Implementing the District-Wide Approach in Bugesera district, Rwanda

The process, lessons learned and next steps
Introduction

Between 2017 and 2019, Rwanda’s Ministry of Infrastructure, in collaboration with WaterAid and other water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector organisations, supported the development of a costed WASH plan for Bugesera district as part of the government-endorsed District-Wide Approach (DWA). The plan sought to accelerate progress towards 100% access to at least basic water and sanitation services by 2024 and increase coverage of safely managed water and sanitation by 2030.

Development of the WASH plan was part of broader collaborative efforts to strengthen WASH systems across the country. These efforts involve strengthening sector coordination, clarifying roles and responsibilities (institutional arrangements), enhancing monitoring through the national management information system (MIS) and establishing user feedback and accountability mechanisms for rural water supply.

This paper outlines the process taken to develop the costed WASH plan, the outcomes achieved and lessons learned. It also provides background to the DWA in Rwanda and an overview of the remaining national and sub-national barriers to sustainable and inclusive WASH provision, setting out recommendations and next steps for how they could be addressed. The paper was developed following a comprehensive desk review of relevant project documents and national WASH policies. A consultation was also conducted with actors from public institutions such as the Ministry of Infrastructure, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, Water and Sanitation Corporation Limited (WASAC), Bugesera district, and development partners including WaterAid, Water for People, World Vision and DevWorks International that were involved in the DWA process in five other pilot districts (full list of interviewees provided in Appendix 1).

**Figure 1. Building blocks of the WASH system. Development of the costed WASH plan sought to strengthen monitoring, strategic planning and financing building blocks.**

The Government of Rwanda has committed to an ambitious target of reaching universal access to basic WASH services by 2024, as part of the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1) targets and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6.

However, this is unlikely to be achieved unless there are clear strategies and plans to guide the design and implementation of the various WASH initiatives and the long-term sustainability of their outcomes. To reach this ambitious target, the DWA, with its focus on strengthening district planning processes, was adopted by Rwanda's national government.¹

The DWA leverages the role of the **district as the main decentralised administrative** entity responsible for WASH planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring, in line with the national decentralisation policy.¹

The DWA approach follows four main stages: Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Monitoring (Figure 1). This paper focuses on the Assessment and Planning stages.

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¹ As stipulated in the National Policies of Water Supply and Sanitation Services and their implementation strategies, December 2016.
2.1 National WASH context

Rwanda has a surface area of 26,338km$^2$ and a total estimated population of 12.6 million people. It is administratively divided into 30 districts, including 27 rural districts and 3 districts of the City of Kigali, with 416 sectors (sub-districts), 2,148 cells (sub-sectors) and 14,837 villages.

While Rwanda was one of the countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets for WASH by 2015, in 2017, when the DWA process was initiated, access to basic drinking water services was estimated only at 57%, while access to basic sanitation services was estimated at 62%.

2.2 WASH context in Bugesera district

Bugesera district is in the Eastern Province of Rwanda and is made up of 15 sectors, 72 cells and 581 villages, with a total population of 361,914 people. The area is characterised by socio-economic water scarcity due to the lack of investment in extending and sustaining water supply services to all communities, made worse in the dry season as households’ access to rainwater declines. Bugesera district is served by three main water supply options, including large-scale networks managed by WASAC which treat and distribute mostly surface water to community taps stands and some private households. Management of small-scale networks is delegated to private operators, while handpumps fall under a community-based management plus model.

Figure 3. National water and sanitation service level ladders (disaggregated between rural and urban contexts).
Despite the presence of large water supply networks, in Bugesera in 2017 household access to basic water services was estimated at just 15% (with high disparity across the district, ranging between 50% and 0% basic water supply access) (Figure 6). Household access to handwashing facilities with water and soap was also only 24%.

Table 1: Status of WASH services in Bugesera district.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service levels</th>
<th>Water supply</th>
<th>Sanitation</th>
<th>Hygiene</th>
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<tr>
<td>No service / Open defecation</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited services</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Basic services</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>86% (including wood slabs)</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Safely-managed services</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>24%</td>
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</table>

Data source: 2017 service-level assessment in Bugesera district

Table: 5th Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey (EICV5) 2016–2017

4th Population and Housing Census of 2012
Figure 5. Water supply service levels in Bugesera, Rwanda.

