



Hungry for Water Joining forces for sustainable

urban water access in Ghana

In Ghana, a big part of the urban population lives in congested, sub-standard structures. These people, known as the urban poor, often do not have a connection to the public water distribution system at their house. Because of their dependency on (multiple) commercial water vendors and the fact that small water quantities costs relatively more, they find themselves paying more for water compared to the wealthy who are connected to the public water distribution system. The lack of access to clean water also poses serious health risks, protection concerns, and undermines human dignity. We believe that everyone has the right to clean and safe water. That's why we're proud to tell you about the Ghana Urban WASH project.



ing towards providing sustainable water connections to the urban poor. So, join us in this story about people who are hungry for water.

Company Limited (GWCL). Together, we're work-



Clean Water

Meet Amina, one of the many people living in the urban poor areas of Asante Mampong near Kumasi, the second largest city in Ghana. Amina is 38 years old, married, and has three children. Amina works at the market, her husband is an artisan, and they

Amina's Struggle for Access to

have no formal education. Amina's total household budget is less than 500 cedis per month, which is about 37 euros. Their house is located within an enclosed compound, with four other houses occupied by families. Unfortunately, Amina's household is one of the many in the area that has no access to a water connection. She and her daughters are responsible for fetching water, often at kiosks or boreholes. They have to carry heavy jerry cans back home and drink water from plastic sachets sold in streets by water

vendors. Amina's profile is what we call: Unconnected.

bottled water

Protected well

Unprotected spring

Borehole or tube well

Public tap/standpipe

Piped into compound, yard...

Piped to neighbor

Pipe into Dwelling

Q12

Main Sources of Drinking Water Other Sachet water



1,0%

43,0%

5,9%

0,2%

0,2%

3,3%

2,3%

6,9%

13,6%

5,4%

4,4%

13,6%



The many Sources of Water

water connection into their house or compound.

There are many ways to fetch water in Ghana.

The Struggles of Sharing a Water Connection: Florence's Story Florence lives in Nzema, an urban poor community in Kumasi. She is 52 years old, married, and has four children. Her husband works in construction, and their total household budget is between 1000-2000

cedis per month. Like Amina, Florence also lives in a house within an enclosed compound with other families. However, there is one significant difference: they have access to a water connection in the

The five families share the water connection and the water meter. They split the

water bill among themselves. Unfortunately, Florence is struggling to pay her share

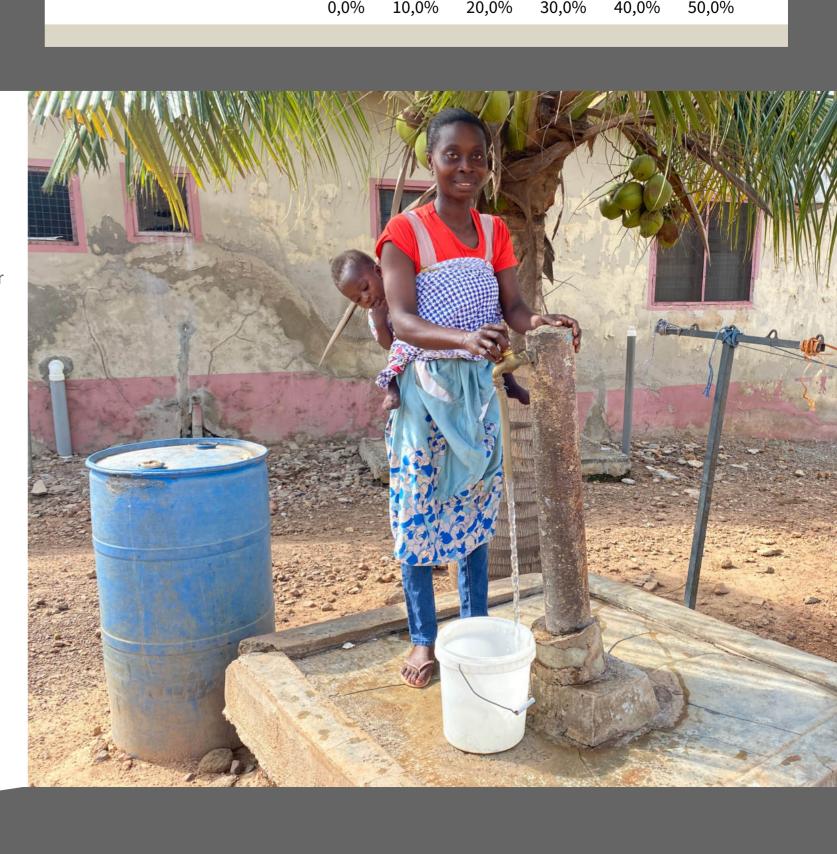
compound. This means they own a water tap that provides water to all families there.

