

## **TKMP Annual report 2020**

A pandemic, a locust plague and heavy rains have been some of the major challenges facing the Tweed Kenya Mentoring Program (TKMP) in 2020.

Now in its 15<sup>th</sup> year, the TKMP continues to provide safe water and sanitation in the Siaya district of Nyanza Province, in western Kenya.

Program Manager, Olita Ogonjo, continues to manage four Safewater facilities and in his annual report has looked at the challenges which have impacted the program from December 2019 until August 2020.

### **December 2019 to February 2020**

A significant event in this period has been a desert locust plague where Kenya and other East African countries faced a serious swarm invasion, which has already decimated over 200,000 acres of land in the region, and caused a humanitarian disaster.

Experts linked the locust spate with the recent unusual heavy rains, attributed to climate change.

Locusts have invaded Muhoroni and Migori County, causing concerns among farmers in the TKMP Safewater areas.

During this period, there has been renewed energy to unite Kenyans following last year's election.

There is support for President Kenyatta and Opposition leader Raila Odinga's peace accord, arising from the 2017 election skirmishes, and a push to fight the country's runaway corruption.

This has seen an increase by Siaya County Government in roads and water infrastructure repairs.

These involved routine maintenance works, including water production/distribution, records maintenance, Gona tank repair, Manyasi delivery line repair works and preparations for Ochilo line repair works.

During this period, 220,510 litres of water was produced and distributed by the SW stations, and KES 10,205 was collected from water sales.

The water production and distribution, even though still low, was higher than the September to November 2019 period.

High rainfalls and Siaya Government (SIBO) piped water supply completion reduced water demand, particularly from September to November 2019 and January, 2020.

The TKMP participated at the Ochilo Primary School 2020 inaugural Board of Management (BoM) meeting on 14 February, 2020.

### **March – May 2020 report**

The Kenyan Government has imposed hygiene/health regulations making it mandatory for people to wear masks and observe 'social' distance while in public places and also wash hands.

There has been a countrywide night curfew and lock down of towns and areas identified to hotspots of the COVID -19 infections, such as in Nairobi and Mombasa. Schools, colleges' churches, bars and restaurants including key services such as courts, international and across border travels were shut down.

As of 30 May, the official confirmed number of cases in Kenya at the time was 1888 (out of 67,341 tested samples) with 408 people suffering from the disease and there were 63 deaths.

Siaya had nine confirmed cases and two reported deaths.

It is very worrying that COVID-19 cases are on the rise.

Despite the rise, the Government is under pressure government to reopen businesses and schools by those arguing that the cost of extended lockdown would outweigh the cost of saving lives.

Siaya's TKMP team used this period to help raise awareness about COVID-19 and help curb the spread of the pandemic.

This was done through the Safewater kiosks.

The kiosks continued to supply free clean treated water to the communities in Manyasi, Tinga and Gona while the Ochilo School remained closed.

Due to lock down and limited movement of people, major repairs and maintenance such as the Ochilo water line and procurement of new water pump suction/discharge hoses for the four SW sites was unable to be completed.

Heavy rains forced the suspension of the kiosk painting works planned for the SW stations and also resulted in flood damage of key infrastructure, homes and properties in the lower River Yalla, Kanyaboli and Manyasi.

Dams are completely filled due to the rains though they have seen a significant silt load and there was damage to water extraction pipes.

There was drop in water demand during in the period due to the rains and people panicking due to COVID-19.

Siaya experienced serious and extended water, electricity, mobile and Internet outage over the period.

### **May update – COVID-19 lockdown**

Nairobi and Mombasa are in total lockdown - no going in or out, with rest of country including Siaya on partial lockdown and tight police surveillance ensuring people wear masks, wash hands and maintain social distancing.

The infections are on the rise and the number of deaths is also rising. The biggest challenge is managing the infection rates in the slums and remote rural areas.

The infections in Siaya are low, with only two reported deaths so far.

It has been raining heavily and many parts of Siaya have been flooded. The locust swarm is rapidly approaching.

Olita Ogonjo said they have tried to keep Safewater operations going and got the staff to observe the new safety hygiene measures.

“We stopped handling loose cash at the water points and have been distributing water free between 9am to 3pm,” he said.

