

MINISTRY OF INFRASTRUCTURE



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Template for Interactive Dialogue Concept Papers

Topic : Water for prosperity

I. Introduction: Water for prosperity

Water is the cornerstone of prosperity, health, and sustainable development. Across the world, access to clean water, effective sanitation, and well-managed water resources is essential for thriving communities and resilient economies. Whether it's supporting agriculture, powering industries, enabling education, or safeguarding public health, water touches every aspect of human life.

Water supply systems ensure that households, schools, and health centers have reliable access to safe drinking water. Sanitation services protect communities from disease and environmental degradation, while the sustainable management of water resources secures long-term availability for future generations.

Investing in water and sanitation is not just a matter of infrastructure—it is a commitment to dignity, equity, and opportunity. When water systems are strong, societies flourish. When they are neglected, progress stalls. That is why governments, development partners, and communities must continue to prioritize water as a driver of inclusive growth and lasting prosperity.

II. Status and trends

2.1. Water as a Foundation for Prosperity

Water is universally recognized as a cornerstone of human development and prosperity. It underpins health, education, agriculture, industry, and environmental sustainability. Without reliable access to clean water, communities face barriers to growth, resilience, and dignity. Globally, water scarcity affects over 2 billion people, and climate change continues to exacerbate pressure on freshwater systems. In this context, water is not just a

resource: it is a strategic asset that determines the trajectory of national development and global equity.

2.2. Uneven Progress in Water Supply Coverage

Despite global efforts, progress in water supply coverage remains uneven. Urban areas have generally achieved higher levels of access, while rural communities continue to face significant challenges. Example of Rwanda, access to improved drinking water sources increased from 87% in 2016/17 to 90% in 2023/24. Urban coverage reached 97%, while rural areas stood at 87%. These figures reflect commendable progress, yet they also highlight the need for targeted interventions to close the rural-urban gap and ensure equitable service delivery.

2.3. Proximity and Accessibility of Water Services:

Beyond coverage, the proximity of water sources to households is a critical factor in access. Long distances to water points can lead to time poverty, especially for women and children, and reduce water consumption below healthy levels. In Rwanda safely managed water systems is still low at 18% with the goal to increase it at 50% in the coming 5 years. These metrics demonstrate ongoing efforts to bring water closer to communities but also signal the need for continued infrastructure expansion and proper management.

2.4. Sanitation Access and Public Health

Sanitation is vital not only for public health and dignity but also for environmental protection and sustainable water management. Many communities still lack access to safely managed sanitation, leading to untreated wastewater contaminating rivers, lakes, and groundwater. This pollution spreads disease and harms ecosystems. In Rwanda, improved sanitation coverage has grown steadily, with more households using hygienic, non-shared toilet facilities, eradication of open-defecation, construction of faecal sludge management facilities—thanks to strong policy leadership and community involvement.

Beyond access, effective wastewater treatment is essential. It prevents environmental degradation and enables water recovery for agriculture, industry, and groundwater recharge. Rwanda is investing in decentralized treatment systems, especially in urban and peri-urban areas. These facilities are designed to be efficient, affordable, and adaptable. By integrating wastewater treatment into its sanitation strategy, Rwanda is advancing a circular water economy—turning waste into a resource and strengthening climate resilience.

2.5. Rising Water Demand and Consumption Trends

Domestic water demand is rising globally due to population growth, urbanization, and evolving consumption patterns. As more people move into cities and living standards improve, the need for reliable water services in households, schools, and health facilities

continues to grow. Globally, domestic water use now accounts for about 12% of total freshwater withdrawals, and this share is increasing. In many regions, per capita water consumption is climbing, driven by expanded access to appliances, improved hygiene expectations, and climate-related health concerns. Groundwater, which supplies nearly half of all domestic freshwater globally, is under mounting stress, especially in densely populated and agriculturally intensive areas. This highlights the growing pressure on water systems and the urgent need for sustainable planning, efficient usage, and resilient infrastructure. Countries are responding with integrated water resource management strategies, digital monitoring systems, and community-led conservation efforts to ensure that rising demand does not compromise long-term water security.

