Impact Report 2022/23

What's inside

Who We Are

We are a non-profit safe water enterprise, working to provide sustainable access to safe water to rural communities and growth centres in Sub-Saharan Africa and beyond.

What We Do

Project Maji develops, deploys and maintains sustainable solar-powered water solutions in remote rural communities and growth centers. Our innovation-centred approach aims to eliminate inefficiencies, reduce costs, and empower communities for a self-reliant and water secure future. Sustainability is a core value in everything we do, utilising renewable solar energy with zero costs and emissions. With our user-friendly MajiPay system, villagers save time by accessing water anytime, avoiding queues and polluted sources. Daily monitoring and cost-effective site-servicing ensure optimal performance and uptime.

Our Mission

To serve 1 million people with sustainable access to safe water by 2025.


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sustainable water partnership

Our Growing Pan-African Footprint

Overall, we have marked a 53% growth rate, expanding operations from 124 sites to 190 sites in 2023.

Over the years, Project Maji has been committed to expanding our footprint and providing sustainable access to safe water for communities in need. Since our inception in 2015, when we first ventured into Ghana, we have worked tirelessly to establish over 190 sites in the country, transforming the lives of countless individuals. Building upon this success, we expanded our operations to Kenya in 2018.

This year, we are delighted to announce a monumental milestone in our journey. Project Maji has set foot in **Uganda**, a significant step forward in our mission to provide sustainable access to safe water for all. Through our dedicated efforts, we have reached an extraordinary achievement, serving an astounding **261,000** people in total.

Pan African Footprint

Ghana

Kenya

Uganda

261,296
people served

190 safe water
access points

390,052,033 litres
of safe water served till date

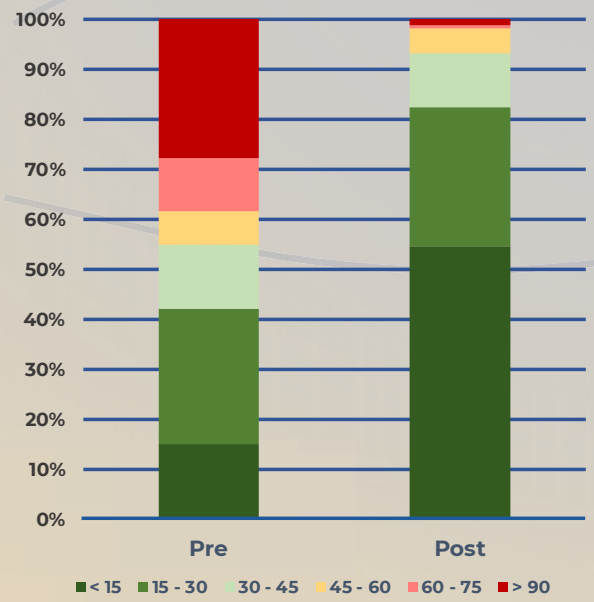
From Water Scarcity to Hope:

OUR IMPACT ON PEOPLE'S LIVES

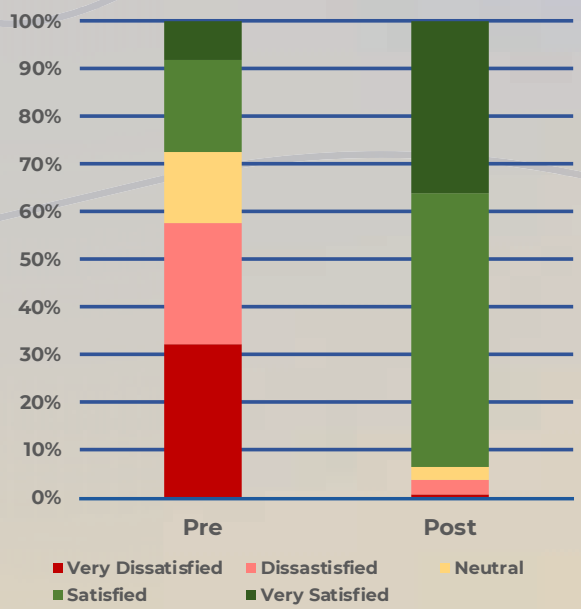
As a social enterprise we are driven by the impact we create in the lives of individuals and communities. We remain laser-focused on measuring the impact of every donor dollar invested. We implement a cycle of pre- and post-intervention community surveys (repeating questions linked to community health, education, women's safety etc) to quantify results and measure progress using a purpose-built data collection and analysis tool called mWater.

Here's a closer look at the transformational power of access to water for rural communities:

