

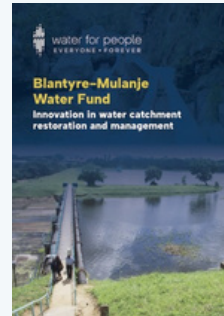


water for people

National Impact Stories

Systems strengthening across country programs

Malawi | Rwanda | Tanzania | Uganda



Blantyre-Mulanje Water Fund
Malawi



Enabling Community Ownership
Malawi



Investment Planning
Rwanda



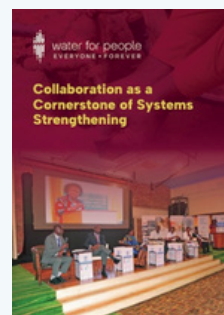
Long-term Focus
Rwanda



Strengthening Partnerships for WASH
Tanzania



Building on Data
Tanzania



Collaboration as a Cornerstone of Systems Strengthening
Uganda



Building an Efficient and Sustainable Sanitation Market System
Uganda

A consolidated booklet of eight national impact stories.



Executive Summary

This booklet brings together eight national impact stories from Water For People country programs in Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. Each story offers a practical example of systems strengthening in action, showing how sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene services depend on more than infrastructure alone.

Across the four countries, the stories highlight different entry points into systems change: catchment restoration, rural maintenance, district investment planning, long-term service monitoring, national evidence generation, asset mapping, multi-sectoral collaboration and sanitation market development. Together, they show how Water For People works with governments, communities, civil society, private sector actors and development partners to strengthen the systems that make services last.

At Water For People, we believe that even one person without clean water and a toilet is unacceptable. That belief drives us every single day. It's at the heart of our Everyone Forever approach: reaching every family, health clinic, and school with lasting water and sanitation access.

Everyone means no one is left behind. Forever means lasting, long-term solutions that keep water flowing for generations. And with climate change intensifying, resilience must be embedded into everything we do. The Rwanda experience reminds us that reaching Everyone is only part of the journey; achieving Forever requires continuous learning, adaptation and engagement with national systems.

The stories in this booklet show that systems strengthening is often built through patient and practical work: creating investment plans, improving maintenance systems, building trust between partners, formalizing markets, strengthening data, and supporting institutions to make better decisions. These shifts may not always be immediately visible, but they are what allow services to continue long after a project ends.

As Regional Director, I see these stories as a reflection of Water For People's commitment to lasting impact. They show that sustainable change happens when communities, governments and partners share ownership of the problem and the solution. They also remind us that our responsibility is not only to help people gain access to water and sanitation services, but to help build the systems that keep those services working for everyone, forever.

Cate Nimanya

Regional Director Africa, Water For People

GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND SHARED FRAMEWORK

General Introduction

Water and sanitation services are essential to human dignity, health, education, livelihoods and long-term development. Across communities, reliable access to safe water and sanitation is not only about building infrastructure; it is about ensuring that the systems responsible for planning, financing, managing, maintaining and monitoring those services are strong enough to last.

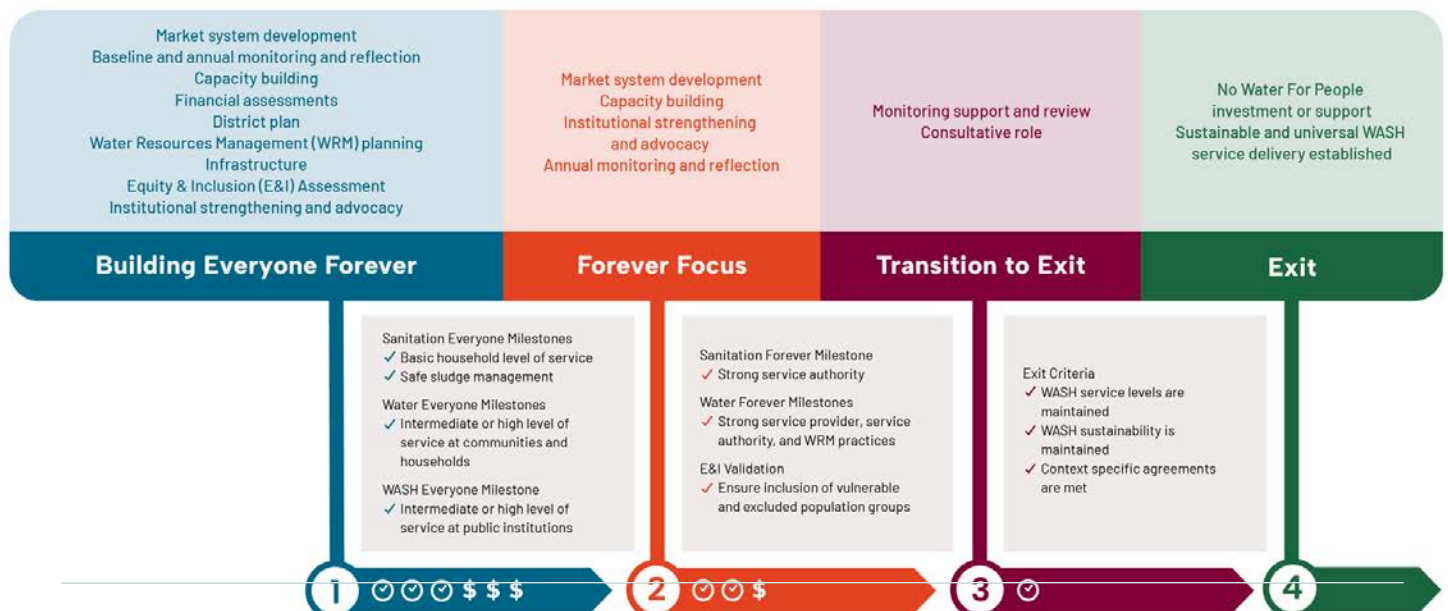
This booklet brings together eight national impact stories from Water For People country programs in Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. Each story presents a different example of systems strengthening in practice. The stories show how country teams are working with governments, communities, civil society organizations, private sector actors and other partners to address the barriers that prevent sustainable and universal access to water, sanitation and hygiene services.

The examples in this booklet reflect different entry points into systems change. In Malawi, the stories focus on water catchment restoration and the professionalization of handpump maintenance. In Rwanda, they focus on district investment planning and the long-term work required to sustain water service levels after initial success. In Tanzania, the stories demonstrate the importance of partnerships, data and national-level evidence in strengthening WASH systems. In Uganda, the stories show how collaboration, district investment planning and sanitation market development can contribute to more sustainable service delivery.

Together, these stories show that lasting impact requires more than short-term project delivery. It requires strong institutions, reliable data, coordinated planning, sustainable financing, capable service providers, community ownership, and accountability across all levels of the system. This is the foundation of Water For People's work: supporting existing systems so that they work better for everyone, and so that access to water and sanitation can be sustained over time.

The Road to Everyone Forever in Districts

Toward universal and sustainable water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services



Everyone Forever: The Foundation of the Work

Reaching Everyone and Sustaining Access Forever

At the heart of Water For People's work is the Everyone Forever model. The model is based on a simple but powerful commitment: to reach everyone with safe and sustainable water and sanitation services, and to ensure that those services last forever.

Everyone means no one is left behind. **Forever** means lasting, long-term solutions that keep water flowing for generations. And with climate change intensifying, resilience must be embedded into everything we do.

The Rwanda Country Program provides an important foundation for this model. Rulindo was the birthplace of Water For People's Everyone Forever model, described in the Rwanda stories as a powerful approach emphasizing the need to reach all members of a community and ensure lasting access to water and sanitation services. The model ensures that no one is left behind and that every achievement is sustainable.

In 2010, the Government of Rwanda, Water For People and Rulindo District committed to an ambitious plan to reach Everyone in the district — every household, every community, every school and every healthcare facility — with safe drinking water and sanitation services, and to develop the institutions and local capacity so that this access would last Forever.

This became known as the Rulindo Challenge and reached more than 385,000 people with water through piped water systems while strengthening national institutional systems.

The model has since been adapted across country programs according to local context. In Malawi, Water For People moved from ad-hoc projects to a more holistic and systemic approach in 2006, adopting the Everyone Forever model and implementing it across five districts. The Malawi Country Program applies this approach across water, sanitation and public institutions WASH, while also advocating for the District Wide Approach to be adopted at national level.

In Uganda, the Everyone Forever model is described as being predicated on strong collaboration and systems strengthening. The development of District Investment Plans, for example, required multi-sectoral collaboration from government ministries and agencies, sub-national regional centers, district offices, non-profit partners, service providers and communities. This demonstrates that Everyone Forever is not only a service delivery model; it is also a systems strengthening approach that depends on shared ownership, coordinated planning and long-term sustainability.

Across the country stories, Everyone Forever provides the foundation for the work. It moves the focus from isolated interventions to district-wide and system-wide change. It asks not only whether infrastructure has been built, but whether the people, institutions, financing, data, partnerships and practices are in place to keep services working for everyone, forever.

Systems Approach

A systems approach to social change solves big problems by looking at all the parts of a system and how they interact, rather than focusing on just one part of the problem. It strives to understand what is feeding a social or environmental challenge and keeping it entrenched, in order to unlock the key actions that will enable change.

Water For People believes in strengthening systems to ensure sustainable impact is created. This is about developing existing systems, so they work better for everyone. Instead of creating new solutions from scratch, Water For People focuses on improving what is already in place and helping it run more effectively, efficiently and sustainably.

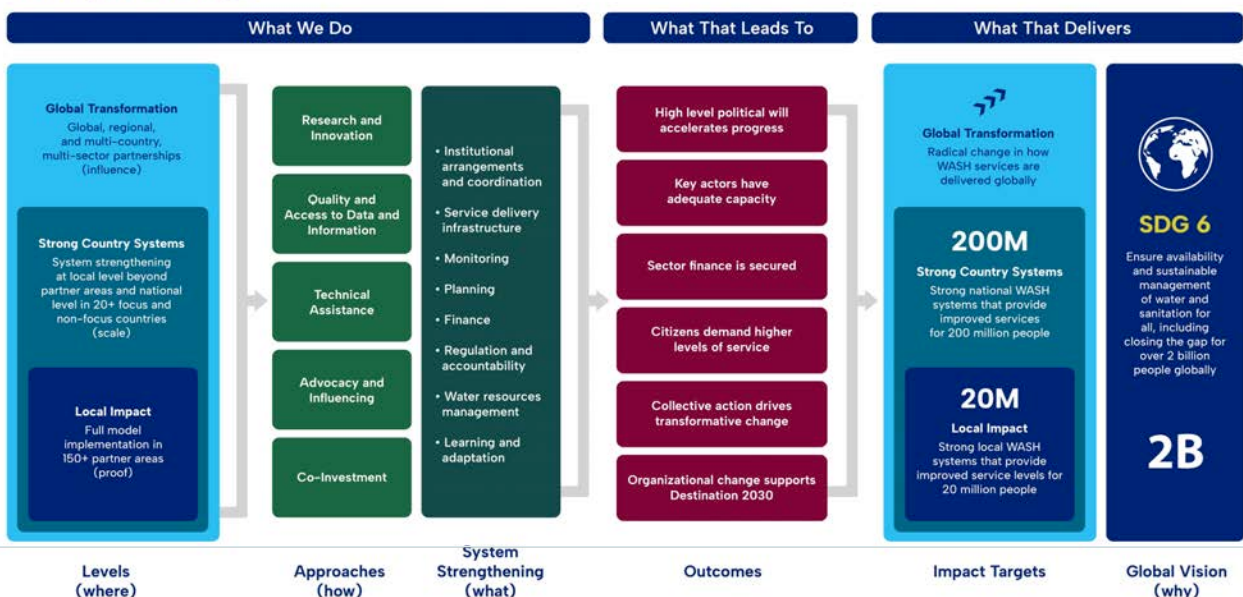
In the shared documents, WASH systems are understood as more than infrastructure. They include the social, technical, institutional, environmental and financial factors, actors, motivations and interactions that influence service delivery in a given context. Resilient systems are required to survive in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world.

As modern NGOs, Water For People recognizes that it cannot solve problems alone. Instead, it can connect across societies and engage beyond the WASH sector to work with decision-makers, experts and citizens to find integrated solutions. Systems strengthening can be catalyzed through partnerships with governments, civil society and businesses. It also requires organizations and partners to challenge themselves, address inequalities and poor practices within their own systems, and invest more effectively to pursue a common goal.

This approach is closely linked to **Destination 2030**, Water For People, and RIVA's joint vision to accelerate progress toward the SDG 6 targets. Destination 2030 identifies three impact pathways:

- Local: Increasing local water, sanitation and hygiene systems to improve services for more than 20 million people in districts.
- National: Strengthening national water, sanitation and hygiene systems to improve services for more than 200 million people.
- Global: Challenging the status quo, influencing leaders, and supporting people and organizations to contribute to transformational change in how WASH services are provided to two billion people globally.

Theory of Change



The stories in this booklet show how systems strengthening happens in practice. It can begin with a district investment plan, a water fund, a maintenance model, an asset mapping process, a sanitation business model, or a national evidence report. What connects all the stories is the same underlying approach: strengthening the systems that make sustainable WASH services possible.

What We Are Trying to Change in the WASH System

Understanding the WASH System: Building Blocks Assessment

To understand what needs to change in the WASH system, the shared documents use the Building Blocks Assessment methodology. This methodology was created by the international think tank IRC to uncover challenges and identify critical gaps within the WASH sector of a country or district. The tool analyzes the sector's current performance against key building blocks in order to identify areas for specific intervention to strengthen the system. When repeated over time, it becomes a way of showing the progress or decline of the sector.

In the Malawi, Rwanda and Tanzania stories, the Building Blocks Assessment analyzes performance against ten building blocks and uses a scoring scale of 1–5, where 1 stands for non-existent or very weak and 5 means fully compliant or very strong. In the Uganda stories, the assessment uses nine building blocks and a scoring scale of 0–2, where 0 stands for non-existent, 1 stands for weak and 2 means fully compliant or very strong.

The building blocks help identify where the WASH system is strong, where it is weak, and where targeted action is needed. Across the stories, different interventions link to different building blocks. For example, the Rwanda investment planning story links to Planning and Finance, the Malawi handpump maintenance story links to Infrastructure Management, the Tanzania asset mapping story links to Planning and Infrastructure Management, and the Uganda District Investment Plan story links to Inclusive Planning and Finance.

The shared documents also use the Water of Systems Change framework, developed by FSG, to describe the six conditions that lead to impact at the system level. The framework outlines three layers of change:

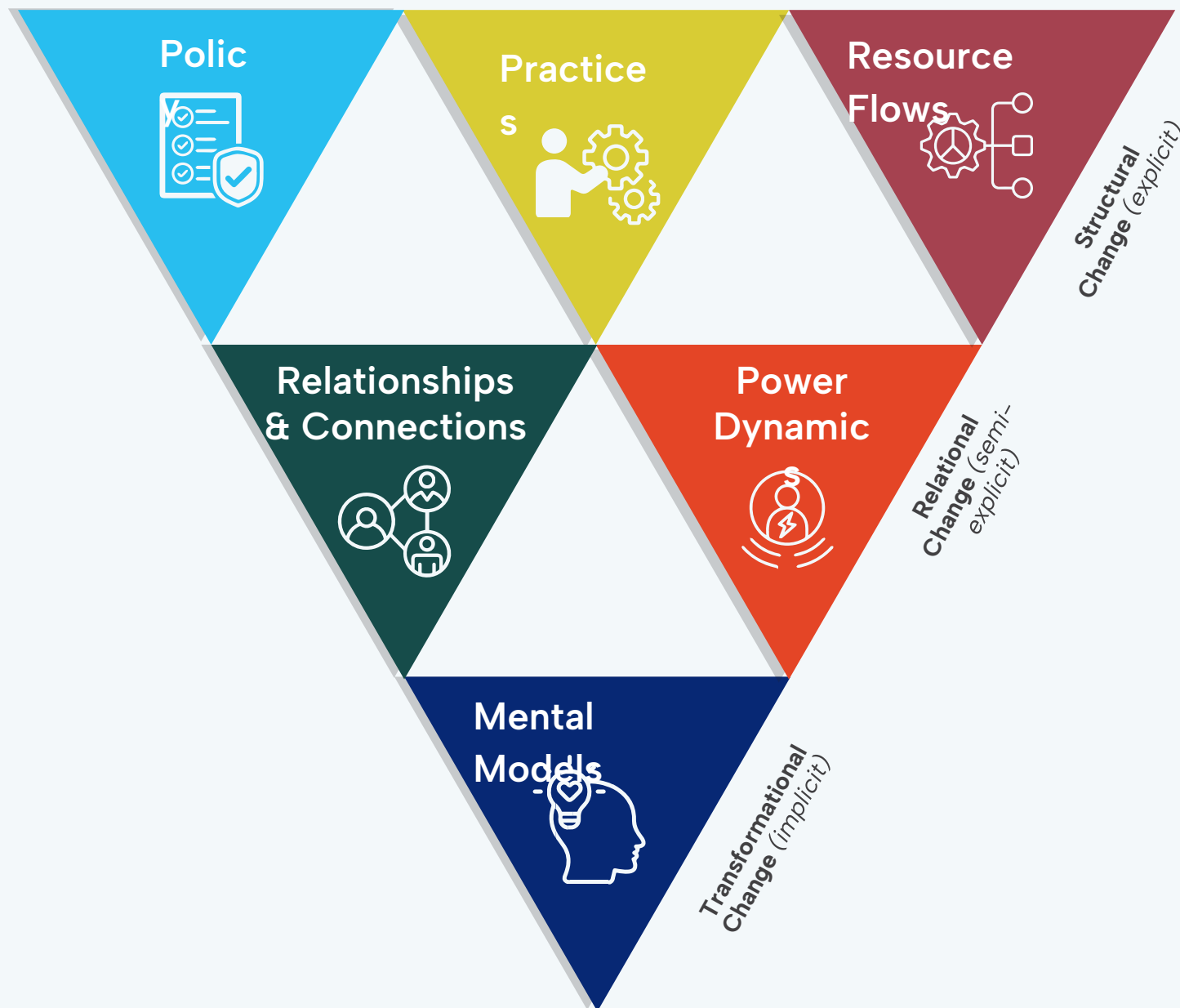
Structural change: This is what we see — the tangible activities and interventions. Changes to processes or policies, and programmatic activities, are examples.

Relational change: This refers to changes in relationships and power dynamics between people and institutions involved in the work. For example, when a grant recipient is treated as an equal partner in development, this can lead to more holistic, consultative support strategies.

Transformative change: This occurs when people's thinking changes. These changes may not always be apparent, but they are critical because they shape how people view the world, the challenges they face, and the choices they make. When this type of change occurs, sustainable and impactful shifts can take place within the system.

The framework identifies six conditions of systems change:

The Six Conditions of System Change

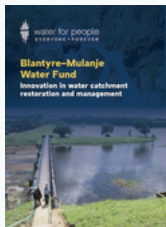


These conditions help explain how change happens beyond individual activities. They show whether an intervention is influencing formal rules and policies, day-to-day practices, how resources move, how actors relate to one another, how power is shared, and how people think about the system itself.

As the shared documents note: “Real and equitable progress requires exceptional attention to the detailed and often mundane work of noticing what is invisible to many.” This is why the stories in this booklet look not only at visible outputs, but also at the less visible shifts in coordination, accountability, financing, institutional capacity, relationships and mindsets that make long-term systems change possible.

Eight stories at a glance

Four country programs, two stories each.



Blantyre-Mulanje Water Fund

Innovation in water catchment restoration and management

Malawi

Collective action for catchment restoration and water security.



Enabling Community Ownership

Professionalizing the Handpump Maintenance System

Malawi

Community ownership and professionalized maintenance for rural water systems.



Investment Planning

Shifting the System Towards Sustainable and Universal Water Access

Rwanda

District WASH investment planning for universal and sustainable access.



Long-term Focus

Staying Responsive to Challenges Amid Success

Rwanda

Protecting sustainability after major service-coverage gains.



Strengthening Partnerships for WASH

Acknowledging CSO Contributions in Tanzania

Tanzania

Making civil-society contributions visible in national WASH planning and budgeting.

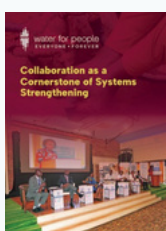


Building on Data

Asset Mapping to Enhance Sustainability of Tanzania's WASH Infrastructure

Tanzania

Asset mapping and digitization for long-term rural infrastructure management.



Collaboration as a Cornerstone of Systems Strengthening

Uganda

District investment plans built through multi-sector collaboration.



Building an Efficient and Sustainable Sanitation Market System

Uganda

Sanitation entrepreneurs, gulper technology and a local service market.

Blantyre–Mulanje Water Fund

Innovation in water catchment restoration and management



water for people
MALAWI

Introduction

In Malawi, Water For People introduced an innovation that had thus far only been applied in two other countries on the African continent.

The Malawi Water Fund is a collective action that brings together a range of stakeholders: utilities, businesses, agriculture, and local government, to invest jointly in ecosystem protection and upstream communities within the catchment that supply their water.

The model focuses on the Likhubula and Mudi catchments, which contribute 20% of the

water source for over one million residents of Blantyre and surrounding districts, where Water For People has partnered with the Water Board since 2007.

