

Climate Change and Water Security Solutions in Ghana

Participants at the 92nd edition of the National Level Learning Alliance (NLLAP) meeting engaged in lively deliberations, provoked by WaterAid Ghana research findings on Climate Change and Water Security. Key among these was the impact of climate change in the focused districts - seasonal changes in water table, unpredictable and erratic rainfall pattern, high temperatures during the peak of the dry season, and frequent drought and floods. Participants, at the end agreed that the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector has to be intentional in implementing a sustained national agenda to address the negative impact of climate change on water bodies and water resources to save Ghana from becoming water stress in the near future.

The ninety-second edition of the National Level Learning Alliance took place on Thursday, 24th February, 2022 at the Coconut Groove Hotel in Accra. The theme of the one-day event was "Advancing Climate Change and Water Security Solutions in Ghana." The purpose of the learning event was to share and disseminate WaterAid Ghana research findings on Climate Change and Water Security. Participants including Journalist from state and private media contributed their perspectives, shared their learning and experiences on Climate Change.

WaterAid Ghana led the discussion and used the occasion to highlight its Water Security and Climate Resilience Advocacy agenda, which seeks to influence Government to prioritize and adequately budget for safe water, prioritize WASH in the National climate adaptation strategy, and tackle the challenges of climate change and water sustainability and the opportunities that improved water management.

Background and Context

Globally, climate change and water security have moved to the centre stage of sustainable development agenda. The Climate crisis has become water crisis. Water resources are under severe pressure in many communities and regions of the world mainly due to the climate change. Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) are interlinked and play an important role in sustainable development. Climate change is threatening the achievements already made in WASH service provision and sustainability. This is being aggravated by the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme events such as storms, floods and droughts in communities already experiencing water stress and poor sanitation. In the face of these threats, WaterAid Ghana (WAG) through its Water Security and Climate Resilience Advocacy agenda seeks to influence Government to prioritize and adequately budget for safe water, prioritize WASH in the National climate adaptation strategy, and tackle the challenges of climate change and water sustainability and the opportunities that improved water management.

The Northern Regions of Ghana have been identified by numerous studies between 2014 and 2018 as more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change than the Southern part of the Ghana. Northern Ghana's vulnerability to extreme weather events is becoming more severe with predictions of strong floods, rising temperatures and changing rainfall patterns in the northern parts of the country as a result of climate change. The negative impact of climate change especially on WASH facilities is of immense concern, hence WAG's advocacy, programme delivery and research on climate change

Over the years, WAG has documented the impact of climate change on water security in Wa Municipality, Bongo,



Kassena-Nankana West and Bawku West Districts, reviewed Ghana's key strategic climate change response documents including the National Climate Change Policy (NCCP), National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (NCCAS) and the Nationally Determined Contributions (GH-NDCs). The review of these documents led to the identification of gaps, missing timelines, and entry points to integrate water, sanitation, and hygiene issues into these policy documents. WAG-funded research also investigated the impact of climate change on water security in Northern Ghana. The four districts used as case studies included, **Wa Municipality, Bongo, Kassena Nankana West and Bawku West Districts.**

The other objective which was met was the conduct of stakeholder mapping and analysis which revealed those with influence, interest and participation to support WAG climate change advocacy agenda in the years ahead.

Key Findings

It came to light that at least 60% of the respondents have heard about climate change in their communities, which means high awareness about climate change phenomenon

in the four Districts, especially among the sampled communities and interviewees. Climate change impacts in the districts include seasonal changes in water table, unpredictable and erratic rainfall pattern; high temperatures during the peak of the dry season; and frequent drought and floods. Also 67.4% of respondents have experienced change in access to water which explains the issue of seasonal access which may be attributable to climate variability. The highlights of other findings were:

- Projection on the climate of Northern Ghana as summarized by the Ghana's Third National Communication indicates that mean annual rainfall totals relative to 1980-2010 is likely to decrease by 1% in 2060 and 3% in 2080.
- Flooding has been identified as a major hazard for Northern Ghana with devastating effect on communities. In 2008 more than 325,000 people were directly affected, needing external livelihood support (**Bonye and Godfred, 2011**). Also, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) estimates indicated that floods destroyed 70,500 hectares of land and 50,000 people in Northern Ghana were directly and indirectly affected with 20 deaths recorded in 2007 (**Armah et al 2010**)

KEY MESSAGES

- Climate change crises is water crises
 - Prioritize safe water in national climate adaptation planning and nationally determined contribution as a critical line of defense against the impact of climate change.
 - Build the human capacity required to understand climate change issues and deliver sustainable WASH services in the context of a changing climate
- The National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (NCCAS) is very comprehensive on climate change adaptation and could serve as an entry point for water and sanitation issues.
 - The National Adaptation Planning (NAP) process is also a great avenue to advance WASH issues in adaptation. The NAP process looks at climate change adaptation planning from medium-long term.
 - Environmental diseases including the celebros spinal meningitis become severe when climate change is severe.

Participants Contributions

Participants agreed on the above key messages and shared

useful perspectives on how WAG could implement the research findings. The suggested advocacy priorities and issues on climate change and safe WASH were:

- Design and implement social behavior change activities on climate change in communities to empower community members with relevant knowledge on climate adaptation and mitigation measures
- Collaborate with other relevant Organizations to urge Government to fully implement the polluter-pay principle which will also ensure compliance and enforcement of relevant laws on managing water bodies and minimize pollution of water bodies
- Influence Political Parties to understand WASH and Climate Change linkages and design political manifestoes to address the climate change crises
- NCCAS became outdated in 2020. There's an opportunity to engage sector policy makers to elevate the discussion and incorporate of WASH issues.

Participants also suggested to WAG to explore alternative community engagement approaches and models to implement climate change advocacy. The nature-based solutions as a right-based approach to climate change advocacy was mentioned. WAG was also entreated to package their interventions recognizing differences between adaptation and mitigation measures to deal with the climate change menace. Assessing the gender dimensions of knowledge on climate change was raised. The need to explore further the different knowledge gaps relative to men and women, as well as recognizing the need for different measures of adaptation for men and women, young and old in the project implementation communities were also raised.

The Way Forward

Participants indicated the need to engage the Government to allocate more funding, logistics and deploy the relevant resources at the Metropolitan, Municipal and District levels to work with communities to stem the tide of climate change and protect water resources. The need to engage different stakeholders based on the stakeholder mapping results should be reviewed and pursued by WAG - The Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) for instance have planning and implementation role which is indispensable in matters of development management.

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,
Tel. (233-0302) 797473/4
Email: rcn@washghana.net

