



Water+ 2021: Retrospective Report

ANNUAL REPORT



Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Madagascar: System Strengthening in RANO WASH.....	5
India: How Women’s ‘Stories of Change’ in the Women + Water Alliance Captured Improvements in Water Supply.....	8
Zimbabwe: Ex-Post Evaluation of the Chivi WASH Program	10
Bangladesh: Progress in Scaling-up WASH Innovations in Remote Locations	14
Ecuador & Ghana: Promoting Equitable Payment Models for Water Resources Protection ...	18

Front cover: ©Anja Engelke/CARE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The briefs compiled in this Retrospective report were written and consolidated by members of the CARE Water Team in collaboration with CARE country office teams. Authors include: Kelly Alexander, Paul Demerritt-Verrone, Kyla Gregoire, Sara Hoffman, and Stephanie Ogden, with inputs from CARE Madagascar and the RANO WASH team, the CARE India team, the CARE Zimbabwe team, the CARE Bangladesh SHOUHARDO team and our partners at iDE, the CARE Ecuador team, and the CARE Ghana team. An extra thank you to our Food and Water Systems KML gurus, Colleen Farrell and Emily Janoch for their magic in pulling this all together in an engaging way.

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

Introduction

CARE's water+ programs play a critical role in fulfilling CARE's 2030 Vision, and link directly to CARE's strategies for Food, Water & Nutrition, Climate Justice, and Humanitarian Assistance. Our water+ programs encompass work across four inter-related domains: WASH in emergencies, WASH Systems Strengthening, Water Smart Agriculture, and Water Resources Management and Protection. Within and across these domains, CARE focuses on strengthening systems – the conditions and capacities for sustainable access and equitable services – and advances gender equality by building agency of women and girls, changing relations, and transforming the structures that perpetuate inequalities.

In 2021, CARE's water+ programs operated in the context of a second year of the global COVID pandemic and resulting economic instability, and increased urgency and attention to climate change. CARE programs continued to support COVID response and climate crises across the globe and, in 2021, reached more than 12 million people with humanitarian WASH activities. CARE programs also continued to adapt and do the persistent work of strengthening governance, accountability, finance, and learning to ensure sustainable WASH services and water resources protection. In 2021, CARE programs reached 5.2 million people across WASH systems strengthening, water smart agriculture, and water resources management improving health, livelihoods, food security, nutrition, and climate resilience, and contributing directly to Sustainable Development Goal 6.

This Retrospective report is a selection of five briefs written throughout the year that illustrate some of the successes, challenges, and lessons learned throughout our water+ programs in 2021. These briefs are borne from different programs, and written in different styles and for different audiences. But together, they capture a snapshot of our water+ work in 2021, and some of the ways in which we have seen and influenced broader systems change for sustainable WASH services. The briefs compiled in this report include:

- **Madagascar: System Strengthening in RANO WASH** describes “quick wins” from working with commune governments, service providers and community to strengthen sustainable WASH services.
- **India: How Women's 'Stories of Change' in the Women + Water Alliance Captured Improvements in Water Supply** describes how training women in life-skills led to government installing and rehabilitating boreholes in 39 communities, and how our monitoring systems almost didn't capture it.
- **Zimbabwe: Ex-Post Evaluation of the Chivi WASH program** was developed after a series of dissemination events where government and community stakeholders discussed the findings of an Ex-post evaluation, conducted four years after project endline (2017) and the implications for improving WASH conditions in Chivi district.
- **Bangladesh: Progress in Scaling-up WASH Innovations in Remote Locations** is an interview with CARE and iDE teams on how together they improved sanitation coverage in seasonally flooded communities of rural Bangladesh through Human Centered Design and training of latrine producers and sellers.

- **Ecuador & Ghana: Promoting Equitable Payment Models for Water Resources Protection** dives into a Water Fund model in Ecuador and a Conservation loan model in Ghana to explore lessons learned from these two different approaches to financing conservation practices that sustain water and protect watersheds.

This report is not an exhaustive synthesis of CARE's water+ impact in 2021. It represents only a small fraction of the work that CARE teams, government and civil society partners, and communities have done, and reflects only a small fraction of what they have achieved. However, these briefs illustrate a number of lessons learned, and sometimes re-learned and reiterated, across our programs throughout the year, including:

- People demanding their rights are the greatest force for change, including changes in WASH services. Enabling and supporting citizens to advocate for themselves and strengthening the capacity of governments and service providers to hear and respond to those demands, multiplies impact.
- Systems approaches are complex, and progress is often non-linear. Working with the government, at various levels requires continuous assessment and adjustment to identify leverage points and opportunities, and address inevitable turnover and change.
- Sustainable sanitation requires greater attention to finance. While community-led total sanitation (CLTS) is an effective social mobilization strategy, it must be layered with policy, market-based approaches, increased public investment, and better access to finance for households and entrepreneurs for sanitation to be sustained at scale.
- We must recognize and address power dynamics and incentives to achieve sustainable water resources management and conservation for the benefit of all. CARE continues to refine and adapt political and financial mechanisms to support local governments in water resources management planning and action, and equitably compensate communities and small-scale farmers that implement soil and water conservation practices for public benefit.

We thank our CARE teams and partners, whose dedication to strengthening systems for water and WASH services and water resources management supports the lives, livelihoods, and resilience of everyone.

Happy Reading!

