

# Water For People introduces a business approach to sanitation management in Uganda



water for people

**Stephen Otage**  
[sotage@ug.nationmedia.com](mailto:sotage@ug.nationmedia.com)

Despite living in an era of advanced technology and easy access to information, hygiene and sanitation management in Uganda still remains a challenge for both the elite and the illiterate.

According to Cate Zziwa Nimanya the Country Director Water For People, this is an international NGO working in nine countries around the world. Three are in Africa and these include Uganda, Malawi and Rwanda. In Uganda, Water For People works in Kamwenge district to ensure that every household has access to safe and lasting water and sanitation services.

“We work with the private sector and Kamwenge district local government. We invest a lot in capacity building in the district water and health teams, the natural resources officers and the politicians for institutional strengthening,” she says explaining that they believe that since institutions are more permanent, they ensure sustainability of WASH investments.

“We promote water safety so that water services last because one unique activity, is not enough to ensure that the water lasts. Communities need to understand the water costs for water provision and replacement costs,” she says adding that working with many other stakeholders like NGOs, public institutions, they have constructed seven water systems in rural areas which provide piped water.

“The work we did in Kamwenge has been scaled all over Uganda because we have proved that a holistic program can stay in the district for a long time when you show the community how to keep the system running,” she said adding that they were asked to make presentation during the tenth Ministry of Water and Environment Joint sector review meeting because they have supported over 100 districts to promote District investment plans.

“We have designed toilets, small treatment plants in towns, and we can make briquettes from fecal sludge. Briquettes are sold to earn money. You can also make money from pit emptying.

## Sanitation at a glance

Since 2008, Water For People has established

partnerships with different stakeholders in the public, private, NGO and Development Partners to push Sanitation As a Business (SAAB). Water For People is a recognized critical player in the sanitation marketing sector in Uganda and plays a facilitators role in Kampala, Kamwenge, Kitgum, Kileleshwa and Soroti Districts.

Water For People in partnership with the private sector is making strides in pushing out innovative products and services beneficial to end consumers / households working along the sanitation value chain, the private sector is engaged with some entrepreneurs having grown their businesses since 2012.

## Why the Private sector?

### Assures sustainability

In 2011, Water For People moved away from the traditional subsidy-driven approach and introduced the Sanitation As a Business (SAAB) Program which seeks to



Ms. Cate Zziwa Nimanya, Country Director -Water For People.

make the private sector the main driver for improving sustainable access to sanitation services among households. Currently Water For People is implementing Sanitation as A Business in Kampala, Kamwenge, Soroti, Kitgum and Lira where as a facilitator we are facilitating small entrepreneurs to provide Fecal Sludge Management (FSM) services of; Latrine construction, pit emptying, transportation, treatment and reuse.

Since 2008, Water For People has established partnerships with different stakeholders in the public, private NGO and Development Partners to push Sanitation As a Business. Water For People is a recognized critical player in the sanitation marketing sector in Uganda and plays a facilitators role in Kampala, Kamwenge, Kitgum, Kileleshwa and Soroti Districts.

Water for people in partnership with the private sector is making strides in pushing out innovative products and services beneficial to end consumers / households Working along the sanitation value chain, the private sector is engaged with some entrepreneurs having grown their businesses since 2012.

## Extends services into poorer and more informal communities

The private sector is paramount in extending services and products to the furthest household. The private sector has developed distribution chains that can benefit SAAB and an example is Crestanks who in 2016 partnered with Lixil and Water For People and through the partnership distributed over 20,000 SaTo Pans across the country.

## Getting the Product / Service to scale

Water For People through its plumbing schematic and global sanitation strategy pushes successful innovations to market testing and eventually to scale which is attained through exponential growth with limited efforts from Water For People. Such products like the now commonly used gulper technology that was designed to serve informal and highly inaccessible households has been incorporated in the service chain and is now recognized by Kampala Capital City Authority. The gulping business has spread throughout the country and is not

only seen in Kampala but in Mbarara, Kitgum, Lira, Wakiso, Masaka. The Gulper Association that was set up in 2017 has 15 member companies.

## Job creation for locals

The private sector, as the primary driver of economic growth and employment creation, has a central role in poverty reduction and the achievement of the SDGs. Sanitation as a business is no different with opportunities along the entire sanitation value chain. The private sector provides around 90% of employment in the developing world Uganda inclusive for both formal and informal jobs. Over the past 8 years, the private sector has been introduced to the opportunities in the WASH sector and this has in turn led to a multitude of businesses investing in the sector and has created over 500 jobs. These jobs include masonry works, pit emptying and youth groups producing fecal sludge briquettes.

## The Private sector is well versed with the Local Market

Despite the robust customer analysis that is carried out to influence product and service design and development, the private sector is key in taking product to market and through experience and continuous communication, advising on the re-segmentation of the market based especially on the local market knowledge and experience in the market. Innovative Financing for End Users of Sanitation Products and Services.

## What more can be done to increase Private Sector Involvement in SAAB?

Implement specific policy instruments and interventions that complement, coordinate and collaborate with the private sector rather than provide competition. Provision of favorable business environment, industrial policies and a system of incentives are necessary to enhance more private sector participation. Consider incentives that encourage private sector participation.