on these learnings and promoted a lease contract model where private operators provide a portion of investment costs. At the same time, we facilitated the development of financial products specifically for WASH. The project also designed a stronger partnership with the Malagasy government through a national, sub-national and local level approach that goes beyond service provision and provides capacity building and resources to 1) commune governments to ensure effective governance, oversight, and



service delivery at the local level, and 2) at the national and sub-national levels to support sector-wide planning and monitoring and provide effective support systems to commune governments. The commune government and technical services are involved throughout the process, ensuring buy-in and understanding of PPPs and what makes them equitable, sustainable and profitable. RANO WASH also works with communities, especially vulnerable populations, to strengthen civil society and create formal spaces to demand the right to WASH services.

### **RANO WASH works hand in hand with the Malagasy government to influence policy and practice of the WASH system in Madagascar. What's an example of this approach to advocacy?**

PPPs delegate water service delivery from the public to the private sector. This is done through contracts awarded to an individual or local firm to manage one or several piped water schemes. RANO WASH jointly developed a contract model for PPPs with the Ministry of WASH that is now widely adopted by the Malagasy government and used by implementing partners. This was the result of collaboration with the government to assess and improve the process and tools, including the delegated contract model. This exercise clarified roles and responsibilities, legal mandate and asset ownership – all key in improving understanding of the PPP model. The Malagasy government views RANO WASH as its main strategic and resource partner for PPPs.

## **Strengthening Water Governance in Garissa County, Kenya**

### **Overview**

While Kenya has experienced significant economic progress over the last 30 years, poverty, food insecurity, and income inequality remain high, particularly in the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) that encompass the northern half of the country. Access to services, infrastructure, and investment in the ASALs is disproportionately lower than the national average, including access to reliable, and safe and sufficient water.

Since 2015, Millennium Water Alliance (MWA), in consortium with seven implementing partners, have contributed to sustainable and resilient livelihoods for communities in ASALs through Kenya-RAPID. This USAID-funded program takes a governance-first approach to achieving its objectives by strengthening county governance frameworks for water and rangeland management, developing scalable WASH and livestock business models, and bridging water governance and infrastructure investments as a means of improving and sustaining gains in water services.

Through Kenya-RAPID, CARE Kenya helped strengthen water governance in Garissa County through the passage of the Garissa County Water Act of 2018 and the establishment of the Garissa Rural Water and Sanitation Corporation (GARUWASCO). In Garissa County, a long history of cyclic drought, conflict, and other shocks had resulted in a rural water sector that was heavily driven by humanitarian response and donor funding. As in many other chronic emergency contexts, this fostered a sense of dependency on NGO WASH

### **Project Snapshot**

**Dates:** 2015-2020

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

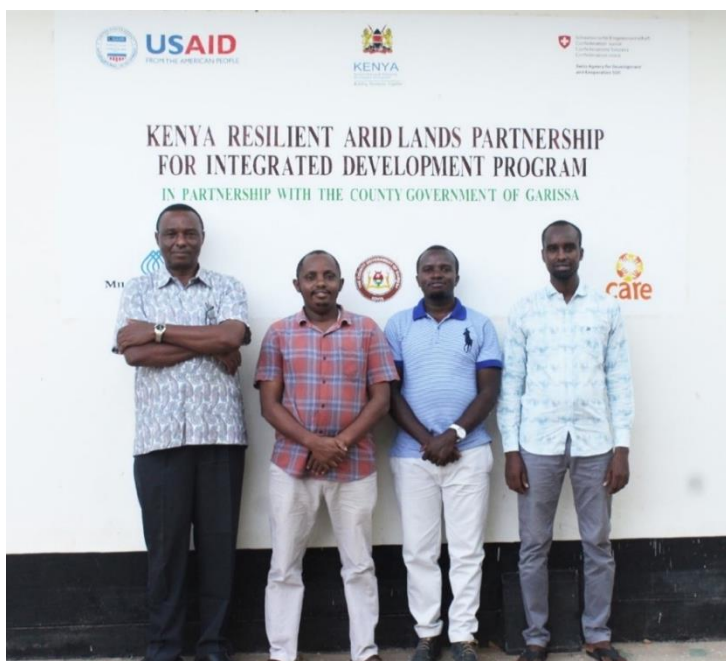
**Geography:** Garissa, Wajir, Turkana, Isiolo, Marsabit Counties

**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 (4) new WASH policies, laws, or agreements.

actors to provide maintenance, repairs, and rehabilitation of rural water schemes. In addition, there was no formal division of roles or funding responsibilities for the O&M of water services, and 20-30% of the County Department of Water and Irrigation budget was going to maintenance of rural systems. This budgetary sink prompted the County to seek legislation to improve transparency and accountability among Water Management Committees and County officials.

In addition to the Water Act, County officials requested support to develop GARUWASCO as a means of operationalizing the Water Act and improving service levels and accountability in rural zones. It is through the operationalization of these policies and tools that Garissa aims to improve cost recovery and cost sharing, ensure accountability and transparency, and increase the role of the public utility (i.e. GARUWASCO) in ensuring service provision and reliability in rural and remote communities.



*The CARE Kenya-RAPID team in Garissa: Sam Ombeki, Eng. Thomas Ihura, Daniel Kitinga, and Shirwaa Noor. ©CARE Kenya*

## Water Governance Outcomes and Intended Impacts

These policy and governance instruments, the Garissa Water Act and development of GARUWASCO, laid the groundwork for increased service coverage, user satisfaction, and reliability and functionality of rural water services through four longer-term outcomes:

1. Improved Solvency of Rural Water Services;
2. Self-sustaining water schemes;
3. Improved user satisfaction with local water governance; and
4. Improved coordination and deliberate planning of WASH efforts.

## Water Governance Approaches

**Development and Passage of the Garissa County Water Act:** RAPID was implemented with full participation of the Garissa County government, including the Governor of Garissa, county-level ministers, and county committees. This commitment to working with and through county governments was operationalized by use of the Program Implementation and Facilitation Approach (PIFA), which sought to increasingly shift roles and responsibilities to county government and to embed and institutionalize interventions within government structures and operations. In passage of the Garissa County Water Act and development of GARUWASCO, CARE and partners adhered to Kenyan national norms and standards that guide the development and advancement of legislation<sup>2</sup>, including: (1) identifying policy gaps; (2) formulating the policy with a wide variety of County Departments and the National Assembly; (3) reviewing and validating the policy with the public, Governor's Executive Office, and by the County Assembly; (4) soliciting further public participation and engagement with the policy; and (5) enacting, signing, and endorsing the policy through the County Assembly.

