



Evaluation summary

Meru Inclusive Trachoma WASH-plus Project

END OF PROJECT EVALUATION SUMMARY
OCTOBER 2020 - DECEMBER 2023

CBM Australia has supported the Meru Inclusive Trachoma WASH-plus project – a three-year project aimed to break trachoma transmission patterns and improve community behaviours, especially among children, and improve livelihoods particularly for people with disabilities in Meru County, Kenya.

In 2018, Meru County was ranked 4th worst in terms of sanitation, out of 47 counties in Kenya. To improve water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) within Meru County, the project team worked in select communities and focused on establishing accessible and maintained water points and toilets; supporting access to quality and accessible healthcare, treatments, and referral pathways, including eye health screenings, rehabilitation services and access to assistive devices; and ensuring that people with disability and their families were involved in livelihood activities so they can become more secure financially.

Achievements

- **95 villages were supported to work towards becoming “Open Defecation Free”, with better hygiene practice.**

The project supported various water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) activities in communities and, working in coordination with the government’s network of Community Health Promoters, was intentional in making sure the hygiene and sanitation needs of people with disabilities were considered – something that is often overlooked in WASH projects. Overall, there has been an improvement in general health, and no evidence of trachoma recurrence.

- **Children’s hygiene and sanitation improved.** Hygiene messaging in schools and the renovation of school toilets encouraged children to improve their hygiene and sanitation behaviour - changes and messages which they then shared with their families at home.

The project was implemented by two partners, the Africa Inland Church Health Ministries (AICHM) and Diocese of Meru (DOM-Spark) with support through CBM Kenya, across seven sub-counties in Meru County, Kenya.

It was funded by CBM Switzerland and CBM Australia through the Australian Government Aid Program.

- **Over 25,000 people were screened and around 2,000 people received eye surgery.** This was supported through quarterly “Eye Camps” and in coordination with the government.
- **53 support groups (totalling around 1,400 people) were formed.** These fledgling Organisations of People with Disabilities not only provided peer support for people with disabilities, but by implementing a savings and loans approach known as “SILC”, they helped to improve the financial resilience of people with disabilities – the majority of whom were women. As a result, group member were more likely to be able to afford their basic needs, such as healthcare or children’s education, or engage in business activities.
- **Access to community services improved.** The project helped people living in poverty, including people with disabilities, access vital community services, including as health services such as eye health, rehabilitation, and assistive devices whilst pushing for these services to be accessible. It also encouraged and helped people with disabilities to register for a Disability Card, giving them access to certain services and benefits, whilst also increasing visibility by government of the number of people with disabilities and their issues.

Strengths

The project has strengthened good hygiene and sanitation practices, leading to better health outcomes. By increasing the visibility of disability issues within the community, it has also started to change mindsets. Stigma is reducing, and people with disabilities are becoming more aware of their rights, more confident, and better at advocating for what they need.

In addition, the way in which the project engaged with and amplified the work of local government, particularly in public health, and brought focus to disability issues was impressive and set a precedent for government approaches, planning and budgeting to be more disability inclusive.

More attention needed

Areas that needed more attention related to ensuring that good quality-monitoring of inclusive infrastructure (toilets and handwashing facilities that the project supported) was actually appropriate for the specific users with disability. In addition, more follow up was needed of people found to have complex eye issues, to make sure they did not fall "through the cracks" in terms of social support through the OPD groups.



"The focus on WASH has attracted people to a common concern in the health of their community. Through the "dialogue days" and the "action days" it has triggered a ripple of momentum through the community."

-Community Health Promoter

A Game Changer

Overall, the project has achieved much more than was planned and is a useful model to demonstrate how a focus around one issue can be a catalyst for broader social change on disability inclusion across many areas.

Not only did the project achieve its objective of helping prevent the spread of trachoma through improved treatment, referral systems and positive behaviour change, but it has also improved government policies and approaches more broadly, particularly in health and disability rights, creating a momentum of change that will likely continue beyond the life of the project.

The Flow On Impacts

The Meru Inclusive Trachoma WASH-plus project, Kenya

Ensuring that trachoma elimination is maintained



The project aimed for the results in yellow – but has triggered so much more.

Project Impact: in their own words



"The project has brought issues of health and disability together. People with disabilities know that access to sanitation is their right. The mere fact that people with disabilities can now come and talk to us about their rights – shows the project's impact."

-Government representative

"For 1,200 students, the toilets were run down... The parents dug the new pits and the project paid for the materials and concreting. The school club takes charge of keeping things clean."

- School teacher



"The group - it's a great sense of togetherness, so much better than dealing with things alone. We have been cultivating around 3000 coffee tree seedlings. The profits go into the central fund, and then we can all take loans. Not all groups are as strong as ours though."

-SILC member
