



Claire Arunye and her son Urbanus, Namorpuh, Turkana, Kenya



TURKANA

## ‘It’s going to improve the life of my family’: SWIFT upgrades the water system in Namorpuh

### What has changed?

Few residents of the arid county of Turkana in northwest Kenya have adequate access to water. In the village of Namorpuh, problems with the local system meant water was available for a limited time only twice a day, and at just one communal kiosk. People had to choose between queuing for many hours at the kiosk, or collecting unsafe water from the river instead, with many opting for the latter.

Claire Arunye, 29, whose family includes her husband, his nephew and their three children, says she often had to queue for over three hours at the kiosk.

‘If I was waiting a long time, things like cooking food would be delayed at home, and my children would suffer. Sometimes they would fall asleep before the food was cooked, because you need to get water to cook.’

The limited supply meant villagers would try to collect as much water as possible while it was available. Claire would take four 20-litre jerry cans to the kiosk, making four trips there and back twice a day, as she could only carry one can at a time once they were filled. ‘Sometimes there was conflict and quarrelling between people,’ she says, adding that if she was delayed for too long it could also cause arguments at home.

The problems with the supply created a vicious circle for the local Water Users’ Association, which received

a lot of complaints. ‘People wouldn’t pay because they weren’t getting water, and because we didn’t get the revenue, we couldn’t afford to make repairs or improve the system,’ says its chair, Priscilla Ebukut.

Now, however, as a result of work done under the SWIFT programme, clean, adequate water is available at any time of day from a number of points throughout the community, benefiting nearly 2,150 people. ‘Even the far end of the village now gets water,’ says Priscilla.

### How has the change been achieved?

Under the SWIFT programme, Practical Action has upgraded the water system in Namorpuh: installing a high-yielding pump at the borehole, and new solar panels to power it; extending the pipeline by 600 metres; improving the water points; and conducting general repairs.

The improved water system has enabled those who can afford it to construct line extensions that pipe water directly to their compounds. With support from Practical Action, Claire’s family built an extension from the pipeline to their home.

‘Now I have a line and tap in my compound, so the distance has been reduced and there is no issue about the amount of water I can get,’ Claire says. ‘I don’t have to carry heavy jerry cans, as I can just fill a bucket as and when I need water.’

### Why does it matter?

With access to adequate water, Claire - like others in Namorpuh - is now able to cook, wash dirty clothes and carry out other household chores. But perhaps the biggest impact of the upgraded system has been on her livelihood: the kiosk she runs selling sugar, clothes and other items, which in the past she couldn't open until 11 a.m. because she had to collect water first.

'People normally buy sugar and other items early in the morning, so I was missing out on that business,' Claire explains. She has now extended her opening hours, often trading from six in the morning until six at night, and her business is thriving as a result.

'I'm making two to three times as much as I did before,' she says. 'I used to make KSh100-200 (£0.66 - £1.31) per day, but now it's between KSh400 and KSh600 (£2.63 - £3.94).'

With the money she's making, Claire plans to buy more food, medicine for when anyone is sick, and school uniforms, shoes, books and pens for the children, who must have these to attend primary school. In the longer term, Claire wants to expand her business. 'I hope to increase my stock and profit and then save the extra money I earn to pay for secondary school fees, because the more education my children have, the better their future will be,' she says.



Claire Arunye in her kiosk

With her improved access to water, Claire is now planning to start a kitchen garden, where she'll grow cowpeas and sorghum. 'If they grow well, I can sell some of the produce as well as keep some for the family.' She also wants to construct a latrine, something that wasn't possible in the past without water to make the concrete blocks for construction. The family currently use a communal latrine, which they share with over thirty other households.

### What are the challenges?

The challenge for the Namorpuh's Water Users' Association has been the community's reluctance

to pay for water, which has made it impossible to improve or maintain the water system in the past. The association needs to collect revenues from villagers so that it can keep the upgraded system operational, ensuring repairs are made when necessary and putting it on a sustainable footing for the long term.

### How will the challenges be met and what makes this change sustainable?

According to Priscilla, the new access to clean, adequate water has already brought about a sea-change in the community's attitude. 'People are now willing to pay for the water, and have paid on time,' she says. Claire, for example, who has a water connection in her compound, pays the association KSh200 (£1.31) a month for her supply. Two other households use her tap and share the cost with her, each paying Claire KSh50 a month.

### *"With this improvement in water, I have more hope for the future"*

'We are very happy with the work Practical Action has done. It has made all our lives easier,' says Priscilla. 'Now, when we (the Water Users' Association) go into the community, they are happy to see us, because they're no longer facing problems with water and they are now willing to pay.'

With this revenue, the association has employed a security officer to guard the solar pumping system and keep the panels free of dust to maintain efficiency. It has appointed a committee member to be responsible for repairing the mainline supply system, and is putting the fees collected from the community into a bank account, so that it can pay for any repairs the committee member is unable to undertake.

Claire believes the upgrade to the water system in her village will lead to many more positive changes. 'With this improvement in water, I have more hope for the future,' she says. 'I feel it's going to improve the life of my family.'



Claire Arunye filling her water bucket

Stories and photos collected by Jane Beesley, freelance humanitarian communications specialist, and edited by Emma Feeny (Oxfam).

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