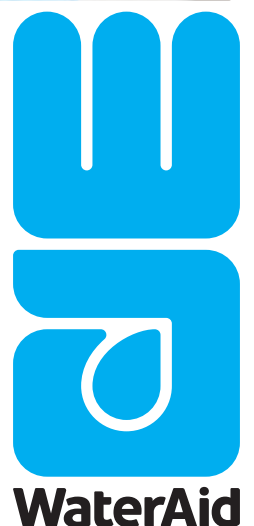


WaterAid Rwanda Country Programme Strategy 2023–2028



WaterAid/Bernard Abu. Mutijima

Catalysing change for collective action towards a healthy and dignified life, through sustainable and gender-responsive water, sanitation and hygiene for all Rwandans.



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● Children participating in Run for Water (3km) sponsored by WaterAid Rwanda during 20km de Bugesera 2022, Nyamata Sector, Bugesera district, Rwanda.

Abbreviations and acronyms

CSO	Civil Society Organisation	JADF	Joint Action Development Forum
CP	Country Programme	LCC	Life Cycle Costing
DWA	District Wide Approach	MHM	Menstrual Hygiene Management
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	NISR	National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda
GoR	Government of Rwanda	NST1	National Strategy for Transformation 1
HAI	Healthcare Associated Infection	NTD	Neglected Tropical Disease
HCF	Healthcare Facility	RDHS	Rwanda Demographic Health Survey
HMIS	Health Management Information System	SACCO	Saving and Credit Cooperative
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
IPC	Infection Prevention and Control	WA	WaterAid
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation	WARw	WaterAid Rwanda
		WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene

● Front cover: Ishimwe, of Ecole Primaire Sumba, washing hands, at public handwashing at Gasaka bus park, Rwanda. October 2020.

Executive summary

The WaterAid Rwanda (WARw) Country Programme Strategy (2023–2028) reflects its ambition, in alignment with the WaterAid (WA) Global Strategy, to meaningfully contribute to ending the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) crisis for everyone, everywhere by 2032.

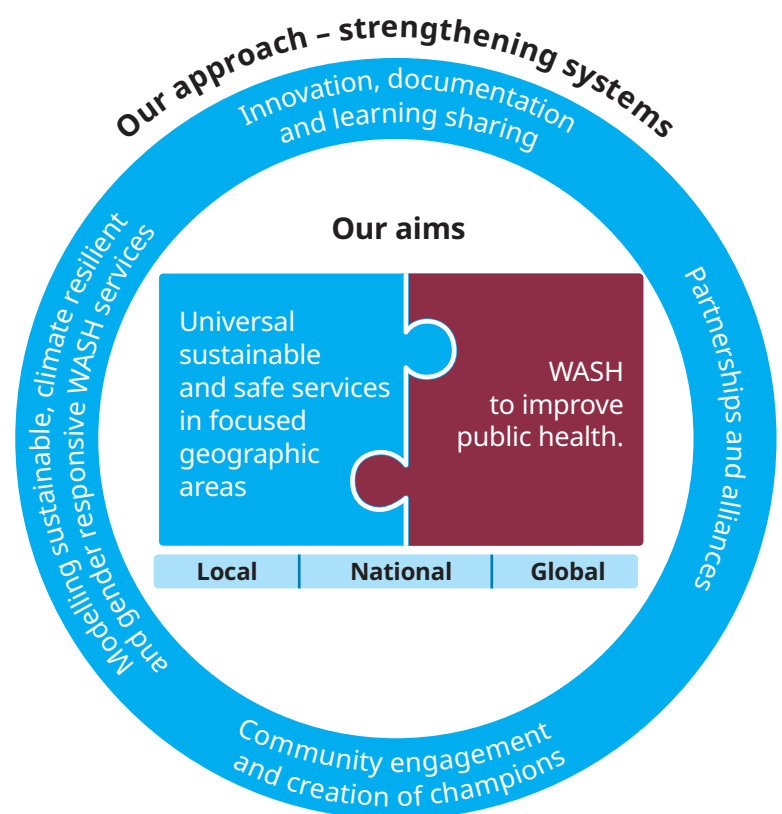
Rwanda offers a conducive political and operating environment for this and has set ambitious targets for access to WASH for all residents by 2030. However, access to basic water and sanitation services remains at 55% and 61% respectively; only 12% of households have fixed places for handwashing and only 32% of these have water and soap available. There is evidence of a lack of access to suitable sanitation for those with limited mobility and for menstruating women and girls in 94% of healthcare facilities and only 73% offer basic water services.

Barriers to WASH still exist, mainly through unclear institutional arrangements, lack of coordination within and between sectors, a focus on WASH coverage that does not guarantee sustainable services, limited financial resources, lack of reliable data to inform decision-making, and inadequate technical capacity, particularly at subnational level. The impacts of climate change and disasters (floods, droughts and landslides) continue to negatively affect WASH infrastructures and, consequently, access to WASH services by vulnerable communities.