However, not all of them provide people with water that is safe to drink. As you can

small plastic bags, often sold by vendors at kiosks. Only 20-25% of the people has a

see, water packed in plastic sachets is one of the most important ones. These are

of the water bill of the last 3 months. Recently, the leader of the group collecting the monthly contributions has told Florence that she is not allowed to fetch water from the tap anymore. Her profile is what we call Connected. The group of Connected people includes different profiles. For example, Florence is at risk of becoming a defaulter, a person who is not paying. She is also surrounded by Connected people who miss their payments, do not report leakages or use illegal connections. They show different behaviours and are far from being responsible water consumers, which is a key ingredient of sustainable urban water access.



However, utilities also depend on their consumers in many ways. First of all, people need to trust the utility enough to be interested in a household connection. Secondly, water consumers need to pay their water bills. For this, they need to understand and trust the water tariff system, they should not use more water than they need and can pay, and in those many cases where one connection is shared among all the families in one compound, water consumers need to organize themselves in a fair and effective way to ensure the water bill is paid. In addition, water consumers

A responsibility that goes both ways

need to report leakages and file complaints when they think the service is not good. We call this responsible water use. The People Influencing Amina and Florence Of course, Amina and Florence are not the only ones with an opinion about water connections. There are many people around them who can influence their decisions encouraging them to adopt new practices These influencers include people close by, such as friends, family, and neighbors, whether they share a connection or not. Landlords also often have a say in whether tenants can be given a water connection. In the community, we

We believe that universal urban access to safe and reliable water services is not possible without well-functioning, user-focused and financially

healthy water and sanitation utilities. The utilities have a big responsibility in meeting the mandate of public water provision that is given to them.

"The Imams make us fetch water for free. They don't charge us when we go to the boreholes constructed by the Muslims." – Resident, Parkoso

see traditional or religious leaders who may even provide free water. Finally, there are people from official institutions, such as GWCL agents, mem-

bers of the Water User Association in a neighborhood, and Red Cross volunteers, who can also influence opinions and decisions related to water

The Challenges of

People like Florence, who have a tap at their compound, are sometimes struggling to pay the monthly bill. Especially when people have recently obtained their water tap, they can be used to daily payments by buying by the bucket and do not have experience in saving money for their monthly water bill. Getting a water connection can pose even more of a challenge, with the connection sometimes costing up to three times a monthly income. In addition, people sometimes do not understand or trust the water tariffing system. Or they face challenges when multiple families live

they have to walk long distances to find water.