The Revised National Water Policy of 2024 specifically references these innovations, outlining a bold shift in government strategy: prioritizing piped water systems over handpumps in rural areas to enhance reliability and sustainability. This alignment of local innovation with national policy marks a critical milestone in Malawi's water sector.

Water is the most critical resource issue of our lifetime and our children's lifetime. The health of our waters is the principal measure of how we live on the land.



What is a Water Fund?

The Water Fund (also known as Watershed Investment Program) aims to set up a sustainable mechanism for **collective action** that brings together different water users — usually utilities, businesses, agriculture, and local government— **to invest in ecosystem protection and upstream communities** within the catchments they depend on.



Background

Malawi 2063, the country's national strategy aligned with the African Union's Agenda 2063, outlines its priority areas for water and sanitation services. These relate to the development of water resources, the provision of drinking water, production and agriculture, and catchment management. A catchment is an area where all water runoff, for example, from rain, drains into a specific point, like a river, lake, or reservoir.

Blantyre is served by several water sources, including water catchments—Mudi and Likhubula. Human encroachment of the area, especially around Mudi catchment, is threatening the sustainability of the water resource.

This is how the idea of a Water Fund was developed. The Water Fund is an innovative mechanism in which water users and beneficiaries "pay" or "compensate" nature for its service.

The Mudi catchment, initially a forest reserve, is managed by the Department of Forestry, while water supply from the dam is managed by the Blantyre Water Board. Prior to the 1990s, the area had indigenous and exotic trees, but people encroached on the area from 1993 onwards, leading to several impacts on the catchment. The dam had an initial capacity of 40,000 cubic meters. When the catchment area was encroached upon, people partitioned it into their fields, where they began growing crops. This led to increased sedimentation in the dams, as fertilizers or other materials used in farming would run into the water source when it rained, affecting water quality. The water also became infected by invasive weeds, which led to further challenges.

The Blantyre Water Board decided to move people away from the catchment area and thus began an awareness campaign on the

importance of the area and the problems with water quality resulting from various human practices. The community was encouraged to plant trees on plots closest to the water source. However, following the agreement that people would move further away from the catchment, most stopped the planting of trees, while those who had already done so were compensated to improve their livelihoods.

The Water Board decided during this time to legally have the catchment area gazetted as a water-controlled and protected area. A committee that comprises several stakeholders was formed. The Department of Forestry and the Ministry of Lands and Water focused on environmental rehabilitation and the local community committee, as prescribed by the regulation that reviews the condition and needs of the catchment area. The Blantyre Water Board was made the secretariat.

In 2015, rehabilitation began in the area, with trees planted over 890 hectares, but due to its size, the Water Board lacked the resources to plant all the trees and began approaching other stakeholders for support. While the exercise continues, not all the trees have been restored in the area, as it is surrounded by residents, and education against dumping and other harmful practices continues. Some trees were uprooted by people in the area and others were mining sand to sell for an income, so security was needed. More than 20 community members were employed to patrol the area.

In Likhubula, the Mulanje mountain catchment area, several invasive species are present, and some plants are becoming extinct due to deforestation.

The Systemic Challenge

Currently, 80% of Blantyre's water supply comes from the Shire River, but transporting this water over long distances is expensive. While Mudi and Likhubula are among the key local catchments, restoring and better managing these, could significantly reduce reliance on the Shire River and improve the overall cost-effectiveness and resilience of Blantyre's water supply system.

Due to deforestation, sedimentation and disposal of solid waste resulting from the encroachment of community members in the Mudi catchment area, the water quality has been affected and flooding has increased. Additionally, the weather patterns have been changed by the mass cutting down of trees. All of these factors have threatened the water security for the population that is dependent on it.

Due to water being a public good, the tariffs charged for water supply by the Blantyre Water Board do not cover all its costs, and consequently, it does not have sufficient resources to protect the catchment and to rehabilitate the trees that were cut for firewood. Due to the size of the area, the trees were not secured, and the cycle of deforestation and replanting continued.



The **Blantyre-Mulanje Water Fund** has set clear objectives to improve water quality and quantity through nature-based solutions:

- Improving Water Quality: Reducing pollution for safe drinking water
- Increasing Water Quantity: Implementing sustainable water management
- Community Engagement: Empowering communities through education and involvement.
- Ecosystem Restoration: Protecting and restoring river ecosystems

We protect nature FOR people, not FROM people. We want people to benefit from nature and the land, but to use these resources sustainably.

Joseph Magoya, Water For People Malawi



Project Partners

The Water Fund is envisioned as a fund that brings financial support and expertise from various public, private and civil society role-players who are the downstream users of water. These players share the responsibility to protect and sustain this vital resource. Central to this effort is the Blantyre Water Board. The board's work is critical for managing the water source and providing good quality water to the residents of Blantyre. All stakeholders who derive that value also have a responsibility in protecting it.

Water For People and the Blantyre Water Board have had a strong relationship in doing just that for many years. Water For People has contributed financially and by obtaining technical information through the feasibility study. The organization also set up the governance structure of the Water Fund, commissioned the feasibility study, trained the steering committee locally and internationally, and now acts as secretariat for the initiative.

The Steering Committee, chaired by NWRA (National Water Resources Authority), meets quarterly to review the progress on the initiative.

There are four technical working groups focused on biodiversity and watershed management, community engagement and stakeholder relations, environmental engineering and wastewater, and Water Resource Management. Each technical working group drafted their terms and



conditions and detailed the tasks to be undertaken. At the quarterly meetings, the steering committee provide feedback on these activities.

On the community side, a committee was formed to engage with the work of protecting and sustaining the catchment and particular care is paid to creating awareness in the community about safe practices in the area. The Blantyre Water Board hired personnel to patrol the Mudi catchment, while other organizations provide support by supplying trees and labor for activities like tree planting or weed removal on temporary basis.

Water For People approached Castell, as a high user of water, to support the Water Fund initiative and this aligned with their previous reforestation efforts. The company adopted the Mudi catchment area and following meetings with the community and other stakeholders, put together a 'plant and manage' concept. This included working with the local community committee and police to keep the area secure, beyond just planting the trees.

Working with Water For People has been a good experience; they are interested in giving the best service to the communities in relation to water. They have helped us to effectively supply water to the people and give benefits to the communities. The impact is that we know how to take care of the sources of water now.



Project Roadmap

Governance & Engagement

- Engagement of the communities living in and around the catchment area; driving awareness on the importance of the area and how people play a critical role in protecting it
- Data collection on tariffs – Water For People conducted studies into how much it costs to produce 1L of pure water and how much the Water Board charges per liter. This data exchange with the Board enables them to serve the people of Blantyre better
- Tree planting continues to be a vital component of the work
- The Water Fund created a governance structure consisting of a steering committee and technical working groups with specific focus areas
- The Technical Working groups draft the Terms of Reference for their structure, conduct specific research on their focus area and report back to the Steering Committee on findings
- The community tries to remain active in this now that they are aware of the connection between the trees, the protection of the catchment and their water supply
- Companies provide the payment for the seedlings
- They even spread awareness about tree-planting and protection of the area during community events such as funerals, at church and other community gatherings, not to dump waste material near the water source
- The Blantyre Water Board hires community members to fulfill specific jobs related to the protection of the catchment
- Engagement with the media was helpful in ensuring widespread knowledge on water resource management

1

Feasibility Study

- A feasibility study has been completed and presented to the steering committee – this research tested whether a water fund is feasible, what the benefits are, what an ideal governance structure should be and whether an enabling environment exists for it. Additionally, it has provided critical information on where the gaps lie, what work is still required and what the return on investment would be for the stakeholders
- In June 2025, the findings of the feasibility study will be presented to the Steering Committee, Technical Committees and ministries of government
- Work is being done on determining what innovative financing mechanisms will be created for the Water Fund

2

The Way Forward

- Following consultation, it will be used to reach out to a wider partner base and to determine avenues for participation from other stakeholders
- Critically, the information in the study will be used to source funding through corporate social responsibility budgets to build the Water Fund
- Further work on shifting mindsets and building relationships with the community and other stakeholders will be done in the implementation phase
- Other than reforestation, the organization aims to create other initiatives such as introducing wildlife to the area in order to create an income stream based on tourism

3

Water For People has been a committed local partner on the ground. They helped us understand the local context really quickly, and the speed and depth of working with local stakeholders would not have happened without them.

Matthew Hurworth, Nature for Water

So there is a shared responsibility: we can't be turning water into beer when people need water for survival. We don't want to be seen as an organisation that is irresponsible, just looking at profit making while local communities are trying to find enough just for survival.

Gloria Zimba, Castel Malawi

Outcomes

While it is too early in the project for the impact to be felt; the current outcomes are:

Blantyre Water Board

- The creation of a governance structure for the Water Fund which builds momentum and sustainability of the initiative for the future
- Data has been received on sediment outflow that provides clear and factual information to the roleplayers
- The Water Board has now been provided with data estimating the potential water yield if the catchment is fully restored
- Collaboration is a major outcome –this has enabled the sharing of information on the Water Fund on other forums related to climate, as an example Companies have expressed interest in supporting the initiative
- A feasibility study has been commissioned and carried out to
- give accurate and comprehensive information on which strategy future work can be developed
- In future, as the water quality in the Mudi catchment improves based
- on the initiatives implemented, the distribution from sources will be more efficient and cuts in water supply will be reduced

Private Sector

- There has been a realisation that contribution to the protection of
- the catchment area is critical to the sustainability of water supply
- Reforestation efforts have primarily been supported by the private
- sector. Castell has adopted the Mudi catchment area with the Blantyre Water Board and planted over 10,000 trees

Community

- Unemployed people from the community have been hired for work that relates to the protection of the catchment. For example, as security personnel that patrols the area, or as part-time workers removing weeds or preventing fire breaks
- Now the community understands more of the scientific aspect of how water comes to be of good quality and how
- it is supplied. Previously, they just saw water coming from the tap but now
- they understand the link between the preservation of nature and getting water
- There is a significant improvement in community habits now e.g., stoppage of solid waste dumping and deforestation, and an improvement in security

The Water Fund initiative is crucial for the sustainability of the water source.

The impact of this initiative will be far-reaching and of critical importance to Malawi, improving the quality of water and water security for the people of Blantyre, and thereafter for the rest of the country.



Outcomes at a Glance



Creation of a governance structure for the Water Fund



Data on sediment outflow provides clear and accurate information to all stakeholders



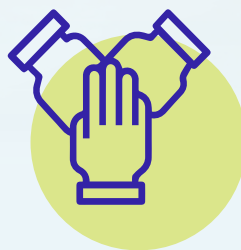
The Water Board has now been provided with data estimating the potential water yield if the catchment is fully restored



Significant improvement in community habits around the catchment



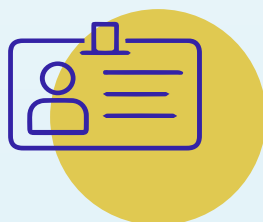
Water supply cuts reduced



Collaboration is a major outcome: this has enabled the sharing of information on the Water Fund on other forums



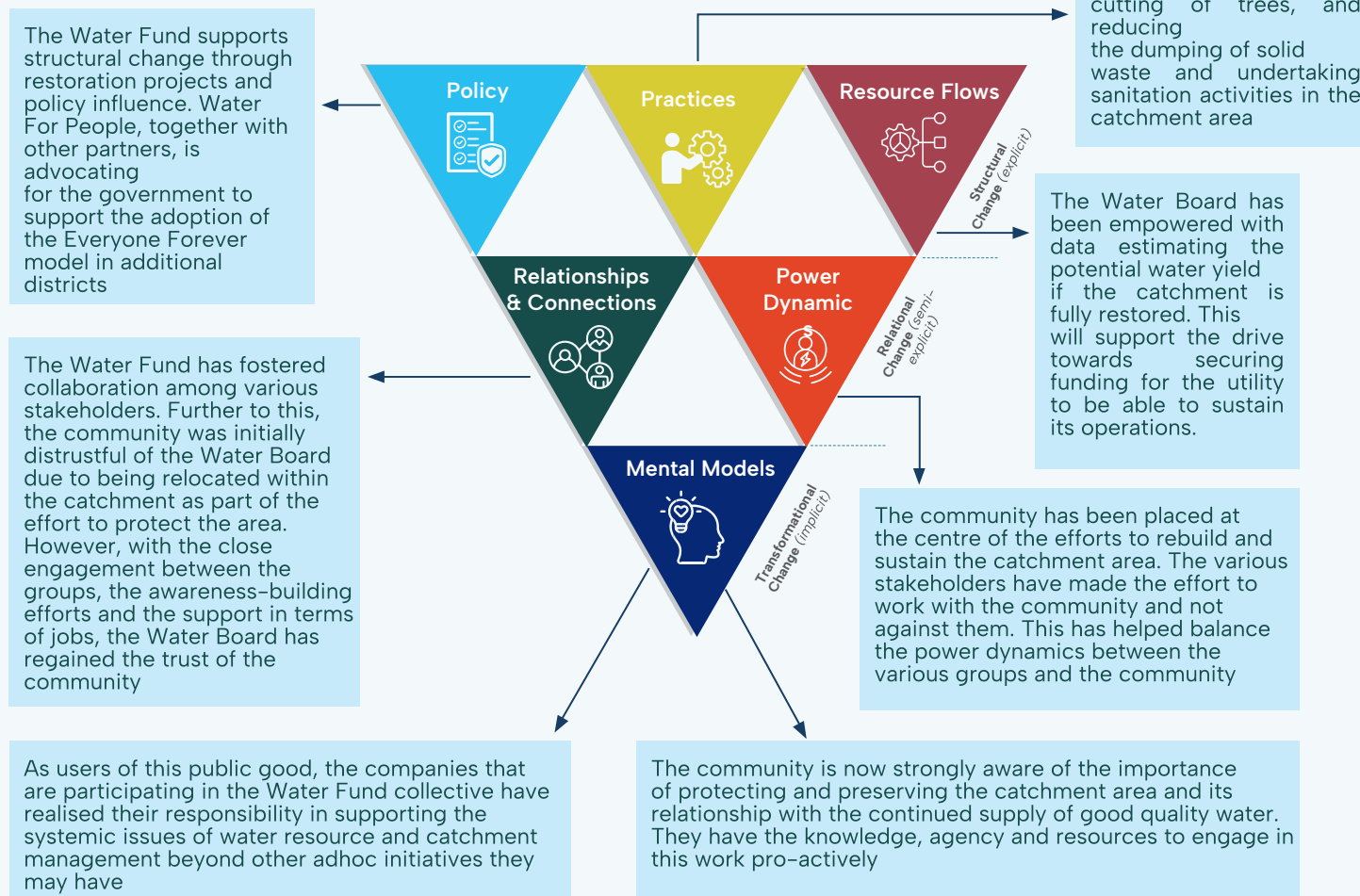
Reforestation efforts have been supported by the private sector e.g. Castell has adopted the Mudi catchment area with the Blantyre Water Board and planted over 10,000 trees



Unemployed people from the community have been hired for work that relates to the protection of the catchment

System-strengthening Impact

The Six Conditions of System Change



The Water Fund has achieved transformational change in encouraging long-term, shared stewardship of water resources

Source: John Kania, Mark Kramer & Peter Senge, "The Water of Systems Change," FSG.
https://www.fsg.org/publications/water_of_systems_change

We are happy and proud that we now have lots of taps in the community and fewer water supply issues. We also feel proud that our work impacts the communities that are even further away.

Community Members

The model in Blantyre will ignite us to come up with a national program. We want to grow this into an institution, it will be its own structure covering the whole country. This is not a project. This is for the sector, for the country. The Blantyre concept is like a pilot to be scaled to become a national WaterFund. **Elias Chimulambe, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Water & Sanitation, Government of Malawi**

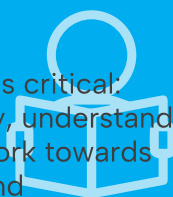


INSIGHTS



- There are many projects with a lot of planning but insufficient work on the implementation. In this initiative, the implementation is being well thought-through and based on a feasibility study and strong collaboration, so the expectation is that the outcomes will be achieved
- If there is no engagement on national support, the work being done in the Everyone Forever districts will die because it cannot be sustained
- Each organization is limited in resources so needs to partner with others to create real impact. The ability to scale is driven by collaboration

LESSONS



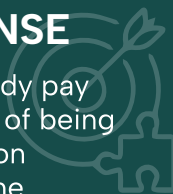
- Collaboration with communities is critical: engagement with them positively, understand their needs and concerns, and work towards getting buy-in as opposed to blind enforcement with a regulatory lens
- There is no space for working in isolation: it is essential to work with all stakeholders and the various systems in government to ensure sustainability
- Impact work has to be grounded on evidence: the use of data to make strategic decisions, present a convincing business case and implement effectively is important. For example, the scientific analysis of Mudi dam will assist the Water Board to understand how much sediment can be avoided by planting trees

OPPORTUNITIES



- Pooled funding –the Water Fund has to be financed by the end user. Corporates, especially those who are large users of water, need to ensure the sustainability of the resource from a business and human rights perspective, as water is a public good
- The feasibility study will show what the Return on Investment is for businesses so that this is understood, not just as a social imperative but an economic one. In future, support for the environment could be an imperative for all foreign companies entering the country
- Students can do research in the catchment (Malawi University of Business and Applied Science, MUBAS)

CHALLENGES & RESPONSE



- Businesses argue that they already pay for the resource and the service of being supplied with water: the Return on Investment that is indicated in the feasibility study will help make the business case for support
- The tree planting was not keeping pace with the number of trees that are either cut down or die naturally: more support is being brought in through the private sector, the Castell initiative of 'plant and manage' is important to combat this
- People may not understand the concept of a Water Fund: greater awareness is being spread through the media and in one-on-one engagements



Enabling Community Ownership

Professionalizing the Handpump Maintenance System



water for people
MALAWI

252.047

Introduction

Water is essential for life, and maintaining the infrastructure is crucial to ensure its supply. Everyone has the right to access clean and safe water. However, when the equipment, particularly in rural areas, is not adequately maintained and breaks down, those who are already disadvantaged or vulnerable are often most adversely affected.

Handpumps are a critical infrastructure to ensure continuous water access in rural areas, and communities are at the heart of managing these assets through their Water Point Committees. Without the necessary empowerment and support, these committees would struggle to fulfil their responsibility of managing and maintaining the infrastructure efficiently.

To address this, an initiative was piloted in Chiradzulu district to professionalize the maintenance system for handpumps, ensuring their ongoing functionality. Additionally, communities received support in developing income-generating activities to help cover the maintenance costs and to ensure the sustainability of the approach.

The impact was the strengthening of the rural water access system and improved consistency of supply, enabling communities realize their fundamental right to water. This became the start of a national effort to scale the approach.

Water is life's matter and matrix, mother and medium. There is no life without water.



Background and Context



Malawi is a small, densely populated country in southeastern Africa. It is one of the world's poorest countries. Most of Malawi's population, around 82%, lives in rural areas. While there is a goal to move towards piped water supply in these areas, many communities still access water from handpumps.

In 2023, the Minister of Water and Sanitation expressed that Malawi had one of the highest proportions of people at risk of frequent water shortage, generally underdeveloped water services infrastructure, and high population growth, leading to a rapid decline in water per capita.

Although Malawi has made progress with creating access to water and sanitation over the last few years, the ongoing functionality and maintenance of those water systems have been identified as significant challenges. At one point, in one district, it was found that if all the water points had been working, universal access would have been reached, but due to the lack of maintenance, this milestone was not achieved.

The WASH Building Blocks Assessment is conducted on the district and national levels annually and serves as a trigger for the

needs to be done in the sector. Two recurring issues over the past few years have been Service Delivery Models and Infrastructure Management. While there has been investment in infrastructure development, the management of the same has not kept pace. Different models have been tried but they have not worked.

In 2023, a study was undertaken by the Ministry of Water and Sanitation to review the current management models for water systems.

One of the key recommendations that emerged from this study is to professionalize the maintenance of the handpumps.

Most rural communities or households in Malawi depend on these handpumps to access clean and safe water. These sources are managed through a community-based model called Water Point Committees (WPC). The committee members are volunteers and consists of at least 60% women, as collecting water is mostly done by women and girls. Water users in the area are charged a small tariff in case of breakdowns; however, if there is a major infrastructural failure, it would become difficult and expensive to repair.

The Systemic Challenge



Malawi has made some progress towards providing universal access to water and sanitation for its people through infrastructure investments.

However, the goal is compromised due to the other end of the infrastructure equation: management and maintenance. If water system assets are not adequately maintained, they will not provide a sustainable service. This includes protecting the area around the waterpoint and speedy repair and recovery in the event of an operational failure.

When equipment breaks down and is not promptly repaired, the water supply is affected, resulting in significant impacts on the surrounding community. The community

committee members, who had been trained in basic maintenance, would undertake the repairs to the handpump themselves. However, in severe cases, this was not feasible, and the community would face the consequence of being without water for longer periods of time.

This disruption in the water service would exacerbate challenges already experienced in the community: people, mostly women and girls, having to walk longer distances to collect water, thereby missing school and other tasks; hygiene and sanitation being sacrificed, leading to greater exposure to disease; and school and household cleanliness being compromised.

A professional and sustainable infrastructure maintenance and management system was required to ensure the functionality of the handpump.

