

## Kamwenge district EF path: how we got to where we are today!

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### Background

Kamwenge District Local Government is located in South Western Uganda. It is constituted of 14 rural Sub-counties and 4 urban Town Councils. The 2014 Census results indicate a population of 421,470 with a population density of 177 per square km. It has a total land area of approximately 2,439.4 km<sup>2</sup> (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2014). In 2015, the water service levels in the district were 49.8%. To date, the water point level of service is at 61.6% (Water For People annual Flow monitoring data, 2018).

### Roadmap

#### Getting Started

Kamwenge district was selected by the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) as the pilot district for the Everyone Forever model in Uganda. It was selected due to its occupation of a vast area, having a mix of all water technologies, and income levels of close to 100 dollars per month. A 5-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) detailed the cooperation between Water For People and the MWE and was signed in 2013.



**Photo1: Sensitisation meeting in Busingye**

Water For People began in the district by organizing visioning workshops with the government, private sector, and non-government organizations (NGOs). The workshops were used to learn and gather information about the population's water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) needs as well as building relationships amongst the key stakeholders. The two to three-day workshop outcomes included detailed roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders, key characteristics of the Everyone Forever model, and a commitment to collaborate with the district. A 5-year MOU was subsequently signed with the main roles of the District Local Government and Water For People clearly defined. In addition, Everyone Forever champions were identified who would promote the concept to others. With office space given to us in the District Water Office, we were sure that we were on this journey together.



**Photo 2: Water For People Country Director (first from left) and Resident District Commissioner (2<sup>nd</sup> from left) at ground-breaking ceremony of Biguli Kirinda piped water system in Biguli**

The needs assessment helped us identify the least served Sub-county with good leadership as a good place to start the infrastructure work. Of the 15 Sub-counties in Kamwenge district, Biguli Sub-county had the lowest water coverage at 23% in 2013 (Water For People annual monitoring Flow

data, 2013). Subsequently, visioning workshops were also held there. Sensitisation meetings (photo 1) were held with community members who in turn elected members to represent them on the Sub-County Water and Sanitation Board. A ground-breaking ceremony followed (photo 2) and was graced by political heads and technical teams.

Early on, the Country Programme had envisaged that funds existed to quickly roll out the programme. This was not the case. The next two years we then embarked on piloting a few projects that would later be funded as donors started coming on board. Phasing of the programme, especially infrastructure work, helped in utilizing the minimal resources we had as we mobilized communities and partners. In 2014, we drilled high yielding boreholes, and in 2015, we designed the piped water system. Later in the year, construction work in Biguli started. One lady during a donor meeting said *“I was pregnant in 2013 when Water For People came here. In 2015, the child is almost going to school and there is no running water.”*

### Key Components

The Water For People Uganda team has implemented the following key components of the Everyone Forever model in Kamwenge.

**Everyone:** Reaching Everyone in Kamwenge means every household, community, school, and clinic has access to safe and reliable water. Our focus has been on increasing services levels through construction of piped water supply systems. These systems have high initial capital investment costs, but they bring water closer to the premises of a household which is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets. Other communities have benefited from rehabilitation of wells as well as rainwater harvesting tanks. Funding for the capital expenditures has come from Government, Water For People donors, and the community. Everyone has to contribute in the Everyone Forever model if it is to be successful. In addition to reaching Everyone, there are a number of components to help us reach Forever.

**Integrated Water Resources Management:** The programme focuses on water quality and water quantity in the district. Interventions based on the need in Kamwenge include:

- Mapping of wetlands and demarcation
- Enforcement of by-laws for forestry and wetland management
- Water quality monitoring and implementation of Water Safety and Security Plans

The above activities have increased in the last few years, working very closely with the Natural Resources Department in the district and the Police for enforcement.