Accessing Clean Water

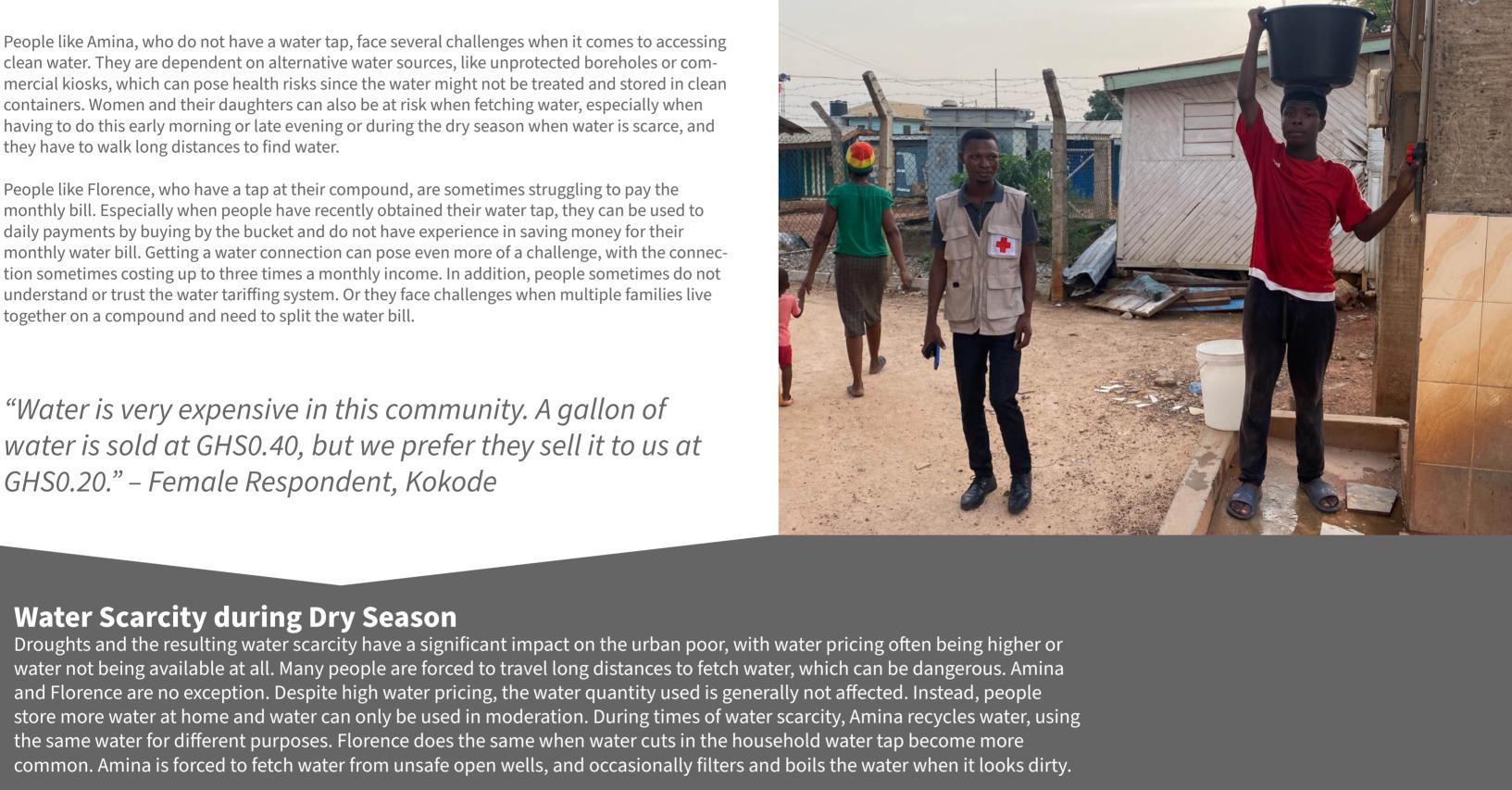
access.

together on a compound and need to split the water bill. "Water is very expensive in this community. A gallon of water is sold at GHS0.40, but we prefer they sell it to us at

clean water. They are dependent on alternative water sources, like unprotected boreholes or com-

containers. Women and their daughters can also be at risk when fetching water, especially when having to do this early morning or late evening or during the dry season when water is scarce, and

GHS0.20." – Female Respondent, Kokode **Water Scarcity during Dry Season**



ing, I use the soapy water to clean the bathroom." – Resident, Kokode "We sometimes have to travel over long distances just to get water during the dry season." – Resident, Pakoso

A UNIQUE PARTNERSHIP FOR WATER ACCESS

the power of community engagement from Red Cross.