**Establishment of GARUWASCO:** The Garissa Water Act specified the establishment of GARUWASCO as the rural water utility, and subsequent transfer of responsibility for rural water services to the new

<sup>2</sup> A guide to the legislative process in Kenya; Kenya Law Reform Commission, July 2015

utility. CARE, as the implementer of RAPID in Garissa, supported the establishment of the new body through technical assistance and facilitation of the initial GARUWASCO meetings, which operationalized the new utility through:

- Briefing the County Water Committee on the Garissa Water Act and GARUWASCO;
- Motions to support endorsement and start-up resources (i.e. budgeting) for GARUWASCO;
- Secondment of technical and financial staff to GARUWASCO; and
- The nomination of GARUWASCO's board members and a CEO.

## Key Successes, Challenges, and Learning

### Factors for Success:

- Political will and championship by county government;
- Demonstrated value-add for county government and key stakeholders;
- Long-term relationship and trust building between Garissa county and CARE Kenya; and
- Deliberate and dedicated facilitation to ensure equity.

### Challenges and Recommendations:

- Budget sufficient time and monetary resources for multi-stakeholder policy processes;
- Align donor/program and government budgeting and work-planning windows;
- Ensure baseline policy capacity and experience;
- Focus next steps on operationalizing new legal frameworks and bodies; and
- Establish foundational indicators to measure governance progress.

The foundation of trust and shared responsibility between CARE and the County Government formed the basis of a governance-first approach that ultimately culminated in the passage of the County's first Water Act, development of the county's first rural water utility, and establishment of a county coordination forum for WASH. Many of the success factors and challenges noted in this case study are likely pertinent to other contexts where nascent water governance efforts are taking hold but will require strong and continued support to realize tangible benefits.

## Assessing Partnership with Government in the Afar Region of Ethiopia

### Overview

The Lowlands WASH project (LLW) was a 5-year, USAID-funded project aimed at increasing water, sanitation, and hygiene access in the arid, pastoralist and semi-pastoralist communities of eastern Ethiopia. CARE led implementation in four zones and nine woredas of the Afar Regional State.

CARE Ethiopia achieved an exceptional degree of collaboration with government partners in the Afar region, resulting in strengthened capacities at regional and woreda levels, as well as significant financial commitment from regional government to support water supply and sanitation activities. The Afar regional

## Project Snapshot

**Dates:** 2015 - 2021

**Donor:** USAID; Government of Ethiopia

**Geography:** Afar, Somali, and SNNPR Regional States, Ethiopia

**Partners:** DT Global (Prime), CARE (Afar Region), IRC (Somali Region)

### Results:

- 79,101 people gained access to clean water
- 20% gained water access from solar powered schemes decreasing maintenance and operational costs
- 104,427 people gained access to an improved sanitation facility
- Women's representation on WASHCOs increased to 57%

government invested more than 32 million ETB (\$845,500 USD) to support LLW initiatives, which accounted for more than 30% of the total project budget in the Afar region. This co-finance included government contribution of 57% of the costs of a reverse osmosis desalination plant in Serdo kebele, to treat groundwater high in saline, fluoride, and temperature (160 F).

CARE Ethiopia conducted an assessment, including interviews with government partners and key stakeholders, to document factors and processes that contributed to strong collaborative relationships with government:

### Factors for Success

**Joint learning and replication:** In 2014, CARE introduced the first desalination plant to the Afar region to demonstrate alternative technologies for extending water access in arid, saline zones. For community members, the reverse osmosis system reduced the price one jerrycan of water (20L) from 17.5 ETB (\$0.46) to 1.13 ETB (\$0.03). The Regional Water Office later financed and installed two additional desalination plants, and multiple solar-powered water pumps after learning from CARE Ethiopia's experience installing nine solar-powered schemes in early phases of the project. While capital costs of installing solar schemes in Afar was 37% higher than diesel pumps, long term operations and maintenance costs are 96% lower over an average life-span of 15-25 years.

**Investing in collaborative processes:** CARE Ethiopia collaborated with regional, zone, and woreda government to select intervention areas and priorities during the pre-implementation stages of LLW. Significant time and investment were dedicated to workshops and processes that engaged government staff across sectors, including the Bureau of Finance and Economic Development, the Afar Region Water Resources Bureau, and the Bureau of Health, and ensured that regional government led in translating project design to operation. Relationships between CARE staff and government partners remained strong throughout the project. However, there was a need to better formalize roles and responsibilities of each partner in implementation.

**Leveraging finance:** Regional government contributed more than 30% of the total cost of project activities, which demonstrated the alignment of the project with regional priorities, and government ownership of project outcomes. This contribution was both in cash and in-kind, including materials, equipment, and infrastructure such as pumps, generators, and cranes. This government ownership greatly increases potential for sustainability.

**Political Will:** The Afar regional government actively participated in learning and evaluating project outcomes, and has shown commitment to scale both technologies, like solar pumps and desalination, and approaches such as context specific ODF verification. Regional government is both constrained and motivated by limited budget; because government budget is limited, the region is highly motivated to improve efficiency and ensure sustainable technologies. However, technologies appropriate to the deep groundwater of the Afar region are expensive, and the region recognizes the financial challenge of maintaining and scaling large-scale infrastructure.

# Sanitation

## Urban Sanitation in Informal Settlements and Low-Income Neighborhoods of Cote d'Ivoire

### Overview

CARE's programming in Cote d'Ivoire (CIV) addresses inadequate sanitation to improve the living conditions and health outcomes of urban populations. In strong collaboration with government, communities and the private sector, CARE's projects improve the technical, managerial and oversight capacity of government and the water and sanitation authority while developing sanitation enterprises to improve access to safe and affordable on-site household sanitation, fecal sludge management and household waste services. These activities are linked with a transformative gender approach to address key barriers to adoption and behavior change.

