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Challenges for sustainable access to improved water sanitation and hygiene services and practices in Burera District in Rwanda

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**EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE WASH SERVICES:
FUTURE CHALLENGES IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD**

**Challenges for sustainable water sanitation and hygiene
in Burera district in Rwanda**

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Rwanda

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Introduction

the Rwandan government through institutional strengthening and financial support is improving water supply and sanitation infrastructure as well as WASH services country wide. We conducted an assessment to identify potential challenges of sustainability of a 5 year (2009-2013) WASH project results, one year after its completion, in Burera district.

Methodology

We conducted a cross-sectional qualitative study and collected data from various community stakeholders in Burera district through semi structured interview. The community stakeholders involved, (1) the district WASH engineer and the Social/WASH mobilizer at district level, (2) the Environmental Health Officers at Hospital level, (3) the in charge of Social Affairs at Sector level, (4) 2 heads of Health Centers and 2 community and environmental health officers (CEHOs) at health center level, (5) 2 private operators at district and 2 community based organizations (CBOs), (6) 2 Socio-Economic and Development Officers (SEDOs) at cell level, (7) 10 heads of villages and 100 households representatives conveniently selected from the 10 villages, 10 local artisans, 10 water point committees and 10 Village WASH committees.

Results

The study results present (1) key WASH stakeholders, (2) actual responsibilities in relation to WASH services and practices at community level, and (3) reported challenges for sustainability of WASH services and practices in Burera district. According to the understanding of the interviewed WASH stakeholders, addressing the reported challenges may support ongoing water supply and sanitation hardware works and CBEHPP/CHC approach and ensure Burera communities have sustainable access to improved WASH services and practices.

The challenges reported include (1) the limited involvement of community stakeholders including households and local artisans, (2) lack of budget to support implementation of WASH services at community level, (3) poor monitoring and reporting, (4) poverty, and (5) limited knowledge and skills on WASH services and practices. The institutional arrangement for WASH interventions is complete at various levels of the Rwandan community. The challenges are related to the implementation of WASH interventions which needs to be supported by a capacity building and involvement of community stakeholders for effective implementation and sustainability. Financial and WASH local needs can be addressed locally through partnerships and mutual support. The private sector actors including local artisans in partnership with local leaders and households representatives may develop local solutions through consultations for sustainability of WASH services. The WASH implementers at community level require leadership skills and capacity to commit various community stakeholders. The monitoring and reporting of WASH practices requires adapted indicators to identify and address gaps on time and ensure sustainability of WASH services at community level.

Table 1.		
Key WASH stakeholders	Actual responsibilities in relation to WASH services and practices	Reported challenges for sustainability of WASH services / practices
District WASH Engineer	Coordination, Technical support and Reporting	Minimum involvement of local leaders, lack of reports from villages, and private operators
Social / WASH Mobiliser	Community WASH education, Follow up of WASH committees, Private operators, and CBOs	Poor involvement of local leaders, lack of reports from villages, private operators, and CBOs
Environmental Health Officer / Hospital level	Supervise, monitor, and report on WASH promotion activities / practices	Limited integration of WASH services in the district and Hospital plans and activities
School headmasters	Ensure water sanitation facilities are maintained functional as well a hygiene status in the school's environment	WASH less integrated in school curriculum and surrounding communities with no WASH facilities (overload the school WASH facilities).
Sector Social Affairs in charge	Coordinate WASH activities at Sector level and report to district	Limited community mobilisation for WASH practices and poor reporting from cells
Heads of Health center/ CEHOs	Coordinate, supervise, ensure WASH activities and status promoted in communities and regular reporting	Lack of budget for WASH services and activities, poor monitoring, data collection and reporting skills
Private operators	Manage, operate, and maintain water supply facilities	Limited number of personel, limited knowledge, skills and funds, and poor invested cost recovery
CBOs	Assist communities with safe water sanitation and hygiene related services	Limited knowledge and skills in WASH services and practices
SEDO	Supervise and coordinate socio economic and development activities at cell level	Poverty, limited knowledge and skills on WASH promotion and limited support
Households	Ensure safe use of water and sanitation with hygienic practices	Poverty, limited knowledge and skills, soil hard to dig for a toilet or a waste disposal pit
Village Heads	Supervise and coordinate all activities at village level	Poverty, limited knowledge and skills on WASH promotion and limited support
Water point committees	Management of water points and involve households for sustainability of hygiene	Limited support, poor skills in involving households in WASH facilities' management
Village WASH committees	Mobilise households for safe water sanitation and hygiene practices	Limited support, poor skills in involving households in WASH facilities' management
Local artisans	Assist the communities and households with WASH materials and services	Low commitment of artisans, limited skills for WASH services

Conclusion

The reported challenges of the sustainability of WASH services are related to the implementation of WASH interventions rather than institutional arrangement. For effective implementation and sustainability of WASH services at community level, there is a need of capacity building at various levels of the Rwandan community on implementation of WASH interventions including leadership skills to address financial and WASH local needs. The commitment of private sector actors including local artisans can contribute to develop local solutions together with local leaders and household representatives. The monitoring with adapted indicators may to identify and address gaps on time.

Key words

Challenges for sustainability, implementation, capacity building, community stakeholders.

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