

Improving Access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Final Report: November 2023

This report shares the most recent update under Temwa's Improving Access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) project implemented in Nkhata Bay North, Malawi. Our work in the latest two villages, Joloti and Yepe, began in October 2022 and, due to delays as a result of a cholera outbreak in 2022, was completed at the end of October this year (with a 1 month extension). The project has seen huge success in increasing access to safe, clean water and increasing uptake of WASH practices in these communities.

Project context and aims

Dirty water and poor hygiene continue to be key threats to life in the communities we work with. In Nkhata Bay North, three in five people contract waterborne diseases every year. This is due to reliance on open water sources, poor sanitation infrastructure, and poor hygiene practices. The water sources communities use to drink, wash, farm, and fish are contaminated by human activity. At the same time, healthcare services are inadequate and hard to access due to the area's topography and lack of reliable transport infrastructure.

Temwa's project aims to create safer and healthier communities through community awareness activities; by providing access to clean water and sanitation; and by building community capacity around health service provision. Over the last year, Temwa has supported two new villages, Joloti and Yepe, along the shore of Lake Malawi. This followed a request from local chiefs and Village District Committee (VDC) members to address the rising cases of WASH related diseases in the area. These two villages are very remote, and can only be reached by a three hour boat journey, and crossing a mountain range on foot. Temwa's support, therefore, was absolutely vital as these communities have very limited facilities and access to government resources.

Community health achievements

We are proud to report that your support has helped Temwa deliver the following project activities and achievements.

Outcome 1: Improved community knowledge about WASH and broader health issues

In order for communities to make informed decisions about their health, including their hygiene and sanitation practices, Temwa runs awareness-raising activities to improve understanding about best practices to combat WASH related health issues. WASH committees, which comprise community members trained by Temwa, are taking a leading role in improving community knowledge and adoption of these best practices. WASH committees use community gatherings such as church services, as well as arranged meetings by chiefs, to raise awareness of key WASH issues.



Through awareness events conducted in the two new villages as well as the health centres of Bula, Ruarwe and Khondowe in March, over 2,000 people received clear, accurate information on WASH best practices, for example drinking safe and clean water, proper use of latrines, and hand-washing.

Since these events, Village Headman and health centre staff have directly linked these events to an increased uptake in WASH best practice and a decrease in waterborne diseases. Across both villages, 51 new latrines and 27 new hand washing facilities have also been constructed. According to monitoring conducted in July, the number of people who can correctly describe at least three measures of preventing WASH related diseases has increased from 41.9% to 89%.

We are proud to report that we have seen huge progress being made, with both communities adopting good hygiene and sanitation practices in their households. In September, household inspections were conducted across Joloti and Yepe by the WASH committees, supported by village Chiefs. In Joloti, we recorded an impressive overall 94% adoption rate of all WASH facilities (including kitchens, rubbish pits, hand-washing facilities) among households. The committees did note that some households are not consistently filling hand washing facilities with water.

In Yepe, 86% of households now use latrines and 73% have kitchens. However, adoption of handwashing facilities and rubbish pits has been notably lower in Yepe however. Overall, of the 419 households across the two villages, we saw an increase in latrine use from 71% to 91%, and an increase in using Mpondagiya (Hand Washing Units) from 40% to 61%.

The results from these monitoring visits demonstrate that Temwa's work including awareness events is having a positive impact on the adoption rates of WASH best practices in these communities and improving health.



Outcome 2: Access to safe and clean water and sanitation

Many community members in Nkhata Bay North are using contaminated water from Lake Malawi or from unprotected wells to drink, cook, and clean with. Lack of access to safe water means that, historically, waterborne diseases, including bilharzia, diarrhoea, intestinal parasites and cholera are rife in Nkhata Bay North. This situation is exacerbated further due to long distances from health facilities so community members often do not seek medical help when they contract water related diseases, and tend to self-medicate.

From our baseline survey, we know that, in Joloti, over 100 households depend on water from rivers and one unprotected well and there are no boreholes, piped water, or safely constructed shallow wells near the community. In Yepe, less than 20 households benefit from tap water which is available at a nearby school, while the rest of the households rely on water that is directly collected from the lake. Both villages were reporting frequent cases of waterborne diseases before the project began.



Throughout the project period, Temwa has been delivering ceramic water filters to each community. Up till September, Temwa had provided the villages with 300 water filters. Unfortunately, there were delays distributing the final filters as a result of supply chain shortages. In September, Temwa procured and delivered the final 119 water filters to the villages, meaning every household can purchase a filter.

Of the 200 filters delivered to Yepe before September, 158 have been sold so far, with a total of MWK 948,000 being raised from the sale. In September, Temwa delivered a further 62 filters meaning every household can access clean, safe water. Of the 100 filters provided to Joloti before September, 97 were sold (the remaining 3 unfortunately being damaged). A total of MWK 485,000 has been raised from the sales. In September, Temwa provided a final 57 filters to Joloti.



A further 53 water filters were purchased to replace any damaged water filters whereas others were distributed to 3 schools, 1 preschool, the Ruarwe health centre and 3 fisherman’s camps.

