

District WASH master planning

Lessons learnt and pathways to scale

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This briefing note presents key insights from IRC's work on district WASH master planning, which was spearheaded under the Safe Water Strategy project funded by the Conrad N Hilton Foundation. It draws on an internal evaluation of IRC's district WASH master planning work in three countries: Ethiopia, Ghana, and Uganda, and on other activities in Burkina Faso and Rwanda. The note presents lessons learnt on district WASH master planning processes and it identifies pathways for scaling district WASH master planning.

Master planning emerged in the early 20th century as an approach for modern comprehensive spatial planning, especially for urban areas in Europe and the USA (Firley and Grön, 2014). Post-World War II, master planning had become the dominant form of spatial planning in many parts of the world (Todes et al., 2010). Initially, master planning was mostly perceived as a technical activity, carried out by trained experts with relatively little involvement of politicians or communities (Bullivant, 2014). From the late 1970s, a wide-ranging critique of master planning developed, including 1) its static and rigid nature, 2) its focus on production of plans on paper, with the plans itself becoming the end goal, rather than a means to an end, 3) its largely technocratic nature, with little attention to social diversity and public participation, 4) lack of attention to social, political, and economic dynamics shaping cities and driving change, and neglect of many actors and interests, and 5) the over-comprehensive

nature of the plans (Todes et al., 2010). As a response, more participatory, government-led planning approaches emerged, with involvement of different interest groups.

This move towards more participatory, government-led planning approaches has also been observed in the WASH sector. Before the 1980s, water and sanitation interventions were mainly planned in a centralised manner, and focused on infrastructure development. The 1980s saw more emphasis on participatory planning approaches. Also, the decentralisation processes in many countries in the 1990s put more emphasis on the role of local government in planning, leading to more decentralised, participatory, demand-based planning processes. The 2000s saw an increase in emphasis on planning for universal access and for sustainable WASH services. The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, with one of its goals ensuring the availability and sustainable

management of water and sanitation for all by 2030, reinforced the need for comprehensive strategic plans. It required a focus on planning for putting in place, and maintaining, systems and capacities for ensuring sustainable service provision for all, going beyond a focus on asset development.

Over the last decades, decentralised water and sanitation master plans have been developed in a variety of contexts, at different levels. In the USA, water supply (and sanitation) master plans have been developed at city level (e.g. the City of Bend), metropolitan areas (e.g. the Twin Cities), basin level (e.g. the Water Supply Master Plan Catawba-Wateree River Basin), and utility level (e.g. Santa Clara Valley Water District and the Heceta Water People's Utility District). Water master plans have also been developed in (upper- and lower-) middle income countries, like South Africa, India, Kenya, and Vietnam. In South Africa (upper middle-income country), water (and sanitation) master plans have been developed for municipalities, commonly consisting of several towns. These have included several municipalities in Free State Province, and the development and updating of the master plan of the water distribution system for Langeberg Municipality, and the development of a water master plan for Knysna Municipality. In India, long-term master plans have been developed by municipal corporations (municipal utilities). These have, for example, included the master plans for Kolkata and Surat, focused on water supply, and Nagpur City, focused on sewerage. In Kenya, water supply master plans have been developed for several cities and satellite towns, including Nairobi, Eldoret, and Mombasa. Linked to the master planning work in Mombasa, Water Supply Master Plan development also took place in several coastal countries, under the jurisdiction of the Coast Water Services Board (CWSB). These initiatives were mainly funded by the

Government of Kenya (GoK) with the assistance of the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) and Agence Française de Développement (AFD). Vietnam (lower middle-income country) has seen the development of a provincial master plan for water supply and sanitation services, notably in the Province of Quang Nam, covering all urban, sub-urban and rural residential areas.

Since the mid-2010s, district WASH master planning, focused on ensuring water and sanitation services for all in mostly rural districts in low- and upper-middle-income countries, and has been spearheaded by several (I)NGOs, including WaterAid, Water For People, Water for Good, Welthungerhilfe (WHH), and IRC, to:

- Serve as an entry point for district-wide approaches and lay a firm foundation for district-level collective action by rallying stakeholders around a common vision for achieving SDG 6;
- Have local government more strongly in the driving seat, fulfilling its role as service authority;
- Promote and enable systems strengthening at district-level and beyond;
- Attract funders and financiers required for the implementation of the plan and guide appropriate allocation of WASH resources, thus reducing duplication, mismatch of technologies, and ultimately eliminating pockets of marginalised groups;
- Play a key role in ensuring climate resilience as it considers possible future scenarios related to climate change and availability of water resources and ensures the development of a resilient plan for ensuring sustainable WASH service provision accordingly.

IRC'S EXPERIENCE WITH DISTRICT WASH MASTER PLANNING

Around 2000, IRC started supporting the development of local-level strategic plans in different contexts. These included the development and implementation of local-level water governance plans in three countries in the Middle East and North Africa region (Egypt, Jordan and Palestine) under the EMPOWERs project, and the development of participatory strategic integrated urban water management plans in cities like Accra and Alexandria, under the SWITCH project. Under both initiatives, guidelines on participatory development of area-based plans were produced, which informed IRC's way forward on district WASH master planning.

