

Stakeholders call for Lessons learnt from the WASH in Disaster Prone Communities Programme to be mainstreamed in national WASH policy

Stakeholders are calling for the mainstreaming of improved and disaster-resilient WASH facilities and services in Disaster Prone Communities (DPC) into policies on WASH and Sanitation to enhance livelihoods and quality of life of households and schools in flood-prone communities.

This came to light at the National Learning Alliance Platform (NLLAP) dialogue held in Accra on Thursday February 27, 2020 on the theme “Technical and Normative Outcomes of the WASH in Disaster Prone Communities (DPC) Programme: Mainstreaming into the Discussions on National Policies and Standards on WASH.”

The dialogue was held by 4 Partner UN Organisations in Ghana (viz., UN-Habitat, UNICEF, UNDP and WHO), working in close collaboration with the Government of Ghana (GoG) partners in the WASH, Disaster Management and Education sectors, who were involved in the implementation of the WASH in Disaster Prone Communities (DPC) Programme in the Northern Regions of Ghana. The main objective of the dialogue session was to share the results of the Programme and elicit feedback on policy relevant messages from the findings and lessons for consideration during the Ghana Water Policy review process.

Remarks by the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms Sylvia Lopez Ekra, was read on her behalf by Ms. Cynthia Prah, the National Information Officer at the [UN Information Centre](#). She congratulated the GoG and UN partners who were involved in implementing the Programme, and noted that “around the world, including in Ghana, floods, drought and other extreme weather are being made worse by climate disruption”. She also noted that Global warming is shifting rainfall patterns making heavy rain more frequent in many areas of Ghana, and stressed that human alterations of the land and destruction of natural protective systems are putting communities at greater risk of experiencing destructive floods resulting in loss of human lives; crops are ruined and properties including schools and hospitals are damaged, “and it is the most vulnerable who hurt first and worst.”

She added that the WASH in DPC programme which was implemented from June 2014 to May 2017, sought to contribute “to ensure that when such floods occur, the resilience of communities is strengthened to ensure that one disaster does not lead to another”. The aim was to provide durable water supply solutions to prevent contamination of water supply sources during such events and thus reduce the burden of WASH-related diseases among men, women, boys and girls in disaster-prone communities in Northern Ghana.

Mr. Eric Chimsi, Development Officer, Global Affairs Canada, said the WASH in DPC program turned out very well because besides giving communities the resilient infrastructure, there was a soft component that built on the capacity of the DPCs through the training of disaster responsive teams to undertake the planning for preparedness and emergency response.

He stressed that the various partners including the National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO), Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources and other key stakeholders made the work of the Programme team very easy to accomplish very daring results.

“Canada has put in a lot of resources to be able to achieve what was going on, however, it is the responsibility of government to support water and sanitation programs in the country; It is the responsibility of the district assemblies to strengthen the monitoring and coordination of the facilities so they stay for a very long time.”

He stressed the need to put much efforts to sustain the gains of the WASH in DPC programme so that the successful outcome of the intervention will benefit many people saying sustainability goes beyond access but involves trust between front liners and the community.

Speaking on behalf of the Coalition of NGOs in Water and Sanitation (CONIWAS), Patrick Apoya, said CONIWAS was proud to be part of the project and understands what WASH in DPCs policies mean to the people on the ground. He encouraged stakeholders to mainstream relevant portions of the WASH in DPC programme into their work so that together as a country we would provide the services our communities are expecting from us.

“We are grateful to the organizers of the workshop for involving us; CONIWAS urges the MSWR to take the findings seriously and incorporate them in the policy reviews the ministry is embarking on” He also urged all Civil Society Organizations and other implementers to strengthen their climate resilience of all WASH programs in the country.

Making a presentation on the theme “Technical and Normative Outcomes of the WASH in DPC Programme: Mainstreaming into the Discussions on National Policies and Standards on WASH”, Dr. Eric Moukoro the UN-Habitat Programme Manager UN Habitat, said among others that the WASH in DPC programme has provided flood resilient facilities to over 320,000 people in 265 communities. They have also promoted measures to ensure the resilience of WASH facilities and reached at least 50,000 school children.

