



Rubazi Community, Rwanda

Mukarubayiza Melanie's Story

Seventy-six-year-old Mukarubayiza Melanie lives in the Rubazi community in southern Rwanda. As the sole caretaker of her two young grandchildren, Mukarubayiza struggled to gather enough water for their daily needs. In addition to lacking drinking water, she and her grandchildren didn't have a sanitary latrine. Instead, they had no choice but to use a shallow pit near their home, which offered no privacy and was unhygienic. Mukarubayiza Melanie worried that her poorly constructed latrine would collapse and that she or her grandchildren would fall into the hole. She was embarrassed but didn't have the physical strength or resources to construct a safe and sanitary latrine.

In addition to lacking sanitary facilities, Mukarubayiza Melanie and her grandchildren didn't practice proper hygiene. They rarely washed their hands because they had such little water. Mukarubayiza Melanie's wasn't the only person who struggled against the water crisis, the entire Rubazi community faced many similar challenges.



Mukarubayiza Melanie's latrine wasn't properly constructed.



Living Water Rwanda mobilizes the community to contribute money for iron sheets, used in constructing private latrines.

"My grandchildren and I struggled so much with sanitation matters. Imagine, at my age, using a latrine which did not offer realistic privacy. It was embarrassing and brought feelings of shame and discomfort, especially when I had to use it when my grandchildren were around."

—Mukarubayiza Melanie, 76-year-old resident

Living Water Rwanda collaborated with Kigoma Methodist Church in the Ruhango sector to conduct intensive WASH-related trainings. Many community members attended sanitation and hygiene activities, learning about the ways they can better their health by instituting hygiene practices like proper handwashing. The local church has inspired community-led change by demonstrating care for the whole person—mind, body, and spirit.

Mukarubayiza Melanie was one of dozens of community members who attended Living Water’s sanitation and hygiene trainings. She and her neighbors engaged with the pastor of Kigoma Methodist Church and decided as a community it was time to take charge of their health and hygiene. She said, “We realized that it was time to construct our own latrines. That’s where our journey began.”

Mukarubayiza Melanie continued, “I am grateful to the Lord and Living Water International for thinking about us and our wellbeing as a community. I gained knowledge, especially about handwashing. I hope I will never again appear on the list of people with poor hygiene conditions or non-improved sanitation facilities.”



Mukarubayiza Melanie poses with her new latrine and tippy-tap.