In the mid-2000s, IRC started focusing on (rural) districts, taking a programmatic approach towards sustainable water and sanitation services for all. Lack of reliable, timely, and accurate data on water and sanitation assets, service levels, and performance of service providers and authorities, was found to be a key challenge. Therefore, an important focus was making such data accessible to (local) government and its partners. The assumption was that this data, if

available, would be used to inform corrective action, planning processes, and collective action for achieving sustainable water and sanitation service provision for all in the districts. However, it became clear that data was not used to its full potential. This was due to many reasons, including challenges with capacity, motivation, and incentives to produce and use data. This highlighted the need to support local government and its partners in using such data in informing planning and collective action processes. This was put into practice around 2018, through the development of district WASH master plans in three focus districts: Asutifi North in Ghana, Banfora in Burkina Faso, and Kabarole in Uganda. These processes were supported by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.

SCALING DISTRICT WASH MASTER PLANNING

Following the development of the Asutifi North, Banfora, and Kabarole district WASH master plans, the process has been scaled, both within the respective countries, as well as beyond. By the end of 2024, some 60 district WASH master plans had been developed in seven countries with the support of IRC, covering a



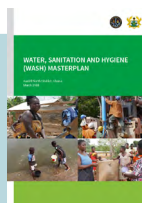
BANFORA, BURKINA FASO

Population: 154,000 (2017)

Timeline

2017: Development of the district WASH master plan starts

2018: Validation, launch and start of the implementation of the master plan



ASUTIFI NORTH, GHANA

Population: 69,000 (2017)

Timeline

2017: Development of the district WASH master plan starts

2018: Validation, launch and start of the implementation of the master plan through the ANAM initiative

2020: Costing and funding gap analysis



KABAROLE, UGANDA

Population: 325,000 (2017)

Timeline

2017: Development of the district WASH master plan starts

2018: Validation, launch and start of the implementation of the master plan

2021: Costing and funding gap analysis

total population of almost 10 million people. This section gives insight into the scaling processes in the three pilot countries, as well as in Ethiopia and Rwanda, where IRC has also been involved in district WASH master planning, and beyond.

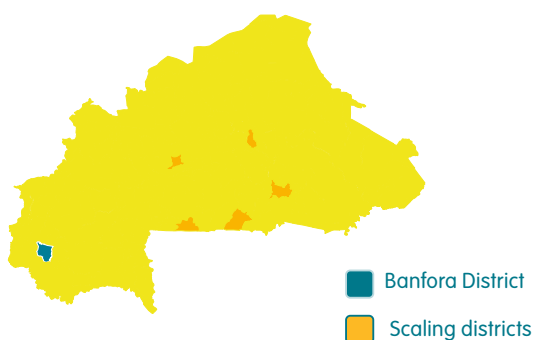
BURKINA FASO

Following the success in Banfora, the district WASH master planning process was scaled to five additional urban communes in Burkina Faso under an EU-funded programme in collaboration with national public water and sanitation utility (ONEA) supporting capacity building on WASH in 93 communes (2020-2022). Also, regional master plans for the three regions under the project (Centre-East, Centre-West, Centre-South) were developed and published. It should be noted that these regional plans do not replace district WASH master plans, but focus exclusively on improving access to drinking water by proposing multi-village water piped systems. District WASH master plans take into account all aspects of the WASH sector (water, sanitation, and hygiene).

The process has resulted in the creation of a pool of experts to facilitate the development of strategic plans in the country.

In the years to come, district WASH master planning is to be scaled further in Burkina Faso, with a focus on urban communes in the period before 2030, and further scaling to all communes post-2030.

Figure 1: Map of Burkina Faso.



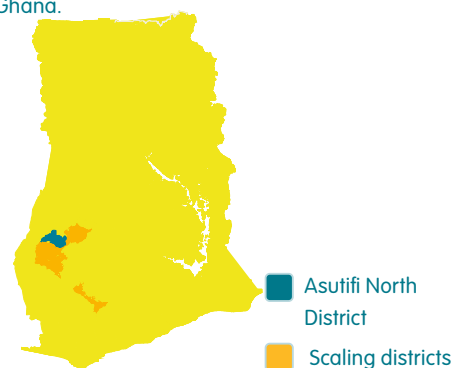
GHANA

The Asutifi North work in district planning triggered demands from neighbouring districts, and other development partners (NGOs), to support similar processes. Based on learnings from Asutifi North, and in response to requests for scaling up the approach to other districts, several scaling pathways have been pursued, whilst others emerged. These include:

- Replication in the five remaining districts of Ahafo Region (Tano North, Asunafo South and Asunafo North in 2023 and Asutifi South and Tano South in 2024), with regional level interventions including: 1) stronger technical support and quality control from the Regional Coordination Council (RCC) to districts (with a smaller role for IRC); 2) bundling district master plans to extract issues best addressed at regional level, such as development of cross-district infrastructure; and 3) a common approach to monitoring;
- On-demand support for replication elsewhere (in Upper Denkyra East Municipality, through a 2021-2022 consultancy for the Spanish NGO Anesvad);
- Other NGOs replicating or following similar approaches in other regions, with involvement of RCCs (e.g. World Vision, WaterAid);
- Laying the foundation for national roll-out, including 1) development of the National Development Planning Commission WASH Toolkit as a checklist for districts to improve the WASH section of their Medium-Term Development Plans (MTDPs), and encourage dedicated WASH master planning; 2) Training of Trainers of district WASH focal persons; 3) documentation of good practices and sharing via National Learning and Leadership Programme (NLLP), so that others adopt improved planning; and 4) facilitating stakeholder engagement around revision of WASH policy and the Ghana WASH development plan, so that the districts' voices would be brought in.

