

IMPROVING ACCESS TO CLEAN POTABLE WATER IN THE OTWETIRI COMMUNITY.

Introduction

A team comprising International Child Development Program (ICDP) Ghana (*Mrs. Joyce Larnyoh, Country Director; Nana Adwoa Afriyie Bonsu, Project Coordinator, Isaac Tetteh, Finance Director*), Clean Earth Scientific (*Isaac, Joseph Ewusi and Benjamin Vormawor*) and Traditional and Opinion Leaders of the inspected and assessed the sources of water in the Otwetiri community and explore alternatives of providing potable water to the community. This move was facilitated by the Zonta Club of Accra Metropolitan.

Background

Water directly affects many issues critical to promoting sustainable development, including the economy, agriculture, health, trade, energy, and peace and security. Clean, accessible water is also critical to human health and a healthy environment, yet over 40% of the global population does not have access to sufficient clean water. In Ghana, 57% of urban households have access to safely managed drinking water services compared to only 11% of rural households. Over 1.7 million Ghanaians still use unsafe drinking water sources such as streams, lakes and rivers and the Otwetiri community forms part of this category.



This is the OTWETIRI STREAM!! The only source of water currently at Otwetiri

The Otwetiri Community

Otwetiri is a farming community located in the Akwapim-North District of Ghana. The community is composed largely of the local Akwapim people. Other ethnicities, mainly Ewes (from Volta Region) are also found in the community. With a population of about 2,000 people who are mainly cassava and maize growers, the Otwetiri stream is the main source of water supply to the community for both domestic, agrarian and other commercial purposes. The Otwetiri community, as a matter of priority and urgency, has been appealing to well-wishers, public and private organizations over the years for support in the provision of clean potable water for the community.

The road to getting access to clean potable water

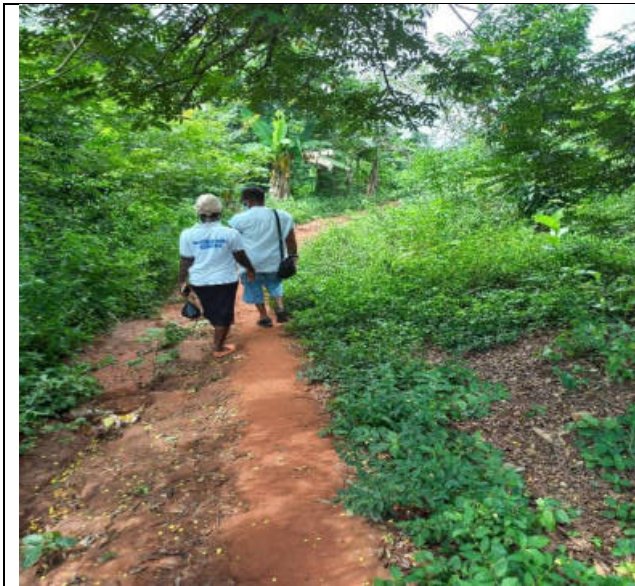
In March, 2022, Madam Susan Adu-Aryee, a member of the Zonta Club of Accra Metropolitan, led the group to Otwetiri Community to honour a group of young women/school drop-outs as part of activities marking Zonta's month-long celebrations of the International Women's Day. The Women's Group had earlier been trained by International Child development Program (ICDP) Ghana/World Education Inc., with diverse vocational skills (soap making, pastries, beads and accessories etc). With support from ICDP Ghana, the women have formed a Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) to be economically and socially empowered with leadership and advocacy skills to among others, voice out issues affecting the community and also take steps to address the issues.

During the Zonta Club of Accra Metropolitan/ICDP celebration program, the leadership of the VSLA group outlined the challenges they face in accessing clean potable water. The challenges enumerated included:

- i. The only source of water in the community is the Otwetiri River is sometimes polluted by trash carried by wind and rain and deposited at the point of collection, making it unsafe for human consumption.
- ii. The run-offs of water from the community is naturally channelled to the stream also making it unsafe for consumption.
- iii. With the growth in population, the Otwetiri Stream is unable to meet demands for water supply to the community members.
- iv. The distance from the Stream site to the habitation of the community members is a challenge.
- v. Occasionally being infected with water-borne diseases including reports of cholera.

Having enumerated the above, it was also pointed out by the group that women and children are the ones who suffer the most since fetching water is a chore which is socially constructed

as the preserve of women and children. Women's lives are impacted by lack of water and sanitation because they are responsible for the care of children, who are affected by water-borne diseases. Children have been observed to be exhausted from fetching water in the mornings before going to school



The narrow hilly path leading to the Otwetiri Stream which is currently the only source of water serving the entire community



A woman and son fetching water at the stream for domestic use.

Steps taken by the community members to address the water problem

The VSLA group mentioned that they had earlier written a request letter to the Municipal Assembly but were yet to receive response to their request. Also, they have been embarking on communal labor periodically to clean the surroundings of the water site and weed the path leading to the stream. Sensitization on cleanliness and proper water and sanitation hygiene are also done from time to time.

Solicitation for Support

After enumerating their challenges, the group with backing from their traditional leaders entreated the Zonta Club of Accra Metropolitan, through ICDP Ghana, to support the community to obtain accessible clean potable water.

Way forward

A team comprising ICDP Ghana/Clean Earth Scientific led by Otwetiri Community Leaders undertook inspection of the sources of water in the community. The main source of water supply currently is the Otwetiri Stream. There are two boreholes. One which has broken down

and abandoned by the community five years ago. The water from the boreholes has iron deposits in it and salty which makes it unsafe for consumption. The other, a mechanized borehole which also is salty and thus unsafe has its pump broken down.



Borehole that produced water with iron and salt deposits which is broken down and abandoned about five years ago



Community leader explaining the operations of the mechanized borehole to the team (salty and currently not in use because of faulty pump system)

Next Steps

- Clean Earth Scientific team took samples of water from the Otwetiri Stream and mechanized borehole for laboratory testing.
- The outcomes of the tests will inform the best option for the supply of good clean water.
- The factors to be considered in finding the solution will be the provision of quality water and its proximity to the inhabitants.
- Costing of the alternative solutions will be done for further deliberations
- ICDP asked the community leaders to begin to think through means of instituting operations and maintenance systems without reliance on long-term financial aid from external donors in maintaining the water systems.
- ICDP pledged its commitment to engage the leaders on community management and maintenance models that will help to recover the cost of operationalizing the water supply.

Photo Galley



ICDP Ghana/Clean Earth/ Community leaders during a debriefing session after the inspection of the sites



Water is life!! A community member quenching her thirst with the untreated water