According to him, one of the immediate outcomes for the programme was to improve hygiene practices among women and children before and after disasters and help the implementation of WASH program and practices for communities through the transfer of knowledge to the local people to manage their own WASH facilities in the event of a disaster.

He added that the programme has also helped in developing a comprehensive Disaster Risk Reduction toolkit for the communities to help them manage their WASH needs in disaster situations.

“We also constructed flood resilient WASH facilities in schools; now remote communities have 100% access to water facilities, and so far about 659 new interventions have been done and we have rehabilitated 396 existing facilities; as well about 224 sanitation flood prone latrines in schools have been constructed.”

Touching on some challenges Dr. Moukoro the Programme Manager for the WASH in DPC Programme said progress in implementing the Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) was a bit slow, and there were also challenges with the monitoring and supervision of household latrine construction, as well as the capacity of local government at the district and community level to provide for operations and maintenance of the facilities provided.

For his part, Dr. Daniel Adom a Consultant on WASH Policy for UN-Habitat, said there was a need for resilience to be integrated into WASH management to cope with present climate predicaments and future changes. What it implied was that the WASH sector needed to critically examine current policies and understand if the policy prescriptions are solid enough to withstand the potential impacts of climate change as far as the WASH sector is concerned.

He urged participants to seriously consider the component targets for SDG6 as a core basis for an in depth review of the water and sanitation policy documents, and referred to the following eight systemic and cross-cutting areas where the UN have suggested that fundamental changes are needed if the SDG6 Targets are to be met. These are: leaving no-one behind; mobilising financing; strengthening institutions for implementing integrated solutions; accelerating implementation locally; building resilience; investing in data; realising benefits of science, technology and innovation for all; and international cooperation.

He further highlighted the following points¹, for consideration in discussions on the way forward for the review of the Ghana National Water and Sanitation Policies:

1. There is the need for a stronger focus on ensuring the reliability and protection of drinking water sources (including water safety planning) and simple changes to latrine design to reduce the risks of damage and contamination due to flooding, as a first step towards adaptation to climate variability and change, through cost efficient changes in design or practice.”
2. Ensuring an alignment of the WASH components to the overall Water Policy with the Ghana National Climate Change Policy, to clearly outline their priorities and guidelines, necessary actions and finance required to achieve them.”
3. Including WASH in climate change policy is a key adaptation strategy. There's a need to commit to and incentivize

¹Adapted from Vision 2030: The Resilience of Water Supply and Sanitation in the Face of Climate Change, WHO 2009.

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.

better cross-institutional cooperation, recognizing that WASH are essential elements in climate change adaptation. There are potentially significant overall benefits to health and development in adapting to climate change.

4. Important knowledge gaps could also soon impede effective action, thus targeted research is urgently needed to fill gaps in technology and basic information to develop simple tools, and to provide regional information on climate change. Also, major changes in policy and planning are needed if ongoing and future investments are not to be wasted.

Conclusion and recommendations

During the open forum and group discussions, several recommendations/suggestions were made going forward in mainstreaming WASH in DPC into the national WASH policy:

- Regularly update and review the Water and Sanitation policies to effectively address and ensure that the policy prescriptions remain valid in the face of changing circumstances over time. This is because a policy promulgated in 2012 may not necessarily work for 2020 if circumstances have significantly changed over the period, and hence the need for regular reviews to offset any such mismatches.
- There is a need to consider assessments of the factors of climate change impact (global warming, sea level rise/coastal issues, extreme floods and droughts etc) and how important these factors are, in order to be effective in teasing out policy measures that integrate sustainability and resilience to the revised WASH policy.
- Given the cross sectoral nature of water in particular, there is a real need to consider an overall institutional coordinating arrangement, where emerging issues are discussed periodically to ensure that there is at least cross sectoral consensus with respect to policy measures that are resilient to climate change impacts on WASH infrastructure and services.
- There is a need to commit to cross-institutional cooperation and PARTNERSHIP recognizing that WASH are essential elements in climate change adaptation
- Government should consider including in the policy statements measures that could insulate the private sector and protect their investments in WASH projects.

If you are interested to propose a topic for a meeting please contact us on,
Tel. (233-0302) 797473/4
Email: rcn@washghana.net

