

## WATER MONITORING IN THE MOROGORO REGION OF TANZANIA

Prof. Nathalie Holvoet and Dr. Sara Dewachter have been doing action research on mobile community based water monitoring in the Morogoro region of Tanzania. The Fuatilia Maji project is a joint undertaking with IOB's Going Global partner Mzumbe University and also part of the VLIR-UOS funded IUC with Mzumbe University (4SITE). It brings together staff and students from both institutions and involves local communities and duty bearers from the start.

### **When did this project start?**

NH: The Fuatilia Maji project started in 2018, when Mzumbe academic staff and IOB and Mzumbe students did a needs assessment among duty bearers and citizens of Mvomero district. Their assessment highlighted the need for more detailed and timely information about rural water sources, and especially about water quality. Water is a highly problematic issue in rural Tanzania; for example, citizens in villages surrounding Mzumbe University consider access to safe water a more pressing need than education or infrastructure.

### **What is the development goal of Fuatilia Maji?**

NH: The aim is to eventually reduce waterborne diseases by improving rural drinking water services, both in terms of accessibility and quality, on the ground. We're focusing on the use of mobile technology in (community-based) monitoring of rural public water points. Can an ICT-enhanced monitoring system contribute to improving rural water services delivery, and how?

We're trying to establish if this kind of monitoring can improve the existing M&E system in the rural water service sector. Can it improve the two-way information flow between duty bearers positioned on different levels and in the rural water service sector between citizens and duty bearers? Can it improve the information use for accountability and learning by different actors? Can it inform citizens about the water quality of the water they use, inform them about the risks of contaminated water and possibly induce behavior change in terms of water treatment?

### **This is an 'action research' project. What exactly does that mean?**

Typically, action research starts from the needs of local citizens and duty bearers. That means outreach is at the heart of these kinds of projects right from the start. Throughout the research you have continuous interaction with the stakeholders involved (citizens,

community monitors, duty bearers, students) and you adjust the research based on the input from the stakeholders.

Usually you also include an intervention. In this case we're doing so by using the social innovation of using mobile community based monitoring.

Normally, this type of research leads to it being used better and having more impact and outreach.

### **Besides yourselves as IOB staff, who else is involved in running this project?**

Well to start with our colleagues from Mzumbe University: Doreen Kyando whose PhD research is linked to the project and Christina Shitima, Mursali Milanzi and Frank Theodory. In this project we're bringing together education, research and outreach – the core activities of academics. In terms of education, we're involving students from both IOB and Mzumbe University. The students are being trained to monitor the access, functionality and water quality of rural water sources using their mobile phones. Mzumbe students are also being trained to do prevention talk meetings, so they're getting communication skills training as well as knowledge about water contamination and treatment.

Not only do they get training, but they get to apply this immediately in the villages. This is part of IOB Going Global (see page 16-17), where we can send students through our 'Mobility Window' to take part in these kinds of projects.

Also, don't underestimate the value of improving students' intercultural skills! We're twinning Mzumbe students with IOB students, creating an invaluable intercultural experience for all of them. Students also indicated the value of getting to know the life in these rural communities much better. Moreover, they have gained confidence and leadership skills from this project, by organizing the data collection of their team or presenting the village meeting prevention talk.

### **And beyond students?**

Besides students, we're also training 'community monitors', members of the local communities, to do the same type of monitoring as we're teaching to the students. And again, they're also getting the communication training for prevention talks, like the Mzumbe students. We're also involving local citizens from ten villages in the Mvomero district. From the very start, students and community monitors have presented the projects and the findings to them.

They've also been highlighting the importance of water quality and ways to prevent water contamination.

And then of course we're actively involving duty bearers on different levels: hamlets, villages, wards, districts. They've been involved right from the start: they were part of the needs assessment that started this project.

Now we're keeping them involved, by sharing the results with them. We've given a seminar on how to use the data. And of course we're sharing the information on the water portal with them and provide them when additional backstopping in terms of interpretation and use of the data. ■