As you can understand, the urban poor in Ghana are in dire need of household or compound water

ed (GWCL) takes their public mandate for universal access very serious and they actively engage to

connections and this requires integrated solutions. The good news is that Ghana Water Company Limit-

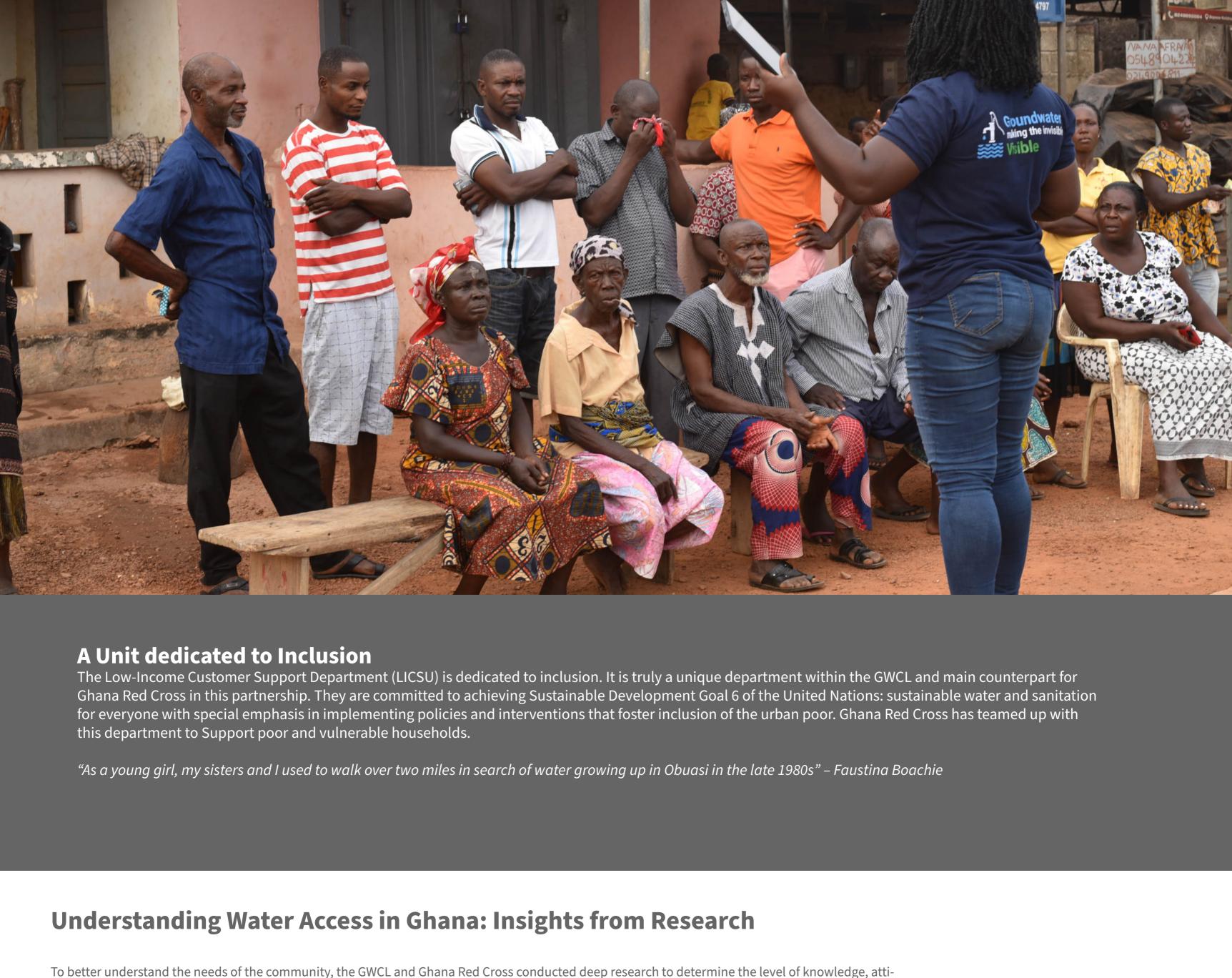
connect the unconnected. That's why the Ghana Red Cross and the Ghana Water Company Limited put their hands together. This is a unique partnership, combining the technical knowledge of utilities and

