

## Sustaining rural water systems: shifting from projectised to service delivery approach

Stakeholders in the WASH sector are happy that efforts are being made at improving rural water coverage, but they deplore the lack/low level of sustainability of rural water systems. In particular, they have raised concern about the lack of systems for tracking the functionality of rural water systems that are being provided. Thus, they advocate for a paradigm shift from the projectised approach to service delivery oriented approach to providing rural water facilities. This is a major recommendation arising from the Eleventh National Level Learning Alliance Platform (NLLAP).

**The Eleventh NLLAP took place on Thursday November 11, 2010 on the theme, “Sustainability of rural water services: looking back to inform our way forward”. There were two presentations; the first was made by Mrs Vida Affum Duti, Country Team Leader, Triple-S Ghana while the second was jointly done by Prosper Dzansi of Triple-S Ghana and Marieke Adank of IRC. This *WASH Reflections* is intended to share with the wider WASH community the most important issues brought up during the meeting.**

### Sustainable Rural Water Services

In a presentation on “Sustaining Rural Water Service Delivery in Ghana”, Mrs Duti traced the history of approaches used for water facility provision from the centralised approaches of the 1960s through the 1990s to the 2000s when emphasis has shifted to post-construction issues and beyond community management.

The presentation, which included a brief video clip, established that in terms of water supply, Ghana is doing well with regards to putting in place an enabling environment and executing projects but was performing poorly in the area of sustainability. Indeed, rural water coverage in Ghana has increased from 27% in 1990 to 59% in 2009, according to data available from service providers, while the JMP estimates that coverage has improved from 32% to 72% over the same period<sup>1</sup>. Unfortunately, between 25 and 30% of the facilities are estimated to be either broken down or malfunctioning. To this end, Mrs Duti stressed that “We can’t continue to do investments without putting in adequate measures to sustain the facilities.”

### Project Approach & Service Delivery Approach

Arguing for a paradigm shift, Mrs Duti distinguished between the project approach and the service delivery approach. The Project Approach has the following key characteristics: temporary execution structures, definite timeframe linked to project cycle, system construction, and limited attention to post construction support, bilateral and parallel funding, different intervention approaches, and no framework for coordination.

On the other hand, the Service Delivery Approach is characterized by investment and provision of services, unlimited time frame linked to institutionalised structures, coordinated framework for WASH services, overarching policy and strategy including commonly agreed approach, model(s) and guidelines, recognition of sector learning, and promotion of innovation.

### Parameters of sustainability

Mrs Duti also outlined some parameters for measuring sustainability by assessing what is working well and what requires attention. It was agreed that there are big gaps between theory and practice related to these parameters, which have to be bridged.

In the case of the first parameter, which is *policy, strategy and plans*, the presenter proposed that a clear approach and strategy for water service delivery in Ghana should be defined. Also, there should be a definition of indicators for service delivery and sustainability, a revision of existing documents to include strategy for addressing post construction issues, and this should be published and disseminated.

In terms of *Governance and institutional arrangement*, key proposals included increasing human and resource capacity of the water directorate, clarifying role of district assemblies, and up scaling the establishment of District Works Department. The role of the MMDAs was considered a big challenge. Why are they not providing the needed support to community management and who is responsible for ensuring that they do?

On *Harmonization and coordination*, Mrs Duti suggested that a framework for harmonization and coordination should be developed and mechanisms for inter Ministerial Coordination should be established.

<sup>1</sup> This apparent contradiction is caused by methodological differences between JMP and service providers: see NLLAP note no.6 (available at [www.ghana.watsan.net/page/788](http://www.ghana.watsan.net/page/788)) for more details.

Technical support services should be in place for communities because of the complex nature of some of the water facilities. There should be support mechanisms to localise manufacturing of spare parts. In addition, support mechanisms for private sector participation should be established and technical know-how and resources should be provided for those supporting private sector participation.

Another parameter that attracted a lot of suggestions was *post construction financing*. Here, there is need to: clarify responsibility for system repairs, upgrading and eventually replacement; consider innovative financing arrangements for major repairs, such as the pool funding concept and/or insurance of facilities; streamline mechanisms for reimbursing institutional fees; and define clear policy and mechanisms for, and agreements, on institutional financing.

