

# System Strengthening Approaches for WASH Services And Water Resources

Annual WASH Systems Award

2022

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*This year, in honor of World Water Day, the Water Team presents its annual WASH Systems Award to CARE Peru in recognition of two flagship water projects (SABA+ and Glaciares+) and the development of the Climate Justice, Water Resources and Amazon program area.*



SABA+ was a 20-year program (1998-2018) that strengthened national, regional and local integrated water and sanitation models, and improved water and sanitation access and service delivery for 5.8 million peruvians in rural areas. In addition to supporting national policies and public investments, SABA+ created Municipal Technical Areas (ATMs) to strengthen capacity within municipal governments to manage, scale, and monitor WASH activities. By 2018, SABA scaled from 2 to 14 departments in Peru. The Peruvian government adopted the SABA model as the basis for its national rural water and sanitation policy and it is still used today. The tremendous impact of the SABA+ program accounted for 10% of total people served across CARE's global Food, Water, and Nutrition Impact area between 2015-2020, and represents the 4th largest contribution to CARE's 2020 Impact targets by a single program.

The Glaciares+ project (Risk Management and Productive Use of Water from Glaciers) was implemented from 2011 to 2019 to strengthen adaptive capacities and risk management originating from glacier melt, while also protecting water-supplying highland ecosystems and creating opportunities to improve water resources management in three departments. A total of 69,804 people reduced their risk of water insecurity and climate shocks by applying participatory climate change adaptation measures. The project also promoted future trajectories for Andean landscape transformation and integrated management of water resources and risks at a technical and policy level, including models for public investments (Multi-Purpose Projects - MPPs). Close institutional collaboration helped impact Peruvian legislation and eight new MPPs were developed to request \$18M in public investment that are in various stages of funding. Currently one MPP is being implemented in Ancash to set up early warning systems, identify water management opportunities for conservation, catchment, and storage, and develop management plans for the mountain ecosystem.

Building on the decades of learning from SABA+ and Glaciares+, CARE Peru launched the Climate Justice, Water Resources and Amazon program in 2019 as a way to focus their water+ work on the most vulnerable. The team is ably led by Maria Mercedes Medina with the support of Jim Vegas and Maria Paz Gonzales under the vision of Claudia Sanchez, Program Director, and Marilu Martens, Country Director. The team has developed two successful pilots with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) to close water access gaps in the Amazon and was recently awarded the \$4.5M FOGEL project to promote mountain to coast landscape management and governance and the 14M euro IKI biodiversity project to strengthen the co-management model among indigenous Amazonian communities in 10 communal reserves for the conservation, protection, and effective recovery of Amazonian territories.

For the CARE Peru team, the water sector must be approached from a principle of management of ecosystems that provide water (natural infrastructure), water and sanitation systems (man-made infrastructure) and territorial governance for water (meaningful multi-actor coordination across the territory to implement established agreements).

The Water Team celebrates CARE Peru's achievements from the last 30 years, and we look forward to co-leading CARE's vision for 2030 to close the water and sanitation gaps for millions and protect the fragile ecosystems that provide water for all. In celebration, we share below portions of an interview we conducted with the CARE Peru team on how they've approached systems change in the water, WASH, and environment sectors in Peru.

### **CARE Peru works hand in hand with the Peruvian government to influence policy and practice of the WASH system in Peru. What are some key steps and actions? And what challenges did you face?**

CARE Peru has been in country for 52 years – a period filled with rich institutional experiences and lessons learned that allow our teams to be recognized for the quality of our work. In the development of WASH and water resources, we have over 30 years of experience implementing different types of projects in different areas and scopes. Among the most successful is the SABA+ project. This project was funded by the Swiss Development Cooperation for nearly 20 years and helped close the water and sanitation gap for almost 5.8 million people. In our systems strengthening work, we have identified the following steps as critical:



**Staffing is important** and requires a team that has the knowledge, skills and capacities required to work with communities and advocate at different levels of government is essential for any project addressing the WASH system.