For more information on the scaling process in Ghana, see [Pathways to universal WASH coverage in Ghana: Lessons from scaling Asutifi North's master planning approach](#).

Figure 2: Map of Ghana.



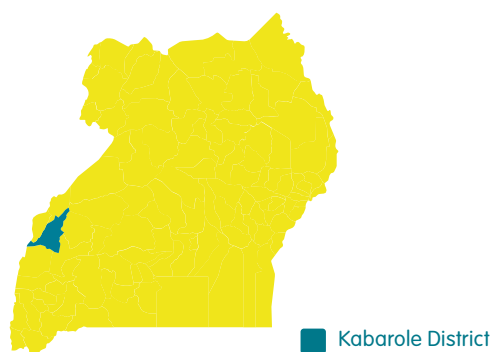
UGANDA

Based on the experiences in Kabarole, IRC, in close collaboration with Water For People, replicated the district WASH master planning process in Bunyangabu District, resulting in the launch of the 'Bunyangabu District WASH Roadmap 2020-2030' in March 2023.

Water For People Uganda has also supported the development of WASH master plans in two other districts: Kamwenge District WASH Master Plan (2020-2030) and Luuka District WASH Master Plan (2021-2030).

IRC has been advocating for the master planning process to be incorporated into the next National Development Framework (NDP 4) in collaboration with the Ministry of Water and Environment and the National Planning Authority. This scaling pathway will make guidelines available to all districts and provide better prospects for prioritising WASH in the districts.

Figure 3: Map of Uganda



SCALING BEYOND GHANA, BURKINA FASO, AND UGANDA

ETHIOPIA

Development of district WASH master planning in Ethiopia has taken place in a number of districts, in different parts of Ethiopia, through different initiatives, as shown in Figure 4.

District water supply master plans were developed in 2018 in three mainly rural districts in Amhara Region: Dera, Farta, and North Mecha. These districts were subsequently supported in updating their water master plans and developing comprehensive WASH master plans. These districts have been supported to track expenditure and funding gaps, and launched resource mobilisation strategies in 2024.

Furthermore, around 2020, district WASH master plans were developed in the mainly rural districts of Negele Arsi and Shashamene in Oromia Region; South Ari, Baka Dawla Ari, Woba Ari in SNNP Region; and Mile District in Afar Region. Scaling of the approach was facilitated with the help of Excel-based planning and costing tools.

In addition, other districts have been supported to develop WASH master plans and resource mobilisation strategies. This has gone beyond rural districts and includes the development of city-wide inclusive sanitation (CWIS) master plans in four towns, and in five refugee/Internally Displaced Persons camps and their host communities, and long-term strategic utility business plans for ensuring sustainable services to seven towns in different parts of the country.

Under Agenda for Change, a collaboration of like-minded organisations that have adopted a set of common principles and approaches, **guidelines** have been developed for undertaking a district-wide WASH approach in Ethiopia, with a strong focus on district WASH master planning for district-level systems strengthening. These guidelines are currently being applied by Agenda for Change partners in Ethiopia.

The government recognised the need for undertaking district WASH master plans (or SDG plans) within the framework of its national 10-year development strategy (2021-2030). As a result, districts were to develop 10-year development strategies in 2021. The master plans (SDG plans) developed with the support of IRC and partners were considered as useful input to these plans.

Figure 4: Map of Ethiopia



RWANDA

In Rwanda, scaling of districts WASH master planning has been stimulated through a push from national level. Up till about a decade ago, Rwanda was struggling to

meet its ambitious sector targets and address the challenges of fragmented planning, uncoordinated approaches and ineffective implementation modalities. In 2016, it adopted the district-wide approach to meet its ambitious target of achieving universal access to basic water supply and sanitation by 2024 and providing safely managed WASH services by 2030.

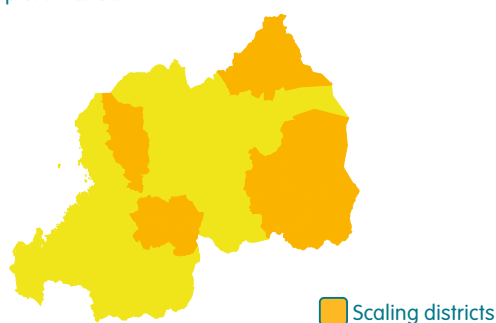
Between 2017 and 2019, district WASH master plans were prepared for five of the country's 30 districts with support from the Ministry of Infrastructure (Water and Sanitation Department) and the national utility, the Water and Sanitation Cooperation (WASAC), as well as development partners, including WaterAid and Water For People. With these plans, Rwanda was able to advocate for finances from international banks and bilateral relations to bridge the funding gaps.

