



**Thames**  **Malawi**

Improving water  
supply,  
sanitation  
and hygiene  
in small  
towns



## Inside

Renewable energy  
ensuring sustainable  
water supply

Water tank improves water  
supply in Kampingo village

Effective solid waste management  
at mponela market

Intergrating savings and loans village  
groups to improve sanitation and hygiene

# Newsletter

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Transforming lives in the warm heart of Africa



The new solar panels in Mponela - Central Region Water Board pump station

## Renewable energy ensuring sustainable water supply

Sustainable water supply has been made possible in Mponela with the installation of K42m worth of solar panels. The panels provide a back up power to hydro-electricity in pumping water for the small town. WaterAid under the Increased and Improved WASH in Small Towns Project with funding from Thames Water in the UK, provided the resources to Central Region Water Board (CRWB).

One set of panel is connected to the submersible pump and the other set to the surface pump to ensure that in absence of hydro-power people still have access to water. On a sunny day, the solar system pumps 1.6l of water per second to a supply tank that is 1.5km away from the CRWB pumping station. The system has been operational since April 2017.

John Makwenda, Director of Technical Services at CRWB said there are already tangible and visible benefits derived from the system. He said Mponela has erratic hydro power supply and in such moments the solar system provides alternative power ensuring continuous water supply.

“He said: “Hospitals and other key strategic institutions are assured of continuous water supply even during hydro-power outages. The idea here is that we will draw some data and lessons from this and from there we should be

able to comfortably scale up to other pumps. We have seen the improvements in Mponela and we believe this is the way to go,” said Makwenda.

Adding to this, CRWB Director of Finance and Administration Ernest Mtawali said, with the renewable energy system, CRWB is saving 4kw per hour translating to K300 saved in the same time. This will lead to sustained revenue base with a possibility of supply coverage increase.



Over a period, the savings will allow the board to scale up to other areas that need similar support.

“I just want to say that Thames Water came at the right time. The relationship has benefited us in terms of fulfilling the plans that we have had to improve safe water supply and looking at the investments that they have done they are really substantial and will lead to sustainable water supply. There are so many prospects in the future from this relationship and we are looking forward to learning a lot from Thames Water,” said Mtawali.

Commenting on the same, WaterAid Malawi

Country Director Mercy Masoo said the project has demonstrated that it is possible to have continuous water supply with alternative energy. With a country like Malawi, stressed in terms of energy, solar power system will go a long way in ensuring that everyone everywhere has water all the time.

“Malawi has a lot of sun. We have been struggling with hydro-power and here is a solution as demonstrated by this project with support from Thames Water. Our problems in this area are not going away soon so solar energy is the way to go. This is something that we will be profiling because we have seen that it works.”

## Water tank improves water access in Kampingo



Kampingo women drawing water

They say the past is a foreign country as they do things differently there. The same sentiment echoes in Kampingo Village where water woes are but a footnote in history thanks to the Thames Water support through WaterAid and Mineral and Appropriate Technology Applicable in Malawi (MATAMA) partnership.

Kampingo Village is smart, well taken care of. The village’s water point is located in the middle of the many houses and near a local market which makes it a very important place in the provision of potable water.

The community used to get their water from a distant dam which is not protected and most animals in the area get their water there too. It is because of this that a lot of diarrheal related diseases were reported. Today, such cases are a distant memory thanks to Thames Water intervention.

Ellen Bwani, 44, said that in the past, due to the long distance in trying to fetch water, she used to get chest pains as she carried the biggest bucket in order to reduce the number of trips to and from the old unprotected water source.

“As of now, my chest pain is a thing of the past. My health has drastically improved as I am able to draw safe water from the kiosk which is close. I praise God for the support and goodwill,” added Bwani.

Likewise, Martha Banda who is a wife to the chief in Kapingo Village testified that in the past there used to be a lot of diarrhea cases and water disputes in her village. Ever since the community benefited from the Thames Water funded project, there is a sense of peace in the village and it is now rare to hear of any diarrhea and other water related disease cases in her community.

