

## Stakeholders call for strong leadership to improve rural sanitation in Ghana

*Strong local leadership is needed to drive change in rural sanitation service delivery. This means striving towards making sustainable sanitation gains that both generate health impact and economic returns in rural communities. This is the general outcome of the National Learning Alliance Platform (NLLAP) meeting held in Accra on 16<sup>th</sup> April, 2020, where findings from two years study of Rural Sanitation Operational research was presented to WASH stakeholders and several WASH sector organizations. The forum which was under the theme “Rural Sanitation Service Delivery - Findings From 2 Years of Rural Sanitation Operational Research” presented an opportunity to present initial findings from the research which has one more year to go as well as to elicit responses on rural sanitation programme implementation issues. The Research was led by the “OMI” consortium, comprising of Oxford Policy Management of the UK, MAPLE Consult Ghana and IRC Ghana. The “OMI” consortium conducted the research with focus on issues such as review of approaches used in the sanitation sector; analysis of the GoG/UNICEF programme data, district level enabling environment assessments, community level qualitative research and sanitation marketing research/case studies in IDE, Global Communities and UNICEF-supported districts and communities. The target districts where the study was conducted were in two regions (Volta Region – Kpandu, Ho West and North Dayi) and Northern Region (East Gonja, Mion and Zabzugu).*

Presenting some of the findings Mr. Kwame Asubonteng, IRC WASH Ghana indicated that the research findings summarises the key findings from the two-year operational research programme in Ghana which took place between 2017 and 2018 to focus on rural sanitation programmes. He said the main aim of the operational research was to strengthen the evidence base related to rural sanitation, with an emphasis on identifying the enabling environmental factors associated with good and poor progress in rural sanitation. He added that nationally it was estimated that over one in five Ghanaians have no access to toilet and defecate in the open, adding that between 2000 and 2015, there was only a modest reduction in open defecation rates from 22 per cent to 19 per cent for Ghana to be classified as having made “little to no progress” He said, however, more recent survey data (MICS 2017) indicated progress was being made in Ghana in some regions in both rural and urban areas and across all wealth quintiles.

Mr. Zack White, Research fellow, OPM said the research therefore focused on the six districts to examine the enabling environment for rural sanitation, while a community-level study was conducted in 30 communities within the six districts to assess the community level factors that inhibit or support progress in rural sanitation. He said data from the recent research showed a sharp

acceleration in results over the last two years as compared to the early phases (2012-2016) of the programme. He added that the team also noted a general improvement in the level of sanitation prioritization at the district level, adding that it was seen to be strongly related to the change of senior leadership in MMDA's being set in the context of rural sanitation receiving greater political prioritization at all levels.

It came to light that data on sanitation marketing in the WASH sector appears to be inadequate hence the need for more collaboration and co-ordination regarding data collection along those lines e.g. the use of community technical volunteers (CTVs). Another was that there is need for more information along non-market approaches e.g. financing for rural sanitation, use of revolving fund for latrine acquisition, computing cost of getting rural communities triggered to achieving ODF status, rural sanitation in small towns and more information on the results-based financing (RBF) approach.

Out of a number of findings emanating from the study, participants were made to express their views on the most important ones though prioritization. The discussions were facilitated by Nii Odai Laryea, MAPLE Consult Director and a member of the consortium. The four that were prioritised were:

- **ODF advocacy/publicity** (which has worked very well in the Northern Region). This needs to be encouraged and promoted country-wide. The use of the ODF league table and wide use of the electronic and print media as well as local FM stations, free air time to be provided by the media for rural sanitation campaigns can all be employed to enhance advocacy and improve sensitization programmes;
- **Strengthening DA leadership** (recognized as key since the influence of the political and administrative leaders are regarded as vital towards driving decisions and steering rural sanitation forward. Orientation programmes need to be provided by the MLGRD/MSWR to all newly-appointed MMDCEs and their MMDCD counterparts when they assume office to ensure that sanitation issues are put on the front-burner of programmes at the DA level);
- **Developing the supply side and sanitation marketing** (it is believed and perceived by many stakeholders in the WASH sector that adequate sensitization has been made hence focus should be shifting towards the supply-side e.g. cheaper and affordable but durable technologies, capacity building for latrine artisans to enable them acquire skills for building a range of low-cost technology options, financing of latrines etc.);
- **Recognition of field staff/natural leaders** (serving as a big source of motivation through simple means such as provision of T-shirt, certificates, exchange visits, publicity and celebration etc.).

local government takes the lead. Where government leadership is weak, a likely negative spin-off is low political commitment leading to chronic budgetary challenges and a very low pledge of public funds and commitment for sanitation. Participants made the following recommendations going forward to improve rural sanitation in Ghana.

- Advocacy to make rural sanitation issues top priority at all levels by making aspects of sanitation a minimum condition under the current District Assembly Performance Assessment Tool (DPAT);
- Ensure compliance of sanitation issues under the current performance contract between District Chief Executives, District Co-ordinating Directors and their respective Regional Coordinating Councils;
- Ensure that sanitation programmes broaden stakeholder engagement at the District Assembly level - inclusion of Assembly Members, religious leaders, traditional authority, among others;
- Sustained capacity building for District Assemblies and toilet entrepreneurs for design and installation of durable and climate-resilient sanitation facilities;
- Making provision for subsidies for the pro-poor, vulnerable, socially excluded and people with special needs.

### Conclusion/Recommendations

It is possible to provide sustainable sanitation to rural communities; this can only be achieved if the

*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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