It was underscored that the “pay as you fetch” system was receiving increasing acceptance among communities but that there were genuine cases where communities are unable or unwilling to afford to pay the set tariffs and, therefore, go back to using unsafe sources. This calls into question how realistic the tariffs are – especially for the poorest. Therefore, it is imperative for district assemblies to consult extensively with their citizens on tariff setting, considering affordability and capacity to pay.

If assemblies decided to lower the tariffs then they must also determine how to balance and bridge the financing gap that is created.

There should also be clarity on the modalities for paying for water used by institutions like the police, health facilities and schools. The inability to collect these institutional water fees has been identified as a serious threat to sustainable water services.

Participants emphasized that revenues accruing from water systems should be channelled into capital replacements to foster maintenance, instead of expending all the money on operations and minor maintenance, as is currently the case.

Regarding the monitoring, accountability and regulatory framework for rural water supply, Mrs Vida Duti mentioned that CWSA is responsible for facilitating rural water and that with the introducing of legislative instruments, the CWSA would be able to play a role as regulator of the rural water sector.

#### Box 1: Draft sustainability indicators

##### Service delivery

- Water services provided are in line with the CWSA standards

##### Community mobilisation and planning

- Community mobilisation for O&M has taken place in line with the PIM

##### Management and Governance Indicators

- A structure (WATSAN or WSDB) is in place at system / service provision level to ensure sustainable water services
  - Hand pump specific indicator: A well qualified, trained and experienced gender balanced WATSAN is in place
  - Piped water specific indicator: There is a WSDB, whose composition, qualifications, experience and training of its members is in line with the CWSA Small town O&M guidelines
- Technical, Administrative and Financial Reports are kept and read out to the Community at least once every six months

##### Financial Management

- Annual income from water sales exceeds total annual expenditure
- There is sound financial management, accounting and auditing
- Tariff setting is in line with CWSA guidelines

##### Operational Indicators

- Maintenance is executed in line with the CWSA O&M guidelines

##### Enabling Environment

- There is a well resourced DWST, consisting of 3 well qualified and experienced staff members, receiving the needed support by CWSA and MMDA
- There are efficient monitoring and data flows
- MMDA District Water and Sanitation Plan is incorporated into medium term development plans and budget of the assembly, which is used to guide implementation

#### Sustainability indicators

In the second presentation of the day, Prosper Dzansi presented a set of proposed sustainability indicators for discussion. As can be seen in box 1, which presents the draft sustainability indicators, these indicators were organized into six main different areas of sustainability. Mr. Dzansi explained that these indicators are based primarily on norms set out in the most recent (draft) CWSA guidelines – hence using them is one way to better link policy to practice on the ground.

For each indicator, a draft scoring table had been developed. These were verified and refined by the participants. The resulting scoring tables can be used to assess how a system, community or district scores in terms of putting in place systems, structures, procedures and practices needed to provide sustainable rural water services, related to the indicator.

The sustainability indicators were well received by learning alliance members particularly given that they are based on CWSA Project Implementation Manual, Guidelines and the model bye-laws for the establishment and operation of Water and Sanitation Development Boards

The NLLAP is a WASH sector multi stakeholder platform with the overall goal of improving sector learning and dialogue. The platform offers learning and sharing opportunity for sector players as one of the practical approaches to improving sector engagements/sharing with the long term aim of achieving a knowledge driven WASH sector that delivers quality and sustainable services in Ghana.

NLLAP meetings are organized and facilitated by the Ghana WASH Resource Centre Network (RCN) in collaboration with the Water Directorate, Ministry of Water Resources Works and Housing; and take place on the last Thursday of every month. They are open to all interested parties. The discussions of each NLLAP meeting are summarized and shared with the wider WASH community in the form of a communiqué (*WASH Reflections*). The topics of upcoming meetings are decided on by the RCN secretariat and a list of upcoming meetings can be found on the RCN website

[www.ghana.watsan.net/page/808](http://www.ghana.watsan.net/page/808)

If you are interested to propose a topic for a meeting please contact us on,

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