



water for people
RWANDA

Partnership Between Local Government and Development Partners to Achieve Sustainable Development Goal 6: Case of Rulindo District

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May 2020

Abstract

This article discusses the outcomes of a joint partnership between the Government of Rwanda through the Ministry of Infrastructure, the Water and Sanitation Corporation (WASAC Ltd) and the district of Rulindo, and Water For People, a United States based nonprofit organization that aims at improving people's quality of life by supporting the development of locally sustainable drinking water, adequate sanitation and hygiene and health programs. In 2010, the partners agreed to implement the Rulindo Challenge Program with the aim to bring full access to water and sanitation services to the population of the Rulindo District through joint planning, monitoring and co-financing. At the time, only 28% of the district population accessed clean water, and only 4% of the households had access to improved latrines, while 50% of schools and clinics lacked proper water and sanitation facilities.

Today, 82% of Rulindo communities have access to reliable and safe drinking water service, 59% of households have improved latrines, while 98% of schools and health facilities have access to water sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services. In addition, the program tackled sustainability challenges by focusing on establishing and strengthening WASH systems, setting up appropriate user tariffs, and providing technical support to ensure the infrastructure is managed properly, fixed when needed and replaced when required; ensuring that water resource management and water safety plans are in place and are used to inform planning. The Rulindo Challenge Model has influenced nationwide water supply policy and it is being replicated in other districts of Rwanda under the District Wide Approach (DWA) to sustainable WASH services.

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Program Background

In 2010, Water For People and the Rulindo District began working on a unique, ambitious program with the objective of bringing safe and lasting water and sanitation access to the entire district population. Implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Infrastructure (MININFRA) and the Water and Sanitation Corporation (WASAC), the program was named “**the Rulindo Challenge**” to highlight the urgent and heavy task of finding a permanent solution to bring full access to safe water and sanitation services to the entire Rulindo District.

By committing to reaching Everyone in the district, partners in this ambitious program committed to bring lasting access to safe water and sanitation services to every household, every community, every school, and every health care facility in the district.

Through a multi-year pledge, partners committed financial, technical, and human resources to reach Everyone in Rulindo. Water For People in Rwanda committed to provide 55% of all hardware costs, MININFRA through WASAC pledged 30%, and the district of Rulindo accepted to cover 15% of the water supply component. Water For People also committed to cover the costs for capacity building for communities to manage the water systems sustainably, hygiene education, community mobilization, and monitoring.

Program Trends and Achievements

This partnership has brought water infrastructure to 271,804 new people, 94 schools and 33 health care facilities since 2012. In addition to increasing access to drinking water through infrastructure development, the initiative is also addressing sustainability challenges through capacity and local knowledge development to ensure that systems built today last well into the future.

Baseline versus Achievements

As shown in Table 1, prior to the Program’s initiation, only about 28% of the Rulindo population had access to safe water, with 32% having no access at all, according to a 2012 baseline survey conducted by Water For People. Only 4% of households had access to improved sanitation facilities, and 34% of schools and health centers had high-quality WASH facilities.

Table 1: Baseline (2012) and Achievements (2019)

Indicator	Baseline in 2012			Achievements in 2019		
	Service Meeting Standards	Service not Meeting Standards	No Access to Improved Infrastructure	Service Meeting Standards	Service not Meeting Standards	No Access to Improved Infrastructure
Community Water Point Service	29%	40%	32%	82%	17%	1%
Household Sanitation Service	4%	94%	2%	59%	40%	1%
WASH Service in Schools	34%	31%	35%	98%	2%	0%

