



# The journey so far

Working together for safe water  
in Burkina Faso

This country brief – compiled by IRC – shares the highlights and lessons learned from collective action in Banfora commune, Burkina Faso. The Safe Water Strategy partnership – made possible with funding from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation – works to ensure access to safe water services, for everyone, for good. Please also see the other focus country briefs and the synthesis document: *People, systems and change: harnessing the power of collective action through the Safe Water Strategy* here: <https://www.ircwash.org/resources/working-together-safe-water-journey-so-far>

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#### **THE STORY OF THE COVER PHOTO**

Traore Bissiri works at the ONEA treatment plant in Banfora. As a key actor of the WASH system, ONEA is responsible for providing water and sanitation services in urban areas but increasingly reaching into secondary towns and their rural hinterlands.

### **MEASURING PROGRESS IS COMPLICATED**

In this brief we use the definitions of the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene (JMP) to assess the quality of services that people are receiving and to set targets for the future. The JMP identifies a service ladder whose rungs consist of five distinct service levels: surface water; unimproved; limited; basic; and, safely managed. Like the JMP, we use a combination of household surveys, infrastructure, water quality, and administrative data to estimate the proportion of the population being served at each level. Criteria including technology type, protection from contaminants, distance from home and availability.

Each level up from 'surface water' represents a significant improvement in the safety and security of the supply. The same logic applies to sanitation, hygiene, and services in schools and health care facilities. A safer water supply can be achieved by using infrastructure that guards against contamination (e.g. a deep mechanised borehole or a piped scheme instead of an open well or stream); using water treatment technology (e.g. in a piped scheme or chlorination at a point source); or reducing the distance and time between the point of collection and the point of use (in turn reducing both the risk of recontamination, and the burden and risks of long trips to the water point).

We are driving progress towards universal access to safe services, and eventually 'safely managed' services by using a variety of context-appropriate strategies. These include bringing piped water to more households, protecting and disinfecting community water points, and promoting better household storage and treatment practices.

The JMP definitions do not always match perfectly to national norms and standards. In particular, there is considerable disagreement about what constitutes 'safe' water. Despite this, we believe that for consistency and ease of comparison across countries and programmes, it makes sense to use JMP wherever possible. For more information on the JMP methodology, go to <https://washdata.org/monitoring/methods>.

# Our vision



**M. Aboubakar Héma**  
Mayor of Banfora

“Our vision is clear. In 2030, our dynamic communal governance will make Banfora the standard in terms of access to sustainable drinking water and sanitation services everywhere, for everyone and at any time. We want Banfora to become a reference for national level and even beyond.”

Everyone deserves to have safe water. It’s the most fundamental human right, and a basic need that enables fulfilling and productive lives. The vision of the Safe Water Strategy in Burkina Faso is to make access to safe water available for everyone, for good.

Over the last 20 years, there has been significant progress globally towards this aim.

And Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6)

– ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all – has provided a sense of urgency and fresh impetus.

But we’re still badly off track. Why?

Because people have focused on building infrastructure, rather than making water services effective and sustainable.

This approach has been inefficient and ineffective. It’s meant that we’ve duplicated efforts and haven’t addressed what matters most to vulnerable communities. What we need now is a change of mindset, and a change of approach. We need to understand the root causes of systemic issues and strengthen the systems that deliver water services: not just infrastructure but also the

people, partnerships, incentives, laws and policies that make it work.

The Safe Water Strategy (2017-2021)<sup>1</sup>, a programme funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation embraced this challenge by driving systems change in districts in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Niger and Uganda. Safe Water Strategy partners work to bring the ambitions of SDG 6 within reach for households, health care facilities and schools.

The strategy is based on a simple but ambitious hypothesis – that it is possible to have a long-term impact on safe water services for everyone by supporting district-level change through government leadership, local coordination of partners and the development of clear and ambitious shared goals that drive systems change, all galvanised through local ‘hubs’.

<sup>1</sup> The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation’s 2017-2021 Safe Water Strategy. <https://www.hiltonfoundation.org/learning/2017-2021-safe-water-strategic-initiative-strategy>



**Sali Nimu, restaurant manager  
in the town of Banfora**

“In Banfora, water cuts happen regularly and the pressure at the taps is falling. To get water you have to wake up early or go very late. I urge policy makers to provide private connections to everyone so that water is coming out of taps at all times. We need water for our daily activities so if we have to pay for it, we will, but these prices have to be affordable.”

