

A white map of Ethiopia is centered on a dark red background. A specific region in the north-central part of the map is highlighted in a bright red color. A white circular callout box with a thin black border is positioned to the left of this red region, containing the text 'Amuru District'. Two thin black lines extend from the right side of the circle to the boundaries of the red region. In the bottom right corner of the map, there is a dark red silhouette of a person's head and shoulders, facing left.

Amuru
District

The logo for amref health africa. It features a red outline of the African continent to the left of the text. The word 'amref' is in a bold, black, lowercase sans-serif font. Below it, the words 'health africa' are in a smaller, red, lowercase sans-serif font.

amref
health africa

**WATER,
SANITATION AND
HYGIENE PROJECT
(WASH)**

**STORY
BOOK**



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INTRODUCTION



Amref Health Africa under Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) project, seeks to increase access to sustainable, safe and adequate water, appropriate sanitation and Hygiene. Amref is therefore trying to reduce prevalence of WASH related diseases such as dysentery, cholera, trachoma, in order to protect women and children from disease epidemics in the areas of operation. In December 2021, a team visited Amuru sub county in Gulu District and collected stories from the residents. Below are some of the stories from selected individuals.

MARGRET MUGISA



▶ **MARGRET
MUGISA**

She works as a project manager supporting two projects in Amuli district.



“Early this year, Amref Health Uganda in collaboration with Amuru government secured a grant from Amref Netherlands, and this grant was focusing on the integration of water sanitation and hygiene into sexually productive health rights in Amuru sub county.”

The project focuses on reducing teenage pregnancy through improving access to water sanitation and hygiene among people living in Amuru Sub County. This project has a unique innovation of integration.

“Each activity and intervention that we do, our focus is on integrating water and sanitation as well as sexual reproductive health rights in this subcounty” Girls, women and young people walk a distance of about 3kms to fetch water. Along the way as they move, the young girls meet the young men and they end up having unprotected sex which contributes to the high pregnancy rates in the district. “Amuru sub county has about

over 10% of teenage pregnancy rates which is higher compared to other sub counties in the district. Why are the girls getting pregnant along the way? They take long distances, and this takes them more than one hour to go and fetch water and come back home. Parents never know what takes place along the way” This, coupled with other factors has increased the teenage pregnancy and Amref Health Africa is trying to close the gap through using schools as the entry point.

“We are going to train school health clubs on personal hygiene sanitation and to teach them to appreciate their bodies through the phase approach.”

Margret also said that Amref is going to ensure that these schools have access to safe water, and the water system will be monitored using solar, and about three or four villages surrounding the schools will be able to access piped water.

“When we ensure that the households get water closer,

then parents will be able to monitor the girl child. We are going to ensure that we educate the parents about parenting in the community and train them on the best water sanitation hygiene practices,”

As much as the girl child is being looked out for, the boy child will also be catered for, because many times the boy child is left out from all the interventions related to SRHR and yet it is crucial to them too. “We are going to have champions in our communities and these are parents we are going to talk to. We need to involve men in discussions related to sexual reproductive health rights. We want the men to appreciate that their daughters are not property and that they have to go to school, in doing so they need to protect them.”

Amref Health Africa is set to ensure that every household in Amuru sub county has a latrine and a washable latrine. Amuru sub county for many years has had temporary latrines but they are moving away from that and taking a step higher in the sanitation ladder. The

households will have washable latrines since there is promotion of the construction of permanent latrines.

There is an organization where the youth through youth clubs or youth groups are engaged in constructing latrines.

“We want the youth to start engaging in livelihood projects and this we have done by linking them to the community development officers to ensure that they benefit from the government programs, and ensure that they increase their household income”

Amref Health Uganda is going to map out households that have young people, both men and women who they will talk to and identify if a household already has a pregnant young girl below 18, and then ensure that this information reaches the police so that whoever is responsible is handled.

Margret also says that they are going to talk about gender-based violence because it’s one of the factors contributing to high rates of teenage pregnancy and through the community dialogs these youths will be at the

forefront of mobilizing communities for health campaigns.

