

Kamaila Interviews October 2007

Introduction

During the trip to Zambia in October 2007, following the completion of the Kamaila water installation by Water for Kids, Sara Emanuel carried out four interviews with local people. The aim was to find out how the availability of clean water from taps close to the houses and to the school had changed the lives of the people in the village.

The provision of clean water to the village started in July 2005 when a new borehole was drilled in the village and the school borehole (3km away) was re-drilled and relined. Both were provided with new hand pumps. In September 2006 water was pumped from the school borehole to a tank on the hill, using mains electricity. The water was supplied through pipes to two banks of taps at the school and to six standpipes providing water to within 100m of the surrounding houses. In July 2007 water was pumped from the village borehole to raised tanks using solar power, providing water to 22 standpipes within 100m of all the homes in the village.

The project was managed by the Zambian Institute of Environmental Health, who appointed a project manager.

The four interviews were held with the following people:

- a group of six women: Christina, Fatness, Ruth, Edenia, Christina Z and Catherine
- an older couple: John Bandas and Viness Tembo
- Mary Luanga (Senior Teacher) who lives by the school
- Jolly Simpanda Luzongo (Assistant School Manager) who lives in the village

The first two interviews involved a teacher, Frida, translating from Nyanga to English. The interviews were recorded and notes were taken by Any Sutton, Andrea Smith or Caroline Maffia.

Availability of water before the Water for Kids/Zambian Institute of Environmental Health Project

Before July 2005 there were seven unprotected wells in the village and from the mid 1990s a borehole provided clean water at the school, however it did not work well and often broke down.

The group of women said that before the taps “we used bad water for drinking and there were lots of diseases especially malaria and diarrhoea. Before the well was not covered it was not good for health, insects got into the water. The wells would sometimes go dry and we could go as far as the lodge (*about 6 km*), and there still we could queue for the water.”

Mary said at the lodge “sometimes people would refuse to let us draw water and you could walk all that way and come back without water. It used to take time to fill a container and people would argue and fight, now there is no more fighting.”

Jolly said that at times they had to go as far as the lodge to fetch clean water. “We would carry some containers and wait for any vehicle that would come, so it could carry us back to this place. We would leave around 10.00 hours maybe coming home very late because we could not carry so many containers on our heads, each person would have many containers, maybe 4 or 5 each one.”

The older couple said that they used to get water from a stream 2km from the house. “The stream used to dry up, so we had to go very early in the morning before it dried up, or late at night. The water was not clean because cattle and goats were drinking from the same stream, there were many insects at the stream.”

Mary said that before July 2005 they were using a hand pump at the school which “was very difficult to use, especially if you were sick. It took a long time to fill a 20 litre container of water, you had to rest, it was very difficult.” Jolly said. “It was a big problem for the children to pump the water, when they were sent to get water.....and when the pump itself got broken we never had our own tools to mend it, we could stay maybe for about two weeks without water here so we could go as far as Ketete village to fetch water from the wells (*Katete is another name for the main village of Kamaila.*). It wasn’t easy, especially for us teachers, because we could have to collect water before coming to teach. We could have to get up as early as 0400 hours just to fetch some water before coming to teach.” She said the water from the wells in the village “was not safe, they were just open wells, the water was not purified so we had to add chlorine and maybe boil to make it at least a bit safe to drink.”

Mary said that before “It was very difficult, sometimes we would have to close the school because we had no water, sometimes we would ask children to bring water in containers and sometimes we would send them to get water, which was not good”.

The health impact

Those interviewed talked about problems with diarrhoea, malaria, headaches and those with chest infections carrying water long distances before clean water was readily available.

The group of women said “before the taps we used bad water for drinking and there were lots of diseases especially malaria and diarrhoea; the well was not covered it was not good for health and insects got into the water. The clean water has really done us good. Now there are no insects in the water and there is much less diarrhoea and less malaria. Before we were not happy using dirty water, now our “consciences are free nothing can happen we are using clean water.”

