

A Well of Hope

How Clean Water Restored Dignity and Joy in Wum



In the quiet town of **Wum**, tucked in Cameroon’s North-West Region, children once began each school day with a difficult choice — carry heavy jerrycans in search of water or arrive in class late and exhausted. The community’s only borehole had long collapsed, leaving families to fetch water from unsafe streams. For **Grace N.**, a mother of three and a widow displaced by the conflict, every drop of water came at a cost. “Sometimes I would walk more than an hour just to fill two containers,” she recalls. “My children missed school because of water.”

That changed in late 2024, when a joint project by **LUKMEF**, the **International Rescue Committee (IRC)**, and **SIDA** brought back not just water but renewed dignity. As part of the **Humanitarian Framework Agreement on Safety, Basic**

Needs, and Livelihood Protection, LUKMEF engineers and community volunteers rehabilitated the broken borewell near Wum Primary School. When clean water finally gushed from the spout, the entire neighborhood erupted in cheers. Grace remembers that morning vividly: “It felt like the whole village was reborn. The children laughed and danced around the pump.”

The Wum borewell is one of **eight water points** built or restored across the region under the project, giving **3,300 people** safe and sufficient drinking water. But the intervention did more than quench thirst—it healed wounds of despair. Communities like **Santa**, **Tingoh**, and **Obang** saw tangible change: **15 VIP latrine blocks with showers** were constructed, serving **168 individuals**, including **11 persons with disabilities** whose homes were adapted for easier access. “I never thought I could bathe in privacy again,” says *Michael*, a wheelchair user in Obang. “Now I feel human.”

Beyond infrastructure, the initiative empowered people to sustain these gains. **Water Management Committees** were trained and equipped with maintenance toolboxes, and **local borehole repairers** learned to troubleshoot and fix hand pumps. Hygiene promoters, many of them women, reached over **8,600 community members**, teaching hand-washing, waste management, and disease prevention. These community educators became trusted voices, turning lessons into habits and homes into safer spaces.

Meanwhile, in **Eyumojock** and **Kake 1**, the project’s **Economic Recovery and Development** component offered livelihood support through cash and food-voucher assistance. Households devastated by displacement regained purchasing power, small traders revived their businesses, and youth found purpose again. “Before this help, I couldn’t feed my children,” says *Aisha*, a young mother from Eyumojock. “Now I can plan for tomorrow.”

In all, the project touched **11,727 lives**—far beyond the original target—proving that when compassion meets community effort, transformation follows. From clean water in Wum to restored livelihoods in Eyumojock, each story reflects resilience born from partnership.

As the sun sets over the Wum hills, the laughter of schoolchildren echoes near the borewell. For Grace, that sound is the music of freedom. “This water is more than water,” she smiles. “It is life returning to us.”