

## 2019 National Learning Exchange in Ghana: Practical Improvements and Lessons Learned in Implementing WASH Service delivery at the Local Level

IRC Ghana, WaterAid Ghana, Water4 and the Hunger Project in collaboration with three (3) focal District Assemblies hosted the second national learning exchange on district-wide initiatives focused on building and strengthening strong local systems to deliver safe and sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services for everyone under the umbrella of the National Learning Alliance Platform (NLLAP) of the Ghana WASH Resources Centre Network (RCN).

*The main objective of the national learning exchange was to provide a platform for like-minded partners implementing district-wide initiatives for achieving WASH and WASH-related SDGs to share their experiences; and learn at first-hand how these initiatives are being rolled out. The event was also used to stimulate all-inclusive district-wide dialogue and interaction with the intent of identifying learning points that will propel improved planning and practice towards securing universal access to WASH services.*

### District-Wide innovations, lessons and challenges

The three (3) focal District Assemblies such as; Asutifi North in the Ahafo Region, Bongo in the Upper East Region and Wassa East Municipal in the Western Region led the discussions with the objective of sharing current implementation status of the various district-wide approaches; and how local governments and partners are fulfilling their roles and responsibilities in supporting the provision of WASH services in different contexts. It was also an opportunity for stakeholders to generate clear and strong recommendations for strengthening district-wide approaches and forging partnerships towards improved delivery of WASH and WASH-related SDGs.

Asutifi North District Assembly District (ANDA) Chief Executive (DCE), Anthony Mensah in remarks delivered by Mr. James Atta-era, ANDA Planning Officer said the initiative has largely been successful because it aligns with national WASH policies thus making their work much easy. "Interest of partners in the program is another source of motivation for us because it proves we are on the right track" He also said that leadership of the DCE was another driving force since the DCE would go to lengths to push the right agenda as well as the mutual interest among concerned parties as far as the provision of WASH services in the District is concerned.

Enumerating some of their achievements, Mr. Ata-Era said they had built 27 boreholes, rehabilitated 34, with ongoing constructions of 9 mechanized boreholes as well as the training of over 130 WSMTs in the district. He was quick to add that they were still facing some few challenges including capacity of assembly staff, limited additional funding to cover additional WASH interventions as well as expanded partnership for the programme.

For his part, Thomas Kngoriba, District Planning Officer for the Bongo District Assembly said before their intervention, water coverage was 74% whereas sanitation stood at 19%.

However, since their intervention the situation in their district showed a positive change in all aspects. He said as a result of their intervention, water coverage has risen to 85%, sanitation coverage at 20%, basic drinking water services at 20%, limited drinking water at 20%, safely managed drinking services at 25%.

He said what helps them is the effective coordination involving many actors in WASH services around One District Plan. "This helps to curb fragmented services delivery and to avoid duplication and lack of alignment of government processes."

"Another thing is adopting a monitoring process that collects, analyses, updates and make data available for planning; this makes it easier to identify un-served or underserved areas because they would have better information on the ground."

"Our initiative also provides some unique innovations such as training of latrine artisans, these are people trained to master the art of building latrines thus creating employment; we have also formed some women cooperative groups, this allows more focus on women in the district and gives them equal opportunity to pursue more opportunities."

Yekimi Ahmed, Finance Manager, Water4 operating in the Wassa East Municipal in the Western Region said so far, a total of 105 women were trained in water kiosk management and operations in the district and 157 professionally managed water points. 469 community ladies have been trained on water delivery services with a total of 54,127 people served currently. He attributed much of the success to the buy in by the District Assembly which facilitated the success of the project. "We could not have done it without their approval and have been very supportive"

“Our goal is to provide 90% of the people in Wassa East District access to improved, reliable and sustainable safe water through a service delivery approach and we are working towards that.”

Manu Ralph Agyakor, a Programme Officer with Hunger Project said Rural communities live in a state of despair and underdevelopment and lack basic development opportunities- eg. water, sanitation and hygiene facilities and skills. “For this our approach has been Community- led women centered approach to development, whereby different communities (from 5-15) who are closed by have been brought together to initiate actions to reduce hunger and poverty among themselves.”

According to him, this is done by bringing cluster of communities together to champion their own development, building capacity of community leadership - (WASH animators/ committee systems); putting women at the center of development as change agents among others.

He said their approach has led to the empowerment of women to initiate water and sanitation facilities in their communities- toilet, boreholes, water harvesting etc. “Others have also approached the District Assemblies for boreholes; trained WASH animators also do a lot of education and sensitizing people on the need for handwashing and using the tippy tap where running water is difficult to access.”

#### Government Commendation

Patinece Ampomah, a Programme Officer with National Development Planning Commission commended all the partners for their role in helping improve access to WASH services around the country. She mentioned that due to the various interventions by the partners and other stakeholders, the proportion of population using improved drinking water services has improved with progressive increase in access to safely managed water services and safely managed sanitation services.

She added Ghana is not water stressed though water availability per capita has been decreasing and that it is important to continue working together towards agenda 2030 for WASH.

#### Recommendations

The dialogue generated clear and strong learning points and recommendations for strengthening district-wide approaches and forging partnerships towards improved delivery of WASH and WASH-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The main lessons for a successful DWA noted from the deliberations included the following:

- Strong district leadership and political commitment;
- Strong partnership and clarity of roles;
- Citizen mobilisation, engagement and commitment;
- Capacity enhancement of the DAs and community members are key to ensure sustainability of WASH interventions;
- Setting-up monitoring framework for tracking performance;
- Creation of cross subsidy system for those with capacity to pay helps those who do not have the capacity to have access to WASH;
- Realistic budget allocation and disbursement for WASH by the DAs support implementation and promote sustainability of WASH facilities;
- A clear advocacy and communication plan to facilitate implementation and mobilise popular support for the initiative;
- Cross sector alliance promotes learning, collaborative decision making and ownership.
- Addressing the water quality (high fluoride and iron) challenge;
- More investment in addressing the sanitation challenge in the DAs;
- National Development Planning Commission adopting and replicating the Asutifi North District approach nationwide.
- Increase private sector involvement in addressing WASH challenges.
- Increase involvement of traditional authorities in designing, planning and implementation, as well as monitoring of WASH system at the District level.

*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 (with modifications when necessary) and are open to all interested parties. The discussions of each NLLAP 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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