This strategy builds on WaterAid’s experience over twelve years in the country, working with the Government of Rwanda and other actors on WASH targets. Among other achievements, WARw has supported the implementation of the District Wide Approach, now adopted in all 27 rural districts, the integration of WASH in education through comprehensive school-WASH projects, the long-term and community-wide hygiene behaviour change programming, and the development and review of key WASH policies and systems.

The strategy entails two complementary programmes in line with WA global aims. The first focuses on achieving universal, sustainable and safe access in specific geographic areas to influence wider change, whilst the second focuses on the prioritisation and integration of WASH across the health sector to improve public health in Rwanda.

Our overarching approach will remain “systems strengthening”. From the community to the national level, WARw will continue to demonstrate sustainable, climate-resilient and gender-responsive WASH services while documenting and sharing learning. We will build meaningful partnerships and alliances, engage communities, and create WASH champions with an emphasis on women, youth and persons with disability. The infographic below is a visual representation of how WARw will facilitate change in WASH outcomes.





WaterAid/James Kiyimba

Introduction

WaterAid Rwanda (WARw) shares the same vision and mission of WaterAid Global – a vision of a world where everyone, everywhere has sustainable and safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and a mission to transform lives by improving access to safe WASH in the world's poorest communities. We are guided by our values of respect, collaboration, accountability, innovation, courage and integrity, and stand against all forms of discrimination, injustice and inequality.

This five-year strategy reflects the contribution of WARw to the 10-year global strategy of WaterAid (2022–2032) of ending the water, sanitation and hygiene crisis together for everyone, everywhere. We treat everyone with dignity and respect and advocate the rights and contributions of all to achieve a fairer world. We act with honesty and conviction, and our actions are consistent with openness, equality and human rights.

WaterAid has been working in Rwanda since 2010. The first five years to 2015 were mainly a period of 'discovery' and organisation, focusing on testing technologies and approaches and building relationships for successful WASH delivery. In 2016, WARw became a fully-fledged country programme and launched its first five-year strategy for the period 2016 to 2021. This strategy comprised of three key strategic and programmatic priorities: sustainable WASH services, influencing, and institutional capacity development. Later, a fourth programme was added in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

● Josiane pumping and Pauline, getting a basin full of water from an underground rainwater harvesting tank, Groupe Scolaire Rukesera, Rwanda. October 2019.

This new strategy is a springboard from the previous successes and learnings of WARw, however, the context within which WaterAid operates has shifted profoundly in the last seven years. WaterAid's work has had to adapt and will continue to evolve based on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, the heightened impact of climate change, shifts in the donor landscape, rapid urbanisation, an increased demand for better services, the need for gender equality in WASH governance and equitable access to WASH services and behaviour change. These changes necessitate WaterAid to take a critical look at its role and niche within the sector, and how its strategy can foster universal access to WASH.

This strategy represents WARw's contributions to WaterAid's global aims and the plans of the Government of Rwanda (GoR) to achieve universal access to WASH and to improve public health. WARw has the necessary experience, expertise, partnerships, passion and commitment to make clean water, toilets and hygiene a normal part of daily life for all Rwandans. Through collective action that brings together the government, partners and communities, WARw will catalyse change for a healthy and dignified life for all Rwandans through permanent access to inclusive and gender-responsive WASH.



● Students at Groupe scolaire Rutoma drinking filtrated water from rain water harvesting technologies, Musha sector, Rwanda, March 2021.



Situation

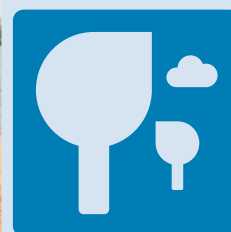
Rwanda is a hilly, landlocked but fertile country of 26,340 sq. km. It has the highest population density in Africa with 456 inhabitants per sq.km. The country borders the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Tanzania, Uganda and Burundi. Its population of approximately 13 million can be summarised as “young and rural” with 52% under 20 years of age.

The fertility rate is currently 4.1 whilst the annual population growth rate is 2.6%. Rural residents account for 84% of the total population. Even though the proportion of those living in urban areas is still low (16%), the annual rate of urbanisation is 3.07%, and population projections indicate that 35% of Rwandans will live in urban areas by 2024. This is expected to more than double to 17.6 million by 2035, and again to 22.1 million people by 2050.

The country has a decentralised system consisting of two layers of government (national and district) and six administrative complementary entities. It is structured into four provinces and the City of Kigali, then divided into 30 districts and 416 sectors. Additionally, the

sectors contain 2,148 cells that are divided into 14,837 villages. Every level of these subdivisions has leaders with defined roles. Accordingly, this structure also facilitates development and clear roles relating to WASH. Rwanda has guarded its political stability since the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi and is often defined as the “Singapore of Africa” due to quick development achievements, cleanliness and its reputation for proactively promoting pro-poor and gender-responsive policies. It remains among the least corrupt countries in the region. Its remarkable political will and accountable governance is evidenced by the ambitious targets made in its Vision 2020, the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1) (2017–2024), its commitment to the SDGs, and Vision 2050.