“We have set up community hand wash stations with soap and everyone has to wash hands and buckets before being provided with water. The water demand has been low because of heavy rains.

“It’s still a challenge getting people to observe the health safety measures because of the community set up.”

The Safewater kiosks have been the only source of clean safe water in the area, as the SIBO company water supply has not been in operation since February.

The Safewater committees have decided to supply water free, (2x 20L Jerrycans per day) for drinking to every person.

The three committees are withdrawing water funds saved in their individual accounts to purchase the required fuel.

The lockdown in Nairobi and Mombasa have reduced supplies at shops in Siaya with several businesses closing.

As of 24 May the official numbers of COVID-19 confirmed cases was 1214 but only nine are reported from Siaya.

There concerns that there may be more cases than reported, especially in Siaya.

The government hospital still doesn’t have means of testing to confirm COVID-19 cases in Siaya.

Tests that are conducted are transferred to Nairobi, taking up to 21 days before results are known.

“We have kept the SW kiosks going, supplying clean treated water to the community in Manyasi, Tinga and Gona thanks to SW operators, TKMP staff and the committees. Ochilo School remained closed,” Olita said.

### **June to August 2020 report - Budget September to November 2020.**

To combat the spread of COVID-19, the government continued to impose a countrywide night curfew (9pm to 4am).

Schools/colleges, bars and restaurants also remained closed.

However the lockdown in COVID-19 hotspots such as Nairobi and Mombasa were eased, allowing the movement of people as well as the much-needed goods and services.

Churches, mosques and places of worship were also reopened as were key government offices and courts.

COVID-19 had now reached rural communities and the responsibility to track and manage the cases has now been handed to the 47 county governments.

The pandemic has caused serious livelihood losses with experts estimating that nearly two million Kenyans are likely to have directly lost jobs and/or businesses.

Siaya and many other rural areas of Kenya saw reverse migration of people back to villages to escape the hardships in cities and towns.

As of 31 August 2020, COVID-19 cases had risen to 34201 with 577 reported deaths (Kenya Ministry of Health). Siaya had about 12 reported deaths.

There is a looming doctors and nurses' strike over poor pay and a lack of COVID-19 Personal Protection Equipment.

This is made worse by reports of COVID-19 corruption (misuse/theft of funds and aid) within the Ministry of Health.

The TKMP Siaya team continued to provide support that ensured Safewater communities at Manyasi, Tinga and Gona had uninterrupted access to clean water through proper maintenance of SW stations and production and distribution of clean water.

The team also messaged COVID-19 hygiene practice standards at the stations; regular hand wash using soap, wearing of masks and maintaining physical distancing. Kiosk repairs and paintings were completed at Gona, Tinga and Manyasi.

Water pump suction/discharge hosepipes (including couplers, clips and strainers) were finally delivered.

Ochilo School remained closed thus no repairs and maintenance could be carried at the site.

A HDPE pipe roll was procured for Ochilo water line repair when the school re-opens. Ochilo School's raw water tank was blown off the kiosk roof during a storm and got damaged.

## **SW9**

The Tweed TKMP committee has been discussing the details of the next volunteer visit and project in Kenya for the past 18 months.

COVID-19 has obviously put a stop to any travel plans and so the team has begun talking to Olita about the next project.

It is likely that this work would focus on small practical improvements to water and sanitation at a number of the schools within the program area.

It is unclear when schools will open exactly but looking at discussions and COVID-19 preparedness, it may be anytime between next month and January next year.

Many schools simply aren't prepared, especially rural schools. The government has set aside funds to help sort out. One area is equipping schools with water and sanitation.

"I honestly don't know how this will play out with or affect our program at Ochilo," Olita said.

"One would think that the logical thing would be for the Government program to adopt/build on our work as an appropriate solution to water problem."  
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The Safewater catchment schools will definitely need water and sanitation infrastructure to manage spread of COVID-19 and other diseases.

"The Ochilo head teacher and schools chairman still need our support, as they are unsure about the government's COVID-19 school program and who to contact/talk to in government.

"This is the same situation with Kubar, Obambo, Urim and Luala schools.

"I agree that hygiene sanitation, including low cost handwashing stations and information at schools is the way for us to go.

"We could seek to support the SW schools within the government programs."