February 23rd, 2011

Abala Water Project Update

Context:

The Abala Women’s Group is a registered entity under the Department of Social Services. It runs the West Kagan borehole and water distribution system (Abala Water Project). The Abala water project is situated at the base of Abala Hill in West Kagan Location. It borders Giant Kagan Location, which does not have a single river cutting across it. Thus water access is a key concern. Self-identified problems associated with lack of water access include waterborne diseases and long distances that must be travelled to collect water for domestic use. In many cases, women must arrive at a water point before dawn in order to secure water during the dry season – by later in the day, the water will have been used up. Cholera outbreaks in this Location used to be the source of regular newspaper reports.

Project:

The current coordinator of the Abala Women’s Group water project is Mr. Crispin Agutu Oyugi. A member of West Kagan, he used to work for the Department of Fisheries (Government of Kenya). Part of his role was coordinator of a World Bank/Government of Kenya funded micro-project scheme that included water and sanitation. In 2002, the Abala Women’s Group applied to this programme for funding to sink a borehole in the community. Finished in November 2002, the borehole cost ksh 1,000,000 and was drilled to a depth of 45 m. The community contributed ksh 100,000 to the project costs as well as supplying in-kind support.

In 2009, the community was chosen by the Lake Victoria Basin Commission to receive funds to upgrade their water system through the AGFUND / UNU-INWEH project. Funds were used to retrofit the pump to run off solar power, two 10,000L storage tanks and distribution pipes. The total project cost was ksh 1,065,805. The new storage tanks were located on the side of Abala Hill. The water is pumped up into these storage tanks and redistributed under gravitational flow. Two households have paid to pipe the water to their houses. These funds were leveraged to secure an additional 2 storage tanks (5,000L each) and 106 pipes from the Lake Victoria South Water Services Board.

As a result of this upgrade, foot pumping is no longer needed, a key benefit, as many children are raised by grandmothers who had a difficult time using the foot pump. Water taps have been installed at the borehole for improved access and a cattle trough has been built nearby so that women do not have to carry water back to their homes for watering cattle. Approximately 4,000 people use the facility, coming from a radius of 4 km. Since the upgrade, people are starting to travel further distances to collect the water. Prior to the improvements, water was sold at ksh15 per month. Now, the water is sold at ksh 50
per month, regardless of volume. This price was established by the community and has been fixed because so many community members cannot afford to pay more. Those who pipe the water to their houses pay ksh 200 per month in addition to the one-time connection costs.

**Next Steps:**

The community has plans in place for a third phase of the project. This consists of:

1. A large steel water tank (20,000L) which can be placed at the top of Abala Hill to serve the outliers in the community through gravitational flow (cost ksh 1,500,000)
2. Additional cattle troughs
3. Water kiosks (increased revenue from water vendors)
4. Toilets and washrooms
5. Management training for staff
6. Community sensitization on ownership