

Project:	Project Extension - Piloting a New Community Water & Food Programme in Mwingi District
Location:	Mwingi Central District, Kitui County, Kenya
Timeframe:	June 2016 – September 2016
Grant:	£7,686
Agency:	Excellent Development
Implementing Partner:	Africa Sand Dam Foundation (ASDF)

Introduction

Water availability is a serious problem and the prime cause of hunger and poverty in Mwingi District, Kitui County, Kenya. 97% of the population (approximately 436,070 people) depend on subsistence farming or rearing livestock for their livelihoods, making water access crucial for survival. Despite this, only 17% of households in Mwingi have access to safe water. Poverty is extremely high with more than two thirds of families living below the national poverty line; 20% worse than the national average. The need for improved water access is desperate.

In 2015, Jersey Overseas Aid (JOA) kindly supported Excellent Development with a grant for **£93,574** to pilot a community water and food programme in Mwingi District. This 12 month project successfully improved water and food security for three communities, directly benefitting 973 people and indirectly benefitting a further 14,108. Activities included building sand dams, terracing farmland, agro-forestry, diversifying crops, utilising drought-tolerant seed varieties and setting up community managed seeds banks.

The project resulted in a **£7,686** underspend primarily due to cost-saving refinements over the project's duration and because trainings were condensed into a shorter timeframe than originally envisaged. In June 2016, JOA kindly permitted us to utilise these remaining funds to expand the programme by enabling a further sand dam to be built with the Mumo wa Mwambui Self-Help Group (SHG) in Katani Village, Mwingi.

Objectives & Activities

The objective of this project was to improve long-term water access for the Mumo wa Mwambui SHG and their community, enabling them to become self-reliant.

Activities included:

- Designing a dam to Water Resources Management Authority (WRMA) requirements and obtaining the necessary dam permit
- Supporting the SHG to gather local materials (sand, stones and water) to be used in dam construction
- Providing the SHG with the tools, specialised materials (cement, steel, barbed wire and timber), technical expertise and skilled labour to assist them in building their own sand dam and shallow well
- Training the SHG in the hygienic use and storage of water from of their sand dam and shallow well

Mumo wa Mwambui SHG

This project supported the Mumo wa Mwambui SHG community; a total of **1,500** direct beneficiaries (including the **24** SHG members themselves). These people are benefitting from direct access to the sand dam. A further **1,500** people living in the communities where the new sand dam is located are expected to indirectly benefit from improved water access in this area.

ASDF began work in the Mwingi area of Kitui County in 2015 with three SHGs. News of the impact of the dams built by those groups spread to the local ward administrator for the area where Mumo wa Mwambui

SHG is located. The administrator met with ASDF and learned about their methods, processes and ethos. The administrator passed this information on to his local communities. In planning for this financial year, ASDF met with the communities and chose those which were sufficiently motivated – Mumo wa Mwambui was one of the three selected.

Prior to this engagement with ASDF, the group has undertaken significant activity to improve their environment and livelihoods, having initially formed in the 1990s to farm sorghum to sell to beer companies. They have since become recognised by the county as village contractors, even securing small tenders for local construction jobs. This is a particularly impressive achievement in the area’s traditionally patriarchal society as the vast majority of the work is done by women (who make up 20 of the 24 SHG members). The group has also established a relationship with the county government who supported them last year with a small sand dam which was not quite built to ASDF standards, but yielded some water nonetheless. The group was keen to learn from ASDF to improve on their sand dam design and construction capabilities.

Challenges to Implementation

The biggest challenge for this project was the shortage of water available for construction, bringing home the reality of the need for this project in the first place. The nearest water source to the construction site was over 10km away, and without water, cement cannot be mixed to build a sand dam. To address this, the community drew up a rota so that each day, a group member would take on the arduous task of trekking to this water source with 10 donkeys, loading them up with jerry cans full of water and then trekking them back to the dam site. Fortunately, ASDF assisted by mobilising other SHGs to support with the transport of local materials as well as with dam construction, relieving some of the burden on group members.

Despite a lack of traditional SHG culture in the area, motivation was never a challenge for Mumo wa Mwambui SHG and visits to other groups only increased their dedication and enthusiasm for the project.

