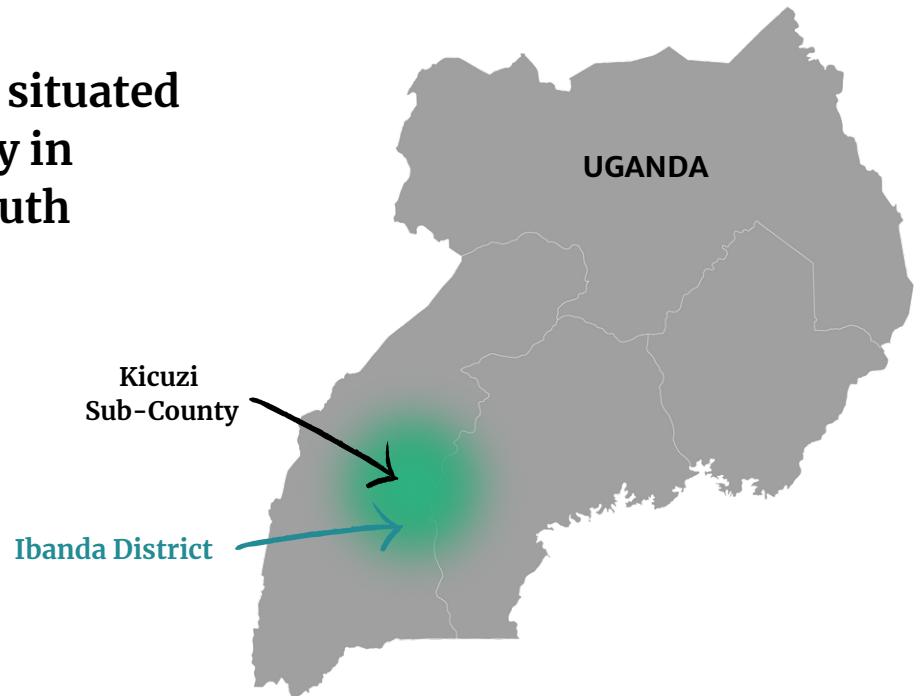


The Kicuzi project is situated in Kicuzi Sub-County in **Ibanda District** in South Western Uganda.



Situation Overview

The Kicuzi Water And Sanitation Hygiene (WASH) initiative was a 3-year project that was implemented from 2019-2021. The project installed a piped Gravity Flow System (GFS) that provided **15 rural villages** and local institutions (schools, clinics, and religious) with community taps.

13 latrine blocks were constructed at **5 primary schools**, and the School-Led Total Sanitation (SLTS) approach was facilitated in select primary schools. The Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach was used to facilitate 100% sanitation and hygiene coverage in catchment villages.



SDG #6.1

Achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all.



This report contextualizes three high-level achievements of the Kicuzi project within the WASH sector in Uganda:

- 1) Clean water coverage
- 2) The eradication of open defecation
- 3) Improved resiliency to poverty

Clean water coverage and the eradication of open defecation align with targets set out in Sustainable Development Goal #6: ensure access to water and sanitation for all. Likewise, Uganda's national development plan is to increase access to safe water supply and increase access to basic sanitation.

The eradication of open defecation encompasses the necessary improvement of hygiene behaviours and household sanitation. Uganda's Ministry of Water and Environment provides a framework and process for villages to be evaluated against critical standards of household hygiene, including the eradication of open defecation. Following a process of verification with sub-county, district, and national-level government, villages are issued an Open Defecation Free certification. ACTS refers to this achievement as the Healthy Hygiene Village status.

WASH is a pathway to improving resiliency to poverty. When improved hygiene behaviours and clean water eradicates waterborne diseases, the money that is normally used for treating them can be redirected to provide for other basic needs, such as education. Market-based WASH initiatives can be used effectively to generate income, thereby improving the economic status of households. This report demonstrates how effectively WASH-based initiatives can alleviate poverty. When people are better able to meet their own basic needs (water, food, clothing, shelter, and education) it is an indicator of poverty alleviation, and therefore, ACTS monitors the change in people's ability to meet their own basic needs. Poverty alleviation aligns with SDG #1: End poverty in all forms everywhere.

