

# Weak membership benefits, lack of business knowledge, illegal activities - some of the challenges that **Kenyan Water Resources Users Associations** face.

Press Release 10<sup>th</sup> of April of 2019

**Kenya is facing a water crisis and the management of water resources has been assigned to voluntary Water Resources Users Associations (WRUAs).** However, they often struggle to finance their operations. Promoting their financial sustainability would contribute to better water resources management and conservation without the need for external funding.

**SUWAMA** project is part of a multidisciplinary **Sustainable Global Technologies Studio** course in Aalto University. The project team consists of 5 Master's students from Aalto with different backgrounds. With the support from a Kenyan state corporation Water Sector Trust Fund (WSTF), the team visited 5 WRUAs and one Community Forest Association (CFA) in rural Kenya, around and to the west of Mount Kenya.

**SUWAMA gathered information about water resources management in Kenya** between 20<sup>th</sup> of February and 8<sup>th</sup> of March. **The outcome of the project will be a policy brief handed to the WSTF about the financial sustainability of the WRUAs and factors that contribute to it.** The policy brief along with the project report will be published on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May.

Most WRUAs, especially at the early stages of their development, are funded periodically by WSTF. During the periods of no funding, these WRUAs often have difficulties in covering all the expenses that they have for management and conservation. Consequently, some activities might cease completely. To ease this problem, income generating activities were added to the management plans of WRUAs a few years ago.

**"Our secret to success is involving and giving ownership of the water to the people."**

– Murithi Muthuri  
Chairman of Ngusishi WRUA

In the beginning of the SUWAMA project the focus was in evaluating the sustainability of these activities, but as the project went on and the team gathered more information, it became evident that the livelihood activities are often too small-scale to be a solution to the financial problems of the WRUAs.

The insights of SUWAMA project can be divided into four categories: Members and community (1), Management of the WRUAs (2), Institutional relationships (3) and Financial sustainability (4). Below there are some insights related to the above introduced topics:

- 1- Community engagement and support from local companies greatly contribute to the success of WRUAs.
- 2- Often the management teams of WRUAs lack business know-how and long-term planning, which prevents them from becoming self-sustainable.
- 3- Collaboration between WRUAs can help to spread knowledge and is especially beneficial for young WRUAs, who are supported by the expertise that already exists in more established associations.

4- Successful WRUAs usually have an alternative source of revenue, such as collecting additional water fees or engaging in a Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) program.

**“Empowering the people through livelihood activities can be seen as indirect conservation, as this discourages unsustainable practices.”**

– SUWAMA team

For more information about the SUWAMA project, please contact Inkeri Seppälä (inkeri.seppala@gmail.com) or SGT course coordinator Matleena Muhonen (matleena.muhonen@aalto.fi)

You can find us in  
[sgt.aalto.fi](https://www.sgt.aalto.fi)  
[www.instagram.com/suwama\\_project/](https://www.instagram.com/suwama_project/)  
[suwamaproject.wixsite.com/suwama](https://www.suwamaproject.wixsite.com/suwama)