GWCL is a progressive public utility and has the technical know-how and infrastructure to manage the water engineering network. It strives towards inclusive water service delivery and has a specific unit

dedicated to include low income communities and the urban poor. However, it's capacity to mobilize the community and drive behaviour change has potential to grow. The Ghana Red Cross has in-depth

"I for instance, during the dry season when there is insufficient water, I use same water for many things. Maybe after I finish wash-

expertise in community involvement and behaviour change, thanks to a large volunteer base that is locally rooted and embedded in the community and years of experience in applying behaviour change techniques. Jointly, the Ghana Red Cross and Ghana Water Company will develop and implement a voucher system, to cover the costs of a household connection fee for the most vulnerable. Netherlands Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC) support this partnership financially and technically. The Red Cross Red Crescent Movement believes that partnerships with public water and sanitation utilities are essential for effective water and sanitation programs in the urban environment.



"Water is a valuable and so to ensure that we can always have access to safe water, we need to pay for it." – Yalewa Zongo Resident

behaviour. Surveys were conducted across 695 households for a period of one month.

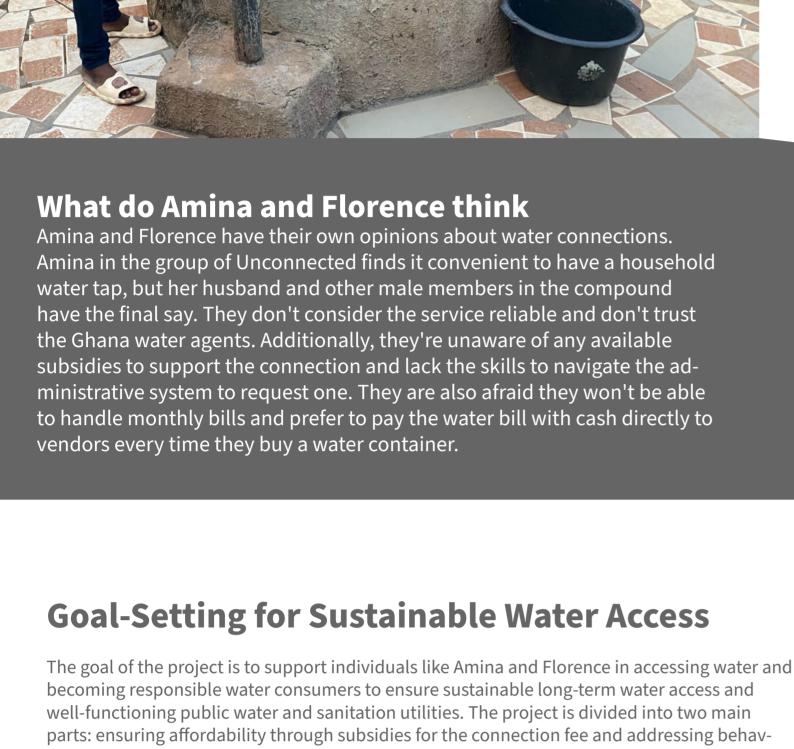
understanding of the context and the design of upcoming behaviour change interventions.

Delving deeper into the Research Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to gain a better understanding of the social aspects of people's motivations. Structured questionnaires were used for the quantitative research, which allowed for data collection and analysis. The qualitative research method, on the other hand, was used to provide detailed information and insight into the specific motivations and barriers to getting a water connection. As can be expected, not everything went smoothly. Some respondents were unwilling to grant an interview or were too busy to schedule a meeting. Some of them also chose to end the interview abruptly due to issues with the observation of storage containers and their place of convenience. Despite these challenges, a wealth of information was gathered, which proved to be crucial for better

social group.

tudes, and practices related to water consumer behaviour among households. The research included for example the assessment of the community's

perception towards the GWCL, their willingness and ability to pay for water, and understanding of the barriers people face to develop responsible



iour change to support responsible water use. In order to achieve success in the behaviour

consumer feedback, which will help to improve the overall service quality.

