

# The COVID-19 Response Facility

## for Water and Sanitation Services



Aqua for All

Timely response, greater impact

thewaterloofoundation\*

In June 2020, Aqua for All, with the support of The Waterloo Foundation, established the **Response Facility for Water and Sanitation Services**: an urgently needed fund to support water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) enterprises amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. An unprecedented crisis demanded out-of-the-box solutions. Thanks to the support of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS/IGG), we were able to adapt our processes and allocate flexible funding to address the most urgent needs of WASH service providers who were identified and referred to the Facility through our 15 regional endorsers. In order for market-based enterprises to sustain progress towards SDG 6, Aqua for All felt it was imperative to provide timely, targeted support and ensure that access to WASH services continued throughout the pandemic.

### Activities supported

#### Sustaining operations

- covering losses
- covering increased costs
- sustaining human resources

18  
initiatives

#### Adapting operations

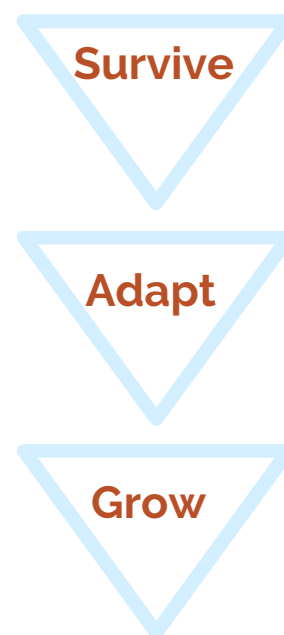
- adding extra safety measures
- adding additional storage capacity
- switching to digital services, marketing and payment methods
- providing end-user subsidy

14  
initiatives

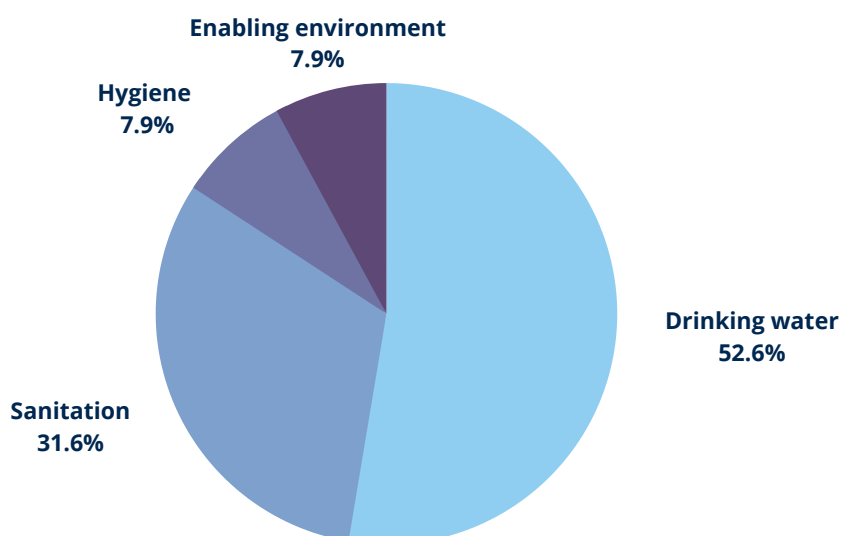
#### Pivoting business model or strategy

- adding new revenue streams
- identifying new markets
- adapting strategy to meet demand

6  
initiatives



### Type of service support



### Facts and figures



Total programme size **€1,556,000**; **€443,000** granted by Aqua for All, **€327,000** granted by The Waterloo Foundation. Total own contribution of project partners **€786,000**.



Average ticket size: **€20,000**



More than **1.5 million** people reached



**38** initiatives supported



Activities in **12** countries

## Stories from the Response Facility

### Aqua Clara, Kenya



Aqua Clara Kenya (ACK) is a social enterprise selling water filters to rural households. Responding to the decreased purchasing power of their clients, ACK used Response Facility funding to test a new sales approach: rent-to-own water filters paid in instalments. As a result, 586 households could afford water filters, allowing 3,340 people to drink safe water daily. Because the rent-to-own model turned out to be challenging to track, ACK subsequently adopted a pay-to-own option as their future strategy.