Hubs act as the ‘backbone’ of each partnership. They help local leaders to mobilise and coordinate partners. They facilitate relationships, provide expertise and monitoring, help share learning and ensure continuous communication among partners. Hubs also work at the national level, linking what’s happening at the district to the centres of power and decision making within the country. This way, as these partnerships explore new solutions through collective action and build institutional capacity to sustain services, they also help expand proven approaches nationally and globally.

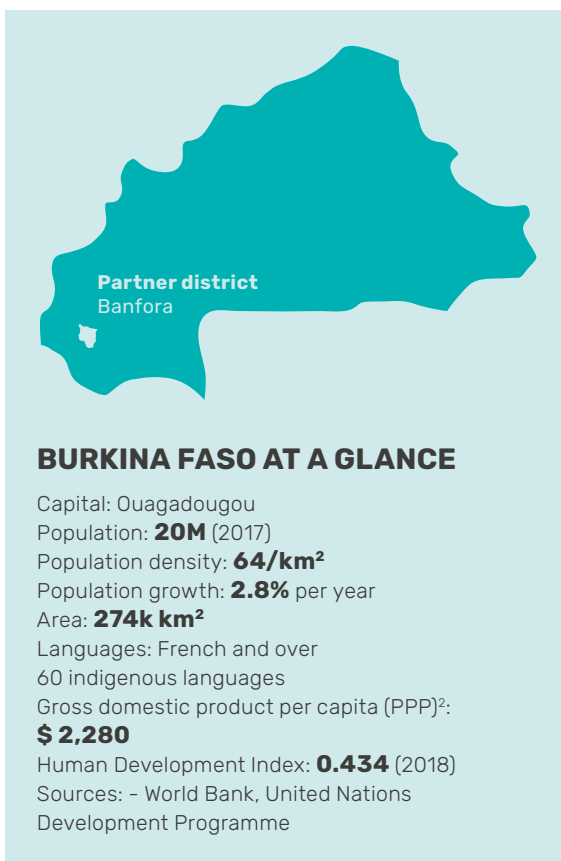
The activities of this unique collaboration in Burkina Faso are concentrated in one commune (district) – Banfora.

They are guided by a WASH master plan which outlines the steps needed to get safe water and sanitation to everyone in the commune by 2030. The plan was developed by the local government and the Safe Water Strategy partnership in 2018 and represents the clear, shared vision, which motivates the entire partnership.

The partners are working together to achieve the government’s long-term vision of reaching 47,000 people in Banfora with basic and 165,000 people with safely managed water services by 2030, and ensuring that 28 schools and 17 health care facilities have decent and sustainable water and sanitation facilities.

# The challenge and context in Burkina Faso...

In 2016, the president of Burkina Faso, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, made a commitment that there would be: 'No more water related drudgery, and a healthy living environment by 2030'.