The CARE Water Team

Madagascar: System Strengthening in RANO WASH

MONITORING ‘QUICK WINS’ FROM 2021

Since 2018, the RANO WASH program has achieved significant and important gains for the WASH sector in Madagascar at the national, regional, and communal levels. The project team conducted an internal midterm evaluation in addition to an external evaluation conducted by the USAID WASH Pals team. Both evaluations found the project to be “complex, ambitious, and innovative; perceived positively by a large majority of stakeholders; and seen as a sector leader” (WASH Pals report vi). In 2021, highlights included increased leadership in WASH and self-efficacy of national and regional ministerial WASH teams and mayors as well as self-sufficiency among civil society and other local groups. A total of **162 communes increased their WASH budgets** this year, **56,000 people gained access to basic or safely managed water services**, more than **240,000 people gained access to basic or limited sanitation**, and **11 communes eliminated open defecation** – across their entire jurisdiction. RANO WASH also continues to support the Ministry of WASH in better understanding and implementing public private partnerships for water service delivery. However, as described below, implementation has many steps and underscores the complexity of a systems approach. Working with the government, at various levels, requires continuous assessment of strengths and approaches to identify leverage points, new focus areas, and opportunities.

One of these **key leverage points** has been the project’s commune-wide approach to governance, which required significant front-end investment and improving self-sufficiency of commune-level actors. This included trainings and coaching for **duty-bearers**, like mayors and technical WASH support agents to plan, monitor and carry out WASH activities in their communes. The project also provided trainings and coaching to **rights-holders**, including civil society organizations (CSOs), WASH committees, and water user associations (WUAs) to benchmark and improve organizational and oversight capacity and strengthen skills in advocacy and communication. The commune-wide approach also fostered multi-level coordination and collaboration between local administrative levels: commune, fokontany¹ and village-level actors.

In addition to building the capacity of people, the approach also focused on **strengthening and institutionalizing tools, platforms, and processes**. Feedback mechanisms (e.g., communal idea boxes) and local consultation and dialogue structures (SLCs)² were set up and continue to be supported as key platforms to trigger local problem identification and change among a range of local stakeholders. The project also used tools like Commune WASH Development Plans (PCDEAH) to improve capacity of commune teams to plan, monitor and scale WASH services. PCDEAHs have been a good starting point for discussions and in some places have precipitated meaningful change in the communal WASH budgeting process with municipal councils.

This multi-actor effort took place over 2-3 years before yielding concrete results. The dynamic of feedback, coordination, and collaboration created favorable environments in many communes that have led to local and context-responsive solutions that were a result of:

- Mayors and municipal councils driving the agenda
- Direct advocacy to commune authorities by CSOs, WUAs and other local community groups
- Public discussion and debate in SLCs and other feedback mechanisms

Some examples include funding allocations for WASH activities and infrastructure, tax schemes to increase commune revenue for WASH, and improved service quality. The project captures “quick wins” every quarter as a qualitative system to collect impact from engagement between government, civil society, and citizens. Below we list some of these key ‘quick wins’ in 2021.

COMMUNE GOVERNMENT TEAMS

In 2021, commune teams continued to develop and finalize their PCDEAH to prioritize commune-level investments for WASH development. These included rehabilitation or construction of sanitation facilities in health centers and schools but also funds to maintain institutional processes. Processes that were financially supported included institutional triggering and consultations for public sector teams as well as a budget line to fund SLC meetings and WASH support agent salaries in the Amporoforo commune. In the Ambalavao Manamisoa commune, the commune team collaborated with the project’s technical agents and their commune WASH support agents, WASH committee, village association, and local CSO to improve supervision strategies and plans, which increased the coverage rate of improved latrines to 75%. Lastly, tax schemes continue to gain traction – with one commune increasing its tax collection rate by 38% and using the funds to rehabilitate two public schools and the roofing of a health center. Local tax schemes are important strategies to mitigate the lack of national fiscal transfers to commune governments, despite the decentralization of policies and responsibilities.



Razafindravao Vola Hanta, Mayor of d'Ambohimandroso



A child washes hands in rural Madagascar as part of RANO WASH

CIVIL SOCIETY AND COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS

In 2021, 134 operational CSOs that receive coaching from RANO WASH advocated directly with mayors and commune councils and succeeded in obtaining public investments in: the installation of new tap-stands and waste bins, construction of public latrines and hygiene behavior change activities. In a separate case, CSOs and a WASH support agent engaged in joint advocacy to the WUA to repair tap stands in three neighborhoods of their commune. Through the SLCs, the Bekatra CSO advocated for sanitation investments which resulted in a mayoral commitment to Madagascar’s national ODF initiative (Madagasikara Madio) at the commune-level and a budget of 1,170, 000 Ariary (292 USD) to cover salaries for WASH support agents and public cleaners and rehabilitate a tap stand at the local health center. The role of CSOs in advocating for public interests is key to transparency and service quality while also

ensuring accountability from commune governments for public WASH commitments and investments.

FEEDBACK MECHANISMS & LOCAL CONSULTATION AND DIALOGUE STRUCTURES

As of 2021, there are 157 communes with operational Local Consultation and Dialogue Structures (SLCs), which act as feedback mechanisms between communities and commune government, and have participation from government officials, WUAs, WASH committees and CSOs. The RANO WASH team provides trainings and coaching to strengthen the quality and maintenance of these SLC mechanisms. This year, SLCs produced proposals that were accepted in 96 communes. A major theme this year centered around the need for increased transparency in commune revenue and expenditures – as part of the larger tax recovery schemes set up in earlier years. After feedback from their constituents, the commune of Andranovorivato publicly posted tax revenues and expenditures to promote transparency in commune financial management. Service quality was addressed through community feedback that prompted a facilitated discussion between the private water operator, mayor's team and community representatives which led to improved communication from the operator around service interruptions. Some communes also passed public hygiene codes to ensure members and visitors follow rules that separate water use from humans and animals in nearby rivers and help mitigate potential conflict.