### Loowatt, Madagascar



Loowatt is a social enterprise providing container-based sanitation (CBS) home toilet services in Madagascar. Infections among the staff, lockdown measures and PPE costs slashed Loowatt's cashflow during the COVID-19 crisis. With Response Facility support, Loowatt improved safety measures for their employees and launched a behavioural change campaign. Additionally, support was used to keep staff numbers stable. According to Loowatt, "No customer went unserved during the lockdowns. This would not have been possible without the support funding provided."

### Safe Water Network, Ghana

Safe Water Network (SWN) provides access to safe water through a community-based approach of decentralised small water enterprises. SWN faced a loss of revenue due to the government's mandate to provide free water. With the support of the Response Facility and other partners, SWN's water distribution stations continued their operations. Additionally, SWN procured and distributed PPE and masks and collaborated with the Ghana Health Service to deliver health messages to customers. As SWN reports, "Without support from Aqua for All and other donors, it would have been difficult to ensure safe water supply to all of our communities during the pandemic."



### Water & Sanitation for the Urban Poor, Bangladesh

WSUP supports sanitation enterprises in Bangladesh to provide improved faecal sludge emptying services under a model called SWEEP. Due to COVID-19, WSUP needed to ensure the safety of frontline workers and the communities they serve. In addition, they had to diversify their traditional face-to-face marketing. Response Facility support enabled SWEEP to launch online marketing campaigns that significantly boosted the numbers of customers, despite the constraints of the pandemic. The provision of PPE and occupational health, safety and environment training reassured SWEEP workers and customers that they were operating as safely as possible.



## Lessons learned

1

Being able to **quickly reallocate** our funding, **streamline** our management processes and **engage our network** of endorsers were key for a timely response to the crisis. Grant funders of SMEs and social enterprises can play an important role in providing the flexibility needed to survive through market fluctuations and economic recessions.