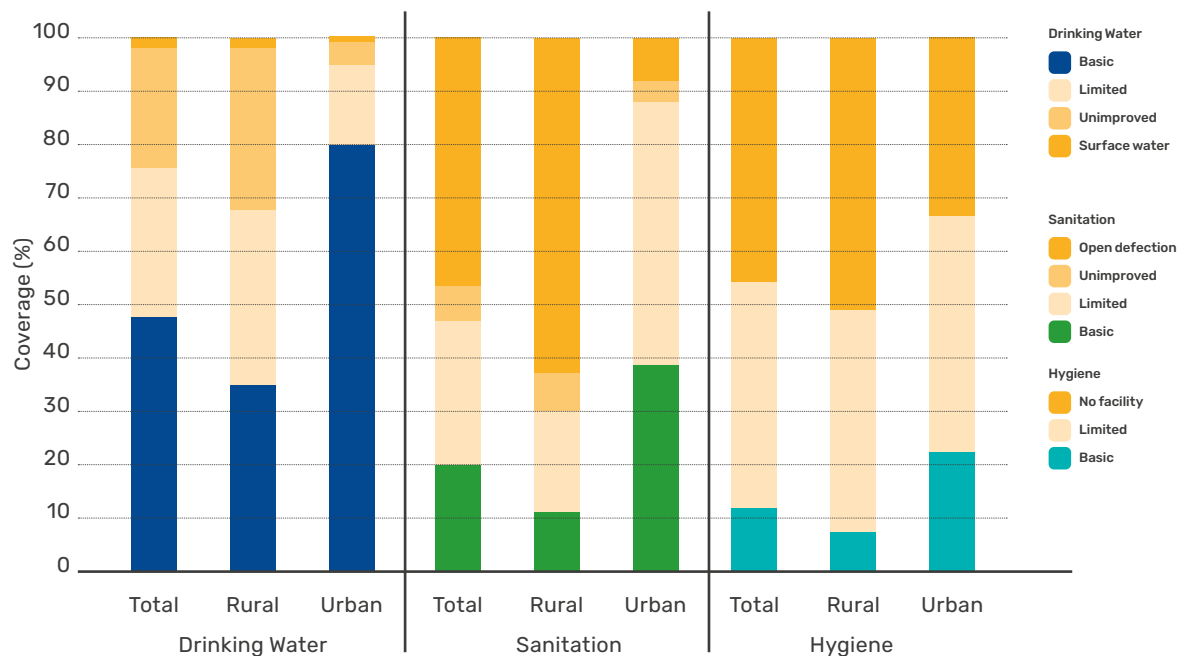


The national government introduced budgeted national programmes for achieving universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all (SDG 6.1); and adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all (SDG 6.2).

In 2017, around one third of the people living in Burkina Faso's rural areas lacked access to basic WASH services, and another third used infrastructure that provided a limited service. The sanitation challenge is even bigger. In rural areas, 63% of people defecate in the open, and only 8% of households have somewhere to wash their hands with soap and water. Urban areas present a different challenge. While most people use a toilet, only 2% of the services are connected to sewers and most of the waste is untreated.

<sup>2</sup> Purchasing power parity (PPP) is a popular metric used by macroeconomic analysts to compare economic productivity and standards of living between countries. The numbers shared are in international dollars.

**Figure 1: Burkina Faso's WASH status in 2017 against SDG indicators (JMP)**



The National Programme for Water Supply and the National Programme for Sanitation<sup>3</sup> define the country's approach to improving these services. The institutional responsibility for service delivery in rural areas lies with the 302 rural communes – the lowest administrative unit above villages.

The responsibilities for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) are organised as follows:

- **The Ministry of Water and Sanitation** defines public policies and sets regulation, monitoring and evaluation targets.
- **The National Office for Water and Sanitation (ONEA)** is a corporatised public water supply utility that plans, develops, extends, operates, maintains and delivers services in cities with more than 10,000 inhabitants.

- In rural areas, most capital investments come directly from **national government, its development partners or charities**. Management is then handed over to the communes.
- **Communes** own the WASH infrastructure (pumps, pipes and toilets etc.) and are responsible for their management, which can be delegated to **private entities, associations or communities**. Communes are generally under-funded and as such struggle to either extend or sustain services.

<sup>3</sup> See: [https://www.pseau.org/outils/ouvrages/mea\\_PN\\_AEP\\_2016\\_2030.pdf](https://www.pseau.org/outils/ouvrages/mea_PN_AEP_2016_2030.pdf); [https://www.pseau.org/outils/ouvrages/mea\\_PN\\_AEUE\\_2016\\_2030.pdf](https://www.pseau.org/outils/ouvrages/mea_PN_AEUE_2016_2030.pdf)

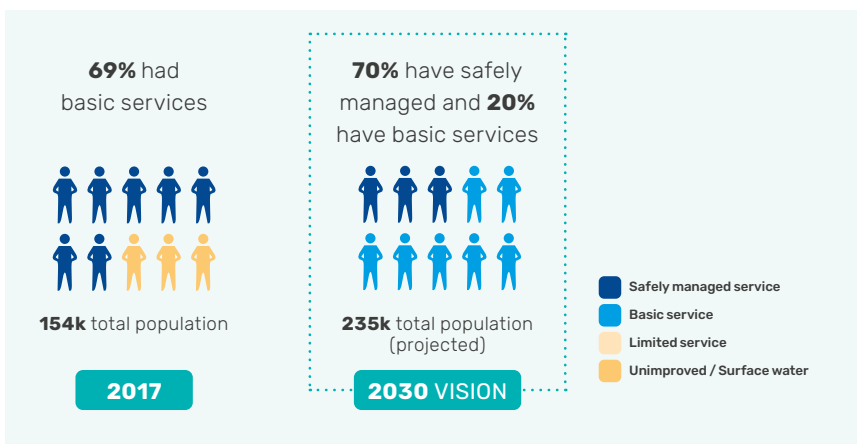
## ... and Banfora commune

The urban commune of Banfora is the capital of Burkina Faso's south-western Cascades Region. It is a relatively prosperous and urbanised commune with strong and committed local government leadership.