Below we feature an interview with **Losseni Coulibaly**, a Project Coordinator with CARE who has been working in the sanitation field for 17 years and **Stanislas Toure**, the project manager for the Gates-funded Community Sanitation Support System (CSSS) project.

### Interview with the CARE CIV Sanitation Team

**In your experience, why is it so challenging and complex to increase sanitation coverage at scale?**

According to the WHO Joint Monitoring Programme for WASH, only 54% of people in Côte d'Ivoire have access to an improved toilet. This percentage masks two different realities: 1) the sanitation coverage rate in urban areas versus that of rural areas; and 2) in cities, inadequate sanitation is often found in low-income areas where people lack access to basic services and have little to no income. Increasing sanitation coverage in urban areas of Cote d'Ivoire is complex, and must address three factors:

- **Lack of investment in the sector:** Everyone agrees that toilets can be a high-cost item for households and that transport, treatment and disposal (or reuse) of fecal sludge and waste in general can also be very expensive. Poor planning by city governments and low profit margins for the private sector hinders investment. Without public investment in high-cost sanitation infrastructure, the private sector sees limited return in sanitation businesses.
- **Absence of a regulated private sector:** Sanitation is not yet perceived as a field for business opportunities. Although the private sector has shown interest in household waste collection and the transport of fecal sludge, it has still not invested in large-scale work like landfills, treatment plants and de-sludgeable toilets.

### Snapshot of CARE in CIV

CARE began working in Cote d'Ivoire in 2000, focusing on regions that lack access to basic services, implementing projects that address urban and rural sanitation, rehabilitation and social cohesion.

### CARE's sanitation work at-a-glance

**3 Donors:** European Union, African Development Bank, and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Grand Challenges

**2 Active Projects:** Promotion of Access to Toilets and Job Creation Through Reuse of Fecal Sludge (PATER), and Community Sanitation Support System (CSSS)

**Impact:** Nine (9) cities, 35 enterprises, and 8.085 people benefitting directly

- **Household behavior:** In Cote d'Ivoire, 25% of households in urban areas practice open defecation. There is a strong need to support households in stopping these unsafe practices and to deepen our understanding of their needs, barriers and aspirations. In CARE's experience, negative practices can be deeply rooted in underlying issues such as harmful social and gender norms.

**CARE has played a key role in influencing policy and practice in Côte d'Ivoire. Could you describe an example?**

CARE established a training program focused on the professionalization of a new generation of managers and the formalization of sanitation committees. The sanitation committees are groups of 10 formalized waste collection, disposal and recycling entrepreneurs that are led by one team leader. These programs and models are used today by the government. CARE and the sanitation and waste authorities continue to collaborate to this day with projects like PATER and CSSS. These projects work to increase the availability and maintenance of affordable toilets, trash collection and fecal sludge management while also strengthening the capacity of municipalities and service authorities to regulate these services.

**“Since 2003, CARE has played a major role in supporting city governments and water and sanitation authorities in sustainable urban development and sanitation.”** **Losseni Coulibaly.**

As most urban populations in low-income areas depend on unsewered sanitation systems, such as pit latrines and septic tanks, there is also a need to safely empty, transport, treat and reuse fecal sludge. Systems for garbage collection, disposal and recycling are also needed given the density and size. Our projects work across the sanitation value chain and support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) of desludgers and co-ops of waste collectors to grow their businesses. We also work with government to develop fit for purpose formalization and regulation processes and standards.

Our PATER project has also set up fecal treatment plants in secondary cities and conducted environmental impact assessments used by government to inform decision-making around sanitation in 3 major cities.



**What are the key innovations that CARE has made in Cote d'Ivoire?**

**Sanitation committees (SC):** Established at the zonal level in cities, the SCs have been an innovation towards the professionalization of household solid waste management. This approach transforms the urban environment and creates livelihoods in low-income areas. SCs are also linked with the transport companies through fee-for-service that ensure waste reaches landfills. Although this model has been successful, CARE and the SCs engage in advocacy and negotiations with these companies to ensure fair wages.

**Microfinance for sanitation:** Although this is new in CIV, CARE leverages our existing relationships with Ivorian microfinance

**“Access to financing is essential because it empowers the poorest and most excluded.” Stanislas Toure.**

institutions to develop sanitation-specific financial products for both households and service providers. We combine this with our Village Savings and Loans (VSLA) and livelihoods approaches to ensure households are able to manage and pay back their loans. This is still being implemented, tested and improved but we are capturing best practices and see it as a promising model to address key barriers to behavior change and transform lives and livelihoods.

**Digital approaches:** With funds from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and as part of the Urban Sanitation Grand Challenge, the CSSS project is testing a digital platform that creates an inclusive market for supply and demand for improved latrines, desludging services, and waste management. The platform links low-income households, providers of regulated sanitation and waste management services, microfinance institutions and municipalities based on geo-location. Our approach goes beyond a service-delivery technology solution and tackles the institutional and socioeconomic factors that influence urban sanitation at scale.

## Sanitation Approaches in Hard-to-Reach Regions of Bangladesh

### Overview

**CARE in Bangladesh:** CARE has supported development and humanitarian programming in Bangladesh since 1949. In FY20, CARE reached 7.7M Bangladeshis across 53 projects, spanning food security; water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH); economic empowerment and livelihoods; climate and resilience; governance; women’s leadership; and humanitarian assistance.

**iDE in Bangladesh:** iDE has supported market-based WASH efforts in Southeast Asia since 2002, scaling globally from original programming in Vietnam. The success of iDE’s model is grounded in market-principles, and relies on simultaneous engagement of market actors, NGOs, and government WASH stakeholders.

**SHOUHARDO (Strengthening Household Ability to Respond to Development Opportunities)** is a multi-sectoral resilience food security activity (RFSA), funded by USAID/BHA<sup>34</sup> and the Government of Bangladesh, and led by CARE. It operates in hard-to-reach, chronically vulnerable communities of rural Bangladesh, including the flood-prone northern regions. SHOUHARDO aims to *improve gender equitable food and nutrition security and resilience* for 170,298 Poor and Extreme Poor households living in the eight districts of Northern Char and Haor wetland areas of Bangladesh. Within SHOUHARDO’s overarching objective, the activity addresses food and income insecurity, maternal and child health and nutrition, WASH, women’s and youth empowerment, access to public services, and resilience capacities.

