



Left: Hand washing with soap and clean water at a WASHaLOT 3.0 station installed outside a church in Aduku.

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PROMOTING WASH THROUGH RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

Sanitation for Millions Uganda Programme has moved to innovatively work with religious institutions and their leaders, whose positions and stand in the communities they serve give them better latitude to advocate for improved WASH and to raise community awareness about the benefits of good sanitation practices.

In the Akere division in Apac, an interesting partnership and integrated model that today actively promotes both the spiritual and social well-being of people has taken off. This model has brought together and helped to build synergies among religious leaders, Government officials, and opinion and community leaders, as they work together with and within the communities to advance WASH and sanitation efforts. The work involves community sensitization on hygiene and sanitation, physical monitoring to ensure progress, and undertaking of improved livelihoods activities that are linked to agriculture, health, water and community empowerment and development. *“These complementary functions are critical and, in many ways, help to nourish the spiritual wellbeing of the faithful people in our communities”,* says Rev. Fr George

Humble Opio, the Parish Priest of Christ the Redeemer Catholic Parish in Apac.

However, beyond the built partnerships, Fr. George equally gives credit to the unique programme model that uses an all-inclusive WASH design and whose innovative approach he says, *“has boosted our outlook within our community and helped attract the interests of other stakeholders in Apac. A partner, who hires our workshop facilities frequently (Florence Nightingale Nursing School), has consulted us on what it would take for them to replicate the exact model within their school. This is because they find our new inclusive WASH facilities at the Parish very effective in terms of the systems support of hygiene standards and effective sanitation measures, yet during usage, the facility design helps to instil the knowledge and discipline of sanitation and better hygiene among the users”.*

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Fr. George's counterpart, Sheik Juma, the Imam of Akbar Mosque in Apac, adds to the conversation and brings in the element of how this partnership dynamic helps to sensitize and bring the faithful on board to play their role in ensuring that these WASH investments are effectively sustained with their support and involvement. *"Our new facilities became operational 4 months ago and since then we have seen excitement among the people when they come for prayers. Our congregation is very excited to have these new WASH facilities that cater to everyone including people with disabilities. This was never seen before and the people are really happy about it. The role that we have now is to remind the faithful that we need to keep these facilities functional. So every Friday during Juma prayers which is the high pick of attendees, the faith community is asked to contribute maintenance fees which they willingly put forward. All men pay 2000/= and women to pay 1000/=,"* he adds. He goes ahead to confirm that with these financial contributions, supporting the operations and maintenance costs of the WASH facilities, becomes easy. *"Currently, we have a budget surplus of 300,000/= and the sanitation committee will agree on how to spend the budget towards upkeep and maintenance of our facilities. When all this is done, the full expenditure will be presented to the people during Juma prayers so that they know how their funds have been utilised."*

In Apac, 3 religious centres of Christ the Redeemer Catholic parish, St. Thomas Church of Uganda and Arkbar Mosque have successfully demonstrated how religious leaders can become multipliers for good hygiene practices and behavioural change in communities, through modelling their institutions to promote good sanitation and hygiene practices, reaching about 2,440 believers (760 from catholic parish, 1080 from COU and 600 from the Mosque).

Back in Kampala, similar milestones have been reached through the targeted model and heavily active religious institutions. A visit to Nsambya Catholic Sharing Hall in Kampala, a people and community place that doubles as a church on Sundays and animation, recreation/education and reception centre during the weekdays, can only be described as a beehive of activities, attracting massive numbers. The centre established by Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) in 1977, under the Roman Catholic Church, to date, remains an all-inclusive, all-embracing commune point that welcomes people from all walks of life. Rev Fr. Hillary Guinko, the Care Taker of the centre, says that *"apart from Sundays when we have church mass that brings together over 1,000 worshipers, during the week, the centre runs several activities that include a vocational school with over 2,000 trainees (80% of whom are girls), youth sports, field and recreations activities, cooperate workshops, conferences and social events like wedding receptions"*. These huge numbers of people, he further explains, *"are now proud beneficiaries of our modern all-inclusive WASH facilities that cater to all their needs, including the hundreds of youth boda-boda riders and the police force, our next-door neighbours, who make use of our bathing units when they retire from their daily duties at the end of each day"*.

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Left: Sheikh Galiwango Ahmed and other mosque committee members prepare for a WASH awareness session at Makindye mosque.

Photo © Gladys Nantume - GIZ Sanitation for Millions



However, as Sheikh Galiwango Ahmed Houd, the leader at Makindye Mosque notes, *“Our WASH facilities at the mosque, during Friday Juma prayers (attracting over 1,000 worshippers) and the holy month of Ramadhan (1300 worshippers), are subjected to constant and heavy use by our faithful, many of whom are first visitors and tend to waste a lot of water (for Wudhu cleansing). This for starters pushes our water costs very high and then the process of adapting to the use of the new WASHaLOTS also results in breakage which creates the need for constant repairs. It means that to keep the facilities running and well maintain, we have to repair the breakages and fix them”* and this is readily done by the Hausmeisters trained on basic and advanced plumbing skills through this programme, he says.