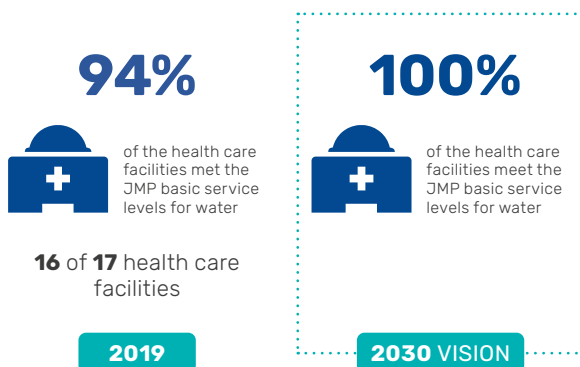
The aim is to deliver WASH services<sup>4</sup> to everyone in the commune (district), from a baseline of 154,000 people in 2017, to 235,000 by 2030.<sup>5</sup>

The drinking water supply in Banfora is made up of surface water and groundwater from boreholes. In urban areas, water is supplied from the Moussodougou dam, but rural areas use two simple piped drinking water supply systems and 227 boreholes with hand pumps. One of the main challenges in Banfora is the number of people who still use a limited (23%) or an unimproved water source (8%). This is above the national average.

**Figure 2: Drinking water service levels in Banfora commune (baseline and vision)<sup>5</sup>**



**Figure 3. Drinking water service levels in Banfora's health care facilities<sup>6</sup>**



If the presidential commitment to WASH is to be fulfilled, things must change. Systems need to be strengthened, and everyone involved needs to believe in and commit to this approach through collective action.

This is what the Safe Water Strategy partnership is working to achieve.

<sup>4</sup> In 2017, monitoring in Banfora did not differentiate between basic and safely managed services.

<sup>5</sup> Commune de Banfora: municipal strategic plan for public water and sanitation services 2018 - 2030. <https://www.ircwash.org/resources/water-sanitation-and-hygiene-strategic-master-plan-banfora-burkina-faso>

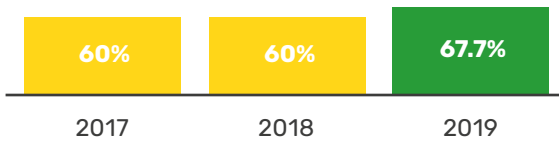
<sup>6</sup> Data based on a 2019 report prepared by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

# Our collective action in Banfora

## Who's involved<sup>7</sup>?

National Partners <sup>8</sup>	Mayor's office, Office National de l'Eau et Assainissement (ONEA – National Utility); Espace Culturel Gambidi (national NGO); Ministry of Health, Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Water and Sanitation
International Partners <sup>9</sup>	Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, One Drop Foundation, Aquaya Institute, charity: water, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Danida, IRC, KfW, Stanford Program on Water, Health & Development (WHD), Water 4

**Figure 4: Strength of partnerships from 2017-2019 in Banfora<sup>10</sup> (maximum score is 100%)**



In 2018 – in its hub role – IRC supported Banfora Mayor Aboubakar Héma and his team to develop a master plan, the first of its kind in Burkina Faso. This plan is a unique expression of political commitment for WASH, and outlines the steps needed to deliver WASH services to everyone in the commune by 2030. Today, the Safe Water Strategy partnership as a whole is supporting Banfora to deliver this ambitious plan.

Government leadership, supported by a coalition of partners, and coordinated by a hub, is at the heart of this. Partners work on their own specific areas of contribution and meet frequently to share updates on progress and learning, and to coordinate future work.

## Our successes

Since developing the master plan, the commune has grown in confidence. It now has the ability to mobilise all of its partners, and has carried out two annual reviews of the plan. As a result, the planning and coordination of WASH interventions in the area have improved significantly. For instance, local government has been strictly monitoring whether companies comply with national guidelines for constructing facilities for vulnerable groups in schools and health centres. This had not been the case before and represents significant progress.

At the 2019 Pan-African Development Awards ceremony the Mayor was presented with an award for his leadership, which he dedicated to IRC, who had supported him in building a strong relationship with national public utility ONEA, which is now using the master plan to prioritise investment in the commune. The political leadership shown by the commune of Banfora has already 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.