Figure 6. Water supply service levels across Bugesera’s 15 sectors.

Implementing the District-Wide Approach in Bugesera district, Rwanda
Overview of institutional arrangements for rural WASH provision

The institutions responsible for the provision of rural WASH services are set out in the Rural District Organisational Structure published by the Ministry of Local Government in 2014. At district level, the WASH sector is divided into two units: water supply and sanitation infrastructure development falls under the responsibility of the Infrastructure One Stop Centre Department, while hygiene and sanitation initiatives are managed under the Health Unit.

Figure 7 summarises the roles and responsibilities of institutions involved in the provision of rural WASH services, from national to district level.
The development of the District WASH Investment Plan aimed to contribute towards Bugesera district’s WASH objective of being able to mobilize and use effectively and efficiently resources for reaching sustainable WASH basic services by 2024. The process for developing the costed plan is presented in detail in Application of the district-wide approach in 5 pilot districts of Rwanda: lessons learned by Bakker E and Smits S. In summary, it includes the following steps:

1. Agree WASH targets
   - To respond to the ambitious national WASH targets, Bugesera district agreed to a target of reaching and sustaining 100% of the population with at least basic water supply and sanitation services, of which 30% using safely managed water supply services, by 2024.

2. Map current WASH assets, service levels and capacity gaps
   - Bugesera district:
     - Gathered data to understand the current level of WASH services (with indicators in line with SDG 6 indicators and national standards).
     - Assessed gaps in the capacity of district staff responsible for WASH management and planning.
     - Compiled an asset inventory, detailing the type of existing water supply infrastructure, and the status of individual components and their age. This was led by WASAC for the larger water supply systems and local government for smaller schemes.
     - Analysed the data using a technical team composed of representatives from the district, WASAC, MININFRA, WaterAid and Water For People. This data informed the basis of the District Investment Plan (DIP).

3. Define appropriate service delivery models and technologies to achieve targets
   - Bugesera district developed detailed engineering designs for new large-scale water supply and sanitation services needed to be built to reach universal coverage.

4. Calculate the cost of reaching and sustaining water supply targets
   - Costs calculated included: capital expenditure (CAPEX) for new infrastructure; operation, repair and maintenance costs (OPEX); capital maintenance expenditure, including the cost of replacing aging or non-functional assets (CAPMANEX); and the costs related to the role of the service authority (district and other government staff) in ensuring sustainable WASH provision (direct support).
   - The total amount required to reach and sustain the district’s water supply targets is 113,116,035,614 Rwandan Francs (RWF) (US$113,116,035). Estimates per cost component for water supply in Bugesera are presented in Table 2. High CAPEX costs are associated with the new water supply treatment plant and distribution network required to reach uncovered communities. While CAPEX makes up the largest proportion of the initial estimated costs, it is anticipated that in future budgeting costs associated with CAPMANEX and OPEX will overtake that of CAPEX to ensure the maintenance and replacement of aging infrastructure. The Investment Plan covers the period 2020–2024 to meet the targets of NST1. In this period, the CAPMANEX is estimated to be a small amount as the water infrastructure is new, but this will increase beyond 2030.

5. Compare the estimated costs with the available budget to calculate the finance gap
   - Comparing Bugesera’s annual district WASH budget from the previous five years of 9,117,816,275 RWF with the estimated costs presented in Table 2, an annual finance gap of 25,779,950,180 RWF (US$25,779,950) was estimated. This means the district annual WASH budget needs to more than double in the coming five years if the district is to reach its ambitious targets.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Investment component</th>
<th>Annual investment amount</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAPEX</td>
<td>19,767,133,560</td>
<td>12,442,678,920</td>
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<td>CAPMANEX</td>
<td>47,221,993</td>
<td>28,333,196</td>
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<td>OPEX</td>
<td>405,018,168</td>
<td>445,519,985</td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct support</td>
<td>286,125,912</td>
<td>314,738,503</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contingency (10%)</td>
<td>2,049,605,523.</td>
<td>2,056,516,964</td>
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Table 2: Estimates per investment component.

