

# JWF Fund 2023 – Project Outline

## Improving Access to Safe Water through Construction of a Rainwater Harvesting System at SSPI Primary School (Uganda)

- Local Partner: Centre for Women and Youth Empowerment (CEWAYE)
- Project site: Nakivale refugee settlement, Isingiro District, Southwestern Uganda
- Project expense: \$1,933 (JWF Fund: \$1,300, donations: \$133, CEWAYE: \$400, beneficiaries: \$100)
- Beneficiaries: 1,141 people (93 men, 146 women, 902 children)
- Background: Access to safe water in Nakivale refugee settlement in the New Congo community was an ongoing challenge. People in the refugee camps, the host community, and local schools were using the same water dam. The community-founded Shaaban Social Progressive Initiative (SSPI), the only primary school in the area, serving over 800 children, is located 4km from the dam. Pupils had to spend an unsafe 2 to 3 hours per day fetching water from the dam. This had led to pupils, especially girls, dropping out of school, a lack of access to safe drinking water, poor sanitation at the school and an increase in water-related illnesses among pupils and community members.

### 【Before】



Pupils collecting water from the community dam

### 【During】



Carrying a water tank

### 【After】



Ceremonial hand-washing using foot operated hand wash

- Details of the project:
  - Construction of a rainwater harvesting system at SSPI primary school
  - Installation of 2 foot-operated hand-washing facilities
  - Equipping pupils, teachers and community members with knowledge of sustainable use of water, and training a local community team on maintenance of the water harvesting system.
  - Result-based participatory monitoring and evaluation approaches.

# JWF Fund 2023 – Results of Follow-up Observations

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### 【Current situation】

- Date of the follow-up visit was September 26. Two years after installation, the system remains in good condition with no observable structural damages or leakages. The gutters, downspouts, and storage tank are intact, and water collection and flow occur smoothly during rainfall.
- The facilities are jointly managed by the SSPI Primary School administration and a trained community maintenance team. The head teacher oversees daily use, while the community caretakers handle routine inspection, cleaning, and minor repairs.
- The pupils use the harvested water mainly for drinking, handwashing, and cleaning, as they were trained to do during the project. Teachers supervise daily water use, and a pupil-led hygiene club monitors proper use of the handwashing facilities. The community caretakers clean the tank and gutters before every rainy season. The system has become part of the school's daily routine, helping improve hygiene and punctuality. The District Health Office has also commended the school for maintaining excellent sanitation standards through proper water use and management. The community is working together to maintain and protect the system.
- Water quality checks are done after every rainy season. The school also keeps a small fund for minor maintenance costs, while CEWAYE offers technical guidance.

### 【Changes】

- There has been a noticeable improvement in hygiene behaviors among pupils and community members. We observed that pupils now wash their hands regularly before meals and after using the latrine, something rarely practiced before the project. The school compound and latrines are visibly cleaner, and pupils take turns to ensure the water tanks are kept covered and clean.
- According to the nearby Nakivale Health Post, cases of diarrhea and typhoid among children have noticeably declined. Mrs. Asiimire Alson, from the Isingiro District Health Office, observed during our follow-up visit that, “We rarely receive cases of diarrhea among pupils from SSPI compared to previous years. The improvement in access to safe water has clearly reduced water-borne infections.” The improvements have also contributed to increased school attendance and well-being.

### 【Other points】

- In 2024, CEWAYE and the Isingiro District Health Department donated two more more, bigger, water tanks and constructed a permanent hand-washing facility. In 2025, in partnership with Giving Joy USA, CEWAYE conducted hygiene promotion and menstrual hygiene management sessions in three primary schools within Nakivale Refugee Settlement, including this one.
- This project allowed CEWAYE to attract support from the government and the local Rotary Club, leading to the construction of new classroom blocks, as shown in the overleaf pictures. The number of pupils has increased, but also the need for more RWHS for these blocks. More support from the JWF would enable them to scale up the project.
- CEWAYE remains committed to sustaining the water system at SSPI Primary School and advocating for the expansion of similar WASH projects across in refugee settlements across Uganda.



Water harvesting system at old classroom blocks.



Water tank on its foundation in 2023



CEWAYE staff washing hands using the permanent hand-washing station.



