

# Sanitation in Burundi: from unattainable privilege to basic service

German development cooperation supports upscaling in the sanitation sector

## Sanitation: a neglected basic right

Burundi is one of the poorest countries in the world, with an exceptionally high population density. During the civil war from 1993 to 2005, much of the country's water and sanitation infrastructure was destroyed. Today, Burundi still lags far behind in achieving the Millennium Development Goals sanitation target to halve the proportion of people without sustainable access to basic sanitation. In the two main cities, Bujumbura and Gitega, only 10 per cent of homes are connected to centralised sewer systems, and in Gitega it is only 2 per cent. In sub-Saharan Africa, 30 per cent of the population have access to basic sanitation; globally, it's 64 per cent (JMP, 2014).

In 2010, when the United Nations General Assembly declared sanitation a human right, investment in sanitation infrastructure represented only 1 per cent of Burundi's total public spending in the water and sanitation sector (Annual Sector Review 2011). Responsibilities are divided between different ministries, resulting in a lack of proper leadership, weak coordination, and a poor environment for investment. With the ongoing decentralisation process, the responsibility for sanitation is being transferred to the municipal level. However, rural poverty is limiting financial capacities to construct adequate domestic sanitation facilities.

## Sanitation facilities and groundwater protection reduce risks

The poor living in Burundi's fast-growing areas on the outskirts of cities, in rural settlements, and in small and medium-sized low-income areas are particularly affected by the lack of sanitation.

## Sanitation – an overview

Sanitation includes community hygiene, and sewage and waste disposal in the broadest sense. It can range from central sewerage systems in urban environments to hygienic latrines in rural regions. People who lack access to appropriate sanitation facilities have to use unhygienic latrines, buckets or communal latrines or practise open defecation.

However, where suitable sanitation facilities already exist, most sewage is not adequately treated or the faecal sludge is not disposed of properly. Many treatment plants and decentralised facilities such as latrines are inadequate and inefficient.

Shallow groundwater and surface water resources are contaminated by the sewage from settlements and thus endanger drinking water, which affects not only human health, but also fauna and flora. If people drink contaminated water and do not practise good hygiene, they risk being infected by numerous diseases. So it is vital to protect groundwater resources and improve sanitation and sewage management in order to reduce people's health risks and raise their standard of living.

## Germany is scaling up sanitation in Burundi

German development cooperation aims to assist Burundi to address its sanitation challenges and to improve the legal, institutional and organisational frameworks for sanitation services, in order to scale up access. Germany and other donors (NL, BEL,





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UNICEF, WB, IFAD, UNDP) provide funding for sanitation infrastructure and hygiene awareness campaigns, including public infrastructure in six towns (toilets in schools, prisons, hospitals and markets), and a small sewerage system and sludge treatment plant in Gitega, Burundi's second largest city. In addition, Germany is promoting hygiene education and the implementation and maintenance of groundwater protection zones.

### Sanitation policy provides guidance

German development cooperation assisted Burundi to develop a National Sanitation Policy, which was adopted in 2013 and specifies the roles and responsibilities of different agencies in the sanitation sector at national and local level. For Burundi, it is vital that the policy is oriented towards the needs of the urban poor. Germany is assisting government institutions to implement the National Sanitation Policy and to monitor results.

At the local level, Germany aims to enable municipalities to include sanitation in their municipal development planning, referring to the positive development of Bujumbura's municipal sanitation service as an example of good practice.

### Sanitation indicators facilitate informed policy-making

With the introduction of the National Sanitation Policy, the need for national indicators for water, hygiene and sanitation arose in Burundi. German development cooperation assisted the government to collect data and to draft, publish and apply indicators, which have become the basis for transparent and well-informed policy-making.

### Policy implementation: Gitega improves sanitation services

In 2010, the city of Gitega launched its municipal sanitation services, comprising sewage treatment, faecal sludge disposal facilities

and public latrines. Groundwater protection zones will be established to complement these measures. Germany is assisting the city to further improve the organisation of its services and cover operational costs.

### Sanitation marketing: latrines have to be built properly

Constructing latrines is a major investment for most people living in Burundi's rural areas. A baseline study commissioned by Germany revealed that around 95 per cent of households had latrines, but only 11.5 per cent of these latrines were adequate and met minimum standards. Germany is therefore supporting the provision of training for local artisans to improve the construction of affordable types of domestic latrines. So far, domestic latrines for around 6,000 households have been built.

### Awareness campaigns promote good hygiene

Changing their sanitation habits, such as starting to use and clean domestic latrines properly, requires major changes in people's everyday lives. Campaigns to raise hygiene awareness are therefore a crucial part of Germany's commitment.

### A basket fund for upscaling access to sanitation service

Burundi depends on external support in its efforts to increase people's access to sanitation. Yet local ownership is a prerequisite for the sustainability of any investment. Germany has therefore supported the creation of a basket fund to finance water and sanitation projects in Burundi's rural areas, enabling various donors to contribute to specific projects, while ensuring accountability and transparency of expenditure. The approach is currently being tested in a number of pilot municipalities.

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