The experiences from these five pilot districts have provided proof of concept and the approach can be scaled up nation-wide, which is now under way, with all 30 districts in Rwanda creating Development Investment Plans (DIPs)

The Rwanda National Integrated Water Supply and Sanitation Master Plans (RNIWSSMP) developed in 2022, included detailed master plans for each district. However, these were developed mainly by a consultant with hardly any input from the districts and focused on investment costs rather than life-cycle costs.

To facilitate the development of costed district WASH investment plans that consider all life-cycle costs, Water For People, IRC and WaterAid have worked with the government to develop planning and costing tools (for water services, sanitation, WASH in schools and WASH in health care facilities). These tools have been applied for the development of DIPs in 10 of the country's 30 districts. A WASH Systems Academy course has been developed to ensure the scaling and use of the tools in Rwanda beyond the 10 initial districts.

Figure 5: Map of Rwanda.



SCALING BEYOND IRC

Documentation and learning from the experiences of IRC and others with district WASH master planning have been consolidated into several products and services under the District WASH Master Planning Facility, intended to promote and facilitate further scaling of the approach. These include a WASH Systems Academy course on [planning for sustainable water and sanitation services](#) and a [landing page](#) on the Facility. Both provide access to 1) a series of case studies on district WASH master planning in specific districts and on scaling of district WASH master planning in specific countries; 2) an overview of tools which can be used at various moments in the planning cycle; and 3) conceptualisation of the master planning cycle. This has provided a resource base for starting up similar processes in other IRC focus countries/districts, such as Rwanda and Ethiopia, but also beyond IRC focus areas such as in Zimbabwe with Welthungerhilfe. The Facility has also been supporting in-house and sector-level learning and sharing on district WASH master planning.

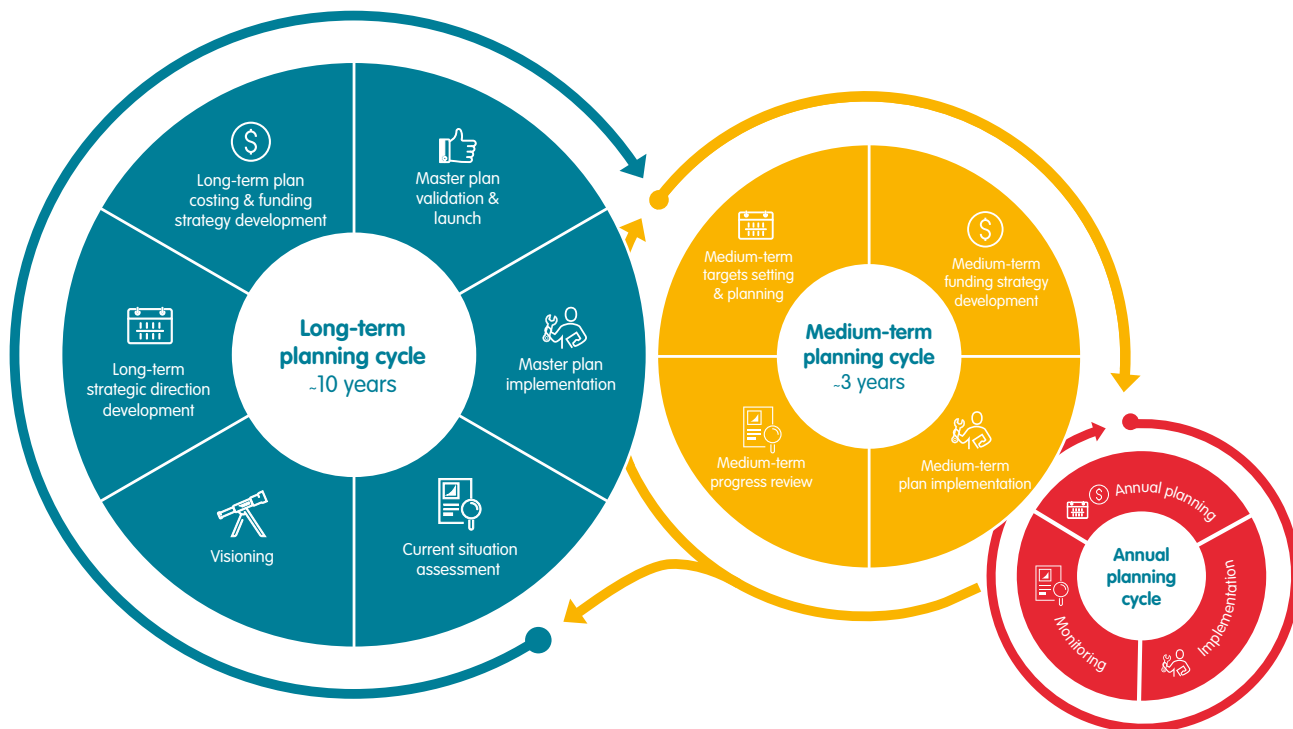
Through the work with Welthungerhilfe and its partners, the Government of Zimbabwe now recognises the importance of strengthening the broader WASH systems to achieve the 2030 target of universal access of universal access to improved water sources. In line with the broader government objective of all local authorities having service delivery plans, the Department of National WASH Coordination supported the development of district WASH master plans on a pilot basis in Chegutu and Mount Darwin Districts. These districts are core areas of Welthungerhilfe's Global WASH Programme which aims to support the development of a roadmap to guide the process of developing a district WASH master plan in Zimbabwe.