**Photo 3: Biguli Kirinda piped water supply system reservoir tank in Biguli Trading Centre, serving 2 villages of Biguli and Kirinda**



**Photo 4: A lady fetching water from a tap stand on which water safety measures were implemented to ensure sustainable drinking water quality**





**Photo 5: The Sub-county Chief of Biguli and Officer In-Charge of Biguli Police Station during supervision of Kizikibi wetland boundary demarcation with permanent concrete pillars**

**Sanitation and Hygiene:** Sanitation and hygiene in the district is implemented differently in households, schools, and Health Care Facilities. The District Local Government has a fully-fledged Health Department which provides the primary human resources. The sanitation approaches in the district include Community Led Total Sanitation, home improvement campaigns and Sanitation as a Business (SAAB). Among the products introduced in the district are tin toilets and SaTo Pans for households. There has been slow adoption of these products due to income levels so we do not push for them aggressively. Pit emptying using the gulper technology was introduced and is meant to ensure that the full pits are emptied, especially in schools. The district currently has no faecal sludge treatment plant. We are undertaking research to explore safe burial as an approach.

Handwashing with soap has persistently been low in the past year. We would always combine it with the above approaches with no significant improvement. We have in the last year identified religious leaders who have undertaken a campaign on handwashing with soap and significant results are visible in the district.

The religious leaders have since been acknowledged as key stakeholders and have been adopted as members to the District Water and Sanitation Coordination Committee.



**Photo 6: The Bishop of Fort Portal Diocese, Rt. Rev. Robert Muhirwa (4<sup>th</sup> from left) officially launching handwashing with soap in Kitagwenda Catholic Parish; Parish Priest Fr. Xavier Kayondo (with microphone) is briefing the Bishop about the ongoing campaigns**

**Finance:** Paying for water is critical for sustainability as funds need to be available to keep the system functioning. We use a simple Excel-based tool called AtWhatCost to help calculate how much is needed to sufficiently operate, maintain, and eventually replace or expand a system. Tariffs are determined in a community meeting facilitated by trained staff. It is important to pass council resolutions by the politicians so that the payments are made within the law.

As it is important to understand the costs of water service provision, and the effectiveness of those services, we have been using Key Performance Indicators (volumes sold, non-revenue water, population served, water quality, billing efficiency, etc.) for the piped water system to understand changes over time. In order to determine the cost of reaching Everyone in the district, through the District Investment Planning Process, we determined that it requires about USD11 million to reach Everyone in Kamwenge district, leaving no one behind. Provision of business development support has been integrated in both water and sanitation businesses. Investing in our own capacity skills enhancement was critical.

Sustainability of the piped water systems was initially addressed by putting in place a management model, with a private operator contracted by the sub-county authorities. Since 2017, the MidWestern Umbrella of Water and Sanitation has been given responsibility for the piped water systems gazetted to them, including those in Biguli. The District Local Government has the mandate to oversee the point water sources. A Handpump Mechanics Association (HPMA) provides day to day repair services. Most water systems are managed by Water and Sanitation Committees at the community level, who can pay the HPMA for repair services. We have also tried to create a “service contract” for hand-pump maintenance, with limited success.

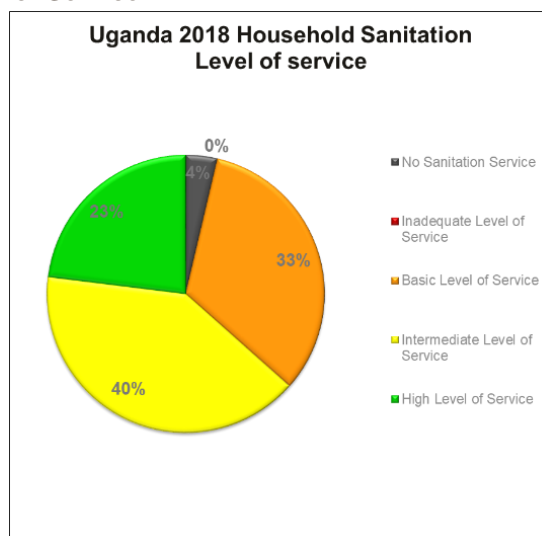
**Institutional strengthening:** As a Country Programme we have invested heavily in human resource skills building. The main methods we use are training, mentoring, coaching, and cross-learning. A capacity needs assessment was undertaken and used to prioritise the training needs. Below are some of the key themes and topics that we have addressed in Kamwenge. Many of these are ongoing since we have staff turnover as well as staff rotation to other Sub-counties.