### Project Snapshot

**Dates:** 2015-2022

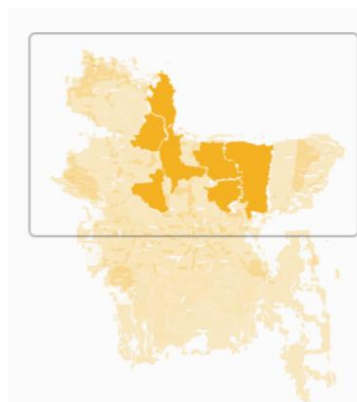
**Donor:** USAID/Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance; Government of Bangladesh

**Geography:** Eight (8) districts in the Char and Haor regions

**Targets:** 170,298 poor and extreme poor households (947 villages; 725,611 people)

<sup>3</sup> USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance  
<sup>4</sup> [https://shouhardo.carebangladesh.org/en\\_US/](https://shouhardo.carebangladesh.org/en_US/)

## Context and Need for Last-Mile Sanitation in Bangladesh



SHOUHARDO implementation area in Northern Bangladesh.

The hard-to-reach, rural regions of Bangladesh, including the riverine islands, known as Chars, and wetlands, known as Haors, lag well behind national progress on access to basic sanitation<sup>5</sup>. Waterborne disease and associated health and nutritional deficits are common, owing to unsafe drinking water sources (e.g. ditches, tidal water) and unsafe WASH practices that do not meet *basic* criteria<sup>6</sup>. Seasonal flooding results in latrine collapse and pit sludge overflow into surrounding water bodies, exacerbating disease. The geography of Haors and Chars, combined with increased population and climate pressures (e.g. erosion, seasonal flooding) makes latrine construction and maintenance a significant challenge. Climate change is expected to increase flood frequency and severity, worsening these conditions and health risks, and underscoring the urgent need for safe, flood-resilient sanitation solutions.

Market-based approaches that have worked elsewhere in the country prove challenging in chars and haors because of market fragmentation, weak linkages between retailers and sanitation entrepreneurs, and challenges reaching both “last mile” entrepreneurs and communities with innovative technologies and improved practices. With limited household purchasing power, entrepreneurs have limited incentive to produce quality products and deliver them to last-mile areas.

The CARE-iDE collaboration is one of few efforts globally to adapt sanitation and market-based sanitation (MBS) efforts to reach flood-prone contexts. Many of the challenges with MBS in the hard-to-reach areas of Bangladesh are commonplace among other last-mile contexts, including pastoral regions and drylands. Reaching universal sanitation in Bangladesh and globally requires an increased focus on such last-mile contexts, and a commitment to learning and adapting approaches that meet the needs and resources of the ultra-poor and vulnerable.



©Sameer Karki (iDE) and Afrhill Rances/CARE



©Sameer Karki (iDE) and Afrhill Rances/CARE

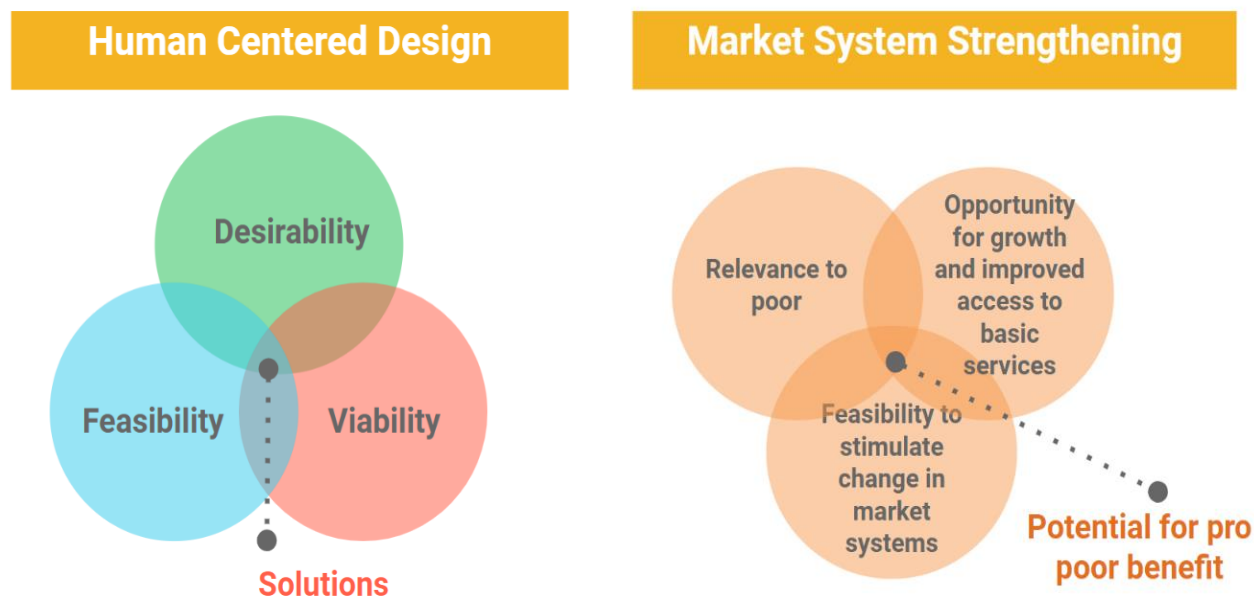
## Approach

In response to these challenges, CARE, iDE, and Pro-WASH worked to develop, pilot, and scale flood-resilient sanitation services in this challenging context. A human centered design (HCD) approach was used to develop a viable, flood-resilient, and desirable sanitation solution, which subsequently fed into efforts to test and scale a modified MBS approach to reach ultra-poor, hard-to-reach communities in the SHOUHARDO program.

