

Fourth National Learning Exchange On District-wide Initiative

Participants at the fourth National Learning Exchange on District-Wide Initiative agreed to review, adapt, and adopt some of the innovative approaches implemented over the recent past years and share outcomes and actions that can be replicated and scaled-up towards the delivery of the WASH Sustainable Development Goal Six (SDG 6).

The fourth National Learning Exchange on District-Wide Initiative took place on Wednesday, 27th October, 2021 at the Fiesta Royale Hotel, Accra. The theme of the one-day event was "Local systems strengthening to deliver safe and sustainable WASH services: Reflections on the district-wide approach towards meeting the targets for SDG6." The purpose of the workshop was to highlight outcomes of the past four years of implementation of the district-wide approach as a leverage for further interactions on local system strengthening for replication across the country.

The Participating Districts shared outcomes and experiences on what works and what does not work; sustainability and scale-up considerations; and the key lessons learnt over the past years of implementation among others. The event hosted IRC Ghana in collaboration with the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) and partners - WaterAid Ghana, and Water4/Forward Development together with the respective District Assemblies. The event was in two fold - i) the learning exchange session and ii) the orientation on the WASH toolkit session.



Presentation by the NDPC

The NDPC led the two sessions starting with the learning exchange with a presentation on Ghana's progress towards the SDGs and what is expected of local governments to meet the targets.

The NDPC indicated that Ghana has adopted a decentralized approach to the SDG implementation where Ministries, Department and Agencies (MDAs) and Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) lead in the planning and implementation of the respective SDGs. For instance, Goal 6, which is: "Ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all by 2030" is led by the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources (MSWR) and supported by Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and all 261 MMDAs in Ghana.

Accordingly, the National Budget is aligned with all the 17 SDGs, and the NDPC develops and disseminate SDG Annual Progress Reports, which includes the indicator baseline reports. In collaboration with the Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA), there is also the SDG bankable projects consisting of high impact WASH projects to attract funding and investment into WASH sector, especially the rural and small-town water and sanitation infrastructure.

The National Medium Term Policy Framework (2018-2021) has a focus area on Water and Environmental Sanitation with emphasis on: (a) improved access to safe water for all, (b) enhanced access to improved and reliable environmental sanitation services and (c) promote efficient water resource management.

The NDPC indicated that an emerging issue that needs serious attention of relevant stakeholders including traditional leadership, Civil Society and Community Leaders is pollution of freshwater bodies in our rivers due to illegal mining/galamsay activities.

Presentation by the District Assemblies

The Asutifi North and Wassa-East Districts Assemblies with support from their partners shared their experiences on their interventions.

The Asutifi North District Co-ordinating Director presented progress made towards Universal Coverage of Water by the District. According to him, the WASH Goal of the Assembly is: "every person in the Asutifi North District will have access to safe and sustainable WASH services in a conducive environment with water resources safely managed". To achieve this, a WASH Master Plan was developed which provided a framework for interventions in the District between 2017-2030. The target was a 30% of District population with access to safely managed water resources and 70% of the population with access to basic access to water services. The main partners/collaborators the District Assembly worked with are IRC Ghana, Safe water Network (for urban settlements), World Vision International, CDC, Aquaya and Latter-Day Saints. Each of these partners played a unique but complimentary role in capacity building, funding, sustainability planning, operation and maintenance, training among others to achieve the District WASH goal.

By September, 2021, the District **water coverage was 93%**. The District however lags in sanitation and must dig-deep to find answers to the nagging inadequate sanitation issues. One key recommendation is for the District Assembly to develop a comprehensive data on Open Defecation and track Open Defecation Free (ODF) communities.

The District highlighted the following promising innovations capable of being scaled-up in other communities:

- The 'NSUPA' limited mechanised system. This is a model of water provision for schools, health care facilities and Communities implemented by World Vision International Ghana.

- Water Kiosk Model with Seed Capital revolving fund to vendors to engage in petty trading.
- Water Quality Assurance Fund. This facilitates water quality testing and make provision for payment of testing fees.
- Safe Water Enterprise Stations. Two are currently in operation which provides water to small towns. One important innovation is the use of prepared cards to pay for as you fetch.
- Hub Service Facilitation. This is for all the partners for purposes of joint planning, monitoring and technical backstopping. It also provides updates on progress made and offer documentation of progress for purposes of sharing and learning.

