



COMMUNITY-DRIVEN TRANSFORMATION: HOW RUZAIRE PRIMARY SCHOOL IMPROVED SANITATION AND PUPILS' WELL-BEING THROUGH COLLECTIVE ACTION.

SUCCESS STORY



Introduction

UNNGOF, under the Change the Game Academy with support from Wilde Ganzen Foundation undertook the Match Funding Programme in Uganda in 2013. This initiative was open to organizations that have trained in Local Fund Raising, successfully develop and roll out fundraising plans. The goal of the programme is to empower organizations that were trained in Local Fund Raising with a 50% financial contribution, towards project budgets for which they locally raise funds as per their Fundraising plans developed, as a result of the skills acquired through the Change the Game Academy training on Local Fund raising.

Kitara Civil Society Network set out to improve sanitation at Ruzaire Primary School - Kabamba Sub County, Kagadi District. The organization together with the community sought to construct a toilet facility that support at least 610 primary school pupils will benefit from this intervention. As of November 2023, the team had completed the digging of the pit and the construction materials delivered to the site. A trainer for girls in making reusable sanitary towels had also been identified.

The Situation

Ruzaire Primary School, located in Kabamba sub-county, Kagadi district, is a government-aided institution serving 544 pupils with just 7 teachers. By March 2023, the school was grappling with a critical sanitation crisis. With only one functional pit latrine block containing five stances for both students and teachers, the pupil-to-stance ratio stood at a staggering 1:152, far above the national standard of 1:45.

The lack of adequate facilities was compounded by the absence of a changing room for girls, which resulted in frequent absenteeism during menstruation. The school had no nearby water source, forcing pupils to collect water from a community point located 0.4 km away.

The existing facilities could no longer meet the needs of the growing student population. Matters worsened when one of the two latrine blocks sank during the holiday break.





Fig 1: A section of the pit latrine that was decommissioned after it sank.

With limited resources and the slow pace of government intervention due to budget constraints and bureaucratic delays, the school was left vulnerable to health risks, increased dropout rates, and declining academic performance.

The Response

Recognizing the urgent need for intervention, the community and school management, with support from the Kitara Civil Society Network (KCSN) under the Philanthropy for Development (P4D) programme, decided to take proactive action. Drawing on insights and strategies developed through community dialogues facilitated by KCSN, the local community came together to tackle the school's sanitation crisis.



A series of meetings involving parents, school management, and local leaders led to the formation of a clear plan to construct a new pit latrine block and install a handwashing facility at the school. To steer the project, a 7-member Building Committee was established, and a community fundraising initiative was launched. Households in Ruzaire Parish were encouraged to contribute UGX 15,000 each, while parents residing outside the parish were asked to contribute UGX 10,000. This community-driven approach created a strong sense of ownership and collective responsibility.

In April 2024, the project received an additional boost through a matched funding opportunity facilitated by KCSON. With this support, KCSON, in partnership with the school management and local community, raised a total of UGX 4,020,000 in cash and UGX 1,260,000 in in-kind contributions.

The Uganda National NGO Forum further matched these efforts with an additional UGX 4,459,125, ensuring the successful implementation of the construction project.

“Community giving needs to be emphasized across various service centers. When people are mobilized, they can achieve great things. Match funding acts as an enticement to give to their needs, which increases ownership and participation.”

Paul Mulindwa,
Executive Director,
KCSON

The Results

The project, which ran from June 2023 to April 2024, successfully transformed the sanitation conditions at Ruzaire Primary School through the construction of a new pit latrine block and the installation of hand-washing facilities.

The upgraded facilities included designated stances for both boys and girls, as well as a separate changing room for girls, significantly improving hygiene standards and ensuring privacy. This development meant that pupils and teachers no longer had to share latrines, reducing the risk of infections and creating a safer learning environment.



Fig. 2: A newly constructed five stance pit latrine at Ruzaire Primary School, built through the collective efforts of the community and the Kitara Civil Society Network.

Beyond infrastructure improvements, the project strengthened community ownership and engagement. Parents and local leaders took a leading role in fundraising and monitoring the construction process, demonstrating a strong commitment to the school's well-being. This active participation ensured the project's success and cultivated a deeper sense of responsibility and pride within the community, setting a foundation for future collective action and sustainable development initiatives.

The new facilities have directly impacted student attendance, particularly for teenage girls.

“Children who used to get sick frequently because of poor hygiene have now returned to school, as the stench and poor sanitation are no longer an issue. The new facilities have also had a positive effect on girls' school attendance, as they no longer have to miss school during their menstrual periods due to a lack of facilities.” Deputy Head Teacher

With a dedicated changing room, girls now have a private space to manage their menstrual hygiene, reducing absenteeism and enabling them to attend school more regularly. This improved school environment also motivated the school administration to continue investing in their facilities, with the head teacher initiating the construction of an office using personal resources, supported by community contributions.



Fig 3: A new office block under construction at Ruzaire Primary School.

“I showed a good example to the current chairperson, and I’m happy to see the community involved,” shared the former Chairperson of the School Management Committee. This increased community engagement has created a foundation for future projects and demonstrated the community’s capacity to address their own needs when effectively mobilized.

The pupil-to-latrine ratio improved from 1:70 to 1:50, bringing the school closer to the national standard of 1:40. The enrollment at Ruzaire Primary School also increased to 544 pupils—273 boys and 271 girls; indicating that the improved facilities have contributed to retaining students and attracting new enrollments. After the project’s completion, the school leadership established that 80% of the community was satisfied with the new facilities, reflecting the positive reception and impact of the project.

This project demonstrates that, with the right support and community engagement, local communities can take the lead in addressing their development needs, creating sustainable change and lasting impact.



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