Activities



The Ministry of Water and development partners have worked on solutions to address the ongoing challenges in infrastructure management. The professionalization study and report address how this can be done. Key aspects of the chosen model were:

- Agreements for infrastructure servicing by area mechanics. Area mechanics are from the community and service areas that allow for quick response times. Ensuring that handpumps are monitored and serviced every quarter reduces the number of major breakdowns and the associated cost burden on the community.

Awareness campaigns were conducted to ensure that committee members understood the benefits of doing it this way and the uptake of the service agreements has increased.

- The spare parts supply chain is effective, and the products are readily available in the shops. The government has been lobbied to remove taxes on imported accessories for handpumps to maintain affordability.

Awareness campaigns were conducted to ensure that committee members understood the benefits of doing so, and the uptake of the service agreements has increased. An approach during the awareness campaign was to respect traditional leaders: it was understood that if they were convinced, the people in their communities would follow.

In rural communities, water is seen as a public good and free of cost and community members could initially not understand why

They would need to pay a tariff to maintain the equipment. The awareness-building conversations about how the benefits are sustained were critical.

The Water Point Committees are responsible for the operational and financial management of the community's infrastructure and have been trained to calculate what each household must pay, and to collect tariffs and raise funds accordingly. Each committee tends to have its own approach, and those with more structure that hold regular meetings and remain focused on bringing benefits to the community tend to do well. The district council lacks adequate staff and relies on these community committees for reports on the status of the handpumps.

Water For People developed several methods to support the committees' income generation efforts:

- **AT WHAT COST** tool: households pay a monthly amount as a contribution towards the maintenance

By saving collectively and buying spare parts proactively, the committees ensure minimal downtime during handpump breakdowns.

- **WASTEWATER** tool: from the water point for growing vegetables that they can sell
- **BOREHOLE BANKING** tool: creating cooperatives, in the form of the Village and Savings Loans Group concept, as a way of helping communities to multiply their funds to meet the operations and maintenance fee requirements. By collectively saving and proactively buying spare parts, the committees ensure minimal downtime during handpump breakdowns.

Area mechanics from within the communities have been trained and sensitized. They receive the necessary equipment, materials, bicycles, tablets, and phones to ensure proper recording of information and efficiency of service. The service provider signs a contract with the district council with specific performance deliverables such as a 95% functionality rate and downtime not exceeding 72 hours, ensuring better quality of service and workmanship.



Project Partnership Model



A priority for Malawi is the management of its water resources, and while there is a vision to move towards taps across the country, handpump infrastructure maintenance remains a critical need.

In 2023, the Ministry of Water & Sanitation commissioned research, funded by Water For People, on professionalizing the management of Malawi's rural water supply services. To be inclusive of other role-players, the Water For People team facilitated consultations with various nonprofits in the sector to gather their input and validate the contents of the study. A key finding was that the current arrangement was not sustainable.

In this arrangement, area mechanics were identified and contracted by communities to provide services for major repair projects. The Water Point Committees, responsible for managing the handpumps on behalf of their communities, had different approaches to doing so. As the volunteers have received some training on basic repairs, they sometimes attempt to address the repairs required for minor breakdowns. However, due to not having regular maintenance, the

breakdowns often become significant and thus, more expensive.

In Chiradzulu, Water For People initiated a collaboration between the District Council and an NGO, the Basic Services Development Agency (BASEDA), in which service contracts were promoted with communities in the district. These were agreements created as once-off, longer-term commitments with communities where the area mechanics would handle both major and minor maintenance concerns.

As a result of the partners' awareness campaign, many communities recognized the importance of regular maintenance and entered into service contracts with mechanics in their areas. The area mechanics signed service provision contracts through the district council that highlighted specific performance deliverables to ensure the quality of their service and workmanship.

Non-profit partners, such as Beyond Water, one of the pioneers of the area mechanic model, shared their experiences and lessons with Water For People to enable improvements to this community arrangement.



We have worked with Water For People for many years and take them as a serious partner in the sector. Wherever they go, they make a good impact. They are always in touch with the government. They are also innovative. They were one of the first two or three to take the solar-powered reticulated water supply system policy on wholeheartedly. By coming up with the policy, they want to work from the same platform in the sector. Their models are taken up and we are doing things uniformly.

Prince Mleta, Director: Water Supply, Ministry of Water & Sanitation, Government of Malawi

Outcomes & Impact

The longer-term impacts of the project:

National

The national study on professionalizing rural handpump maintenance included information on the strengths and shortfalls of current arrangements in this space and provided models of how this could be managed. This has significantly enhanced the government's and other stakeholders' knowledge.

The Service Contract model has now resolved its previous challenges of insufficient area mechanics, use of untrained 'mechanics,' or dormant Water Point Committees.

The supply chain for spare parts has been strengthened – further lobbying is being done with the government to remove some taxes imposed on imports, so that these can be made more affordable.

Other organizations are moving towards this model of professionalization, and it will therefore scale.

District

Economic empowerment of the area mechanics: now that they have consistent contracts with communities, they have experienced increased income and positive lifestyle changes.

Increase in quality of service and workmanship, as this is now contracted

and monitored through a service level agreement:

- the level of service in Chiradzulu district has improved to over 80% in the latest measurement (2024)
- water systems being in good physical condition and functional rate improvement from 59% (2019) to 84% (2022)
- Communities reporting that their systems have not been out of service for more than a day have risen from 57% (2019) to 76% (2022)
- a higher number of people within the districts have now experienced the highest grade of service, as rated by the district. The downtime of handpumps has decreased
- Greater ownership of the infrastructure and security of the assets because communities now have realised the value of the system and they have support for maintenance
- Service contracts served as a motivation for the community residents to pay their tariffs as they now recognised the quality of service
- Water interruptions have been significantly reduced
- Waterborne diseases have been reduced significantly

The initiative is essential to increase uptime for boreholes so that the communities are able to have access to safe water with minimum interruptions. The Policy and Planning Goal in the Ministry is to ensure that safe water and improved sanitation services are available and accessible to all, at all times. To achieve this goal requires minimizing the downtime as much as possible. This project achieves that.

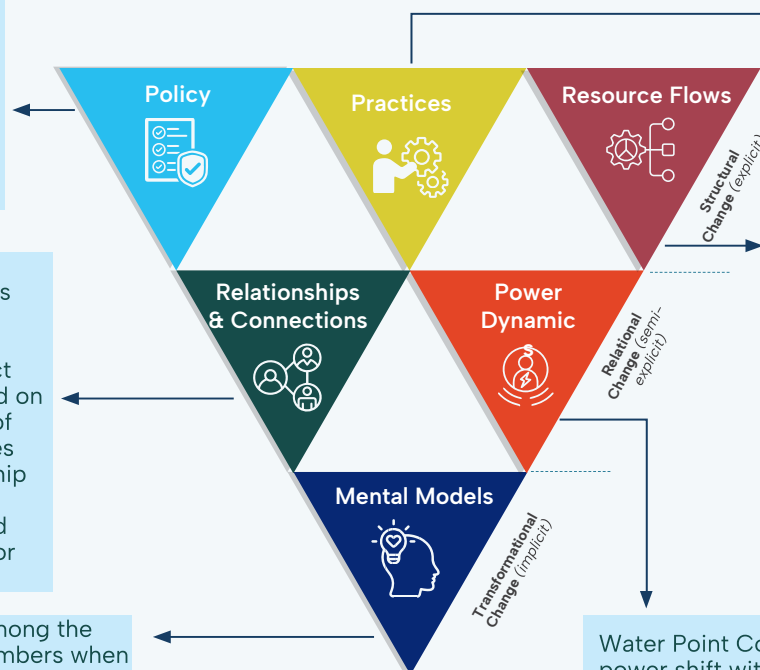
Max Wengawenga, Deputy Director of Policy and Planning, Ministry of Water and Sanitation, Government of Malawi

The Six Conditions of System Change

The industry was professionalized and regulated by the district offices. This allowed for better monitoring of service quality levels and the workmanship. Advocacy is still underway to remove taxes for imports of spare parts to strengthen the supply chain.

The relationships between the Water Point Committees and the communities they serve, and between the communities and the district office, have improved based on the efficiency and support of this model. The communities now feel a stronger ownership of the infrastructure due to understanding the value and not having to deal with major issues.

A mindset shift occurred among the Water Point committee members when they realized the agency they built and their growth, individually and collectively, were driven by the support they received. The borehole banking concept allowed them to pay for their children's school fees or purchase goods for their small businesses. There is a sense of excitement to contribute to the community.



The key shift in the practice of this work has been the move from ad hoc maintenance or engagement with the area mechanic only in the event of a major breakdown to more consistent maintenance through service contracts, preventing such major breakdowns.

The financial flows are between the communities and the area mechanics for service payments – this is done through tariffs, supplemented by income generated from other activities led by the Water Point Committee members. The community has thus been empowered to manage the costs.

Water Point Committee members have felt the power shift within the committee and with how the community relates to them. From a leadership perspective, them being women has elevated their sense of pride in being able to create value for the community. There is an acceptance irrespective of gender.

Source: John Kania, Mark Kramer & Peter Senge, "The Water of Systems Change," FSG.
https://www.fsg.org/publications/water_of_systems_change

What the project is doing here is contributing to the achievement of the national agenda, right up to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Water For People is complementing our efforts to do this. We also partner in other areas of work.
Francis Matewere-Chiradzulu District Commissioner

We have really benefited from working with all the partners. We are able to get support for any challenge we face. We are all working together like an umbrella of services and it becomes easier for us.
Water Point Committee member

Water For People is a partner that has been available whenever we need them; they are very active in the water and sanitation sector, especially in providing technical and financial support. The most important thing is the support on the technical side, such as policy formulation, and providing guidelines and support.
 They find solutions to challenges. Or where we initiated coming up with research and a proper model, most inputs come from partners like Water For People. This is the kind of partnership we want. We look at a challenge and discuss it together. Their involvement in national and sector activities helps us to review as a team and decide what is best.
Elias Chimulambe, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Water & Sanitation, Government of Malawi



INSIGHTS



- It was important to have buy-in and ownership of this model at the community level. This included understanding and respect for cultural norms and traditions and recognizing the role of the elders/ leaders in the community in convincing other members of the importance or need for this service.
- At the same time, community members saw water as being a free, public good and did not understand why they needed to contribute to the upkeep of the system: this is why awareness-building and close consultation with the community were important

LESSONS



- It is important to look beyond just providing a solution and stepping away. Rather, thinking through with the community as to what they will need to ensure the solution's sustainability is critical
- It is also crucial to have a monitoring plan and the service contracts allow for a platform to do so
- In cases where communities have not yet adopted the solution, it is important to not assume that there is a lack of interest but to explore what lies behind this. A lack of awareness, understanding or ownership could be at the root of their non-involvement in the initiative

OPPORTUNITIES



- Potential for this model to grow beyond the voluntary-based rural Water Point Committees, and rather resemble an urban model of professional service provision

CHALLENGES & RESPONSE



- Cost of maintenance: The tariffs paid by community members were insufficient to keep up with the maintenance required in some communities, especially prior to the service agreements with area mechanics. Due to the irregular servicing, the major breakdowns in infrastructure were more expensive to repair and the tariff charged would not keep pace
- The response was to create other income: generating activities such as starting vegetable gardens to supplement the tariffs



Investment Planning: Shifting the System Towards Sustainable and Universal Water Access

Introduction

‘An investment in knowledge pays the best interest’

Developing a plan is not always the most exciting part of a project. Yet, when you work with a resource as valuable to the earth and communities as water, deep thinking about how much is required, when, where, how it will be distributed, and how much it will cost becomes critical.

The WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) Master Plan serves as Rwanda’s national strategy for delivering effective and efficient water and sanitation services to its population. To bring this strategy to life, it needs to be supported by an Investment Plan that outlines the financing required to implement the relevant projects and initiatives. Planning and cost estimation should begin at the district level in a District WASH Investment Plan to ensure that the national plan is reliable,

robust and accurately reflects the ground realities.

Water For People’s District-wide Approach was initiated in Rulindo in Rwanda’s Northern Province in response to this thinking – communities are the place to start to ensure sustainable and universal access to water and sanitation services. In 2010, the Government of Rwanda, Water For People and Rulindo District committed to implement an ambitious plan to reach **Everyone** (every household, every community, every school, and every healthcare facility) in the district with safe drinking water and sanitation services, and to develop the institutions and local capacity so this lasts **Forever**.

This became known as The Rulindo Challenge and reached over 385,000 people with water through piped water systems while strengthening national institutional systems.



WATER: DISTRICT WIDE APPROACH

Delivering reliable drinking water to everyone in the community.



SUSTAINABLE SANITATION

Providing families the resources they need for improved bathrooms.



SCALE INITIATIVES

Advising governments and partners to adopt our proven model to reach millions more.

Established in 2008, Water For People's Rwanda Country Program works with the districts of Kicukiro, Rulindo, Gicumbi, Karongi and Gisagara to bring clean, efficient and sustainable water and sanitation solutions to communities while strengthening the institutions.

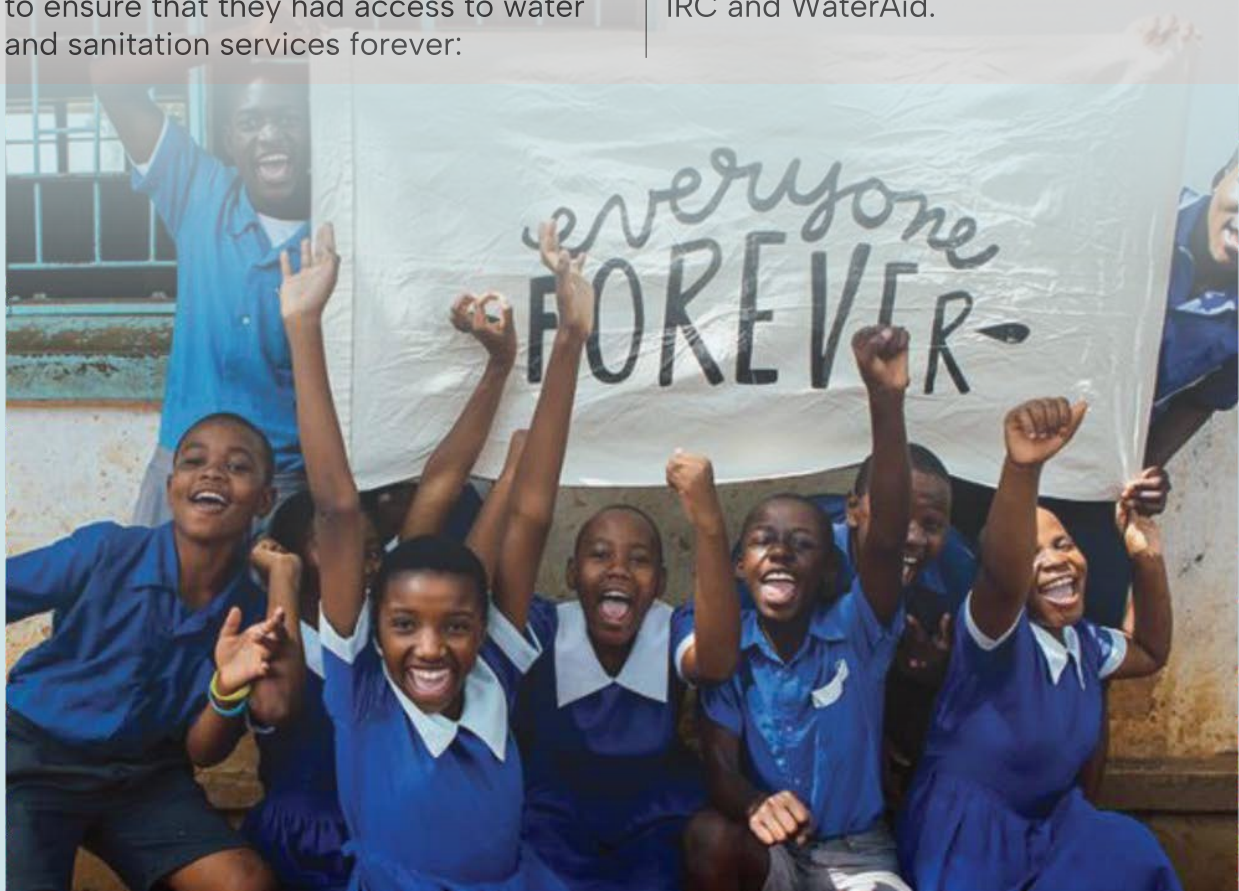
Ten further districts were supported through the five-year former USAID-funded Isoko y'Ubuzima project which achieved improved water access for 100,000 Rwandans.

Rulindo was the birthplace of Water For People's Everyone Forever model, a simple yet powerful statement of the need to reach all members of a community and to ensure that they had access to water and sanitation services forever:

ensuring that no-one is left behind and that the impact achieved is sustainable.

Through the relentless efforts of the Rwanda team, more than one million people in the five target districts have received access to safe, reliable water services since the inception of its activities.

Water For People Rwanda is also an active member of the Agenda For Change, an international collaboration of like-minded organizations in the WASH sector that have adopted common principles and approaches. In Rwanda, the other members are IRC and WaterAid.



Background and Context



Rwanda, known as the “Land of a Thousand Hills,” is one of the smallest countries on the continent and among the most densely populated in the world. While the target is universal access to water and sanitation by 2030, only 57% of the population has access to safe drinking water within 30 minutes of their homes, and 64% have access to basic sanitation services as of 2025.

When Water For People’s Rwanda Country Program was established in 2008, the initial work was ad hoc and focused on four sectors in Rulindo district, a rural area in the northern part of the country. In 2010, the Mayor of Rulindo questioned why the interventions were limited to only four sectors instead of the 17 sectors of the district. This gave rise to the District Wide approach in partnership with the Ministry of Infrastructure, which aligned with the government’s Vision 2050 goal to bring universal access to water and sanitation services.

The approach used the simple thinking of working in one district at a time and applying the Everyone Forever thinking — ensuring that everyone (every household, school, and every healthcare facility) gets access

to water forever, which emphasises the sustainability of the service. The first district chosen for implementation of this new, more holistic approach was Rulindo and the effort became known as The Rulindo Challenge. One of the first issues to resolve was that Rulindo did not have a WASH investment plan and thus could not identify what expenditure would be required to meet infrastructural gaps.

The designs developed were accepted by the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Water and Sanitation Corporation (WASAC), the key government agency in charge of these services. The output was used to elaborate on the investment plans. By 2014, the required information was in place, and more investment could be mobilised for the water and sanitation systems in Rulindo.

Thereafter, this District-wide approach was scaled to Gicumbi district where access to water and sanitation was one of the lowest in the country, followed by Karongi and Gisagara.

¹ UNICEF Rwanda – <https://www.unicef.org/rwanda/water-sanitation-and-hygiene>

The Systemic Challenge



Rwanda's Vision 2050 presents an ambitious roadmap for transforming the nation from a low-income to a high-income country. A pivotal aspect of this vision is the commitment to ensure that every citizen has access to clean water and proper sanitation.

However, the success of this strategy hinges on effective execution. While the country and its districts have developed WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) Master Plans to guide efforts toward universal access, these plans fall short in several critical areas. They do not provide a comprehensive overview of the existing infrastructure, fail to outline specific district-level requirements, and lack a thorough financial assessment of the necessary investments.

This gap in planning and budgeting has severely hampered the ability to mobilize resources essential for achieving these vital goals. Without a detailed investment plan that specifies the financing needed for water infrastructure and ongoing maintenance, government agencies, districts, and non profit organizations struggle to connect with potential funders and target their efforts effectively.

The results of a national WASH sector assessment reveal an urgent need for action; Planning and Finance rated among the lowest of the sector's critical building blocks. To realize the promise of Vision 2050, these issues need to be urgently addressed, ensuring that areas of financial need are identified, the appropriate funds sought and allocated.

Rulindo district required an investment plan that would align with its Master Plan and support the district's financing mobilization efforts.



Activities



The Rulindo Challenge was initiated as a call to action for partners, including relevant government agencies, departments, and WASH non-profit organizations like Water For People and WaterAid, as well as the residents of Rulindo District. The aim was to concentrate their efforts on providing comprehensive access to water and sanitation for everyone in the district, rather than pursuing disconnected and small-scale initiatives scattered across various areas.

To achieve this, the district required a clear investment plan outlining the gaps in service and the costs associated with addressing them. Formulating a comprehensive investment plan required a detailed design of the water systems first. Rather than hiring consultants who lacked ongoing engagement with the project, young graduates were recruited, trained, and supported to design the water systems effectively. They collaborated with professional volunteers from the United States, Canada, and elsewhere to transfer the needed expertise to these graduates.

A set of activities and work principles was agreed upon and incorporated into a national rollout plan, which helped harmonize the efforts of all partners regarding the requirements for future districts.

The designs developed were accepted by the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Water and Sanitation Corporation (WASAC), the primary government agency responsible for these services. This output was subsequently used to refine the investment plans. By 2014, the necessary information was gathered, enabling the mobilization of further investment for the water and sanitation systems in Rulindo.

The key was to understand the required investment, provide capacity building for stakeholders on the ground to utilize the investment plan, and then scale up the efforts. Establishing a successful model in one district would serve as an inspirational example and a valuable learning opportunity for others.

