



SUCCESS STORY

Villages Gain Access to Fresh Water

New and rehabilitated water sources reduce disease and improve women's lives



Photo: Fred Le Gregam, Pact
Toting a five-gallon jerry can, a woman in Upper Nile, Sudan, makes her daily trek to find water.

With each new water source, fewer women have to spend hours a day away from their families.

Sunrise brings stress for Nyandeng. Each morning the young mother leaves her children unattended for hours as she treks to the nearest pond to fetch water. While she is away, the children fend for themselves. Babies cry. Tummies rumble. When Nyandeng returns late in the day, exhausted from lugging five gallons of water for miles, she grinds sorghum, feeds her family and tries to make things better, all the while knowing she will repeat the long journey tomorrow.

Like Nyandeng, villagers across southern Sudan struggle daily to find water. The sources they find are often contaminated and may cause infection from Guinea worm, cholera or other diseases. One out of every four children in the region dies before the age of 5; nearly half of those deaths are caused by water-related illnesses.

Some communities have dug their own boreholes — shallow wells — and international organizations constructed more than 6,000 in southern Sudan over the past two decades of civil war. But without technical training or resources, villagers were unequipped to maintain them; half no longer work.

USAID is working to provide safe drinking water and empower communities to manage and maintain this precious resource. To encourage a sense of ownership, villagers are involved in every step of the process, from providing labor, materials and security to electing village committees to install and repair the water sources. The committees also administer the systems, charging villagers a minimal fee to pay for repairs and spare parts.

Within three months, 15 village committees and communities in the Upper Nile counties of Koch and Mayendit had been trained to operate and manage eight new boreholes. In Bor North County, Upper Nile, 15 village committees were trained and 10 boreholes and one water tank were rehabilitated.

With each new water source, fewer women have to spend hours a day away from their families. They have more time to care for their children, cultivate crops, collect firewood, generate income and pound sorghum for meals.

Said one woman, “Now, if we could just get a grinder....”