MINUTES TO COLLECT WATER

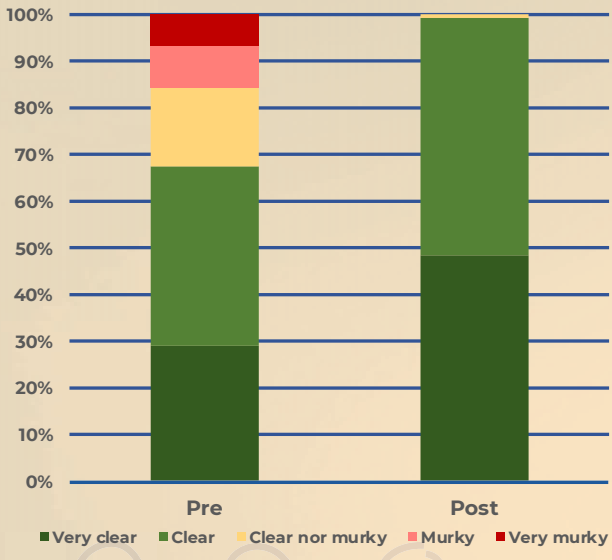


SATISFACTION WITH WATER SOURCE



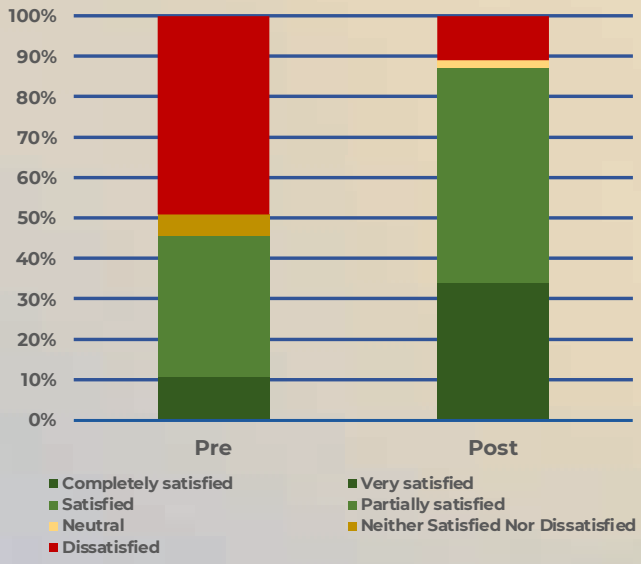
QUALITY OF WATER

CLARITY OF WATER

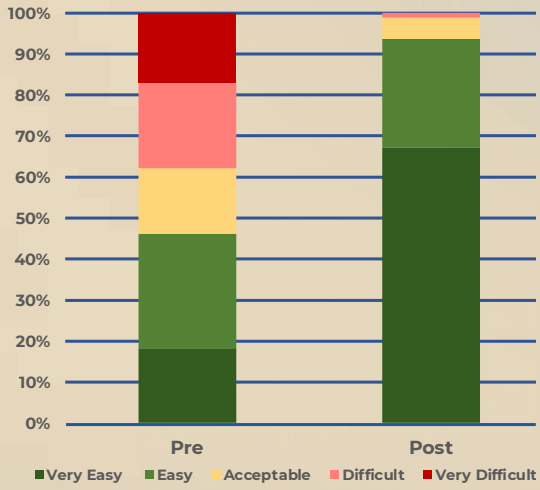


Source: Internal Research

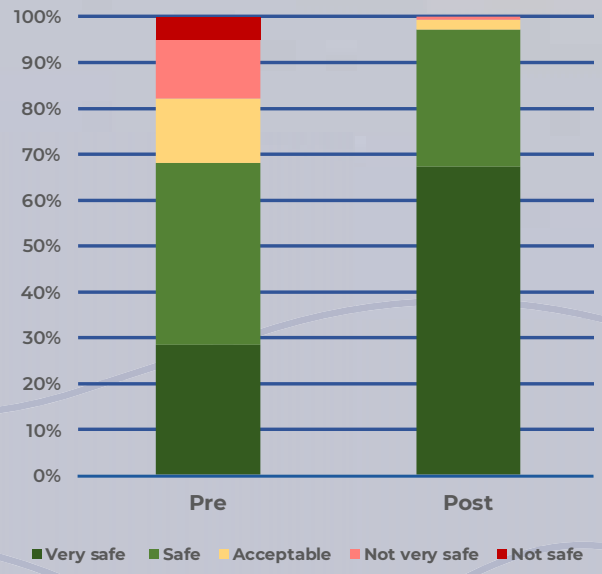
RELIABILITY OF WATER SOURCE



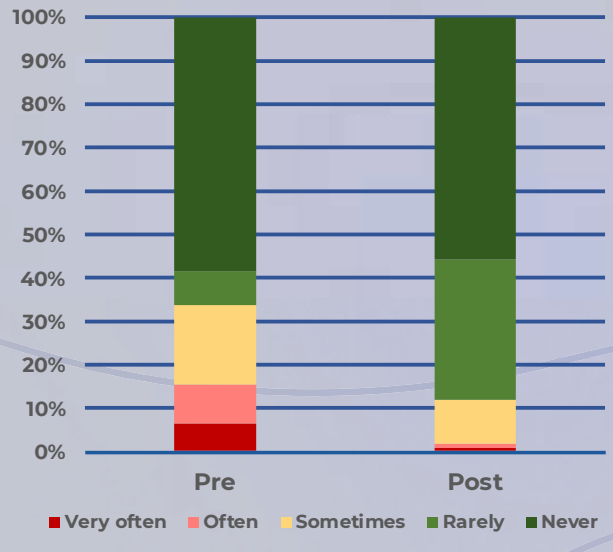
ACCESS



SAFETY

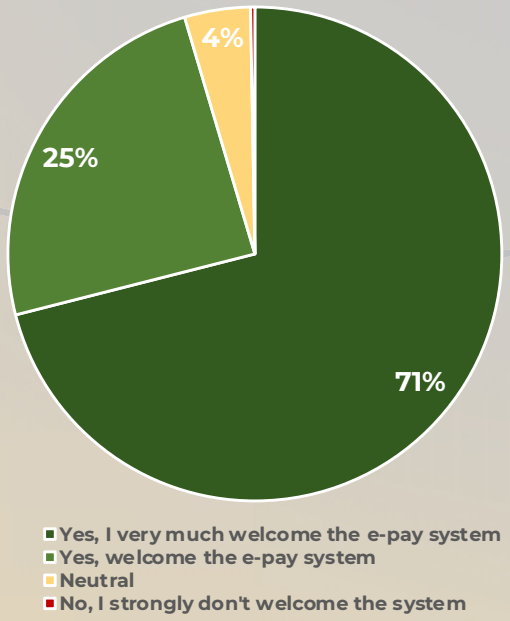


FREQUENCY OF WATER-BORNE DISEASES

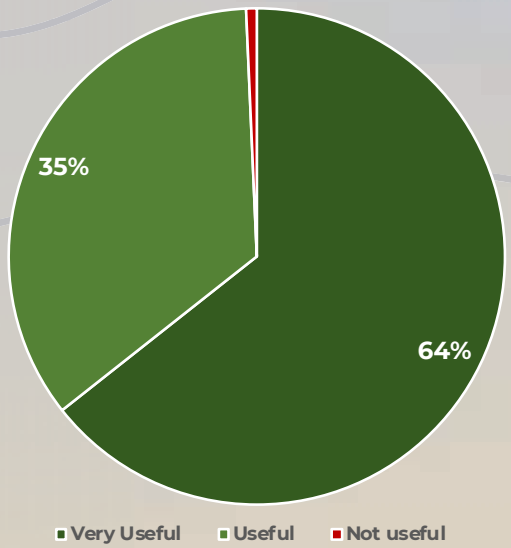


Source: Internal Research

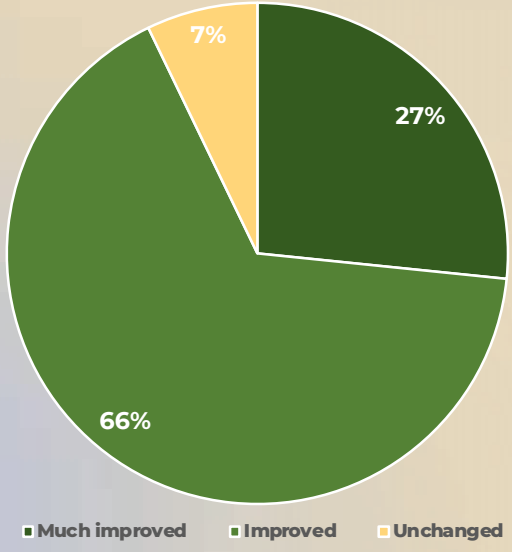
E-PAYMENT SYSTEM OPINION [PRE]



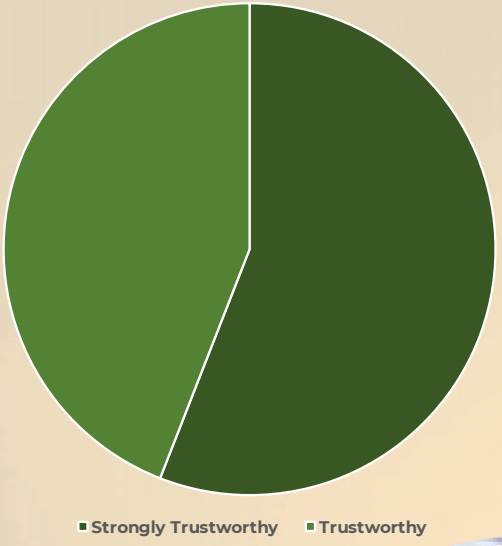
E-PAYMENT SYSTEM OPINION [POST]



HEALTH IMPROVEMENT



TRUST PROJECT MAJI



Source: Internal Research

Dora's Day

An Inspiring Journey with Project Maji in Vume, Ghana

Dora is a 31-year-old KG teacher and a single mum to two boys: Lawrence and Miracle in the Vume Community, rural Ghana. She lives with her mom and her two boys. I met her when she was walking back home from a full day of teaching at school. When asked about the difference the Project Maji waterpoint has made, she recalled how the river water made her children sick.

She said the urinary infection would make her children bleed, known as bilharzia. It made her very worried, not only for their health but also because their ill health meant that she knew she would soon need to visit the clinic and pay for the medical treatment. Being a single mum, this cycle of dirty water and disease put a lot of unnecessary additional pressure on her.

In addition, she spoke about the long walk to the river and the steep slippery path she and the women of her village had to take mornings and evenings to be able to cook and clean for their families. Dora had big ambitions for her boys, so she tutored them early in the morning before bringing them to school every morning - so that they stay ahead in their studies. But the long walk to the river in the morning required that she wakes up before dawn and fetches their daily water before the boys wake up. As a teacher, she complained of the high school absenteeism because of how often the little ones in her class would fall sick from drinking the dirty water at the river. She said on top of that, skin rashes were a common complaint from her own children, and the students in her class.

As we entered her home, she admitted that she is now able to get some rest when she comes back home. I didn't quite grasp it fully until I shadowed her for the rest of her day. She picked up her silver pot and we walked to the Maji Tower that literally sits a few steps away from her house. She tapped the MajiPay token and stood under the overhead spout that eliminates the need for her to bend down and pick up the 25 kilo-heavy pot. In less than five minutes, we were back home. She filled the designated water pot for her family's use and filled a jug full of clean water for lunch. She then proceeded to change her clothes and instructed Miracle and Lawrence to do the same.

