

In Focus: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Uganda

IRC WASH fast facts (May 2012)

Within the Sub-Saharan Africa region, Uganda has relatively well-defined WASH policies, an articulated WASH agenda, a well-established Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) and an advanced decentralisation process. According to the Sector Performance Report of 2011, coverage of drinking water in rural areas stands at 65%, in urban areas at 75% with functionality rates of 81% and 85% respectively. Rural latrine coverage is reported to stand at 70%; for urban sanitation at 81%. Uganda has the fastest population growth rate in Africa, posing great challenges ahead for development initiatives, including the WASH sector. As a country emerging from a series of civil wars and internal conflicts, recent concerns over poor governance and corruption have resulted in weakening political support for the government and declining development support.

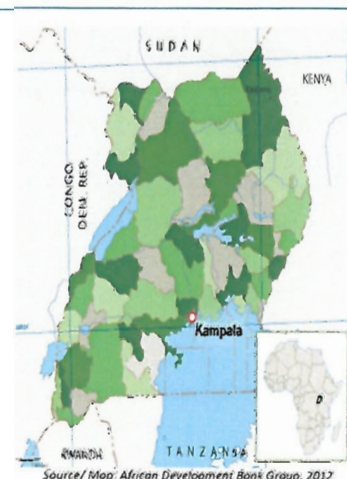
At a glance: WASH in Uganda

Population: 34.5 Million (Afd, 2011)

Area: 241,000 sq km (Afd, 2011)

Main challenges in the water and sanitation sector: weak government leadership in sanitation and hygiene; government financing for rural drinking water in steady decline; capacity gaps at decentralised levels of government; overemphasis on piped schemes, which only cater to, at best, 10% of rural drinking water services

Most recent government activities in the WASH sector: on-going efforts to improve Operations & Maintenance (O&M) frameworks for both point sources and piped schemes by reviewing guidelines and strengthening support structures in districts; increased interest of all stakeholders in improving sector monitoring by piloting the use of mobile phones; continued interesting sector innovations, such as self supply, rainwater harvesting, Ecological Sanitation (ecosan)/ Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), accountability, and WASH governance; new funding support for sanitation secured in 2012.



IRC in Uganda

IRC has become increasingly active in Uganda since 2002. IRC's work in the country is presently supported by an annual amount of some one million euros. Through a programmatic collaboration established between IRC and SNV in 2012, the organisation is now involved in a joint funding amount of approximately two million euros per year. In addition, collaboration with SNV has facilitated IRC's visibility in eight districts.

In Uganda, implementing initiatives that strengthen learning processes, in particular at decentralised levels, is a first focus area for IRC. Through these initiatives, IRC aims to improve the capacity of local stakeholders – both in government and civil society – to address problems locally and employ local solutions that build on the strengths of all local stakeholders, including the communities themselves. Strengthening governance and accountability represents IRC's second focus area. Within this area, IRC introduces and improves upon monitoring and accountability tools and methodologies that facilitate sector responsiveness to demand and performance problems. Similarly, action research is conducted involving local and national stakeholders to inform national level policy development and implementation.

Highlights of IRC and partner organisation activities

- All drinking water related activities of IRC are carried out in partnership with the Ministry of Water and Environment, local government, and a number of civil society organisations, Such as NETWAS Uganda, SNV, WaterAid and UWASNET.
- The 'rural drinking water services that last' initiative supports the sector in improving the entire Service Delivery Model, in particular by reducing the time needed for the sector in responding to service breakdowns, and strengthening planning, coordination and learning processes at both the central and decentralised levels. In partnership with SNV and UNICEF, IRC supports action research initiatives that improve water, sanitation and hygiene in approximately 300 schools and communities across eight districts. The research focuses on strengthening the capacity of water users, and supports structures that develop O&M, in particular the HPMAs.
- Within the WASHTech consortium, IRC is involved in developing a framework and assessment procedure that enables the sector to select appropriate WASH technology innovations.

- Through the Performance Improvement through Learning in Sanitation (PILS) project, IRC assists local government and NGOs to improve rural household and school sanitation and hygiene in Northern Uganda.

Lessons learnt and impact

Supporting the WASH sector in strengthening its capacity to reflect and learn from experiences, leading to performance improvements of stakeholders, is IRC's niche and value in Uganda. In this light, IRC fully participates in various sector coordination groups in the country. Currently, IRC is also taking the lead in supporting two thematic working groups: functionality and MIS. Innovation processes in the rural WASH sector are expected to play an increasingly important role in expanding coverage and sustainable access, at a time where resources are decreasing, and as the population continues to grow rapidly. As such, 'self-help' capacity at decentralised levels for learning and coordination will need to increase and be facilitated by the government. Examples of such self-help initiatives in Uganda are an increase in low-cost ecosan technologies, and accountability by the sector. In general, the trend of the WASH sector of embracing 'learning' as a key strategy to improve its performance is very encouraging.

IRC's Uganda country team and expertise

- René van Lieshout: IRC Uganda Director and East Africa Programme Coordinator
- Valérie Bey: Programme Officer, rural water supply and sanitation, with interest in monitoring
- Jo Smet: Senior Programme Officer, Sanitation, rural technologies and learning processes
- Marielle Snel: Senior Programme Officer, WASH in schools
- Peter Bury: Senior Programme Officer, process facilitation, capacity building and communication
- Jeske Verhoeven: Programme Officer, documentation and communication
- Jane Nabunnya: Country Director, "Water Service that Last" initiative
- Peter Magara: Learning processes and sector monitoring facilitator
- Lydia Mirembe: Communication expert
- Robert Otim: District facilitator with capacity building expertise
- Martin Watsisi: District facilitator with capacity building expertise
- Dorah Egunyu: Communication expert

For **further information** on IRC's involvement in Uganda, please contact René van Lieshout at lieshout@irc.nl

IRC's WASH fast facts series provides readers with a snapshot of the status of water, sanitation and hygiene in IRC focus countries, and details IRC's current approach and in-country main activities. The WASH fast facts series is regularly updated by IRC staff to bring to the fore current in-country initiatives and trends known to the organisation.