RCN Ghana
Resource Centre Network Ghana

WASH REFLECTIONS 7
JUNE 2010
A monthly review of the National Level Learning Alliance Platform

# Management models for urban and small town water supply

**There is a need for clarity on the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders under different small town and urban water management models. These roles and responsibilities have to be spelt outwith clear guidelines, backed by a legal, regulatory and monitoring framework. This is one of the most important findings of the eighth NLLAP meeting in which small town and urban water supply management models were discussed.**

The eighth National Level Learning Alliance Platform (NLLAP) took place on Wednesday June 30, 2010 on the theme, "*Management models for small towns and urban water supply in Ghana*". The TPP project presented the work it had been doing on mapping, describing and assessing urban and small town water management models. This communiqué is intended to share with the wider WASH community the most burning issues brought up during the meeting.

The Tripartite Partnership project (TPP) aims to contribute to building sector capacity for delivery of pro-poor WASH in urban areas, through identification, documentation and piloting of innovative management models, and pro-poor advocacy and facilitating learning and sharing. Under the Project, management models for urban and small town water supply in Ghana have been mapped through an institutional mapping and a GIS mapping exercise. To describe and analyze the reality of the main models, a number of case studies were executed under the TPP project. The findings of these studies were verified and discussed by sector stakeholders during the NLLAP meeting of Wednesday 30 June 2010.

## Who should serve the unserved?

After an introduction on the project by TPP team leader Eugene Larbi, Benedict Tuffuor (TREND Group / TPP Project) presented a multitude of different management models which can be found in urban areas and small towns in Ghana and elsewhere. According to global literature, the line between small towns and urban areas is difficult to draw. In the WASH sector in Ghana, though the National Water Policy defines towns with population of 30,000 and above as urban towns, the distinction is often made based on the management model; areas under GWCL management are considered "urban", while towns under community management are considered "small towns".

However, in practice, different service providers under different management models can be found within areas (theoretically) served by the utility. The poor especially depend on intermediate service providers, either private or community managed, who buy water from GWCL and sell it to customers. Also, about 70% of the systems managed by GWCL serve towns with populations smaller than 30,000. Similar sized towns can thus either be served by GWCL or community managed water supply.

This raises questions of who is institutionally responsible for the urban unserved and who is responsible for water supply in rapidly growing small towns?

## Different support and regulatory arrangements for different models

There are different direct (including training and technical assistance) and indirect (including a policy and regulatory framework) arrangements for support to service providers under different management models. Community managed water supply in small towns is generally facilitated by CWSA, while piloting community management in urban areas is being facilitated mostly by NGOs, in cooperation with PURC and GWCL/ AVRL. Regulation of utility managed water supply is the task of PURC, while local government is responsible for regulation of community managed small town water supply. It is unclear who is supposed to regulate private water service providers. This leads to differences in service levels, standards and prices between services provided under different management models.

Piloting of innovative management models can be interesting, but documenting and applying existing models, learning from existing experiences is essential as well. Mr Nii Kotei (PURC) emphasised the need for documentation, in order not to re-invent the wheel and in order to learn from past experiences. As stressed by Mr. Van Ess (CWSA), agencies like CWSA and GWCL are supposed to implement policies as defined by the ministry. Piloting will have to take place within the framework of the policy, or should lead to suggestions for changes in the policy, in order to create an enabling environment for the scaling-up of successful models.

## Urban and small town management models in Ghana

An overview of management models in small town and urban water supply in Ghana was presented and the

strengths, weaknesses, required enabling environment and applicability of the main models were discussed.

Direct WSDB management with watsans, as opposed to direct WSDB management without watsans, strengthens local management of facilities and promotes community ownership and management. However, including watsans as an extra layer can lead to complications in flow of resources and information and in an increase in conflicts with vendors.

In several more complex systems with more than 10,000 users, the WSBDs have delegated operations to a private sector operator with the required technical capacity. However, the needed legal framework at the DA level (WSDB bye laws) is not in place. Furthermore, the capacity of the DA to monitor is weak and monitoring from CWSA is inadequate, leading to weak implementation of checks and balances.

A special case of WSDB management with delegated operations to a private operator is the Three District Scheme, serving some 120,000 people in rural areas and small towns. Although costs are in principle spread over a large number of people, per capita unit costs are high and because of low levels of water use, cost recovery is a problem. In addition, only 3% of the revenues are allocated to a replacement account, which may lead to financial deficits for post construction investments. The WSDB does not have the capacity to provide the needed oversight and management directions for a system with this complexity.

In systems with bulk water supply, like the discussed Savelugu case, communities manage water supply themselves, from a bulk water meter supplied by GWCL to distribution points in the community. This can also ensure effective management and is easy in a small unit within a metropolis. Weakness of this model is mainly the unreliability of bulk water supply from GWCL and the lack of regulation of the water vendors.

The model of AVRL tanker services supplying subsidised vending points in parts of Accra was discussed as a temporary measure to bridge the supply gap to the poor. However, quality at the selling points proved difficult to regulate and prices were still not pro-poor, and the costs involved in supplying subsidized water in (???)manner were too high to be sustained for a longer period.

In addition, participants of the NLLAP meeting identified joint management of independent systems by a private company and community members, which can be found in a small number of peri-urban communities, as a separate management model being implemented by WaterHealth Ghana.

To strengthen community management of small town systems, there is a need to rethink the composition of WSDB to reflect the technical capacity required. Especially in more complex systems, where operation is delegated to private operators, there is a need for the professionalization of the WSDB, in order for it to play the management and oversight role it is supposed to do under these models. Furthermore, structural capacity building of WSDB members is needed. WSDB bye laws at DA level should be institutionalised and enforced. This would require regulation and monitoring, which would imply strengthening operational and financial monitoring capacity of the DAs.

It was noted that system performance and the degree of unaccounted for water does not depend on the type of management model. Other factors, like infrastructure and institutional support will determine system performance and the degree of sustainability. Management models need to fit with socio-economic, institutional and infrastructural situation of the community where the model is to be applied. There is no magic management model that guarantees high quality sustainable water services in all situations.

For all management models, there should be clarity on roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders, clearly described in guidelines, backed by a legal, regulatory and monitoring framework. Bits and pieces of these either exist or are currently being addressed. They need to be strengthened.

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 are organized and facilitated by the Ghana WASH Resource Centre Network (RCN), 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 after the meeting. 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**.

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

IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre
TREND TRAINING RESEARCH AND NETWORKING FOR DEVELOPMENT
WaterAid
CONIWAS
COMMUNITY WATER AND SANITATION AGENCY
WSMP
KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY KUMASI