The SLCs continue to be spaces for exchange between the commune's dynamic actors, including communities, service providers, and authorities. Right now, there are 157 operational SLCs across six intervention regions. The discussion points/topics for WASH within these structures include a budget proposal for the commune's WASH needs as part of the preparation of the initial 2021 budget, validation of the PCDEAH, consideration of the necessary budgets for water resource protection activities, how to make the commune ODF, and identification of inclusive approaches to facilitate household access to latrines. SLCs continue to be a key platform to bring together stakeholders to suggest, discuss and agree on development efforts for the commune.

CONCLUSION

These achievements emerge from a **multi-faceted systems intervention that ensured both duty-bearers and rights-holders have the capacity, tools, and processes to trigger change and engage in collective action**. Receptiveness of duty-bearers (e.g., commune government or service providers) and participation of citizens fosters mutual responsibility and increased confidence in government and service providers. However, in addition to achievements, the RANO WASH experience also highlights the complexity of local governance, the political nature of social accountability, and the difficulty in capturing impact and identifying causal pathways that can inform scaling of approaches or future programming.

It is also important to note that these successes depend on context. In communes where mayors lack political will to monitor or invest in WASH or where CSOs and other local associations lack human and financial resources, these quick wins may be more difficult to achieve. Power dynamics and equity in participation are another factor – local governance must reflect the diversity of its constituents and social accountability systems need to reach and count on the participation of everyone. Other risks (even in successful communes) include overlap and confusion in roles between the various bodies (CSOs vs SCLs) and their dependence on the RANO WASH team. Systems strengthening approaches inherently tackle some aspects of self-sufficiency and sustainability but exit strategies need to ensure clarity in roles and functions between multi-actor platforms and ensure codes of practice and ethical norms.

India: How Women’s ‘Stories of Change’ in the Women + Water Alliance Captured Improvements in Water Supply

Harsha organized a rally in her village to ask for clean water, and the government built a new well. In another village—30 women marched to the local district office and demanded that their borewell be fixed. The government fixed it the next day!

Those aren’t the only successes. In 2021 alone, **women in 39 villages successfully advocated to get better access to clean water with new or improved boreholes.** Boreholes are one piece of a bigger success story where women are driving change. Women have convinced governments to build or repair wells, bridges, roads, and schools.

Women are also running for office. In 2021, at least 163 women were elected to their village governing bodies. They are taking senior positions, with 14 elected as head and 3 as deputy head. These women are taking charge. These are activities they came up with on their own, with no formal support or funding to carry out their action plans. They set goals themselves, and they had the confidence and skills to see them through. No NGO got them there or paid for those wells. These women did it themselves.

“The collector was moved by the sight of 30 of us and inquired about us. We convinced him of the urgency of the situation, and he sent a team from the public health department to install a borewell in the middle of the village.”

Rajni, P.A.C.E. participant and community member



How did this happen? The women participated in the P.A.C.E.¹ program, where they got leadership training and connected with other women in their village across 6 months. The training works with groups of 20–30, and covers communication, decision-making, problem-solving, confidence, water, sanitation and hygiene basics, among other life skills. Men in their lives also received some training to become male champions who support women’s leadership. These women say the training and connecting to each other gave them the confidence to express their views and demand what they needed, even after the project left their village.

How do we know? Through over 90 “Stories of Change,” the CARE India team found patterns of impact – in this case government provision of water supplies – and started tallying the numbers. As mentioned above, 39 instances of women demanding and receiving improved water access have been documented, but this data wasn’t collected as part of the project’s formal monitoring system. The project’s monitoring system was designed to track Key Performance Indicators, such as how many women get training, how many groups form, and how many women graduate from the program. It measures the number of male champions. Those are important numbers—we need to be accountable to delivering the program—but they aren’t the real change. The most exciting impact comes through the stories that CARE collects.

“All this is possible only because of the P.A.C.E. training we received from CARE India’s trainer. The people of the village had no clue of our [government] entitlements and thought that fetching water over long distances was their fate. CARE’s P.A.C.E. training program changed all of that.”

Harsha, P.A.C.E. participant and community member

These stories tell the impact of P.A.C.E. from the perspective of women. The most important impact is that women used that training—and their networks with each other—to meet their own goals. They are improving their world, one borehole at a time.

Three important lessons learned:

1. **Investments in women’s leaderships pay off**—well beyond the scope of what we usually see in our log frames and evaluation time frames. Women who have leadership skills and networks change the world in ways we have never planned for.
2. **We need to plan and budget for better measurement**—if what these women accomplished was a surprise, what else are we missing? What do the narrow apertures of our KPIs make invisible? These impacts came to light because CARE asks women to tell their own stories of change. The M&E officers taking the stories noticed a pattern, and took recorded these changes. Investing the time and money to understand, document, and verify the unexpected changes teaches us more about impact than our project monitoring systems can alone.
3. **Our goal must be to support women’s own goals.** This success was only possible because women found ways to apply a training to the goals that were most important to their lives. We heard about the story because we asked women what had changed in their life since the P.A.C.E.