LESSONS LEARNT

Master planning involved long-, medium-, and short-term cycles of planning, implementation, monitoring, and reflection, which informed the subsequent phase of the cycle.

Based on the experiences in the pilot districts and beyond, the Facility conceptualised the district WASH master planning development and implementation cycles, shown in the figure below.

Figure 6: Visualisation of the different planning cycles and their key elements



DATA AS THE BASIS FOR DISTRICT WASH MASTER PLANNING:

In order to develop a District WASH master plan for achieving a future vision, there is a need to first understand where you are by undertaking an assessment of the current situation. In the three pilot districts, local government was actively involved in data collection, cleaning and processing. In Kabarole, for example, the strategic diagnostic assessment was undertaken by the District Water Office with support from the Hand Pump Mechanics Association, while in Asutifi North this was done by district staff, supervised by the district planning coordinator. Involvement of these stakeholders in the situational analysis was key for ensuring ownership of the data and establishing a good common understanding by these stakeholders of the current situation and the related challenges and opportunities.

In the three pilot districts, initial availability of data was limited (due to lack of strong local data and monitoring systems), necessitating a costly process of

primary data collection. This was identified as a possible challenge for scaling the process. The situational analysis process needs to strike the right balance between establishing a solid data, information, and knowledge base as the foundation of the district WASH master planning process, and ensuring that this process is cost-effective and efficient (e.g. by relying on existing secondary data where possible).



DEVELOPMENT OF A JOINT VISION AND SETTING TARGETS:

The pilot and scaling district WASH master planning processes have shown the importance of ensuring that the joint vision and targets that are set to guide the district WASH master plan, are as much as possible, in line with, and localised and contextualised versions of, national visions and targets. The Kabarole District WASH Master Plan was, for example, developed to be aligned with national documents such as Vision 2040 and National Development Plan 3.

Setting of (vision) targets can be an iterative process. In Rwanda, for example, the initial vision for district WASH master plans was to ensure safely managed water services for at least 40% of the population. However, the use of the planning and costing tools, and validation of the findings by district stakeholders, revealed that achieving this vision would require an unrealistically high increase in household connections for many districts. As a result, the vision target was adjusted for these districts. This shows that district WASH master planning processes can inform evidence-based discussions on national target setting.



DEVELOPING JOINT STRATEGIES

Strategic directions for going from the assessed current situation towards the vision were developed in the pilot districts.

This was done by taking population and economic growth scenarios and demands into account. In some cases, like in Asutifi North, this involved identification of innovative service development models for ensuring improved water services to people through Safe Water Enterprises. Strategic directions were not just focused on the development of assets needed to ensure universal coverage, but also on initiatives for ensuring long-term functionality and sustainability of WASH service provision, for example, through capacity building of service providers, sensitisation of WASH service users, and local systems strengthening.



DEVELOPMENT OF A COSTED PLAN AND FUNDING STRATEGY

Ideally, the development of a costed plan and a funding and finance strategy should be an integral part of the district WASH master planning process. The development of master plans for the three pilot districts included the costing of these plans. Customised and contextualised planning and costing tools have played a role in facilitating scaling of district WASH master planning, e.g. in Ghana, Rwanda, and Ethiopia. However, the processes in the pilot districts did not involve detailed funding and financing strategies based on thorough analyses of the funding

gaps. In Asutifi North and Kabarole, such analyses were done some years after the development of the master plan itself. Scaling master planning processes, such as the ones in Ahafo Region, Ethiopia and Rwanda, did include a light funding gap analysis, and a funding and financing strategy.



MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

The implementation of the district WASH master plan is often aligned with multi-sectoral District Medium-Term Development Plans, with the district WASH master plan informing the WASH parts of these multi-sectoral plans (e.g. the WASH section in the 4-year District MTDP in Ghana and the district 5-year plan in Uganda). Monitoring of the implementation of the master plan, based on an agreed monitoring framework, with regular critical reflections to inform learning and guide future actions, is critical for ensuring district WASH master plan implementation (beyond being just a document on a shelf). Although monitoring frameworks are an integral part of district WASH master plans, the actual use of these monitoring frameworks for tracking progress and informing reflection and decision making has been observed to a lesser degree. In Asutifi North, for example, a comprehensive monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) framework was developed as part of the district WASH master plan, without close reference to targets and strategies proposed in the master plan or data to be collected through annual service monitoring rounds. As a result, the monitoring data do not fully align with the MEL framework indicators. Quarterly and mid-year reports were done in districts, but appeared to be focused on 1) activities, and 2) access/service levels, with little to no information and reflection on monitoring of performance indicators. Furthermore, monitoring data, when collected, is not always consolidated beyond being made available in the consoles. In Asutifi North, for example, only one performance report was produced over a seven-year period (2018-2024).