2.6. Mapping Water Resources for Strategic Planning

A major milestone in Rwanda's water sector has been the comprehensive mapping of all water resources nationwide. This includes surface water bodies, groundwater aquifers, and catchment areas. The mapped status provides critical data for strategic planning, resource allocation, and environmental protection. It enables decision-makers to identify vulnerable zones, prioritize investments, and monitor water availability in real time. This data-driven approach is a model for effective water governance and long-term sustainability.

2.7. Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM)

Rwanda has adopted an Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) policy that unifies water supply, sanitation, and resource management under a single framework. This policy promotes coordination among institutions, efficient use of resources, and alignment with national development goals. By integrating infrastructure development with environmental stewardship and community needs, IWRM has accelerated progress across the sector and enhanced resilience to climate-related risks.

2.8. Community Engagement and Local Governance

The success of water and sanitation initiatives depends not only on infrastructure but also on community ownership and local governance. The Government of Rwanda delegated a specific implementing agency mandated to develop, implement, operate, and maintain water supply systems both in urban and rural areas. Local governments, such as district authorities, play a crucial role in community mobilization; particularly in preventing vandalism, discouraging water theft, and promoting timely payment of service fees. This partnership ensures that facilities are protected and services are sustained.

2.9. Global Trends and Innovation in Water Management

Globally, countries are embracing innovation to improve water management. Digital monitoring systems, smart meters, and remote sensing technologies are being deployed to track water usage, detect leaks, and optimize operations. Financing models are evolving, with blended funding and results-based approaches helping to close investment gaps.

Community-led solutions and public-private partnerships are also gaining traction, ensuring that water services are inclusive, accountable, and responsive to local needs. Rwanda is piloting the use of pre-paid water meters at public taps (currently, 200 are in use) whereas there is a launch of another piloting case of 300 smart-meters under private framework.

2.10. Sustaining Momentum and Leaving No One Behind

As the discussions in water and sanitation go on, the focus should remain on sustaining momentum and reaching those still underserved. Protecting water infrastructure, promoting responsible usage, and ensuring equitable access are shared responsibilities. Governments, partners, and communities must continue to work together to make water for all a reality. Leaving no one behind is not just a slogan: it is a commitment to dignity, resilience, and shared prosperity for every individual.

III. Challenges and emerging issues

3.1. Persistent Gaps in Access

Despite global progress, significant disparities in water and sanitation access remain. Over **2 billion people** still lack safe drinking water, and more than **3.5 billion** lack safely managed sanitation. These gaps are most severe in rural and peri-urban areas, where infrastructure is either limited, absent, undersized or poorly managed. Many households rely on unsafe sources like rivers or unprotected wells, increasing exposure to waterborne diseases. Inadequate sanitation further compounds health risks, especially for vulnerable groups. Bridging these gaps requires infrastructure investment, inclusive planning, and strong community engagement.

3.2. Climate Variability and Water Security

Climate change is a growing threat to water security. More frequent droughts, floods, and erratic rainfall are disrupting supply systems and degrading water quality. These impacts are especially severe in areas dependent on rain-fed sources and surface water. Groundwater recharge is also declining due to prolonged dry spells and overuse. As climate extremes intensify, water systems must adapt through resilient infrastructure, diversified sources, and better forecasting. Without proactive measures, climate variability will continue to undermine water access and sustainability.

3.3. Rising Demand and Resource Pressure

Population growth, urbanization, and economic expansion are driving up water demand globally. In developing countries, where the population growth is high, it also implies the high growth of water demand both for domestic, agriculture and irrigation use. This mirrors global trends, where urban centres and industries are placing increasing pressure on water systems. As demand outpaces supply, competition intensifies, often leading to inequities

and environmental stress. Meeting this demand requires strategic planning, efficient usage, and scalable infrastructure.

3.4. Infrastructure Vulnerabilities

Water infrastructure faces threats that compromise reliability and increase costs. Vandalism, water theft, and non-payment of fees are common, especially in areas with weak local governance. These issues disrupt service delivery and erode financial sustainability. Aging infrastructure and poor maintenance further exacerbate breakdowns and water losses. Addressing these vulnerabilities calls for stronger community involvement, better monitoring, and robust asset management to ensure infrastructure remains secure and functional.

