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**KENYA AND EAST AFRICA**

## SUCCESS STORY

# Protection of water source improves water quality and quantity in rural Kenya

**Building the capacity of county governments and institutions to expand source water protection and improve water access.**



*Naima and her young daughter get drinking water from the protected spring in Silula Village, Siaya County*

*“Long queues at the spring are unheard of now. My 20 liter jerry cans fill up within just two minutes! “*

*- Naima Mohammed*

Eric Onyiego/ KIWASH

Residents of Silula Village, in western Kenya are dependent on ground water as their primary source of water. Approximately 95 percent of the residents obtain their drinking water from springs and rivers yet the majority of these sources are unprotected from pollution including fecal contamination and domestic activities such as washing of clothes and utensils within spring areas and agricultural runoff.

Naima Mohammed, 23, who lives only 300 meters from the spring used to spend over 90 minutes every other day to draw water at the spring because the flow was very slow and the queue, equally long. She was always exhausted and hoped the water would miraculously flow a little faster to save her time for other household and farming chores.

In November 2016, Naima along with other women and men in the village took part in a USAID supported initiative to promote conservation of key water sources in Siaya County by protecting and strengthening of Water Resources User Associations (WRUAs). WRUAs are voluntary membership associations made up of water users and riparian owners interested in proper management of their water resources.

Enthusiastic community members contributed fencing posts, bricks and hardcore to secure the spring intake and unskilled labor to clear and improve the access path to the spring.

The benefits of protecting and conserving the spring were experienced immediately. Water flow increased and the quantity and quality of the water completely improved. “Long queues at the spring are unheard of now. My 20 liter jerry cans fill up within just two minutes! Moreover, my family of four now uses five jerry cans per day up from the two we used to queue for so long to fill up”. Naima says.

In addition to improving the quality and quantity of water available to over 700 community members, the protection of the Silula Spring encouraged community members to register as voluntary members of the WRUA, making commitments to carry out a wide range of activities that contribute towards better watershed management. With sufficient water, the members are also excited about exploring economic opportunities including irrigated farming.

The USAID Kenya Integrated Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Project (KIWASH) began in September 2015 and will run through September 2020. The project is working with local communities, county water offices and decision-makers to improve community

### Telling Our Story

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representation in WRUAs within sub catchments in order to increase sensitization on integrated watershed conservation and water resources management. The project also aims to build the capacity of county governments and institutions to expand source water protection and improve water access.