Dora's mom laid the table and the family sat together to enjoy the Fufu (a corn-based dish) Dora had prepared before leaving for school this morning. After lunch, Miracle - her 8-year-old boy helped her wash the dishes. Then, she headed to the Maji Tower where some of her friends and fellow moms had gathered for some downtime and chats. She spent the entire evening chatting and relaxing. On our way back to Dora's home, she shared that she is a single mum. She said: "A lot of people advise me to go to Accra and find a better paid teaching position in the city, since I am the sole provider for my kids. But I can't leave, my boys need me. I have big dreams for their education and careers. They need my time and attention". She then remarked, "You are a mom too, I'm sure you understand what I am saying". Indeed, she was right—being present is the most valuable gift she could offer as a mother.

When we got home, it was time to prepare for dinner, so Dora picked up her silver pot again to fetch water for the night. The sun had already set, and it was dark but the solar light on top of the Maji Tower across her home lit up her path, making it safe and easy for her to access clean water for her family.

In this rural corner of Ghana, I witnessed first-hand how easy and sustainable access to clean water creates a profound difference, elevating lives, and empowering dreams. Through Project Maji's work, stories like Dora's illuminate the path to a brighter and more promising future for men, women and communities across the world.

Muneeza Aftab
Communications and Advocacy Officer, Project Maji

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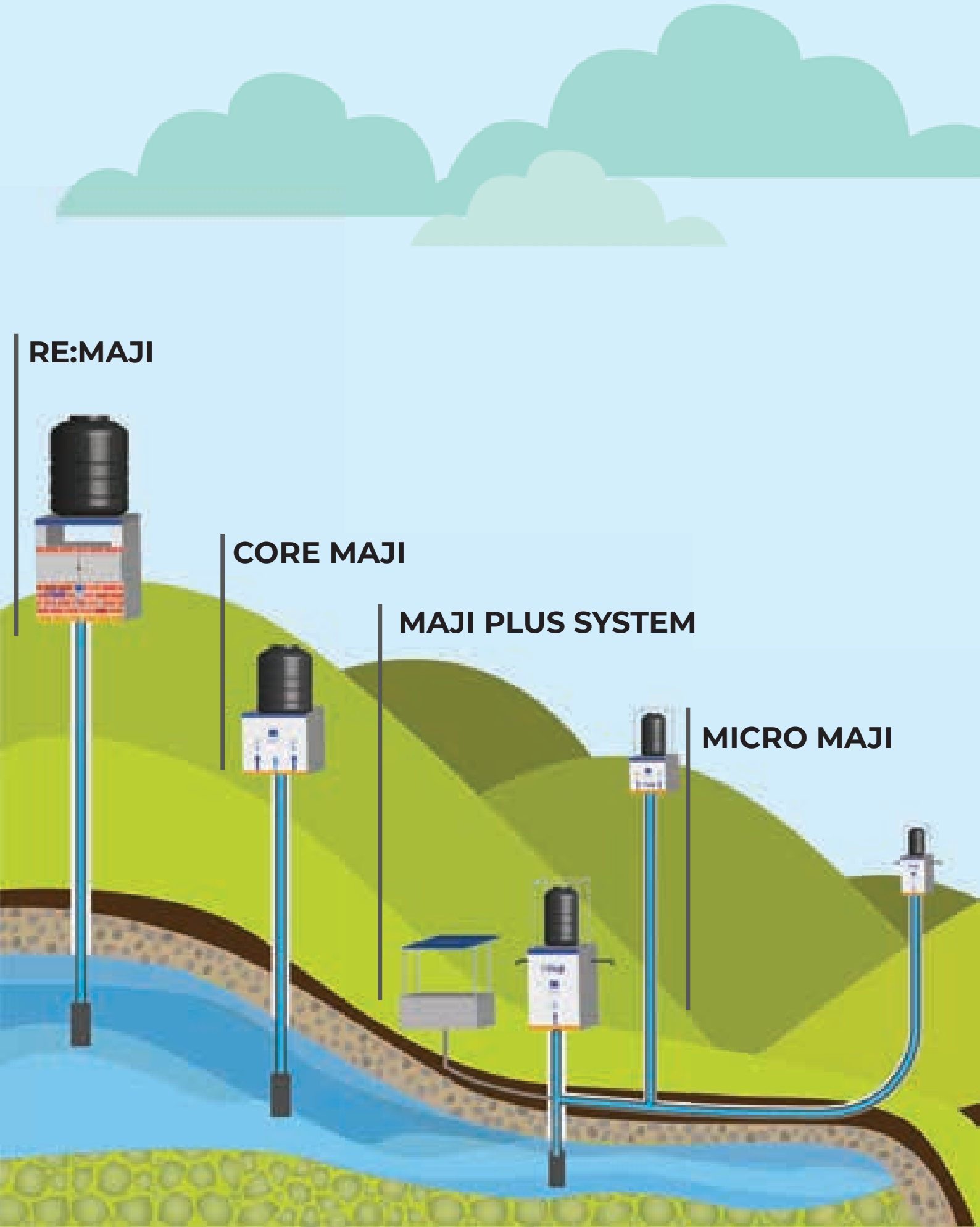
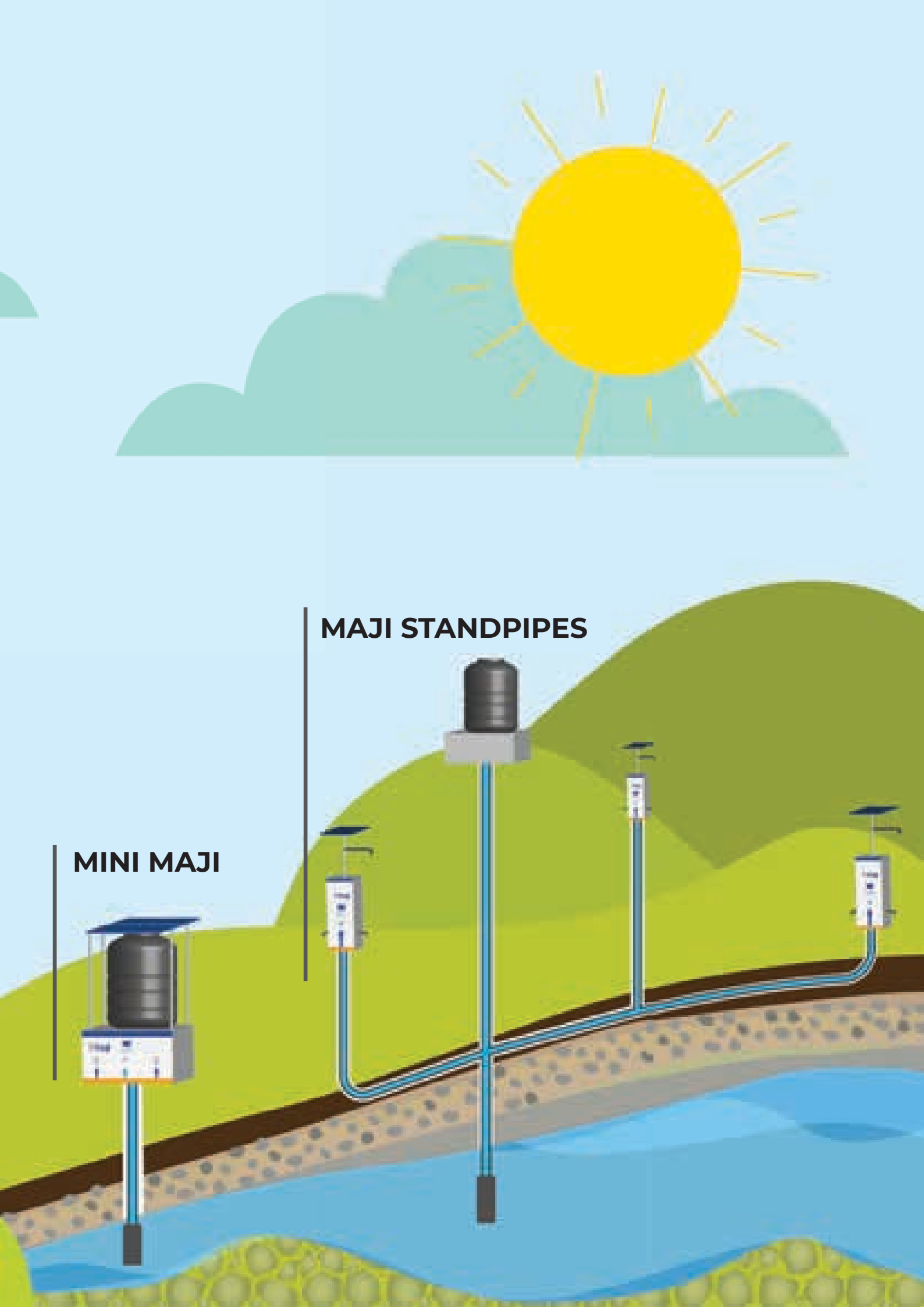