- General planning for WASH activities
- District Investment Planning
- Monitoring using web-based application
- Groundwater monitoring using divers
- Waster Safety and Security Planning
- WASH in Health Care Facilities
- School WASH
- Tariffs determination using AtWhatCost



**Photo 7: Hand Pump Mechanics repairing one of the boreholes on the pay-as-you-fetch model in Kabambiro as the caretaker looks on**

**Figure 1: 2018 Household Sanitation Level of Service**





The Country Programme has also strengthened partnerships with regional structures and platforms, including Mid-Western Umbrella for Water and Sanitation who are managing rural piped water systems in the region, Water Management Zones who are a decentralized structure of the Directorate of Water Resources Management mandated to protect surface and ground water resource, and the Technical Support Unit 6 in charge of supporting the District Local Governments in the region on technical aspects. Where certain government staff have excelled, we are using them to mentor others or orient new staff that have been posted.



**Photo 8: Health Assistants from other sub-counties in Kamwenge being hosted by the Health Assistant of Buhanda on Kyabwayo Spring to learn best practices of water safety planning and operation and maintenance, to replicate in own sub-counties**

**Monitoring and Learning:** Monitoring is a cornerstone of our work, and we use the Water For People Monitoring Framework as a guide. However, we try as much as possible to incorporate the Uganda national monitoring framework. At the district level, we consolidate data collected in individual communities to review how we are doing at a macro scale, process lessons learned, and identify trends. The District Water Office is the custodian of this data, and they are involved in review all data collected. Data is collected by enumerators selected from the Sub-county Local Governments. Selection of the data collectors is critical. We use people that can clearly document the WASH situations and are able to use mobile phones, especially texting. An exam after the training is used to eliminate those that cannot perform to our expectations. Making decisions using the data collected is a major outcome of our monitoring. It is important to know where we still have gaps, which indicators are not doing well, and where we can find successes. The data we collect is disseminated at the Sub-county (and district) level where annual action plans are developed. The issues form the discussion in Water For People annual reflection sessions with partners and stakeholders, as well as the District Water and Sanitation Coordination Committees.

The Country Programme promotes learning and sharing with other stakeholders at the district, regional, and national level. This is done through regional learning forums, exchange visits, and journeys. Water For People has been privileged to share learnings on the different tools and approaches such as Water Safety Planning, sanitation model villages, hand washing campaigns, prepaid meters for water supply systems, and District Investment Plans, among many others.

**Rights and Voices:** Engaging with the communities in Kamwenge is one way in which we get them to voice their concerns and take broader ownership of the programme. Apart from the usual mobilization meetings, we use tools such as the community scorecard, customer feedback surveys, and *Barazas*. Issues from the meetings are then followed up on by the respective service providers or Local Government staff. For example, issues on a piped water system may include poor communication from the service provider, faulty meters, delayed connection after payment, and no information when there is a shut off, and therefore, no supply. We have found that we get the best results if customer feedback surveys are administered by an independent person.

### Today

Today, Kamwenge District is the hub of WASH approaches in the sector. A lot has been achieved in disrupting the sector and leading to policy changes. At the recent Civil Society forum in Kampala we highlighted the challenges with shallow wells in poor water quality and seasonality, and thus are an unsustainable technology type.

Today Kamwenge district stands at 61.6% water point service level, up from 49.8% over 3 years ago. The Country Programme anticipates to reach everyone in Kamwenge by about 2030. The District and Sub-county staff have been empowered in data collection and interpretation, water safety planning, model village approach, tariff-setting using the Atwhat Cost, District Investment Planning, assets analysis, and they can confidently speak about WASH issues. However, a lot still needs to be done to achieve Everyone Forever.