The women also said “We used to visit the clinic so often.” They said that these days, because of the clean water, they mainly visit the clinic for antenatal and under fives health checks and vaccinations. “Before we were going so often especially for diarrhoea cases, not only for the children, but even for the older ones they were also being affected by the same disease, though mainly with the children. You could find them going maybe seven at once and our clinic is very far (*18 km*). They found themselves going there so many times and it was expensive for them.” We still have diarrhoea, but it is not as severe or as frequent as before. We still go to clinic but not as often.

The older couple said that diarrhoea was very common. “These days there is an improvement, now there is diarrhoea and, although it can be there, it’s only once in a long while we are free from such things now.”

The older couple said that “sometimes we could not wash, which felt unhealthy. Drinking dirty water was bad for our health.” They said that there was a lot of malaria and that the clean water has reduced malaria.

Jolly thought that the health of people has improved very much. “For people who have been suffering from chest problems carrying water long distances with something heavy on their head is not safe. Now even washing, cooking, people are now free because there is enough water for them.”

Jolly said that the health of our school children has also improved “throughout the day they have enough water. When there is not enough water in the body you suffer from headaches. A lot of pupils used to suffer from headaches because after moving long distances in the sunshine, then coming to the school and finding no water. So we used have a lot of sickness, now these are minimized.”

Jolly also said “Attendance is good because the cleaner environment is attracting pupils. There is a lot of improvement. In the case of the commercial farmers who send their children they have the chance

to prepare their food at the school and use the water here. "Before they could carry their lunch from home and it could get sour before they take it, which would cause a lot of problems to their health." The children come from up to 12km away, she said some are driven but some do walk that distance.

Quality of life in the village

The group of women said that in the past they were not happy using dirty water, they said "Life has really changed because of the clean water, we were not free drinking the water before now we are happy we use the water freely, there is plenty of water. We could wake up at 0100 in the morning to avoid the queue (*at the lodge*), so there was less time for resting and doing other things because we spent time walking for the water." Now they say that they have a lot of time to do other things like gardening because the water is near, they grow rice, sweet potatoes, maize and some cotton.

Mary said that the water at the school "is clean now, before, I don't know if it was rust, but sometimes the water was not all that clean, now we don't even need to use chlorine". She also said that the school used to pay to have the pump fixed, then the pump-minders were trained as part of the Water for Kids/ZIEH project and they were given their own tools. If the pump broke down it could be fixed quickly, that made it much easier, she said that since the pump was refurbished in July 2005 it doesn't break down as it did before then.

The older couple also noted a change since July 2005 "Despite the boreholes being near, there were a lot of people drawing from the same borehole, it used to waste a lot of our time. Now we draw water near and we can do things faster than before."

Changes at Kamaila School

Mary said that the school benefits from having the taps. "It's not far to go for water to clean the toilets, the pupils they drink clean water and every time they do some work we encourage them to wash their hands as we have water nearby." Jolly said "there is no longer congestion and we really appreciate it because we get water at the time when we want and it is safe water it's not dirty as it was in the past".

Mary suggested "There is some improvement in attendance and I am sure it is because the pupils are not walking long distances to fetch water..... They just wake up in the morning, they wash and they just come to school." She said that they are on time, but before they used to come late.

Mary also said the teachers "don't need to walk long distances to go and fetch water. Back in 2005 we would even come late to class we would have to walk a long way for water. Now everything is easy you wake up the water is there, you just open the tap and you draw and you bathe and you report to work on time We are really thankful for what you have done."

Jolly said that attendance at the school is good "because the cleaner environment is attracting pupils, there is a lot of improvement."

There are seventeen teachers now at Kamaila school, there were only nine two years ago, this means the classes are half the size. "When teachers are posted to this place they appreciate this type of water system and they stay because of this, even though we do not have enough accommodation. It has really attracted a lot of teachers, water plus electricity, we really appreciate it."

Mary said "We have more teachers now, because when they come here they see there is water here they never try to go back, because there are very few schools in Chibombo District which have tap water. We are one of the very few schools with tap water, so when they send a teacher here, they stay, maybe forever." The average class size is now forty-five, two years ago "the classes were combined because of the lack of teachers, we had maybe one hundred and twenty pupils in one class."