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed list of partners please see pages 14-15.

<sup>8</sup> National partners take on a range of roles including delivering parts of the master plans and holding each other to account.

In 2019, Banfora secured more than three-quarters of the finance it needed to implement its master plan. This was despite reduced national funding for WASH due to the deteriorating security situation in the country.

Clear examples of successful collective action can be seen in and around Banfora.

Its COVID-19 response plan was developed under the leadership of the Mayor's office, and brought together its partners, CRS, a local NGO, ECG and IRC in a united effort to align activities and mobilise funding to prepare for the pandemic. Each partner is now implementing the plan in its own area of expertise.



Mayor of Banfora, M. Aboubakar Héma receiving the 'Best local administrator' award

The Saniya So project, implemented by CRS, is improving WASH services in 17 health centres and 30 schools. Through training and awareness raising it has already improved many indicators including: access to on-site water supply; availability of safe sanitation and hand hygiene facilities; waste management in care rooms; and community participation in the management of facilities.

Another CRS project called Ji Saniyani ('clean water' in the local Dioula language) – aims to increase equitable and universal access to safe and sustainable water services in targeted rural areas of the commune.

ECG is improving infrastructure in health care facilities, especially in maternity wards, with the support of One Drop. They are also implementing Social Art for Behaviour Change™ interventions to promote the long-term adoption of healthy hygiene behaviours.

In an important separate development, the European Union is supporting ONEA and IRC to adopt elements of the Banfora approach in 93 additional communes, and to develop full master plans in five of these.

These are strong signs that we are accomplishing M. Aboubakar Héma's vision: that besides the aim of achieving full coverage, Banfora becomes an example for others to adopt at scale.

<sup>9</sup> International partners are working on implementing the master plans. Most are grantees of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, however an increasing number of new partners (e.g. NGOs, funders) are joining the Safe Water Strategy partnership.

<sup>10</sup> Strength of partnerships improving from 2017-2019 in Banfora, measured according to the Qualitative Information Systems (QIS) (maximum score is 100%) More here: <https://www.ircwash.org/data-behind-our-work>



**Carine Mariétou  
Ouattara, Director of  
Water, Sanitation and  
Public Hygiene  
Department of  
Banfora**

“My vision is aligned with that of Banfora, which is to make the commune the benchmark in terms of drinking water supply and sanitation by 2030. We want at least 70% of the population to have access to safely managed water services. Regarding sanitation, we want to put an end to open defecation in our town. With the implementation of our strategic plan, which started three years ago, we have already seen improvements in water services. Many of the activities focus on getting basic services to people, which is a good start in terms of reaching vulnerable people while waiting to be able to provide higher level services. IRC and Banfora have become a family. With their support an important process has started. However, there is still a lot left to do to provide safe water to our population.”

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<sup>11</sup> The capital expenditure data is based on Banfora’s master plan - Commune de Banfora : municipal strategic plan for public water and sanitation services 2018 - 2030. <https://www.ircwash.org/resources/water-sanitation-and-hygiene-strategic-master-plan-banfora-burkina-faso> - and a finance gap analysis conducted by IRC.

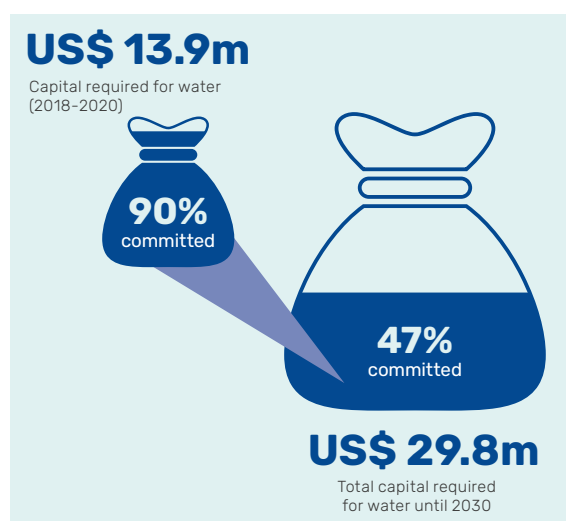
<sup>12</sup> For an overview of how building blocks have been changing over time in Banfora visit <https://www.ircwash.org/data-behind-our-work>

# Our progress to 2030

We've made excellent progress since 2017. As of 2020, **59,000 people** have a basic supply and an estimated **50,000** people now have a safely managed water supply. This is largely due to ONEA's efforts to increase household access to treated piped water in rural areas.

