

REPORT ON THE 6TH NORTHERN REGION LEARNING ALLIANCE PLATFORM MEETING HELD ON 7TH AUGUST, 2014 AT THE CWSA CONFERENCE HALL – TAMALE

INTRODUCTION

The 7th in the series of the Northern Region Learning Alliance Platform (NRLAP) meeting was held on 7th August, 2014 on the theme 'WASH SECTOR POLICY DIALOGUE – Emerging trends'. The meeting was organised at the instance of WASH Alliance in collaboration with the Community Water and Sanitation Agency and the Core Group of the Platform to discuss and share views regarding the emerging issues, policies, new indicators and performance targets on which year 2015 would be measured in terms of the Millennium Development Goals on water and sanitation.

The chair for the occasion, Mr Zakaria A. Rashid, director of URBANET, in his acceptance remarks implored all gathered to cooperate in steering the affairs of the meeting.

The Country Director of Ghana WASH Alliance noted that most of the indicators and emerging trends would be carefully measured alongside the MDG targets and that, discussing the challenges and achievement in the WASH sector would put (not only the GWA but) all actors in a better position beyond 2015.

PRESENTATIONS

Three presentations were made as follows:

- The role of CWSA & achievements of the WASH sector – CWSA
- Environmental & Sanitation policy provisions and emerging trends – ESHD
- Exposition on the CWSA L.I (2007) and its implication for sector players – CWSA

The Chief Hydrogeologist (CWSA-NR) in his presentation on the role and achievement of CWSA, touched on the functions of the agency in light of the Community Water and Sanitation Programme, the strategic direction of the agency (Mission and Vision), coverage and investment needs in the rural water subsector.

According to the CH, the NCWSP policy and strategy over the years had been hinged on:

- ✓ Sustainability of water and sanitation related services to the rural communities
- ✓ Demand responsiveness; a shift from dependence on government to self reliance by user communities
- ✓ Community ownership and Management of water and sanitation facilities.
- ✓ Ensuring sustainability of Water and Sanitation facilities through community operation and management
- ✓ Maximizing health benefits by integrating water, sanitation and hygiene promotion interventions

The NCWSP has chalked some success amidst its numerous challenges. Notable among the achievements are

- The construction of 14,779 new boreholes and 1,528 new hand dug wells
- The construction of a total of 513 new pipe schemes
- The rehabilitation of 4,238 boreholes
- The construction of 71,446 household and institutional latrines
- The formation and inauguration of 22,651 WATSANS across the region
- The training of 1,387 WSMTS formally WSDBs
- Building the capacity of 1,913 area mechanics, 29,018 pump caretakers and 5,191 latrines artisans.

These achievements notwithstanding, there have been some challenges which need urgent attention.

- District level implementation remains a serious bottleneck
- There have been non compliance of NGOs to national guidelines and norms
- Limited capacity for private sector players
- Hydrogeologically, the terrain remains very difficult in the communities, towns and districts.

The next presentation by the Environmental Health and Sanitation Unit touched on the background of the Unit, its objectives and functions. The current statistical figures in terms of sanitation coverage were catalogued in the presentation. The three Northern Regions were identified as leading in open defecation. Ms Martha Tia-adjei opined that the trend could be halted if all sector players came on board with a concerted effort. The EHSD identified value addition to waste, support to communities with sanitation credits and training of latrine artisans as the emerging trends which need to be improved upon.

She argued that, the unit continues face some difficulties in the discharge of their mandate. Key among the challenges are the absence of WASH sector players on the RICCS and DICCS platform, lack of reporting updates on sanitation in various districts and communities as well as the inadequate budget they had had to work with.

The third presentation was on the CWSA L.I (2007), which expounds the general principles and standards in the provision of safe sustainable potable water for rural communities, tariff settings and investments, fees for services rendered, transitional provisions and sanctions for offenders.

On the provisions of the L.I, the Chief Hydrogeologist stated that the MMDAs remained the approving authority in the provision and supply of sustainable water and sanitation services. In this light, all applications for the provision of safe and sustainable water services must be channelled to the respective MMDAs for approval. The CWSA plays a complimentary role as the sector facilitator and regulator. Additionally, the MMDAs have a duty to monitor and quality assure the provision of safe quality water.

Participants were also informed of the evolution of the Water and Sanitation Development Boards (WSDBs) to Water and Sanitation Management Teams for Small Towns (WSMT-ST) and the WATSAN Committees to Water and Sanitation Management Team for Small Communities (WSMT-SC).

He urged all participants to get a copy of the L.I from the Agency's website.

DISCUSSIONS

Participants after the presentations were offered the platform to engage the facilitators on issues which needed clarifications. Pertinent among the issues brought forward for discussions were how the CWSA as Agency would be sanctioning defaulting bodies in the rural water subsector. The point was however made that, the focus of the Agency now is on educating all relevant stakeholders on the provisions of the L.I (2007). It was argued that a good understanding and appreciation of the provisions of the legislative instrument will enable compliance by most sector players.

In response to a question on efforts being put in place by the EHSD to enforce the bye-laws on household latrine construction, the Unit indicated that enforcement could not be sustained under the current circumstances because of frequent chieftaincy/political interferences. She maintained that, advocacy is the surest way forward in matters of household latrine construction.

The deputy Regional Environmental Health Officer lamented how the financial or budgetary constraint is impacting on their performance. She mentioned that, the amount the unit receives for its activities is woefully inadequate and called for greater financial commitment to the unit.

A participant made a passionate appeal to all NGOs in the rural water subsector to inform the MMDAs of their activities before entering the communities. This he argued will help improve the coordination of all efforts at the district level.

A representative from the Catholic Relief Services made a point for policy makers to include uniform estimates in Bills of Quantities to ensure uniformity in all water and sanitation facilities.

CONCLUSION

The Country Coordinator of WASH Alliance, Mr Eric Chimsi expressed satisfaction on the deliberations and discussions that went on as well as the suggestions from participants.

The chairman in a closing remark thanked all participants for coming and cooperating with him till the end. He was particularly happy that the platform members had come together to share, learn and understand the critical policy guidelines/ issues pertinent to the WASH sector and expressed the hope that more of such meeting in the future would go a long way to reinforce collaboration in the sector.