3.5. Fragmented Institutional Coordination

In many countries, water supply, sanitation, and resource management are handled by separate entities, leading to inefficiencies and gaps in accountability. Infrastructure may be built without long-term maintenance plans, or water resources allocated without sanitation considerations. This lack of integration hampers progress toward universal access. Strengthening institutional frameworks, clarifying roles, and fostering collaboration are essential to streamline operations and align sector goals with national development priorities.

3.6. Financing Gaps

Expanding and maintaining water and sanitation services requires substantial funding, yet many governments struggle to mobilize adequate resources. Climate-resilient infrastructure and rural service expansion are particularly costly, considering the usual practice. Traditional financing often falls short, leaving projects underfunded. Low revenue collection due to non-payment or subsidized tariffs further limits financial viability. Bridging the gap calls for innovative models like blended finance, public-private partnerships, and results-based funding, supported by donors and development banks.

3.7. Social Equity and Inclusion

Access to water and sanitation is a basic right, yet marginalized groups—including those in informal settlements, remote areas, and climate-vulnerable zones—often remain excluded. These communities face barriers like geographic isolation and limited representation. Women and girls are disproportionately affected, bearing the burden of water collection and suffering from inadequate sanitation. Addressing these disparities is key to achieving **SDG 6**. Inclusive policies, targeted subsidies, and participatory planning can help extend services and promote equity.

3.8. Emerging Governance Challenges

Water governance is increasingly complex, requiring coordination across sectors and jurisdictions. Weak regulations, limited enforcement, and unclear mandates hinder

effective management. Centralized decision-making often overlooks local realities, leading to misaligned priorities. Transboundary conflicts, privatization debates, and climate adaptation add further complexity. Strengthening legal frameworks, improving transparency, and promoting stakeholder participation are vital for building governance systems that can respond to evolving demands.

3.9. Data Gaps and Monitoring Limitations

Reliable data is essential for informed decision-making, yet many regions lack comprehensive information on water availability, usage, and quality. Real-time monitoring is rare, and resource mapping is often outdated. Without accurate data, planners cannot allocate resources effectively or respond to emergencies. Rwanda's nationwide water resource mapping offers a model for strategic planning. Investing in digital tools, building local data capacity, and promoting open platforms can improve transparency and accountability.

3.10. Cross-cutting risks across SDGs

Water and sanitation challenges affect multiple Sustainable Development Goals. Lack of clean water undermines **SDG 3 (Health)** by increasing disease. Poor sanitation impacts **SDG 4 (Education)**, as children—especially girls—miss school due to inadequate facilities. Water scarcity hinders **SDG 5 (Gender Equality)**, while inefficient use impedes **SDG 13 (Climate Action)**. These interlinkages demand cross-sectoral solutions that integrate water strategies into broader development agendas. Recognizing and addressing these synergies is essential for building a more equitable and sustainable future.

IV. Solutions

4.1. Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM)

Global Perspective: IWRM is a globally endorsed framework that promotes coordinated development and management of water, land, and related resources. It ensures that water use across sectors—agriculture, industry, domestic, and environmental—is balanced and sustainable. Countries like South Africa, Jordan, and Mexico have institutionalized IWRM to harmonize water governance and reduce fragmentation.

Rwanda's Innovation: Rwanda has fully embraced IWRM through its national water policy and the establishment of the Rwanda Water Resources Board (RWB). This body oversees water resource planning, allocation, and protection, working in close coordination with WASAC (Water and Sanitation Corporation), district authorities and all other water users' catchment-wise. The IWRM framework has enabled Rwanda to align water supply,

sanitation, and resource management under a unified strategy, improving efficiency and accelerating progress toward universal access.

Scalability: Rwanda’s IWRM model demonstrates that even low-income countries can institutionalize integrated water governance through clear mandates, capacity building, and stakeholder alignment. It offers a replicable blueprint for nations seeking to harmonize fragmented water sectors and build climate-resilient systems.

4.2. Nationwide Water Resource Mapping

Global Perspective: Accurate data is the backbone of effective water management. Countries like India and Brazil have invested in hydrological mapping to guide infrastructure development, conservation, and disaster preparedness.