¹ The P.A.C.E. (Personal Advancement & Career Enhancement) program is a curriculum developed and implemented by Gap, Inc., and was adapted and modified by CARE India for the rural Indian context.

training. And then we listened to them. Putting communities, their goals, and their actions at the center of what we are doing will have bigger impacts than we can ever imagine.

About the project: The Water + Water Alliance is a six-year project, finishing in January 2023, that focuses on empowering women and men in cotton-growing communities in rural India to increase their agency and self-efficacy and accelerate their access to WASH services. CARE India is the partner implementing Gap Inc.'s P.A.C.E. training program with the goal of reaching at least 200,000 women.

Zimbabwe: Ex-Post Evaluation of the Chivi WASH Program

BACKGROUND

In March 2021, four years after the close of the Chivi WASH Project in Zimbabwe, CARE conducted an ex-post evaluation to see which aspects of the project had been sustained. The evaluation focused on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and specifically: open defecation status, latrine coverage and access to an improved water source. The original project, which ran from 2014-2017, aimed to: 1) increase sanitation coverage in schools and communities through the Government of Zimbabwe's Sanitation Focused Participatory Health and Hygiene Education (SaFPHE¹) strategy; 2) increase reliable water services, and train (primarily) women as WASH service providers (pump menders and latrine providers); 3) ensure gender and social inclusion, including space for women to participate fully on community water committees and in Sanitation Action Groups; 4) motivate communities to achieve open defecation free status, and; 5) increase broader capacities of local government. The program's final evaluation in 2017 underlined the program's effectiveness in improving health outcomes, increasing coverage and use



of latrines and improving access to improved water sources. Increases in handwashing behavior and safe water storage, and reductions in open defecation were also achieved as part of the program.

EX-POST EVALUTATION RESULTS IN BRIEF

Results of the ex-post evaluation (2021) are presented below for select WASH indicators, alongside figures from the baseline (2014) and endline evaluations (2017) of the Chivi program, for sampled households (HHs).

INDICATOR	BASELINE 2014	ENDLINE 2017	EX-POST 2021
Practicing Open Defecation (% sampled HHs)	45	1	8
Latrine Ownership (% sampled HHs)	50	97	93
ODF certified (% sampled communities)	N/A (CLOSE TO ZERO)	58	28
Improved Water Source (% sampled HHs)	69	94	79
Safe Water Storage (% sampled HHs)	7	90	66

Sanitation

Open defecation rates in 2021 were higher than 2017, but significantly lower than 2014 levels before the Chivi project was implemented by CARE Zimbabwe. According to interviews with (village-level) Sanitation Action Group members, government officials and village heads, heavy rains had destroyed many latrines and latrines were not re-built due to limited income, construction materials or motivation. Data from the ex-post showed that households headed by individuals under 40 years of age reported over three times higher proportions of open defecation compared to households headed by older adults.

Handwashing and Water

Enumerators observed soap next to a water-equipped handwashing facility within 15 meters of the toilet in only 2% of HHs. Fifty-eight percent of respondents reported their main water source is always working, and 41% reported some level of disfunction. During interviews, many Village Pump Mechanics mentioned that a lack of access to tools limited their ability to fix boreholes. Inadequate income for their services also decreased motivation. Fifty-eight percent (58.7%) of respondents reported their main HH water source is always working, and 41.3% report some levels of disfunction. Over 85% of HHs reported having enough drinking water in the past 30 days.

Results of the ex-post evaluation confirmed multiple challenges observed within the wider sector, but also suggested a relatively high sustainability of water services.

- Sustained household latrine coverage, but slippage in village-level ODF:** While only a minority of communities retained ODF status at ex-post, a relatively high proportion of households continued to maintain and use functional household latrines. This confirms broader sector

observations that community level ODF is too easily compromised when even a few households in the community revert to open defecation. The Chivi ex-post also demonstrated that the poorest households were the most likely to revert back to open defecation, after collapse of their household latrine. This is also congruent with sector findings that poor households who construct latrines out of locally available materials are more likely to see their latrines collapse, and less likely to reconstruct their latrine².

- **High levels of improved water access:** Water access increased dramatically from baseline to endline during the Chivi project. Ex post evaluation demonstrated that water access levels were not fully sustained, but remained relatively high, at nearly 80%. This is consistent with other studies, considering the average functionality for boreholes in sub-Saharan Africa is around 75% and 72% in Zimbabwe⁴. While further analysis will help to identify what factors contributed to this outcome, preliminary analysis of survey data and quotes from qualitative interviews suggests that the Chivi program's focus on local capacity strengthening and, supply chains and training women as pump mechanics contributed to this higher sustainability.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Zimbabwe needs a “post-ODF” protocol.** Many villages become ODF while programming is active in that community. However, it is unclear how to maintain community motivation and ability to maintain latrines, particularly if latrines suffer seasonal collapse. Sanitation Action Group members could be an important pathway for sustainability by encouraging members to maintain latrines and discussing the importance of ODF post-project. Local enforcement of a village constitution where all HHs must have a toilet could also increase ODF compliance.
- **Consider a stepwise recognition to reducing open defecation.** Many villages achieved ODF or made notable increases in latrine coverage but are not certified ODF, which can be discouraging and cause further recidivism. Many communities likewise slip from ODF status, despite maintaining a very high percentage of households with safe toilets. A non-binary OD reduction status would recognize that health benefits, specifically child growth, can happen with incremental increases in latrine use ([Fuller & Eisenberg, 2016](#)).
- **Budget sanitation subsidies for ultra-poor households.** One finding was that government-promoted uBVIP⁵ latrines are not being upgraded and are vulnerable to weather. The government should consider subsidizing a limited number of HHs in each community with quality (upgraded) latrines.
- **Focus on improving consistent handwashing practice rather than hygiene knowledge.** Availability of soap at household handwashing stations was used as a proxy for good handwashing behaviors. Very few households had soap available despite high levels of knowledge about its importance. Future efforts should focus on sustaining consistent behaviors, habits, and practices.
- **Facilitation of bulk purchasing for materials.** Some districts are already doing this: There is a need for buying materials in bulk for latrine building (cement, pipes, etc.) to reduce prices and increase accessibility for HHs in remote communities.

