



Sustainable WASH Systems Learning Partnership

## Develop and Scale District Public-Private Partnerships that Sustain Reliable Rural Water Supply

### SWS partner:

Whave

### Country:

Uganda (Nakaseke, Kamuli, and Kumi Districts)

### Geographic focus:

National, district, and sub-county levels

### Sector:

Rural water

### Primary actors targeted:

Regulator/service authorities, providers, users

### Learning focus:

Financial sustainability of preventive maintenance model

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### To learn more about Whave, visit:

<http://www.whave.org>

### Background

Water supply in rural Uganda is characterized by frequent breakdowns, prolonged repair delays, and premature abandonment of infrastructure. Field studies indicate that rural water supply equipment is non-functioning for 30 to 40 percent of the year. This is due in part to a weak system for sustainable operation and maintenance arrangements – in which local governments pay for major faults while communities are responsible for minor repairs – resulting in a “wait until it breaks” culture. This situation jeopardizes the health and well-being of communities, and represents a poor return on investment from government budgets and development assistance funds.

### Solution

Whave is working to cultivate a sustainable model for rural water service delivery by testing a preventive maintenance approach in three pilot districts. Operating as a Ugandan regional service provider, Whave is signing multi-year preventive maintenance service agreements with communities that require community leaders to charge operation and maintenance tariffs, manage the collected funds in supervised bank accounts, and pay an annual service fee. An important component of this model is incentivizing local technicians to prevent breakdowns by paying them based on the number of days a water source is functional instead of paying them to make repairs. Whave is helping government build an effective institutional and regulatory structure to establish and enforce preventive maintenance services. When incentives are aligned and costs can be recovered locally, the system can continue to work, increasing the sustainability of rural water service provision.

### Our Approach

**Understanding the system:** Whave is conducting network analysis and factor mapping to better understand the network of actors and factors influencing the provision of preventive maintenance services at the district and sub-district levels. Whave aims to help stakeholders better understand how the preventive maintenance approach works by discussing results. Consulting with community members and government, Whave is assessing the regulatory environment for rural water and analyzing the root causes of excessive down-time and lack of willingness to pay for operation and maintenance services.





A regular maintenance check by a Whave technician is certified by the Water Committee Chairperson. Photo credit: Whave

**Strengthening the system:** Whave aims to create a strong enabling environment for sustainable rural water supply by engaging with communities and all tiers of government, and building their capacity to improve the provision of preventive maintenance services. Whave is working with sub-county governments to pass and implement legislation (e.g., mandating preventive maintenance service agreements, setting minimum tariff levels), and marketing and contracting service agreements in communities. Whave is also closely tracking and documenting the costs of the preventive maintenance model, exploring ways to reduce these costs, and sharing this information with local governments to encourage investments in preventive maintenance. Whave is experimenting with aggregating the spare parts needs of communities to negotiate a lower price with suppliers and supporting mechanics to identify and mobilize eligible communities, thereby reducing costs of expanding services.

**Increasing sustainability:** The activities undertaken by Whave are designed to create a government-led partnership with the private sector that is a financially viable and sustainable model for rural water supply. Sustainability will increase as Whave makes progress in four areas: (1) services provided are at a sufficient quality to merit fee levels that match the costs of service provision; (2) service provision is at-scale (district-wide) so tariff collection becomes the norm, and economy of scale is achieved; (3) services are effectively regulated by local government; and (4) there is a viable market for the local private sector to provide preventive maintenance services.

**About the Sustainable WASH Systems Learning Partnership:** SWS is working to identify and test locally-driven solutions to the challenge of developing robust local systems capable of sustaining water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) service delivery. For more information, visit [www.globalwaters.org/SWS](http://www.globalwaters.org/SWS), or contact Elizabeth Jordan ([EJordan@usaid.gov](mailto:EJordan@usaid.gov)).