RE:MAJI
CORE MAJI
MAJI PLUS SYSTEM
MICRO MAJI


MAJI STANDPIPES
MINI MAJI

Mini Maji

Features a 10,000-litre storage tank, providing up to 8,000 litres a day depending on the solar intensity and aquifer. Due to its capacity allowance, the solution is better suited for larger communities with population ranging between 750-1,500 people.

MajiPlus

MajiPlus offers a small network of water kiosks, each one serving a catchment area up to 1.5 km. Each access points has a buffer capacity of a 1,000 litres but can deliver up to 4,000 litres per day, resulting in a total as high as 12,000 litres per day from a 3-point network. In total, it can serve up to 2,000-3,000 people living in multiple connected communities.

Standpipes

Tailored water solution for highly dispersed communities where distances between households can be vast, the Maji Standpipes effectively cut down water collection times. A network of standpipes can serve a maximum of 1,500 people. With lower costs compared to standalone kiosks, Maji Standpipes cover vast geographical areas, enhancing accessibility and revenue potential.

RE:Maji

Whenever feasible, the RE:Maji solution revitalises current water infrastructure rather than implementing new systems. Additionally, we enhance the waterpoint by incorporating remote monitoring and e-payment technologies, transforming it into a reliable and sustainable source of safe water for the community.

Core Maji

This compact kiosk with a 2,500 litre tank still being able to serve over 5,000 litres a day, helps to significantly cut down costs while meeting water demand with supply, allowing for higher revenue potential and higher efficiency.

Micro Maji

This solutionsn with a 2,000 litre tank is built with pre-fabricated metal that can be easily transported and mounted on standard cemented floor using anchor bolts. It is ideally used in Maji Plus set-up with number of dispensing points and lesser storage capacity requirement.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RURAL WATER

Prepaid household meter

Household connections

This involves utilizing a solar-powered borehole and storage tank to provide water to a pressurized network. This network includes both prepaid public kiosks and individual household connections. The typical setup comprises 1 to 2 kiosks and 15 to 40 household connections, covering an area of 1 to 2 square kilometres.

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR GROWTH

Building from the inside out:

Restructuring the Kenyan Operations Team

This past year, Project Maji experienced a remarkable 52% growth rate. The expansion prompted a shift in priorities towards strengthening internal capacity to scale sustainably and deliver on donor commitments. Given Kenya's role as the locus of our rapid expansion, we undertook a comprehensive restructuring of the Kenyan operations team. This restructuring focused on various aspects, including project management, stakeholder management, supply chain management, and, most importantly, water engineering and water point construction.

Strengthening Internal Systems for Sustainable Scaling
We recognized the importance of relying on robust internal systems for scaled, sustainable service delivery, rather than depending on external stakeholders such as contractors for site installation and daily maintenance. To address this, we developed "Supervisor Installation teams" that received training from Amol Parker, our lead engineer, and Country Director from Ghana. Amol Parker spent three months in Kenya, equipping the teams with the necessary skills. As a result, our "build capacity" increased to five kiosks per month.

Utilizing Local Tradesmen for Site Installation and Maintenance
A key focus of our internal capacity building is the development of "supervisors" who can manage teams for site installation and maintenance. By cultivating this resource, we can effectively utilize local tradesmen whenever possible or necessary. This approach not only reduces costs, including salaries and transport, but also encourages local employment and engagement. Additionally, expanding our network of technicians, engineers and masons provides a fruitful training ground for future "supervisors" and enables us to overcome geographical limitations posed by external contractors.

Managing our operations internally yields several advantages. It ensures a quicker response time and higher service levels for communities while reducing costs. Moreover, internal management allows us to maintain control over the entire process and eliminate dependency on external contractors.

New Leadership Roles
To facilitate effective management, we made strategic additions to our team. At the top level, we hired a new Project Director with proven experience in strategic management for sustainable development. This individual is responsible for the daily management of the Kenya Team, ensuring smooth operations and efficient execution of projects.

Introducing the Community Manager Role
At the grassroots level, we created a significant role known as the Community Manager. The Community Manager acts as the bridge between Maji communities and our top operational and strategic management. They establish regular communication with caretakers and community leaders, fostering strong relationships and improving situational awareness. This role plays a vital part in responding quickly to any issues and preventing potential problems. Additionally, the Community Manager manages local fundis (handymen) for small repairs and receives training on mWater issues, enabling us to enhance uptime and response time.

Blending grassroots with top-down approach for effective site selection
Initially, we followed a bottom-approach to site selection to ensure full community buy-in and patronage. The selected communities signed an MoU with Project Maji and sought formal approval from their respective County or District Assembly.

In light of our rapid expansion trajectory in Kenya this year, we have pivoted towards a blend of top-down and bottom-up approach for effective site selection. This means we have dedicated time and efforts to strengthen ties with county governments. We formalized our mandates by signing MoUs with the County water ministries, and an MoU with the national Ministry of Water, Sanitation, Irrigation and Climate Change.

With these strategic partnerships in place, we are now discussing co-funding, joint site selection and resource sharing. This supports the general systems strengthening approach, promoting coordination, the joint development of sector priorities, planning of interventions and support of sustainable rural water services. It also mitigates the risk that our efforts will be undermined by local political forces, which jeopardized the long-term sustainability of our operations.

Furthermore, specifically in the Kitui County, we have hosted multiple conferences to explain Sub County Water officials Project Maji's site selection strategy and how they can assist us by providing a list of the most in-need communities in their constituencies. This worked well and has resulted in a high-quality list of communities that meet our criteria for assistance. The explicit support of the Sub County makes the process much easier, eliminating unexpected duplication of efforts by the local governments and private operators such as us.


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sustainable water

Asset Management for Strengthened Systems

At Project Maji, we emphasize asset management for long-term and sustainable service delivery by acknowledging the criticality of efficient and cost-effective management of physical assets. Asset Management is viewed as a combination of various practices, including management, financial, economic, engineering, technological and others with the ultimate goal of providing the required level of service at the lowest life-cycle cost.

Leveraging Purpose-Built Solutions for Systematic Asset Tracking

To this end, we rely on purpose-built solutions such as the mWater Asset Management feature to map and track water system assets across Sub-Saharan Africa. This enables Project Maji to have a systematic and digitized view of key water system assets, including their age, location, and condition. With this information readily available, the organization can prioritize investments and repairs, plan for major replacements, and allocate proper financing for long-term sustainability.

Breaking the Cycle: Overcoming Challenges in Rural Water Asset Management
Managing rural water assets proactively is a significant challenge, often leading to insufficient preventive maintenance, high levels of non-functionality, and poor service levels. This is primarily due to a lack of willingness and capacity to implement good asset management practices. It becomes a vicious cycle where a "fix on failure" approach perpetuates the lack of proper asset management, and vice versa.