- **Stockpiling spare parts for water points.** Many water committees and VPMS mentioned difficulty in paying for transport or finding the spare parts needed. Communities should continue to pay for parts, but the government may need to assist in stockpiling items for purchase at the ward or district (as is already done in some districts). Easy access to tools for VPMS is also needed.
- **Local leadership and government budgets should prioritize sustainability of water, sanitation, and hygiene systems – not just the establishment of new water points.** District Development Coordinators and Rural District Councils should engage local leaders on ways to continually improve WASH systems through monitoring and reporting successes and failures.
- **Consistent promotion of safe water treatment and storage.** Considering the reduction in access to improved water sources and reports of dry boreholes during certain seasons, more HHS should practice water treatment and storage to improve quality for consumption.
- **Expand women’s leadership in WASH.** CWP and other programs have shown the importance of not only involving women in WASH, but also conducting programs that increase their confidence and skills. Women’s involvement in WASH and community leadership contributes to sustainability of outcomes.

DISSEMINATION MEETINGS

In November 2021, CARE conducted 20 dissemination meetings to share the ex-post evaluation findings with community and local government stakeholders. The meetings were attended by community representatives including chiefs, village heads, environmental health technicians, youth workers, village health workers, Sanitation Action Group members and health club members. In total, over 500 people across the 10 wards participated. The purpose of the dissemination meetings was to present and validate results, compare results to local experience and perceptions, and make space for discussion and recommendations.

Most village heads across all wards discussed the importance of enforcing the village constitutions for all households, including that all households are required to have a latrine (in many villages this is not enforced so newer homes built after ODF certification did not always have latrines). Additionally, there was discussion about the importance of monitoring visits by local government officials to encourage sustained behavior change. Sanitation Action Group members supported the finding that once the Chivi project ended and ODF was achieved they did not continue with promotion and follow-ups. Toilets were destroyed by the rains and COVID-19 has affected livelihoods and hampered the prioritization of reconstructing latrines. Some prefer OD because of poor conditions of latrines.

Many Water Point Committees are not reporting their malfunctioning boreholes through official channels with the local WASH offices. This is often because they are unsure of the correct process. Water Point Committees (WPCs) are not consistently collecting water for repair and maintenance funds, and most WPCs need more training so there is quality communication and reliable follow-up. In many wards there was a suggestion that pump mechanics receive toolboxes to assist them in completing repairs.

Discussion groups defined the following doable actions and responsible actors:

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE
Reinforce village constitutions to require latrines for every home	Village Heads
Follow-up with households on latrine construction and penalizing households that do not adhere to requirements	Village Heads, Sanitation Action Group Members, and Villiage Health Volunteers
Rebuild latrines after rains: prioritize rebuilding as is done with other community and household structures	Community Members
Encourage households to build latrines with seats for older populations	Village Health Volunteers
Regular payment by all households for water point maintenance	Community Members and Village Heads
Sharing regular updates with the district WASH office on borehole functionality status and requests for rehabilitation	Water Point Committee
Using ash when soap is not available for handwashing	Community Members

There were several other items discussed – though they are not mentioned here because no clear responsible party was identified to carry forth actions. For example, there was a frequent suggestion to revive Village Savings and Loans groups which helped families save or borrow money for purchasing cement to build and repair latrines.

Overall, the dissemination exercise and discussion of the ex-post evaluation results was appreciated by all in attendance, and was considered important in identifying next steps and key actors for strengthening WASH services. Feedback gathered through dissemination meetings helped communities and local government identify gaps and ways to sustain gains, and helped CARE to identify which groups and activities had been sustained post-project, and inform future program design.

Bangladesh: Progress in Scaling-up WASH Innovations in Remote Locations

CONTEXT, APPROACH AND IMPACT

CARE’s SHOUHARDO III program operates in the Chars and Haors of Northern Bangladesh, and addresses food insecurity and poverty through integrated nutrition, livelihoods, disaster preparedness, WASH, and gender empowerment in poor and ultra-poor rural communities. The Chars and Haors are remote, low-lying areas and islands that are in a constant state of formation and erosion—highly vulnerable to



recurrent flooding, climatic shocks, climate change, and other hazards. Ensuring safe sanitation and disposal in these seasonally flooded and vulnerable areas is a unique challenge, as traditional and affordable pit latrines are untenable. SHOUHARDO III aims to improve WASH infrastructure and services in poor and extreme poor communities, and through a partnership with iDE that was forged in 2018, they jointly tackle water supply and governance, water quality surveillance and remediation, and demand and supply-side interventions for sanitation and hygiene. The sanitation strategy, co-developed by CARE, iDE, USAID Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance, and Pro-WASH, reflected the unique challenges of working in the Chars and Haors. The team applied a sequence of human-centered design (HCD) and exploratory, field research to develop, pilot, and ultimately scale a market-based approach to sanitation and hygiene. The team is focused on converting traditional, direct delivery channels into equitable and self-sustaining market approaches that work to strengthen existing systems and entrepreneurial capacities. To date, after 12 months of active sales, 16,971 latrines have been sold, helping more than 68,000 Bangladeshi residents of the Chars and Hoars gain access to improved sanitation, and strengthening livelihoods for 72 local sanitation providers, and 84 sales agents. Of the 84 sales agents currently active, 57 of them are women. More than 750 households accessed financial services for improved sanitation, and 900 households received smart subsidies.