Rwanda is the world’s leading country for female representation in parliament, standing at 61.3% in the Chamber of Deputies, 36% in the Senate, and 55% in the Cabinet. This has shown Rwanda to be a politically influential country at regional and continental levels despite its small size. The average increase in gross domestic product (GDP) over the last 15 years has been seven



● Uwimana Velene, loading her bicycle after collecting water from Lake Kidogo, Groupe Scolaire St. Albert Rilima Catholique, Bugesera District, Rwanda. October 2018.

percent whilst the GDP per capita is \$797 United States Dollars (USD). This is steadily rising, and average annual GDP growth is forecast at 6.8% from 2022 to 2025.¹ Rwanda is committed to becoming a green economy by 2030; its Vision 2050 reflects its aspirations to become an upper-middle-income country by 2035 and a high-income country by 2050. The heart of its economic growth revolves around efficient and accountable institutions, gender equality and women's empowerment, youth, information, communication and technology (ICT), health, education, agriculture, tourism, environment, energy, urban settlement, private sector and human capital development, and universal access to amenities, safety and security.

According to the 2019/2020 Rwanda Demographic and Health Survey (RDHS), 55% of the population has basic drinking water services, a percentage that increases with the wealth quintile, from the lowest at 38% to 85% for the highest. Eleven percent of urban households and 41% of rural households report traveling more than 30 minutes (round trip) to obtain drinking water. For sanitation, 61% of the total population has basic services (51% in urban compared to 63% in rural) whilst 3% of the population engages in open defecation.

According to RDHS, only 12% of the population has a fixed place for handwashing whereas 32% of them have soap or other cleansing agent available.² In terms of WASH integration into public health in Rwanda, 73% of HCFs have access to basic water services and 100% have a sanitation facility of some sort. However, only six percent of existing sanitation facilities conform to menstrual hygiene management (MHM) requirements and the standards needed for persons with limited mobility.³

This poor state of WASH can be associated with 80% of Rwanda's disease burden that is caused by poor personal, domestic and community hygiene practices and 90% of HCF consultations

for diseases preventable by instituting simple hygienic principles and practices. Due to lack of inclusive WASH in communities and institutions like HCFs and schools, preventable diseases such as diarrhoea, typhoid and NTDs including soil-transmitted helminths, remain leading causes of mortality and morbidity in Rwanda. Under these conditions, the dignity and comfort of people, especially those living with disability, and women and girls are compromised as their access to health and education services is difficult or even impossible.⁴

The main barriers to the WASH sector in Rwanda include limited financing and investment in sustainable services and behaviour in spite of strong political will and government ambitions. The story on the prioritisation of WASH in Rwanda is mixed. On the one hand, sanitation and hygiene have attracted political attention since they are seen to be issues of human security countrywide. However, political commitment is yet to match the budget allocated to WASH since it is insufficient to achieve the WASH targets set. If basic universal coverage is to be achieved, financial resources will have to increase by 250% between 2023 and 2030. If safely managed services are to be achieved, available resources need to be increased by more than eight times.⁵

The WASH sector is predominantly financed by external resources, which poses a challenge to financial sustainability if domestic resources are not strategically mobilised.⁶ Sanitation and hygiene continue to be given less priority within the WASH sector as well as the health sector, and more attention is directed to urban areas, disadvantaging rural populations. For instance, the share of rural budget allocations accounted for 36.1% of the WASH budget in 2021/2022.⁶ In addition, there is limited investment in the operations and maintenance of WASH infrastructures, which threatens the sustainability and equity of WASH service availability.

1. Raga S., 2022. *Rwanda: Macroeconomic and Trade Profile. Opportunities and Challenges towards implementation of the AfCFTA*.

2. NISR, M.I., *Rwanda Demographic and Health Survey 2019-20: Final Report*. 2021, NISR and ICF: Kigali, Rwanda, and Rockville, Maryland, USA.

3. WHO, 2020. *Global progress report on water, sanitation and hygiene in health care facilities: fundamentals first*. Geneva: World Health Organization. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

4. WHO, 2018. *Country Cooperation Strategy at a Glance: Rwanda May 2018*.

5. José, F., 2019. *Finance Assessment of the WASH sector in Rwanda*. IRC, Water for People and WaterAid.

6. UNICEF, 2021. *WASH Budget Brief: Investing in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for Child Welfare in Rwanda 2021/2022*. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Rwanda: Kigali.

