

## **REPORT ON THE 7<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE NORTHERN REGION LEARNING ALLIANCE PLATFORM, CWSA CONFERENCE HALL – TAMALE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Northern Region Learning Alliance Platform continues to make giant strides in the region with the sharing and learning of WASH related issues. The 7<sup>th</sup> of its sharing meetings was held on 19<sup>th</sup> September, 2014 under the theme *'moving from infrastructure to service delivery in water supply; Implementation of Triple – s project in East Gonja'*. The meeting was to share and discuss findings from the 3<sup>rd</sup> round of functionality and service monitoring in East Gonja. CWSA/Triple-S sponsored the meeting and the discussions were led by a team from the East Gonja District assembly.

The chairperson for the day in the person of Madam Patricia Gyamfi, Principal Information Technology Specialist – CWSA-NR, in her acceptance remarks thanked all participants for making the platform what it is today. She mentioned that, the entire Rural WASH sub-sector is undergoing a lot of restructuring and as such it is rather vital for all sector players to be on the same page in relation to these new innovations. According to her, the Triple-S initiative in East Gonja has been a real eye opener to many especially the CWSA as a sector lead and regulator. The drawbacks in the old way of monitoring have come to the fore as a result of the pilot activities in East Gonja.

She opined that, the fascinating thing about the project is the detailed framework which has been developed in conjunction with CWSA technical committee for the monitoring of functionality and service delivery. According to her, the framework does not only measure functionality but takes a holistic view of the performance of all the structures necessary for the delivery of sustainable potable water to rural folks. It also points out where each support structure fits and what is expected of them.

Madam Patricia also took the opportunity to explain the origin of the smarterwash programme and how it is structured to all participants. She pointed out that, the smarterwash programme is a scale up of the pilot programme in East Gonja to cover the entire 26 districts in the region. This is aimed at getting a comprehensive data on all water supply facilities in each district to aid planning and budgeting for remedial action. According to her, it is the fervent hope of the Agency to share the data with all relevant stakeholders in the region to solicit support to augment the efforts of the district assemblies.

### **PRESENTATION**

Mr Bashiru Shahadu, DWST Leader of the East Gonja district assembly gave a breakdown of the performance of their water supply infrastructure on the various indicators. He noted that, functionality of handpumps reduced in the 3<sup>rd</sup> round data compared to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> rounds with 58%, 69% and 71% respectively. However the functionality of the standpipes increased in the 3<sup>rd</sup> round with a figure of 54%.

Handpumps providing services meeting all the 5 service level indicators stood at 12% with 45% and 43% for handpumps providing services not meeting all the service level indicators and broken down facilities respectively. 17% of piped schemes were providing services meeting all service level indicators while 83% were providing SOME level of service.

There has not been a major improvement in the performance of the water service providers since the baseline data collection.

The Service Authority (District Assembly) performed well in the 3<sup>rd</sup> round of data collection meeting 4 of the 7 benchmarks for assessing the performance of the Service Authority. The Assembly met the benchmarks on:

- Data transfer from the district to the region
- NGO Coordination
- Budget allocation and utilization
- Presence of a District Water and Sanitation Plan

Mr Shahadu explained that, the Triple-S intervention has brought enormous improvement in the workings of the DWST and the Assembly as a whole. He catalogued the achievements of the initiative since its inception till date. Below are some few

- Critical mass of district staff skills and knowledge built in the application of the monitoring framework for data collection
- A comprehensive, reliable and up to date data on functionality of water facilities, services delivered, performance of service providers and service authority available for planning, budgeting and remedial action
- Adoption and use of the framework by the district in data collection
- Marked improvement in budgeting and planning for WASH activities in the district due to reliable data.
- Use of the NRLAP for sharing and leveraging support for remedial actions

These achievements notwithstanding, a lot more needs to be done in order to attain the desirable objectives of the district in terms of water supply.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

A representative from WaterAid sought to find out why functionality keeps on waning after the various interventions. It was explained that, the factors contributing to functionality are numerous and until such a time where all these issues are collectively dealt with, much improvement would not be recorded. The interventions which have come have not dealt with all the necessary factors hence, the continuous decline in the functionality rates.

Some participants also observed that, the information captures communities with improved water sources neglecting those communities without any water facility. They argued that, since the data is used for planning, budgeting and remedial action, then it presupposes that

the communities without any facility would be left out. In response, the Development planning officer of the district pointed out that, there is a separate data on communities without any water facility which is also taken into account when preparing the plans and budget for the district.

The district was commended for their budgeting strategy, Life Cycle Cost Approach (LCCA) as being very comprehensive and holistic. However, participants could not fathom why with such an excellent budgeting strategy the district still experiences the shortfalls in her water supply facilities. The point was made that, government subventions were not forthcoming as expected. By the time these funds hit the accounts of the assembly, there were arrears ready to be cleared leaving virtually nothing or something meagre for the water unit. A clarion call was made to all benevolent bodies to come on board to support in terms of funding for water supply infrastructure in the district.

Three Journalists from Ghana WASH Journalist Network in the Tamale Metropolis participated in the meeting. They made a plea to all gathered that, they need their capacities to be built in order to help broadcast issues of WASH adequately. The three are from the GNA, Daily Dispatch News paper and Zaa radio in Tamale.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Regional Learning Facilitator observed that the platform has gained grounds in the region and urged all participants to make it a point to bring onboard what their respective organizations are doing for sharing. He stated that, the most vital purpose of the platform is for best practices shared to be carried on by all bodies in the rural WASH sector.

The chairperson thanked all for making it a point to be part of the meeting despite their busy schedules. She noted that, if the necessary attention could be given to WASH activities just like some other sectors of the economy, then the countries productivity will be in for a boom.