

Stories of Change
The Sustainable Water,
Sanitation and Hygiene
(SuWASH) Project
(Kavre, Kalikot, Jumla)



WaterAid / Mami Karmacharya



WaterAid

Where we started

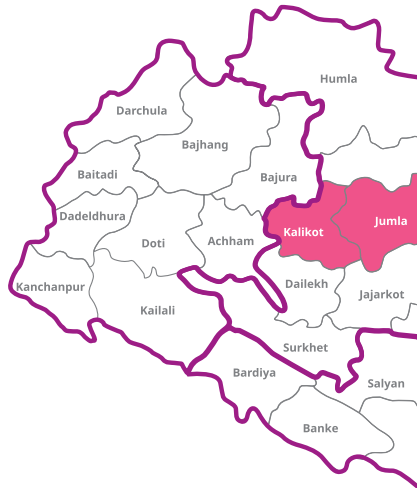


In Nepal, one in ten people still do not have access to clean water. This means that people living in remote communities, who do not have equal access to services, often have no choice but to drink dirty water. As a result, they get sick and their education and livelihoods suffer. None of this should be normal.

That is why, three years ago, we came up with a comprehensive WASH intervention for the vulnerable communities in Jumla, Kalikot and Kavre districts. Due to the unavailability of water sources and lack of awareness in these areas, the WASH status was very poor. The earthquake in 2015, made the situation even worse as most of the WASH facilities were damaged adversely affecting the vulnerable communities of the region.



Grounded on the principles of human rights, SuWASH project was implemented, with the main objective to build resilience among the community people by promoting WASH related rights and building resilient WASH structures, to ensure the sustainability of the WASH interventions during and after the natural disasters. The project was designed to ensure that the targeted communities have clean and adequate drinking water, sustainable sanitation facilities and improved hygiene behaviour through WASH resilient structures.



The Centre of Change

Three years on



In the past three years, SuWASH project has provided improved access to safe and adequate WASH services to **9,706** marginalized and vulnerable people by building **1,980** water taps.

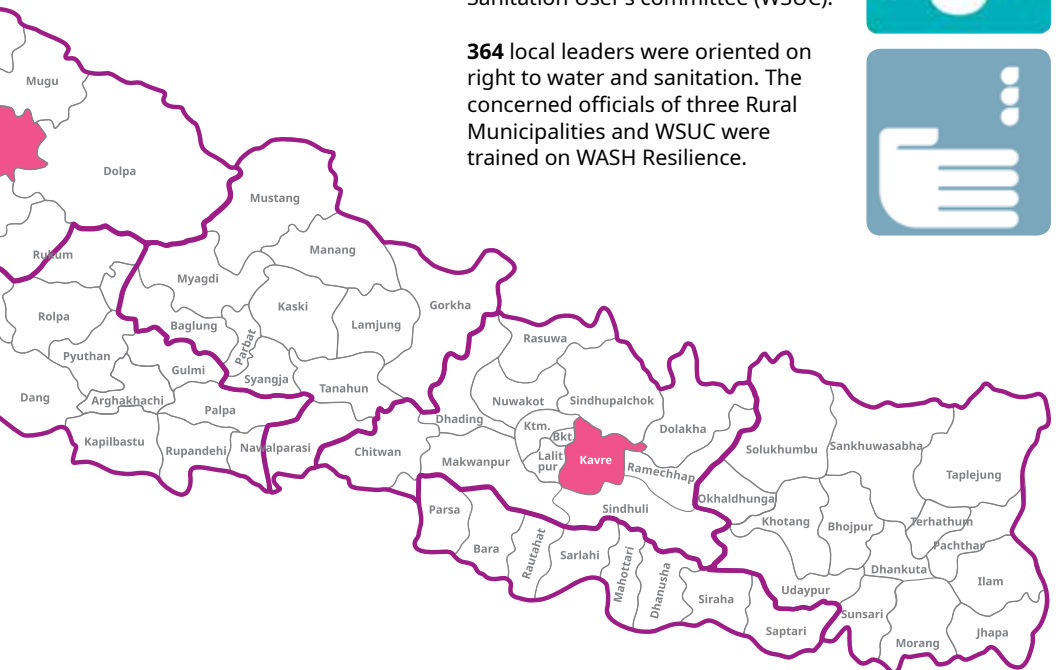
2,203 people have access to sanitation services by building **385** toilets at the household level. Earlier, the sanitation scenario was very challenging in the region. Around 200 households did not have toilets and those who owned a toilet, did not have sufficient water for cleaning.