The Wassa-East District WASH Goal is: Increased

Safe Water Access rate from 52% to 85% by end of 2021. The desire of the District Assembly is to have all the 196 communities in the District have safe water by end of 2021. ACCESS Development now FORWARD DEVELOPMENT has been the main partner and made huge investment in water systems to meet their target of 90% safe water access by December 2020. A District baselines data on water situation was assessed. **141 Service Delivery** contracts with communities have been developed. The investments made so far resulted in the establishment of 662 professionally managed water points across the District resulting in **93% water access in 2021**. The District is hopeful to achieve 100% by end of year, 2021.

Sustainability measures are in place to promote continuous operations of the water facilities. Area-based controllers have been trained. These include the training of Pump Mechanics and Vendors on basic operation and maintenance issues for continuous monitoring of water systems. There is also, a fully developed Sustainability Plan to guide operations and management issues.

The District Assembly is hopeful that collaboration with stakeholders will help resolve **challenges** such as concentration of Iron in water sources, high cost of water connections due dispersed nature of settlements inadequate number of Momo vendors among others and weak record keeping by Vendors.

The **lessons learnt** include: Sustained partnership and effective stakeholder collaboration bring about sustainable WASH service delivery; pay as you fetch approach is effective in mobilizing funding for operation and maintenance and will ensure sustainable water service delivery; Water, Sanitation and Hygiene service delivery should be approached from a system perspective to ensure proper integration.

Orientation on the WASH Toolkit

The NDPC also presented orientation on the **WASH Tool Kit** and elicited participants' inputs to enable them finalize and roll it out. The Tool Kit was developed by the NDPC with the support of IRC Ghana. It is developed against the backdrop of inadequate planning for WASH activities in the Districts.

Thus, the Tool Kit is designed to leverage on existing opportunities, sustain good practices for scale-up, strengthen WASH planning and improve WASH Governance at all levels. In doing this, it would bridge planning, operations and management gaps and promote sustainable and equitable WASH services delivery. It has the Planning, WASH Governance, Water Safety Planning and Life Cycle Costing to guide WASH planning and resource allocation.

Discussion

The discussions that ensued centred on ensuring that effective measures are put in place backed by necessary investments, relevant innovations, models, and methods to ensure the Asutifi North, Wassa-East, and other Districts implementing WASH activities with using the District-Wide Approach sustain their gains by 2030 and beyond.

While commending the NDPC, participants also tasked the Districts and the MSWR to be aware of the threat to Ghana's freshwater bodies/sources by illegal mining activities. Participants indicated that if the wanton destruction of freshwater bodies is not checked, Ghana will be off tracked to achieve SDG 6.1, which is safe water access to all by 2030. The NDPC was further tasked to re-look at the computation of the Water Resources Management Indicators under Goal 6, particularly water use efficiency ratios as well as community participation issues.

The District Assemblies were tasked to give similar attention to sanitation and hygiene since a poor environment has the potential to contaminate the safe water systems the communities currently enjoy. They were asked to reflect on the past years of implementation to inform the way forward for replication and upscale of some of the strategies and models for sanitation and hygiene delivery.

The District Assemblies were urged to deliberately and consistently allocate a certain percentage of their Internally Generated Funds to fund WASH activities which will enable them to solve some WASH related health diseases such as diarrhoea.

The collaboration with the NDPC and its benefits to the WASH sector in terms of effective planning and resource allocation was also highlighted.

Perspectives from Government, Development Partners, CSOs and the Private Sector was shared to enrich the discussion.

The Way Forward

Participants committed themselves to review and adapt some of the WASH models with a possibility to implementing them in their various Districts.

The MMDAs also committed to undertake effective planning for WASH implementation and allocate resources to improve the fortunes of sanitation and hygiene services delivery.

The MMDAs were tasked to submit written comments on the WASH Tool Kit to enable the NDPC finalize and roll it out.

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.

If you are interested to propose a topic for a meeting please contact us on,
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