### Outcomes and benefits for sustainable services

- **Improved planning and understanding of costs to ensure sustainable water supply**
  - Developing the DIP encouraged different district sector offices to **collaboratively plan** for WASH investments covering schools, healthcare facilities, households and public places.
  - Developing the DIP helped **increase district staff's understanding of the significant costs of reaching and sustaining basic levels of service for all**.
  - Developing the DIP **improved the efficiency of district-level processes** such as needs assessments, asset mapping, service-level monitoring and life-cycle costing.
  - For a country with a long-term water and sanitation strategy, the **DWA helped to clarify where resources and efforts should be invested to reach targets**. Indeed, the cost estimates in the DIP helped to inform the broader District Development Strategy (DDS).

- **Improved sector coordination**
  - The district WASH plan **provides all actors working in the district with the information they need to direct funding where it is needed most**, saving them time undertaking baseline needs/service-level assessments.
  - Development of the DIP saw many WASH stakeholders and partners working in the district commit to supporting its implementation.

### Challenges

- **Difficulty in gathering asset inventory data due to the complexity of the water supply systems**
  - Engineering data collected by WASAC, the utility managing larger water supply networks was used to inform the process instead.

- **Misalignment with government planning cycle**
  - In general, the **DWA process needs to be fully integrated into the annual government planning cycle as per the MINECOFIN guidelines**, to reduce district workload and ensure use and uptake of the DIP for annual budgeting.

- **Weak capacity of district to leverage funds for plan implementation**
  - The Local Administrative Development Agency (LODA) is the institution responsible for channelling funds from the national treasury to districts. While instructions and eligibility criteria to access LODA funds are available, district staff do not have the required skills and tools to attract such funds. In this regard, **only 7% of the total cost of the plan has since been secured by the district**. The remaining 93% will be sourced either from internal (district's own revenues) or LODA.

- **Willingness of stakeholders to support the DWA process**
  - Some stakeholders/partners hesitate to **align with the DWA process** in their respective interventions because the DWA obliges them to change their routine of the classic project cycle.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes and benefits for sustainable services</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Increased WASH investments</strong></td>
<td><strong>Gaps in coordination remain</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Using the CAPMANEX cost estimated in the DIP, WASAC <strong>signed, for the first time, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Bugesera district</strong> to rehabilitate and <strong>extend water supply schemes</strong>. In this instance, the district will provide the materials needed, while the community will support with the transportation of materials, excavation and laying pipelines.</td>
<td>- This is especially the case where large-scale water supply schemes, managed by MININFRA and WASAC cross district administrative boundaries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- “The District WASH Investment Plan [makes] it is easy for us to plan for our Performance contract (IMIHIGO) and is considered as an important tool to mobilize money from the Government (MINECOFIN and Local Administrative Entities Development Agency – LODA) for Water supply component because we have all designed projects and budget needed. The implementation of this plan is supported and monitored by the district council.” Mayor of Bugesera district.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Detailed engineering designs for water supply and development of the costed plan helped the district convince donors to invest in the construction of new infrastructure. <strong>While before 2019, there was no budget allocated to WASH in Bugesera district, in the 20/21 fiscal year, Bugesera district mobilised 200 million RWF (US$200,000) from MINECOFIN for extending water supply pipelines and sanitation projects in communities.</strong> In 2021/22, a further 200 million RWF was secured by local government from MINECOFIN for water supply improvements.</td>
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<td>- <strong>Further funding from the African Development Bank (AfDB) has been sourced to construct Kanzenze Water Treatment Plant</strong>, in a partnership between MININFRA, WASAC and Kigali Bulk Water Company under a public private partnership. The plant aims to produce 40,000m³ of clean water per day (16,000m³/day to Bugesera district and 24,000m³/day to Kigali). WASAC buys water from the treatment plant for US$0.9 per m³ and sells it to consumers for US$0.4 per m³. MINECOFIN pays WASAC the difference of US$0.5 per m³. This is the <strong>first time a public-private partnership for water supply service has been established in the country.</strong></td>
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Table 3: Outcomes, benefits and challenges of the DWA process.

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While development of the DIP has helped attract more investment for WASH in Bugesera and contributed towards improvements in district planning, monitoring and coordination, key barriers to the provision of inclusive and sustainable WASH remain. These barriers were identified in April 2021 as part of a WASH system assessment (see Annex 2 for the results), conducted in consultation with government institutions from national (MININFRA, MINECOFIN and WASAC) to district levels (government and partners, including those involved in the implementation of the DWA between 2017 and 2019).

This section presents the findings of the WASH system assessment, identification of remaining barriers and recommendations for how they could be tackled to reach 100% basic water and sanitation service access in Bugesera district by 2024.

