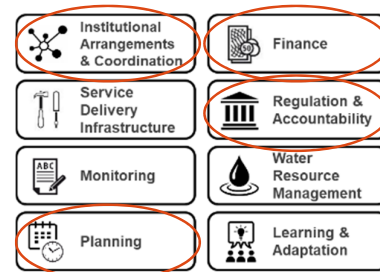


## Reaching Universal Services in Rwanda: District Wide Approach

Water For People  
August 2019



### Background

The Government of Rwanda set ambitious targets of achieving universal access to water and sanitation by 2024 and providing safely managed services by 2030. The Government has adopted the “District Wide Approach” (DWA), a systems-based approach which considers the district as the entry point whilst recognising the broader national enabling environment. Districts are responsible for oversight on all service delivery, including comprehensive and sustainable WASH services. Agenda for Change partners seek to strengthen the district as a service authority in all core functions, including planning, finance, regulation and accountability, and institutional arrangements.

### The Journey So Far

In 2010, Rulindo District leadership and Water For People ambitiously agreed to reach **Everyone** in Rulindo with safe water and sanitation services and develop the institutions so these services last **Forever**. Creating comprehensive services was supported by the Ministry of Infrastructure (MININFRA), whose technical and financial support have been critical since inception. In May 2016, activities implemented in Rulindo were reframed as the District Wide Approach with the goal of national scale.

The following steps capture the national-level DWA process.

1. *Assessment of WASH infrastructure, services, and institutions.* The district and partners assess i) WASH infrastructure, ii) quality of services (service levels), iii) capacity and performance of service providers, iv) capacity and performance of district authority, v) water resource availability.
2. *Plan for universal, sustainable WASH services.* Baseline data is used to develop a comprehensive District WASH Investment Plan, which includes i) defining district-level targets, ii) identifying activities required to achieve targets, iii) developing financial and operational plans.
3. *Implement the District WASH Investment Plan.* Annually, elements of the plan are implemented dependent on the ability to i) resource the plan and balance the ii) delivery of new services (new construction, extensions, rehabilitation) with iii) strengthening service provider and authority capacity.
4. *Monitor implementation of the District WASH Investment Plan and services.* The District WASH Investment Plan should be regularly monitored, often based on indicators used in the assessment stage.

This work was implemented in 5 districts plus Rulindo. Planning is underway for a nationwide comprehensive roll-out. For this model to be sustainable, district government partners must take ownership. The commitment of NGOs and funding partners to a long-term engagement is also crucial for building trust and bringing about institutional change, with the balance of power ultimately resting with government.

## THE ROAD TO EVERYONE FOREVER



## Successes and Challenges

Major milestones include:

- Recognition of the DWA in the National Water Policy and Strategy.
- Establishment of District WASH Boards in national WASH policy.
- Commitment from the Local Government Development Agency to joint funding throughout programme's lifecycle.
- Consolidation of private sector engagement with larger and fewer private operators recognised by the national regulator.
- National support to partners to promote creation of service environments, not just infrastructure.
- A WASH Management Information System to capture service level data nationally.
- Implementation of Asset Assessment and full lifecycle costing tools.
- National regulator revising rural water tariffs to ensure coverage of recurring costs.
- DWA moving from pilot phase to full national roll-out.

Challenges:

- Building a national-level entity for ongoing support to district-level institutions. No such institution has this responsibility.
- Securing ongoing resources to sustain the local systems-strengthening process. Greater priority must be placed on WASH investment at a national level.

## Lessons Learned

The DWA implemented by Agenda for Change partners in 5 pilot districts is being scaled nationally. Key learnings include:

- *Systems strengthening and capacity building.* Capacity of district government and private operators must be strengthened, including creating appropriate oversight of private operators and developing efficiency incentives through new tariff and contractual arrangements.
- *Customer feedback platform.* A system to provide early warning of service failure and enhance service provider and authority accountability.
- *Establishment of an appropriate water tariff* that covers operation and maintenance expenses of a system.
- *Water Resource Management planning* to build a comprehensive understanding and

prioritization of all current and future water resources and uses.

- *Monitoring and peer-learning.* Annual reflection on outcomes and service levels to identify challenges and develop action plans.
- *Political leadership.* Leadership of senior district staff and political leaders has been instrumental in galvanising support and resources and advocating for national scale.
- *Technical solutions not recognised.* Government and the national utility do not recognise basic water supply technical solutions as appropriate for improved water supply, leading to confusion about their management responsibilities.
- *Unclear roles and responsibilities for management and maintenance.* Few rural districts and networks are directly managed by the national utility, creating confusion around management and budgeting roles.
- *Integration with existing processes.* Further integration of the DWA within national and local government processes and policies, including WASH Board development, tariff review, existing planning cycles, and policy changes. Local governments must view the DWA as a process to support District WASH Investment Plans.

Implementing this systems-strengthening approach has required collaboration with Agenda for Change and government partners. As momentum shifts from pilot districts to national implementation, government leadership and continued collaborative efforts will support sustainable service delivery at scale.