Mary said that without the water the painting of classrooms and building the wash room, that the group from England were doing at the time of the interviews, would have been very difficult.

Jolly said that “when Professor Malandola came to the school he was impressed with what Water for Kids and ZIEH had done and, because of this, he gave money to the school to buy new desks.”

Paying the fee

Now the water installation is in place, local people are being asked to pay a fee for maintenance and to pay for a caretaker for the water system in the village. The fee is 1,000 Kwacha (14p) per month for village families and 5,000 Kwa for those living by the school. The interviewees were asked whether they thought people could afford these fees and they said that this is not a problem.

The group of women said that very few families were paying the fee, because some of the taps weren't working. (This matter was resolved and all taps were working in early November 2007.)

The older couple said that they have to pay the salary of the man who looks after the water, but “it's not a problem, the amount is little and it's everyone who is paying, so it's easy. We want it to be safe, so we have to pay.”

Mary said that the 5,000 Kwacha per month is reasonable and that most of 35 families living here are not teachers and that it is not a problem for them to pay this much. Jolly said “here, by the school, they can afford the fee better than those in the village. Those in the village, it's not that they cannot afford, it is because they are uncivilized, they can't understand why they should pay. They say these people brought us these things, why should you charge us? We try to explain that it is for maintenance, in case it gets broken. All those who understand they pay and they appreciate the water.”

Hand washing

All interviewees knew when to wash their hands for hygienic reasons and did so, but they are rarely able to use soap.

The group of women said that the villagers wash their hands a lot, especially the women. They wash their hands “when we wake up, before preparing food, after the toilet, after working or digging or touching dirty things”. They said that soap is very expensive and hard to find each time they need to wash their hands.

Mary and Jolly said that the pupils are taught about hand-washing in Grade 1, from their first week at school and they are reminded right through to Grade 8. Jolly said that the children wash their hands whenever they come from the toilets and “when they go for a break they rush to wash their hands. We don't provide soap, they simply wash. We used to get money for soap, but not now, we get less money now to run the school.”

Latrines

All families were encouraged to dig pits and build latrines last year and again in September 2007, they were promised a bag of cement for the slab and super structure once they had completed the digging.

The group of women said that they have all finished the digging for their latrines and two have started actually building the latrine. One woman already had a latrine, but is building a new one. The older couple said that they completed their latrine three months ago. They said “Last time you came we were promised cement, as we were still waiting we built it anyway.”

Mary said that around the school the teachers had latrines, but few of the others. She said “People from the District came and encouraged them to dig and promised cement for latrines, some have done that, but I am not sure how they are getting on.”

Appreciation of the clean water

The group of women said “the clean water has really done us good.” They also said “Life has really changed because of the clean water, we were not free drinking the water before, now we are happy we use the water freely. There is plenty of water.”

The older couple said “the taps are good for the village. We had to pay when the borehole broke down before, the taps are better as we are no longer losing money this way.”

Jolly said “I live just beyond Katete village We have a well there and you have brought a tap nearby to us, so we are really secured with the water system there, we really appreciate it, because it is really easy.”

Mary said “We are just thanking you for what you have done, you have really changed the environment, you know. Without water..... I don't know how life would be without water, otherwise we really appreciate it.”

Jolly was extremely grateful “We really appreciate your sacrifice to help this school. We really appreciate it, because we have not had such before and you have really changed the shape of this school. Because of the help you have brought and with this we commit you to the hands of the lord that he may praise you abundantly over what you have brought to us, because it is not easy. There are few people who think of helping others and that of all the schools in Zambia just to come and choose Kamaila we really appreciate it. We thank the lord for bringing you here to help us.” She went on “Whenever you think of somebody who you don't even know, who you have never seen, and somebody who is very far it is not easy. We thank the lord, who worked through you, that you do such a thing for us.”

These interviews illustrate what a difference this Water for Kids project has made to the lives of the people in Kamaila and to the children at the school, the future generation. WfK now plans to build on the experience of working with the Zambian Institute of Environmental Health and start new water and sanitation projects in Zambia.