Limited capacity regarding skills and technical expertise, lack of equipment and inadequate manpower are recognised human resource capacity gaps in areas of planning, operations and maintenance, especially for water supply systems and sanitation. They remain critical areas for improvement to build a foundation for sustainable WASH in Rwanda.⁷ Institutional arrangements for WASH governance are unclear with many institutions having overlapping mandates. Given that WASH falls within the responsibilities of several institutions and ministries, cross-sectoral coordination needs continuous improvement. In fact, the lack of clarity around roles, responsibilities and accountabilities often leads to the duplication of functions and resources, and a lack of coherence in interventions.⁸

Climate variability and change increase the vulnerability of WASH infrastructures in Rwanda. There are recurring landslides in many parts of the country, as a result of the steepness of the terrain and intense rainfall leading to erosion, storms and flooding. These are hazards expected to continue to manifest throughout this strategy and beyond as the projection on precipitation indicates an increase of 5 to 10 percent by 2030.⁹ Limited reliable WASH data to inform decision-making remains a challenge in Rwanda. We recognise and commend the efforts made by the government and partners in the past five years to progress the national WASH Management Information System (MIS). However, the process of ensuring it is fully functional through regular updating, analysis and use of data is still weak and it is still difficult to track progress. For example, disparities exist between WASH MIS data and the official data from the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR) that may challenge planning and advocacy efforts around WASH.

The realisation of a shared goal and desire for change to end the WASH crisis in Rwanda and beyond requires significant shifts in key WASH building blocks, particularly in relation to institutional arrangements, WASH financing, gender equality and social inclusion.

● **Uwimana Velene, after school, collecting water from Lake Kidogo to take home. There are fears of crocodiles in nearby bushes, Groupe Scolaire St. Albert Rilima Catholique, Bugesera District, Rwanda. October 2018.**



WaterAid/James Kiyimba

7. MININFRA, 2020. *Guidance for Implementing the Full Life Cycle WASH Plan in Rwanda through District-Wide Approach 2020*, Republic of Rwanda: Kigali.

8. Khan, M., 2010. *Political settlements, and the governance of growth-enhancing institutions*.

9. GOR, 2020. *Updated Rwanda's Nationally Determined Contribution*. Ministry of Environment: Kigali.

Our role

Over the past 12 years, WARw has played a considerable role in the WASH sector providing support for policy and capacity development as well as WASH service delivery. During the period, WARw intervened in 537 schools, 57 HCFs and 4,345 villages, reaching 283,374 people with clean water, 223,858 with sanitation and 1,915,715 with hygiene.

WARw has gained a good understanding of and experience in the WASH sector and the overall context of Rwanda. The evaluation of the first country programme (CP) strategy, which ended in 2021, concluded that “WaterAid has built solid relationships within and beyond the WASH sector in Rwanda and has profiled itself as a well-respected, credible, reliable, competent, well-organized, and managed organization”.

The uniqueness of WARw can be attributed to its exceptional role in piloting the District Wide Approach (DWA) and integrated school WASH that incorporates MHM and hygiene behaviour change programmes. WARw was also notable in its agility in contributing to health emergency preparedness and responses, especially through COVID-19 related mass hygiene campaigns and handwashing facilities in public places and HCFs.

The innovative technologies in rainwater harvesting and treatment up to drinkable water in schools is a best practice that government and other players can adopt and scale up. The CP started a few, small-scale but strategic engagements with the private sector. It worked with local private operators in rural water services, the Saving and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOs) for household WASH financing, and rural women’s cooperatives in the production of reusable sanitary pads.

● **Women members of community hygiene club learning how to make toilet slab, Bugesera District, Rweru Sector, Kabeza Village, Rwanda. June 2018.**





Importantly, the DWA positions the district as an entry point into the sustainable management of WASH services, in terms of planning and budgeting, procurement and regulation of and support to other entities. WARw supported the GoR in pioneering this approach, starting with the operational districts that devised their costed WASH investment plans. The practice was later replicated in all rural districts in Rwanda. We consider this a prerequisite and solid foundation for work on universal access over the next five years.

Going forward, WARw will remain **a convener**, giving prominence to **inspiring and compelling** others to play their part in collectively ending the WASH crisis. This underlies WaterAid's long-standing belief in **partnership and collaboration** and the conviction that better and accelerated outcomes can only be achieved through collective efforts. To this end, WARw will continue to demonstrate and push the adoption of the **DWA** as it has proven to be the right platform for stakeholder engagement, joint planning and implementation. The full Life Cycle Costing (LCC) and district WASH investment plans are important tools for both human and financial resources for the sustainability of WASH projects and to bridge the skills at subnational level. In the next five years, WARw will be known for demonstrating innovative WASH approaches, integrated programming, and collaboration as tools to influence and advocate for increased commitment and investment in WASH, towards sustainable universal access.