<sup>5</sup> WHO-UNICEF, Joint Monitoring Project (JMP), Bangladesh WASH data: <https://washdata.org/data>

<sup>6</sup> WHO-UNICEF, JMP, Sanitation indicator definitions: <https://washdata.org/monitoring/sanitation>

A rapid, three-phased approach, termed 'Hear, Create, Deliver' was used to develop, pilot, and test a suite of flood-resilient latrine solutions and service delivery models that reflect the unique context and consumer profile (e.g. desires, purchasing power)<sup>7,8,9</sup>. The Hear and Create phase resulted in three, tiered latrine designs (termed the 'Nira Pod'), a modified 'Honest Broker' business and maintenance model, and a tailored social and behavior change (SBC)/marketing approach that addresses local customs and common, unsafe practices<sup>10</sup>.



*Two approaches were used sequentially to address sanitation in the hard-to-reach regions of Bangladesh-- human centered design (HCD) was employed, followed by a market-systems strengthening and market-based sanitation (MBS) approach.*

iDE's proven model for MBS in 'plain land' regions of Bangladesh relies on three key components: (1) capacitating masons and entrepreneurs with sales and marketing skills; (2) linking masons to markets and WASH products (e.g., SatoPan suppliers); and (3) deploying district-wide scaling strategies. This was modified for the ultra-poor, hard-to-reach communities. This includes a modified sales strategy, e.g. household consultations designed to show different tiers of sanitation packages, price points, and suitable installation locations. The modified strategy also ensures there are direct links between households and entrepreneurs, and deliberately addresses financing through (1) links to MFIs within the implementation area; (2) facilitating access to Government of Bangladesh-supplied subsidies to poor and ultra-poor households; (3) 10-15% discount models, where iDE compensates the provider; and (4) linking VSLA platform to latrine financing.

**Behavioral 'nudges'** – an approach that seeks to create a gentle spatial or visual cue without an overt 'ask' for a behavioral change—are being explored as a supplemental or alternative SBC strategy to increase demand generation. Given that other SBC approaches for sanitation (e.g., CLTS, health/financial messaging) are almost universally at-scale in Bangladesh, nudges may prove a promising way forward to increase sanitation uptake in last mile communities. Nudges that are being tested include: (1) integration of low cost, low maintenance hygienic pans within the slab design; (2)

<sup>7</sup> iDE, 2019, Sanitation in Complex Operational Environments: <https://fr.fsnnetwork.org/sites/default/files/SCORE%20-%20Final%20Report.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> USAID-ProWASH-iDE, 2019, Employing HCD to WASH: [https://fr.fsnnetwork.org/sites/default/files/PROWASH%20HCD%20Workshop\\_compressed\\_1.pdf](https://fr.fsnnetwork.org/sites/default/files/PROWASH%20HCD%20Workshop_compressed_1.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Shouhardo III differentiates between flood-resistant and flood resilient technologies. 'Flood resilience' refers to a latrine design that may still be inundated but can withstand flooding from season to season without significant damage; no technology can be truly 'flood-proof' or 'flood-resistant' in the context of Chars and Haors. Local home building practice was used to benchmark an appropriate flood resilience level.

<sup>10</sup> Char/haor latrines are commonly built to a lower standard than homes due to unavailability of durable, high-quality materials and the perception of latrines as temporary and unclean; and often built far from the home because of odor and cultural/religious concerns. Easy access to floodwaters for defecation decreases latrine use.

modified slab color (i.e., bright yellow) to improve visibility and appeal to customer preference; and (3) ridges on the footrest to prevent slip hazards. Recognizing that SHOUHARDO has a limited geographic footprint and remaining award life, CARE and iDE are also leveraging other ongoing sanitation investments to make best use of remaining time and resources.

Methods to evaluate the outcomes and impact of these modified approaches are under development, but broadly, SHOUHARD expects to use ongoing sales and marketing data to evaluate if these strategies result in increased sales. The team is also exploring methods to capture outcomes related to uptake, SBC, and latrine maintenance. Outcomes of this learning will be disseminated as part of final SHOUHARDO learning products, to USAID, Pro-WASH, and potentially a broader audience of implementers working on sanitation in ultra-poor, last mile contexts.

## Preliminary Results

Movement restrictions associated with COVID-19 delayed roll-out of the modified MBS approaches until November 2020. The following summarizes preliminary results from the first three months of field implementation. Subsequent learning pieces will test and report out on the hypothesis that these modified strategies will result in increased latrine sales, uptake, and usage (anticipated in 2022).

**Sanitation Demand:** Initial results suggest increased demand for improved sanitation—as measured through group sales meetings that incorporate SBC and messaging related to improved sanitation products (184 group sales events to date). These meetings are led by sanitation entrepreneurs and sales agents who have received sales training and use tailored sales pitches. 184 sales meetings have taken place since November, reaching 2,200 potential customers (1,700 female/500 male), and triggering an average of 5 on-the-spot sales orders at each meeting. There is also preliminary evidence that the nudges are supporting adoption and continued use of the improved latrines, as measured by customer feedback and self-reporting on likelihood of usage and willingness to maintain<sup>11</sup>. The program will continue to integrate and test additional nudges to increase the adoption of improved latrines. In coming months, additional demand-side marketing approaches will be rolled out. Ultimately demand will be measured through (1) sales data, disaggregated by vulnerability status; (2) annual monitoring for *basic sanitation*.

**Sanitation Markets and Supply:** To address the absence of improved latrine components in the implementation area, SWIRL established a partnership with a manufacturer of improved latrine components whose products were not previously penetrating the hard-to-reach markets. This has now scaled to five dealership networks (with sub-dealers) that connect last-mile producers with manufacturers—each now introducing and selling improved, hygienic latrine components in a region that previously had no access. In addition, 74 latrine producers (2 female/72 male) have taken part in training modules (e.g. business, linkages, technical and marketing). Trainings are followed by six months of on-the-job coaching and mentoring to ensure training contents are internalized and practiced by the latrine producers. To work in concert with latrine entrepreneurs, 74 last-mile delivery actors have also been developed as sales agents (50/50 female/male).

**Sanitation Sales:** SWIRL began recording sales through latrine producers in January. The initial sales numbers are promising—as of the end of February, 2,366 improved latrines (2,003 from the ‘basic’ model, and 350 from the offset model) have been sold from the trained latrine producers. Preliminary monthly averages (14 latrine producers per latrine) is comparable to the results observed in the plain lands sales, suggesting that there is strong demand and willingness/ability to pay in the hard-to-reach areas. The upcoming monsoon season will test whether initial, monthly averages will be affected by seasonal flooding.

