



PRESS RELEASE

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WATER ACCESS RWANDA CONCLUDES TRANSITION TO SCALE SEED ROUND WITH A \$1MN INVESTMENT FROM THE STEELE FOUNDATION FOR HOPE.

Water Access Rwanda is an award-winning social enterprise that has been operating in the water sector for eight years since its 2014 debut. The company is primarily focused on the bottom of the pyramid's need for affordable, convenient, and safe water access. With a mission to establish affordable and reliable water infrastructure in Africa, it deploys models of access that provide clean and safe water in a convenient manner that saves users money and time while providing an elevated water access experience.



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“Our vision is safe water at the simple turn of a tap. This for everyone, everywhere and every time.” Says Christelle the founder of Water Access Rwanda, “Over the years we have added products and services that allow us to deliver this promise to all our customers, no matter their budget or living situation.”

The company currently employs 77 people full-time – 50.6% female and 61% below 30 years old. It is youth and female-led and currently keeping taps open for 91,000 Rwandans across the country through a growing network of water mini-grids. It has directed its focus on broken boreholes and already rehabilitated 68 of them with ambitions to many more over the next 2 years. Through their model, no water point should go broken again once established or rehabilitated. The company has mapped 889 communities across 8 districts in Rwanda where it intends to establish its safe water mini-grid solutions. 39% of these communities already have boreholes that are either now defunct or are without proper management. Interventions over the next 3 years will see the 690,000 residents provided with sustained access to affordable safe water. Beyond addressing the lack of access to water, Water Access Rwanda is also promoting the usage of rainwater in urban settings and school settings to reduce water bills, water outage days, and run-offs which cause flooding. Instead with amazi.rw households can experience drinking safe water straight from their taps in a way that is friendly to the environment and to their budget as on average households save 61% of their water bills once they have amazi.rw.

For 8 years, the company was mainly bootstrapping with most of its operating cash directly sourced from revenues and time to time complemented by grants Christelle was able to win through challenges and competitions.





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“There is generally a lack of patient capital available in our ecosystem for innovative start-ups and their market-creating solutions. we have been relentless in trying to find well-aligned funders to help us tackle the huge water crisis. It is a joy to reach this milestone now” Adds Christelle who founded the company while a Mechanical Engineering student at Oklahoma Christian University. With ambitions to cover 12 countries by 2030, Water Access Rwanda needs to raise massive amounts of capital to meet the demands of the current 386 million Africans without clean water (and 700 million who access water that is not free from contamination).

2022 provided a great milestone, with the company successfully fundraising \$1 million from the Steele Foundation for Hope in a mix of equity and grant.

“Water Access Rwanda is a great example of the type of organization we seek to fund. Christelle is a dedicated leader who is tackling a very difficult problem - building a scalable business to provide safe drinking water to people living in challenging environments. We invested in the company because we were attracted to their mechanical, technical, and entrepreneurial innovation and their proven commitment to social impact.” Says Joe Exner, the CEO of Steele Foundation for Hope.

“We established the Steele Foundation for Hope in 2021. We believe that advances found through technology and innovation are key to improving the quality of life for less fortunate people around the world. We provide funding for leaders, innovators, and organizations committed to delivering solutions that will help people in need.”

“The Steele Foundation for Hope is one of those unusually great funders who understand that they have the money, and you hold the potential for impact. From our first conversation, they asked us how to be better funders and they listened.” Christelle reflects. Water Access Rwanda’s funding decision came exactly 7 weeks after a request was made. This was about 3 weeks after being initially introduced to the foundation through Segal Family Foundation which has created the African Visionary Fellowship with the goal of enabling more growth and funding at African-led and African-founded organizations.

Nothing is usual with the Steele Foundation for Hope. When you visit their website, you can see everyone they have funded, and how long it took for them to arrive at a funding decision. The shortest funding timeline was 1 day under their emergency grants, given for an emergency Humanitarian response in and around Ukraine. Prior investors into Water Access Rwanda include Velocity Digital, 3rd Creek Foundation, and Arthur B. Schultz Foundation. This is the company’s first priced round.