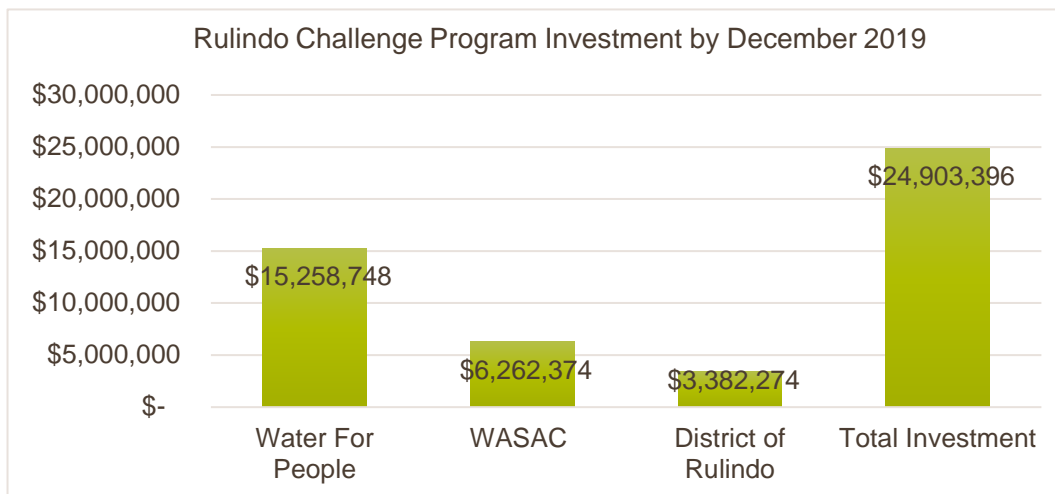
Source: Adapted from different Water For People monitoring survey results (2012, 2019)

In 2019, 99% of communities are covered by water supply infrastructure while 82% of households have reliable water service. Fifty-nine percent of households have access to high-quality sanitation services, and 98% of schools and health centers have access to high-quality WASH services. This dramatic improvement was caused by investment in WASH infrastructure and sustainability-oriented activities.

Program Investments and Co-financing

The Rulindo Challenge Program partners invested US\$24,903,396 over the past eight years to bring water to the district population. See Graph 1 below for more details about contributions of program partners.

Graph 1: Rulindo Challenge Investment and Co-finance



Eighty-four percent of the total budget went into the construction of water supply infrastructure, 8% was invested in program management, 6% was spent on school WASH infrastructure, and the remaining 2% was invested in institutional support and capacity building.

Drivers of Success

Partnership and Approach

The partnership between the district of Rulindo, MININFRA, and Water For People is governed by a memorandum of understanding (MoU) that sets roles and responsibilities of each partner, as well as details regarding implementation and monitoring. The partnership has allowed for the exchange of knowledge and resources and enabled a strong collaboration as partners worked together to bring water to all of the district population.

The Everyone Forever approach was used to implement the Rulindo Challenge Program. Everyone Forever means water and sanitation services that last for every family, clinic, and school. In most water and sanitation projects around the globe, the focus is on short-term wins; building few wells or toilets without considering how they will keep serving people long into the future.

Water For People used to operate that way, until we realized it was not working. When pumps and toilets broke, no one could fix them. This left communities back where they started. Thus, in 2011 Water For People conceptualized the Everyone Forever model and was piloted first in Rulindo. The results of this model show that it is working.

Co-financing

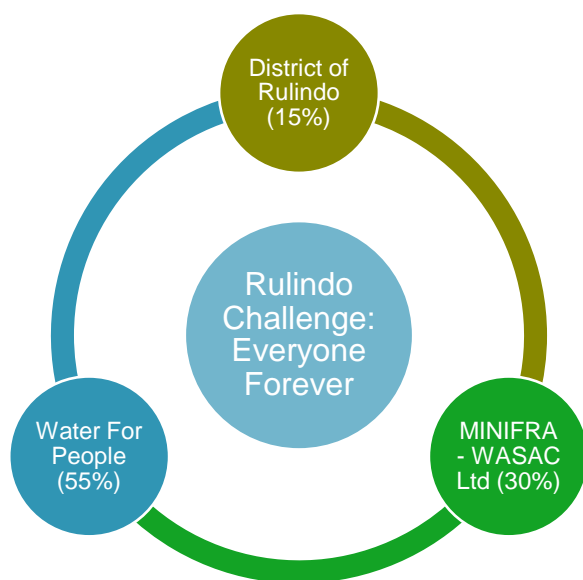


Figure 1: Co-financing Model

The financing model of this program is based on co-financing where each partner contributed financially. Local government and communities invest resources, alongside Water For People. Everyone pays, as result, everyone has ownership of water services. In Figure 1, the co-finance model shows how partners to Rulindo Challenge Program invested in this program. The district of Rulindo contributed 15%, MINIFRA through WASAC contributed 30% while Water For People contributed 55%. This was only done to community water supply systems.

Based on the experience from Rulindo, government policies and investment practices should facilitate investment from domestic, international, and private investors to accelerate investments required in WASH to be able to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG6) and improved services over

time.

To reach SDG 6, and “ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”, there is an urgent need to build strong institutions and adopt the model of co-financing and matching funds among partners.