“Time is expensive. When I was not connected to water, I needed two hours to walk long distances through hilly terrain every day to get the water for my eight family members. I could have done so many things in that time. Even the children had to go when they returned from school. Now life has changed so much. We have the tap here, I was able to build a better house in the compound so we can wash when we want, whenever we come from the field. I was also able to build another room to rent it out because there is water available here.

Thanks to water, everything else changed.”

Community Member



The project started in Rulindo and expanded to Gicumbi district since access to water and sanitation services in these areas was among the lowest in the country. The topographical features of the Gicumbi district presented specific challenges as it is a very mountainous area and, from a planning perspective, needed a customized approach.

The challenge was that people were living on the top of the mountains, and the water sources were down in the valley, so water needed to be pumped and supplied up significant heights and distances requiring substantial financial investment in these areas.

In Rwanda, households needed to address and improve their access to water and sanitation. The government, through WASAC which manages the water infrastructure and supply, supported by a system of service providers within the communities supported households in addressing their needs. The goal was to ease the burden of accessing water compared to the other daily activities, which also required significant travel and strain.

The investment per capita spent on infrastructure and its maintenance in mountainous areas is higher than in flat areas due to additional infrastructure and manpower needs. Understanding these nuances was important in drafting the investment plans. The preparatory work for the investment plans required knowledge of the technical and resource challenges created by the terrain.

Equally critical to the sustainability of this work was maintaining the infrastructure. WASAC contracted and trained private operators from the respective communities to do this. Previously, the motorized water systems used in the area were old and damaged, and while there were private operators, they would refuse the work as it was difficult to manage the travel and time taken. As part of implementing the investment plan activities, the water connection points are now closer, and private operators have been capacitated to handle the community's needs relating to the maintenance of the water infrastructure.

Some non-profit Organizations think on a small level about interventions or spending a small amount on infrastructure or focus on “soft” issues such as training and consultations only. Real impact is felt by people when they see water coming from their taps. Water For People thinks big. They don't scatter the interventions and this creates the impact needed on the ground.

Gemma Maniraruta, Director-General of Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Infrastructure, Government of Rwanda

Project Partners



Water For People recognized that strengthening the national system required multi-sectoral partnerships that would be aligned with this singular purpose and organised one of the first workshops with the Ministry of Infrastructure and other sectoral stakeholders. Project partners saw this as a starting point for the movement of Agenda for Change in Rwanda and the District-Wide Approach.

Through conversations and close collaboration with the Ministry of Infrastructure as the custodian of the Water Policy, the local government ministry which supervises the districts, the state-owned Water and Sanitation Corporation (WASAC) who are tasked with providing safe and reliable water and sanitation services, the Rulindo district officers and other non-profit partners such as Water Aid, a common vision and action plan were developed.

Co-financed by the Government of Rwanda (45%) and Water For People (55%), the Rulindo Challenge was a landmark initiative that enabled other partners to come on board to replicate and support districts in investment planning and implementation.

Collaboration was key to the success of this project. Government policy encourages partnerships in fulfilling the development agenda. Each stakeholder in the WASH ecosystem realized the importance of having an aligned District-wide approach and working in tandem to achieve the goals of the Rulindo Challenge.

Thereafter, as the District-wide Approach was adopted as national policy, Water Aid and Water For People each scaled the approach to further districts across Rwanda while sharing lessons and best practices along the way.

Water For People has become one of our strongest partners in implementation. Before we started working with them, the development of the sector was very localised; it was intervention-led, we worked with partners on particular projects. The Rulindo Challenge challenged us to think bigger. We thought of helping 30 million instead of one million and leaving. Secondly, they demonstrated that mobilizing resources when everyone is aligned can be done efficiently and with a results-oriented approach. The sector became dynamic as we had different partners working together, each bringing what they could to the table. It has even challenged how we work with our implementation partners and is driving the sector forward.”

Eng. Dominique Murekezi, Acting Managing Director, WASAC Development Ltd

Outcomes & Impact

The longer-term impacts of the project:

National

In 2016, following a review of the national water and sanitation policy, the Ministry of Infrastructure and the WASH sector decided to include the District-wide Approach in the national policy; the model is now institutionalised within the Ministry and sector-wide WASH strategies.

This contributed to the water and sanitation targets of Rwanda Strategy 2050: Rwanda's vision to become a developed country.

The district investment plans provided the data for a more accurate national investment plan and supported the preparation for the shift of demand due to urbanisation.

Improvements in the country's WASH Building Blocks Assessment have been noted.

There is now a framework for the implementation of the services, bringing together different stakeholders.

Accountability of duty-bearers in WASH, especially in supply, has increased. There is a better understanding at the national level of the investment required to achieve SDG6 in Rwanda: \$320million per year.

WASH System Academy has been created for national, district, other stakeholders to take free virtual courses that easily and quickly train them on the District-wide Approach.

Water Aid and Water For People worked closely as "sister" organizations and drove the thinking on the creation of a Water and Sanitation (WATSAN) secretariat to coordinate the efforts of thematic and sector working groups and to contribute to the consolidation of the sector's learning from the various initiatives. These experiences and lessons have been shared on various national and international forums.

World Vision has used this model to inform their approach to supporting villages and districts, using the WASH investment plan to mobilise further funding.

District

494 villages, 100 schools, and 24 health centers have had their access to water improved in Rulindo district.

In Rulindo, over 330,000 people have been helped to achieve universal access since 2019, when they had only having 29% access, and only half of the schools had sanitation facilities.

In Gicumbi, the situation was elevated from 44% water coverage to 94%.

The walking route and distance from where people live to the water point was over difficult terrain and took a long time –this has been reduced, resulting in a significant impact on the community.

The community now has clean, treated water, so health issues, especially water-borne diseases, have reduced, especially in small children (water borne diseases down from 28% to 19%).

District leaders have been capacitated and empowered to use the document as a resource mobilisation tool with both the private and public sector.

The planning process on a district level has helped the relevant officers and representatives in the community to understand all the costs. Before this project, people only counted the infrastructure. Now, due to the scaled Isoko y'Ubuzima project, the capacity of people to understand procurement, contracts and replacement costs has been developed.

Other districts have seen the impact and are motivated to emulate this in their areas.

Outcomes & Impact

The longer-term impacts of the project:

WASAC –Institutional

The investment plan has enabled the country to secure \$250million from African Development Bank to improve access to water and sanitation.

Research for the investment plan helped to understand the actual technical challenges: real picture of the project area and clear picture of the budget and interventions needed.

Lessons from the Rulindo Challenge have been transferred to other interventions.

Impact on Individual

People, mostly women and children, were walking at least 45–60 minutes one way to get water.

This has now been reduced to a 30-minute round trip (universal indicator of accessibility).

There is also a significant increase in the number of people who now get water directly from a tap. This has reduced their costs and time taken to access water.

Children can go to school and women can attend to their other work.

Children were getting sick due to bad hygiene this has been reduced.

The installation of new, closer water connections has profoundly increased the value of water access. By reducing the long, time-consuming journeys previously required, people can now secure water faster, dedicating more time and energy to their livelihoods and daily essential activities.



Outcomes & Impacts at a Glance

2016

District-wide Approach adopted as national policy and the foundation for sector-wide WASH strategies

Improvements in the WASH Building Blocks Assessment

	Y1	Y2
Planning	3.2	?
Finance	2.4	?

What we now know

Investment required to achieve SDG6 in Rwanda

\$320 million per year

2019

Universal access achieved in Rulindo district (from **29%** at project start)

494 villages

100 schools

24 health centres

over **330,000** people ...have had their water access improved in Rulindo district

Growth in investment in the WASH sector:

\$ 250 million

secured from the African Development Bank to improve access to water and sanitation in Rwanda

Gicumbi district

44% water coverage

94%

Walking distance and time taken to the water point (60min one way to 30min round trip)

Health issues, especially waterborne diseases in small children

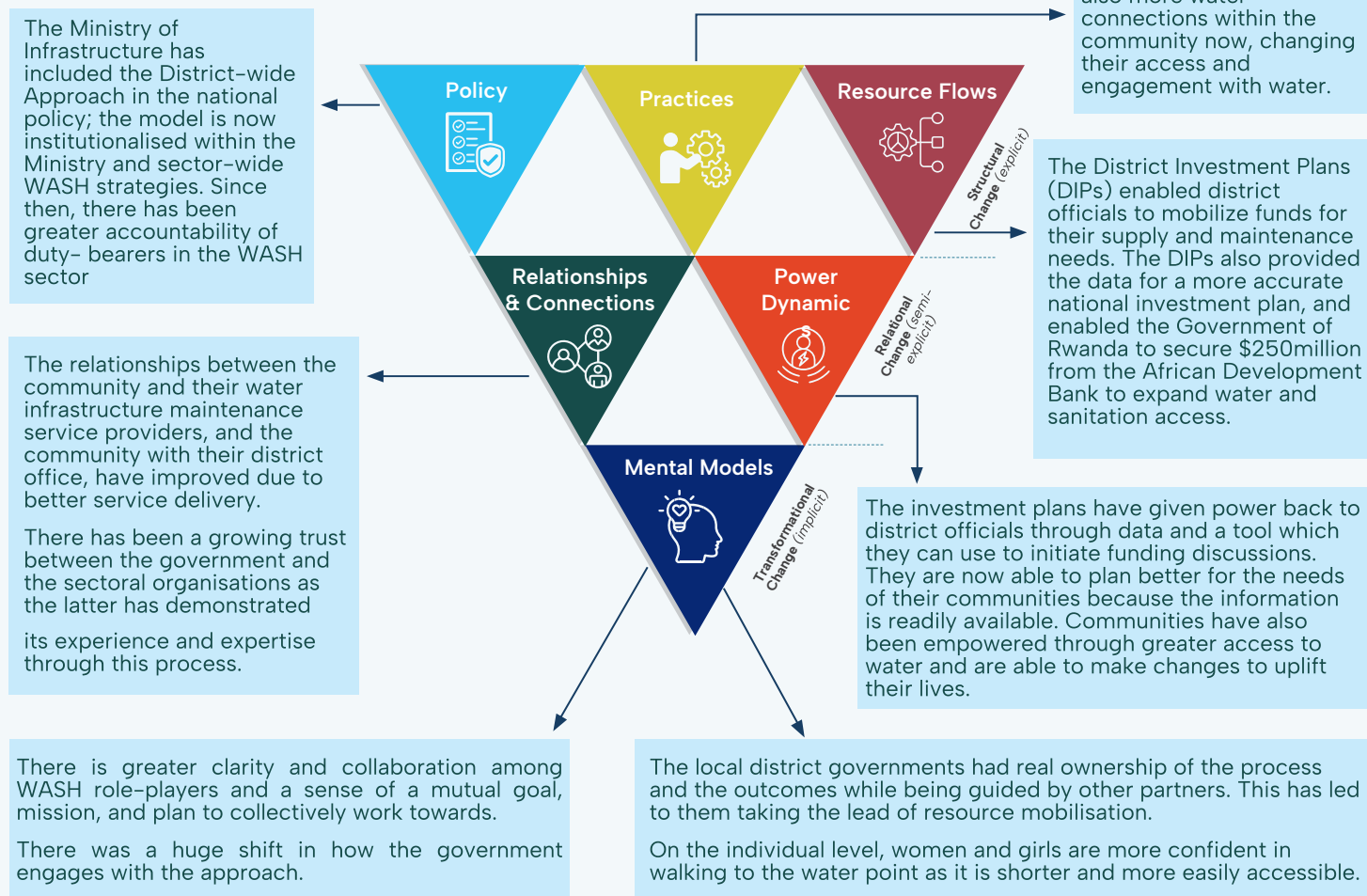
(28% to 19%)

Achieving scale

The Isokoy'Ubuzima project, an expanded version of the District-wide Approach, has reached an additional 100,000 people directly, with more than 2.5 million residents of these districts benefiting from strengthened systems for WASH service delivery, planning, and finance.

Over 100,000 people have improved sanitation facilities as a direct result of the support provided through the project, and this number continues to grow as an effective market system has been developed. The scaled impact of this initial work has thus been significant.

The Six Conditions of System Change



Source: John Kania, Mark Kramer & Peter Senge, "The Water of Systems Change," FSG. https://www.fsg.org/publications/water_of_systems_change

This is a strong partnership with Water For People. We are sister organizations.

We have had a lot of learnings by working with Water For People. We initially had different systems for monitoring and we learned from their tool. Also, we learned about the whole lifecycle costing approach. They took the sector forward by teaching us about this.

Maurice Kwizera, Regional Director, WaterAid

Water For People moves fast, if you want to work with them, you have to move fast. And they want to see the impact of what they're doing. When you impact people and change people's lives from bad to good, you are satisfied as a person. This is what Water For People has done for people in this district. They have impacted people to have access to water and now their lives have changed. We hope to sustain this for generations to come.

Kirenga Moses, District Executive Secretary, Gicumbi District



Challenges & Response



- Cost of the water: being able to add tariffs to the water was necessary despite being a lower socio-economic user group; however, what could be recovered was insufficient to cover the cost.
- Lack of education around water quality and its usage in communities: initiatives were run at the district level to shift the mindsets of the community members

Lessons



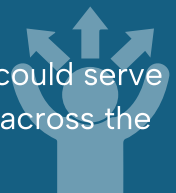
- Saying “you are helping to fund a document” is hard to tell a donor. Direct potential donor support to the areas where there is a tangible impact (such as the support of young graduates to help design the water systems).
- When considering and analyzing the WASH system, we need to consider the wider context such as political economy, cultural factors and governance.

Insights



- Co-creation: an approach like this could not be feasible or accepted in the country without involving the government and other stakeholders to co-create and own the process.
- Enabling and capacitating people in the community to lead and contribute to the decision-making for their development is critical for any WASH initiative to succeed.

Opportunities



- The success of this initiative could serve as a model for other districts across the country.
- This plan helps build towards the sustainability and rehabilitation of the systems which would need to be addressed in future.
- Demand for water is high so the opportunity is to build water treatment plants instead of pumps.



Long-term Focus: Staying Responsive to Challenges Amid Success

Introduction

In 2010, Water For People and the Rulindo District embarked on a groundbreaking initiative with a bold vision called Everyone Forever: to ensure that every resident of the district has access to safe and sustainable water and sanitation. This initiative, aptly named “the Rulindo Challenge,” was launched in collaboration with the Ministry of Infrastructure (MININFRA) and the Water and Sanitation Corporation (WASAC). The program was crafted to meet the urgent and essential need for a comprehensive and sustainable solution that would guarantee universal access to safe water and sanitation services in the district by the year 2018.

The initiative demonstrated notable success, as service levels increased from 29% in 2012 to 87% in 2020, with complete infrastructure

coverage achieved in 2019. However, by 2021, the district experienced a decline in service levels. While there has since been a recovery in community water service levels, there were deteriorations in the levels of service for both public institutions and household water. In normal circumstances, collaborative efforts in developing preventive plans and their implementation should lead to sustainable water services.

This prompted the realization that while Everyone had been reached, the challenge of Forever in the Rulindo Challenge remained and an exploration of why that was the case was required. Thus began a second phase to the Rulindo Challenge, which demonstrates a commitment to staying on course until the sustainability of the initiative is secured.

The program was crafted to meet the urgent and essential need for a comprehensive and sustainable solution that would guarantee universal access to safe water and sanitation services in the district by the year 2018.



Background and Context



The multi-year Rulindo Challenge pledge was a collaborative effort among various partners who committed their financial, technical, and human resources to reach Everyone in Rulindo, Forever.

As part of a co-financing arrangement for infrastructure development in public institutions (including health clinics and schools), Water For People Rwanda committed 80% of the required funds, while Rulindo District contributed 20%.

In addition to financial support, Water For People also covered the costs of capacity building for local communities, ensuring they could sustainably manage their own water systems and needs. This included hygiene education, community mobilization, and continuous monitoring of the system's effectiveness.

The overarching goal of this ambitious program was to ensure that every household, community, school, and healthcare facility in the district had lasting access to safe water and sanitation services. It also aimed to strengthen institutions and local capacity so that all residents across 494 villages, 100 schools, and 24 health centers in the district could enjoy safe and sustainable drinking water by the end of the program.

Despite the initiative's early successes, by 2021 the district had experienced a decline in service levels. Using this data, Water For People began evaluating and diagnosing the underlying issues, developing a strategic plan to address them, and ensuring the continued efficiency and sustainability of their interventions.

Water For People began evaluating and diagnosing the underlying issues, developing a strategic plan to address them, and ensuring the continued efficiency and sustainability of their interventions.



The Systemic Challenge



There were several challenges that followed the extensive work done to bring universal access to water to all households in Rulindo. They fell into two categories: those that could be more immediately diagnosed and repaired, and others that required longer term intervention.

Short-term challenges

A key contributing factor to the decline in service levels was the poor performance of private operators. This was partially because of a lack of clarity regarding their roles and performance expectations which further led to inadequate supervision of their work.

As a result, there was a complete shutdown of several water pumping stations, with others operating inefficiently. The inadequate performance of the private operators was largely due to non-functioning water pumps, which resulted from a lack of regular maintenance and servicing of the pumping stations. The pump inefficiencies also contributed to high electricity costs in Rulindo.

Long-term challenges

A key challenge was the lack of an updated asset register and full life costing at the district level. This meant there was insufficient information about non-functional water systems and water points, and they thus remained unrepaired and non-operational. Additionally, there was a shortage of skilled personnel to operate and service the water systems. Limited funding from the local government for maintenance, and a poor understanding of asset management contributed to these issues.

Furthermore, there was a significant issue with non-revenue water, which refers to water produced by a utility but not billed to customers, resulting in lost revenue. This includes water lost due to leaks, inaccurate metering, illegal connections, and authorized but unbilled consumption. The lack of monitoring and reporting of non-revenue water led to inaccurate estimates by private operators of their profitability.

This combination of factors exacerbated the challenges faced in the district and highlighted the need for urgent solutions.



Surfacing the Uncounted

The Customer Management System (CMS) ensures the tracking of water produced and billed, and customer payments received. The system enables private operators to track their profitability, and WASAC is able to monitor non-revenue water and other key performance areas.

In Rwanda, non-revenue water had previously not been carefully monitored. As the process was underway, it became clearer to the private operators that they were losing revenue, resulting in them being unable to manage their infrastructure efficiently or pay for electricity needs due to income shortfalls. A behaviour change was needed from the private operators. Therefore an awareness drive was implemented to help them become

more conscious of how much they were losing and what they could do differently to develop the financial sustainability of their businesses.

Additionally, an approach was introduced to place meters in a number of additional places within the piped water system, which helped to identify more accurately where within a system the difference between the amount supplied and amount billed was occurring. This enabled the proper investigation and management of natural or intentional leakages that were occurring. The improvement marked a real opportunity for improving the operational efficiency of the WASAC and the operators.

The Intervention Plan

Water For People partnered with the Kigali Sanitation Board (KSB) to conduct deep dives on the root causes of poorly maintained pumps and how the premature failure of pumps can be avoided in future. While immediate actions were taken to repair or replace non-functioning pumps, there were three key aspects to the solution to the deeper challenges faced:

A transfer of the responsibility and accountability for system upkeep and efficiency

The district's responsibility for the infrastructure management and maintenance was transferred to the Water & Sanitation Corporation (WASAC), a government agency established to have an overall mandate for the water systems. This enabled greater ties of accountability between the service provider and the institution that was contracting them.

The professionalization of the private operator model

Several initiatives helped to create a more professional private operator sector, including:

- Review of the delegated management contracts between the districts and the private operators, and ensuring formal contracting between WASAC and the private operators
- Institutional roles and responsibilities were clarified, especially regarding the

involvement of a pump maintenance company and WASAC's supervisory role

- WASAC involved companies led by youth, providing training and on-the-job coaching
- Aligning the private operators' business plans with an assessment of all water systems and water points
- Development of a customized training manual focused on proper pump operation and maintenance
- A focused skills development program was conducted to capacitate private operators, WASAC, and district personnel based on a needs assessment
- A task force was developed to meet quarterly for a review on the strengths and challenges of the new arrangement and where further action was still required.

A customer management system was created to ensure transparency and accountability

The system has recorded over 100,000 water points and serves as a reporting database where private operators can enter maintenance details. Customers also have the option to pay their bills online. Through this system, the regulator can track the performance of private operators, fostering a culture of improved customer service.

This is ongoing work: This is ongoing work: there are still issues but we are confident because there is strong political will. The sector is vibrant and meeting on a regular basis: WASAC's new mandate gives them the authority and power to fix things; and the private operators now have the knowledge on what needs to be done. Considering the way things are assembled, they set us up for tangible results on the ground.

Bruce Uwonkunda, Chief of Party, Isoko y'Ubuzima Project, Water For People Rwanda



Outcomes & Impact

Water & Sanitation Corporation (WASAC)

The enabling environment is now in place to ensure greater efficiency of the private operator model.

WASAC as an institution now has the mandate for the operations and maintenance of the WASH infrastructure and has been capacitated to manage the private operators.

A structure and the relevant systems have been developed resulting in greater accountability between the private operators and their contracting entity. WASAC has a stronger geographic footprint with a branch in each district and professionals in the field across the country.

The customer management system is now in place with over 100,000 water points recorded, providing a reporting database that each of the private operators use to detail information on their work. The regulator now has a way of monitoring private operator performance and tariff collection has become more effective.