Through these multi-layered partnerships, capacity development and ownership, we will ensure that our initiatives are sustained and inspire further actions. WARw will work with government and influential development partners to enhance clear institutional arrangement, strong cross-sectoral coordination and capacity development of all actors. We will focus on government institutions with overlapping WASH responsibilities, development partners, the private sector, youth, persons with disability,

● **Left: Girls students with reusable sanitary pads at Groupe Scolaire Rugogwe, Rugogwe Village, Rwanda. January 2023.**

● **Above: Divine N, and Divine M, students and members of the School Hygiene Club, standing in front of the newly constructed MHM room, G.S Musange, Rwanda. June 2022.**



and women's rights organisations. WARw will continue to adapt its ways of working and increase competencies to overcome the challenges identified e.g., limited financial resources to demonstrate even large-scale projects. We will intentionally promote the integration of WASH into other sectors, especially health, education and climate change, leveraging on their known importance and financing to reinforce WASH towards sustainable development. We will engage and raise the capacity of the private sector and business community on sustainable WASH financing.

We will promote indigenous knowledge, especially based on women's experiences, to address WASH challenges, use and community-led initiatives for sustainability, participation and improved community ownership.

We will capitalise on the state of Rwanda leading the world with a majority of women in the cabinet and parliament, and its constitutional provision of having 30% women's representation in decision-making positions to promote the empowerment and participation in WASH leadership and business of women and girls to increase WASH access and gender responsiveness.

● Kirehe district Mayor and WaterAid team learning water pipe connection technics on the field, Kirehe District, Nyamugali Sector, Rwanda, Rusumo Village. October 2022.



In terms of policies, WARw will shift its efforts away from policy development and review to strengthening the monitoring of policy implementation, with special attention to climate resilience, gender responsiveness and inclusiveness. Other major shifts will be to empower youth for improved participation and championship of the WASH sector. We will also provide them with a conducive environment and options for capacity development such as internships, research and knowledge sharing opportunities.

In brief, we will take the DWA and convenor role with us. We will champion and strengthen **cross-sectoral collaboration and coordination** for collective efforts to accelerate universal access to sustainable, safe, inclusive and gender responsive WASH services and behaviours. We will provide **evidence** on the value of WASH to stakeholders. We will strengthen **partnerships** with critical public institutions, civil society organisations (CSOs), the private sector and development partners.

We will provide technical assistance while advocating for adequate quality and quantity of financing for WASH. We will prioritise the use of indigenous knowledge for **empowerment and engagement** of rights holders and users with an emphasis on young people, women and girls and persons living with disability to sustain and scale up **innovative, inclusive and gender-responsive WASH models**.

Learning from our experience in the effective response to COVID-19 and considering the vulnerability of Rwanda to climate change induced disasters, the CP will remain open to engaging in emergency response when needed. We will be guided by WaterAid's humanitarian policy framework and driven by relationships with governments and partners. The priority, length of commitment and level of effort in response to public health emergencies such as diseases outbreaks, pandemics and disasters will be determined by the level of risk to people's health and the potential to compromise the sustainability of WASH services.

Our aims

Over the next five years, WARw will focus its efforts where we can add more value using the advantage of our position, strength and experience to maximise our contribution to the wider agenda and influence all those who are more broadly involved to realise our shared goal of SDG 6.

The selection of aims was inspired by a thorough analysis of the achievements of WASH implementation in Rwanda over the past 12 years. To address the remaining challenges, it is important to understand people's needs for WASH services and their behaviours, the patterns of disease, and the requirements of the sector. In implementing the DWA, all rural districts in Rwanda have costed WASH investment plans, and our work in schools, HCFs and communities is backed by strong relationships with various partners, communities and supporters.

The aims listed below are motivated by the progress we have made with these partners and supporters to influence policy.

1. To achieve universal, sustainable, safe and inclusive services and behaviours in the focused district to influence wider change.

2. To prioritise WASH across the health sector to improve public health in Rwanda.

These two aims augment each other and, if implemented at the same time in the same area, they can contribute to sustainable outcomes and impact. In fact, sustainable and universal access to WASH raises the quality and safety of healthcare, leading to improved acceptability and use of health services.

Later, this results in greater public health gains including disease prevention, mother and child health, infection prevention and control (IPC), improved hygiene behaviours and lifestyle amongst other benefits.

As HCFs are at the intersection of our two aims, whenever appropriate, the CP will focus its WASH for health interventions in the selected geographic area for universality. Together, these aims have the potential to contribute to public health gains, WASH outcomes, economic development, the dignity of people, and the wider range of aspirations of individuals and Rwandan society.

● **Pacifique, representative of Ishingiro community radio, sharing ideas during programme performance review at Savannah Motel, Nyamata sector, Bugesera district, Rwanda. April 2023.**



WaterAid / Bernard Abu Mutijima



Members of community washing hands, at public handwashing at Gasaka bus park, Gasaka Sector, Nyamagabe district, Rwanda. October 2020.

WaterAid/Bernard Abu. Mutijima

Aim 1: To achieve universal, sustainable and safe WASH services in Bugesera District to influence wider change

Why?

In Rwanda, bridging the gap towards sustainable universal access to WASH services is still significant. Forty-five percent of people do not have access to basic water services, 59% cannot access basic sanitation and 88% do not have access to handwashing facilities with safe water and soap. Despite the GoR's ambitious WASH targets and the political will reflected in policies, strategies, commitments and accountability mechanisms, the achievement and sustainability of WASH sector goals continue to face challenges due to unclear institutional arrangements, weak cross-sectoral coordination, limited financial and human resources, and low capacity in planning, budgeting, implementing and monitoring for WASH projects.