WASH MASTER PLANNING HAS CONTRIBUTED TO STRENGTHENING OF LOCAL SYSTEMS

Master planning is a key component of a broader district-wide approach, which is considered a relevant way for systematically seeking to achieve substantial progress against WASH targets.

Development and implementation of the district WASH master plan has been observed to have gone hand-in-hand with capacity building of local stakeholders in systems strengthening and support for coordination and learning. In Uganda, for example, there was a focus on support to the task team (consisting of technical and political representatives at district and sub-county level).

The master planning process has particularly led to notable strengthening of the local monitoring systems, through the development and use of dedicated platforms for WASH monitoring which provide data to inform decision making and remedial actions (including in [Kabarole](#) and in [Asutifi North](#)). Going forward, it will be important to ensure systems and capacities are in place at local level, as well as enabling and facilitating systems and capacities at sub-national and national level, to ensure these monitoring systems can generate the data required to inform corrective action, reflection, planning, and reporting for accountability on an ongoing basis.

DISTRICT WASH MASTER PLANNING HAS BEEN A STARTING POINT FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

In the three pilot districts, the district WASH master planning processes have clearly led to implementation of the district WASH master plans through collective action.

In Asutifi North, implementation of the district WASH master plan has been ongoing through the [ANAM](#) (Asutifi North Ahonidie Mpontuo) initiative. The Asutifi North District Assembly is leading the implementation of the initiative with support from selected grantees of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation: IRC, Safe Water Network, Netcentric Campaigns, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Aquaya Institute, and World Vision International in Ghana. In addition, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have joined the initiative to support the district in reaching its sanitation vision and targets.

The master plan in and around Banfora is implemented through several initiatives, emphasising different elements of the master plan implementation and funded through different sources. This includes, for example, the Ji Saniyani ('clean water' in the local Dioula language) for improving water services in targeted rural areas of the commune, and the Saniya So project, for improving WASH services in 17 health centres and 30 schools, both implemented by Catholic Relief Services, as well as the Espace Culturel Gambidi for improving infrastructure in health care facilities, and the Social Art for Behaviour Change™



Photo caption: Launch event of the Asutifi North district master plan in 2018.

interventions to promote the long-term adoption of healthy hygiene behaviours, with support from the One Drop Foundation. Furthermore, citizens were mobilised through the "Faso-toilettes" campaign, to generate 57,000 euros for the construction of 500 household latrines.

In Kabarole, the master plan is also being implemented through various initiatives with different funding sources, focusing on different elements of the master plan. These include, for example, asset development and software activities for improving water and sanitation services for households and in health care facilities (HCFs), funded by the Waterloo Foundation, James Percy Foundation, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In these cases, collective action was initially facilitated through funding (from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation) for continuous coordination of partners and for projects on the implementation of components of the master plans. In cases where such funding was not available (e.g. in Mile District in Ethiopia), collective action for the implementation of the district WASH master plan proved more challenging.

DISTRICT WASH MASTER PLANNING HAS CONTRIBUTED TO ATTRACTING SOURCES OF FUNDING (TO SOME EXTENT...)

District WASH master planning has been found to contribute to mobilising additional public finance, but only to a limited extent.

Although in Asutifi North, relevant measures were taken to reduce the gap between required and actual spending on OpEx (through tariffs), such as stimulating pay-as-you fetch, there was no evidence of a reduction

in the financial gap from the users' side. It is plausible that the district-based approach has enabled the dedication of more public finance, and leveraged funding from development partners, but evidence of mobilisation of additional national public finance or (large-scale) repayable finance was lacking.

Findings from the 2021 financial gap study in Kabarole indicated a 12% increase in district WASH funding since the development of the district WASH master plan in 2018.

District WASH master planning has mainly been observed to have contributed to mobilising additional resources from development partners and NGOs.

In Kabarole, the presence of the district WASH master plan attracted additional NGOs to join the collective action of implementing specific elements of the WASH master plan, including the Waterloo Foundation, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In Banfora, for example, the political leadership shown by the commune of Banfora has inspired other partners and funders to join the initiative. The strength of the master plan helped Catholic Relief Services (CRS) to attract funding from US-funder, charity: water. As a result, Banfora had secured more than USD 3.5 million from four different funders, accounting for 88% of the resources required for the first implementation phase (2018 – 2020). This has mitigated, at least to some extent, the reduced national funding for WASH due to the deteriorating security situation in the country .

When district WASH master planning includes a rigid analysis of funding and financing gaps, it is likely that not only the finance gap will become more apparent,



Figure 7: Capital required vs committed for the implementation of the water services component of the Banfora master plan.

but also that it cannot be addressed at the local level alone. This creates the need and opportunity for national-level resource mobilisation within the framework of a broader finance strategy.

DIFFERENT PATHWAYS CAN LEAD TO SCALING OF DISTRICT WASH MASTER PLANNING

As shown above, the scaling of district WASH master planning has followed different paths in different countries. Evidence from the pilot and scaling countries shows that district WASH master planning is an approach that has the potential to be scaled up.

This is particularly the case when done through structures of government, as is shown by, for example, the role of RCC and NDPC in scaling district WASH master planning in Ghana, and/or through utilities, like WASAC in Rwanda, and ONEA in Burkina Faso. The involvement of such (sub-)national government agencies can mitigate the risks associated with limited local government capacity and leadership for the follow-up on planning processes, especially in scaling cases, where support from NGOs and other partners may be limited.