It also alerts WASAC to where parts need to be changed: this was done reactively before but now the tool enables a more proactive approach and preventive maintenance.

District

The interventions have increased the service levels for district community members.

A culture of customer service has been created, and the district authority is now able to advocate for its people if there are maintenance concerns.

Due to improvements in the system, the cost of service to people is reduced.

Private Operators

Being equipped with the necessary skills has enabled a behaviour change and greater professionalism for the private operators, they have now experienced the benefits of these changes.

Their revenues have increased in Rulindo and Gicumbi, as they have been given the training on how to be more efficient and accurate with billing and counting non-revenue water.

This has led to more sustainable businesses, enabling them to set aside funds to purchase spare parts, and pay for their electricity usage.

The customer management system has given them an understanding of the value of data: it allows them to see what data they are generating and where they could be more effective. They are also now more effective and understand the importance of a high quality of service to their customers.

As WASAC has provincial hubs stocked with spare parts, private operators are now supported to purchase what they need within a 4-hour travelling time in case of a breakdown, as opposed to having to wait for parts to be imported

Water For People

What was learned in Rulindo was carried out in Gicumbi which has a similar topography and level of infrastructure.

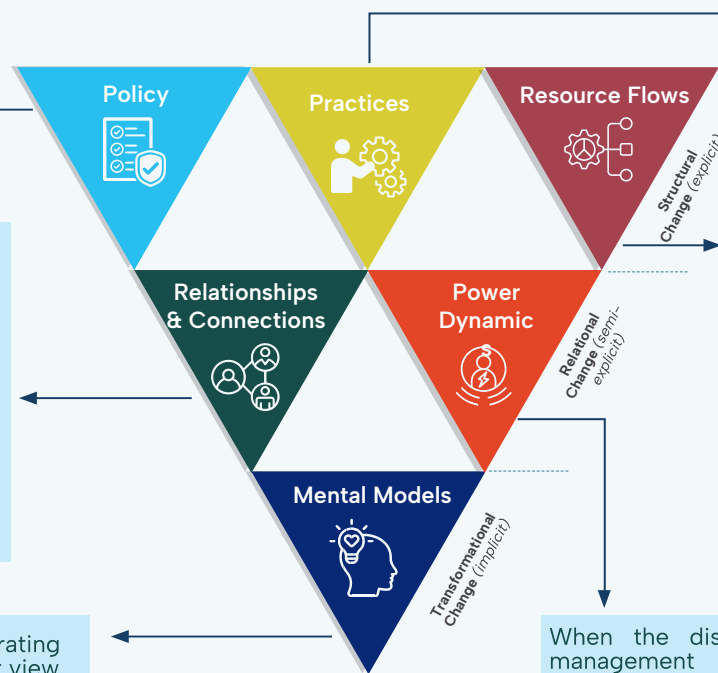
The approach of capacity building for WASAC and private operators has continued in other districts which allows for learning to be carried across and past mistakes to be avoided. The reflection sessions with all the stakeholders, including the district WASH board, helped to generate awareness about the importance of the work and resulted in reduced resistance from the districts, continued close collaborations with all stakeholders and sustained impact for the communities.

The Six Conditions of System Change

The Everyone Forever philosophy and model was adopted by government and other sectoral stakeholders, and the District-Wide approach was adopted by the Government of Rwanda as official policy.

The high level of accountability in the Government of Rwanda led to strong commitment to working with partners and with driving improvements at every level. The new relationship between WASAC and the private operators was enhanced by the accountability mechanisms put in place. This resulted in greater transparency and professionalism.

Private operators were not operating professionally and often did not view themselves as entrepreneurs or business owners or the people in the districts as their customers. They lacked proper business management skills and this resulted in practices that compromised their businesses. The capacity building provided to them contributed to a change in their thinking.



Previously, the maintenance of the infrastructure was managed by volunteers of service delivery at the village level. However, this was not effective as the volunteers did not have any accountability. When private operators were hired, their practices were not properly monitored or standardized. A more professional approach was thus implemented through WASAC.

Private operators did not realize the importance of accurate billing and focused on larger clients, neglecting payments from smaller clients. At the same time, they were losing money on non-revenue water. Further, due to the cost of maintenance of infrastructure, there was a recognition that a sustainable funding model split between taxes and tariffs was required.

When the district was responsible for the management of private operators, it was difficult for them to be supportive of the citizens as they would feel confronted on issues of concern in the midst of many priorities. With the new arrangement, they are able to be advocates for the citizens when there is a drop in service, enhancing their level of accountability. The mayors in Rulindo district were integral to the effective transition of the private operator management to WASAC, as they created an environment of mutual trust.

Source: John Kania, Mark Kramer & Peter Senge, "The Water of Systems Change," FSG.
https://www.fsg.org/publications/water_of_systems_change

We are more intentionally and actively getting WASAC involved and taking the lead in whatever systems-strengthening initiative we are doing in any district we are in. We involve the top leadership, and WASAC is at the forefront.

WASAC is still under reform, and the reform of such a big institution does not happen overnight. By having them in the front seat, we are ensuring that lessons learned are used in all the districts in the country, even those where we are not involved.

Olivier Tushyimire, Senior Program Manager, Water For People Rwanda

To achieve sustainability, Forever, is not easy. Due to our close collaboration and continued efforts in Rulindo, there is now greater accountability and independence from WASAC. Previously, they needed our support to assess the performance of the private operators. Now, they manage this on their own. This is a really good sign. It was what we were aiming for, to strengthen the institution, the system and achieve sustainability.

Eugene Dusingizumuremyi, Country Director, Water For People Rwanda

"We have been there and done it, and it's now in the institutional memory of the organisation and the individuals who have worked on it. And they have used the experience to improve the work in each district: from Rulindo to Gicumbi and Karongi and wherever it goes from here."

Nick Burn, Global Advisor; National Impact, Water For People

Sustainability and Long-Term Planning

Several activities were implemented to build the resilience of Rwanda's systems and ensure better planning.

Collaborative approach

To ensure the continued functionality and reliability of the pumping infrastructure, a collaborative approach involving the Ministry of Infrastructure (MININFRA), Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC), Local Administrative Entities Development Agency (LODA), Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority (RURA), WASAC, Water For People, World Vision International, and local private operators was developed.

Building the local supply chain

Contracts with pump manufacturers or suppliers with a presence in Rwanda were created to enable the timely supply and repair of spare parts, and to reduce import times and costs.

Sustainable maintenance funding

The government addresses the capital investment needs for infrastructure. However, there is a gap in funding of operations and maintenance of the infrastructure. This process involved determining the expected costs and clearly outlining financial responsibilities among water users, the District, and WASAC.



More effective planning and budgeting

Key steps included updating the District's asset registry to support better planning and budgeting processes. Districts were supported in conducting cost projections using lifecycle cost analysis to ensure that capital and operational costs are budgeted and allocated appropriately.

A culture of prevention rather than cure

To prevent costly future investments in replacing pumps and other critical components of the water supply systems, a comprehensive maintenance plan aimed at strengthening the system's functionality and sustainability was developed. This plan prioritized preventive maintenance to extend the lifespan of key infrastructure. It provided a clear schedule and defined responsibilities, considering the systems' age and complexity, and the district's capacity to carry out timely and effective maintenance.

Achieving Forever at local or national levels is very complex. It includes failing, learning and acting again –a cycle of learning and re-learning from challenges. What it has taught us is that you can never solve all challenges on the local level: you have to engage with the national system to get the results you need. If you are smart enough, you pick the learnings and replicate them wherever you go. That's how we have been able to scale impact and pick models that work. We took 15 years to reach Everyone in Rulindo. Through our learnings there, we are now taking less than five in other districts.

Cate Nimanya, Regional Director: Africa, Water For People



Challenges & Response

There is an ongoing challenge to educate residents on the reality of the systems and the funds needed to maintain water systems and supply. The two areas of financial need are:

- The consistent operations and maintenance, which might be met through taxes applied by the government or tariffs collected specifically for this purpose.
- The ambition is that every household has a pipe in their house, which will increase the funding need substantially.
- The districts were not allocating sufficient financing to WASH, as there were many competing needs. Water For People initially.

Lessons

- Sustainability requires working with different parts of the system and ensuring they talk to each other.
- Building internal capacity is important during such projects: there was an exchange program initiated between the Water For People Rwandan and Ugandan teams to ensure appropriate transfer of knowledge between them.
- Sustainability requires persistence and ongoing learning: the national model is evolving, and the project stakeholders and partners need to remain committed to the outcomes over the longer term, and to continually be learning.
- The initial belief was that the district was the authority but the lesson was that a more professionalised institutional arrangement was required, which needed to be separate from the district government

Insights

- While districts need to be at the centre of ownership of their solutions, it is critical to have specialized and capacitated national support for the supervision of the delivery model: when key challenges are unblocked at the national level, the effects will trickle down to the local level.
- The co-ownership model with the government led to a stronger relationship. It also meant that both the problems and the solutions were co-owned, strengthening the accountability of partners.
- Accountability mechanisms, which are strong in Rwanda, created space to address issues timeously

Opportunities

- The Rulindo project has gathered many learnings and these have been used to improve the efficiency and efficacy of the approach to bringing universal water and sanitation access to other districts in Rwanda. This will continue until the entire country has been reached.
- There is a further opportunity to learn how to make the model work on an even more "hands off" level for Water For People which will create further independence of the districts and institutions involved.
- The work being done to minimise non-revenue water can be deepened and scaled to other districts to help private operators to get the income and build sustainable businesses.
- There is an opportunity to build the citizens' voice so that they can speak up regarding their needs within the district



water for people
TANZANIA

Strengthening Partnerships for WASH

Acknowledging CSO Contributions in Tanzania

Introduction

Water is a critical resource. It creates and sustains life on the planet.

In Tanzania, the government recognised that water is essential to achieving its development goals. It created the multi-year Water Sector Development Program (WSDP) in 2006 to serve as a framework through which all its interventions are implemented under the following pillars:

- Water Resources Management and Development
- Water Quality Management
- Water Supply
- Sanitation and Hygiene and
- Program Coordination and Delivery Support.

The overall objective of the WSDP is to strengthen sector institutions for integrated water resources management and improved access to water supply and sanitation services.

Collaboration is key to delivering on the significant mandate of universal access to adequate, clean and safe water and sanitation services. Driven by a common vision, the Ministry of Water, the Tanzania Water and Environmental Sanitation Network (TaWaSaNet) and Water For People came together to support the objective of strengthening institutions in the sector.

The starting point was by counting the uncountable.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) are the closest on the ground and an integral part of the community and a voice for their needs and concerns. They are delivery agents, ensuring that key services reach those at risk of being left behind and critical grassroots support for implementing national and global initiatives.

Yet, their role in the system of change was not measured and therefore not counted, understood or incorporated into decision making at the highest levels. The CSO Contribution Report was a groundbreaking effort to change this. The research found that the financial contribution of the CSOs that reported their activities was 9% of the government budget.

The recognition of this and the effort undertaken to measure and report on the contribution of CSOs was a fundamental systemic shift that allowed a more comprehensive view of the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector to be developed in Tanzania. Additionally, it gave rise to collective ownership across all sectors— public, private and civil society—on the crucial work being undertaken.

Background and Context



The supply and management of water and sanitation are critical to achieving the goals across other sectors, such as, agriculture, mining, education and energy.

In Tanzania, all activities of the WASH sector are implemented within the Water Sector Development Program (WSDP), which spans the period 2006 – 2025. National planning, budgeting, and monitoring and evaluation are based on this sector-wide Program. In 2022/2023, the Ministry of Water's budget was TZS 709.4 billion, down by 13% from the year before.

Water For People, together with the Ministry of water, recognized that the contributions of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the WASH sector was not being counted and adequately acknowledged within the WSDP.

Nonprofits were implementing critical projects that were visible in communities but information about this was not finding its way to ministerial offices. An example was when some CSOs recognised a contradiction between various water and sanitation policies, and their advocacy led to a comprehensive review and harmonization of the relevant policies. In other cases, CSOs implemented community-based initiatives to support district water supply, such as the construction of small-scale water schemes and borehole drilling, or building awareness and mobilizing communities around sanitation and hygiene.

Details on such activities are provided within quarterly and annual reports by CSOs as part of their obligations to the Office

Nonprofits were implementing critical projects that were visible in communities but information about this was not finding its way to ministerial offices.



of the Registrar of Non-Governmental Organizations. However, the data from these reports had not been collated and elevated to the national level as part of the evidence of what was being achieved, nor was it shared meaningfully with the sector or the broader public. The Water Status Report, usually presented in March when all water-related matters are discussed, did not mention the role and efforts of CSO. This led to an under valuing of the contribution of this important sector to the overall efforts towards water and sanitation access and equity, completely excluding the financial investment applied to these efforts.

There was also a resultant impact on budget allocations as the Ministry allocates funding based on available information. To support proper budgeting and avoid duplication of efforts, the investment in WASH services by the public, private and civil society sectors, and their respective geographic footprints, had to be clearly understood.

To bridge this gap in information, the Tanzania Water and Environmental Sanitation Network (TaWaSaNet), as the umbrella body for CSO in the WASH sector, was approached to undertake a national study of the presence and activities of such organizations to ensure that their efforts were made evident at the highest levels. TaWaSaNet's goal is to raise CSO voices on relevant platforms, enhance their visibility and internal capacity, assist them in gaining access to national support and ultimately

enable their sustainable and collective impact in the sector. It was clear to CSOs that their ability to influence, advocate and make strategic decisions about their work had to be supported by data.

Annually, TaWaSaNet conducts Equity Reports which identify research themes and use various sectoral platforms to promote and discuss the findings. This data has enabled the network to make a powerful impact such as influencing the government's budget allocations between urban and rural areas. Previously, despite most of the population living in rural communities, urban areas received almost 70% of the budget but through advocacy based on data, the government sought to narrow this allocation gap in 2014/2015.

The project partners understood that national planning and budgeting require evidence, and this provided the impetus for the studies undertaken in 2023 that led to the CSO Contribution Report and the Budget Analysis. Water For People provided project financing, technical assistance to conceptualize and guide the project, and played an important role in validating the report. This was aligned with the organization's belief in strengthening systems through working with key stakeholders and duty-bearers, understanding the components of the system and the context, and supporting them in what they need to achieve.



The Systemic Challenges



Challenge One

The national planning did not reflect the contribution of civil society organizations

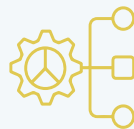
Having a clear understanding of what CSOs are doing and where they are operating would help the Ministry of Water reduce duplication of funds and efforts. Previously, the activities of CSOs were not well documented, leading to resource duplication, underreporting of their contributions, and ultimately weakening the water sector on many fronts that include:



POLICY: Failure to acknowledge CSO contributions has led to the inability to respond to questions about civil society work in the WASH sector during parliament sessions. This may have indirectly affected the ability to develop enabling policies.



PRACTICES: National planning does not reflect the contribution of non-state actors, especially CSOs. This leads to a lack of recognition of the work being done by organizations on the ground.



RESOURCE FLOWS: There was a gap in the knowledge of where CSO services are implemented, affecting the government's ability to allocate budget accordingly.



POWER DYNAMICS/ RELATIONSHIPS/MENTAL MODELS:

The dearth of information led to suspicion of a lack of accountability over resources, duplication of efforts and resources, and finger pointing among sectors.



RELATIONSHIPS: The relationship between CSOs and the government was somewhat antagonistic due to this information gap. This resulted in a cycle of incomplete information being provided by CSOs and continued government suspicion due to the lack of data.

Challenge Two

The national budget needed an assessment to understand its alignment with the Water Sector Development Program (WSDP) objectives

The financial year 2022/2023 marked the commencement of the third phase of implementation of The Water Sector Development Program, Tanzania's water resource management strategy. Without a budget analysis, there was insufficient information to understand how funds were being allocated and what changes needed to be made for more efficient and effective service provision on the ground.

PRACTICES & RESOURCE FLOWS: There has been an unequal allocation of resources per geographical area (e.g. between rural and urban) as well as among the various components of the Water Sector Development Program. The capacity of the government to understand potential misalignments was limited due to a lack of relevant information.

EXISTENCE OF GAPS IN COORDINATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY: Further, there are existing dialogue mechanisms for coordination and accountability in the water sector. However, it was unclear whether these were sufficient and whether they were performing this function effectively.

It was clear that a mechanism for coordinating and acknowledging the contribution of CSOs towards the Water Sector Development Program needed to be developed, and that a comprehensive analysis of the budget had to be conducted.



Activities

CSO Contribution Report

It was realized early on that additional support would be needed to reach a broad range of civil society organizations. The Ministry of Water engaged the Office of the Registrar of Non-Governmental Organizations in the Ministry of Community Development, as they have a system to collect reports from NGOs. Previously, little was done with the information collected and there was an opportunity to mine this data for the purpose of the study. Unfortunately, most organizations were not complying with the reporting requirements and supplementing the information would require manual work for which there would be time and financing constraints. The Ministry of Water and TaWaSaNet teams applied themselves to contacting the organizations directly to get the required information. Through the process, there were consultations with the sector to sense check the findings, ensure gaps were filled and impact discussed. Water For People provided project financing, technical assistance to conceptualise and guide the project, and played a role in the validation of the report.

Budget Analysis

The analysis of the 2022/2023 budget was designed to understand how equitable the allocation of funds were within the sector, where the potential gaps were and how to ensure that the financial resources were being most effectively applied.



The research-intensive project required the analysis of the budget against the national budget, the WSDP requirements and objectives, and overall financing within the sector. It compared funds allocated across different Ministry of Water components (Water Resource Management and Development, Water Quality Management, Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene, and Program Coordination and Delivery Support). Further, the report described trends in budget allocation and provided a detailed analysis of budget and expenditure cycles within these components.

Following the drafting of the report, a validation workshop was conducted in which organizations and individuals in the sector were able to provide technical review and feedback. Water For People provided financial and technical support to the project and contributed to the validation workshop.

Key Finding of the Budget Analysis

- The percentage of the Ministry of Water budget of the national budget is small. It is also comparatively smaller than other social sectors.
- Based on the national water sector's budget against the country's GDP, Tanzania is still allocating inadequate financial resources to the sector

Parliament was aware that during the budgetary sessions, TaWaSaNet would showcase the budgetary gaps, allocations and disbursements. If we did not have the budget analysis, then we would not have the evidence to present and would miss the avenue of opportunity to influence. Through the partnership with Water for People, we were able to deliver on this important work on time.

Emmanuel Jackson – National Coordinator, TaWaSaNet

Outcomes & Impact

The CSO Contribution Report provided a view into the water projects implemented by various nonprofit organizations, where they are located, and the number of people reached by these important services.

The findings also demonstrated the financial and employment contributions being made by CSOs. The budget analysis provided crucial information on how the national water budget is being allocated and suggested recommendations to improve the efficiency and robustness of the budgeting process.