WARw successfully championed the DWA to be included in water and sanitation strategies in Rwanda. The rollout of the DWA with the first costed district WASH investment plan and the introduction of the full LCC method in Bugesera is a foundation to preserve. The successful scale up of the DWA and development of costed WASH investment plans in all other 26 rural districts through collaborative efforts between government, WaterAid and other like-minded

organisations resonate in advance what the aim is for universal access. Bugesera District is gaining more attention as a satellite and airport city in the following ways: the government, private sector and the district are currently engaged in mega development projects including water treatment plants (through the Kigali Bulk Water Supply Project which involves Metito) and an international airport involving Qatar Airways. Influencing through such arrangements is a new avenue to promote universality in the district and proactively raise attention to urban sanitation.

The commitment by the government and development partners to the DWA demonstrates the strong likelihood of universal access to WASH in Rwanda. The political attraction of sanitation and hygiene as human security issues and the existing sense of urgency to realise 100% of water and sanitation access in schools and HCFs by 2024 as per NST 1, are another reason to believe that the demonstration of replicable WASH models for sustainable, universal WASH access would successfully accelerate the pace to realising SDG6.

4.1.2 How?

WARw will concentrate its efforts in Bugesera District, mobilising collective commitment and action with local government, INGOs, CSOs, the private sector and other actors to develop and resource a pipeline of projects that operationalise existing costed WASH investment plans.

WARw will advance the collective demonstration of a proof-of-concept WASH management model, technology and approaches that are easy to replicate beyond Bugesera as opportunities emerge. For this to happen, we will intentionally document and share learnings on successes and failures within Bugesera District and beyond for change at greater scale.

In urban/semi-urban settings, the focus will be on raising the attention of responsible institutions and communities to sanitation, in particular, developing capacity along the whole sanitation service chain, including emptying, transport, treatment and disposal of faecal wastes, as well as stormwater management. DHS 2019/2020 shows lower basic service coverage in urban areas (at 51%) than rural (at 62%). WARw will leverage its convenor role and experience to bring various actors together to make the whole sanitation service chain function. We will strive to integrate the sanitation service chain and delivery as part of the urban development and planning process and support public institutions in creating more conducive environments for the private sector and financial institutions to invest and operate sanitation in the selected area.

WARw will work towards the full empowerment and engagement of communities to gain their informed participation in WASH planning and implementation and strengthen their capacity to demand their rights and hold governments and service providers to account. Community-led WASH initiatives and use of indigenous knowledge will be promoted for sustainability. Areas of special focus will be the engagement of sanitation workers, meeting the WASH needs of women and girls and maximising efforts to fully engage them by working with relevant government institutions and women's rights organisations. WARw will contribute to the capacity development of authorities at different levels, including government, utilities and service providers to manage and lead WASH within wider development.

We will endeavour to raise the capacity and role of the private sector in WASH for sustainable supply chain, technology and financing. Manufacturing, financial institutions and services will receive specific attention. WARw

will work towards collective efforts through partnerships and alliances at all levels of its work, to ensure integration, joint planning and implementation of WASH, documentation, experience sharing and replication of best practices to maximise the impact across Rwanda and beyond.

Outcomes

All efforts will point towards sustainable, universal, gender-responsive WASH in the focused district and beyond.

- WASH is sustainably prioritised in national and local budgets and plans.
- Successful, scalable WASH models and approaches are demonstrated and adopted for replication.
- The community is effectively engaged in WASH and realising their rights to access affordable and sustainable WASH services.

- **Women fetching water at a public water on Gashora Water supply system, Gashora sector, Bugesera District, Rwanda. April 2022.**



Aim 2: To prioritise WASH across the health sector to improve public health

Why?

Health is a priority sector in many countries including Rwanda. Recently, the GoR added another layer of HCF to the existing structure, with “Health Posts” at cell level, an administration entity comprising between three to five villages. It requires significant effort to take healthcare services closer to communities. These facilities serve as models to the populations not only for health but also for hygiene behaviour change. If WASH is properly integrated into HCFs at all levels and in public health programmes, it can accelerate the achievement of universal access to WASH and hygiene behaviour change.

Nevertheless, WASH is also seen as necessary to advance public health in Rwanda. Diseases that would be preventable by instituting simple hygienic principles and practices including diarrhoea, typhoid, cholera outbreaks, and stunting in children under five are still important contributors to mortality and morbidity.

The prevalence of stunting among the under-fives continues to be a great concern to Rwanda’s development progress, whilst diarrhea and other WASH-related diseases remain among the leading causes of mortality and morbidity. Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), of which the majority can be prevented or controlled by providing safe WASH conditions, continue to burden the health system in Rwanda.