4,949 people reached by hygiene promotion activities. Hygiene Behaviour Change was one of the key components of the project to improve health, well being and dignity of the communities.

Now, **3,145** school children have access to CDG friendly WASH facilities at **17** schools. The sanitation scenario was even worse in schools, the toilets were closed due to scarcity of water.

5,361 community people were provided orientation on right to water and sanitation and **23** people from the marginalized communities hold key positions in Water Sanitation User's committee (WSUC).

364 local leaders were oriented on right to water and sanitation. The concerned officials of three Rural Municipalities and WSUC were trained on WASH Resilience.



Independence and dignity

How would you feel if you were not allowed to fill water from the taps because you are a Dalit? How frustrating would it be to have a tap you couldn't reach? For some this was a daily struggle.

37 year old Sadu Darji, lives with her family of six in Darji Tole, Palata-9, Kalikot district, an area with scarcity of drinking water, further exacerbated by periodic droughts. Until last year, Sadu and her family used to fetch water 4 times a day. She recalls the time when she had to queue up for hours to fill her canister (gagri) with water and also face discrimination from the villagers simply for being a Dalit.

"A community tap was constructed a decade ago in the area where non-Dalits live. The tap was not an easy access for us, even though we equally contributed physically in the construction. We had to wait until all the non-Dalits finished filling their pots."

- Sadu Darji

Monsoon season was even more difficult for them since the water would turn turbid and they were left with no other option but to drink it.

SuWASH project has helped many families access clean water, improved sanitation and also practice good hygiene behaviours. Today, Sadu and her family can collect water from the tap stand without any fear of humiliation.

Easy access to water has helped Sadu save time, keep her toilets clean, spend more time with her children, maintain personal hygiene and engage herself in other productive activities. As a member of WASH Co-ordination Committee, Sadu has participated in sessions on Rights to Water and Sanitation, which made her aware on WASH rights. With meter system attached to her tap, she is mindful about the water consumption and is willing to pay the amount as per use.

This reflects that availability of water services can help reduce the existing differences in the communities. Sadu's willingness to raise her voice against the discrimination against the Dalit community gives a sense of empowerment.





WaterAid/ Mani Karmacharya

Clean water for a better future



WaterAid/ Mani Karmacharya

Bijay from Birtadeurali, Kavre started carrying water when he was 11 years old. The nearest water source, which was 10 minutes away, dried up after the devastating earthquake of 2015, which made their lives very difficult.

Bijay used to take the hour long water journey twice a day, in the mornings at 6am before school and in the evenings at 4pm after school. If the source was crowded, he had to wait for about half an hour for his turn. He sometimes went to the source along with his friends, but most of the time he was alone. Bijay says, "The path he used to take was not easy, it was steep and dangerous. If you slip and fall, there was a very small chance that you would return fit and healthy. Going downhill was easy with an empty canister, but climbing up was very difficult".

According to Bijay, the source was usually very busy with a minimum of 20 people around to fetch water. They used this water for drinking purposes,

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but if they have to wash clothes and bathe, they all used to come to the source, since it was no possible to carry such a huge amount of water back home.

Bijay says, "The water was not protected but since it is a natural stream, the water looked clean and the taste was not bad either. We did suffer from stomach ache, fever and headache sometimes, but I am not sure if it was because of the water we drink."

Bijay recalls that the most difficult part of the water journey was climbing uphill with a canister full of water. Bijay's canister carried 15 liters of water and the canister itself was 5 kgs. Bijay regret that he had to miss school very often because

he had to go to collect water, and he was left with no other option but to miss school since there was no water to even cook food at home.

Bijay's family used to own buffalos, cows, oxen and many goats, but they had to sell them because they could not provide enough water for them. Most of the villagers sold their cattle for the same reason.

Bijay says, he used to get really frustrated thinking about the time spent in collecting water. He was always tired and his productivity was lost. A year later, the intake construction was almost complete in Bijay's area, and the main pipeline from the intake had started flowing water at one point in the village.

Bijay expressed his joy and said they save a lot of time, since they don't have to go to collect water and can regularly attend school as well. Now, we also have water for farming and can focus on sanitation and personal hygiene as well. He believes that clean water at home is essential for a better future.