### Coordination and integration

**Analysis:** Some gaps in stakeholder coordination remain, particularly between national (MININFRA, WASAC) and district levels, and where large-scale water supply projects cross district boundaries. There are also multiple uncoordinated sanitation initiatives, leading to challenges in harmonisation, monitoring and reporting.

**Recommendation:** The DIP should be integrated into the District Development Strategy as comprehensively and realistically as possible, paying due attention to all the aspects and factors necessary to attain universal and sustainable WASH services by 2024, in line with local targets. Detailed engineering designs for large sanitation projects, including the construction of landfill and liquid waste (faecal sludge) treatment plants, should also be developed and integrated into the DIP. An annual operation plan should be developed to complement and support the implementation of the DIP. This would serve as a reference during formulation of the district performance contract (IMIHIGO) between His Excellency the President of the Republic of Rwanda and the mayor of the district. The integration of the DIP into the DDS would improve coordination, as WASH is considered as a cross-cutting subsector and central to other social economic sectors, such as education, health, environment, industry and agriculture.

### Financing

**Analysis:** Development of the investment plan helped to secure additional funding from the national government to cover planned CAPEX for new water supply. However, some gaps remain for WASH in Bugesera district, particularly for the construction of landfill and liquid waste (faecal sludge) facilities.

WASAC’s management of large-scale water supply networks relies on tariff recovery and subsidies from the Government of Rwanda to cover the OPEX costs. However, in future the district will need more budget dedicated to major maintenance and asset replacement.

**Recommendation:** There is still a large gap between the WASH budget allocated to Bugesera district and the funding required to reach the 2024 targets. Currently, the district’s total budget needs to double, of which more than 50% needs to be allocated to WASH.

This is ambitious and will require the local government to coordinate and organise annual fund mobilisation dialogues with the Ministry of Finance, development partners, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and the private sector to address this gap in line with the National WASH Financing Strategy currently under development.
Service delivery and behaviour change

Analysis: The management of hand pumps is delegated by local government to community associations. However, communities often lack access to spare parts and the technical capacity to repair and maintain the pumps. The daily management, operation and maintenance of public toilets also remains a challenge. Limited access to water supply services in public places and households hinders the uptake of good hygiene and sanitation behaviours, particularly in the dry season.

Recommendation: Strong technical and financial support is needed from MININFRA and WASAC to ensure members of district WASH boards have the capacity to sustainably manage hand pumps and public toilets.

Institutional arrangements

Analysis: Few district staff are dedicated to WASH planning, financing and implementation. Sanitation is covered by two units under the WATSAN Officer in the Infrastructure One Stop Centre Department and the Sanitation and Hygiene Officer under the Health Unit. This division hinders coordination of sanitation interventions. Additionally, there is no unit or staff in charge of external fund mobilisation from partners to implement the DIP.

Recommendation: A clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities is needed at district level between the Water and Sanitation Officer under the Infrastructure One Stop Centre Department and the Sanitation and Hygiene Officer under the Health Unit.

Accountability and regulation

Analysis: While there is currently no mechanism for community members to report issues arising in small-scale water schemes, WASAC through support from WaterAid is developing a user-friendly tool to receive and manage customer feedback and complaints. Regulations for sanitation and hygiene components are not yet developed at the national level.

Recommendation: A user-friendly customer feedback and complaints tool should be put into operation and scaled up in all rural districts of Rwanda. Pilots should be developed to test the appropriateness and viability of different feedback and complaints tools for all service options including those managed by WASAC and smaller private operators.
**Government leadership**

**Analysis:** Rwanda is known for having high-level committed leadership for WASH. The Government of Rwanda has committed to achieving access to basic WASH services by 2024. However, leadership at the local government level remains a challenge.

**Recommendation:** The national government’s public commitment to accelerate progress towards SDG 6 can help encourage the commitment of stakeholders and partners to support the implementation of the DIP. The involvement of key government stakeholders in the planning process, like MINECOFIN and LODA, helps to instil a culture of ownership and enhances the likelihood that the plan will be used to inform investment decision making to ensure sustainable and universal access.

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**Gender and social inclusion**

**Analysis:** Although Rwanda has committed to having women make up at least 30% of staff in all aspects of the country’s social transformation institutions, there remains a large gender gap in the management of WASH services (at and beyond the community level). Furthermore, WASH services are not yet fully inclusive; very few public water taps are accessible to people living with disabilities and only some sanitation facilities in schools and healthcare facilities consider the needs of women, girls and people with disabilities.