Understanding Motivations:

tion. However, it is equally important to understand the

Before, we discussed the barriers to obtaining a water connec-

motivations behind people's desire for clean water. While it is

commonly assumed that better health is the primary motiva-

tor, research has shown that factors such as pride and social

status, convenience, and safety are much more significant. In

Ghana, these motivations are further amplified by a sense of

patriotism and the desire to build a stronger nation and a

Hungry for Water

Bringing it Together

Goal: Encourage saving habits

Motivations: Pride and social status

ity, feeling valued, desire of peace

Barriers: Not prioritizing the water bill

Unconnected group.

community associations

Cross volunteers

So far, we have discussed the goals, barriers, motivations,

and influencers related to water connections. Let's now

Key influencers: Family, Community Based Organizations,

For the **Connected** an example could be as follows.

Goal: Inclusive understanding and good relation among

Motivations: Building mutual trust, desire for accountabil-

Barriers: Fear of ejection, resistance from the landlord

Influencers: Religious leaders, landlord, husband, Red

illustrate these with a few examples, starting with the

change part, it is crucial for Amina and her neighbors to trust the water provider and be willing to connect to the water supply. They also need to understand how to read the meter, manage their water consumption, and make timely payments to the GWCL. Moreover, Amina and Florence are encouraged to report any incidents such as leakages or water shortages, and provide

Florence, on the other hand, is proud of her water connection, as it pleases visitors with fresh water that takes less than five minutes to collect. However, she feels the bill is very expensive and doesn't accurately reflect their actual consumption. She thinks other households in the compound consume more water than her and still pay the same amount. She has never

Breaking Down Barriers to Water Access

An important part of the research was to understand what people like Florence and Amina think about household water connections. It turns out trust plays a huge part. The findings showed that 70% of respondents do not have a household water connection, but 50% of respondents would be interested in having one. However, many doubt that they can afford to pay the monthly bills. An even larger percentage of 65% confirmed they cannot pay the initial fee for the connection itself. And they often lack knowledge about the subsidy scheme for water connections. But not all is about financial barriers, people have strong perceptions

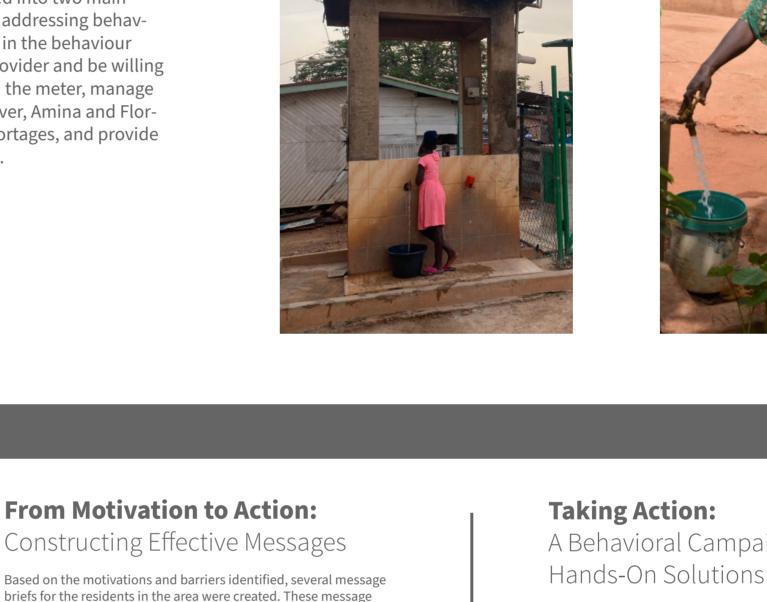
about tap water being a commodity that is out of reach, something unattainable for their