**Develop a participatory process** with all decision-making actors in the territory to design and implement governance solutions for water treatment and access to water that can be adapted to different contexts. In Peru this has been in deserts, the Amazon jungle, and the Andes mountains and highlands. An intercultural perspective is also necessary – in Peru we have worked with farming communities and Indigenous Peoples.



**Capacity building** with academia, technicians from municipalities and provincial and regional governments, specialists from ministries, and above all with the community. This includes recognizing the importance of both man-made infrastructure and natural infrastructure (ecosystems that provide, store, and protect water).



**Strengthening governance** at all levels: community, district, provincial, regional and national. This includes consultation spaces, advocacy, and participation mechanisms. Another key component is the existence and strength of sectoral regulations and policies as well as strategies to strengthen cooperation mechanisms between small and medium-sized enterprises and leadership of community, public and private sectors.



Throughout our experience, we have also identified challenges:



**Working within and across cultural norms and structures.** Understanding and responding to cultural factors and sensitivities is always a challenge and projects should be aware of traditional community authorities and social contexts.



**Political instability.** Frequent government turnover requires prioritizing activities with government officials and permanent programming of spaces with the new authorities.



**Communication for development.** It helps prioritize issues in sectoral agendas, benchmark progress of technical areas at the institutional level, and more importantly builds and maintains trust among citizens, especially in the communities.



**Climate change.** Our intervention areas face different conditions and exposures to its impact while big gaps remain in adaptive and resilience capacities.



**Financing.** In our experience, projects themselves must consider developing models for additional public and private investments as project-level investments are only a contribution to the larger funding puzzle.

## How can organizations make sure that everyone, including women, men, girls, boys and other vulnerable populations participate in the decision-making around the delivery of sustainable water services in their communities?

People's participation in decision making is an important milestone for all projects. Achieving it depends on many factors: 1) Community interest; 2) Technical capacity of the teams as facilitators and promoters of participation; 3) Creating, supporting, or facilitating spaces, instances and mechanisms for participation; 4) Definition of methodological tools for participation; 5) Relationship principles; 6) Agreements and safeguards for agreements; and 7) Transparency and accountability mechanisms.



**Why is it so important to link the provision of sustainable water services with the management of water resources to meet SDG6? What are some ways organizations like CARE can help?**

Any project or initiative that seeks to close water access gaps must consider from the outset the source of water – which is the ecosystem. Understanding water regulation is the first step in securing the provision of water for

consumption and livelihoods. Well-conserved ecosystems are the providers of water. Degraded ecosystems have lost the capacity to regulate and therefore to provide water. In this sense, whether the water comes from a spring, a stream, a well or a wetland, it will depend on the ecosystem itself to ensure its provision. The first step in overcoming poverty is to guarantee the quantity and quality of water. Likewise, the water that is provided must be treated and this must be a principle for any sanitation initiative.

## What do you think the global water sector will need to address in the next ten years?

- ✓ **The sector will need to recognize the vulnerability of ecosystems and the risk of water shortages due to climate change.** It must also promote natural and man-made infrastructure for any initiatives seeking to close water and sanitation gaps.
- ✓ **Local water governance must ensure equitable distribution,** the quality and quantity of water resources, and the treatment of wastewater.
- ✓ **Dispersed rural populations must continue to be prioritized,** especially a Latin American context.
- ✓ **Find innovative mechanisms** to access and store water in areas at greatest hydro-climatic risk.
- ✓ **Generate the data and information** required to facilitate decision making. This information must be accessible and clearly state linkages with other human, social and economic development outcomes.

## Any final recommendations for CARE colleagues?

CARE faces a great challenge to overcome poverty; and water security is the first and most fundamental step. The management of water resources must thus be cross-cutting across operations. As an organization we must also showcase the integral relationship between water and land management. And lastly, CARE must open learning spaces that transverse our markers: gender, governance, and resilience with water.



Visit our websites for more information:

SABA project: [proyectosaba.org.pe](http://proyectosaba.org.pe)

Glaciares project: [proyectoglaciares.pe](http://proyectoglaciares.pe)