The SHOUHARDO III team won our Innovation in Sanitation Award in 2021 for their groundbreaking work on human-centered design and market-based sanitation (MBS) in last mile contexts. Below we feature an interview with the CARE Bangladesh and iDE team, including Masud Rana (iDE), Riazur Rahman (CARE), and Zinat Afroze (CARE), and Marc Nosbach (CARE)—who have been part of the team supporting SHOUHARDO and other sanitation efforts in Bangladesh.

INTERVIEW: CARE BANGLADESH AND IDE SANITATION TEAMS

[Interview notes have been compiled and edited for brevity]

At the start of SHOUHARDO in 2015, what was the state of sanitation products and services available in the Chars and Haors? Why do you think progress on sanitation was still a challenge?

- **Significant, but uneven progress:** Bangladesh has achieved substantial gains in sanitation access over the last 20 years, and by 2015, only 1% of the population was practicing open defecation. Despite these achievements, some areas—like the Chars and Haors—remain stubbornly hard to reach, due to factors like remoteness, affordability, and low awareness. This is compounded by the impacts of recurring flooding in the Chars and Haors and the absence of ‘flood resilient’ sanitation solutions for the context.
- **These conditions, combined with the high levels of poverty, also contributed to challenging sanitation, market and supply conditions:** (1) latrines were largely unimproved—lacking in hygienic water seals, improved features like flooring or roofing, and often discharging into the surrounding water bodies; (2) households deprioritized latrine investments; (3) the market ecosystem was fragmented and fragile, with very weak linkages between retailers, sanitation entrepreneurs, and consumers; and (4) the sanitation market was poorly integrated and inefficient, which also drove up the price of products.

What were some of the main challenges when trying to change mindsets and to shift programmatic approaches toward market-based solutions for sanitation?

- **On the demand side,** there were challenges with households and communities deprioritizing latrine investments because of: (1) poverty and purchasing power—it was a challenge to sell to the large fraction of households who fall into the ‘poor’ and ‘ultra poor’ wealth categories, and who often need to prioritize other basics like food and water; (2) an expectation of subsidies and donor/government support for WASH services suppressed demand; and (3) the cyclic nature of disaster and rebuilding on the Chars and Haors increases maintenance costs and complexity.
- **On the supply side,** there was a need to (1) identify latrine producers who have entrepreneurial skills and are motivated to produce quality products for consumers; (2) to think carefully about incentive structures and methods to support the latrine producers to expand their business and to adapt to the needs of clients; and (3) to integrate promotional ‘nudges’ into the product line that spurred additional demand.
- **On the partner side,** there were initial challenges recruiting project staff at the union level of the Chars who were willing to work in the remote Char context and who were familiar with market systems. To counter this, iDE used a ‘mixed team’ approach to onboarding and training that blended new and existing staff to help facilitate transfer of market systems knowledge and terminology.

This is a new partnership for CARE and iDE—can you give an example of one thing you have each learned from one another and will take away into future programming?

- **CARE:** SHOUHARDO III has learned and adapted to reflect the importance of both demand and supply side approaches to rapidly develop and scale a ‘last mile’ approach to MBS in

Bangladesh. In addition, we have deepened our understanding of the need for a supportive enabling environment to ensure the sustainability of service provider models—like developing a smart subsidy model and expanding our advocacy with local authorities to ensure that WASH services are accessible to the poor and ultra poor.

- **IDE:** Reflecting on prior experiences with other donors or primes, CARE’s strong understanding of the field context and their willingness to adapt and pivot approaches contributed to a spirit of mutual trust and learning, and was critical to achieving these results. This offered a level of flexibility that was critical to quickly adapting and pivoting the MBS approaches, in response to both the challenging field conditions and to COVID-19 lockdowns—we were able to quickly shift and use approaches like mobile campaigns, Youth Ambassadors, and peer-to-peer sessions.
- **Both CARE and IDE:** Our collective work has also demonstrated the importance of a multi-sectoral, livelihoods-focused program that increases household incomes and purchasing power as a precursor to MBS approaches. IDE had previously piloted MBS in the Chars, but encountered challenges with affordability and purchasing power of the sanitation products. In 2019 though, CARE’s prior livelihoods and demand creation activities had helped to prime the environment for MBS—where households understood the importance of sanitation and were able to afford the products and services being marketed.

What is something you are most proud of from the SHOUHARDO and sanitation approach and results?

- Our **first ‘win’** was the strengthening of the nascent market ecosystem in the Chars and Haors—we have recruited and trained 70+ latrine producers, who in turn have recruited 85 sales agents, 60 of whom are women. And after only 10 months of active field sales, they have achieved dramatic sanitation results—selling more than 12,000 latrines to date, and results are expected to continue through and after project close-out in September 2022.
- Our **second ‘win’** was the positive results we observed through piloting of behavioral ‘nudges’ into our products, like painting slabs yellow and adding ridges to the footrests that increase visibility and remind users to wear shoes.
- And finally, our **third ‘win’** was to successfully adapt approaches to ensure that community-level efforts could continue in the face of COVID-19 and lockdowns—we started working through Youth Ambassadors in lieu of schools, billboard campaigns in lieu of face-to-face social and behavior change activities, and peer-to-peer counseling with students in lieu of school WASH groups.