**62** schools and **17** health care centres now have decent and sustainable water and sanitation facilities. And **99** schools and **17** health care centres now have access to handwashing facilities.

## Financing the vision in Banfora<sup>11</sup>



We secured commitment and funding for **90%** of the capital needed between 2018-2020 to work towards achieving the water vision of the master plan. Our ambitions for 2021-25 are to continue to mobilise the necessary funds, and to develop local government's capacity to reach Banfora's entire population with safe WASH services.

## Showing a WASH system's progress through its building blocks

Reliable and sustainable WASH services can only be delivered by strong and resilient local

WASH systems. Systems are the networks of people, institutions, hardware and resources necessary to deliver services. The partnership is using nine building blocks to break down the complexity of the WASH system so we can measure progress and prioritise actions.

For WASH services to be delivered, all these building blocks must be present and working to at least a minimum level<sup>12</sup>.

**Figure 5: Strength of planning building block (water) from 2017-2019 in Banfora (maximum score is 5)<sup>12</sup>**



This building block is about setting out how to achieve and pay for policy goals. Compared to 2017, Banfora commune now has a WASH master plan guiding its steps on WASH service delivery. The plan is aligned with the SDGs and with the national objectives of the Ministry (PN-AEP and PN-AEUE) up to 2030. It plays a key role in uniting partners around a common vision and goal and gives a good basic understanding of context. More elaborate action plans and finance studies have been developed to complement and guide its implementation.

# What's next?

The implementation of the master plan is only the first step.

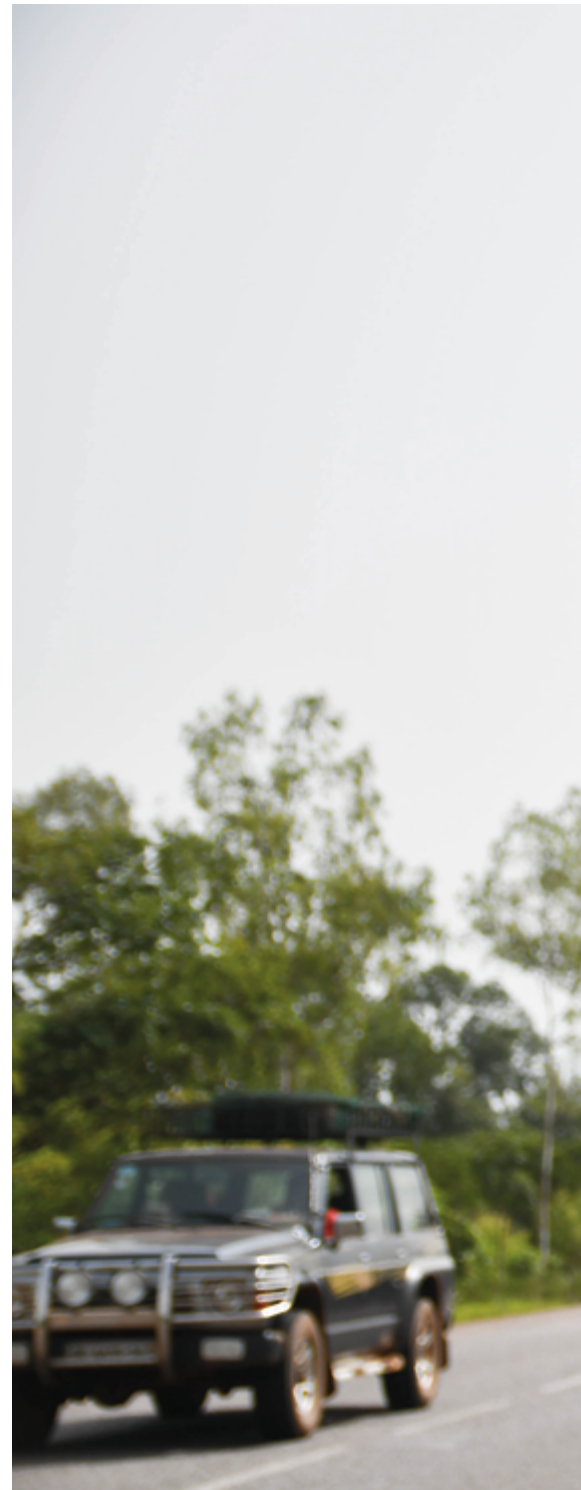
The commune and the Safe Water Strategy partnership have tested an approach that can serve as a national model and reference point to ensure that sustainable WASH services are available to everyone, for good, by 2030.