Entry	Significance of the Report
NATIONAL/ GOVERNMENT	• Government now understands and acknowledges the contribution of CSOs and this has led to enhanced trust and collaboration between the sectors • The awareness created on where CSO services are being implemented has been invaluable in allocating the national budget Resources are limited, it has thus been critical to have data that enables greater efficiency • As the report maps out the geographic footprint and focus areas for CSOs, it is now clear which regions are underrepresented or lacking specific services. This information has helped direct the government on how to make decisions and guide the geographic footprint of CSOs on where and how support is required • The budget analysis demonstrates the disparity between the financing of water supply projects versus the funding allocation towards water quality or management of water resources. This is critical information for the Ministry, as well as the CSOs and TaWaSaNet, to consider in planning processes • Government now has evidence of how CSO information can be meaningfully used in order to encourage other CSOs to comply with reporting requirements
CIVIL SOCIETY	• The CSO sector has been valued for its contribution to the overall Water Sector Development Program efforts of Tanzania, and thus the credibility of its work has grown • NGOs have been capacitated with the data to support their organizational campaigns, grassroots interventions, fundraising and advocacy • The sector now has clear information on where services are being provided and where there are still gaps (e.g. none of the CSOs reported any projects in Katavi region highlighting a gap in resource provision) • They have also used the report to inform the sector and influence government leaders on critical issues • Having civil society efforts represented in this way has encouraged other organizations in the sector to report on their activities to the Office of the Registrar of NGOs to have their contributions counted
TAWASANET	• The capacity and profile of TaWaSaNet have been strengthened with the network now having evidence for its work, it has been invited to participate on various national and sectoral platforms to share its knowledge

Key Findings in the CSO Contribution Report



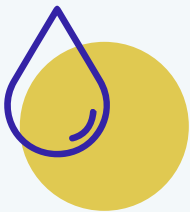
598

CSOs in WASH in Tanzania



115

Submitted their annual progress reports in 2022/2023



239

Water projects implemented

165

District councils

25

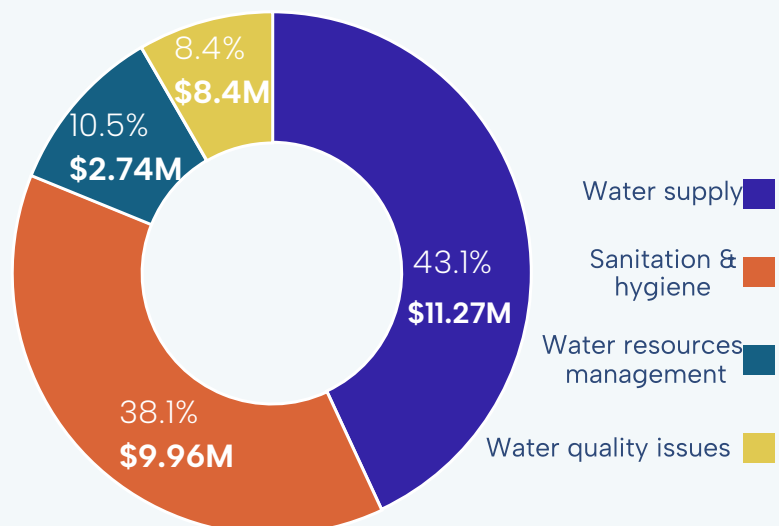
Regions



Monetary contribution of CSOs to implement WSDP III (2022/2023)

TZS 63,311,771,943

USD 26,161,889 (12.2024)



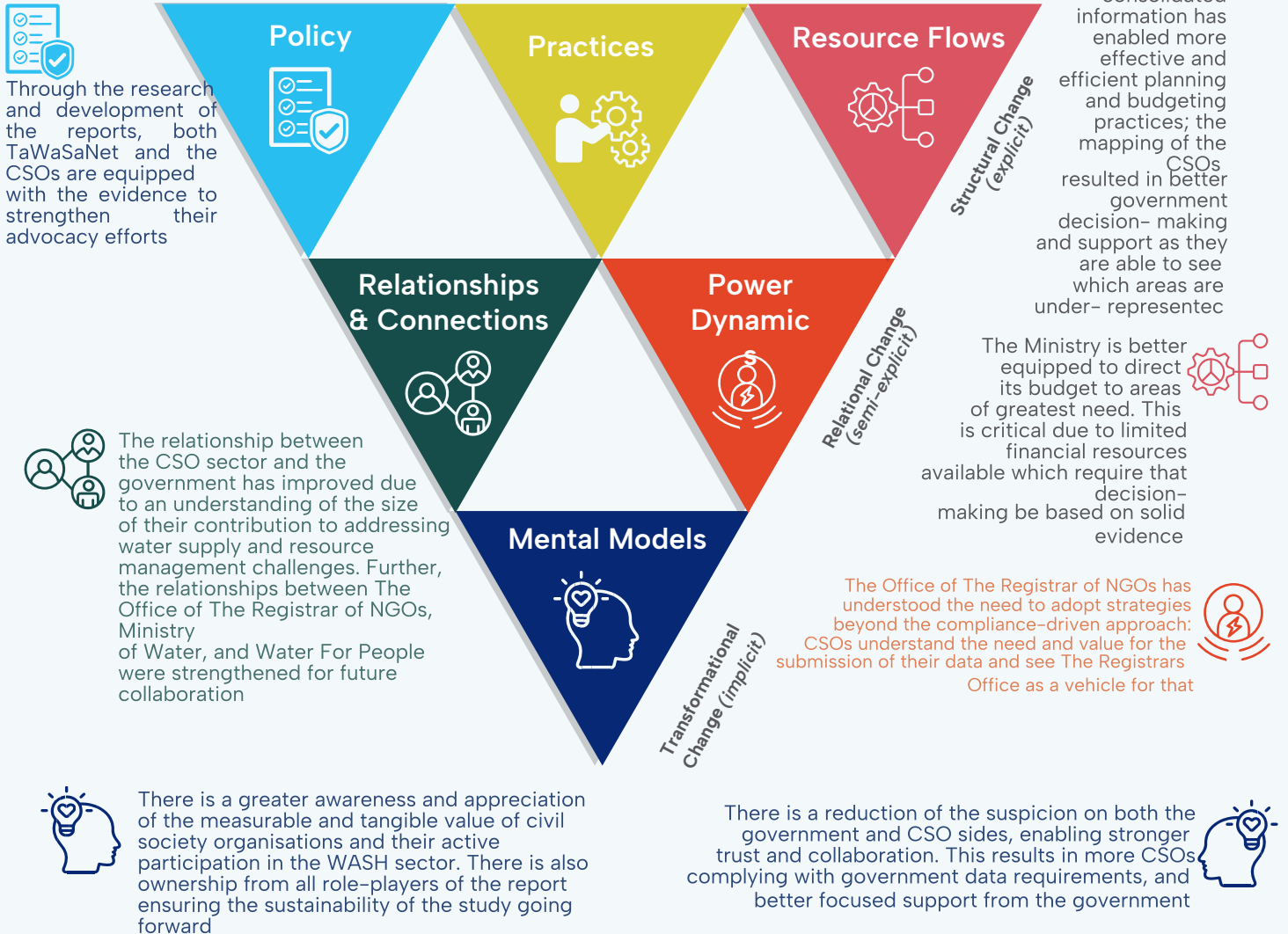
9% of total government WASH budget

**Figures will not equal 100% as they include multiple services and are rounded up*

What has really helped was to be able to look at information on water resource management and how it is performing, to see whether it is getting fair financing as compared to the other sectors. We have generated the data for the analysis where we can note that it's just 10.5% that has been invested which gives us the evidence to keep advocating for more financing for this part of the sector for the organization. – **Pendo Hyera, Program Manager, Shahid Maji (a CSO in the WASH sector)**

How the System Shifted and Was Strengthened

SIX CONDITIONS OF SYSTEMS CHANGE



There is still a long way to go... still so much to do so we cannot walk alone as government. We need the support from CSOs and NGOs. Through this project, there has been a great improvement in the relationship, and in their recognition and acceptance in the community.

Ministry of Water

This report is critical because it helps us to be familiar with organizations like Water For People, TaWaSaNet and other stakeholders to build cooperation and support for NGOs. We now know the NGO sector in the water space better and it helps us to avoid duplication of efforts.

Francisca Elias Ng'wendesha
– Office of The Registrar of Non- Governmental Organizations

Our role is to identify areas in which we can shift the system, trigger that idea and thought process with the right institutions, support them to take it forward and then step aside.

Rehema Tukai – Country Director, Tanzania, Water for People

Conclusions and Recommendations



INSIGHTS



- The government cannot do this alone and requires the help of CSOs and NGOs
- Data is critical for more effective decision making on allocation of financial resources
- Comprehensive measurement of social change efforts needs to consider the contributions of all sectors and role-players
- Ensuring visibility of these contributions removes suspicion about what CSOs are doing
- The project has enabled stronger relationships between the various partners
- Working with sectoral networks is important for consolidation and efficiency

LESSONS



- It is important to get buy-in from the CSOs for them to provide their information openly and accurately
- Partnerships, such as that with the Office of the Registrar of NGOs, are vital to reach as many organizations as possible
- When issues or concerns arise in the project or the partnership, it is important to raise the alarm quickly so that they can be discussed and resolved without much damage
- Good relationships with the government are vital to ensure large-scale systems change

OPPORTUNITIES



- Unpack the data for the different indicators with the various project partners; collate the data collected against the Sustainable Development Goals
- Prepare simplified versions of the report for community engagement
- The NGO Information System (NIS) can be improved to accommodate the submission of reports electronically
- Office of the Registrar of NGOs has seen the value of aggregating the information and sharing it with other sectoral networks and ministries to develop similar reports
- Mobilization of CSOs to understand the project's value, and scale this nationally

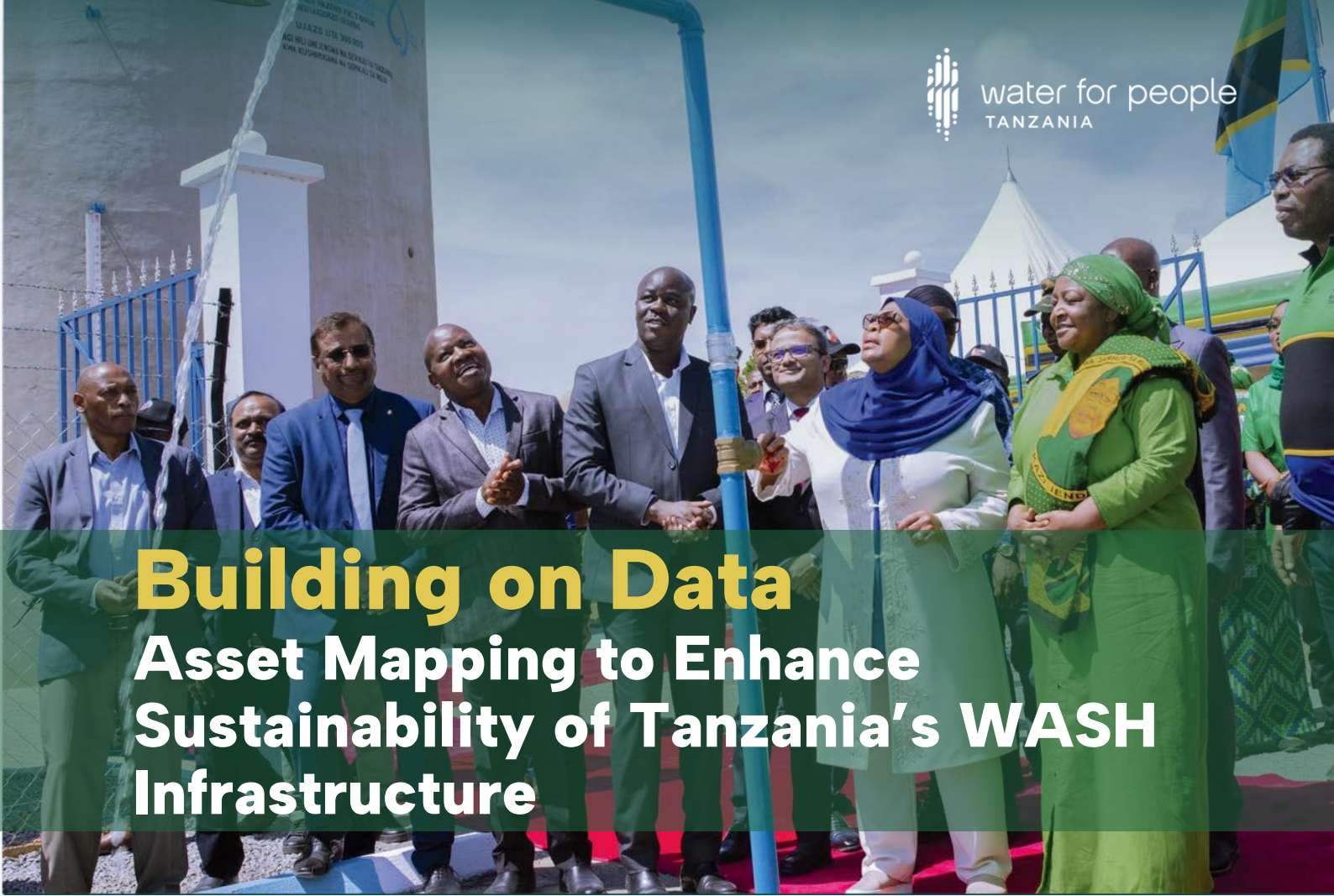
RECOMMENDATIONS



Not all CSOs are active in submitting their reports; thus, data collection was hampered. There are several reasons for this:

- capacity and availability of CSO representatives are limited
- there was suspicion on how the information will be used
- there were concerns expressed about the user-friendliness of the online system

The Ministry of Water and TaWaSaNet teams contacted organizations directly for the required information using the registration data and referrals



Building on Data

Asset Mapping to Enhance Sustainability of Tanzania's WASH Infrastructure

Introduction

When we think about the goal of remote rural communities flourishing with clean and safe water for all, we often envision the end point—the water pouring out of the tap and village children drinking happily. We don't often think about what got the water to that point—the machinery, equipment, and piping that all had to be carefully installed, maintained and protected over the years.

Yet, the journey to fulfilling this basic human right for millions of people starts with knowing what infrastructure is in place to support the delivery of water to those who live in underserved areas. When that is understood, key decisions on where the gaps lie, what still needs to be developed, what maintenance is required and how to best manage these assets can be made more efficiently and effectively.

Managing water supply services is critical for a country's ability to provide this essential resource to generations of its citizens sustainably. In Tanzania, over 42 million people live in rural areas. Much of the rural water infrastructure is old and due to incomplete records of the specifications of what exists and where, any breakdown becomes challenging to overcome.

In recognition of this, Water For People, RUWASA (Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency) and USAID Maji Safi Project created a system-changing partnership to ensure that the country's water assets are mapped, documented, digitized and analyzed for ease of management and maintenance.

With sustainable water supply as the end goal, this vital initiative takes the country one step closer to achieving that.

When the well's dry, we know the worth of water. – *Benjamin Franklin*



Background and Context



Tanzania, home to over 61.7 million people, faces critical challenges in providing sustainable water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services to all its people, particularly in rural areas where over 62% of the population lives. Despite being a water abundant nation, only 64% of households have access to basic water supply services, and sanitation access drops to 32%, with rural areas fearing even worse.¹

In line with Sustainable Development Goal 6, the Government of Tanzania has set ambitious targets to achieve universal access to water and sanitation by 2030. To advance these goals, the 2019 Water Supply and Sanitation Act established the

Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency (RUWASA), tasked with managing water services in rural areas. It took over the mandates of various regional authorities to ensure the provision of water services to rural communities, small towns and district headquarters. However, the agency also inherited decades-old infrastructure with limited records and management strategies, creating significant gaps in asset accountability and maintenance.

RUWASA contracts Community-based Water Supply and Management Organizations (CBWSOs) to support the management of water supply infrastructure and operations in rural areas. CBWSOs monitor and report

In line with Sustainable Development Goal 6, the Government of Tanzania has set ambitious targets to achieve universal access to water and sanitation by 2030



¹ Tanzania – High Priority Country Plan 2022–2027, USAID
https://www.globalwaters.org/sites/default/files/tanzania_gws_hpc_plan_2023.pdf
Joint Monitoring Programme statistics, Tanzania – High Priority Country Plan 2022–2027, USAID
https://www.globalwaters.org/sites/default/files/tanzania_gws_hpc_plan_2023.pdf

maintenance issues to enable RUWASA to evaluate and take the necessary action. RUWASA currently accounts for these water assets; however, the law requires that they be allocated to the books of CBWSOs. For this transition to happen effectively, proper information on the assets is required, and this is where the substantive gaps were found.

In 2023, the Water For People Uganda team trained staff from RUWASA, the Ministry of Water, Water For People Tanzania and select NGOs on asset analysis and the customized tool they developed and used locally. This sparked interest and the conversation on the value of this approach continued. RUWASA saw the need to implement this initiative in Tanzania as it struggled to clearly define the maintenance burden for the water infrastructure assets under its care. Due to this, it could not plan and budget appropriately, affecting its financial allocation from the Ministry, nor could it support the CBWSOs adequately in their business plan development.

CBWSOs, too, faced challenges due to this lack of information. There was a gap between their delivery costs and the tariffs they were allowed to charge consumers, which affected their financial sustainability. They were unable to make a compelling argument for appropriate subsidies from the government due to their limited knowledge of the infrastructure

assets and the maintenance or replacement requirements.

To address these challenges, Water For People created a partnership with RUWASA, USAID's Maji Safi Project and community based organizations. Through this partnership, a comprehensive plan for the management of rural infrastructure assets is being developed. The collaboration has identified critical gaps and intends to equip CBWSOs with the tools required to lobby for more sustainable tariffs. The long-term goal is to ensure better maintenance and long term functionality of rural water systems.

To address these challenges, Water For People created a partnership with RUWASA, USAID's Maji Safi Project and community-based organizations

Resilient systems are a requirement to survive in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world. We define water, sanitation, and hygiene systems as all the social, technical, institutional, environmental and financial factors, actors, motivations, and interactions that influence service delivery in any given context. As modern NGOs, we cannot solve problems alone, but we can connect across societies and engage beyond our sector globally to work with decision-makers, experts, and citizens to find integrated solutions.

We can catalyze systems strengthening through partnering governments, civil society, and businesses. And we can challenge ourselves and others to be better, root out inequalities and poor practices in our own systems, and invest more effectively to pursue the common goal.

Destination 2030 Water For People-IRC Joint Strategy

The Systemic Challenges

Challenge One

There is no inventory of the infrastructure assets in rural communities. This results in an information gap of what is required to build an asset management plan.

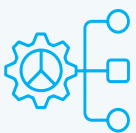
RUWASA has implemented several water projects and thus has many assets. The organization has also inherited assets whose condition and functionality are unknown which has hindered effective planning, resource allocation and the development of an asset register and operational plans.

An inventory does not exist for most infrastructure assets, including information on age, specifications and current physical state of assets.



POLICY & PRACTICE: As there is no clear inventory of all existing assets, CBWSOs are unable to: a) develop costed operational plans for resource allocation, b) determine full cost recovery to enable them to set realistic tariffs for sustainability, c) develop mechanisms for delivery of a subsidy if policymakers see this as an option.

RESOURCE FLOWS: Evidence is required for the justifications put



forward to the Ministry of Finance and Planning to ensure an adequate budget allocation. A lack of

proper data hinders RUWASA's ability to advocate for bigger investments in specific areas. It becomes difficult to predict the budget allocation towards operations.



PRACTICE: The lack of an inventory affects planning for maintenance. To maintain a given stock of items, one would need to know the specifications of the various assets.

The information gap denies RUWASA the opportunity to plan well, implement maintenance, solve problems quickly and work cost-efficiently. Some projects were constructed in the 1970s so the details on pipe and pump specifications do not exist. When these items break down, time is wasted figuring out what is needed to fix it.

Challenge Two

The practice of asset management has not been operationalized through standard tools, guidelines and training.

Beyond the mapping and recording of the assets, an asset management plan is required for sustainability.



POWER DYNAMICS: A system that does not consult and cater for those on the ground in its designated implementation but seeks to use their resources is not productive or sustainable.



PRACTICES & RELATIONSHIPS: It is challenging for succession planning and knowledge transfer to new staff if there is

no standard operating procedure for this work. Training is critical as the asset management tool will be on a new system and CBWSOs will likely not have the technical expertise to navigate this system. The continuity of the asset management activity will be at risk if the people required to implement are unclear of the expectations of them.

The country's water assets needed to be urgently mapped, recorded and collated into a single user-friendly system, and the standard operating procedures developed to enable proper management of these critical resources.

Activities

The journey to strengthen Tanzania's rural water systems began with a critical first step: identifying existing assets and assessing their condition and value.

This project is in the preparatory stage. Key foundational discussions were held and agreement has been reached on the modalities of how it will be implemented. A critical decision was to undertake a pilot program, and the partners collaborated on selecting regions and zones where this will be conducted. During this pilot phase, an asset data model was developed to define the attributes associated with each water asset, laying the groundwork for accurate and efficient mapping.

The relevant software was identified with specific attention to data protection and user-friendly features. Training programs and clear criteria for the deployment of staff were also established, equipping teams with the knowledge and tools needed to implement the initiative effectively.

As the Community-Based Water Supply and Management Organizations (CBWSOs) collected detailed data on water assets, geo-referenced mapping tools were introduced to verify the accuracy of recorded locations.



Attributes were superimposed onto pre defined maps, enabling the system to detect and flag any misalignments, allowing for quick corrective action and ensuring data integrity.

This initiative represents a timely and impactful intervention, aligning with the government's significant investment in water infrastructure. With the outcomes of the pilot set to inform nationwide scaling, the project is well-positioned to strengthen Tanzania's water asset management and drive lasting improvements in rural water service delivery.

A bird in the hand is worth more than two in the bush. We have already secured 79% coverage. To sustain it is as important as investing in new infrastructure.

Davis Rweyemamu, RUWASA

Project Roadmap

Guideline Development

- Development of Analytical Framework: Create a framework for the mapping and digitization of existing water infrastructure.
- Guideline Development: Establish comprehensive guidelines for Community-Based Water Supply Organizations (CBWSOs) Asset Management.
- Conduct Training of Trainers (ToT): Train CBWSOs technical team on the new guidelines and processes.

Guideline Pre-Testing Activities

- Data Collection: Gather information on existing water infrastructure.
- Data Analysis & Report Generation: Analyze the collected data, interpret findings, and generate detailed reports.
- Guideline Dissemination Meetings: Conduct meetings to share the final guidelines with stakeholders for feedback and validation.

Procurement of ICT Equipment

- Purchase of Laptops: Acquire laptops for data collection, analysis, and reporting.
- Purchase of Tablets: Obtain tablets for on-site mapping, data collection, and data entry.
- Purchase of Software: Procure ArcGIS Pro software for mapping and digitization tasks.

1

2

3

Project Partners

Water For People played a key role in this impactful partnership, leveraging its experience in asset mapping and creating a WASH Master Plan in Mpwapwa to provide critical technical support throughout the project.