How can (or should) large organizations think more thoughtfully about markets- and finance-centered approaches to development?

- **Contextualize the approach for poor and ultra-poor populations:** We need to avoid blanket approaches and provide space and time to deeply understand the ‘whys’ and ‘hows’, like human centered design approaches. These up front investments result in targeted interventions that have a higher probability of success, better outcomes, and more cost effective development.
- **Linking entrepreneurs to the right types of support:** It’s important to identify and support those

with an entrepreneurial spirit with the right types of support and capacity building—like linking them to the private sector and helping them to access financial loans to jump-start their business. The energy and willingness-to-learn in many youth have shown that they are a promising audience for this type of approach.

- **Balancing ‘public good’ and ‘private good’:** It’s important to test the myth that market-based approaches conflict with public goods or services. When designed purposefully, they are not mutually exclusive. We often see that blanket or quick subsidies lead to market distortions and undermines nascent markets that already exist. Organizations like CARE and iDE have demonstrated that there is a better way to incentivize private sector engagement in development, while ensuring that we leave no one behind.
- **Expanding financial access and inclusion approaches:** Addressing the supply side of WASH access also means addressing access to finance and growth capital for service providers, entrepreneurs, and all those working to build out a financially viable model. The recent growth of social impact investments and blended finance approaches present a range of opportunities and approaches that deserve to be explored.

“It’s important to test the myth that market-based approaches conflict with public goods or services. When designed purposefully, they are not mutually exclusive.”

About the program: CARE’s SHOUHARDO III program, in collaboration with iDE, implemented the Scaling-up WASH Innovations in Remote Locations (SWIRL) project from April 2020 to March 2022 in the char and haor regions of northern Bangladesh. The project made low-cost sanitation products available to the community and mobilized the community to come out of the existing practice of open defecation with subsidized, low-cost improved latrines.

Ecuador & Ghana: Promoting Equitable Payment Models for Water Resources Protection

For decades, anticipated and ongoing ecological crises from climate change to global pandemics have made the necessity of environmental conservation clear. Since the early 2000s, Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) has been one of the leading policy mechanisms for market-driven natural resource management, conservation, climate adaptation, and poverty alleviation. PES models for the purpose of watershed protection are the most common, comprising roughly 68% of PES investments to date.¹ While the concept behind PES is simple - that those who provide environmental services² (e.g. watershed protection, soil conservation, or carbon capture) should be compensated by those who benefit - its implementation in practice is often complex, highly varied based on context, and fraught with challenges. One PES example is that water utilities might fund the adoption of conservation agriculture practices by small-scale farmers working upstream to improve water quality for downstream

communities.

In 2019, CARE concluded research into the potential for PES schemes to address barriers to small-scale farmers in adopting Water-Smart Agriculture (WaSA) practices, particularly its high upfront labor and capital costs. This research revealed that previous PES mechanisms have often been criticized for failing to address the needs of small-scale farmers and the barriers they experience to participate in such mechanisms. In addition, PES models tend to be top-down, as their governance structures often favor the interests of the ‘buyers’ of ecosystem services (private, public, and nonprofit actors who finance conservation outcomes) who typically have more resources and influence compared to the ‘sellers’ (e.g. small-scale farmers who do the work of conservation). CARE has sought to address these inequities in PES models, while applying some of the benefits of PES, such as the scaling and sustainable funding of watershed protection and the establishment of political and financial mechanisms for Integrated Water Resources Management. Below, we share two examples of how CARE has worked to test and adapt equitable PES and PES-related models for watershed protection at different scales and in varying landscapes.

WATER FUNDS IN ECUADOR

Since 2016, CARE and the decentralized autonomous governments (GAD) of Pedro Moncayo, Ecuador have operated a water fund as part of the broader ACCRE (Climate Change Adaptation of Andean Populations) initiative to protect the region’s páramos, a unique highland ecosystem and source of drinking water for domestic and productive use threatened by soil damage from unsustainable agricultural techniques. The Pedro Moncayo Water Fund was created as a multi-stakeholder platform to finance sustainable agricultural practices in the water-supplying páramos. The financing for the Water Fund comes from 5% contribution of companies that operate in the area and from monthly collection fees taken by the local water utility, which are then managed by the GAD of Pedro Moncayo Board of Directors, which includes representatives from the community, the GAD, and the water utility. To ensure buy-in from all parties, particularly women and small-scale farmers, the Pedro Moncayo Water Fund was designed through a participatory process between local governments and public sector agencies, agricultural producers, community organizations, CARE Ecuador, and other local stakeholders. The participation of female-led households and entrepreneurs was also critical to the development of this financial mechanism in order to ensure the long-term economic and social autonomy of women agricultural producers.