---

11 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fOLnLO4T664&t=9s>

**SHOUHARDO WASH local service provider, Salima (pictured below), discusses the perception of women working in this field: “Once I saw the community dismantling one tube well, they were experiencing poor water flow and asked them to let me take a look. They refused and said, ‘being a woman, you will be of no use solving this problem.’ After much convincing, they agreed to give me one chance. After I installed the check valve, the water flow went back to normal and their problem was solved!”**

**Women’s Empowerment and Livelihoods:** Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) are foundation to all CARE programming. Accordingly, SHOUHARDO monitors for a spectrum of GESI indicators and for qualitative feedback from women. Preliminary findings demonstrate a strong, positive reaction from women to (1) improved latrine access; and (2) economic opportunities through the activity’s broader WASH livelihoods approach (which includes MBS sales agents, as well as a water service provider model). In particular, women point to the positive impacts of latrines on dignity, convenience, and health<sup>12</sup>. Inclusion and engagement of women in as latrine producers and sales agents will also be measured in depth throughout implementation.

### Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Preliminary results point to a promising model for technological improvement and strengthening service delivery in these last mile, chronically vulnerable contexts. Initial lessons learned and recommendations for other last-mile sanitation programs include:

- Meaningfully and substantively engage last-mile actors (e.g. ensure they are armed with up-to-date information and resources) so that they can best bridge the gap in community sanitation access.
- Ensure that messaging and sales strategies reflect consumer preferences, concerns, and in-demand benefits (e.g. support with installation and construction; tangible health and economic benefits).
- Align and coordinate any subsidy approaches with local government and other partners in the implementation area.
- Develop a coordinated approach with other actors key to creating an enabling environment to reduce barriers to scaling.
- Engage in people-centered approaches to avoid the one-size-fits-all approaches that are often ill-suited to last-mile contexts (e.g. HCD helped to identify potential pain points related to market actors, consumer opinions, and design preferences that fed into the MBS approach).

Finally, the Chars & Haors represent just one 'last mile' context where sanitation is often reported as an intractable challenge. Many



<sup>12</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRJD0l0226g>

others exist (e.g. drylands and pastoral contexts; shock-prone regions) and represent the 'last mile' of sanitation, where many partners and communities struggle to find durable solutions. CARE and iDE recognize this challenge and have been deliberately investing in research and learning in these contexts-to better develop a toolkit of approaches and learnings. Right now, we have ongoing sanitation research and projects in Bangladesh, Nepal, Cambodia, Vietnam, Ghana, Niger, and Northeast Kenya. Full learning reports from the CARE-iDE collaboration in Bangladesh are anticipated in 2022, with a vision to disseminate and workshop findings with a broader audience of implementers and government stakeholders from other last-mile sanitation contexts.

## Water and Climate

### Working Towards Climate Justice in Water+ Programming

The scale and the urgency of the global climate crisis demands an augmented effort to promote gender transformative climate action. Throughout 2020, the CARE Water+ Team has worked to integrate and prioritize climate justice throughout our programming and mandate and underline the importance of water resources management and protection as critical to climate justice within our 2030 Vision and Strategy for Food, Water, and Nutrition. We have placed particular emphasis on addressing the intersections of climate change, water resources management, and ecosystems. Climate change has already contributed to historic flooding, droughts, and declines in biodiversity and natural resources - impacts that disproportionately affect poor communities and the fragile ecosystems they depend on. Without decisive action, the situation will become more dire as water scarcity is expected to displace between 24 – 700 million people by 2030, and an additional 132 million people may be pushed into extreme poverty by 2030 due to climate change. In the face of this crisis, CARE's ongoing work to integrate WASH, water resources management, and climate adaptation becomes even more critical. Throughout the world, CARE works in freshwater landscapes, with coastal communities, and in highland ecosystems to strengthen the capacity of marginalized communities to adapt to the myriad threats posed by climate change. Here is a snapshot of some of those programs that provide invaluable lessons on how we can work towards climate justice through integrated approaches to watershed management, water resources protection, and climate adaptation:

#### Glaciares+ Peru

An estimated 53% of Peru's glaciers have melted, forming more than 200 new periglacial lagoons while creating water shortages in surrounding basins. The high risk of ice and rock landslides from glacier melt generate waves that form deadly flash floods, inundating populated centers and displacing communities, with women and children most disproportionately affected. To adapt to this phenomenon, CARE Peru



has led the implementation of the Glaciers+ project in partnership with the University of Zurich and financed by the Swiss Cooperation for Development. Glaciers+ used community-based adaptation to integrate community knowledge into risk and water resources management, while strengthening governance systems by building collective management between communities and public, private, and academic institutions. Glaciers+ impacted nearly 70,000 people through the establishment of the first early warning systems for glacier melt alluviums in Peru, strengthening local governance, and increasing funding in multipurpose public investment projects for water resources management.

### **Pedro Moncayo Water Fund, Ecuador**

In 2016, CARE Ecuador and local governments of Pedro Moncayo cantón created a water fund as part of the broader ACCRE (Climate Change Adaptation of Andean Populations) project to protect the region's páramos, a fragile and critically important highland ecosystem. Through the Pedro Moncayo Water Fund, CARE Ecuador reduced the vulnerability of 200 families living in the páramos to the impacts of climate change and water scarcity on their livelihoods. The Pedro Moncayo Water Fund was created from a participatory process between local public sector actors, agricultural producers, community organizations, CARE Ecuador, and other local stakeholders. Techniques for restoring the ecosystem of the páramos such as agroforestry, silvopastoral and related forestry systems were financed through the Water Fund. CARE Ecuador's participation as a process facilitator was instrumental in enabling local governments and social organizations to engage in the design and implementation of the Water Fund, contributing to stronger political advocacy for water resource management and climate resilience, the participation of women and small-scale farmers, and financial sustainability.