Clean Water Coverage

Only 11% of the rural water supply in Uganda is provided through piped water schemes and rainwater harvesting tanks. The majority of investment made by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Uganda is directed toward point water solutions (boreholes, shallow wells, and springs). In 2021/22, 666 new point water solutions were reported within the sector versus only 35 piped water systems.¹

The Kicuzi Gravity Flow System (GFS) was one of those 35 piped water schemes that were constructed in 2021, providing 86 community taps to 15 villages and serving over 17,000 people. Factoring in population growth, the number of people served scales by 3.1% over time.² **The Kicuzi project scaled from serving 17,000 people in 2021 to 17,527 in 2023.**

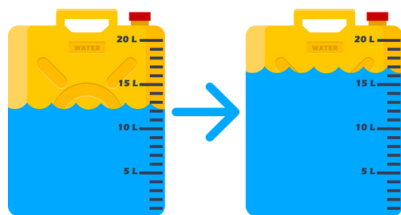
In 2020, the national safe water coverage in rural areas was estimated at 68%. Uganda’s national development plan aims to increase safe water supply in rural areas to 85% by 2025.³ The clean water coverage in Ibanda district (where the project was located) is presently at 63%. The clean water coverage within Kicuzi sub-county moved from 13% to 38% as a direct result of the Kicuzi GFS, thereby increasing the clean water coverage within Ibanda district. The exact impact on the water coverage of Ibanda is not presently known due to a lack of current data available through the district government.

99% of households in our project catchment area are collecting water from a safely managed piped water source. Within Kicuzi sub-county, only 33% of the population is served by a public tap. Only 42% of Ugandans can collect clean safe drinking water within



a 30-minute timeframe, but within the Kicuzi project catchment area, 94% of families now collect water from a public tap within 500 meters of their home.⁴ At baseline, only 43% of respondents could collect water within this same proximity. The close proximity of water taps to the household enables people to spend only 30 minutes (round trip) collecting water.

The GFS water solution offers the unique capacity to reduce the time rural Ugandans spend collecting water because it’s the one solution that can bring clean water within 500 meters of every user versus having a central water source that all users walk to (e.g. borehole pump or kiosk). No other water solution can deliver this same result.



Eliminating water scarcity and improving accessibility has a positive impact on the use of water for different purposes, such as cleaning and personal hygiene. With the installation of community taps, water usage in Kicuzi increased by 33%.

Water consumption moved from 12 litres per day to 16 litres per day. The improvement in water consumption is an indication of water being used for various domestic purposes.

1. Uganda Water And Sanitation Network (UWASNET). Annual WASH CSO Performance Report (FY21/22). pg.1.

2. Using the population growth rate determined by the national housing and Population Census 2014 as identified in the UBOS profile.

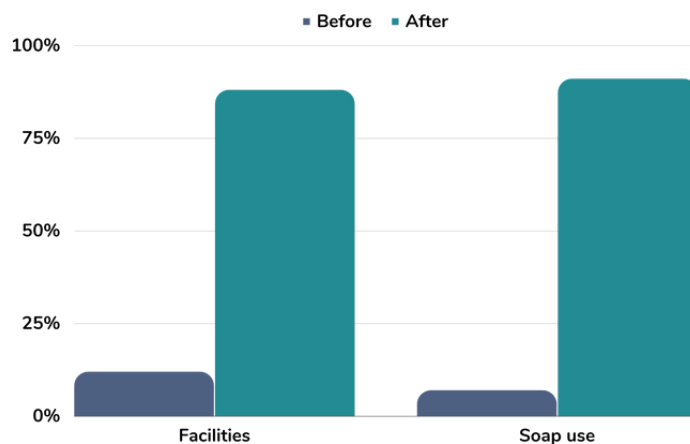
3. The Republic of Uganda. Ministry of Water and Environment. Water and Environment Sector Performance Report (2020). <https://mwe.go.ug/library/sector-performance-report-2020>.

4. Kanya, I.R. et al. (2021). Children’s Experience with Water Scarcity in Rural Rakai, Uganda. Makerere University.

The Eradication of Open Defecation

In Kicuzi, 15 villages were triggered with Community-Led Total Sanitation Transformation (CLTS), and 100% of them achieved Uganda's national-level Open Defecation Free (ODF) certification. **This rate of success is 64% above sector performance results.** The WASH sector within Uganda has a 33% success rate for leading triggered communities to achieve the ODF certification. Between 2020-21, only 3,595 out of 9,451 villages triggered throughout Uganda were declared open defecation free.⁵ Over four years, ACTS has achieved a 99% success rate in four project areas, in two districts, within the South Western region of Uganda; Kicuzi was one of those projects.

Successfully leading communities to become free from open defecation depends on successfully altering sanitation practices and hygiene habits that are prevalent in communities impacted by chronic water scarcity. Hygiene behaviours, such as handwashing with soap and collecting water in clean containers are critical for reducing diseases such as typhoid, diarrhea, and parasites.



As a direct result of the Kicuzi project, **the percentage of households that had a hand washing facility with soap moved from 8% to 93%** by the end of the project. Twelve months after the project ended, **97% of households practiced hand washing with soap.**

The percentage of people practicing this behaviour increased as time passed instead of regressing, demonstrating that behaviour change was sustained. Likewise, there was a significant change in people transporting water in clean jerry cans. **At baseline, only 28% of the population was collecting water in clean jerry cans and by the end of the project, 75% of the population were using clean jerry cans.** These hygiene behaviours interrupt the contamination chain that causes waterborne diseases and are therefore critical practices for reducing waterborne diseases. Waterborne disease was reduced by 57% in the project catchment area.