Rwanda has been advancing its One Health approach; IPC initiatives and NTD elimination strategies are in place although their effectiveness will always depend on the quality of water, sanitation and hygiene conditions and their functionality within HCFs and communities.

Recent efforts to further decentralise Rwanda’s health system and services to cell level administration, where health posts deliver primary health care including maternity and dental services for second generation health posts, need to go hand in hand with sustainable, safe, inclusive and gender responsive WASH services and behaviours.



● **Bebisie Uwambajyimana, a janitor at Nzangwa Health Centre. Nzangwa, Kintambwe, Rweru, Bugesera, Rwanda. February 2018.**

The development of inclusive policies and strategies to tackle aspects of WASH services and behaviour change in the health sector such as the NST1 targeting of a 100% water and sanitation in HCFs, the IPC policy, One Health policy, the NTD strategic plan, hygiene and environmental health policies, have been prioritised in the last five years; however, in terms of implementation, the pace of their translation into budgets and WASH projects is still low. Twenty-seven percent of HCFs in Rwanda do not have access to basic water services whilst only 94% of sanitation facilities in HCFs meet menstrual hygiene needs and limited mobility requirements.

WASH data are neither tracked nor recorded by the health management information system (HMIS) and the integration of hygiene behaviour change into relevant public health programmes to maximise wider public health gains such as maternal child and adolescent health (MCAH), outbreak response programming, IPC, and community health programming, is still inadequate or completely lacking.

Sustainable, safe, inclusive and gender-responsive WASH services and good hygiene behaviour are essential for disease prevention and control, and for the quality and effectiveness of healthcare; they enhance adherence to healthcare by offering dignity and safety to users, especially women and girls as well as people with disability.

How?

WARw will build on the existing strong and well-established partnership base in the health sector, ranging from the government to academia, development partners, media and civil society, to advance the narrative and embrace the importance and cost benefits of WASH in public health.

In collaboration with the government and research partners, we have already invested in research that will support work on advocacy and policy in the next five years. The areas researched include hand hygiene in HCFs (neonatology department), community hygiene, customer care, IPC in public health facilities, WASH and child health, MHM, cholera and water quality. These research and learning opportunities have also created a critical and enabling momentum, raising the profile of WASH for its integration with other health subsectors and its implementation as an essential component for quality and effective healthcare.

We will enhance the collaboration and coordination of relevant stakeholders for their collective commitment and demonstration of inclusive, gender-responsive and climate-resilient WASH in HCFs; this will improve the quality and effectiveness of healthcare and reduce healthcare-associated infections (HAIs). We will work with health practitioners and professional associations to create new WASH advocates and champions while increasing practices and demand for services.

We will position WASH to be essential for good public health. We will work to strengthen health systems through integrating WASH and hygiene behaviour change with healthcare provision at all levels and prioritise the requirements of women and girls who are the majority of health service users and workers. We will seek to leverage existing health financing to deliver sustainable WASH services and hygiene behaviour.

WARw will intentionally multiply efforts towards prioritisation and integration of hygiene into public health programmes (mainly maternal, child and adolescent health, IPC and community health programmes). In partnership with the government and the Ministry of Health, we will model proof of concept hygiene integration programmes that demonstrate the mutual benefit for both health and behaviour change. These are ready to replicate into wider public health programmes and emergencies in Rwanda. Through documentation and sharing learning, we will influence the scale up of successful models locally, regionally and globally to prioritise the integration of WASH in public health.

Outcomes

Our aim is for WASH service and behaviour to be sufficiently prioritised and integrated across the public health sector in Rwanda by ensuring that:

- improved access to gender-responsive, inclusive and sustainable WASH services in HCFs;
- health sector policies, strategies and guidelines adequately integrate WASH and are implemented in the health sector;
- hygiene is fully prioritised and integrated into three priority public health programmes (i.e. maternal, child and adolescent health, IPC and community health and public health emergencies) to improve sustained behaviours and public health gains.

Our approaches

WaterAid Rwanda and partners during a working visit at Ministry of infrastructure offices at Kimihurura, Kigali city, Rwanda. January 2023.



WARw believes that strong systems are needed to reach everyone, everywhere with sustainable, safe WASH services and behaviours, and the delivery of its five-year strategy will focus on supporting the creation and facilitation of enabling conditions and strengthening the capacity of actors and their interrelationship for effective coordination.

Universal, sustainable and safe WASH services are fundamental to public health and their prioritisation is critical for the Rwandese to enjoy a healthy and dignified life. Therefore, WARw will embed the **“strengthening of WASH system building blocks”** in its interventions. The scale-up and sustainability will uniquely characterise our ways of working towards the ambitious changes we seek to promote.

We will work at national and sub-national levels and combine a range of tactics to strengthen the necessary systems to achieve SDG 6 in Rwanda. We will continue to combine demonstration work with capacity development and increased advocacy. The main shifts will aim to strengthen institutional arrangements and monitoring through collective demonstration of WASH management and service models, joint planning, budgeting and implementation in order to profile WASH in the development arena.

