

## Household Water Treatment and Storage: The story so far

There are three policy related gaps that must be addressed to advance Household Water Treatment and Storage (HWTS) in Ghana. These are; HWTS is not mentioned in the National Water Policy; drinking water quality standards exist but there is no household water quality regulation; there is lack of coordination and documentation of HWTS efforts. This came up at the 26<sup>th</sup> edition of the National Level Learning Alliance Platform (NLLAP 26) in Accra.

NLLAP 26 was held on Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2012 on the theme: *“Household Water Treatment and Storage (HWTS) Strategy in Ghana: Taking HWTS to Scale”*. Discussions were led by the Environmental Health and Sanitation Directorate (EHSD) of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) the Water Directorate (WD) of the Ministry of Water Resources, Works and Housing (MWRWH) and UNICEF Ghana. The chair was Mr. Fredrick Addai, the Director of Water, WD-MWRWH. Presenter for the day was Mr. Naa Lenason Demedeme, Acting Director, EHSD-MLGRD whose presentation was on *“Taking Household Water Treatment and Safe Storage (HWTS) to Scale: The Case of Ghana”*. Charles Nachinab, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer of NewEnergy, Tamale; Araba Sam Annan, Area Manager, C.S., Public Health, Vestergaard Frandsen West Africa Limited; and Simon Laari – WASH Advisor, CRS/Ghana served as discussants, sharing their perspectives. This communiqué is intended to share with the wider WASH community the most important issues brought up during the meeting.

### Taking Household Water Treatment and Storage to scale

In his presentation, Mr. Naa Lenason Demedeme, Acting Director, EHSD-MLGRD explained that, “We need to focus on HWTS because....Next to HWWS [Hand Washing with Soap], HWTS is the most effective intervention for reducing morbidity from diarrhoeal diseases (if used correctly and consistently over the long-term)”. He emphasised the important role of HWTS in addressing contamination of water during distribution, collection, and storage.

According to the District Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) of 2009, between 1% and 7% of households in Ghana treat their drinking water. The predominant treatment method adopted was boiling even though the treated water was subject to re-contamination.

Generally, household water treatment for microbiological water quality is promising but the problem is that approaches are uncoordinated and there is no strategy for implementation to scale, Mr Demedeme stated in a presentation made on his behalf by Mr. Kwaku Quansah of EHSD-MLGRD.

This buttresses lessons at the global level where HWTS initiatives failure is attributed to inability to address three aspects of sustainability, namely: economic sustainability, social sustainability and technical sustainability. Economic sustainability issues have

come up because of reliance on free/subsidized products and dependence on external funding. This is compounded by the fact that households with poorest water quality often do not have means to purchase products. On the other hand, there are questions around social sustainability because of the difficulty with changing long-standing hygiene related household habits such as water storage/treatment and open defecation. Technical sustainability is also an issue because of extreme focus on product and product adoption while ignoring maintenance and repair, and supply chain deficits.

This is where an HWTS strategy becomes imperative. The goal is that by 2015, 90% of the population of Ghana should be aware and 15% should be “consistently practicing effective HWTS methods in a manner that renders the water they use compliant with national standards,” Mr Demedeme indicated.

He also said: “In furtherance of national strategies for water, sanitation and hygiene, the purpose of the National strategy for HWTS is to contribute to a measurable reduction in waterborne diseases by encouraging the adoption and long-term use of effective HWTS, especially by the population segment that does not have access to safe drinking water.”

The guiding principles for Ghana's strategy on HWTS are that health is the primary driver; initiatives should follow a demand-responsive approach, with range of

certified methods, products and technologies available to users & users paying for costs; all stakeholders should be encouraged to participate in providing standardised HWTS solutions, among others.

The process of developing an HWTS strategy in Ghana stretches over the period 2007 to 2016. The first phase was implementation of HWTS from 2007 to 2011 with particular focus on household intervention for guinea worm eradication through the promotion of ceramic and biosand filters and improved drinking water supply for flood affected households with emphasis on ceramic filters/aqautabs.

Within that time, other phases of the strategy have been pursued in the form of strategic decision of re-packaging WASH into four packages – enabling environment, behavioural change, water and sanitation services, and WASH in emergencies; evaluation and assessments of key interventions from 2009 to 2010; and development of national scaling up strategies from 2010 to 2011.

The final phase of the strategy development involves scaling up implementation over the period 2012 to 2016. During this period, specific activities such as WASH programme implementation in five regions, adaptation and use by other sector programmes, continued coordination, and monitoring, evaluation, documentation and learning would be carried out.

The HWTS strategy emphasises four common water treatment technologies: disinfection, filtration, chlorination and sedimentation.

An estimated 650,000 people are targeted as direct beneficiaries from HWTS products & hygiene promotions during the first phase of the national strategy implementation. These have been targeted based on critical safe water deficit. Other populations throughout the regions would indirectly benefit from marketing of HWTS products and hygiene promotions. Meanwhile, pilot tests in Cheshei community in the

Tamale Metropolis, Gofal Sahi in Wa East District, and Dinaso in Wa Municipality indicate that at least 23 households are using ceramic and Biosand Filters for water treatment in their homes, according to Charles S. Nachinab of NewEnergy, Tamale.

He was reporting on NewEnergy's Community Choices for Water (CCW), which is an off-line internet/computer based tool developed by Pacific Institute (PI) for facilitating decision-making on what technology to use for water treatment at the household level.

#### What issues are critical?

At the close of the day, stakeholders agreed that the following actions, if taken, can advance the promotion of HWTS:

- ❖ Empowerment of households to take informed decisions about their water treatment options
- ❖ Positioning HWTS as a policy priority to reflect government support and facilitate resource mobilisation
- ❖ Establishing a regulatory framework for HWTS to regulate product safety and performance standards, certification and product labelling system
- ❖ Building institutional capacity for supporting HWTS through training on HWTS technology & promotion
- ❖ Establishing coordination for HWTS work by setting up coordinating committee for integration with other WASH initiatives (including emergencies)
- ❖ Encouraging development and local manufacture of HWTS products which are simple, acceptable, affordable for low-income and remote population
- ❖ Developing a Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) approach and advocacy package for HWTS to create awareness, demand (based on evidence), and raise funds
- ❖ Establishing a phased implementation of HWTS
- ❖ Making Social marketing a key strategy for reaching the poor, creating demand and influencing behaviour

The NLLAP is a WASH sector multi stakeholder platform with the overall goal of improving sector learning and dialogue. It is hosted by the Ghana WASH Resource Centre Network (RCN). 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 take place on the last Thursday of every month and opened to all interested parties. The discussions of each NLLAP meeting are summarized and shared with the wider WASH community. 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.washghana.net](http://www.washghana.net).

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