Rwanda’s Innovation: Rwanda undertook a comprehensive mapping of all its water resources, including surface water bodies, groundwater aquifers, and catchment areas. This initiative has provided critical data for strategic planning, enabling authorities to identify vulnerable zones, prioritize investments, and monitor water availability in real time.

Scalability: Rwanda’s mapping initiative showcases how digital tools and geospatial data can empower governments to make evidence-based decisions. It is a model for countries with limited data capacity to build robust water information systems and improve resource allocation.

4.3. Expanding Rural Water Access

Global Perspective: Reaching rural populations requires decentralized systems, community-managed schemes, and inclusive service models. Ethiopia’s One WASH program and Nepal’s rural water supply projects have demonstrated success through local ownership and targeted investments.

Rwanda’s Innovation: Rwanda increased access to improved drinking water from 87% in 2016/17 to 90% in 2023/24, with rural coverage reaching 87%. The government prioritized infrastructure in remote areas, promoted household-level connections, and ensured that water points were located within 200–500 meters of households, in urban and rural areas respectively, to reduce collection time and improve health outcomes. In addition Rwanda has changed the management of the rural water supply where it is managed by the Government agency in charge of water and sanitation, where the latter has delegated it to the youth companies.

Scalability: Rwanda’s approach—combining infrastructure expansion with community engagement and performance-based contracts—offers a scalable model for inclusive service delivery in rural and underserved areas.

4.4. Climate-Resilient Infrastructure

Global Perspective: Climate-resilient water infrastructure is essential to withstand droughts, floods, and shifting rainfall patterns. Nature-based solutions, rainwater

harvesting, and flood-proof sanitation are gaining traction globally, with Kenya's sand dams and Bangladesh's elevated latrines serving as strong examples.

Rwanda's Innovation: Rwanda's Climate Resilient Strategy and Action Plan provides a framework to strengthen water supply and sanitation services against climate risks. Its goal is to ensure reliable, sustainable services through both mitigation and adaptation. The strategy focuses on protecting infrastructure, improving service quality, and preparing for climate-related disruptions. It outlines eight objectives, including better asset management, protection from floods, erosion, landslides, and drought, as well as stronger sanitation systems. It also promotes energy efficiency and disaster preparedness through real-time monitoring and contingency planning.

Running from 2025 to 2034, the strategy is backed by an action plan and monitoring framework, with an estimated cost of over USD 20 million. Rwanda's approach highlights how integrated planning can build climate-resilient WASH systems and safeguard essential services.

Scalability: Rwanda's climate-adaptive infrastructure demonstrates how resilience can be mainstreamed into water planning, even in resource-constrained settings. It offers practical lessons for countries facing increasing climate variability.

4.5. Reducing Non-Revenue Water (NRW)

Global Perspective: NRW—water lost through leaks, theft, or inaccurate billing—undermines financial sustainability and service reliability. Countries like Singapore and Chile have achieved low NRW through smart metering, leak detection, and efficient billing systems.

Rwanda's Innovation: Rwanda's Water and Sanitation Sector Strategic Plan (2024–2029) targets a reduction in NRW through digital monitoring, infrastructure upgrades, and public awareness campaigns. WASAC is implementing smart meters and pressure management systems to detect leaks and improve billing accuracy.

Scalability: Rwanda's strategy shows how combining technology with behavioral change, both professionally and socially, can reduce losses and improve utility performance. It is a replicable model for utilities seeking to enhance operational efficiency and financial viability.

4.6. Community Engagement and Local Governance

Global Perspective: Empowering communities to manage water systems enhances sustainability and accountability. Uganda's community-led sanitation and Bolivia's water cooperatives are strong examples of local ownership driving success.

Rwanda's Innovation: District WASH Boards have been created to help improve water and sanitation services in each district. Their main role is to support the proper management of water systems and make sure communities receive good quality services. These boards

bring together local leaders, service providers, and community representatives to plan, monitor, and guide WASH activities.

They meet regularly to review progress, prepare budgets, and check that services like water supply and sanitation are working well. They also help ensure water prices follow national rules and promote better hygiene in schools, health centers, and public places. By working closely with different groups, District WASH Boards help make water and sanitation services more reliable and sustainable.

Scalability: Rwanda's model highlights the importance of local governance and community participation in sustaining water services. It offers a practical framework for decentralized systems that rely on grassroots engagement.

