



Clean Drinking Water Is A Lifesaver In Mali

Konodimini had serious potable water problems. For years, five small pumps served a village of 3,500. Half the time the pumps were broken. Even when all five pumps were working, they were never able to produce enough clean drinking water for the entire village, or irrigate vegetable gardens that were an important food source.

Each neighborhood guarded its pump jealously. When the pump broke, they had to ask another neighborhood to help them out and the request was not always granted when water was scarce. There was bickering over water, and it divided the people in the village.

Effective and transparent governance was a problem, particularly when it came to managing the water supply. In Mali, lack of clean drinking water leads to potentially deadly diseases like cholera and diarrhea – which is the second highest cause of death among infants. Many villages in this mostly desert country were experiencing the same kind of drinking water problems. In Mali, 113 out of every 1000 infants die before their first birthday.

To help address its water challenges, USAID formed a partnership with Moving Water Industries, the West African Water Initiative (WAWI), the Government of Mali, and local community leaders to provide an adequate and reliable supply of potable water to villages desperately in need.



Photo: USAID/Mali

The villagers of Konodimini demonstrate how well the clean water runs from their new SolarPedalflo pump.

USAID invested over \$490,000 and secured over \$570,000 more from private industry, non-governmental organizations and the government of Mali in a public-private alliance to help bring clean drinking water to over 48,000 rural Malians. The money is used to work with villages in introducing a new, sturdier kind of water pump powered by the sun or villagers' own feet: the SolarPedalflo.

When the people of Konodimini were told that the village would be an active participant in not only installing but also managing the new pump, they readily agreed. Konodimini immediately formed an oversight committee, comprised of both men and women, that would take responsibility for the proper functioning and maintenance of the pump. They drafted bylaws, established a price-per-bucket policy, and identified when certain groups would have access to the pump – for example, women in early morning and at dusk.

The pump provides enough water for 600 people a day (at 20 liters per person) - that's three to four times the amount of water from one borehole that a hand pump can produce. USAID expects diarrhea in the village to be reduced by 90%.

This was the first time that the entire village actually put together a management plan - they were in fact governing. Two men, who hadn't spoken to each other in years, were serving on the oversight committee together and were talking. Pride replaced jealousy. The pump united the village.

With the much increased, reliable water flow, the women decided to greatly expand their vegetable garden from just a small plot to a full hectare. The garden provides an excellent source of nutritious food for the village. The surplus vegetables are sold in a nearby market. The proceeds will pay for school fees, medical supplies and more seeds.

