

A REPORT ON THE 8TH NORTHERN REGION LEARNING ALLIANCE PLATFORM MEETING HELD ON 14TH APRIL 2015, CWSA CONFERENCE HALL – TAMALE

INTRODUCTION

WASH Alliance Ghana through its Learning Trajectory programme which seeks to provide improved options for WASH interventions through tested approaches has carried out practical experiments in community level WASH services delivery for effectiveness, sustainability and scaling up.

The findings of these experiments were shared on the NRLAP for adoption and further testing by all stakeholders. The meeting also sought to solicit inputs from stakeholders to improve upon the experiment as well as to identify the success factors for adoption to reduce failure.

The chairperson in her opening remarks observed the journey of the platform to date with the numerous issues discussed and proposals made. Participants were all urged to contribute their bit to the discussions.

PRESENTATIONS

The country coordinator of WASH Alliance Ghana in his presentation on '*learning trajectory experiences*' shared with stakeholders the objectives of the learning trajectory, WASH Alliance partners and operational locations, key research themes and the future. The Ghana WASH Alliance seeks to achieve increased sustainable access to and use of safe water and sanitation services and improved hygiene practices especially for women and the marginalised groups in the local communities.

The WASH Alliance learning agenda had four main tenets

- In-Country learning Initiatives which necessitated the establishment and launch of the NRLAP
- Regional learning events
- South – South learning visits
- WASH Alliance learning trajectory

According to the presentation, alliance countries form a learning group to learn, share, innovate and co-create on specific WASH themes. All these efforts are geared towards ensuring a sustainable WASH sector with its maximised health benefits to all.

The objective of the learning trajectory which was anchored on the platform meeting is to develop and experiment with system approaches that offer or enable improved and sustainable water and sanitation services for all.

It was observed that WASH Learning Trajectory is made effective when the LT identifies the need for generating business ideas, sharing of good practices and developing a group of professionals who would act as ambassadors of change in WASH. Further, three key areas were noted as the themes for research and experiments. These themes are: Inclusive Business Modelling, Public-Private and civil society Partnerships and The Shifting Role of NGOs.

Amin Yahaya shared his experiences on the *sanitation micro credit scheme* which has been implemented in 31 communities in 3 MMDAs. He opined that, access to sanitation facilities is still a challenge. Meanwhile, demand for latrines and willingness to own a latrine is very high among these community members. The experiment identified the supply side as the main obstacle hindering people from owning and using latrines.

The gap identified in the demand and supply chain motivated INTAGRAD to introduce the sanitation micro credit scheme to support households to purchase latrine components and construct their own latrines while as well increasing their investments in their Income Generating Activities (IGAs).

The presentation noted that, capacity building, education and advocacy on the Right to Water, health, sanitation and hygiene has been the strategy for improving WASH services delivery in the targeted communities.

The credit facility was made available to individuals, households and community groups through a contract with an agreement reached to make payments bi-weekly. This support complemented the Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach in sanitation delivery after a successful behaviour change campaigns.

The experiment afforded Amin an opportunity to

- Develop communication materials on the sanitation credit scheme
- Partnered with banks and micro finance institutes in the area of loan assistance
- Developed sanitation models and manuals to help facilitate training and education
- Develop videos for potential donors/partners who wish to come on board

The 3rd presentation on the day was on *community savings and loans scheme* by Rahinatu Abubakar of Presby Water. The presentation noted that, communities were not interested in the Village Savings and Loans Schemes (VSLs) towards sanitation as commitments and pledges made were not adhered to. Loan repayment became a big challenge and Presby water had to hold back the process until further thinking through. It became apparent that, community members were only interested in receiving subsidies as opposed to mobilizing savings for sanitation revolving credit.

DISCUSSIONS

Participants observed that, Rahinatu had not done enough in terms of community assessment prior to rolling out the VSLs. The apathy showed by the communities is an indication of a misplaced priority. Communities' ability to repay loans and implementation bottlenecks should have been well assessed and complemented with vigorous sanitation promotion campaigns and an enhanced environment for income generation.

Participants also urged partners to be realistic in their targets. Entering so many communities with little success is not the ideal situation. The platform recommended that, targets ought to be realistic bearing in mind the availability of resources and time constraints because she indicated she had only five (5) months to carry out the experiment to generate results for sharing.

Abdul-Karim Ziblim of WUZDA gave the 4th presentation on the day. His experiment focused on Small *Town Water Supply System – Water Kiosk*. The presentation focused on the gaps in the supply and provision of safe water facilities to small towns as against the demand for it. His particular interest in the experiment was to strengthen the capacities of local committees and facilitate broad sector participation (PPPs) to obtain an enduring system which ensured optimum performance/contribution by all players in the delivery and management of community water supply chains. The findings pointed out that, there could be frequent flow of clean water; revenue could be generated to support minor and major maintenance, capacity development to enhance O&M as well as education promotion in water, sanitation and hygiene promotion.