The success of the Kicuzi project in the area of behaviour change is attributed to the constant presence of the ACTS program team during project implementation, the use of participatory development approaches, and a high level of engagement with all stakeholders.

5. Uganda Water And Sanitation Network (UWASNET). Annual WASH CSO Performance Report (FY21/22). pg.25.

The Eradication of Open Defecation continued,

Community members co-implement program interventions by working alongside ACTS staff in activities such as the construction of infrastructure, community mobilization, and helping neighbours to make household improvements that will meet critical hygiene standards, such as having a proper latrine with a hand washing station. 54 community volunteers (called WASH Cluster Heads) were trained to facilitate the hygiene and sanitation improvements in 10 neighbouring households. 600 household latrines were improved and 900 were newly constructed as a result of the collective effort between ACTS staff and WASH Cluster Heads. Co-implementation with trained volunteers has proven to be an effective strategy for mobilizing a collective effort toward achieving ODF certification.

The community labour contribution to construction activities alone was equivalent to adding 11 full-time volunteers to the construction team for one year. This level of community contribution grows the human resource capacity by 122%. The total In-Kind contribution from local stakeholders was equivalent to \$89,574 CAD. Local stakeholders included: community members; school parents; and the district government. The collective effort in both the funding of project activities and the implementation of activities essentially creates a joint venture in community development. A close working relationship lived out on a daily basis builds relationships and trust; both are needed for effective social change. The effectiveness of this is demonstrated in the sustained results.



Close access to clean water and better latrines at households improved personal safety for participants. Women and girls no longer need to walk in remote areas in the dark to collect water before dawn or after dusk to provide for the needs of their families. There is no longer a need for girls and women to seek remote, private areas for sanitation. Hence, beneficiaries reported feeling a reduced vulnerability in personal safety.

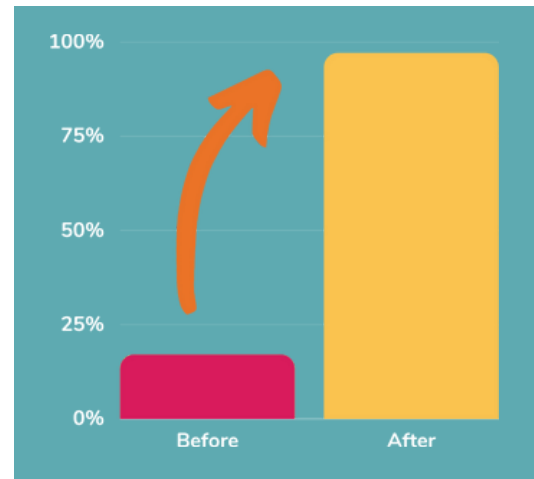
The Kicuzi project installed 65 safe, secure toilets in schools and facilitated the School-Led Total Sanitation (SLTS) approach for improving WASH standards at 5 primary schools. Safe and secure latrines restore dignity and remove barriers that prevent girls from attending school after adolescence. Absenteeism in schools targeted with this intervention was reduced by 70% and there was an observed improvement in the confidence of female students. Enabling equal access to education is a gender equality issue that was met by providing for the gender-specific hygiene and sanitation needs of students.

Improved Resiliency to Poverty

Co-implementation not only generated local resources for the purposes of community development but also generated program evolution. When beneficiaries of soap-making workshops formed organized community-based groups to leverage income-generating efforts, ACTS reinforced the efforts with entrepreneurship training that enabled them to build revenue for Village Saving Loans that can be accessed to scale small business initiatives. As a direct result of entrepreneurship training, the program reduced the percentage of households earning \$18 or less per month from 48% to 4%. This supports the proposition that WASH is an effective pathway for alleviating extreme poverty.

The **percentage of households able to meet their basic needs (water, food, clothing, shelter) changed from 17% to 97%** within the 3-year timeline of the Kicuzi project.

An impact assessment conducted 12 months after the project ended, revealed another 2% increase in households able to meet their basic needs, indicating that the positive trajectory of poverty alleviation continued beyond our intervention. In part, this was attributed to the WASH-based entrepreneurship training that ACTS provided in 2022.



As a direct result of this project waterborne disease has been reduced by 57%. The Kicuzi project provided 100% clean water coverage and eradicated open defecation for 15 villages/17,527 people in Kicuzi sub-county. Clean water coverage, the eradication of open defecation, and improved resiliency to poverty were sustained one year after the project ended.



Learn more about the work in Kicuzi at acts.ca/kicuzi.