

Case Study Report



Key findings

“Everyday, our pupils and teachers shoulder the burden of survival, carrying water from home because our school, tragically, has no reliable source. During devastating drought periods, we endure, sustained only by the grace of God” (Janet Pere, June 2023)

Introduction of person and background

Janet Pere is a trained teacher and the Headteacher of Ngoso Primary School, located in the vast savanna of Maasai Mara, Narok County, Kenya. The school serves 120 pupils, 68 girls and 52 boys, from Pre-Primary 1 (PP1) through Grade 6. Founded in 2014 with approximately 20 pupils, the school expanded significantly after Janet's arrival in 2015. The teaching staff comprises 11 teachers: 8 employed by the government and 3 supported through parent-funded employment.

Story

Ngoso primary school serves a diverse population (this contradicts the paragraph above, do you have the exact number of pupils, can you confirm the exact number?) primarily drawn from nearby communities. The area is situated in a semi-arid climate, characterized by limited rainfall and consequently scarce availability of water sources. Given the current climate breakdown, rainfall patterns have become even more erratic.

Access to clean and safe water is a fundamental right and essential for the health and well-being of school children. The insights gathered from interviews with Janet Ngoso, the head teacher of the school, highlight the impact of not being able to access basic quantities of clean and safe water and what this means for students' health, education, and the overall school environment.

The situation at the school is dire, as children are required to bring water from home to meet their daily needs. Younger children must carry about 3 liters of water, while older children are expected to bring 5 liters each day. This requirement places a significant burden on them, particularly given that many parents in the community also lack access to clean water. As a result, families struggle to provide the necessary amount of water for both their daily activities and for their children's schooling. The situation at the school is dire, as children are required to bring water from home to meet their daily needs.

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This not only affects the pupils' well-being and capacity to focus on their education but also highlights the challenges faced by families in a community where basic resources are scarce. The children may arrive at school fatigued from carrying heavy loads and may spend valuable time and energy on a task that should not be their responsibility, ultimately detracting from their learning experience. Such circumstances underscore the urgent need for a sustainable solution to improve water access for both the school and the entire community.

Health Risks.

The lack of access to clean water has severe implications for the pupils' health. Janet noted that without proper handwashing facilities, the risk of waterborne diseases and other health issues increases significantly, which can lead to increased absenteeism among pupils. In areas where hygiene standards are not met, the chances of outbreaks of diseases such as cholera or typhoid are higher, further exacerbating the public health risk.

Water Carrying Burden

Pupils, particularly girls, often bear the brunt of carrying water, which is an additional physical burden on them. Janet highlighted that many pupils have to wake up early to collect water before heading to school, which affects their attendance and academic performance. Though some pupils are assisted by their parents to fetch water for use the next day.

Impact on Learning

The lack of water also translates to inadequate infrastructure for hygiene practices like handwashing and maintaining cleanliness in the school environment. As a result, students might struggle to focus on their studies due to the discomfort associated with lack of proper sanitation facilities. Janet stated,

"Without water, we are not only jeopardizing the health of our students but also their future education." (Janet Pere, June 2023)

Community Involvement

While the local community has made efforts to provide support, the random and inconsistent availability of water sources means that these measures often fall short. Janet mentioned that community members try to assist by providing water occasionally; however, these are not sustainable solutions.

Conclusion

The lack of access to safe and clean water at Ngoso Primary School in Narok County presents a serious impediment to the health and educational outcomes of the 120 (?) pupils. Insights from Janet Ngoso, the head teacher, underscore the urgent need for intervention to ensure that the school can provide a safe and conducive learning environment.

"Addressing water access will significantly improve both the physical health and educational opportunities for the pupils, enabling them to achieve their full potential." (Janet Pere, June 2023)

Relationship to bigger picture

The situation at the school built in 2014 underscores a critical issue that extends beyond its walls—access to clean and safe water is a fundamental human right and essential for the health and education of pupils. While the school's modern infrastructure should ideally support a conducive learning environment, the absence of potable water highlights systemic failures in prioritizing basic needs over infrastructure expansion.

In this case, the constituency councillor's focus on constructing additional classrooms reflects a troubling trend where educational investments are often directed towards enhancing revenue potential rather than addressing immediate, pressing issues like water scarcity. The emphasis on increasing income through additional classrooms, without adequately addressing the dire need for clean water, raises questions about the councillor's commitment to the holistic development of the school community.

The intervention by a Grape member brought a sense of urgency to the issue, prompting promises of action from the government. The commitment to drill a borehole before the year's end, funded by development funds, is a step in the right direction. However, it also serves to highlight the gap between promises and reality, as the community eagerly awaits tangible improvements to their water situation.

This situation serves as a microcosm of larger issues within the education and social welfare systems. It illustrates how critical decisions at the local governance level can greatly impact the day-to-day lives of pupils and their families. Moving forward, it is vital that local authorities adopt a more holistic approach to school development—one that prioritizes the basic needs of pupils alongside infrastructural growth. Sustainable solutions, such as comprehensive water supply systems and educational resources, are essential for fostering an environment where pupils can thrive without the threat of health crises due to inadequate water access.

In conclusion, the promise of a borehole is just a starting point. Ensuring that students have access to clean and safe water must become a priority that is recognized by all stakeholders involved in the education sector, especially local leaders who hold the power to influence real change.