Program Strategic Planning

District WASH programming processes should be district-led, district-driven and based on district priorities and needs. This reaffirms that the district local government has the primary responsibility for the formulation of the district WASH programmes in consultation with relevant WASH stakeholders, including specialized organizations or government institutions. This was the case of the Rulindo District where partners of the Rulindo Challenge Program jointly planned together, led by the Rulindo District. Initially, they agreed to have a joint strategic planning, which was driven and led by the District.

Monitoring and Measuring Success

Monitoring is the continuous assessment of the program or project in relation to the established schedule (Biwott, Tecla & Egesah, Omar & Ngeywo, Javan. (2017). The Rulindo Challenge Program adheres to a strict monitoring process and believes that monitoring both the infrastructure developed, and strong management systems are necessary to maintain a

successful and sustainable project. The program monitoring was based on below Everyone milestones, as indicated in Figure 2 below.

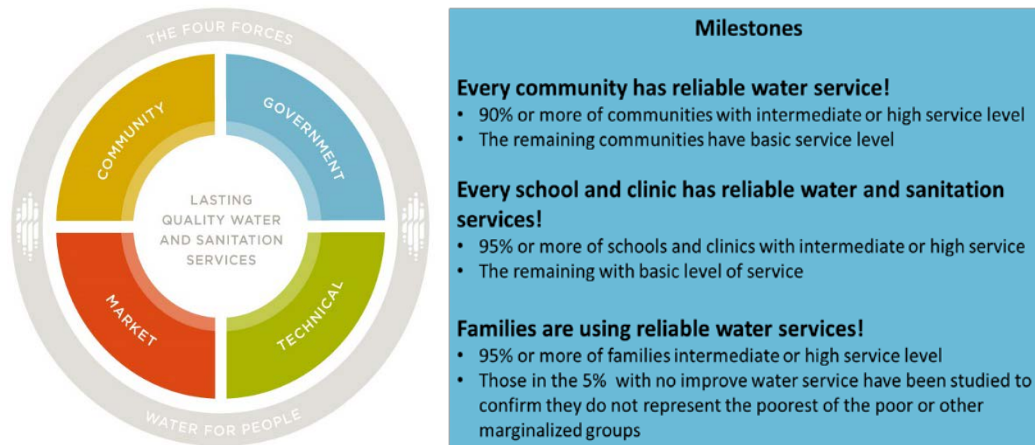


Figure 2: Everyone Milestones

Challenges

While the Rulindo Challenge Program has been a success, program partners experienced some challenges.

Lack of Demarcated Population Settlement Sites

When the Program was launched, the district of Rulindo, like many other rural districts, did not have a land use master plan. The land use and detailed plans of planned settlements and urban areas in Rulindo were approved in February 2018, and the plans revealed that some of planned settlements do not have access to water systems. Program partners decided to revisit the designs and new extensions were proposed to ensure that all planned settlements are fully served.

Topography and Impact on Program Investment

The district's hilly topography also complicated efforts to supply water to its population and is responsible for the high costs of water supply infrastructure. In some areas, the only possible option to ensure uninterrupted water supply was through the installation of pumping systems which use high pressure pumps and require high operating costs.

Water Tariff

Like in other rural districts, the population of Rulindo used to get untreated water from springs, rivers, and swamps for free; introducing the concept of paying for water service was challenging. Through continued education efforts, the population became aware of the importance of paying a small tariff (RWF 20 per 20 liters for electrical motorized water systems and RWF 8 per 20 liters for gravity water systems) to meet the cost of maintenance and repairs and ensure the long-term sustainability of the system. In addition, communities were

encouraged to use safe water to avoid a heavy health cost resulting from avoidable diseases. However, there are limited cases of people resisting to pay the tariffs which need to be addressed to avoid losses to water operators and eventually limit their ability to pay for repairs in due time.

Conclusion

The Rulindo Challenge Program has inspired a policy shift from traditional sporadic water provision projects to more sustainable and comprehensive interventions with the Government of Rwanda, scaling up the same approach at national level under the DWA—a sector led way of working that seeks to achieve universal access to sustainable WASH services in all districts across Rwanda—banner.

Globally, Water For People scaled up the approach under the Everyone Forever model after a very successful initiation in Rulindo District.

Based on the achievements of the Rulindo Challenge Program, MININFRA has requested Water For People to extend its interventions in another district, Gicumbi, and the organization is supporting the pilot of DWA in other five districts.

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