Experiences from the three pilot districts and beyond have shown that involvement of national (and sub-national) stakeholders in the development of (pilot) district WASH master plans is key for ensuring government ownership of the process, which has been proven to stimulate and facilitate its scaling.

THE FACILITY HAS PLAYED A USEFUL ROLE IN ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING A COMMON RESEARCH BASE, BUT NOT IN LINKING THESE TO SOURCES OF FUNDING AND FINANCING

The District WASH Master Planning Facility was established to 1) act as a platform for the promotion and facilitation of district WASH master plans; 2) facilitate marketing of district WASH master plans by bundling elements from multiple master plans for the development of “shovel-ready” projects; and to 3) act as a mechanism to link these master plans and bundled projects to possible financiers. Although it has been successful in its first objective, it has been less so in its second and third objective.

The Facility has successfully brought together tools, methods, guidelines, and documented experiences from developing and scaling district WASH master planning, into a **resource base**. This has included a WASH Systems Academy course on developing (and, to some degree, scaling) district WASH master plans. However, there is neither clear evidence of the Facility marketing district WASH master plans and facilitating the preparation of “shovel-ready” project, nor of the Facility acting as a matchmaker between master plans and financiers. Nevertheless, the Facility has triggered further thinking on how to achieve that. For example, in Rwanda, where district master plans have been developed at a nation-wide scale, there is now the recognition that project preparation is a bottleneck between having the master plans and the ability to

The Facility enables:

1. District WASH master planning at scale,

2. ...marketing these and preparation of shovel-ready projects,

3. ...linking these to sources of funding and financing.

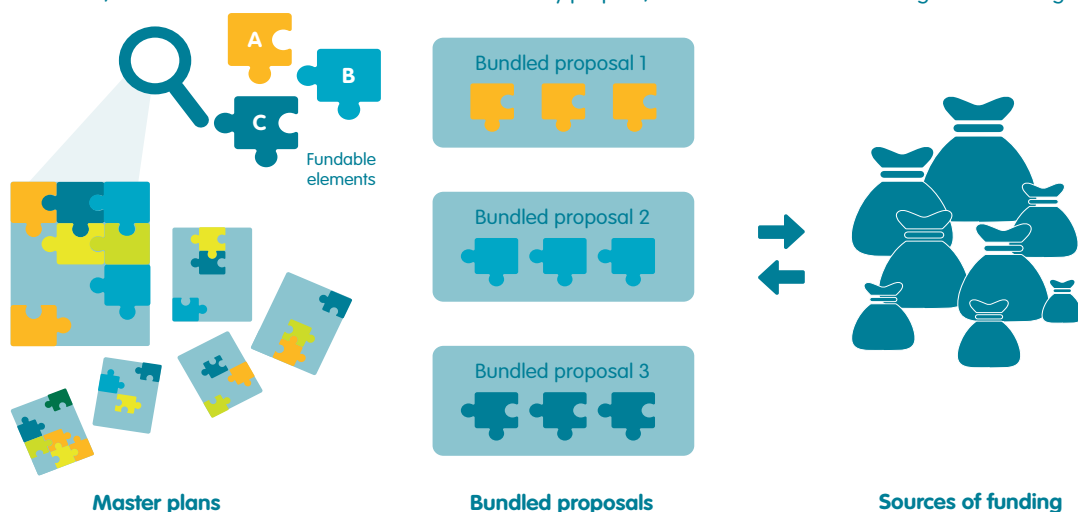


Figure 8: How the District WASH Master Planning Facility works.

mobilise finance. Financiers, whether national governments, public development banks, or multilateral development banks, need infrastructure development projects that include all the necessary details, feasibility studies, social, economic, and environmental impact studies, detailed engineering designs, etc. which goes well beyond the scope of a district WASH master plan. This aligns also with the broader literature on the role of major financiers (particularly national and multilateral development banks), that indicate that the biggest bottleneck in providing finance is in project preparation. Master plans remove one part of the bottleneck, i.e. the broader framework for identifying and prioritising projects. However, they need to be accompanied by project preparation functions. This is a very context-specific (country-specific) issue.

The responsibilities for project preparation often do not lie with districts (as service authorities), but rather with (national) utilities or governments, which have the technical capacity (or can hire it from consulting firms) to handle project preparation and follow the correct processes. This in turn also points towards the need for district master planning to take place within a framework which provides sufficient clarity on financing sector investments. Master plans make the financing gap visible in a striking manner. The cases reported above indicate how, on a local scale, districts have been able to mobilise funds, but mostly from development partners including INGOs. Some even have hired dedicated resource mobilisation capacity for that purpose. This can be understood as a reflection of the lack of clarity on secured sources of finance, at a sufficient scale, to implement the plans. For that reason, some of the countries have started developing [WASH sector finance strategies](#).

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS FOR THE WAY FORWARD

IS THE DISTRICT THE RIGHT LEVEL FOR STRATEGIC WASH MASTER PLANNING?