Violet Zulanga, 40 years old is the water seller and manages the kiosk on a daily basis. She explains that when the onsite overhead tank is full, her entire community has access to water for at least 48 hours without getting fresh water supply from Central Region Water Board (CRWB). With the board continuously facing power outages that interrupt water supply, the people of Kapingo are indeed lucky.

Mussa Chimtsimbo who is the Scheme Manager for CRWB in Kasungu agreed with Zulanga that having a water tank in Kapingo and other areas helps such communities have constant flow of water as the board is currently facing constant water pumping hiccups due to sporadic power outage.

In addition, Chimtsimbo said that the intervention has drastically helped in changing people's livelihoods.

"Since we've had Thames Water funded project, we have seen an increase in the construction of water kiosks in several communities with others having water tanks that act as reservoirs. These tanks ensure the constant supply of water in such communities. Among others, we have constructed a 700m Kasalika manda development line, a 1.2km Katema development line, a 1.5km Moffat line which will benefit more than 1,500 people in these communities alone," added Chimtsimbo.

He further said that as of now, Kasungu has 95 water kiosks which are ably being managed by Kasungu Water Users Association (WUA).

# Solid waste removal at Mponela market



WaterAid and OWI staff visiting the market

Donald Majiga has been selling bananas at Mponela market for three years. Despite this being the case, Majiga's income always fell short. This is because, in recent years, he has not been selling enough. The profits have not been adequate to feed and care for his wife and nine children. Majiga believes this is because of the waste that was there close to his bench despite paying K100 market fee to the council every day.

"I got into the banana business because I know that it is profitable. I had seen friends live better lives from selling bananas.

On this bench alone there are about 6 people who sell the bananas. We can't be damn. There is something we saw in this business. However, over the years business became slower and I noticed it was because of the huge pile of the waste that used to be here. It became unbearable for customers to follow us to this end of the market. Some would brave the smell but most chose to buy elsewhere. I could not change places because everyone is allocated a place by the market committee and the market is already full as it is" said Majiga.

"First timers to the market would always question our state of mind selling food close to a pile of waste. The smell of rotting things combined with urine was just too much. To our luck, one day we just saw a truck with the team from OWI

coming to collect the rubbish. Business is picking and I am sure that very soon things will return to normal. We are very grateful to OWI and the council for cleaning this place up. We had fears of cholera but now we know we are safe," said Majiga.

To get rid of the waste, Our World International (OWI) partnered with the city council with support from WaterAid.

The exercise lasted for about a week and that things have improved at the market where people are now breathing some fresh air.



Pile of waste that was producing bad odour and was a breeding ground for microbes



After a clean-up exercise, the waste was removed and more free space was created



Majiga selling bananas

## Integrating village savings and loans in sanitation and hygiene promotion



Getting urban communities into action on improved sanitation and hygiene is not just an overnight achievement. A host of challenges and questions often have to be answered to stir people into action. When MATAMA triggered Kasungu urban settlements on sanitation and hygiene, interest was generated but two questions kept on coming from communities: In these challenging times and with competing priorities how do we finance investments in sanitation? Most of us are staying in rented houses; how do we invest in improved sanitation and hygiene when the houses are not ours?

In order to make significant progress on these questions, MATAMA reflected with its partners and hatched the idea of incorporating village saving and loan initiative (VSL). In collaboration with the District Community Development Office, citizens and local leaders the VSL initiative was embraced. The communities and three existing saving groups were approached on integrating WASH in their activities.

While the primary purpose of the VSL groups was to improve livelihoods of members, the groups

agreed to embrace sanitation and hygiene as a key component and they set up a special fund to finance sanitation. The incorporation of the VSL groups has not only helped to solve the financing issue, but has also, challenged landlords. Initially, individual tenants had challenges in engaging landlords, but with the formation of VSL groups, their voice has been strengthened.

The VSL groups have held meetings with the landlords and an agreement was reached allowing members of groups to improve household sanitation on an understanding that the landlords would pay back the money invested or stay in the house without paying rent for an agreed number of months to offset the expenses.

By October 2016, 16 latrines had been constructed, 2 were under construction and the VSL groups had accumulated MK35, 000 in their sanitation and hygiene fund. In total, the three groups have 60 members. The group members have also been reached with sanitation and hygiene messages by Health Surveillance Assistants through health education sessions in their areas.