4.7. Inclusive Sanitation Strategies

Global Perspective: Safely managed sanitation requires infrastructure, behavior change, and policy support. India's Swachh Bharat Mission and Senegal's fecal sludge management reforms have improved sanitation coverage and hygiene practices.

Rwanda's Innovation: Rwanda increased access to improved sanitation from 86% in 2016/17 to 94% in 2023/24, with non-shared toilet facilities rising from 66% to 72%. The country promotes household latrines, school sanitation, and hygiene education through coordinated campaigns and community outreach. In the light of inclusiveness, each school is equipped with a menstrual room for girls as well as sanitation facilities at health care facilities.

Scalability: Rwanda's sanitation success stems from strong political commitment, community mobilization, and integration with health and education sectors. These elements can be replicated in other countries to accelerate progress toward SDG 6.

4.8. Innovative Financing Mechanisms

Global Perspective: Blended finance, results-based funding, and public-private partnerships are unlocking capital for water projects.

Rwanda's Innovation: Rwanda completed a comprehensive study on the unfolded the gaps in WASH financing and developed strategy to fulfil that gap. The main goal was to develop a clear, evidence-based fact sheet that shows the potential of different revenue and financing sources for the WASH sector. It involved modelling of growth of each source over time in response to national targets, helping to understand their contribution toward closing the current financing gap.

By analyzing Rwanda's WASH sector financing needs and comparing them with available and projected income streams, the study identified practical ways to bridge funding gaps across key expenditure areas, support the design of a strategic program/project aiming the achievement of Rwanda Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) by 2030.

Scalability: Rwanda's financing approach demonstrates how strategic partnerships and financial reforms can mobilize resources for water and sanitation in low-income contexts. It offers a roadmap for utilities seeking to improve creditworthiness and attract investment.

4.9. Digital Transformation in Water Supply Management

Global Perspective: Digital tools are revolutionizing water management. Smart meters, GIS mapping, and remote sensing enable real-time monitoring, predictive maintenance, and data-driven planning. South Korea's digital water platform and the Netherlands' flood forecasting system are leading examples.

Rwanda's Innovation: Rwanda is deploying digital tools to monitor water consumption, detect leaks, and manage assets. The integration of technology into planning and operations is improving efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness.

Scalability: Rwanda's digital transformation shows how even small utilities can harness technology to optimize performance and enhance accountability. It provides a scalable model for digital innovation in the water sector.

4.10. Strengthening Regional and Global Partnerships

Global Perspective: Cross-border collaboration and knowledge exchange accelerate progress. The African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW), the Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) partnership, and the UN-Water SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework foster such partnerships.

Rwanda's Innovation: Rwanda actively participates in regional water platforms and global initiatives. Its inclusion in the UN-Water SDG 6 Country Acceleration Case Study highlights its leadership and commitment to sharing lessons. Rwanda also collaborates with neighboring countries on transboundary water management and regional capacity building.

Scalability: Rwanda's engagement demonstrates how countries can contribute to and benefit from global partnerships, driving innovation, resource mobilization, and collective progress. It underscores the importance of diplomacy, knowledge exchange, and shared accountability in achieving SDG 6.

V. Recommendations and conclusions

Water for Prosperity: Recommendations and Conclusions Toward Achieving SDG 6

5.1. Recommendations

Rwanda's Progress in Water and Sanitation

Over the past decade, Rwanda has made notable progress in expanding access to water and sanitation services. The country has prioritized rural and peri-urban areas, where infrastructure gaps are most pronounced. Through targeted investments and strong policy

leadership, Rwanda has increased the proportion of households with access to improved drinking water and non-shared sanitation facilities. These gains reflect a commitment to equity, sustainability, and community-driven development.

One of Rwanda's most impactful initiatives is the development of the **Climate Resilient Strategy and Action Plan for the WASH sector**. This strategy provides a comprehensive framework for enhancing the resilience of water supply and sanitation infrastructure to climate change. It outlines eight strategic objectives, including improving asset management, protecting infrastructure from floods, erosion, and landslides, mitigating drought impacts, strengthening sanitation services, promoting energy efficiency, and enhancing disaster risk management. The strategy is backed by a costed action plan and monitoring framework, with implementation scheduled from 2025 to 2034.