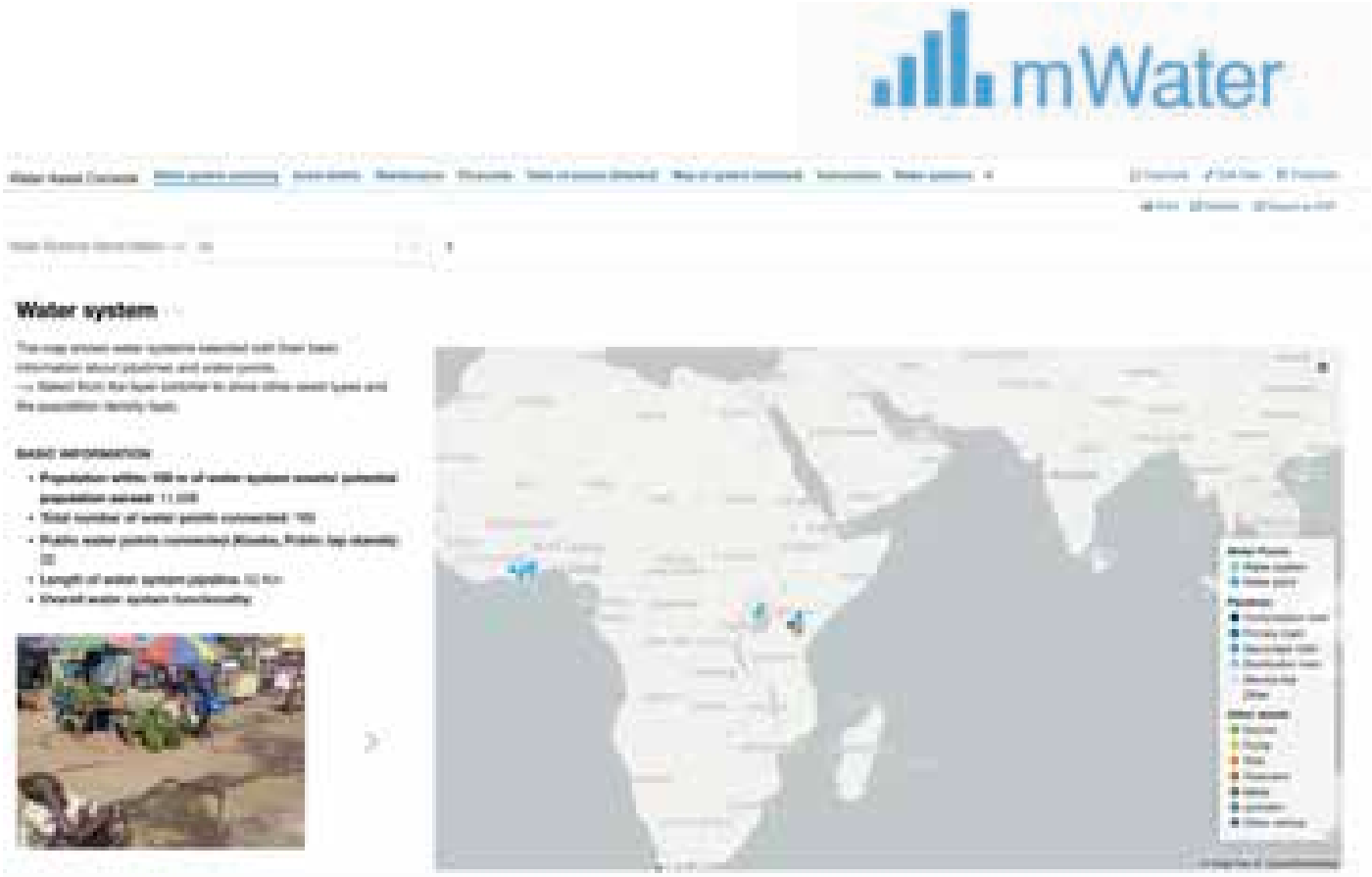
To break this cycle, Project Maji believes in stakeholder sensitization for asset management both internally and externally. This means shifting the mindset of donors towards long-term thinking and ensuring sufficient budget allocation for operation and maintenance (O&M) and asset management methods and tools when setting up programs. Recognizing that asset management incurs costs, proper funding is essential. Alternatively, shifting mindsets by linking the adoption of asset management practices with financial viability and the development of business cases.

Furthermore, building internal capacity among field staff is crucial for successfully transitioning from a "fix on failure" approach to a strategic asset management approach. It is crucial that the field staff interacting daily and up close with our water systems fully embrace and see the value in taking a long-term approach to the management of these assets.

By emphasizing efficient and cost-effective asset management, leveraging purpose-built solutions, breaking destructive cycles, sensitizing stakeholders, and building internal capacity, Project Maji strives to ensure the long-term sustainability of water service delivery.

"To me, Asset Management is all about keeping water flowing uninterruptedly and ensuring uptime! After all, if you don't service your car – it'll also break down at some point!"

Wieke De Vries, Director of Development & Partnerships



Project Maji Asset Management Workflow

Water Asset Console
We have utilized mWater's Asset Management capability to create a customized 'Water Asset Console' that helps us map the inventory per access point. This means a database of all 'assets' from pumps, panels, to meters, pipes – the condition of these assets, expected lifespan of items and the financial consequences and planning.

Water Systems Dashboard
Next, the asset inventory mapped feeds into the "Water Systems Dashboard". This dashboard serves as a comprehensive platform offering detailed insights into various facets of the planned solutions. These include the specific solution types, the length of pipes employed (measured in meters), the geographical elevation, the local population served and precise GPS coordinates.

This dashboard's utility has been significant in facilitating the evolution of our System designs. By factoring in critical parameters such as pipe length, elevation, local water demand and distance, we can accurately ascertain the requisite solar power capacity and pump specifications.

Repair and Maintenance Framework

Finally, once a site is commissioned, our Repair and Maintenance framework comes into effect. Under this framework, our field teams are required to report on three kinds of field visits to ensure all sites are fully functional and properly maintained. The main visits are the Annual Servicing Visits and Maintenance & Repair Visit. Our response time to address a technical challenge is 5 and diligent reporting is essential. Lastly, we report on Courtesy Visit beyond regular maintenance schedule, for example a visit with a Donor.

We track our progress through the O&M Console set up in mWater that helps us map and monitor water point functionality as well as a full record of repair issues reported and resolved. Our field staff is now confidently logging and tracking issues. This has led to improved comprehension of our performance, the establishment of longitudinal data, and a deeper grasp of both challenges and functionality, ultimately fostering greater accountability. At the core of this process, asset management forms the foundation upon which our system designs thrive.

EXPANSION TO UGANDA

A case study

On Effective Partnerships

Project Maji's expansion to Uganda is a remarkable achievement for our small yet rapidly growing enterprise. This milestone serves as a powerful testament to the transformative power of effective partnerships. The journey began in 2021 when Uganda Water Project and Project Maji initiated discussions about collaboration in Uganda. Together, UWP and Project Maji were invited to the WaterTime consortium, a collaboration spearheaded by the Dutch NGO Woord & Daad and supported by Practica Foundation. In June 2022, we turned on the taps of the first Mini Maji, which is installed and will be maintained by UWP.

"The uniqueness of our partnership lies in the incredible blend of online collaboration and occasional in-person meetings. It is amazing to witness how all the planning and execution unfolded seamlessly through remote connectivity. I had the pleasure of meeting Nelline ***(Woord en Daad)*** in person last November, and only recently, I met the Uganda Water Project for the first time in person."

As the CEO & Founder of Project Maji, I remain a staunch believer in hybrid working. While in-person interaction holds undeniable value, the accomplishments we have achieved remotely, fuelled by the determination and shared vision of our like-minded partners, have been nothing short of incredible."