CARE Ecuador’s participation as a process facilitator was instrumental in enabling the participatory process behind the design and implementation of the Water Fund, which contributed to stronger political advocacy for water resource management and climate resilience, stronger participation of women and small-scale farmers, and development of a financially viable model for conservation activities. Some of the techniques financed through the Water Fund for restoring the páramos included agroforestry, silvopastoral and related forestry systems, which were chosen following an environmental assessment of sustainable agriculture, climate change, and community-based risks in the area. Disaster risk reduction was also a program priority as climate emergency plans were developed along with community brigades and early warning systems. CARE Ecuador and partners are currently seeking to scale the Water Fund into new communities, as a result of its success in:

- Protecting water recharge zones in the páramos by sustainably financing restorative and

- income-generating agriculture for small-scale farmers;
- Strengthening the capacities of local government for integrated water resources management;
- Creating a platform for women to learn agricultural techniques and advocate for their needs.

Impact of the Pedro Moncayo Water Fund

Due to the adoption of these techniques and other policies that support the conservation, restoration, monitoring, and adequacy of local water recharge areas:

- 137 hectares have been reforested as ‘connectivity corridors’ between agricultural plots and páramos-based water sources, to protect the páramos from runoff and soil degradation due to agricultural activity.
- A Conservation and Sustainable Use Area has been established, which protects 6,000 hectares between grassland moors and remnants of high mountain forests. This government-protected area is the water recharge zone for the 35,000 people living in the Pedro Moncayo canton.
- 200 families situated within the páramos have reduced vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and water scarcity on their livelihoods.

CONSERVATION AGRICULTURE FUNDS IN GHANA

While CARE’s research revealed that PES schemes are often flawed in ensuring equity and inclusion, we concluded that CARE’s Village Savings Loans Associations (VSLA) model could offer a potential mechanism to extend financial incentives to farmers committed to adopting WaSA practices, and help de-risk their adoption of practices that have public benefit. Such a model must ensure:

- Benefits outweigh costs for participants
- Community buy-in and participation among marginalized communities
- Interdependency between all resource users
- Accountability mechanisms are created
- Sustained funding

In response to these findings, CARE leveraged funding from the Shockwave Foundation in early 2021 to pilot conservation agriculture funds for 10 VSLAs in three communities in the Garu and Tempene districts of northern Ghana and incentivize farmers to sustain the adoption of WaSA techniques previously learned through the Water and Development Alliance She’s Smart Program. The beneficiaries of the conservation fund were mostly women, as VSLA membership is primarily comprised of women: 201 female and 49 male participants. While this pilot is not strictly a PES model because there is no local ‘buyer’ of the WaSA practices, the conservation fund was selected because it could fulfill the criteria for sustained funding and community control and buy-in because of the VSLA structure. Overall, this pilot sought to understand: 1) the operational feasibility of using VSLAs to administer economic incentives for long-term adoption of WaSA practices; 2) the sustained adoption of WaSA in VSLAs with the conservation fund compared to counterfactual VSLAs; and 3) the impacts on women’s empowerment.

Fund Structure and Impact

The conservation fund is separate from the main VSLA fund (e.g. routine member contributions), and is

loaned to members of the participating VSLAs specifically for expenses related to the adoption of conservation agriculture practices with an interest rate of 10% - the same as the main VSLA fund - payable within a specific period after harvest. This allows participating VSLA members to use the sale of their harvest, likely larger than usual, as WaSA practices increase yields, to replenish the fund for the following year. While the constitutions of the piloting VSLAs were changed to accommodate, regulate, and ensure orderly use of the conservation fund, the operations of the VSLAs have otherwise been kept as they were originally designed.

Roughly six months into the conservation fund pilot, surveys with the VSLA members were conducted to understand how members were using the fund and if it successfully addressed their barriers to adopting WaSA practices. This assessment found that:

- VSLA members use conservation funds to purchase labor and inputs to adopt WaSA practices such as intercropping and compost
- Primary motivation for VSLA members is increased yields and improved soil health
- Fund increased adoption of WaSA practices
- Perceived value of conservation funds is that they provide funding that wasn't available through main VSLA fund, and support secondary priorities
- Revolving fund administered by VSLAs appears to be a potentially self-sustaining mechanism

A follow-up survey will be conducted in April 2022 after harvest to assess whether the increased incomes from the WaSA practices were sufficient to pay back loans and sustain the conservation fund.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Though both models are still in development, they provide useful insights and evidence for how CARE can adapt inclusive PES models for watershed protection, and what challenges and barriers need to be addressed to increase impact and scale. For PES models such as the water fund which operate at a larger scale, CARE can play an instrumental role as a process facilitator to bring in local government, utilities, civil society organizations, and communities in a participatory process while ensuring communities have the agency and voice necessary to advocate for their priorities and interests. CARE's existing programming, models, and relationships with communities was instrumental for success, particularly in Ghana where the conservation fund was effective because the VSLAs had been in operation for years and had received previous training on WaSA. For future PES models, CARE and partners need to:

- Assist in clarifying land tenure to ensure small-scale farmers have access to their land;
- Monitor environmental impacts and sustained adoption of conservation practices;
- Address barriers for female small-scale farmers to participate in and benefit from PES schemes;
- Strengthen institutional capacities for integrated water resources management and advocate for an enabling policy environment to effectively scale PES schemes.



CARE Water+

CARE USA HQ
151 Ellis Street NE
Atlanta, GA 30303

For more information, visit: <https://www.care.org/our-work/food-and-nutrition/water/>

Founded in 1945 with the creation of the CARE Package®, CARE is a leading humanitarian organization fighting global poverty. CARE places special focus on working alongside women and girls. Equipped with the proper resources, women and girls have the power to lift whole families and entire communities out of poverty. In 2021, CARE worked in over 100 countries, reaching 100 million people through nearly 1,500 projects. To learn more, visit www.care.org.