Rwanda has also institutionalized **Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM)** through the Rwanda Water Resources Board (RWB). This approach ensures that water supply, sanitation, and resource management are coordinated under a unified strategy. Nationwide mapping of water resources has provided critical data for planning and allocation, while digital tools are being deployed to monitor water consumption, detect leaks, and manage assets.

At the local level, the establishment of **District WASH Boards (DWASHBs)** has strengthened governance and accountability. These boards bring together district officials, service providers, and community representatives to oversee WASH activities, prepare budgets, monitor service quality, and advocate for improved hygiene in schools, health centers, and public spaces. Their inclusive structure ensures that decisions reflect the needs and priorities of diverse stakeholders.

Lessons Learned from Rwanda's Experience

Rwanda's journey offers valuable lessons for other countries seeking to improve water and sanitation services:

1. Integrated Planning Enhances Efficiency

Rwanda's adoption of IWRM and climate-resilient planning demonstrates the value of aligning water supply, sanitation, and resource management under a single strategic framework. This integration reduces duplication, improves coordination, and ensures that infrastructure investments are sustainable and climate-adaptive.

2. Local Governance Strengthens Accountability

The creation of DWASHBs has empowered local institutions to take ownership of WASH services. By involving district leaders, health and education representatives, service providers, and community members, Rwanda has built a governance model that is responsive, inclusive, and accountable.

3. Climate Resilience Is Non-Negotiable

Rwanda's Climate Resilient Strategy highlights the importance of designing infrastructure to withstand floods, droughts, erosion, and landslides. Climate adaptation is not a luxury—it is a necessity for protecting investments and ensuring service continuity in the face of increasing climate variability.

4. Data Drives Smart Decisions

Nationwide mapping of water resources and the use of digital monitoring tools have enabled Rwanda to make evidence-based decisions. Accurate data supports strategic planning, resource allocation, and performance tracking, leading to more effective and efficient service delivery.

5. Inclusive Sanitation Promotes Health and Dignity

Rwanda's focus on non-shared, improved sanitation facilities in households, schools, and health centers has enhanced public health and human dignity. Sanitation is not just about infrastructure—it is about behavior change, community engagement, and policy support.

6. Wastewater Treatment Adds Environmental Value

Rwanda recognizes the importance of wastewater treatment for environmental protection and water recovery. Treated wastewater can be reused for agriculture, industry, and groundwater recharge, reducing pressure on freshwater sources and contributing to a circular water economy.

What Can Accelerate Progress Toward SDG 6

To achieve SDG 6 by 2030, countries must adopt a multi-dimensional approach that addresses infrastructure, governance, financing, climate resilience, and community engagement. The following recommendations outline key actions that can accelerate progress:

1. Scale Climate-Resilient Infrastructure

Investing in infrastructure that can withstand climate shocks is essential. This includes flood-proof sanitation facilities, drought-resistant water systems, erosion control measures, and nature-based solutions such as watershed restoration. Climate resilience must be embedded in all stages of planning, design, and implementation.

2. Mobilize Diverse Financing Sources

Closing the WASH financing gap requires innovative approaches. Governments should explore blended finance models, public-private partnerships, and results-based funding. Strengthening utility creditworthiness and improving revenue collection can attract commercial investment. International donors and development banks play a critical role in supporting large-scale infrastructure and capacity building.

3. Strengthen Monitoring and Data Systems

Real-time monitoring, digital tools, and open data platforms enhance transparency and accountability. Countries should invest in technologies that track water quality, service coverage, infrastructure performance, and customer feedback. Data should be disaggregated by gender, geography, and income to identify and address inequalities.

4. Promote Regional and Global Partnerships

Collaboration across borders and sectors accelerates learning and innovation. Platforms such as the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW), Sanitation and Water for All (SWA), and the UN-Water SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework facilitate knowledge exchange and joint action. Countries should actively participate in these networks and share best practices.

5. Empower Communities and Local Institutions

Community engagement is key to sustainability. Governments should support local institutions like DWASHBs, build capacity at the grassroots level, and involve communities in planning, implementation, and monitoring. Inclusive governance ensures that services reflect local needs and priorities.