Sunil Lalvani, CEO & Founder of Project Maji

The WaterTime Consortium: Uniting Expertise for Lasting Impact

At the forefront of this collaborative effort is the WaterTime consortium, a three-year program led by Woord en Daad. Bringing together the water expertise of Project Maji, Uganda Water Project, and Practica Foundation, the consortium is committed to enhancing equitable access to water by managing sustainable, paid drinking water services for rural communities in Central Uganda. A key focus is on reducing rural water poverty through innovative techniques such as solar-powered access points, electronic payment systems, and integrated post-structure maintenance support. The WaterTime consortium aims to directly impact over 26,000 people, deploying 15 solar-powered water-piped systems, 36 communal water access points, and establishing household connections.

Collaboration and Co-Creation: Leveraging Expertise

To truly accelerate rural water access, the WaterTime consortium leverages the expertise of each partner. Woord en Daad takes the lead in coordinating overall project planning, providing strategic guidance, and addressing operational and budgetary matters. Project Maji, as the safe water enterprise, assumes responsibility for developing, supplying, and guiding the implementation of solar-powered water systems. Leveraging innovative technologies such as remote monitoring and e-payment, Project Maji ensures optimal and sustainable service delivery. Uganda Water Project oversees the implementation and maintenance of solar-powered water-piped systems through their servicing arm, AquaTrust. They also establish vital government partnerships to advance the consortium's rural water agenda. Additionally, Practica Foundation, a non-profit rural water consultancy agency, serves as an external advisor to the consortium, offering technical guidance on systems design and rural water engineering.

By forging effective partnerships and leveraging their collective expertise, Project Maji, Uganda Water Project, Woord en Daad, and Practica Foundation are making significant strides in expanding access to clean water. This case study exemplifies the transformative impact that collaborative efforts can have on sustainable development initiatives, not just in Uganda but throughout the entire pan-African region.

“We see an opportunity to transform the reliability of rural water services at scale, and expanding results-based contracts through the Uptime Catalyst Facility provides the chance to demonstrate what is possible in practice.”

Duncan McNicholl, CEO

A Deep Dive

Uptime: Making Reliable Service a Reality

Water revenues alone seldom cover the costs of operation and maintenance (O&M), let alone the hardware expenses, which are typically funded by donors. This creates a critical finance gap that jeopardizes the functionality of rural water access points and the availability of safe drinking water in rural areas across the global South. Recognizing this challenge, Project Maji is honoured to be selected as one of the service providers to receive results-based finance from the Uptime Catalyst Facility, a UK-based organization that provides performance-based funding for reliable water services.

Transforming Safe Water Access and Sustainability

The collaboration between Project Maji and Uptime Catalyst Facility is a game-changer in achieving universal access to safe water, leaving no one behind. By mobilizing contractually specified performance-based funding this unique partnership ensures the sustained functionality of safe waterpoints. It highlights the equal importance of expanding our reach by establishing new sites and building strong alliances to maintain existing waterpoints.

The agreement with Uptime Catalyst Facility encompasses all managed sites in Ghana, for one year. To qualify for funding Project Maji must meet critical key performance indicators, including 96% uptime. This indicator measures the proportion of time in a quarter that a waterpoint is functional out of the total time. By consistently meeting these targets, Project Maji secures results-based grant payments that bridge the finance gap between operational costs and revenue.

Project Maji's dedication to meeting these performance criteria is evident, as we currently operate well within the established standards. This partnership with Uptime Catalyst Facility propels us forward in our mission to provide sustainable and reliable access to safe water, ultimately transforming the lives of countless individuals in rural communities.

Let's hear from the experts

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the partnership we turn to sector experts from both organizations. Uptime, with its extensive reach has already made a significant impact benefiting over 4.7 million people in twelve countries across Africa, Asia, and Latin America by supporting service providers and safe water enterprises such as Project Maji. Now, let's delve into the insights of these experts and explore their vision for this collaboration.

INTERVIEW WITH

WIEKE DE VRIES

Director Business Development & Partnerships | Project Maji

Explain Project Maji's relationship to the Uptime Catalyst Fund?

In 2022 Project Maji was selected as one of the seven new service providers to enter the Uptime Catalyst Fund (UFC) as a recipient, joining the five existing founding members. The results-based contract came into effect in January 2023 after a rigorous historical data verification process. Fellow safe water enterprises include Safe Water Network, Uganda Water Project, Water 4, Uduma and Fundi Fix. All service providers share a similar approach to sustainable water services by ensuring reliable maintenance protocols to safeguard uptime.

We are grateful to be part of this innovative finance partnership, because we agree with UFC that catalytic funding is necessary to enable changes that will ensure the provision of efficient, reliable and responsive rural water services for the long term.

Can you explain how the performance-based funding model works in the context of this partnership? What specific performance indicators are used to determine funding allocation?

The arrangement applies to all the solar-powered water points we manage in Ghana in 2023. To clarify, Project Maji has installed many kiosks which are managed and maintained by our partners such as Ghana Red Cross and World Vision, and these sites are therefore not considered for the UCF.

At the end of every quarter, we submit relevant performance data including litres sold, revenues generated and downtime data per water point. The target is to ensure 96 percent 'uptime', meaning that kiosk is functioning and reliably supplying safe drinking water to our end-users. The data submitted is benchmarked against a year of historical sales and uptime records to ensure data integrity. We

have also welcomed the Uptime team to our communities to explain how we record technical issues digitally to provide transparent and live data of the sources we manage.

How does the funding contribute to the O&M costs of waterpoints managed by Project Maji?

The UCF is a non-repayable source of funding to bridge the shortfall between costs and revenues as service providers work towards developing sustainable service models for rural water provision. In practical terms, we receive a 50% revenue match for water points with uptime >96%. We use these funds to cover the shortfall between our revenue and maintenance costs, providing desperately needed financial relief and therefore sustainability.

Simply put, our efforts to ensure functional and reliable water sources are rewarded and at the same time it inspires our field technicians to fix any unforeseen technical problems imminently. This triggers an upward cycle of trust, whereby our consumers value the services provided and patronize the kiosks even better. This leads to higher willingness to pay, reinforcing a better financial position and higher service levels.

How is Project Maji benefitting from this progressive financial facility?

Our Founder CEO / Founder Sunil Lalvani, has shed light on how valuable this type of support is for Project Maji. Lalvani: “We have been operating in rural Africa for 8 years now and we are always focused on ensuring we can cover ongoing operational expenses to maintain our kiosks. Because of this financial necessity and reality, we often compromise the communities we serve as we need to ensure they are (or are close to) financial viability … this invariably means that we have to walk away from serving some of

the more needy communities as we know we will not be able to generate enough water revenue from them to maintain a high service level for them.

The Uptime solution has proven to be a very powerful catalytic initiative for us in this regard. We now know that we can now serve those communities that might otherwise be too small, too poor or too remote with confidence."

How has the partnership with Uptime Catalyst Facility contributed to the overall impact?

The Facility promotes functionality, and we can clearly see this has an internal impact on our technicians' drive to solve problems efficiently. The uptime of the Uptime portfolio is higher compared to those sites we don't manage.

As a result, we applaud the fact that the facility is conditional on our service 'uptime' or functionality. It is a very fair trade off and has also made us more focused on ensuring the high levels of service demanded under our agreement. We have put in processes to measure this and to maintain it, which has, in turn, improved our own efficiency levels as well. With this support, we are confident we can continue to expand our provision of water to the most in need communities in the territories we work.

Have there been any challenges or lessons learned?

Data is king. Without proper data management, we would not be able to comply with the Uptime terms. We have learned to collect data in a much more consistent way, and this spurred our internal capacity building and awareness. Collecting historical data also allowed us to have better insights into our actual 'working ratio' (ratio O&M costs vs revenue), a key performance indicator that has become increasingly important in our sector.

Challenges mostly relate to hard-to-reach communities where it takes time to fix an unforeseen problem. For instance, if our technicians are working on building a new kiosk, we do not want to drop the job at hand to rush to another site. Yet, we know we need to respond within three days to resolve any technical issue to be eligible for funds disbursement.

How would you describe relationship between Project Maji and Uptime Catalyst Facility?