## Reviving WASH clubs in Mponela

Kachulu Primary School WASH Club has been inactive for a long time. This is because students were discouraged after the selection criteria of winners in a WASH competition was not clear. Considering the benefits that come with being members of the Club, Our World International paid the school a visit to rejuvenate the club.

Through a quiz and WASH related song, dance and games OWI was able to get the club back on its feet. To make it more exciting the members of the club have been taught how to make various items from solid waste and re-usable pads from pieces of cloth.

According to Mary Ulaya the head teacher at the school, this has not only revived the club but improved the attendance rate especially among adolescent girls. In return, this has motivated the school to make one of the teacher toilets a designated menstrual hygiene management (MHM) facility.

Ulaya said: “We do not have a toilet with MHM facilities but we have some materials in the head teacher’s office which we give to girls who are on their periods. This has helped a lot as more girls are now coming to school and the WASH club is also vibrant now. The club is very important because we believe that whatever we teach them here they are able to share back home creating a better society. We teach them to wash hands with soap and to always keep clean.”

Ulaya took the opportunity to share some of the challenges being faced by the school including access to water. Ulaya said the school once had a water storage facility which they are hoping to fix in the near future. However, this means that sometimes drinking water and water for handwashing is not always available.

## Ecosan latrine brings peace of mind to Nkhoma Family



The Nkhoma family is now living in peace after constructing an ecosan latrine. The family had for decades been constructing traditional latrines which had substandard structures and could easily collapse.

The quality of the structures made it difficult to practice good hygiene as they were not easy to clean. The frequent construction of the toilets made life challenging for the family as Nkhoma and his wife, who is visually impaired, are elderly and stay with their young grandchildren.

“We used to construct a new latrine every year. You can imagine how hard that was for me,” with a deep sigh explained Dickson Nkhoma, 86-year-old man.

Nkhoma came across the message on latrines spread by MATAMA under the Increased and Improved WASH in Small Towns Project through its Community Development facilitator.

Currently, the family is very proud because they are using a good latrine.

“Since we started using this latrine, there is no bad smell produced. Our family will be saving a lot of money since it will take a very long time before we have to reconstruct another latrine.

This is a long lasting latrine. We have spent just K6, 000.00 to procure two slabs and there are no more flies. There is so much joy and pride in our family now that we are using this latrine.,” concluded Nkhoma.

## Increased and improved access to water: Bwemba story



It was a team effort to dig the trench

**B**wemba Village is one of the villages in Kasungu Municipal Council where access to safe drinking water was a farfetched dream. Women used to fetch water at a nearby unprotected shallow well which was also infested with frogs and it used to dry up during the dry season. This forced the women walk long distances in search of water.

Those that could not wait walked long distances in search of other shallow wells and streams. If all efforts failed, the women spent nights at the shallow wells hoping to be the first to draw the water at its first drip and on some nights the women would be chased by hyenas and thugs.

Suffering from water related diseases like cholera and diarrhea was part and parcel of their day to day life. Learners too felt the pinch of water scarcity as they would be late for classes every day. Sometimes they would be sent back home. This eventually resulted in school dropouts. They would also go to school on empty stomach which affected their concentration in class.

MATAMA with support from Thames Water and WaterAid started implementing the Increased and Improved Access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Project in April 2016. On the water component the project planned construction of one water kiosk and the identified village was Bwemba.

Before commencement of the project community mobilization meetings were held in the village mainly focusing on site identification, community participation and community monitoring of the



Everyone was happy when water was finally coming in Bwemba

project. A committee was set up for project.

As part of community contribution to the project, Bwemba Community dug a 3.5 km trench. GVH Bwemba has 9 villages and community members from the nine villages took part in trench digging.

Each village was digging 20 metres per day and it took them 4 weeks to complete the trench digging. It was evident that community members were committed as no single day passed without digging. The power of community participation led to the realization of that farfetched dream of accessing safe water in Bwemba Village.

People in Bwemba village would not believe their eyes when water finally gashed out of the kiosk on 19th August, 2016.