CEWAYE staff meeting pupils

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### Voices of the beneficiaries (excerpts)



Mr. Kangume Elias, 63 years old, town chief

Mr. Kangume observed that there has been a big improvement in hygiene practices among the local people since the water harvesting project was completed. He explained, “Before the project, people rarely washed their hands after visiting the latrine or before eating because clean water was hard to find.” Now, he noted, “With water available at the school, pupils have developed a routine of washing their hands every morning and after lessons, and this behavior has spread to their homes. I have seen children teaching their younger siblings how to wash their hands properly, something that never used to happen. Nowadays, you can see the children at SSPI Primary School looking more active and healthier. They no longer miss classes because of stomach problems. Even at home, mothers say their children are falling sick less often.” Mr. Kangume explained that the project has strengthened unity and cooperation among community members. Women now have time for income-generating activities such as selling food, sewing, or gardening. Girls are also spending more time in school, which has boosted attendance and performance. He noted that the community feels more hopeful and prouder because they now have a clean, reliable source of water within their reach.



Ms. Nansubuga Annet, 42 years old, chair of the Facilities Management Committee

Ms. Nansubuga explained that the committee works as a team and each member has clear responsibilities. When the dry season started, one committee member mobilized parents to collect runoff water from classroom roofs to supplement the main tank. Ms. Nansubuga herself is responsible for record-keeping and communicating with the school administration and CEWAYE. She has received a lot of positive feedback. One mother told the committee that her daughter’s performance had improved since she stopped missing classes due to water-related illness. Ms. Nansubuga added that users had also asked the committee to expand the system in the future so that more households in the nearby community could benefit.



Mr. Mose , 38 years old, SSPI primary school director

Mr. Mose explained that the system has become part of school life. Pupils drink the water, wash their hands, and clean classrooms with it. “For us, it’s more than a tank,” he said. “It’s a source of dignity and health. For example, during the last school term, we didn’t have to send pupils to fetch water from far away; instead, we used the time saved for lessons and hygiene education.” He added that the water is clean, tastes good, and is always available, which has made everyone feel proud of their school. The WASH training had teachers leading short hygiene sessions every week, emphasizing handwashing. The hygiene club formed after the training continues to monitor latrine cleanliness and refill the hand-washing stations daily. “The pupils even remind even parents at home to wash hands and keep the water clean.” Since the system was installed, cases of water-related sickness among pupils have dropped, and school attendance has improved. He also mentioned that his own family benefits indirectly since the school allows nearby residents to collect some water during the rainy season. “We feel safer, cleaner, and more united as a community,” he added. “This project didn’t just give us water, it gave us back time, health, and hope.”



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Ms. Imani Gloria, 10 years old, primary 3

Gloria smiled shyly and said she uses the tank every day at school. “We drink the water and also wash our hands,” she said. “Before, we used to go to the dam to get water, and sometimes we came back late for class or very tired.” She added that the water from the tank is clean and cool, and she feels safe using it. “I don’t fear getting stomach pain like before. Now I can stay in class and study well.” Gloria explained that she learned to always wash her hands with soap before eating and after visiting the latrine. “Our teacher showed us how to do it properly,” she said. “Even at home, I tell my brothers and sisters to wash their hands.” She proudly mentioned that she also helps refill the hand washing jerrycan near her classroom every morning. “I like to help because I want our school to stay clean.” “I don’t get sick all the time anymore. I used to miss class because of diarrhea. My mother also says I look stronger. We even sometimes use water from the school when it rains a lot.” She added that since she does no longer spends hours fetching water, she has more time to read and play with her friends. “I feel very happy because I can come to school clean and learn every day.”



Mr. Mengerere Sam, 12 years old, primary 4 pupil

Sam said he uses the water harvesting system every day, especially for drinking and cleaning the classrooms. “We used to have to go far to the dam, and sometimes the water was dirty. Now it’s easy, we just open the tap.” He added that during games or hot days, they can drink water anytime, and it keeps them refreshed. “During sports day, we don’t have to carry jerrycans from home anymore.” Sam proudly shared that he is part of the school’s hygiene club. “We learned to keep the water tank clean and covered,” he explained. “We also teach other pupils how to wash their hands properly.” He said he now uses the same lessons at home. “I make sure our jerrycan at home is covered and we don’t put dirty cups inside it. My parents are listening to me now because they see I have learned something useful at school.” Sam said that since the project started, pupils have been coming to school early, and classes begin on time because no one is fetching water. “We also don’t fall sick like before,” he added. “For example, last term, none of my classmates missed school because of stomach problems.” He said his parents are also happy because he spends more time studying and less time walking long distances for water. “Our lives are better now. We are clean, healthy, and proud of our school.”



The new classroom block that lack a water harvesting system



Meeting with Mr. Mose the Director of SSPI



Pupils raising hands to answer a question  
“When do we wash our hands?”