

*When Rwanda restructured rural water management by dissolving the former Régie des Eaux and opening the sector to private operators, a small group of experienced technicians saw an opportunity to turn reform into impact. From that transition emerged AYATEKE Star Company Ltd, a homegrown enterprise that has since become a key player in delivering safe and reliable water to rural communities.*

Founded in Kirehe District and officially registered with the Rwanda Development Board (RDB) in August 2013, AYATEKE Star Company Ltd began by managing water supply services in just five sectors of Kirehe. More than a decade later, the company stands as one of Rwanda's leading private water operators, operating under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model and contributing to national goals for universal access to water and sanitation.

At the heart of AYATEKE Star's journey is Eng. Cyprien Sebikwekwe, the company's founder and Managing Director. Born in Kirehe, Eng. Sebikwekwe holds a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering and brings decades of experience in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) as well as electricity systems. His vision was clear from the start: to drive development in underserved communities through access to clean and reliable water.



Under his leadership, AYATEKE Star has implemented transformative infrastructure projects across Rwanda, expanding access to clean water, introducing innovative off-grid energy solutions and improving livelihoods in rural and vulnerable communities. His blend of technical expertise and entrepreneurial drive has positioned the company as a catalyst for sustainable and inclusive development.

AYATEKE Star's technical capacity first earned it a management tender in Kirehe District, which later opened doors to operations in at least 13 districts nationwide. Policy changes later led to scaling back in order to maintain a strong operational presence in few areas. Today, it manages water supply systems in Kirehe and Gatsibo districts and operates the Mahama Water Treatment Plant through a long-standing partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The Mahama facility supplies clean drinking water to more than 72,000 people in the refugee camp and the surrounding host communities, underscoring AYATEKE Star's role not only as an utility operator but also as a humanitarian partner

committed to public health and dignity.



As a development partner to the district, AYATEKE plays an active role in numerous initiatives aimed at advancing local development and improving community welfare. The Managing Director of AYATEKE Star Company also heads the Joint Action Development Forum (JADF), a multi-stakeholder platform that coordinates development efforts in Kirehe.

With a workforce of 164 permanent staff, including engineers, technicians, financial experts and support personnel, the company ensures consistent, safe and sustainable water services.



According to Jean de la Paix Hakorimana, Permanent Secretary of AYATEKE Star, the company has successfully navigated sector reforms introduced in 2023, when management contracts transitioned from districts to the Water and Sanitation Corporation (WASAC).

By mid-2024, AYATEKE Star had signed new agreements, allowing it to continue operations seamlessly under the revised framework.

Beyond operations, the company has steadily diversified its services. What began as water supply management in five sectors in Kirehe has grown into a comprehensive portfolio that includes the design and construction of water systems, operation and maintenance of treatment plants, and rigorous water quality monitoring to prevent waterborne diseases and improve public health outcomes.

Financially, AYATEKE Star has demonstrated resilience and stability. Its contracts with WASAC Utility and partnerships with development organizations such as UNHCR, WaterAid and GIZ provide a strong foundation. The company reports an average annual turnover of Rwf.2 billion, with assets valued at approximately Rwf.1billion with a culture of tax compliance. This consistent performance has earned AYATEKE Star the Rwanda Revenue Authority's Best Taxpayer Trophy for six consecutive years—a rare distinction in the private sector.

Capacity building is another pillar of the company's impact. The AYATEKE Rural

Water Management Academy has become a cornerstone for professional development in the WASH sector.

Working with partners including WaterAid, Water for People, COFORWA, WASAC and GIZ (through the DeveloPPP program), the academy has trained 650 youth, 30 percent of whom are unemployed graduates. Training covers practical skills such as plumbing, pump operation, water quality testing, billing and revenue recovery, and utility management software.

Strategic partnerships have enabled AYATEKE Star Company to significantly expand its impact in the water sector. Through collaboration with WaterAid Rwanda and funding from WaterAid Japan, supported by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the company has successfully implemented three major water projects to date.

Preparations are underway for the inauguration of MOFA IV Phase I in Nasho, Kirehe District, scheduled for February, with MOFA IV Phase II set to commence in Bugesera District in April 2026.



The company has also obtained an operating license to provide water services in Zambia, marking an important milestone in its regional growth strategy.

Internationally, AYATEKE Star Company is a member of the International Water Association (IWA) and African Water and Sanitation Association or Association Africaine de l'Eau et de l'Assainissement (AfWASA). This has strengthened its profile through participation in major global WASH platforms, including the IWA Water and Development Congress & Exhibition in Kigali (2023), the World Water Congress in Toronto, Canada (2024), and the AfWASA International Congress and Exhibition in Kampala (2025).

Looking ahead, the company plans to expand into chlorine production, become a regional distributor of water technologies, and scale operations across Eastern and Southern Africa.

However, challenges remain. Vandalism of costly water infrastructure and non-payment by some consumers-including institutions continue to affect operations.

Despite these hurdles, AYATEKE Star's trajectory reflects the power of local

expertise, supportive policy frameworks and purposeful partnerships. From its roots in Kirehe to its growing regional and international presence, the company's story illustrates how private enterprise can play a decisive role in delivering essential services and advancing Rwanda's development agenda.