**Recommendation:** The National Water and Sanitation Policies and Implementation Strategies 2016 recommends gender and social inclusion are considered as cross-cutting issues in WASH. A specific percentage of women should be represented in key positions in water-user committees and water and sanitation sector institutions.

For social inclusion, an inclusive mechanism for the provision of water to vulnerable populations should be developed and implemented.

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**Capacity building**

**Analysis:** Bugesera district staff have limited capacity and tools to mobilise funds for the DIP’s implementation. The capacity needs assessment showed the district has limitations in planning and infrastructure management (especially for public toilets and hand pumps).

Community behaviour change is needed around ensuring the sustainability and replacement of constructed infrastructure through payment of water fees for using hand pumps.

**Recommendation:** A capacity-building plan should be developed by the district, with support from development partners and based on a needs assessment, focusing on improving planning, infrastructure management, social mobilisation and the management of customer complaints. Training should also be provided to district officials by MININFRA, MINECOFIN and development partners on fund mobilisation to ensure implementation of the DIP.

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**Monitoring**

**Analysis:** The WASH monitoring process and management information system (MIS) has been dysfunctional for many years and National Statistics data on WASH is available only every five years, limiting capacity to track WASH service levels and the implementation of DIPs.

Efforts to establish a new MIS and strengthen monitoring processes is underway; however, insufficient financial resources to facilitate monitoring processes and water quality testing has been identified as a key challenge. Water quality is only monitored in large-scale schemes managed by WASAC, and there is currently no mechanism to monitor or manage water quality in small-scale schemes or boreholes.

**Recommendation:** To track progress and service levels and support the updating of the DIP and budgeting processes, the district must invest time and funds towards improving the quality and frequency of WASH data collection at village level.

In this context, the WASH MIS managed under the Ministry of Infrastructure must be fully operational and used at local level to provide all the data needed for planning and decision making.
Next steps

The partners involved in the development of the District Investment Plan continue to provide support to Bugesera district to address the identified barriers and implement the costed plan, in line with the institutionalisation of the district-wide approach across the country, led by MININFRA.

Bibliography

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- Bugesera District WASH Investment Plan, July 2019
- Ministry of Infrastructure, National policies for water supply and sanitation services and their implementation strategies, December 2016.
- Sanitation and Water For All (SWA) building blocks.

Endnotes

Annex 1: List of people consulted in the development of this paper

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Institutions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kayitesi Marcelline</td>
<td>Director General of Water and Sanitation Sector, MININFRA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuwamanya Emmanuel</td>
<td>Planning Officer, MININFRA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hategekimana Emmanuel</td>
<td>Rural Water Supply Senior Engineer, MININFRA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kagaga Monique</td>
<td>WATSAN Monitoring and Evaluation Expert, MININFRA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bunzinya Christophe</td>
<td>Budget Policy Formulation and Reform Officer, MINECOFIN</td>
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<tr>
<td>Umugwaneza Vincent de Paul</td>
<td>Director of Rural Water and Sanitation Services, WASAC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mutabazi Richard</td>
<td>Mayor of Bugesera district</td>
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<td>Mugiraneza David</td>
<td>Executive Secretary of Bugesera district</td>
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<td>Kananga Jean Damascene</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kamuyumbu Perpetue</td>
<td>Country Director, Water For People</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mugabo Stephen</td>
<td>M&amp;E and Business Development Manager, Water For People</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nyirishema Richard</td>
<td>Consultant at DevWorks International, Rwanda office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ugabinema Marie Nicaise</td>
<td>WASH Coordinator, World Vision</td>
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Annex 2: Results of participatory WASH system building block assessment in Bugesera district

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**Figure 8: Results of participatory WASH system building block assessment in Bugesera district, April 2021.**
Authors

Fidele Nteziyaremye (independent consultant), Maurice Kwizera (WaterAid Rwanda), Lambert Karangwa (WaterAid Rwanda), Jean Paul Mbarushimana (WaterAid Rwanda), Kananga Jean Damascene, (Water and Sanitation officer at Bugesera District), Ellen Greggio (WaterAid UK) and Hannah Crichton-Smith (WaterAid UK).

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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.