Alongside delivery of the filters, the WASH committee members and chiefs are trained on using and maintaining the water filters, and they are responsible for training the community members as filters are purchased. The training highlights the advantages of the filter technology compared to other methods of water treatment and explains how the monetary contribution will benefit the community’s overall

health through reinvestment in other community health projects (see more below about community projects supported by reinvested funds).

In each village we implement the project, we normally plan to build three latrines in public areas to show their importance to the community, and demonstrate how to build their own. However, following the baseline survey at the start of the project it became apparent that Joloti already had a significant number of latrines, having received support from another charity some time ago. However, these were not being used consistently by all the households. In Yepe, whilst demonstration latrines needed to be built, the dramatically increased costs of building materials in Malawi in 2023 meant just two latrines were constructed.

In Joloti, we are proud to report that, since Temwa’s project began, the community has now achieved a near-100% adoption rate of their pre-existing latrines. Due to the community not needing the demonstration latrines, they instead requested support to construct a borehole as they face major challenges sourcing water for cooking and drinking. We have now successfully constructed a borehole to provide a more consistent water source for the community.

To ensure sustainability, the community has entrusted the WASH committee to be responsible for maintaining the borehole. Each household will contribute a very small fee every two months which will be used to buy materials required for maintenance such as oil. WASH members were trained on how to fix the borehole should it be broken. Before the borehole was constructed, over 2,000 people had been drinking water from an exposed water source, which was also shared with livestock. Now these community members have a protected water source to fetch water from which, in addition to treating the water using their filters, further reduces their risk of getting a waterborne disease.



Outcome 3: Improved community health services



The local health centres in Nkhata Bay North are sparsely located and severely under-resourced, often lacking basic health necessities such as soap. Some community members live a nine-hour walk away from the closest clinic. The two villages, Joloti and Yepe, are particularly remote and inaccessible, meaning their healthcare and water facilities are inadequate and the communities receive no support from other organisations.

The WASH project has centred on empowering local governance structures to lead the implementation of core activities. Training local governance representatives and health centre staff on water, sanitation, and hygiene best practices will ensure the project’s sustainability going forward.

Since the WASH Committees were established at the end of 2022, they have continued moving from household to household twice a month to

train community members and ensure that households are adopting the WASH best practices the project is promoting.

The VDC and Chiefs get monthly reports from the WASH committees and act where necessary. These visits have been supported by bylaws decided upon by community members to help enforce proper sanitation practices, including the reduction of open defecation, in order to reduce the prevalence of waterborne diseases in the villages.

Our monitoring visits in April and September established that WASH committees in both villages have been actively participating in the project throughout. Both WASH committees have consistently been meeting with their respective local governance representatives, providing regular updates on the roles which were assigned to the committees.

The WASH committees have continued to raise awareness among community members through community gatherings in churches, community meetings and chiefs courtesy calls.



According to the Ruarwe health centre which offers health services to community members from both villages, there has been a huge decrease in occurrences of WASH related diseases among community members compared to the same period in September before the project had started. It is reported that only two people have suffered from diarrhoea from Joloti (compared to 11 last year), and four from Yepe (compared to 16). No one from Joloti has reported cases of dysentery (compared to 7) and only one from Yepe has done so (compared to 12).

The villages are now deciding how they will reinvest the funds raised into community-led health projects. See the Community Stories below for more information.

Community Stories

Reinvesting water filter funds into a community clinic

Singa Kamanga is the Village Development Committee (VDC) chair of Mchulu Village, where Temwa implemented the WASH project in 2021-2022. We returned to speak with him about the lasting impact of the project on his community.

In 2021, Mchulu VDC called for a meeting with Temwa who began implementing the WASH project in the area. Singa says, since the project, there have been reduced cases of illness as people are now drinking clean water through their water filters. Prior to this, community members experienced high levels of waterborne diseases such as diarrhoea and cholera. Before the project, only 30% of households had latrines, but now at least 60% of households have adopted latrine use. Singa has also seen a decrease in open defecation, especially along the beach, since the demonstration latrines were built under the project.

Through the collection of funds for the subsidised water flyers, the community raised over MWK 1,050,000. Through well-wishers and other fundraising, the community are now raising a total of MWK 6,000,000 to build a clinic for children under 5. Singa says, "I want children to be frequently supported with medical care and for women and guardians not to walk long distances when taking the children to the hospital".

The clinic should be built in April 2024, and will provide a lasting service to the community as they continue to benefit from the WASH project.



A community empowered to create change



Makoka Mkandawire is a Health Surveillance Assistant who lives in Yepe with his wife and 4 children. In early 2022, the Ruarwe Health Centre recorded staggeringly high cases of cholera in Yepe. As a result, Temwa began implementing the project in the area.

Now, Makoka has seen that awareness of WASH best practices has increased, water filters have been distributed to the community, and the number of households using latrines has increased. Makoka says that the community have been empowered to make their own changes to the community: “Yepe is now mobilising resources on top of the money raised from the Water filters to construct an under-5 clinic”.

Having seen the changes in his community, Makoka says they are going to continue to work to boost reduction of waterborne diseases.

“Temwa works differently from other organisations. Before I did not understand the approach but seeing the mindset change in people of Yepe, I would like to thank Temwa for that”.



Thank you for making a difference!