### Next Steps

Next steps for reaching Everyone Forever in Kamwenge include:

1. Mobilise resources to enable us to reach Everyone in at least one Sub-county of Biguli and start off in other Sub-county
2. Explore other strategic partnerships like National Water and Sewerage Cooperation and other NGOs to extend water to the unserved areas
3. Explore moving to another Everyone Forever District in Uganda which is closer to Kampala and where we can apply our criteria for new district entry
4. Develop an Everyone Forever strategic plan for Kamwenge
5. Scale up the innovative approaches in handwashing with soap through engagement of religious leaders
6. Scale up the WASH in schools programme and ensure that all indicators are implemented in the second phase of WASH in Health Care Facilities
7. Scale up the IWRM work to protect the remaining wetlands and natural resources where water is developed from.
8. Cross-learning among the different Sub-counties on various approaches like Water Safety Planning and pay-as-you-fetch

### Key Learnings

The Kamwenge District roadmap to Everyone Forever has been successful due to the exemplary leadership under the guidance of the Chief Administrative Officer and the Local Council 5. The

leaders have been able to mobilise their teams to be part of the programme and provided the much-needed support in terms of funds and time. Every Quarter, we have strategic meetings with management to identify the challenges. The challenges initially were on staffing and messaging. During the past 3 years, the District has recruited competent and committed staff such as the District Water Officer and Natural Resources Officer, among others. Council resolutions have also been passed on pay-as-you-fetch and a budget allocation of 3% from all departments for natural resources activities. The District Investment Plan was adopted by the council as well. The District Water and Sanitation Coordination Committee (DWSCC) approved the extension of the platform to include field visits for learning as well as adopting other actors

The mapping and identification of stakeholders in the Everyone Forever model needs to be ongoing. Different issues and challenges require different stakeholders depending of level of influence. As new issues get identified, they necessitate going back on the drawing board and identifying the most suited stakeholders or the combination of stakeholders, which has most chance to leverage change. Water For People has learnt this from the context of the need to improve handwashing with soap. Religious leaders have been mapped out and brought on board to further the campaigns five years after commencement of the model.

When we started implementing the Everyone Forever model, we thought we could replicate a number of approaches like SAAB and Sub-county Water Boards. With time, we learnt that context is key. The majority of approaches we use today have been developed specifically for Kamwenge.

Scaling up of the District Investment Plan in over 100 Districts in Uganda was a key milestone in helping the sector realize its national targets. To date, every District shares an update on unserved villages. Many stakeholders have adopted our approaches and models of implementation. Through the Agenda For Change partnerships we now have three Districts where Everyone Forever implementation is ongoing. Through Agenda For Change we have built the capacity of over 200 professionals at the national and regional level to adopt our tools and methodologies. Kamwenge is now a learning hub for innovations in the sector.

Over the past years, we have come up with several approaches and lessons learned that are now considered best practices that can be replicated. These include:

1. The Everyone Forever model requires working closely with and putting the Government at all levels at the centre of your work. Governments and permanent politicians are good allies when it comes to decision making and mobilization of communities.
2. Visioning workshops are crucial to unpack the Everyone Forever model, including the different models and approaches of implementation.
3. While pursuing Everyone Forever plans, it is good to phase the infrastructure as well as geographical areas in order not to spread too thin.
4. Strategic partnerships with like-minded stakeholders who can co-fund aspects of the programme can accelerate the achievement of the vision.
5. Developing business and management models for water systems is a must as it not only creates jobs but unlocks the potential and skills of the local community to solve their own water problems.
6. Prepaid meters are a good solution for large consumers and those far from the Water Office to make prepayments for water.
7. WASH in Health Care Facilities requires special skills, especially from the Health sector.
8. Water Safety and Security Planning is critical for improvement of wells with poor water quality.

9. The District Investment Plan is a great tool for resource mobilization and planning for the unserved.
10. Engagement with religious leaders was a great boost to the programme, especially in improving handwashing with soap. The religious bodies have an institution that is rooted in the community.
11. The regional government and ministerial departments that support District Local Government are a great institution in terms of skills transfer. The technical support units can easily roll out the model in their regions and country at large.