



Success Story: Bringing Cutting-Edge Water Ideas into Homes

Water experts from diverse backgrounds — a senior USAID official, a West Bank-based co-founder of the Palestinian Water Authority, a Harvard professor, and a Nigerian leader of a female farmers' group — have shared their perspectives on water and development with Global Waters Radio, USAID's new podcast series about water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH).

The podcast series is produced by the USAID Water Communications and Knowledge Management (CKM) Project, which supports the Water Office at USAID's Bureau for Economic Growth, Education, and Environment (E3) to harness outreach, data and learning to achieve its strategic goals. The project is implemented by ECODIT, an international development consulting firm with extensive experience in implementing water, natural resources management and energy projects with integrated development communications and learning components, for USAID.



Photo credit: Global Waters Radio

Russell Sticklor, a communications specialist for the project, created the podcast in 2016. While Sticklor had already helped develop articles, photo essays, social media messaging and other outreach for the USAID/E3 Water Office, he believed that a podcast series could further serve USAID's communications needs by enabling listeners to easily access firsthand accounts from water-sector experts they may not otherwise be able to interact with, such as top scholars, USAID staff, water entrepreneurs, community leaders and project beneficiaries. "The podcasts serve USAID's capacity building and communications needs by providing a new medium through which the story of USAID's water programming can be told, diversifying our storytelling approaches," Sticklor said. "The spoken word is a powerful vehicle to deliver stories that can leave a lasting impression on the listener, and the podcasts are easily accessible to anyone with a basic internet connection."

Water Communications and Knowledge Management (CKM) Project Overview

Period of Performance: September 2016 – September 2020

Value: \$15 million

Client: The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)


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The Water CKM Project has produced 17 podcasts since the series launched in March 2016. After growing its audience in its initial year of operation, the series reached about 2,000 listeners in 2017 by illuminating water issues for even the most seasoned water experts, with a focus on the USAID/E3 Water Office's strategic priorities, including gender, sanitation and water supply, with an emphasis on sustainability.

An October 2016 podcast featured an interview with Natasha Wright, an MIT researcher who received a USAID award to pilot a new technology she helped develop for solar-powered desalination in India. In addition to sharing information on the technology itself —one that could have wide-ranging implications, given water shortages in many parts of the world—Wright shared insights gleaned from her work in the field. One

unexpected discovery she noted was that community members actually prefer manual desalination systems to automatic ones. "They preferred both the fact that a fully manual system was less expensive, and also the fact that a fully manual system was less likely to break," she explained.

Unique insights like these make Global Waters Radio listeners keep coming back. Sometimes, the most interesting anecdotes come from beneficiaries themselves. The September 2017 podcast interviewed Salamatu Garba, a native of rural Nigeria and the founder and Executive Director of the Women Farmers Advancement Network. Garba shared stories of how a USAID-Coca Cola Company



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-Salamatu Garba
(Women Farmers Advancement Network Executive Director)

Photo credit: Global Waters Radio

partnership, the Water and Development Alliance, helped make sanitation aspirational in Nigerian villages like the one from which she hails. "More women wanted to marry in the communities where WASH facilities are. Because nobody wanted to marry in the place where she would go and be trekking long distances," she said.

While the podcasts are interesting for anyone with even a casual interest in water issues, they are also a cost-effective way for USAID to increase global awareness of its work and build the capacity of staff and partners. "Global Waters Radio is great exposure for USAID and its partners worldwide," said USAID/Ghana WASH Advisor Emmanuel Odotei, who was featured on one of the podcasts, in which he spoke about WASH innovations such as a new low-cost plastic rural latrine USAID had piloted in Ghana. "USAID staff and partners can use it to learn more about different approaches and professionalize their operations."

So far, the Water CKM Project team is thrilled with the positive feedback it has received from USAID and from listeners and is looking forward to growing the podcast series. "Water is an issue that has immense health, economic and security implications worldwide," said Water CKM Project Chief of Party Mary Renwick. "We are happy to have the opportunity to work with the USAID/E3 Water Office to increase understanding of this complex and multi-faceted issue for USAID staff and others working on water issues around the globe."