IRC's growing collaboration with ONEA shows that we are on track to achieve change at scale. So too is the adoption of the approach by other partners in their work outside Banfora.

Banfora will continue to engage with its partners in mobilising funds for the master plan and for implementing a strategic planning approach in other communes.

But to achieve this, we need people in all parts of the system to work together – local and national government, global funders and intergovernmental organisations, civil society, local communities, and organisations that fund, regulate and deliver services.

As a network and partnership, we're convinced that local leadership is vital to achieving our vision. Our leadership challenge now is showing how, by working together, we can scale lessons learned at district level to national and global levels.



A photograph of a road sign for Banfora. The sign is rectangular with rounded corners, a white background, and a red border. It is mounted on a black post. In the background, a road stretches into the distance with a green truck and a white car. The sky is overcast, and there are green trees and bushes on the sides of the road. A green triangle is visible in the bottom right corner of the page.

**BANFORA**

### **Who we are and what we do?**

Under the Mayor of Banfora's political and technical leadership, national and international actors are supporting the commune with achieving its vision.

They include government agencies at national, regional and commune level, and national agencies responsible for water, education, health, finance/ tax and environment. All of them play a key role in providing local leadership, and inspiring and driving change.

The following entities work in and with Banfora commune:

- Direction Régionale de l'Eau et de l'Assainissement (DREA) Cascades
- La Direction Générale de l'Eau Potable (DGEP)
- La Direction Générale des Etudes et des Statistiques Sectorielles (DGESS)
- Le Ministère de l'Eau et de l'Assainissement (MEA)
- Direction Générale de l'Assainissement (DGA)

National utilities provide WASH services and improve quality. The National Office for Water and Sanitation (ONEA) is the national utility in Burkina Faso, responsible for providing water and sanitation services in urban areas but increasingly reaching into secondary towns and their rural hinterlands.

Local private sector providers help improve and provide services. Civil society actors such as grassroots NGOs like Gambidi Cultural Space (ECG) and local leaders, help to identify those who lack safe water and sanitation and hold the responsible people and agencies to account. They also play a key role in sharing

learning and accelerating change. These local stakeholders are also supported by a growing partnership of external actors, including the following:

**The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation:**

a leading US-based philanthropy organisation that provides financial and technical support to address a wide range of social problems, including safe water services in sub-Saharan Africa.

**IRC** is a Dutch-based champion of ‘systems thinking’ within WASH. In Banfora, IRC’s work is based on two principal pillars:

1. Supporting government. An important step towards achieving SDG 6 is transforming district and country systems by involving and connecting people at all levels and improving accountability mechanisms. To do this, IRC provides technical assistance to Banfora local government in the development and implementation of its master plan.
2. Acting as the hub. IRC supports local government to organise mid-term and annual reviews to which all partners are invited, monitors the implementation of the plan and ensures continuous communications among key stakeholders.

**US-based charity: water** financed a new project called Ji Saniyani, initiated and implemented by CRS since February 2020. The project aims to provide safe water to households in 19 out of 22 villages in the commune.

**Catholic Relief Services (CRS)**

is a global humanitarian and development organisation with long and deep experience in providing water and sanitation services. Since April 2019, through the Saniya So project in Banfora, it is particularly focused on supporting the provision of clean water and sanitation services in health care centres and schools.

**The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**

is the national public health agency of the US and a global public health leader. In Banfora, CDC focuses on action research for monitoring result indicators under the Saniya So project.

**One Drop:** an international foundation created by Cirque du Soleil founder Guy Laliberté. Together with partners, One Drop deploys its unique Social Art for Behaviour Change™ approach to promote the adoption of healthy WASH-related behaviours and empower communities. In Burkina Faso, One Drop is funding its local partner Espace Culturel Gambidi (ECG) to address access to safe and inclusive WASH in Banfora commune’s healthcare facilities.

**The Stanford Program on Water, Health & Development (WHD)**

serves as the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation’s Strategy Measurement, Evaluation, and Learning partner, with a focus on the Foundation’s strategy-level measurement and evaluation to inform strategy execution.