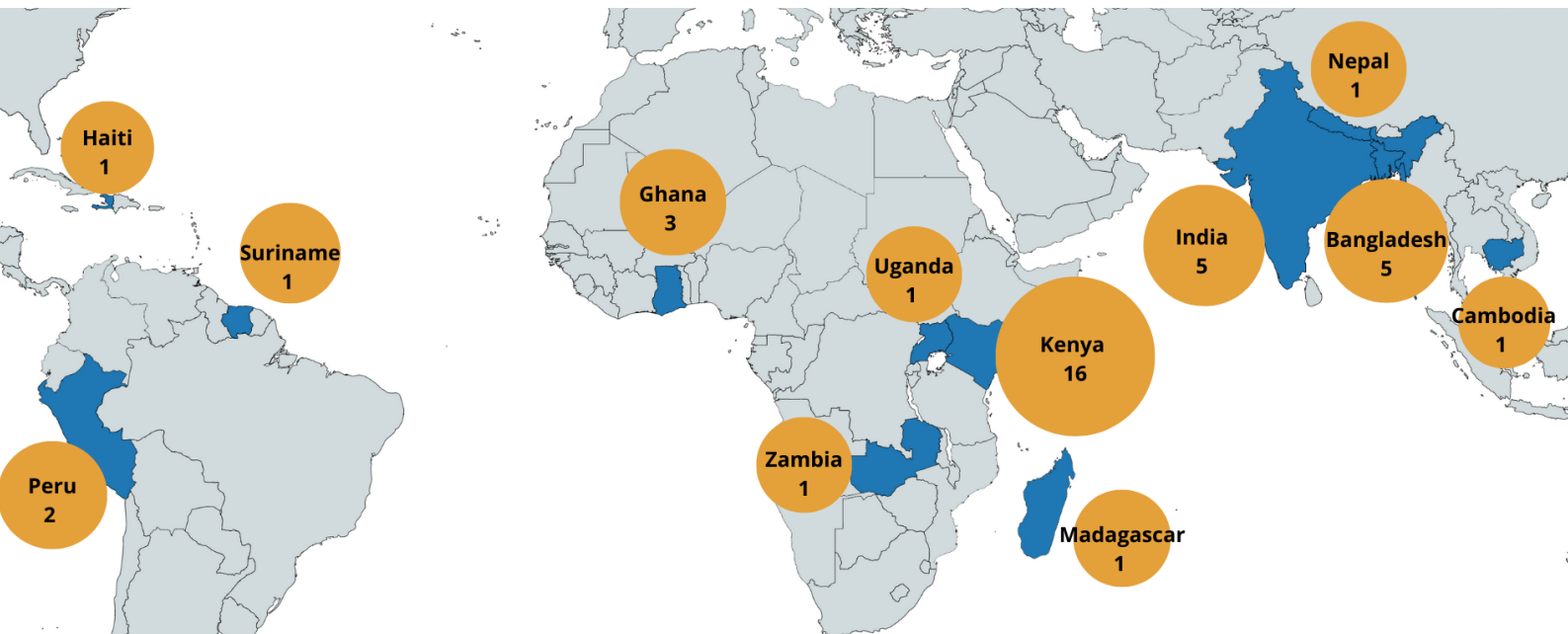
2

**Uninterrupted and reliable water and sanitation services** for low-income consumers were the priority for the Response Facility. To achieve this, enterprises had to **overcome diverse challenges**: protecting staff against COVID-19, dealing with both increased and decreased demand for services, customer inability to pay, government mandates on opening hours, sales and travel, supply chain risks, inability to conduct in-person sales and marketing, and more.

3

The challenges for service providers transformed throughout the course of the pandemic as governments and societies changed their emergency responses. But increased awareness of WASH also presented opportunities. The Response Facility and supported enterprises worked **on a case-by-case basis** to address **immediate needs** or to adapt operations to **build resilience in the long term**. Enterprises showed amazing resilience and flexibility as well, coming up with speedy solutions and creatively applying granted support.

## Countries and initiatives



### Kenya

- [Aqua Clara Kenya](#)
- [Boya Water Project](#)
- [Chulu Water Community Water Project](#)
- [CREATA/Kamida](#)
- [DipTop Agencies](#)
- [Dutch Water Limited](#)
- [Eswand Enterprises Ltd](#)
- [Gasia Poa Waste Management Services](#)
- [Geoseismic Water Company](#)
- [Kenya Private School Association](#)
- [Naivasha Ushirika \(Family Bank\)](#)
- [NAWASSCOAL Company Ltd](#)
- [Maji Milele](#)
- [Makutano Community Borehole Project](#)
- [Sana Holdings Ltd](#)
- [Upande Ltd](#)

### India

- [Lootel \(Dot Box Conception Pvt Ltd\) \(2\)](#)
- [Safe Water Network India](#)
- [Spring Health Water Pvt Ltd](#)
- [Wooloo](#)

### Bangladesh

- [Folia Water Inc.](#)
- [HappyTap Bangladesh Ltd](#)
- [Shobar Jonno Panni \(Water and Life Bangladesh\) \(2\)](#)
- [Water & Sanitation for the Urban Poor \(WSUP\)](#)

### Peru

- [Arrebol Peru SAC](#)
- [Sanima](#)

### Zambia

- [Live Clean Initiatives](#)

### Ghana

- [Safe Water Network Ghana](#)
- [Saha Global](#)
- [Project Maji](#)

### Haiti

- [dloHaiti](#)

### Uganda

- [Water for People](#)

### Madagascar

- [Loowatt SARL](#)

### Nepal

- [Aerosan](#)

### Cambodia

- [TapEffect](#)

### Suriname

- [Surinaamsche Waterleiding Maatschappij](#)

## Endorsers



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