Karim in an effort to ensure the sustainable provision of water undertook a number of measures in conjunction with WASH Alliance Ghana and ICCO to address the gaps militating against the provision of safe water. These included Awareness creation within communities, consultations on a number of issues with key water supply stakeholders, facility management processes, metre reading, and sanitation and hygiene promotion, O&M support. These measures targeted all relevant bodies in the WASH supply chain including Water and Sanitation Management Teams (WSMTs), District Water and Sanitation Teams (DWSTs), persons with disabilities, Community-based Organizations (CBOs) etc.

The presentation identified apathy in the management of public facilities, poor record keeping, unwholesome water at the point of use and low participation of decentralised bodies as factors which need to be addressed to ensure sustainable delivery of WASH services to rural and peri-urban centres

Sanitation Product Financing – artisan empowerment by Mohammed Abdallah of CLIP was the final presentation on the day. The financing gaps and the low sanitation coverage in the region and the country as a whole propelled Abdallah to experiment and share lessons with sector players on empowering local artisans on improved construction techniques and development of Business Plans for WASH Service provision within the local communities. It was observed that, lack of subsidies and grants to rural communities, uncoordinated services and inadequate business approach to sanitation were largely some of the factors accounting for the undesired sanitation situation in the region.

Abdallah put forth some interventions seeking to address the undesired sanitation situation in their pilot communities:

He explained his approach using the ‘Diamond Model’ which clarifies the various stages of Public-Private partnership which promotes the business environment through an enabling environment provided by the public sector. He explained elaborately on how this multi-stakeholder platform is facilitated by Civil Society to enable it deliver the results required for profitable, win-win WASH business environment which works in an inclusive manner to serve the needs of both the rich and the poor. He anchored his experiment on the following key steps:

- Identification and training of five latrine artisans in pilot communities
- Formation of 15 community savings group in 10 communities
- Construction of six sanitation markets within communities
- Registration of 109 households with presby cooperative credit union

The presentation shared some experiences from the experiment as

- Well appreciated cost effective latrine options
- Construction of 40 household latrines
- Improved behaviour change towards sanitation

DISCUSSIONS

Some participants had concerns over the spiralling defecation and to a large extent the unperturbed mindset and outlook by many people when it came to latrines and household toilets. Mr. Rex Jakpa, (*Regional Environmental Health Director*), implored sector players, stakeholders and partners to collaborate seriously to ensure that a common goal - support to eliminate ODF – was the focus for all. He further stressed that enforcement by relevant institutions would push the agenda forward.

Some members argued strongly that some communities and towns in the regional capital still had a high incidence and prevalence of open defecation in this time and age. Majority of participants agreed with the view that the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly (TaMA) had not done much in terms of personnel and budgetary utilization in the fight against sanitation. The meeting believed that the

magnitude of the work far outweighs just one person and therefore observed that TaMA as a major stakeholder required a working team to successfully prosecute the sanitation agenda.

The Chairperson requested the Core Group to meet the TaMA WASH focal person for updates on sanitation activities in the metropolis.

Participants also bemoaned the low level of understanding of the concept of CLTS and other interventions by stakeholders. It was observed that most of the implementing bodies (field officers) on the ground do not have the necessary technical knowhow to execute the sanitation campaign. Participants were all encouraged to provide the necessary training for their field officers to ensure success in the fight against open defecation.

A participant was of the view that, the use of appropriate model and operational document is critical to any sanitation drive. This brought to light the fact that, most players in the sector are not even aware of the CLTS models and their contents resulting in the haphazard manner in which things are done in the sector.

World Vision Ghana agreed to forward the ODF protocol to the platform administrator for onward sharing to all organizations.

The platform argued for the reports of all meetings to be made available to the various partner bodies and NOT individuals attending such meetings. This will go a long way to help address the issue of lost institutional memory when these individuals are no longer with such bodies/ organizations.

The WASH Coordinator noted that WASH Alliance would continue to share and probe for better and more practicable learning ways from both international and local partners. He noted that there would always emerge challenges in any shape of experiment but remained confident that with close collaboration and cooperation, solutions and lessons would continue to be shared. He concluded on the point that the poor and under privileged are at the heart of all discussions and therefore urged members to continue to experiment, follow up and endeavour to share whatever experience that may have emerged for discussions.

The chairperson urged players in the sector to place much emphasis on sustainable sanitation services that last as the only way forward. According to her, it is only with regular collaboration and coordination of efforts by all partners which will result in the success of WASH.