

IMPROVING ACCESS TO WATER IN REFUGEE SETTLEMENTS THROUGH AUTOMATED DISPENSERS.

Location: Kyaka & Rwamwanja, Uganda. Timeframe: 2019 – 2020

Project Status: Ongoing

1. PROBLEM/GAP BEING ADDRESSED:

Despite major investment in water infrastructure and capacity building of management structures and institutions, mechanisms and systems required for sustainable services are still lacking. The Government of Uganda has a progressive policy towards refugees encouraging assimilation with host communities. UNHCR and its partners are working closely with Government to develop a operating model that transfer responsibility for water service provision to local utility companies as part of a transition strategy. To ensure a responsible exit it is necessary ensure adequate institutional capacity is in place to ensure sustainable O&M and management of the water services. As national framework for O&M is being developed, there's is need for adoption of innovative and cost-effective technologies/approaches that can increase the efficiency of the water supply services.

2. SOLUTION:

Automated water dispensers (ATMs) have been used with success in urban contexts to improve system performance, revenue collection and accountability but they haven't been deployed in a refugee settlement context. Whilst refugees are not currently expected to pay for water, host communities who share the same schemes do pay. Furthermore, with time as livelihood opportunities for refugees grow and they become assimilated into the local community there is an expectation that a greater percentage of the operating costs need to be covered locally. ATMs not only enable users to access water services at their convenience, they can provide operators with a better oversight and understanding of flows of water and demand within a network. If used to their full potential, ATMs can inform operational decisions, help troubleshoot and ultimately improve reliability and contribute towards equitable access to water.

3. RESULTS:

A total of 15 water ATMs have been installed in two refugee settlements (10 in Kyaka and 5 in Rwamwanja). Each water ATM has two faucets and is designed to serve 200 households and fit within the UNHCR standard of 80-100 users per faucet. The project evaluated Susteq and Lorentz equipment and opted for Susteq because each unit can provide upto 3 tap outlets making the cost per tap cheaper.

Teething troubles/reliability

4. LEARNING/APPLICABILITY ELSEWHERE:

The fundamental question this project aims to answer is "Can prepaid water ATMs deliver reliable water access more affordably and reliably than the current system?"

- I. For a camp context where the majority of people are not required to pay for water are ATMs appropriate?
- II. Have ATMs improved service delivery and if so how?
- III. Is there any evidence (quantitative or qualitative) that ATMs have improved reliability or transparency or equity of water. And does this justify the investment?
- IV. How much revenue has been collected by the ATMs since time of installation?
- V. Who is using and analysing the data.

5. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

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