Jean Theu, a 30 year old woman who is a water seller in the village had this to say: "The problems we had in this village like waking up during the night waiting for water for a long time and sometimes water not coming out from the well; and drinking unsafe water are now history. We are really grateful for bringing us piped water in the village."

She continued to say that, with the time she has gained, which was previously spent looking for water, she is now able to participate in community development activities like savings and loans group meetings. In addition she is now running a small business which is putting food on her table.

## Question and Answer with Chifuniro Yambani, kiosk project chairlady



Chifuniro Yambani

**MATAMA with financial support from Thames Water through WaterAid constructed a water kiosk in Bwemba Village. The community contributed to the project through excavation of the trench. The kiosk was commissioned on 19 August 2016 and is expected to supply 945 households with potable water.**

### Tell us about yourself?

"I am Chifuniro Yambani and I was born right here in Kasungu at Chimangeni Village am 28 years old. In 2006 I came to Bwemba following my husband. I was elected as a chairlady for this project in a very competitive process.

### How did you get the community organised?

People were divided as some section wanted us to dig the trench while others were against the idea, that was in May. However, due to the influence of the committee and the chiefs, people were convinced that the project will change our lives for the better. All nine villages had a share of 20 metres per day which helped us cover the whole 3.5km distance within a four-week period."

### What did it take for you to complete the trench in time?

"The grace of God made it all possible for us to manage all the work. We worked hard as we reminded ourselves the calamities we faced due to the water problems that we had for quite a long time. It wasn't easy to dig the trench but it was quite worthy for us as we now have been saved from serious water problems."

### What impact will having this kiosk have on your everyday activities?

"The kiosk will help in our livelihood development. There are many areas that will be improved. For instance, previously children would go to school late as they had to wait for water, and some would be sent back home for reporting late for classes. Even farming was a problem as most women would not accompany men to gardens as they had to go fetch water. Also, we used to have a lot of waterborne diseases which were affecting our household as well as personal development. We feel we will experience great change as we now have safe water."

### As chairlady, how will you ensure the kiosk is well taken care of?

"This place will be extremely secured, we jointly worked hard to get this far and everyone knows how important this is to us. Everyone will take guard of the kiosk to make sure that it lasts."

### How do you feel knowing your children will never know the hardships you have faced regards to access to water?

"As a chairlady I am also delighted that newborns and babies to come will lead good and healthy lives. The future for these children looks promising as am sure they will be able to go to school on time. Also, as we have previously lost a lot of children due to various waterborne diseases, we are happy that this will be a thing of a past as we now have potable water free from any microbes."

### What is your message to Thames Water team?

"On behalf of all my colleagues and community members, I am extending my gratitude to Thames for the kind gesture that was extended to us, please reach out to more in need. Thank you



## 70 year old Lucy celebrates water in Moffat village

Lucy, 70 years old, lives in Moffat Village in Kasungu, Malawi. She suffered from an eye infection when she was five years old and became blind.

She farms, cooks and also takes care of her family. Her biggest challenge has been access to water as most scoop holes and wells were not protected. Her fears became a reality when she fell in a well whilst trying to fetch water.

She is happy that clean and potable water is now accessible a few meters away from her home.

“In the past I used to have problems to fetch water from a distant borehole and would have my granddaughter help me walk to the borehole. I knew I was a burden to her as she needed to do other things apart from walking me to the borehole which is very far from here.

I am now able to draw water from the kiosk on my

own and my granddaughter is able to do other things now. Everyone is happy for having a good water source in our village.

I believe I have a healthier life now. I am now ever smart as I bath frequently because water is nearby; Meals are now prepared in good time; I am drinking safe water; My clothes are not dirty as I now wash them; I am walking a very short distance to get water; I am protected from accidents like falling in pits or being hit by bicycles; I can draw water even at night which I could not do before because there are hyenas within,” said Lucy.

Thanks to a Thames Water funded project through WaterAid and its local partners (Mineral and Appropriate Technology Applicable in Malawi and Central Region Water Board), Moffatt village has a new water kiosk now which serves a population of over 350 people in Moffat village alone.





## Transforming lives in the warm heart of Africa



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# WaterAid

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