In line with the focus on the district-wide approach, IRC's approach to WASH master planning has focused at the district-level. However, the following limitations of planning at district-level have been observed:

- **Lack of scale:** Interventions identified in district WASH master plans can be too small to attract potential sources of funding, such as from development banks.
- **Boundaries of service providers do not overlap with the district boundaries:** Especially with increasing “utilitisation” of rural water supply (and sanitation), service providers increasingly serve areas which comprise several districts.
- **The limited role of local government as service authority:** The idea of local government as a service authority, ensuring water and sanitation services for all its constituents and overseeing and regulating water and sanitation service providers, is not always a reality. Although district WASH master planning can help strengthen local governments' roles in contexts where they are supposed to take up these responsibilities, this may not be relevant in every context.
- **Fragmentation:** Development of a large number of district WASH master plans places high demands on the facilitation and support of such processes.

This raises the question of whether the district is the right level for undertaking area-based participatory strategic planning processes, or whether it makes more sense to focus such processes at a higher institutional level (e.g. regional level, provisional level, etc.). This is, of course, highly context-dependent but warrants further discussion going forward.

HOW TO SHIFT FROM NGOS AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS TO (LOCAL) GOVERNMENT DRIVING DISTRICT WASH MASTER PLANNING?

Although local, regional, and national governments have been involved in scaling of district WASH master planning, as shown in this briefing note, requests for support and/or uptake typically come from INGOs, and scaling processes are mostly driven by development partners. The main users of the District WASH Master Planning Facility have also been INGOs, including ones with whom IRC works closely. There are few cases where governments use the resources to initiate district master planning without substantial support from technical agencies, such as INGOs.

CAN DISTRICT WASH MASTER PLANNING PLAY A CRUCIAL ROLE IN ENSURING CLIMATE RESILIENCE?

Ensuring access for all to sustainable water and sanitation services through district WASH master planning can be crucial in mitigating the effects of climate change. So far, however, emphasis on climate change adaptation and mitigation in district WASH master planning has been limited. District WASH master plans have not sufficiently focused on ensuring climate change resilience, which could be a missed opportunity, especially in terms of accessing climate funding. The Facility's team has identified several tools for assessing and addressing climate change risks and incorporating mitigation measures into district WASH master plans. However, they have observed that this issue needs further attention.

HOW TO LINK DISTRICT WASH MASTER PLANS TO SOURCES OF FUNDING AND FINANCING?

Given the lack of success of the District WASH Master Planning Facility to facilitate the linking of master plans to sources of funding and financing, it could be questioned whether the global level is the appropriate level for establishing such a Facility. Rather, such facilities could be more useful at country level, where the more specific bottlenecks between planning and financing could be addressed and where financing could be negotiated. In contexts where national (or large-area-based) utilities are the main service provider (e.g. Burkina Faso and Rwanda), they could play a key role in bundling common elements of district (or local) master plans and linking these to funding and financing sources. In contexts where such utilities are not in place (e.g. Ethiopia), regional, provincial, or state-level government could play this role.

HOW CAN DISTRICT WASH MASTER PLANNING TAKE DIFFERENT CONTEXTS INTO ACCOUNT?

The District WASH Master Planning Facility has not (yet) comprehensively differentiated the approaches to be applied for district WASH master planning in specific demographic and socio-economic settings and contexts, e.g. rural districts, small towns / municipalities, urban conglomerates, in resource-poor or -rich settings etc. Rather, it has developed resources and services which can be applied to different settings. The WASH Systems Academy course does comment on the use of the proposed approaches and tools in different settings.

The compilation of tools available from the Facility landing pages, and included in the training, covers a wide array of tools that can be applied in different contexts, thus presenting users with various options depending on their specific needs. The tool overview indicates for each tool when in the planning cycle it can be applied and for which subsector. Some tools are more context specific, while others are more general. This is mentioned as much as possible in the tool overview as well.

WHAT COULD AND SHOULD BE THE ROLE OF (I)NGOS AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS?

- Further evidence-based advocacy for district WASH master planning at scale directed at national governments and development partners, as well as stimulating and informing sector debate on related issues, including those mentioned above.
- Documentation of good practices, tools and methods, and making these easily accessible and usable.
- Provide technical assistance to local government. Although planning capacity is generally present at local government level, they often need support from third parties on:
 - Data collection, processing, analysis, and management.
 - Ensuring inclusiveness and prioritisation of the vulnerable and poor.
 - Introduction of new concepts and innovations in the development of strategic directions and plans.
 - Costing and development of funding and financing strategies.
- NGOs and development partners could play a role in providing such technical support, either directly, or by building (national and/or regional) government capacity for doing so.
- Stimulating and supporting relevant national (or regional) institutions in linking district WASH master plans to sources of funding and financing, e.g. through national project preparation facilities.

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About this brief

This paper builds on an evaluation of IRC's work on supporting the master planning approach within the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation funded Safe Water Strategy Program in Ethiopia, Ghana, and Uganda by Stef Smits, Veronica Ayi-Bonte and Moses Asiimwe. For more information on the scaling process in Ghana, see please read the briefing note:

[Pathways to universal WASH coverage in Ghana: Lessons from scaling Asutifi North's master planning approach.](#)

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