According to Margret, the project came up as a result of a 5-year project that they had implemented in four sub-counties in Amuru, but this project also passed on integration both in the community and the health facility.

“We realized it was producing results but there was a gap because we were leaving out the young people in the picture hence the need to include the youth this time.”

Young people were not being addressed, this prompted them to come up with a project that is integrating sexual reproductive health rights into water sanitation hygiene.

“In summary, we have been able to build the capacity of health workers, especially our dear midwives who play a very big role in protecting a mother and a child at delivery. We have also been able to build their capacity in leadership management and governance and we are seeing the 6 health facilities bringing a lot of money as far as result-based financing intervention is concerned.”



VALENTINE OJORO



▶ VALENTINE OJORO

He is the Project officer under the Water Sanitation and health flagship (WASH) project in Gulu district, but works in Sub County. He explains the clustering strategy and how people have adapted to it.



“Before we adapted the clustering strategy, we would have community workers, health workers and CDOs going down to communities and parishes to sensitize communities on sanitation, hygiene and also ensure that latrines are constructed.”

Valentine says that over time, the challenge is that Uganda is very wide and the frequency with which a health assistant or a community person keeps going back to monitor latrine coverage will be too little, due to the scarcity of enough resources.

“We adapted the clustering methodology so that a group of a cluster may take upon themselves the role of monitoring and supervision of each other.”

A cluster is a group of between 10 and 20 households who are staying in a geographical similar area.

The 10 or 20 households then select a chairperson, finance secretary, a treasurer and the general mobiliser. The whole idea of the committee is to stir the activities of the whole cluster.

It's upon the decision of the committee that they frequently meet several times a month. In the selected and agreed time, the

committee takes it upon themselves to move around to ensure that each of the members in the cluster have sanitary facilities.

“Since we are under the WASH flagship project which has strong components of Sexual Reproductive Health Rights, the cluster members are also trained to go and follow up to ensure that girls continue staying in school, and to make sure that cases of teenage pregnancies are followed up and worked on by the sub county”

Clusters help with issues of mobilization and follow-up, and there is more direct contact between the community people, other than the government members who only visit once in a while.

“We visited one of the clusters that was formed in November, comprising 15 households, 7 of which have confirmed that they have pit latrines already built, and the rest are on their way to complete construction.”

The cluster members have committed that by February 2022, all of the clusters in the village of Kurula A in their 5 clusters will have competitions to see which cluster is doing better and which one is not.

ALBERT



▶ ALBERT

Albert is the CDO of Amuru sub county. He gives an overview of the status of the WASH & SRHR projects in Amuru sub county.

According to UBOS 2020, Amuru has a total population of 47,000 people, with the majority being women and men having the lowest number.



“We have 9 primary schools with the highest enrollment being in Amuru lamogi which has over 2000 learners”

In the lower primary, the majority are young girls. There’s a slight decline in the number of girls in higher classes like Primary 6 and 7. The lockdown has affected many people but mostly the girls because they have been exposed to situations that have led them to getting pregnant.

“According to the duty bearers like the LC 1, we receive an average of about 3 cases related to girl child pregnancies every week.

“At the moment in Amuru sub county, per every 100 women going for Antenatal Care, 31 are young and teenage girls. Covid 19 is to blame for the increase as well as the economic hardships. COVID 19 has kept young girls and boys home, a factor which has threatened food security in so many households.”

The girl child’s health has been

ignored since parents are unable to provide for their daughters’ needs. Girls’ needs then end up being transferred on to men who promise to marry and take care of them, hence the rise of teenage and child pregnancies. Albert’s worry is that when schools in Uganda open, most of these pregnant or young mothers will not be allowed back in, hence putting their lives at stake.

Albert suggests that as a district, parents, sub county, and stakeholders should embark on continuous sensitization and engagement with all structures at the ground level which include; the child protection committees, the village health team, gender-based violence team at the district and sub county levels, to help in the community awareness, to ensure that even though these girls got pregnant, they can deliver safely and be prepared to go back to school.

