

JOA – Sand Dams Worldwide 2023



Project	Sand Dam Community Works Project
Location	Kenya
Dates	Saturday 10th June – Friday 24th June 2023
Group size	Approximately 14 volunteers from Jersey

Aim and Context of the Project

This project is led by Excellent Development (ED) and their local partner, the Africa Sand Dam Foundation (ASDF). The project will support a subsistence farming community in Ukambani (a region of SE Kenya comprising Machakos, Makueni and Kitui Counties) to build a sand dam to provide a reliable, year-round water source. Sand dams are a sustainable, low-cost, rainwater harvesting technique built into dry river channels to capture and store seasonal runoff water so that water is available to local people even during the dry periods. Over the last 16+ years, sand dams have proven highly effective at transforming lives in this part of Kenya.

The project area suffers frequent droughts and unreliable rainy seasons exacerbated by climate change, leading to environmental degradation, severe water shortages, and failed/reduced harvests. Since most households rely on small-scale farming, these conditions result in widespread hunger and high levels of poverty. Over two thirds of families live in poverty – 20% more than the national average – and about the same proportion also has no access to safe water. The constant search for water leaves people with little time to invest in improved agriculture, trapping them in a cycle of aid dependence. The sand dam is expected to address the key issue of water scarcity and provide families with the time and opportunity needed to focus on food production and income generation.

Project Details

Responsibilities (/Activities): The volunteers will work with a community-based Self-Help Group (SHG) to build the sand dam, experiencing first-hand how it is done and what it means. The project will support this SHG and its wider community to have a new local and reliable source of clean water. SHGs are self-formed groups of male and female farmers from the same village or community who have joined together for the purposes of community development, motivated by *Mwethya*, a Kenyan philosophy of working together to achieve a common goal. The average size of a SHG is approximately 35 farmers and experience shows 70% are female.

Participation on this project will enable volunteers to see first-hand how sand dams work and their role and impact on communities in this area.

Accommodation: All of the communities who benefit from the sand dam projects typically live in remote rural locations but the volunteer team will be staying close to the village in which the project is being run.