We will contribute to global efforts to influence on a wider scale beyond Rwanda to achieve a collective response and coordinated actions for sustainable, universal, inclusive, gender-responsive and climate-resilient WASH services. Our approaches underpinning sustainability, climate resilience, gender responsiveness, knowledge sharing, integrated programming and collaborations for scaling up are further described on the following pages.

Modelling sustainable, climate-resilient and gender-responsive WASH services and behaviours

WARw will combine its multinational experience and global exposure with understanding of local contexts to collaboratively design and demonstrate appropriate WASH services and behaviour change models that are replicable and scalable. Our interventions will model the participation of women, people with disability, young people and the private sector to maximise gender responsiveness, social inclusiveness and climate resilience for sustainability. We will work alongside the government to ensure alignment with global and national standards and policies.

We will collaborate and partner with local government institutions, civil society organisations, the private sector and communities to strengthen their capacity and ensure the smooth exchange of skills and expertise of local people and institutions so they can ultimately lead and drive the desired changes. We will support integrated WASH planning, full LCC and coordinated cross-sectoral interventions counting every actor's contribution for credit.

For maximum influence across sectors, we will target decision-makers at all levels and align our efforts to accelerate and build the case for sustained and increased investment in WASH. We will work in alliance with others within and external to the WASH sector and maximise use of existing support mechanisms and platforms such as sector working groups (SWGs), thematic working groups (TWGs), the Joint Action Development Fund (JADF) and the One Health policy.

Documentation and sharing learning

WWARw set to work with government, the private sector, civil society organisations, research and academic institutions, the media and other development partners to achieve sustainable, universal, inclusive and gender-responsive WASH services at a wider scale. Setting such ambitious goals and realising them entails concerted efforts to galvanise the contributions and innovations of other actors and the replication of previous successes.

To accelerate change and scale up impact of WASH services and behaviour change, our work will be built on a detailed, fundamental analysis of WASH systems at national and Bugesera District levels and within the health sector. We will document and share learning from our work, use policy research, lobbying and advocacy to engage and empower others so that WASH issues are more prominent. We will aim to generate evidence and learnings that inform WASH decisions and investment, mobilise more supporters and allies and amplify community voices in their demand for services.

Lessons learned will be disseminated from both the failings and successes of our WASH and behaviour change demonstration programmes for marginalised groups, with a focus on women and girls, for replication and learning exchange within and beyond the WASH sector. We Climate resilience, inclusiveness and gender-responsiveness of WASH and behaviour change solutions will be highlighted in research, documentation and lesson sharing, and we will strengthen our relationship with academia, youth and research institutions. We will take advantage of the numerous global events and conferences hosted in Kigali to advance our advocacy and influence.

● **Water aeration, filtration system and water tank, Mugina village, Kintambwe Cell, Rweru Sector, Bugesera District, Rwanda. October 2022.**



● Public handwashing station built by WaterAid Rwanda at the entrance of Munini district hospital, Nyaruguru district, Rwanda. August 2021.



Partnership and alliances

WARw believe that the achievement of SDG 6 will result from collective action by committed and well-coordinated actors. We are more conscious than ever that sustainable universal access to WASH services requires different stakeholders and sectors to integrate and leverage their talents, expertise and actions in order to strengthen WASH systems. Hence, nurturing our relationships within and beyond the WASH sector becomes an urgent priority.

Maintaining our ambitious aims, we will scale up our partnership with established supporters and donors and mobilise new ones to create momentum for our mission. We will strive to catalyse their enthusiasm, ownership and action to achieve impactful WASH. WARw will remain a dedicated development partner to the GoR for stronger and effective WASH systems. We will collaborate with the private sector, utilities, regulators, women's rights organisations, youth organisations, academia, data and research institutions, the media and disability organisations and engage with communities and local institutions as we transfer our mindset, ways of working and WASH technologies for sustainability.

Community engagement and the creation of WASH champions

WARw believes in the vital function of empowered communities to achieve SDG 6, claiming and realising their rights to water and sanitation but also playing their role in WASH services provision and behaviour change. We will strive to enhance the capacity of responsible local government institutions and organisations, clarifying their duties and responsibilities to engage and empower communities for their active participation in WASH planning, implementation, monitoring, maintenance and management. In the spirit of leaving no one behind, WARw will continue to focus its demonstrations of inclusive, gender-responsive and climate-resilient WASH for the benefit of less privileged communities and to maximise all citizens' engagement to increase their representation and voices in WASH decisions.

We will amplify our work with communities and promote community-led WASH initiatives while creating WASH champions. We will leverage existing mechanisms, such as community assemblies and works and accountability days, to increase community engagement and accountability and promote digital solutions for sustainability and swiftness.

WaterAid is an international not-for-profit, determined to make clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene normal for everyone, everywhere within a generation. Only by tackling these three essentials in ways that last can people change their lives for good.

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