He narrates how before the first project (WASH) of Amref Health

Uganda, they were at 47% of Latrine coverage, and when the project was implemented, the percentage rose to 57% in most of the villages.

“We still have to achieve 85% in order to consider it a success story, and Amref Health Uganda has been very supportive to this date .”

There’s a total of 147 bore holes in Amuru Sub county, 47 of which broke down, and the 100 have been rehabilitated and fully functional for community members to enjoy. The protected springs are 9 and out of these, 5 were rehabilitated with the help of Amref Health Africa, the rest are not in good shape.

“I’m happy that Amref Health Uganda as our good partner, blessed us with a good water project which has put us all under clusters, where every cluster will be given piped water systems. We shall then all have access to clean water, hence preventing water borne diseases in Amuru.”

The youth are supposed to be engaged in productive activities and be represented at council level, with their voices heard. They will be involved in income generating activities with the SRHR project. Through Amref Health Africa, the youth were grouped and tasked to come up with projects with the facilitation they were given. We are pleased that some ventured into piggery, poultry, goat rearing, among other things

“As a sub county we still pledge for more youth related projects because we still have needy members within the community”

AMONY IRENE



AMONY IRENE

17 years

Amony Irene is a 17 years old student of Muteme Primary School. She is in primary six, and stays in Acodo Village. Her parents are called Anyeko Helen and Odogo Oyamo. She has eight siblings of which four are girls and four are boys.

Irene narrates how she started her menstrual periods at an early age when she hardly expected it.



“I started my periods while at school. Our caretaker, whom we refer to as Senior Woman, gave me a basin, jerrican and soap, and thereafter I went to the borehole and fetched water to shower and clean up.”

The Senior Woman also gave her a sanitary towel to use during her periods. Irene also said that such is still the case when she goes into her menstrual period at school. The senior woman always comes to her rescue with the other girls.

“When I go into my periods while at home, I go to the borehole and fetch water, after which I shower and put on clean clothes,” she adds that her parents usually give her money to buy sanitary towels.”

Irene and the other girls face a challenge of accessing sanitary towels since the nearest shops are about 3km away from their home. At times, the shops are short of sanitary towels which poses a big challenge.

The other challenge Irene faces is the borehole being far away

from her home. To add to her problems, she often finds a long queue of people at the borehole, and this delays her journey back home, making it hard for her to take care of other household chores.

“I request that we have water sources brought closer to our homes, so that we can be protected from the vile men we usually find on our way to the well and at the well. It is because of this that some of my friends have ended up being rape victims, and some even getting pregnant.”

When asked about who educates her about Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR), Irene said that she learns from her parents, and sometimes from freinds.

“I have very tough parents who are strict about the kind of friends that I keep. They worry about my safety, and only allow me to move to the shop, or to the well, and back home. This has kept me protected from bad company.”

AGENORWOT SUNDAY



AGENORWOT SUNDAY

17 years

Sunday stays in Acodo village in Amuru district. She is seventeen years of age and a teenage mother. While she was in her Primary Five, she bore a child, and this was during the lockdown brought about by the Covid-19 outbreak.



The permanent effects of child pregnancies are; dropping out of school, mental health, family and social rejection, increased poverty. However, Sunday has been very lucky that her family is very supportive of her.

“My parents have since been taking care of both me and my little baby and that is something I’m grateful for, because very many parents would have neglected their pregnant child.”

When asked about the father of the child, Sunday mentions how he denied responsibility. He was 20 years of age by the time this happened.

Sunday is still enthusiastic about returning to school, and still has a lot of dreams that she wants to achieve.

“I have learnt from my mistakes, and want to be given a second chance to go back to study when schools when re-open”

Agenorwot hopes to go to a vocational school and study hands-on skills since she has always wanted to be creative. She wants to be able to come back to the community and pass on her knowledge to fellow girls.