It has been a joy working not only with the UCF, but also with the other safe water enterprise recipients. We share similar challenges and comparing notes allows us to better address the stubborn roadblocks we face to make meaningful progress towards access to safe water in underserved areas. It will strengthen our sector and promotes more reliable water services.

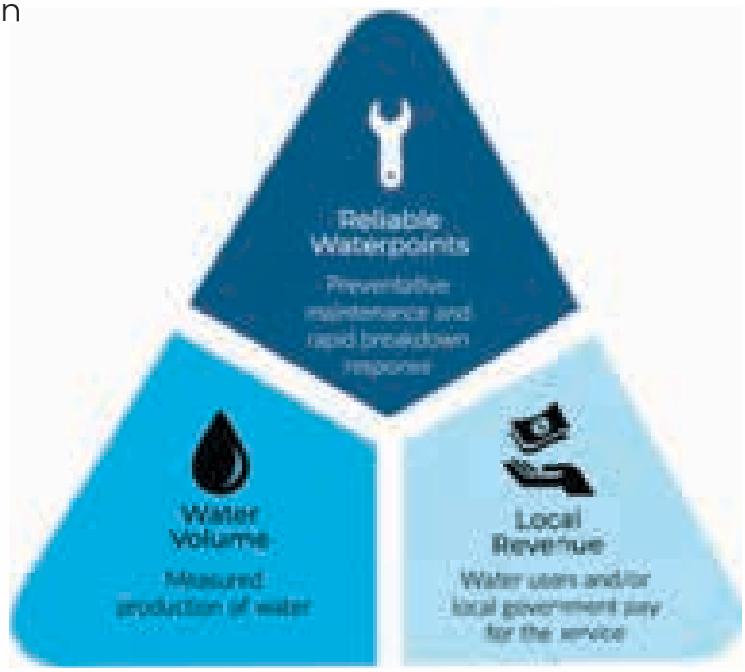


Figure 1 - Uptime framework: reliable waterpoints, water volume, and local revenue

INTERVIEW WITH

ANDREW ARMSTRONG

Global Lead, Data Integrity | Uptime Catalyst Facility

What is the Uptime Catalyst Facility exactly?

Uptime is a global consortium of mission-driven organizations that delivers drinking water services to around 4.7 million rural dwellers in Africa, Asia and Latin America. It was formed because we believe that by 2030, universal access to safe and affordable drinking water has to transition from its current reliance on donor payments to results-based funding.

We created an outcome-payment model to fund rural water maintenance services at scale. Funding would be conditionally disbursed to service providers based on consistent operational and financial performance metrics. The immediate goal is to disburse targeted and transparent funding to sustain rural services; the broader goals are to develop the information systems, investment cases, and institutional structures needed to scale a performance-based funding model globally.

What makes the UCF different from other donors or finance mechanisms?

We know that there is no quick fix to transforming the rural water sector. But based on our collective experience and research, we share the conviction that sustainable and scalable financing of rural water services is achievable by aligning payments to service providers with contractually specified, verifiable performance outcomes.

We pooled our data to help design a transparent, outcomes-based model for funding rural water services at scale; using performance contracts and verifiable indicators. An independent payment approach has also been developed for contracted service providers, with payments contingent on outcomes. The Uptime Catalyst Facility (UCF) is demonstrating the potential of this approach at scale by establishing a multi-country grant funding process for rural water services.

Unlike conventional social impact bonds or pay-for-success programmes, the UCF operates across multiple jurisdictions, not dependent on a government payor. Additionally, it does not require investors to pay upfront working capital to service providers, eliminating their risk involvement. Instead, service providers bear the financial and operating risk of delivering against their contractual performance outcomes. Service providers are paid retrospectively based on independently verified performance.

How does the UCF improve functionality rates, also referred to as 'uptime'?

The UCF incentivizes the provision of a reliable service in existing and new water supply infrastructure. This requires investment in asset maintenance to ensure value for money and sustainability for water supply infrastructure. Setting in motion, overall improvement in the functionality rates of rural water infrastructure; resulting in a better return on the significant quantum of capital expended by donors on handpumps and piped systems.

What are the mechanisms in place to ensure transparency and accountability in the utilization of the funding?

We have developed a rigorous, triangulated data validation approach to ensure high data integrity, whereby historical data is compared to two historical averages. We first screen the data during pre-contract visits and a compilation of historical data. Next, we validate the quarterly metrics against the service provider's historical data. Lastly, we verify data sets through our Annual Data audit of representative waterpoint samples across the Uptime portfolio in combination with Bi-annual spot checks.

Data that are key to Uptime Global outputs and the results-based contract framework evaluated from quarterly data submissions

- Total number of waterpoints
- Percentage of qualifying waterpoints with >96% functionality
- Local revenue (USD per waterpoint per quarter and per cubic meter)
- Volume (cubic metres per waterpoint per day)
- Estimated population (people per waterpoint)

How do you envision the partnership contributing to the long-term sustainability of safe water access initiatives?

Drinking water investment approaches that focus on infrastructure development with uncertain long-term outcomes, high transaction costs, and limited scalability yield unsustainable results. Information asymmetries between water users, service providers, authorities, and funders drive these inefficiencies and hinder transparency and accountability. Results-based funding can re-prioritise financial and information flows to incentivise ongoing delivery of safe and reliable drinking water. The Uptime model demonstrates this potential while addressing barriers to scalability and efficiency with simple and comparable metrics that apply across countries and infrastructure types. Perhaps most importantly, quality services that users are willing to pay for are delivered to households, schools, and healthcare facilities, and co-funding from these users reduces the need for external funding.

Improving the business case with
Aqua for All

Project Maji's vision is to disrupt inefficiencies that threaten our collective goal of universal access to safe water through innovation and sustainable service delivery. To this end, the first major partnership that we have built to truly rethink rural water economies is with our trusted visionary partner, Aqua for all. The three-year programme 'Untapping the potential of rural water economies' in Kenya is a novel blended-finance model that aims to multiply impact and drive sector change. The project sought to accelerate sustainable access to safe water to 20+ new communities. At the same time, a Research & Development (R&D) programme intends to significantly reduce the current cost of a solar-powered water kiosk installation.

Revenue and operational improvements have been observed, with an increase in average consumption per water access point. We attribute this improvement to better site selection, free water trials, and improved in-house maintenance protocols. The price per access point went down under this program by 28% as a result of the innovation efforts.

MajiPlus Effect on the Business Case:

The introduction of small piped systems, specifically the MajiPlus system with three standard access points is the key driver of the capex reduction. Beyond lower hardware cost, the central servicing provided by the MajiPlus system leads to decreased operational and maintenance costs. The approximate running cost of a Mini Maji is $75 per access point per month, whereas a MajiPlus access point incurs only $44 per month. This cost difference is attributed to centralized servicing and the use of single major components, such as one solar array and one high-performance pump. By adopting the MajiPlus system, we can align demand with actual supply and achieve greater cost efficiency.

Overall, the partnership between Project Maji and Aqua for All aims to disrupt inefficiencies, promote innovation, and achieve universal access to safe water through their blended-financed rural water delivery model. By implementing their program objectives, they seek to create lasting change in the rural water sector, positively impacting communities and challenging the status quo of financing in the sector.

“The vision of this partnership is how do you bring down the cost of a kiosk to impact more people with the same number of dollars. This was the bottom line. So we looked at the Mini Maji at every element of it to see how we can reduce the cost. So it is material cost, the metal structure. Was there any way we can use less solar panels? But that depends on how deep the water is, we could not simply cut down. This culminated in the development of the Maji Plus and Core Maji piped systems.

What we did was that we looked at the standard product (Mini Maji) to strip down major costs from that. The big costs were borehole drilling, solar panels, and pumps, so if we could eliminate this, we could bring down the cost by a lot. But we still had to pump the water somehow. If we could get two, three or four kiosks to share the big costs, meaning we place the pumps/panels in one community and extend a pipeline to the other communities, we share the heavy costs. That ends up bringing down the cost per access point. The capital cost of the total system goes up, but the cost per access point comes down. The Aqua for All project put us on a journey of finding novel ways to bring the cost per access point down."