6. Integrate WASH with Other SDGs

Water and sanitation are linked to health (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), and climate action (SDG 13). Countries should integrate WASH strategies into broader development plans to maximize impact. For example, improving school sanitation boosts attendance, especially for girls, while clean water in health centers enhances service delivery.

7. Prioritize Wastewater Treatment and Reuse

Wastewater treatment is often overlooked but is essential for environmental protection and water security. Countries should invest in decentralized treatment systems, promote safe reuse, and develop policies that support a circular water economy. Rwanda's efforts in this area offer a model for others to follow.

8. Foster Innovation and Technology Adoption

Emerging technologies—such as smart meters, mobile payment systems, and remote sensing—can transform water management. Governments should create enabling environments for innovation, support pilot projects, and scale successful solutions. Partnerships with tech companies, research institutions, and startups can drive progress.

5.2. Conclusion

Water is more than a basic need—it is a pathway to prosperity. It enables health, education, economic growth, and climate resilience. Rwanda’s experience shows that with strong leadership, integrated planning, and community engagement, it is possible to transform the WASH sector and make meaningful progress toward SDG 6.

The journey is not without challenges. Financing gaps, climate risks, and governance complexities persist. But the solutions are within reach. By scaling proven models, investing in resilience, empowering communities, and fostering collaboration, countries can ensure that clean water and safe sanitation become a reality for all.

VI. Guiding questions

1. Policy and Strategic Planning

- How can countries better integrate water supply, sanitation, and water resource management into a single, coherent national strategy?
- What are the most effective ways to embed climate resilience into WASH planning and infrastructure development?
- In your experience, what policy shifts have been most impactful in aligning national WASH efforts with SDG 6?

2. Equity and Access

- What strategies have proven successful in reaching the most underserved populations with safe water and sanitation?
- How can we ensure that WASH services are inclusive, particularly for women, children, people with disabilities, and marginalized communities?
- What role does local data play in identifying and addressing inequalities in WASH access?

3. Governance and Institutional Capacity

- How can local governance structures, such as Rwanda’s District WASH Boards, be strengthened to improve service delivery and accountability?
- What are the key ingredients for successful multi-stakeholder coordination in the WASH sector?
- How can we ensure that community voices are meaningfully included in WASH planning and monitoring?

4. Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability

- What are the most pressing climate risks to water and sanitation infrastructure in your context, and how are they being addressed?

- How can countries balance infrastructure development with the protection of water catchments and ecosystems?
- What role does wastewater treatment and reuse play in building a circular and climate-resilient water economy?

5. Financing and Resource Mobilization

- What innovative financing models are helping to close the WASH funding gap in your country or region?
- How can we better leverage public-private partnerships and blended finance to scale WASH investments?
- What mechanisms are in place to ensure the financial sustainability of water and sanitation services?

6. Technology and Data for Decision-Making

- How are digital tools and real-time monitoring transforming WASH service delivery?
- What challenges do countries face in building reliable data systems for water and sanitation, and how can they be overcome?
- How can we ensure that data is used effectively to inform policy and improve accountability?

7. Service Quality and Performance

- What standards or benchmarks are most useful for measuring the quality of WASH services?
- How can utilities and service providers improve responsiveness to customer needs, such as leak repairs and new connections?
- What role does tariff regulation play in ensuring both affordability and sustainability?

8. Cross-Sectoral Integration

- How can WASH be better integrated with health, education, and climate policies to maximize development impact?
- What examples have you seen where improved WASH services directly contributed to better outcomes in other sectors?
- How can we foster stronger collaboration between ministries and sectors to deliver holistic solutions?

9. Innovation and Scaling Best Practices

- What innovative approaches or technologies have shown promise in your context, and how can they be scaled?

- How can countries adapt successful models from others—like Rwanda’s climate-resilient WASH strategy—to fit their own needs?
- What role do research institutions and startups play in driving innovation in the WASH sector?

10. Global and Regional Collaboration

- How can countries benefit from participating in regional and global WASH platforms?
 - What mechanisms are most effective for sharing knowledge and lessons learned across borders?
 - How can international partnerships be leveraged to accelerate SDG 6 implementation at the national and local levels?
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