### **Village and Land Use Planning, Tanzania**

In Tanzania, water use and land use planning have long taken place separately, leading to inefficient and often destructive uses of water resources that are threatened by droughts. In the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT), the CARE-WWF Alliance has spearheaded integrated land and water resource management at scale, bringing women and youth into the planning processes. These innovative Village Land Use Plans—which encompass multiple communities—provide a spatially explicit roadmap for the next decade of sustainable development, including zoning community areas for activities such as agriculture, grazing, social services, forest management and water protection, as well as no-use areas. By integrating water into this participatory land use planning process, 98% of 111 identified freshwater sources were subsequently protected via community-led initiatives (e.g., planting 12,000 trees).

## What Did We Hear from Consultations?

In 2020, we reviewed CARE's experience in WASH, watershed management, and climate change to better capture and build on decades of programmatic experiences and lessons learned at the intersection of these areas. In addition, we interviewed staff across our CARE Country Offices and Country Member Partners as part of our 2030 strategy process and heard them consistently report water and climate as some of their greatest challenges and provided insights into how we can best support their work. Here are some of the most consistent themes and lessons that emerged:

***Water scarcity, flooding, and rainfall variability are major threats:*** CARE staff throughout the world reported that recurrent droughts and unpredictable rainfall are some of the greatest challenges to implementing their programming over the next decade. Some examples include frequent droughts and depleted aquifers in Zimbabwe, significant reduction of water resources affecting food security and health in Mali, conflicts over diminished water resources across the Sahel region, increased water scarcity in urban areas in Ecuador, and historic flooding in Yemen.

***Water needs to be recognized as a cross-cutting issue and integrated with ecosystem protection:*** Sectors working together on water resources management as a collaborative and cross-cutting issue was one of the most common ways that CARE staff identified for improving water programming over the next decade. This includes the integration of conservation and water resources management agendas and recognizing that protecting aquatic ecosystems is foundational for the livelihoods, health, and dignity of all people.

***More toolkits and approaches for IWRM and climate resilience are needed:*** Many CARE staff noted that while WASH, water resources management, and climate adaptation were a part of their programming, there were rarely any attempts made at creating and using approaches to integrate water and climate with other CARE issue areas. For example, CARE Vietnam expressed a need for approaches that helped to understand and address the risks faced by women small-scale farmers who were dealing with severe losses in productivity from increased salinity due to coastal flooding in mangrove forests.

## Conclusions

While CARE's Water+ programming has already pioneered innovative and integrated methods for improving water resources management and climate adaptation, there is still significant work to be done. Over the next several months, we will work with the broader CARE Food and Water Systems Team and the CARE Climate Change Resilience Platform to develop and disseminate toolkits, approaches, and frameworks for mainstreaming climate resilience, water resources management, ecosystems protection, and gender justice throughout CARE's programming.

We will also work with the CARE Climate Change Resilience Platform to develop a joint strategy on climate change, WASH, and integrated water resources management. This strategy will not only clarify our own goals for addressing water and climate challenges but serve to identify and advocate for joint programming around this intersection. We have the responsibility to face the climate crisis through holistic, equitable and community-driven climate action.

## Hygiene

# Impacts of Menstruation and Menstrual Hygiene on Adult Women Farmers in Ghana and Malawi

### Overview

Many women and girls throughout the world face challenges to menstrual hygiene management (MHM) including a lack of resources to hygiene products as well as cultural and societal taboos that limit their participation in public during menstruation (Hennegan et al. 2019; Sommer et al. 2017). While there are many studies that describe the impact of limited MHM on school aged girls, there is less literature regarding adult women's experience with MHM. Studies about adult women's experiences with MHM show they lack support and proper resources, which may contribute to stress and missing work (Hennegan et al. 2019; Garg et al. 2001; Parker et al. 2014; Caruso et al. 2017; Krenz & Strulik 2018). The right of women and girls to manage their menstrual health is critical. Improving MHM can lead to increased confidence, higher educational attainment (for school-age girls), and ultimately, improved quality of life for women (Sommer et al. 2017).



### Background

As part of the She's SMART project, (funded under the Water and Development Alliance between Coca-Cola and USAID), CARE Ghana and CARE Malawi conducted exploratory research to learn about societal and individual experiences and attitudes towards menstruation in rural farming communities, with an emphasis on understanding the impacts of menstruation and associated attitudes on adult women farmers. The She's SMART project uses the Field Farmer and Business School-Water Smart Agriculture (FFBS-WaSA)<sup>13</sup> model to promote the economic empowerment of women smallholder farmers. Data from this baseline informed the development of "Menstruation Modules," which were intended to open dialogue on taboos of menstruation, addressing the needs of women and girls during menstruation, and exploring ways for men and boys to support women and girls during their menstrual period, and with household responsibilities generally.

### Methods

CARE Ghana conducted a series of discussions in January 2020 in nine communities across four districts in northern Ghana. CARE Ghana spoke with women and men (of different ages), schoolgirls, schoolboys, traditional leaders, community health workers, and schoolteachers to explore attitudes, practices, social norms, and taboos around menstruation and its impact on women's livelihoods. All discussions were facilitated by the same CARE staff person, who also took notes. In February 2020, CARE Malawi conducted a survey across four traditional authorities in central Malawi. Data was collected via tablets during one-on-one interviews. This baseline comprised of 144 female respondents aged 18-82 years, and 90 male respondents aged 18-75 years.

<sup>13</sup> FFBS-WaSA model entails groups of 20-30 smallholder farmers (mostly women) that meet 1-2 times a month to learn business skills, financial literacy, nutrition knowledge and Water Smart Agriculture (WaSA) techniques that lead to increased yield whilst using less water.

## Key Findings

**Taboos:** The taboos surrounding menstruation affect rural women's incomes, domestic responsibilities, and daily activities. Female respondents in Ghana reported experiencing “very discriminating” taboos in their lives and emphasized the financial consequences of menstrual restrictions such as: not permitted to shake a man's hand, drink from the same cup, touch their food, enter their husband or father's rooms, and in many cases exclusion from prayer and farm work. In Malawi, both men and women respondents have heard various menstrual taboos, such as that women should neither sleep nor have sex with their husbands and that women should not cook. Importantly, many women of these women said they do not believe in the taboos and voiced the need for improved menstrual education within the community.