Highlights of Water For People's contributions include:

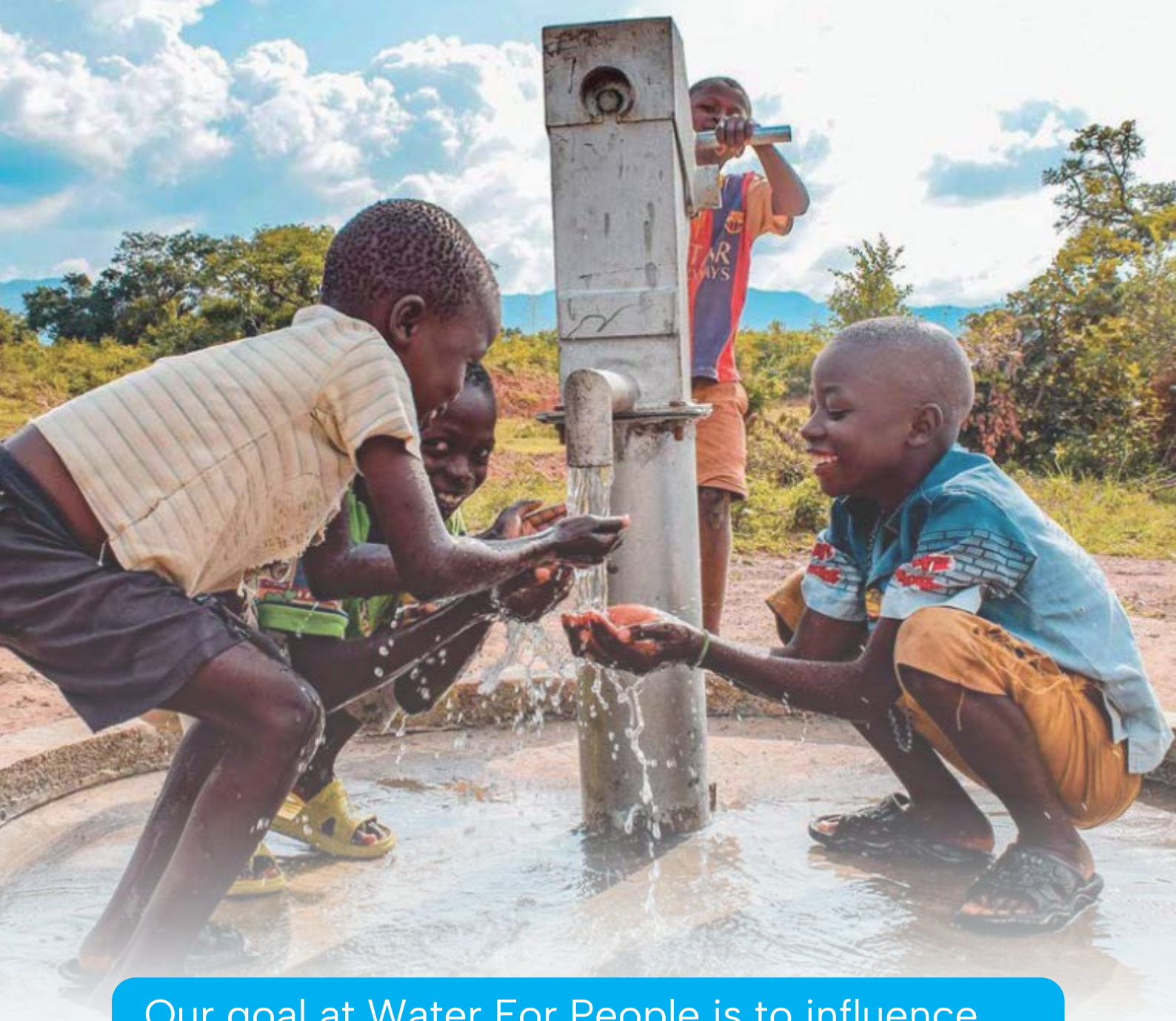
- **Training stakeholders:** Conducting workshops on its Asset Analysis Tool for RUWASA, the Ministry of Water, USAID Maji Safi Project, and CRS, a nonprofit focusing on sustainable rural resources in Tanzania.
- **Sharing expertise:** Facilitating knowledge-sharing sessions to help RUWASA learn from Water For People's practical experience in Mpwapwa.
- **Developing tools:** Providing technical guidance on asset mapping and creating a digitized data model.
- **Shaping plans:** Leading the creation of guidelines for preparing asset management plans

The USAID Maji Safi Project was also a critical financial and technical partner, helping to shape the strategic approach to managing water assets. Through collaborative sessions in Iringa, they contributed to the thinking on the key considerations for the initiative. Further, the Maji Safi Project team provided engineering expertise and analysis that laid the foundation for the Water For People operations and management support.

Community-based Water Supply and Management Organizations (CBWSOs) are integral to the management of the rural water supply schemes. Water For People's established relationships and ongoing support for these organizations helped strengthen their ability to deliver on their responsibilities.

This initiative underscores the power of partnerships in strengthening water governance, improving service delivery, and transforming lives in Tanzania's rural communities.





Our goal at Water For People is to influence and scale. We enter into partnerships to catalyse and influence. Once the intervention is part of the system, then we become irrelevant. We believe that the durability of the project is in your absence and we work on making that a reality. The “forever” part of Water For People’s “Everyone Forever” Model is that the transformed system exists without us.



Outcomes & Impact



The longer-term impacts of the project:

NATIONAL

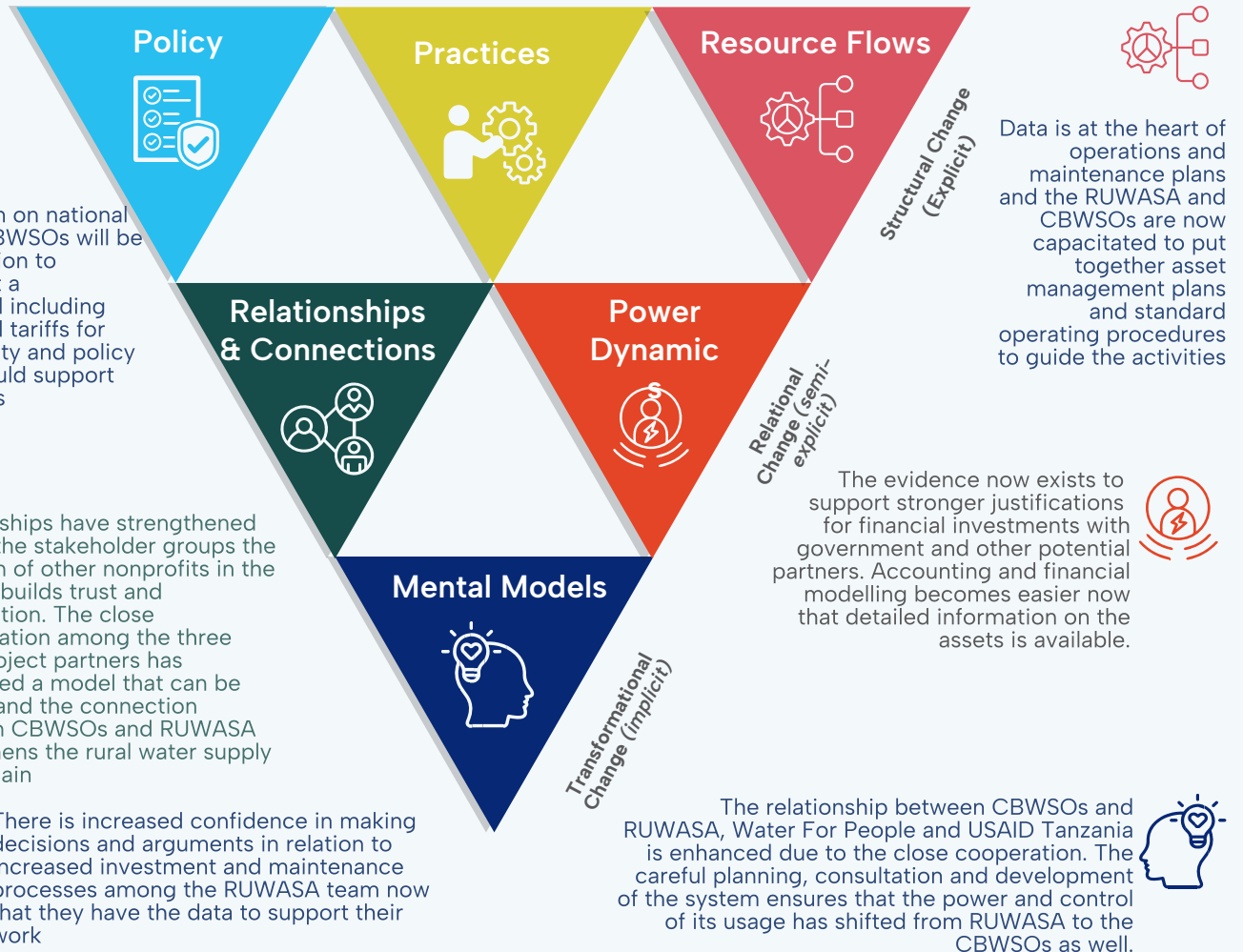
- Sustainability of service delivery specifically in rural areas across Tanzania
- Greater emphasis on the protection and maintenance of assets
- An asset register being developed will be a significant outcome for the country. As all assets now have to be digitally recorded, this enables a greater quantity of information to be stored in a user friendly and efficient manner
- Cost savings: Based on comprehensive information documented on assets, it is now clearer which assets are redundant or not properly utilized, and how to calculate depreciation. Due to the proper accounting of the infrastructure and planning for future maintenance needs, the project will be more cost-efficient

RUWASA INSTITUTIONAL

- This project is now embedded into the key performance indicators of RUWASA which will ensure that it continues to receive attention in the longer term
- The teams at RUWASA and the CBWSOs are capacitated to manage this system once it is operational, and ownership of the maintenance is vested in the community organizations

How the System Shifted and Was Strengthened

SIX CONDITIONS OF SYSTEMS CHANGE



Source: John Kania, Mark Kramer & Peter Senge, "The Water of Systems Change," FSG.
https://www.fsg.org/publications/water_of_systems_change

This is about more than mapping coordinates; this will help us come up with future insights for the sustainability of water supply management schemes and services in Tanzania.

– **Flavius Kalisa, RUWASA**

This is the right time for such an initiative. The government has invested a lot into infrastructure and coverage was at 79.6% at the end of 2023 so it is the best opportunity for mapping. The partners and Ministry of Water will know that they will have data for the investments they have made.

– **Walter Kirita, RUWASA**

Conclusions and Recommendations

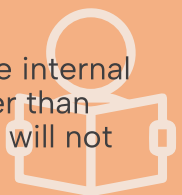
INSIGHTS

- Initially, RUWASA planned to use an external consultant to map the assets but realised that it would be better to train internal people for sustainability.
- To make change durable, thought needs
- to be applied to the entry point. This is a decision point on where the organization should intervene to bring about the most impactful and enduring change.
- Involve the key stakeholders in project planning, initiation and implementation phases. Listen to their needs and see how the project partners can best cater to their demands.



LESSONS

- It is important to train and use internal people for sustainability rather than international consultants who will not be there in the long term
- RUWASA needs to be very intentional about what data is collected, who is going to use it and for what purpose to not get into the trap of collecting lots of data for no reason. It is important that the information available on the system for CBWSOs is simplified as they may not have the technical expertise to interpret it
- The system might be a bit complex for those who do not have water sector or IT skills and thus it should be simplified



OPPORTUNITIES

- Optimism on the project's growth potential and that it could become strategic on the national level based on the pilot
- Partner with other departments like the Ministry of Energy, or Ministry of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development, which may also need mapping to share learnings
- A sustainable investment model could be developed to:
 1. Improve the Rural Service Delivery Management Information Service (RSDMS) system
 2. In partnership with the World Bank, build data management visualisations into the system
 3. Linking the system to a call centre such that when there is a breakdown or fault, people can call and register their concerns on the system for RUWASA to take action



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Financial constraints – funding requirements went beyond the initial amount secured
 - Due to concerns about data protection, open-source software could not be used and hence, the cost increased
 - Knowledge constraints – engineers were not conversant on the software and required training
 - Locating knowledge on infrastructure that was built in the 1970s – there are no archives, no access to engineers who were involved at the time, no layout drawings that still exist
- Compromises were made on the software cost to address the issues above and more funding was secured





water for people
UGANDA

Collaboration as a Cornerstone of Systems Strengthening

Introduction

“If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself.”

Often a cliché in the development world, collaboration is frequently spoken about but rarely practiced. This is not always because people lack the will to do so, but because collaboration is presumed to be difficult, time-consuming and, requiring unrealistic compromise, and open-mindedness.

The Everyone Forever model is predicated on strong collaboration and systems strengthening.

In Uganda, a key initiative based on this model was the development of District Investment Plans (DIPs). The scale of the initiative required multi-sectoral collaboration from government ministries and agencies, to sub-national regional centers, district offices, non-profit partners, service providers, and the people on the ground.

The significant gain was the in-depth process of uncovering the real needs of the district, expressing these in financial terms, using the insights to build an investment case, and intentionally creating knowledge and sustainability for the community in each phase of the planning journey.

What first excited me with Water For People was the Everyone Forever model: it touched something in me. We tend to do things piecemeal and we sometimes don't look at the big picture. Forever means sustainability. We saw the systems strengthening and were hooked onto this model. The theme and the approach spoke to us, but also practically, they have the technical expertise and they come with the tools which we have now used for a long time.

Engineer Joseph Oriono Eyatu, Commissioner of Rural Water Supply and Sanitation, Ministry of Water and Environment, Uganda



Background and Context

Kamwenge is a rural district found in South Western Uganda. It is constituted of 14 rural subcounties and 4 urban town councils. There is difficulty in access to clean and protected water sources. People have to walk very long distances to access these places. The easily accessed water is unclean and unprotected from rivers and ponds.

The district contended with several waterborne diseases due to the use of unsafe water sources. At the same time, unhygienic sanitation practices, including open defecation, contaminated natural water sources were a problem too. Schools also struggled with access to water and sanitation facilities. The few toilet facilities were overcrowded during break times, and some schools had no washrooms at all. As a result, girls were often forced to drop out of school due to challenges they encountered during menstruation.

The District Water Office (DWO) faced its own challenges; they lacked skilled people to repair broken equipment and had only one employee managing all water related needs across the entire district. Other departments had limited understanding of the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

issues resulting into poor coordination and collaboration across sectors.

These overlapping challenges were made worse by the absence of a comprehensive analysis of the district's WASH needs. Although the district has had a five-year development plan approved by the national government, it lacked specific strategies for effectively addressing the identified gaps.

In the meantime, the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) welcomed Water For People's Everyone Forever model, which focuses on ensuring universal access to sustainable WASH services for household, schools, and health facilities in a district. Kamwenge was identified as the right place to launch this approach. The process brought together all WASH sectors in the district, and its value lay in making planning more effective and efficient while enabling informed decision-making based on current and accurate data. These efforts were scaled up to the national level through the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Regional Centers. The District Investment Plan (DIP) helped develop a strategy to achieve universal coverage.



These overlapping challenges were made worse by the absence of a comprehensive analysis of the district's WASH needs. Although the district had a five-year development plan approved by the national government, it lacked specific strategies for effectively addressing the identified gaps.

The Systemic Challenge



The Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) in Uganda has committed to the global goal of providing universal access to sustainable water and sanitation services. However, access to water remains a significant challenge in rural areas, with many villages faced with lack of accessibility to safe and clean water.

In 2017, a presidential directive was issued to ensure that every village had at least one improved water source. This led to an effort to create equity in water access, which required identifying the number of unserved villages and determining where urgent assistance was needed.

To achieve this vision, strategic planning at the district level was essential. A key challenge involved understanding the access gap and estimating the cost of providing water and sanitation services to every household, school, and healthcare facility in the district. Additionally, vulnerable areas were being left behind in financing due to limited data on their specific needs.

Realizing this vision also required collaboration among various stakeholders. However, many districts lacked the data needed to effectively guide and support these collaborative efforts, increasing the risk of overlap and duplication in resource allocation.

Districts required an investment plan that would identify unserved areas, estimate the costs needed to bridge the gap, support government planning, and assist the districts in mobilizing financing.

Activities



MWE has established regional structures known as Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Regional Centers (RWSRCs), previously referred to as Technical Support Units. Their mandate includes sector coordination, advocacy, compliance, monitoring and verification of WASH service delivery within the districts. To ensure a comprehensive outreach to all rural districts so as to create a national impact, Water For People identified collaboration with the RWSRCs as a key strategic lever for unlocking the true potential of the DIPs.

Developing the DIP was just the beginning of the initiative. It was crucial to train the trainers on how to use the tool effectively. This training involved providing appropriate instructions to the engineer, public health specialist, and community development specialist in each RWSRC.

Water For People focused on building the capacity of these RWSRCs, enabling them to use the DIP tool and further develop these skills within the districts. These subnational units share their knowledge with the districts, creating a pool of experts on the ground who can populate and use the tool. The trained specialists would then be able to help their respective districts create customized DIPs.

Water For People provided targeted assistance to districts like Kamwenge to develop their DIPs. The district water office lacked clear information on the various stakeholders working within the district, including their specific areas of focus and the resources allocated to their efforts. Collaboration was essential to ensure all the necessary data to facilitate and support this process was obtained and Water For People facilitated this process.

Water For People is helping me as a district leader. We have insufficient funding and the work of Water For People helps complement our meagre funds. As politicians, Water For People has helped us to be part of conferences, meetings, advocacy on the national and international levels. They have given us networking and exposure and this has helped us form a clear vision.

Hon. Joseph Karungi, District Chairperson, Kamwenge district

Water For People has supported the MWE through the RWSRCs to use the DIPs to develop WASH Strategic Investment Plans for three regions: Karamoja, Acholi, and Lango, these regions had been significantly affected by war. These regions have a unique and complex context. They are semi-arid, with a history of slow development, are occupied primarily by traditional pastoralists. These regions were faced with significant WASH challenges and their state therefore called for an intervention through planning and strategising.

In order to get a proper 'snapshot' of the standard services in the targeted districts, Water For People facilitated this process through tasking district leadership and stakeholders to provide information on all their villages, including population, number of schools and healthcare facilities and functional water sources and accessibility. District-level verification and validation meetings were held to agree on the access levels, gaps and costs required to close the gap. These costs are based on the lifecycle costs of the different infrastructure elements contextualized to the different regions. This information is then used to develop district-specific investment plans that are combined to form the WASH Strategic Investment Plans for the regions.

On the national level, all the DIPs served as reference points, and the information from each was used to inform the undertaking on number of villages that lack access to improved water sources. This data was also consolidated to inform the development of the Sector Investment Plan.

Project Partners

This comprehensive partnership model included the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) at the national level. The Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Regional Centers (RWSRCs) were at the heart of developing the DIPs.

WASH cuts across all households, schools, and healthcare facilities. Within the district administration office, several key offices are involved:

- The District Water Office — mandated to plan and invest in bridging water gaps.
- The District Health Office — responsible for addressing gaps and overseeing interventions of WASH healthcare facilities.
- The District Education Office — mandated to address WASH needs in schools.
- The District Community Development Office — responsible for supporting good livelihood the household and community level.

The District Planning Office is the most critical of them all as it is in charge of surveying the entire district and inform the concerned department of the missing gaps of WASH services and how to bridge them for a better service delivery.

All offices and departments report to the Chief Administration Officer and the Local Council V Chairman (the political head of the district).

A District Task Team, formed with these key officers, development partners and RWSRC representatives meets quarterly to review the DIP, analyze gaps in access, discuss how they will be bridged, and what each partner can provide. The team also monitors the implementation of the plan by going into the field to check on progress and then convening for feedback and update of the DIP.

Non-profit development partners can use the DIP tool to support their own areas of focus.

Water For People has been a leading partner in the WASH sector and in coming up with innovative approaches and solutions and helping government to take that on and scale it up. We were able to leverage on these innovative practices, and we are grateful for that. **Peter, WASH Specialist, UNICEF**

Outcomes & Impact

The longer-term impacts of the project:

National

The process enabled the identification of unserved villages and the estimated cost of extending services to them, allowing the government to better plan and prioritize resource allocation.

Over 100 DIPs have been developed, covering approximately 90% of districts nationwide.

This initiative was implemented at a time aligned with the government's review of the Sector Investment Plan, providing real-time, credible data that made the national plan more realistic and evidence-based.

With accurate unit cost data from the DIPs, the MWE can now present stronger, more realistic budget justifications.

The availability of credible, district-level data has led to increased funding, including UNICEF support for WASH services in Karamoja, enabling a more region-focused strategy.

Technocrats now have the data needed to support planning and decision-making, which has helped unlock additional financing for underserved regions.

Sector performance reviews have improved significantly; whereas conflicting data previously hindered agreement among districts, the gap is now narrowing with more accurate and harmonized information.

Regional Centers

The DIP concept has been adopted by RWSRCs to develop Regional WASH Investment Plans, supporting their mandate for fundraising, planning, and budgeting.

This has equipped technocrats with the data needed to inform decision-making and has contributed to unlocking additional financing for regional WASH development.

It has also strengthened ownership and accountability around data at both regional and district levels.

District

Districts now have a stronger voice at the national level, which has contributed to increased funding from central government.

With access to reliable data, District Chairpersons and leadership are better positioned to advocate for funding, using unit cost estimates for unserved populations. The DIPs have led to more informed and relevant interventions, aligning development partner support with actual needs on the ground.

As a result of this planning process, WASH Master Plans have emerged at the district level, guiding assessment and prioritization of water resources and other key building blocks. District departments, previously working in silos, are now more coordinated. WASH is increasingly viewed not in isolation, but as a cross-cutting issue spanning departments and impacting communities, organizations, and individuals.