Sunil Lalvani, Founder and CEO, Project Maji

Water Education Programme

DXB School Partnerships

Our water education programme stands out as the first of its kind in the region with a two-pronged objective of raising awareness about the gravity of the water crisis whilst also promoting fundraising for sustainable solutions. Firstly, we have developed a comprehensive Water Curriculum for students at the Elementary through High School levels. This curriculum aims to raise awareness about the global water crisis, not only in the UAE but also beyond. Through various subjects such as Science, Math, English, Social Studies, Arts, Music, and PE, students gain insights into the magnitude of the issue and its far-reaching impact on millions of lives.

Beyond just presenting statistics, our curriculum strives to humanize the crisis by helping students understand that these numbers represent real individuals with families, dreams, and aspirations. This approach fosters empathy and a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by communities affected by the water crisis. Secondly, our water education program equips students with the tools to actively support sustainable solutions to address the water crisis. Through the WinS (Water in Schools) initiative, students engage in activities and initiatives that raise funds for providing clean drinking water to a beneficiary school in Kenya. Each activation of the

program concludes with a fundraising push, empowering students to make a tangible difference by ensuring access to clean water for their peers in the partner school.
We have been actively engaged in several collaborations with schools in Dubai, bringing awareness about the global water crisis and fundraising to provide safe water access to schools in Kenya. Dunecrest American School organized the “6x6 Water Warrior Challenge,” where students participated in various water-related activities and raised funds to provide safe water access to Wendano Primary School in Kenya. Dubai International Academy (DIA) held a “Water Week” in collaboration with Project Maji, with students engaging in the Project Maji Water Curriculum to learn about the water crisis and its impact. Jumeirah Primary School hosted an Eco Market where Project Maji raised awareness about the water crisis and sustainable solutions, as part of their long-term partnership focused on raising awareness and fundraising for safe water access in Kenyan schools.

These initiatives have garnered significant interest from numerous schools in Dubai, and Project Maji is thrilled to announce a burgeoning pipeline of new partnerships with schools in the region for the upcoming year.

MEET THE TEAM

Project Maji Team

Management

Sunil Lalvani
Founder & CEO
UAE

Wieke de Vries
Director of Development & Partnerships | Netherlands

Tejinder Singh Lamba
Director of R&D & Production
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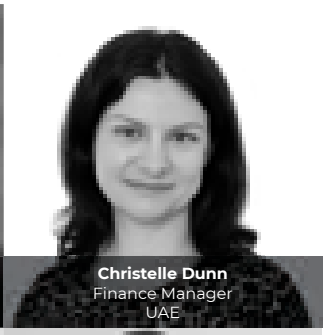

Christelle Dunn
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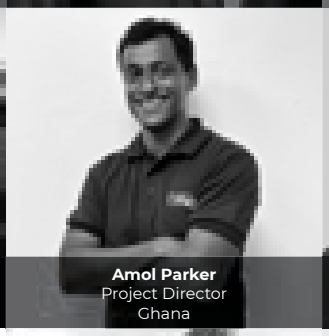
John Hutchinson
Technical Consultant (Energy & PAYG) | South Africa



Amol Parker
Project Director
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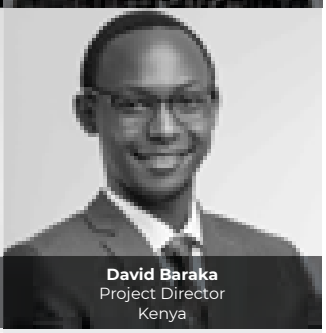

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Joyce Matata
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Kenya

Patrick Mburu
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Joan Marie Tinoyan
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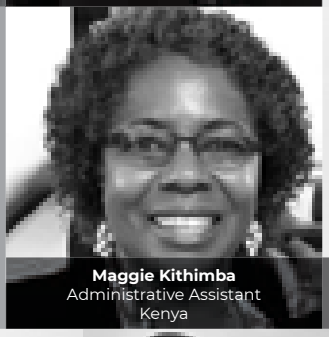
UAE



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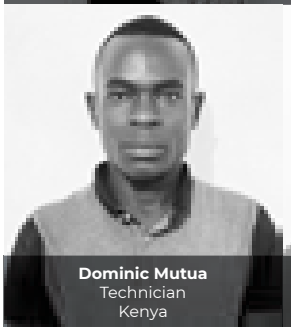
Administrative Assistant
Kenya

Ama Wilson
Administrative Assistant
Ghana



Dominic Mutua
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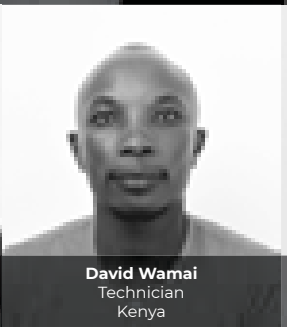

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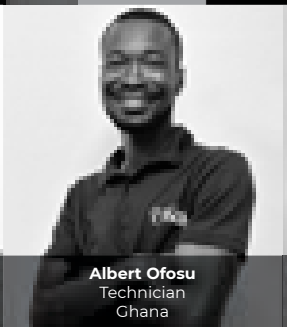
Kenya



Albert Ofosu
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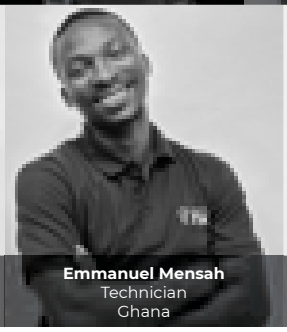

Emmanuel Mensah
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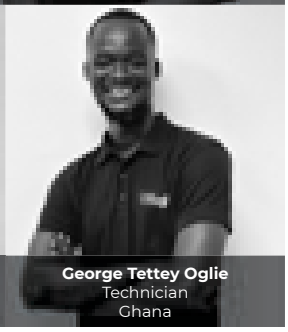
Ghana



George Tettey Oglie
Technician
Ghana

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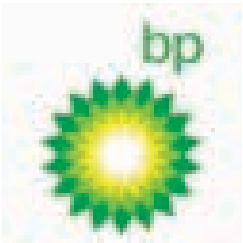
Commercial Partnerships



Non-Profit Partnerships

Aqua for All

thrst

VOXimpuls

Woord en Daad

GlobalGiving

BRINEYS

WATER FOR LIFE TRUST

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

steppingstones for africa
steppingstonesforafrica.org

Chellaram Foundation

LAB PAINT FOUNDATION

UGANDAN WATER PROJECT

www.buildmyafrica.com

IMPACT ADVENTURES

Relate

Ali Ebrahim & Family

UNESCO GREEN CITIZENS

beyond capital fund

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Knowledge Partnerships

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TU Delft

Middlesex University

PRINCETON in AFRICA

SOCIAL IMPACT CLUB London Business School

DE MONTFORT UNIVERSITY LEICESTER

Murdoch UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

FAIRGREEN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

DUNECREST AMERICAN SCHOOL

SEVENOAKS SCHOOL

project maji
transforming lives

The impact achieved by Project Maji throughout Ghana, Kenya, and Uganda is a testament to the transformation that clean water brings to communities. We've witnessed children attending school with brighter smiles, families enjoying improved health, and women empowered to pursue their dreams. This report is not just a reflection of the past year; it's a blueprint for the years to come. As we move forward, we invite you to be an essential part of our journey. Your support has and will continue to shape lives, one drop at a time.

If you're inspired by our mission and want to play an active role, consider making a difference by scanning the QR code to donate. Your contribution fuels the ongoing journey toward sustainable access to clean water. Alternatively, you can scan the other QR code to delve deeper into the heart of Project Maji, discovering more about our initiatives and the stories that define us.

Scan the QR code to learn all about our work via our website

Scan the QR code to support Project Maji's work in rural Sub-Saharan Africa and help provide sustainable safe water access for communities in need