THE NEED:

Democratic and transparent institutions with participatory and accountable governance are critical for improving peoples' lives. However, across sub-Saharan Africa, poor governance and lack of accountability too often disrupt effective local governance loops (see Figure 1) and hamper the ability to attract private sector engagement. As a critical basic service that is often ineffectively provided, water provides a lens to explore these issues. The emergence of private sector operators poses new opportunities to improve services, though the impact on governance is relatively unknown at this point.

The GROWS project will address governance challenges that hinder sustainable and equitable economic growth including:

- Building better relationships and trust between communities, institutions, local government authorities, and private sector water service providers;
- Improving fiscal transparency around water services; and
- Improving the accountability of local institutions to community members and other water consumers.

GOAL AND ACTIVITIES SUMMARY:

The goal of the GROWS project is to identify and disseminate innovative governance models and tools that will help accelerate eliminating extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa. This project will explore models to improve trust and accountability between communities and water service institutions through key project activities including:
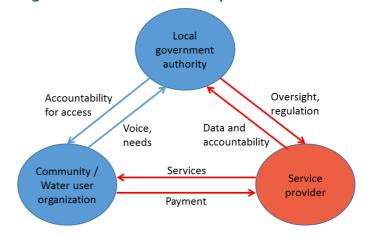
- Activity 1: Landscape analysis to review existing evidence and knowledge around governance models for water services, innovative private sector water services concepts, accountability mechanisms, pricing policies, and funding approaches;
- Activity 2: Field evaluation of local governance mechanisms and private sector engagement; and
- Activities 3&4: Toolkit development and dissemination of key findings to USAID mission staff.

GROWS will investigate how rural water services can provide a strategic entry point to improve governance through two specific research questions:

1) How can rural communities and local government authorities improve governance to hold water service providers accountable?
2) What governance structures, business models, or market-derived tools could enable private sector service providers to hold rural communities accountable for payments?

Figure 1. Local Governance Loop

LOCATION:
Rural communities across Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda

DATES:
October 2018 – September 2021

FUNDING:
USAID: $1,974,000

KEY PARTNERS:
- U.S. Agency for International Development
- Global Environment & Technology Foundation
- Global Partners for Development
- The Ohio State University
- U.S. Water Partnership