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### **Water systems will more often bring a community together than apart. It can create leaders.**

In the developed world, most communities do not notice their water systems until a failure of water of quantity and/or quality. There is not a strong interaction between the community and the water system, except at the tap. There is less need to focus on those communities. Due to their own self interest, they will ensure the water service provider addresses their needs. Or they will raise their voices for external forces to help.

It's different in the developing world. Statistics help explain why. About two billion people, most in the developing world, live in water stressed communities (UN Social and Economic Council 2017). And by 2050 nearly 5.7 billion people, mostly from communities in the developing world, will face water scarcity (WWAP/UN-Water, 2018).

Hence, in the developing world, water is almost always on the community's mind. There exists a closer connection between the community and their water system. The community knows from where water is supposed to come. What it costs, when it is available or how long it takes to fetch it and its quality.

Communities in the developing world have different types of water systems. These include the very basic. Such as a lake, river or stream - often requiring time and danger to walk to these sources. One step up would be a water catchment combined with a small

pipe network. A more complex water system would be a (deep or shallow) well, sometimes with a pump. The more complicated, the more the community needs leadership and money. To support the water system. The next order of system complexity is communal water point or public kiosks (free or for a fee). This is an extension to a reticulated system. Where these occur, we often see small water vendors. They sell water in containers to individuals. The final level is the reticulated system. Including treatment, storage and distribution and pipes. Direct into people's homes or businesses. These are the most common systems found in the developing world. Of the different systems described above they often operate together to varying degrees. For example in an urban or peri-urban community some citizens will get their water from streams, lakes or rivers. Others will get their water from shallow wells. Some will stand in line getting water from kiosks. Or bought from water vendors. The wealthier will get their water through a pipe into their homes or businesses. For the most part, the more complex the water system, the less the community is engaged.

But, most communities in the developing world are helpless to effectuate changes if their water systems are inadequate. Water systems are managed by well-intentioned individuals. But, often without the requisite training and experience. Money to maintain, repair and expand water systems, is usually inadequate. Inadequate for salaries, equipment, parts and supplies. This leads to marginally functioning water systems. And yet communities have little influence or means to help improve the situation. The result is often poor quality water. And, consequentially, community members can become sick or die. This also impacts the community's economy.

For a community to effectuate improvements in their water system they need exceptional community leadership. But, as with anywhere, it's rare to find exceptional individuals. The other method is from external (outside the community) intervention. For the latter, while the intervention is there, the systems improve. The community benefits. But, it's all too common that once the intervention ceases, the water system inadequacies return. Not only does the suffering and deprivation resume, but a new challenge surfaces. That is frustration and despondency. More insidious is a fatalistic attitude. That the community has even less control of their destiny, when it comes to water, then they had before.

There is good news, especially for the less complex system. Water systems will more often bring a community together than apart. It can create leaders. And create community water committees, advocacy groups or other means of collaboration.