Achievements

With support from ASDF, Mumo wa Mwambui have now successfully completed their sand dam and shallow well to a high standard. The photos below show the SHG hard at work on construction of their sand dam:



Esther Munanie Musyimi is the Vice-Chair of Mumo wa Mwambui SHG. She explained why the group decided to work together to provide a sand dam for their community:

“We use to plant sorghum and sold it to these company [the Kenya Breweries company]. They bought it at a good price in that our level of incomes were good.”

“As time went by the rate of rainfall went down in our area and thus it became hard for us to produce more sorghum like we use to, we no longer supply the sorghum to them”.

“Less rain in our area has contributed to rivers drying up. This has forced us to walk for more than 5km to get water. We waste a lot of time which has made us to stop terracing our lands - another reason why we cannot produce more sorghum like we used [to].”

“We decided to construct sand dams along our rivers at least to bring water close to our area. We believe once it rains we will have plenty of water and this will mean enough time to terrace our land thus more sorghum and other crops for our families.”



Esther Munanie Musyimi (far left), Vice-Chair of Mumo wa Mwambui SHG

What Next?



Members of Mumo wa Mwambui SHG with their completed sand dam, generously funded by Jersey Overseas Aid

During the next rainy season (October 2016 to January 2017), Mumo wa Mwambui's completed sand dam is expected to start harvesting water which the community will be able to access quickly through the shallow well, greatly reducing the usual time spent and distance travelled to collect water.

The community should also be able to see positive effects on local plant life within a few months as the water table rises. As the dam matures, water quality will improve and the amount of water contained in the dam will increase, reaching full capacity in 2-3 years.

Now that they have a sand dam to improve water access, the group's aim going forward is to focus on agriculture, perhaps even making a return to sorghum production. They are looking to acquire further training and support in partnership with ASDF. ASDF are keen to support the aims of the group for the next stage of their development and are confident that the new dam will help the group to produce much larger harvests. They consider Mumo wa Mwambui to be an important partner in the region and plan to work with them as a training model for other SHGs, and as a source of quality seeds for other groups.

This project has reaffirmed findings from our JOA funded pilot; that sand dams are an appropriate water solution for Mwingi. The project also gave ASDF further experience of working in Mwingi and a greater understanding of community needs there. They have assessed that the region has great potential for producing high yields of crops such as sorghum and pearl millet, as long as work is done to improve water access, as has been the case in this project.

ASDF's learning is being used to inform their long-term approach to working in Mwingi which includes working with more SHGs and building more sand dams, with the support of the county government. ASDF have already started work on another dam in the Mwingi area, with Wendo wa Matoki SHG.

Project Expenditure

	Project Budget	Actual Expenditure	Variance
Project Management & Fieldwork	£ 2,190	£ 2,190	£ -
Project Management	£ 556	£ 556	£ -
Community Engagement & Fieldwork	£ 1,367	£ 1,367	£ -
Evaluation & Planning	£ 267	£ 267	£ -
Transport	£ 285	£ 324	£ (39)
Sand Dams	£ 4,822	£ 4,577	£ 245
Cement	£ 1,925	£ 1,991	£ (66)
Steel & Barbed Wire	£ 357	£ 270	£ 87
Timber Shuttering	£ 232	£ 301	£ (69)
Tools	£ 77	£ 64	£ 13
Material Transport	£ 443	£ 207	£ 236
Dam Permit	£ 96	£ 96	£ -
Skilled Labour	£ 725	£ 725	£ -
Shallow Well	£ 966	£ 923	£ 43
Community Contribution (Local Labour & Materials)	£ 2,627	£ 2,627	£ -
Monitoring	£ 389	£ 598	£ (209)
TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET	£ 10,313	£ 10,316	£ (3)
Less Community Contribution	£ (2,627)	£ (2,627)	£ -
GRANT REQUESTED / SPENT	£ 7,686	£ 7,689	£ (3)
Based on £1 = 130.511 Kenyan Shillings as per xe.com on 15.08.2016			

Thank You

We are extremely grateful to Jersey Overseas Aid for the generous grant which allowed this project to take place. Thank you on behalf of the beneficiaries, our local partners, and Excellent Development.

Report compiled by:
Emily Brewster, September 2016
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