WaterAid/ Mami Karmacharya

Bijay wants to go to Japan or Canada for further studies. He says earning money in Nepal is not easy, so he wishes to go abroad to make ends meet. He wants to come back to Nepal later and serve his community. He added that he thinks being a politician is a good way to serve the community and the nation.



WaterAid/ Mami Karmacharya

The Water Effect



Nepal was hit by massive earthquakes in 2015 causing widespread damage to water sources, making life very difficult for people like Rekha from Kavre. She had to fetch water each day from a source, an hour away from her home.

She says, "I could not carry two jerry cans of 20 litres each, but I used to take some empty bottles so that I could carry more water at once to avoid going to the source several times a day."

She felt very sad that they do not have sufficient water and they spent many hours a day collecting water, making them tired and unproductive for the rest of the day.



WaterAid/ Mami Karmacharya

“We are all expecting water in our taps within a month. I will be extremely happy that we do not have to fetch water from the source anymore. The first thing I will do is fill up the water pots and clean the house.”

-Rekha



The path they used to take to reach the water source was very steep and in some parts it was dangerous as well.

Rekha never liked the fact that she had to walk so much to collect water for drinking purposes. She was always 15-20 minutes late to school and sometimes she even had to miss it, which led to lower grades.

One year later, we went to Rekha's house and found out that the intake construction was almost complete, and the main pipeline from the intake had started flowing water at one point in the village.

Access to clean water not only affects people's health, but can have a transformative impact on young people's education. Access to clean water close to home has given Rekha ample time to pursue her studies and focus on other important things or just developing their hobbies. They can stay healthy, hydrated and are able to concentrate in class.



“There was a huge scarcity of water earlier and we were compelled to drink water from the irrigation canals. I used to suffer from cold and cough continuously since the water contained faecal matter and we would have faeces in our utensils as well.

The Karnali river also contained charred remains of cremations and we used to collect the same water mixed with burnt coal in our vessels and use it for drinking purposes.

Life has become comfortable with a water tap at my doorstep. The elder people in my village never imagined we would be given such a facility. It is a different experience to have access



to water so close by and we are all really happy now.

Earlier, we walked for hours to fetch water and now it feels like we are in heaven. Now with water at our doorstep, my children have been able to go to school on time and also complete their homework. May our children and grandchildren receive the blessing of clean water for years to come and benefit from it, just like we have received it and benefitted from it.”



Sapana Bam

Bhavana Adhikari



“We feel extremely fortunate to have water so close to our house. Earlier, we used

to drink water from the irrigation canals and used to often fall sick. We used to spend most of our day collecting water since the water journey was very far. Sometimes, we didn't even get time to cook food because the only thing on our minds was water. Even while doing other chores like collecting firewood, our constant worry was whether we have collected enough water or not.

We built a toilet in our house few years ago, but we never really used them and still went to the jungle due to lack of water. Now, since we have water at our doorstep, we teach our children to use the toilet to avoid spread of diseases. Having a tap and a toilet at home is like heaven on earth to us.”





Kitty Damai

"I really can't explain how our life was earlier without water. We were covered in dust and our children were filthy. Even new clothes looked dirty and ragged. Earlier, a lot of children used to die of allergies and dysentery after drinking dirty water.

We had a lot to lose due to dirty water. We have had situations where we could not clean ourselves

during Menstruation due to lack of adequate water.

We feel fortunate and happy that our situation has changed. Neither do we have to walk long distances to fetch water not do we have to indulge in fights over water anymore. We wish the water flow continues for years to come."



Tackling the sustainability crisis



“The tariff system not only assured the sustainability of the WSS but has also saved our future generation from the hardship of water we faced in the past,”
- Buchho

Buchho Adhikari, Chairperson of Water Sanitation User Committee (WSUC), Khaldhunga, Hima Rural Municipality (RM) recalls the days when water was scarce in the community. The non-functional water system left them with no other option than to depend on the spring fed stream. During monsoon they were compelled to drink turbid water and it became even more difficult in winter when they had to depend on melted snow. Majority of the people suffered from diarrhea after consuming unsafe water.