**Impact on income-generation:** Programs involving agriculture and women's participation in income generation activities are hindered by menstrual restrictions and negative views about menstruation.

**“Since we are not allowed to farm during menstruation, our personal farms are often affected. We may not plant, weed or harvest at the right time and this will affect our yield.”** Woman farmer, Ghana.

For instance, almost all women in the Ghana study reported restrictions for participating in income-generating and/or household activities during menstruation. For example, menstruating women should not go to farms with fruiting crops because a menstruating woman tending to these crops will cause them to fail. Both men and women acknowledged that the **taboos that cause women to miss one week of farm work each month can seriously impact yields and incomes for women**. Some of the traditional leaders also acknowledged that these practices can negatively affect women's farms, with one explaining:

**“They will not be able to participate in any activity on their personal farms and it can affect their yields from cultivation through all farming stages to storage.”**

Traditional leader, Ghana.

**Impact on daily activities:** Women in Ghana and Malawi also identified other concerns, such as sanitary products leaking in public, which led to worrying about working or participating in public activities. In fact, 18.1% of women in the Malawi cohort said it affects their ability to complete work, and **34% acknowledged that at least one of their normal activities is affected by menstruation**.

## Conclusions

Agriculture programs promoting women's participation are likely hindered by menstrual taboos. More than 30% of women farmers reported that their farming and training activities are impacted by these taboos. All development programs working with women or adolescent girls must consider the needs, beliefs, and restrictions - including limited access to resources, dignity, privacy, mobility, and income - affected by menstruation.

Women's ability to engage in income-generating activities, including farming, processing and sales is severely restricted during menstruation, leading to decreased yields and incomes for women each month.

Girls and women do not always feel comfortable managing their menstruation in public spaces or institutions, which limits their mobility and public participation during their menstruation. This is a call for WASH programs to address challenges of MHM beyond the home.

## COVID-19, 2020 and Next Steps

Within days of COVID-19 being declared a global pandemic by the WHO, CARE country offices began supporting local planning, prevention, and control efforts. The CARE Water+ Team and Emergency WASH Team joined together to provide technical assistance to country response efforts. While 50 CARE country offices already had water-related programs and staff experienced in hygiene and working with the relevant government and WASH clusters, there were another 19 countries without existing WASH programming. Furthermore, the specific focus on WASH contributions to a public health emergency was new for many CARE programs. Our support covered both adaptation of existing WASH and health programs to mainstream COVID safety and prevention, as well as the development of new, COVID-specific emergency response.

**30.01M** reached directly to date in **69** countries.



**4.1M** people  
got clean water



**3.42M** people  
received hygiene kits

*CARE International COVID-19 Situation Report #15, Jan. 22, 2021*

Our team primarily delivered two messages as part of engagement with staff: 1) Connect with and support response efforts led by government and WASH clusters – bringing a gender-sensitive lens to the table; and 2) Whenever possible, integrate plans and language that focus on systems strengthening, and developing or maintaining services – for clean and reliable water supply, sufficient and functional handwashing stations with soap, and safe sanitation – well beyond the current emergency response. These messages underpinned larger efforts to coordinate inter-ministerial response between WASH and Public Health ministries.

CARE country offices supported governments in a number of ways to slow the spread of COVID-19 in communities, from developing or producing COVID informational flyers, to distributing hygiene kits to vulnerable households, to rehabilitating or reinforcing critical water supplies and installing hand-washing stations in public places. In many places, to overcome delays and disruptions in supply chains, CARE also distributed sanitary napkins and other necessary hygiene items. CARE staff worked with government partners, existing health partners, community groups and water committees to support action planning, educate communities about COVID and take practical steps for prevention – including handwashing with soap, sanitizing handpumps between users and drawing circles to ensure distancing among those waiting in line for water. CARE was also able to develop new donor and private-sector partnerships to address the COVID threat; donations of soap from Colgate-Palmolive were received globally, from Ecuador to the Philippines, and CARE's work on hygiene behavior change in collaboration with Unilever is ongoing in Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Somalia, Jordan and NE Syria.

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted ongoing WASH programs and outcomes in expected and unexpected ways. Lockdowns and social distancing measures precluded engagement, follow up and monitoring at the community level in many cases, putting a halt to participatory processes that stimulate sanitation and hygiene behavior change. However, the pandemic also highlighted the importance of water, hygiene, and sanitation as a defense against COVID-19 and co-morbidities, and mobilized collective investments and attention, as well as coordinated stakeholders and health messages in a way that may have stimulated improved outcomes. The RANO WASH program in Madagascar, for example, exceeded sanitation targets despite COVID-19 lockdowns, resulting in a 25% increase over the expected number of

households investing in, constructing, and using a household latrine, and 30% more communities declared open defecation free (ODF) than targeted. This success is due to both a robust sanitation approach that has strengthened political will, investment, and alignment among stakeholders over several years, and increased attention to the importance of WASH and coordination of hygiene and sanitation messaging during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The private sector proved to be resilient and responded creatively at the onset of the COVID crisis. In Madagascar, local seamstresses and tailors that produce sanitary napkins pivoted to producing reusable masks for their communities – and increased their profits in doing so. Though many water operators and utilities suffered significant revenue losses during the COVID-19 pandemic, newly established rural water utilities supported by RANO WASH capitalized on increased interest in WASH and adopted payment plans and other flexible payment methods to ensure households were able to access clean water. These operators also manufactured and sold chlorine for water treatment systems and supplied chlorine for disinfection to schools, health centers and public transport.

Several of our CARE country office staff also reflected that years of work with national and sub-national Ministry of Water and WASH teams and local governments strengthened leadership and coordination capacities, and increased effectiveness of in-country WASH sector response to COVID-19.

Throughout CARE's COVID response, we have attempted to emphasize two key messages, and live by them: 1) Handwashing, water and sanitation are essential to *preventing disease, protecting health, and building resilience* – during the COVID crisis and every day; and 2) Sustained hygiene behaviors and sustainable WASH services require coordinated action and local and national government investment, planning, monitoring, partnership, and prioritization. If we seek to impact health and resilience, investing in strong water and WASH systems is non-negotiable.