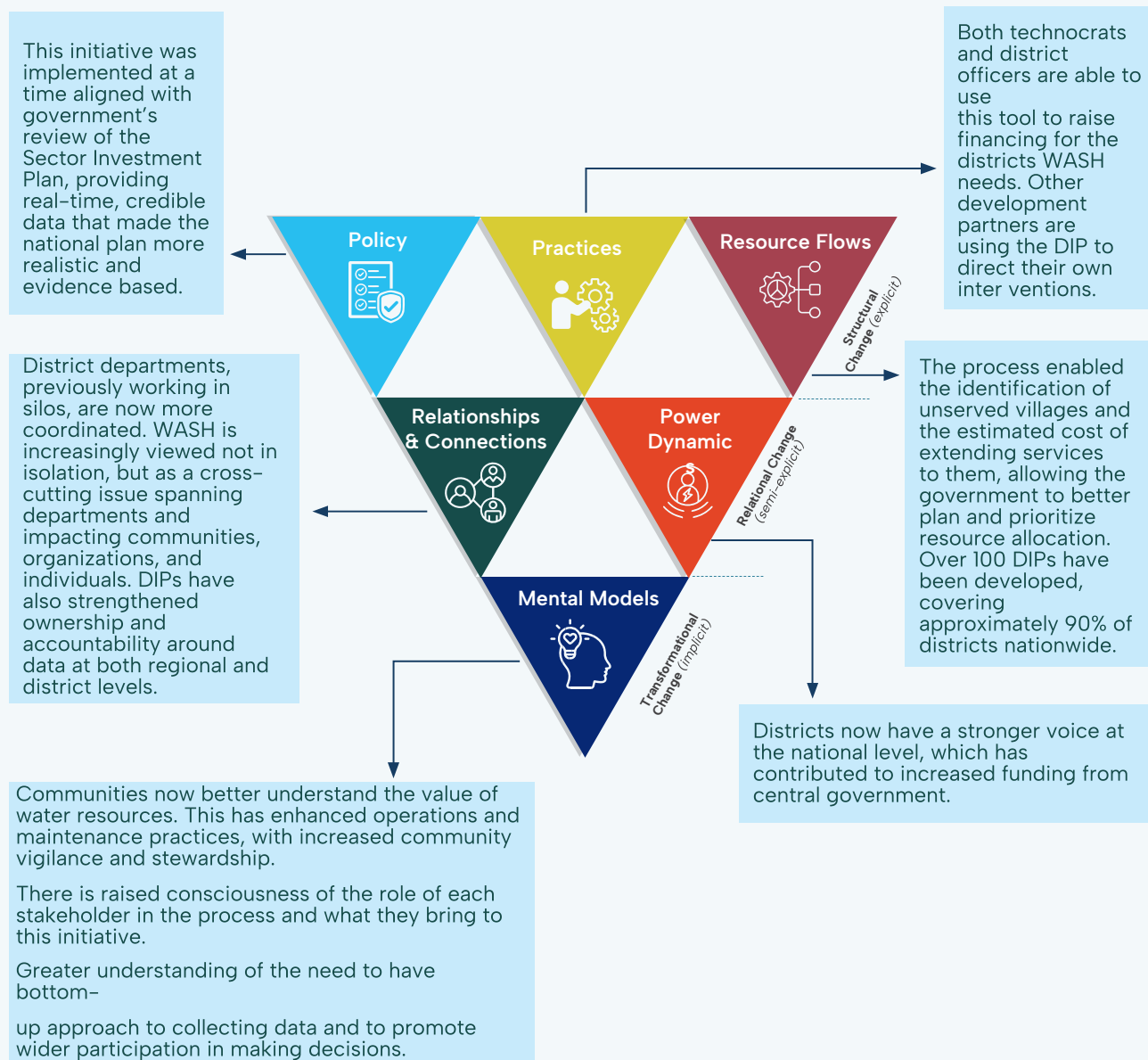
The District Water Office, now strengthened from just one staff member in Kamwenge to five, is better equipped to coordinate activities and monitor which partners are working in the district and what resources are allocated to the WASH sector. A task team of key district officers and development partners now meets quarterly to discuss progress, address gaps, and ensure continued collaboration and impact.

Communities now better understand the value of water resources. This has enhanced operations and maintenance practices, with increased community vigilance and stewardship. The improvements arising from the investment planning process have also contributed to increased retention of girls in school, as WASH services, particularly around menstrual hygiene management, have improved.

Institutional

Water For People has been approached by other non-profit organizations to learn more about the process and they are using it now (one non-profit was able to secure funds for WASH facilities in schools based on the data in the district's investment plan). The Water Officers of the districts know about Water For People's work and this has built credibility.

The Six Conditions of System Change



They have really taught us to think big, plan together — the mission of this organization is inclusiveness. Water For People is known in the districts they work in: not like donors or non-profits who come and go. They work side by side with everyone. The confidence government has in Water For People is that we know we are solving the problem together, we work on each part together and they have great technical expertise that can support and guide us.

Engineer Joseph Oriono Eyatu, Commissioner of Rural Water Supply and Sanitation, Ministry of Water and Environment, Uganda



INSIGHTS



- What makes this model unique is the involvement of the different layers of stakeholders from those that gathered data at the village level to the national officers at the Ministry. Due to this, the data is trusted to have a high level of accuracy.
- When planning around the changing needs of the people in the communities, key indicators needed to be viewed from a district level, not the national level. For example, the population growth rate which would indicate movement in the water access need should not be based on the average national growth but rather the specific rate within the district.

LESSONS



- Planning is critical: it must be detailed and the involvement from every role-player is required.
- It is vital to not succumb to time pressures but to allocate enough time to gather real time data.
- This work is not just about the structure but comes down to when you create capacity within individuals and those individuals leave the organizations, then you have to recruit and retrain others. The work is not over when the first group of people are trained.
- A common resource mobilization strategy is needed so all the role players are aligned.

OPPORTUNITIES



- Take the climate resilience to the next level within the master plan and investment planning process.
- Conduct a risk assessment for the district Spearhead an assessment at the catchment level.
- To disseminate the information below district level (e.g. to institutions)

CHALLENGES



- Data: There were various sources of data, so harmonizing the outputs from each became difficult.
- Transparency of financial information: The project team needed to work with different partners to understand the financing available within the sector. Some partners were hesitant to declare their resources.
- Forecasting: it was difficult to forecast what financial resources would be available for the implementation of the projects in the plan; assumptions based on multi-year grants would need to be revised based on uncertainty on the amount which made forecasting difficult.



Building an Efficient and Sustainable Sanitation Market System

Introduction

Water and sanitation access are fundamental human rights for every person.

The World Health Organization and UNICEF estimate that around 411 million people in Africa lack basic water services, 779 million people lack access to basic sanitation, and 839 million lack basic hygiene.

As a result; the outcomes from this are devastating: diarrhoea, caused by the lack of proper sanitation and hygiene, kills 33 children every day.

In Uganda, diarrhoea, caused by the lack of proper sanitation and hygiene, kills 33 children every day.

The other risks are as damaging. Diarrhoea also contributes to stunting, affecting children's cognitive development. The lack of access to proper sanitation facilities also leads to high absenteeism and dropouts, especially for girls.

Even where pit latrines are available in rural areas, the manual system to remove the sludge is ineffective and costly due to the time taken. Water For People's development of the gulper technology and building of a sanitation market system has helped to create livelihoods for entrepreneurs and a sustainable sanitation service for the community.

Although we take it for granted, sanitation is a physical measure that has probably done more to increase human life span than any kind of drug or surgery.



Background and Context

In 2008, Water For People received a grant from the Gates Foundation to develop market systems for sanitation. Named the “Reinventing the Toilet” programme. It was the catalyst to Water For People developing the gulper technology and business model. Supported by the Water Research Commission in South Africa, Water For People had a program with Makerere University on sanitation technologies. This enabled the rise of a few successful technologies for sludge management. Entrepreneurs worked with the students to look at the technology, content of sludge, treatment options and the market in place. They carried out research and testing of the market for the sanitation technologies being developed such as decentralised treatment plans.

Based on the findings, the group started advancing a few of them that seemed to be viable by designing businesses around them. Water For People provided technical support and helped guide the business development ideas. The second allocation of funding from the Gates Foundation was to translate the ideas into viable businesses based on the research. The robust process of theory and practice informed the training and the business model, ensuring that both were based on practical needs and conditions on the ground. One of the entrepreneurs who benefited from this market being created and formalised, is Semukoteko Abubaker, the CEO and Founder of Brilliant Sanitation Uganda Ltd. based in Kampala. Semukoteko grew up in Kasubi, one of the slum areas where over 20 households shared one toilet. When he was in senior year of school, the toilet was full as the school did



not have a service provider to clean it. The normal trucks could not access it but guplers had not been developed as yet. As he came from a humble background, university was not an option but after a few years of loading goods on pickups and learning how to drive, he heard about this opportunity to be trained on how to be a gulper entrepreneur and he applied. Over time, having been trained in technical and business skills by Water For People, he decided to start his own business. His initial contract was cleaning in a high-use market in Kampala which allowed him to earn the money to increase his equipment. He recalled that in his childhood, such a technology would have been critical to keeping young people in school. Semukoteko realised the market potential of the gulper technology in the slum areas and it was the key driver behind him growing his business. The stories of Semukoteko and many like him demonstrate how this initiative has strengthened the Ugandan sanitation system.

The Gates Foundation grant enabled the rise of a few successful technologies for sludge management. Entrepreneurs worked with the students to look at the technology, content of sludge, treatment options and the market in place.

The Systemic Challenge



In Uganda, the level of safely managed sanitation, especially in rural areas, is low. Eight out of ten people do not have a decent toilet; most people in rural areas use pit latrines.

As a pit latrine becomes full, it gets more challenging to remove the sludge and the risk of diseases being spread increases. Previously, a jerry can or bucket would be used to scoop the waste into a drum or for the sludge to be buried. Time was being wasted and it was unsafe due to the direct contact with the sludge. It was not authorised and there were no safety regulations attached to this method of waste management.

While there is a high demand for pit emptying and sludge management services, on the supply side, there is a lack of trained people to remove the waste. At the same time, the service of pit emptying was not formalised or regulated, leading to gaps in service provision and limited support for the pit emptiers. Due to the informality of this sector, the service providers were unable to access capacity building, financing or support to scale their work.

In addition, the current sludge management option of using trucks for removal was not serving the users –it was expensive and still the manual method would be insufficient for the removal of all the waste.

The sanitation market system needed formalization to serve the customer, entrepreneur and all other ecosystem stakeholders efficiently and sustainably.



Activities

The Water For People business development process had three key stages: the Idea Tank, which focused on the innovation; the Market Tank, which developed the market and trained the entrepreneurs on how to commercialize the idea; and the Scale Tank, which looked at growth.

The intervention was practical and holistic. There were three key elements:

Training: The training made use of real situations, information and resources to ensure that the lessons were easily understood and applicable. Technical training was imparted on the gulper technology and additional equipment that would be used.

Legalization: Previously, pit emptying was done illegally in informal settlements. Now, Water For People worked with the authorities to create an enabling framework for licenses and support.

Market/Ecosystem Support: This was supplemented by ensuring that the market was ready to receive the services of the entrepreneurs by generating demand. The city council contributed by providing incentives to households that if they empty once, the council would provide a matching financial support for the second requirement. Water For People looked at each sanitation business separately to understand their specific needs. An association was created to support this new industry in the form of mentorship, training, and a community.

Water For People undertook engagements with banks and microfinance institutions to help them understand how they could support the sanitation businesses. The organization helped the banks with feasibility assessments that would provide data to encourage them to finance the entities. Training was provided for the loan officers to enable them to be more sensitive and aware of what they should be examining in loan applications, and how to assess these businesses against others



The sanitation blueprint that was followed:

- **1st component:** Focus on the supply side. Working with developing the market system and service providers, ensure that the entrepreneurs are capacitated and have the correct technology.
- **2nd component:** Work on the enabling ecosystem. Ensure that the regulatory and legal frameworks are in place and people can access the support they need. As this becomes a formalized sector, the service providers will be better monitored, regulated and supported.
- **Additionally,** the work in the ecosystem enabled deeper thinking on client servicing, standardizing the quality of work, and price control.
- **3rd component:** Build a financing pipeline. Water For People began the initiative by covering the costs businesses needed. However, as the training continued, the entrepreneurs were taught to look at their growth strategies and determine what capital and partnerships they needed for this to be realized

Project Partners



GIZ and the Gates Foundation provided funding to Water For People to conduct market research and support the business development of specific technologies. The sanitation entrepreneur is at the heart of this system – there are currently 32 businesses in Kampala operating profitably.

The Gulpers Association of Uganda was instrumental in providing a formal body to support entrepreneurs using semi-mechanized gulper equipment to pump and empty pit latrines. They currently have over 300 members and provide training, mentorship, and other forms of support, such as providing personal protective equipment.

The Kampala City Council developed a permit system that allowed the sanitation entrepreneurs to operate in the city. They were interested in this option as the previous sludge management options were unauthorized and it was difficult to regulate

and keep track of activities, or mediate between client complaints and the service providers' needs. Now, they have given the entrepreneurs and their employees vaccinations and provided a dumping bay for use.

Financing institutions, such as banks and microfinance providers, were engaged to learn how to work with this specific group of entrepreneurs and assist them in growing.

National Water & Sewerage Corporation – this is the utility responsible for sludge treatment.

WaterAid – worked with city authorities to subsidize households for their emptying services and to stimulate demand on the demand side of the market.

Water For People project-managed this initiative, brought the partners on board, did the business development training, and enabled market access through stakeholder engagement at various levels.

It is good to be able to help people have a clean environment and then still leave the place with some money. This work can help prevent a cholera outbreak – I love it so much to improve other people's lives. The money comes second. Water For People is the reason we are able to help people.

Richard Mutabazi, KCCA



Outcomes & Impact

National

The systemic approach of this initiative included identifying the entrepreneurs, training and supporting them with startup capital, helping to create an enabling environment that formalized the sector through the city council, developing the financing mechanisms through the banks now all of this operates without Water For People, and is a model for replication through the country.

The supply chain was developed such that there are fabricators in the market who can develop the equipment and spare parts based on the local context and they are available in the same city as opposed to importing the parts.

An association has been created that brings the entrepreneurs together and provides mentorship and all relevant information for new startup entrepreneurs. They manage and monitor the industry and ensure professional practice.

UNICEF has brought funding for schools based on this work.

Previously, people would dig holes to put the sludge in and could not use boreholes. There would be an outbreak of diseases if this were not done hygienically. During the rainy season, the sludge is opened to run with the running water, bringing the contaminated water back in the form of flooding and causing a cholera outbreak. Now, the cases are not there because the pits are being emptied properly.

City Council

There are now licences for this type of entrepreneur from the city authorities,

they get permits and continue to get additional training.

This means that the way they are viewed, supported and regulated is as a respected and credible profession. This followed extensive engagement with the city authorities to support them to own the process.

Sanitation Entrepreneurs

32 businesses in Kampala that are operating and profitable.

The businesses have grown to a point where Water For People is no longer needed. Second- and third-generation entrepreneurs are created: employees are attracted to the business, trained within it, and then start their own businesses, or take over an existing business if the original entrepreneur gets tired of running it.

Due to the aggressive, growth-focused strategies employed by Ugandan entrepreneurs, their businesses have expanded rapidly in both scale and speed. By prioritizing the purchase of essential transport infrastructure, they ensured a clear path for expansion, resulting in significantly higher enterprise growth.

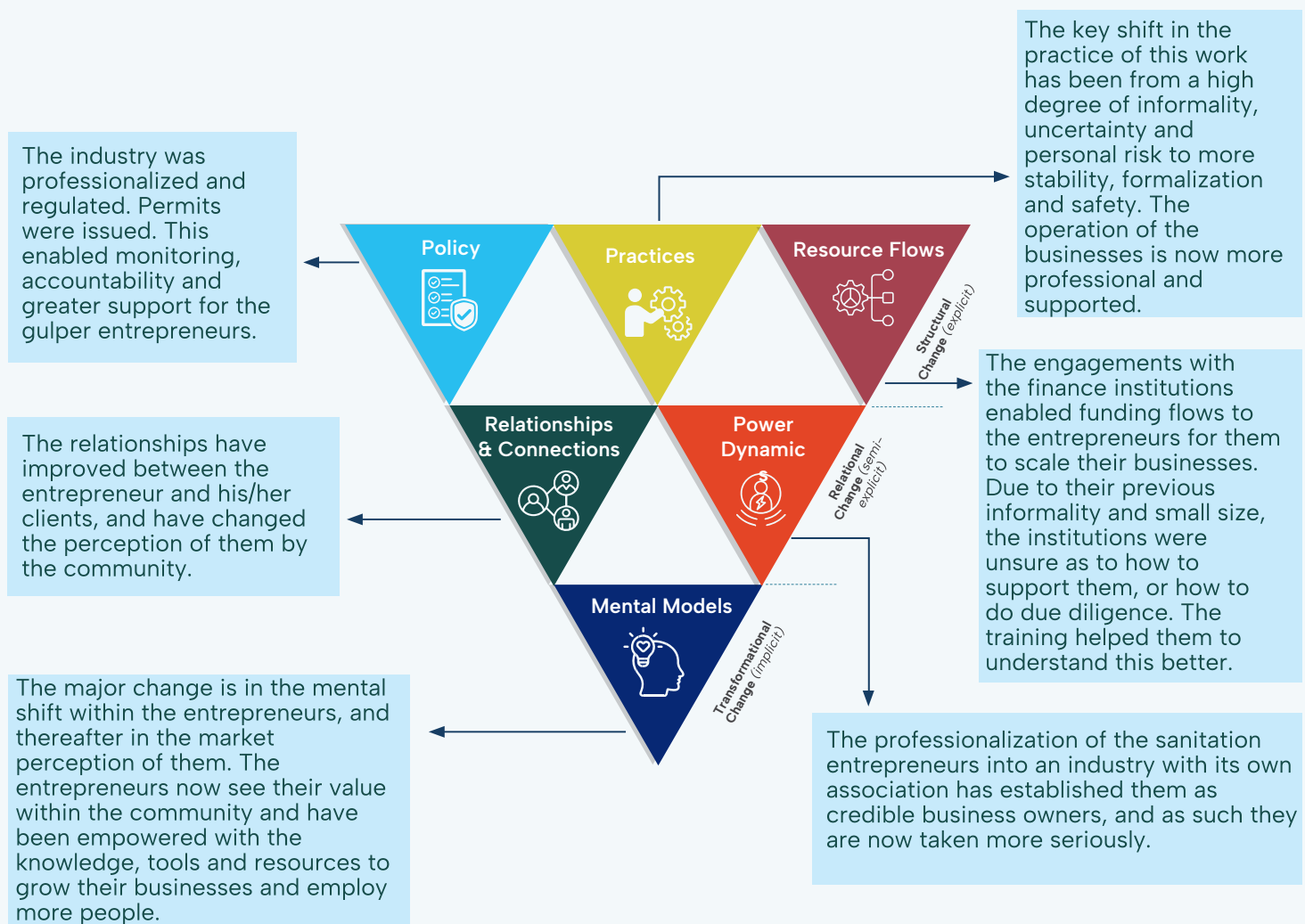
The entrepreneurs can go into the bank, present their books, and get financing (previously, they needed a letter of recommendation from Water For People).

The businesses are also seeing growth opportunities in other cities –they have reached out to city authorities and set up offices. They are becoming aspirational for other businesses

I am now making a significant income, I bought four trucks. I married and bought land to build my house. My children go to a nice school and I even pay for other children to go to school. I have offices in three places and employ 35 people, mostly youth who were unemployed before. I believe in serving the under-served. Every year I ask my employees 'what have you managed to improve in your life'. If nothing, I tell them we should not be working together. Because if the workers are not growing, what does it mean for the business?

Semu Abubaker, Brilliant Sanitation

The Six Conditions of System Change



Source: John Kania, Mark Kramer & Peter Senge, "The Water of Systems Change," FSG.
https://www.fsg.org/publications/water_of_systems_change

I feel happy and I always talk about my job. I am proud. Some people used to talk about me cleaning up sludge. But now I am employing six people, and I am paying for my children's school fees with the money from this business. My two daughters work with me during the holidays.

Edith Nassanga, Sanitation entrepreneur

All this that I have –the trucks, the residence, everything, if it wasn't for Water For People, I would not have had anything. From the start, it was Water For People helping me. If they didn't support me and empower me, I would have nothing. Now the leaders of an African-level association have confidence in me because of what I received.

Semukoteko Abubaker, Brilliant Sanitation



Challenges & Response

- There is only one dumping bay in Kampala – there are many gulpers and much traffic so this causes delays – this is being reviewed for a potential second bay.
- There is also a high cost for use of the dumping bay.



Lessons

- It is critical to have business and entrepreneurship development in addition to technical and practical training.
- It is important to look at businesses and their needs on an individual basis to ensure that the services being provided to them are relevant and practical.



Insights

- The game changer was engaging with city authorities and financing institutions.
- The scale of what entrepreneurs were doing – they were more aggressive on their growth, purchasing of the transport means, equipment, etc. and hence, there was greater growth of the entrepreneurs in Uganda than elsewhere.



Opportunities

- This is now being implemented in Malawi and there is an opportunity to take this technology and approach into other countries in the region too.
- The potential for businesses is to scale in size to meet the demand or to move across cities, and many entrepreneurs have already begun to explore this option.