After regular advocacy for improved water supply system to the municipal chair, finally the community voice was heard and construction of Water Supply Scheme (WSS), worth NPR 5 million was on track. The RM allocated a budget of NPR 3 million with additional community contribution of NPR 7,00,000. The construction was halted due to insufficient funds, which was a major disappointment to the Khaldhunga community.

KIRDARC Nepal, partner organization of WaterAid Nepal coordinated with the RM, who proposed the completion of



Khaldhunga WSS with their support. KIRDARC provided technical support for design estimate and construction. After a year, in 2018 an agreement was signed between RM, WSUC (Khaldhunga WSS) and KIRDARC which gave construction of the WSS a go ahead.

Today, clean drinking water runs at every household in Khaldhunga and the community members drink water directly from the tap. Water quality test further confirmed the quality of water they are drinking.

The major concern was the operation and maintenance of the structure and its sustainability. WSUC sought support from KIRDARC, who in turn provided training on post construction management mainly focusing on management of drinking water system and tariff collection. A public hearing was conducted in presence of RM, KIRDARC and WSUC. During the event, a Village Maintenance

Worker (VMW) was appointed and assigned with roles/responsibilities for maintenance of the water supply system. There was a decision to collect monthly tariff from each household, NPR 50 for 4 units as read by water meter as a minimum tariff rate and surplus charges-NPR 10 for each additional unit. As a motivation to the VMW, it was agreed to provide NPR 3,000 monthly wages.

In 3 months Khaldhunga WSUC collected around NPR 7,800 monthly from tariffs with direct saving of NPR 4,000. Operation and maintenance fund have been well channelized with approx. saving of NPR 78,000. WSUC are planning to expand their water system lines by collecting NPR 10,000 per household connection.

“The agreement was a sign that this time there will be water at our door steps. With that enthusiasm, we worked hard and also motivated everyone in the village to provide labour contribution. Excavation of main pipeline and construction of the reservoir tank was completed by KIRDARC, while the household tap connection was community’s responsibility.”

-Buchho



Toilets save lives

There was a severe lack of awareness on water, sanitation and hygiene issues in Karnali, which was the leading cause of water borne and cleanliness related diseases. Baseline survey showed that 16% of the people in the community were still defecating out in the open.

28 year old Lila from Palata Rural Municipality, constructed a temporary pit latrine after ODF declaration, but was not using it.

Lali says, “We built a toilet, but our family was not comfortable to use it and preferred to go to the nearby jungle.” This was a clear implication that people were finding it difficult to adopt the safe hygiene behaviours.



With the main objective to change the hygiene behaviour of the community, a hygiene session was conducted.

Lali shared the learnings with her husband and soon constructed a new toilet for regular use. Along with the toilet they also collected materials to construct a handwashing/ dishwashing station, but due to lack of cement it is yet to be completed. Lali has incorporated the six hygiene behaviours and also motivates her family members to do so.



WaterAid/ KIRDARC

“The hygiene session was very fruitful, it gave me an insight on good and bad hygiene behaviours. It was an awakening call and I vowed to adopt good hygiene behaviours and set an example of an ideal family.”

-Lali, 28



Clean water ends the woes of Kalika Basic School

Imagine you are in a school with no water supply and the kind of situation you would have to face. Lack of access to water in Kalika Basic School was a daily plight for years.

Kalika Basic School has been facing water supply problems since its establishment. The office helper had to walk to a distant source to get water, which did not meet the demands of the school. The students and teachers faced the predicament on a daily basis.



WaterAid/ KIRDARC



Chandra Shahi, a resident of the village provided his private source of water to the school, giving everybody a ray of hope for regular water supply. The Village Development Committee started the construction with pipeline fittings, but the assigned contractor had a vested interest and the quality of work was compromised even though the construction was complete. The water was directly piped from the source without taking into consideration the water safety plan.

The happiness was short lived and within a year of the construction, the pipeline was damaged in several places, and the quality of water deteriorated. Dip Bahadur Shahi, the Principal of the school says his heart sank when the teachers and students were compelled to eat lunch prepared with contaminated water.

Witnessing the problematic situation faced by the school, KIRDARC Nepal, a non-profit organization, working in the school to support sanitation facilities (CGD latrines) also started the intervention in water supply system.

“I recall the day the school got water for the first time. I was very happy to witness the joy of all the students and teachers.”
-Chandra



The community members provide support in the construction of the water schemes in Kavre district.



WaterAid/Rashik Maharjan