ADYERO FRANKA



▶ **ADYERO
FRANKA**

15 years



“I want the project to bring water closer to where we stay so that we can have access to safe and clean water. This will also keep us safe from vile men who usually disturb us as we go to the well to fetch water”

ABER NANCY



▶ **ABER
NANCY**
17 years

“

“I’m also requesting for safe water in our homestead so that I can ably clean up myself when my periods come every month. This will help improve my self esteem around the community and amongst my peers”

AMARORWOT EVALYNE



AMARORWOT EVALYNE

20 years

“I am requesting for both safe water and sanitary towels because they are not easy to get. Our nearby shops usually don't have, which prompts us to move longer distances of about 5Km”

ANENE IRENE



▶ **ANENE
IRENE**

42 years

Irene is 42 years old, a mother of 8 children (4 girls and 4 boys). She is married to Otukene Santo. She is an executive member of LC1 in Acodo Village.



“In my village, we have 3 functional boreholes and two well protected wells. However, we still have a problem of shortage of water due to the increase in the population of my village.” says Anene

She requested Amref Health Uganda to help them bring the water sources closer to their homesteads, and to also construct more bore holes in Acodo Village, in order to increase the water supply.

Irene also speaks of how during the lockdown, many teenage girls in the village got pregnant. Three of the girls in her own homestead are teenage mothers who never completed school.

“Since the lockdown, children have stopped going to school. They became very redundant and started misbehaving, leading to many teenage pregnancies.”

She added that it's now almost normal to find 14-17-year-old pregnant girls. Some girls have been impregnated by their age

mates, and some by the vile men they meet while fetching water.

Teenage pregnancies have also brought tension and home breakages because husbands blame their wives for the high rate of pregnancies among their daughters. They think that mothers have not been responsible enough to talk to the young girls about Sexual Reproductive Health rights.

Irene requested the project to provide basic skills in making pads. As a leader she has realized that the girls rarely have money to buy pads because their parents are unable to provide. Teaching the girls in Acodo village how to make reusable pads will help in solving this problem.

According to Irene, this is what she hopes and wishes the project could do for her; “The project should form groups and train young people on Income Generating Activities that can help them work and earn for their children.”

MICHEAL OYUBA



MICHEAL OYUBA

Mr. Micheal Oyuba, is a teacher and a representative of the headmaster, Patron of the Department of Health, Sanitation and well-being at Mutema Primary school.

Before Covid-19, the school had 1062 students, with the biggest population being girls.



“There are changes in the trend of the number of students in this school. We always have many pupils in lower classes but they keep dropping out,” commented Oyuba.

Currently, there are 168 pupils in primary one (108 girls and 60 boys) and primary seven has 43 pupils with 23 being girls and 20 being boys.

Girls are dropping out of schools at a higher rate than the boys are. Oyuba also says that girls are more exposed to a lot of hindrances and challenges throughout their education journey.

Here are some of the issues that have led to an increase in girl school dropouts;

- Long distances from their homes to the school.
- Lack of school fees, pregnancies, and early marriages.

“There is a challenge of the

broken bridge from the other part of the village. Boys always have a way of navigating and crossing, but it's always very tricky and difficult for the girls to cross.” said Oyuba.

When speaking to the staff from Amref Health Africa, Oyuba mentioned that they lack a girl's changing room to use during their menstrual periods.

“We also face a challenge of having to share the school borehole with the whole community. This brings outsiders who end up misleading our young girls, hence luring them into sexual relationships, the end result being pregnancy”

On behalf of the headmaster, Mr. Oyuba requested the following;

- To have a girl's changing room constructed to help them cope with their menstrual periods.
- To have the water point fenced in order to limit entry of community members

- Installation of solar panels to enable the computer system work, hence equipping students with computer skills

- To have a special facility built specifically to cater for the babies that belong to the teenage mothers who want to continue studying when schools finally open.

“We want to advocate for more female teachers so that girls can be catered for and can easily find someone to talk to freely when they have issues.” Out of the 17 teachers at primary school, only two are female.

Mr. Oyuba hinted that they are working on a small budget that has been put to purchase sanitary towels for girls during the menstrual period. This is unfortunately not enough, and they hope that Amref Health Africa will help to contribute toward this cause.

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