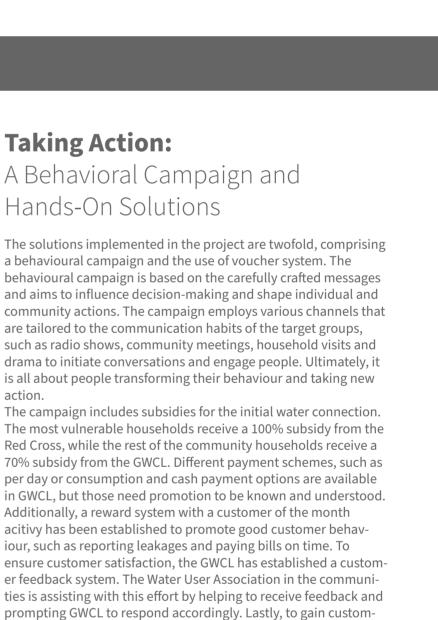
There is also mistrust among neighbors who share a water meter. Arguments arise when one family has visitors, and their water usage is not accounted for. And in one case, the

person responsible for collecting money used the funds for something else. People also lack trust in the authorities and GWCL to provide reliable water services, and there are misconceptions on how water meter and billing work with rumors of meters overestimating usage.

"A water connection is for rich people, it is not for me" – Female Respondent, Kokode

seen the bill and doesn't understand how the meter works. She has complained about irregularities during the dry season to the compound leader and assembly man, but she hasn't received any feedback.





which would lead to easy access to water (benefit) and earning better future for their children. There is a strong sense of pride in seeing communities prosper, women and girls safely fetching social respect (motivation). For the Connected group, five statements were developed. One example is about having inclusive water, and building trust among neighbors. As one of the understanding and good relationships among households (benerespondents put it: fit). The message focused on encouraging shared and transparent "We are hungry for water" - Female resident, Yalewa Zongo billing and meter reading (action) to improve accountability and trust and gaining social development and peace (motivation).

What's in the Message Let's take a look at the actual message briefs now. As we discussed earlier, one of the behavioural goals for the Unconnected group is to encourage saving habits. A message to support this could be: "Saving money helps you get the capital needed for a water connection. Once you have easy access to potable water, you will earn respect." For the connected group, one of the behavioural goals was to promote inclusive understanding and good rela-

tions among households. A message that could be used

"Improve your accountability by participating in shared

community and ensure that everyone pays their fair

share."

billing and meter reading. This will help create a sense of

briefs reflect the key motivation for change, include a cue for

action, and refer to the benefit obtained through the new behav-

iour. Four statements were developed for the Unconnected group. One of the goals for example, was to encourage saving habits. The

could help individuals get capital for a water connection (benefit),

corresponding message focused on saving money (action) that

ers' trust, GWCL officials need to be well-dressed, carry a valid ID, speak in understandable language, and maintain a familiar

Specific to Ghana are the CiCs, or Community Information

Centers and the organization of community meeting called

dabbas. CICs are equipped with powerful megaphones that

on a small building in the center of transport hubs or mar-

kets, as well as display billboards for posters, banners, and

utilized to invite people to community meetings or adver-

tise the Red Cross radio shows. The dabbas are traditional

are used typically to gather large amount of people to be

informed about recent events or decisions.

meetings called by community or religious leaders and they

murals. In the context of water connections, the CiCs can be

make announcements to the community. The facility consists of a microphone and horned speakers, mounted

relationship with their customers.

Words Speak Louder

Make a Difference in the Lives of the Urban Poor We are about to start and make progress in providing water connections to Ghana's urban poor. Together GWCL and GRCS have united in

barriers and motivations to access clean water, gaining valuable understanding of the context used to design solutions that put user behaviour at the centre of the intervention. The use of the voucher systems and the design of the behavioural campaign as solutions show a lot of potential for increasing water access to poor urban dwellings. We hope to test this approach effectively and provide solid evidence on whether it works. We will provide more details about the results soon. However, there are still countless people in Ghana and around the world who lack access to clean water. We must continue our efforts to scale up and expand our impact. As we move forward, we have to recognize the critical role that partnerships play in achieving our goals. Whether you work for the Red Cross, a water utility company, or in the WASH sector, we urge you to reach out to each other. By working together, we can make a real difference in the lives of those who are hungry for access to clean water.

a unique partnership making the best use of their strengths and expertise. So far since we started, we have collected information about