Challenges regarding sanitation financing uptake to cause change within communities

Steven Birungi, an Advisor for WASH at Caritas Uganda, notes that beyond the faith-based institution’s financial needs to effectively maintain WASH, the ambition to promote improved WASH at community and household levels, which is the primary objective of the faith-based institution’s advocacy for their believers, has also been hit by inadequate community financing solutions and products that are appropriate to the people in terms of affordability and uptake.

‘Because of the current economic downturn, even with the successful community WASH sensitizations carried out by religious leaders, many households in communities cannot afford the financial packages that commercial banks have put forward, as a solution to bank role their home-based sanitation investments. In other words, communities don’t have the financial backing to qualify for access to bank finances. Unfortunately the next best solution of local community Village Savings Schemes and SACCOs, have limited funds which cannot provide backing for the many people in need of sanitation loans. Steven is optimistic in noting that *“if efforts focus on financial strengthening of grassroots savings and loans agencies this would be a game changer and would help activate all the readily available ‘sanitation values chains’ within Apac cluster of towns, whose sanitation market is ripe and ready for takeoff”*, he concludes.

“A church, mosque, synagogue or any other place of worship, plays a community pivotal role because this is where our people come and gather together to pray to their God, and commune by staying together and spending extra moments, after prayers.

Fr. George equally gives credit to the unique programme model that uses an all-inclusive WASH design and whose innovative approach he says, ‘has boosted our outlook within our community and helped attract the interests of other stakeholders in Apac.



Above: The Vicars and congregants of a Kampala church participate in a sanitation campaign during the Uganda Sanitation Week 2022.

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Right: Worshippers at a mosque in Apac using an ablution station designed and constructed by Sanitation for Millions.

Photo © John Bosco Oryema - GIZ Sanitation for Millions



Right: An inter-religious capacity building workshop on World Water Day 2022.

Photo © Vanessa Mugide - GIZ Sanitation for Millions

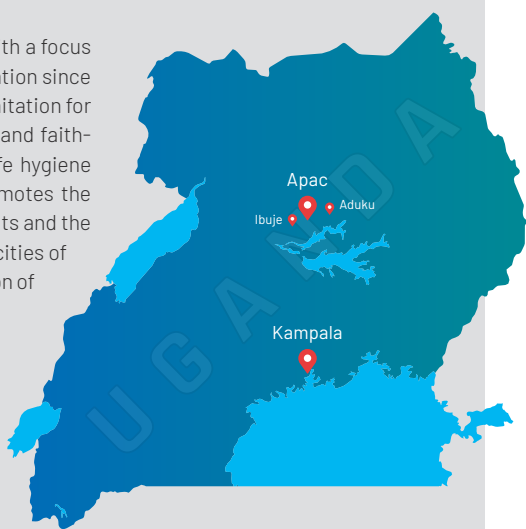
This community spirit of togetherness among the faithful in my experience requires the support of adequate WASH infrastructure that gives them a sense of comfort to seat and spend those few extra minutes together. Knowing that if nature calls or if I have a need to freshen up, or water, toilets, a mirror, a hand wash basin and soap and that these are available in a community is reassuring. For this, I say, thank you to Caritas and to Sanitation for Millions and all the other supporters, for making sanitation in Apac among the faithful a reality to support spiritual nurturing” says Rev. Fr George Humble Opio in Apac.

In looking at the future, partners like Caritas HEWASA will continue to play a catalytic role that so far has helped to provide the needed WASH capacity building that within this framework brings together Local Government leadership, selected model faith and religious institutions as well as the private sector to improve the entire sanitation and FSM chain.

Background

Sanitation for Millions is a global programme improving access to safe sanitation and hygiene with a focus on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. In Uganda, the programme has been under implementation since 2016 in Kampala City and the northern Uganda towns of Apac, Aduku and Ibuje (Apac Cluster). Sanitation for Millions builds female-friendly and inclusive sanitary facilities at schools, healthcare facilities and faith-based institutions, trains local professionals to operate and maintain them, and promotes safe hygiene practices through targeted campaigns and knowledge transfer. Furthermore, the project promotes the treatment and reuse of sanitary wastewater and faecal sludge through the elaboration of concepts and the construction of appropriate facilities. Sanitation for Millions strengthens the management capacities of institutional partners and municipal administrations in direct cooperation. To ensure the operation of the facilities in the long term, financing mechanisms are developed jointly with the local partner.

Sanitation for Millions was commissioned by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development in 2016. With the BMZ as the lead donor, Sanitation for Millions has received additional funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Water Unite, the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Inter-American Development Bank, and share GmbH. The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH executes the global programme in close cooperation with local partners in Colombia, Jordan, Pakistan, and Uganda.



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