Stakeholders hail 2021 Population and Housing Census Data on WASH

With less than 10 years to the sustainable development goals agenda, the need to generate and promote the use of credible home-grown WASH data remains on the minds of the water sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector stakeholders. This came to light at the end of the Regional Learning Alliance Platform (RLLAP) in Kumasi. Participants agreed on the need to harmonise WASH data and to establish a joint working group (Ghana Statistical Service & Sanitation stakeholders) to promote the generation of WASH evidence- based data for use. Participants also agreed on the need to support the Ministry to develop hygiene indicators to aid the Ghana Statistical Service to collect comprehensive home-grown hygiene data.

Seventy-Seven (77) participants including media persons attended the dissemination of 2021 Census WASH data at the Miklin Hotel in Kumasi on the 28th of July, 2022. The GAMA-SWP funded workshop was organized in collaboration with the Resource Centre Network. The main objective of the WASH Census Data Dissemination forum was to bring to the attention of WASH sector stakeholders and practitioners the new Census WASH data, and to enable them understand better and effectively use the data for effective decision-making and programme management. Specifically, the forum was used to help all participants to understand the exact WASH figures and percentages in the 2021 Population and Housing Census (PHC) report, and to promote its use in complementarity with other international data. This comes against the backdrop of the need to promote and use credible home-grown WASH data.

Cross-section of workshop participants during the dissemination at MIKLIN HOTEL in Kumasi

2.0 Background and Context

The Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector depends on reliable data for effective decision-making and planning. Since 1990, the WASH sector has relied on the WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Platform (JMP) data for policy planning, monitoring, and reporting purposes, mainly because of lack of reliable national data on WASH. The credibility of national WASH data sources has also been questioned in the past because of methodological and procedural issues in data gathering and analysis. The past national census data on WASH was also limiting and lacked comprehensiveness.

The Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) conducted a Population and Housing Census in 2021, a national practice undertaken every decade. The census data is believed to be the most authentic and reliable data source since there are minimal chances of errors from sampling. In between the census exercise, the Ghana Statistical Service undertakes other surveys such as the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey and the Ghana Living Standards Survey, both of which contain some data on WASH. Before the Census in 2021, the latest source of WASH data generated locally was the MICS in 2017, compelling users to resort to that source even in 2021 until the census data was published in early 2022. Perhaps, the only available annual source of data is the one published globally by the WHO/UNICEF

Joint Monitoring Programme. Considered as foreign source, even though the JMP insists that it takes its data from authentic country sources, many local institutions hesitate to use it as there are sometimes slight disparities between this source and those from the Ghana Statistical Service. With the publication of the census data on WASH, therefore, stakeholders hope that at least there is a locally generated and reliable source of data available for planning and decision-making over the next few years. However, the way the data has been presented in the Census report looks quite technical and it takes some statistical and data analysis skills to get the full understanding. There are, for instance, reports of misinterpretation by some sector professionals while others still prefer not to use it at all for fear of error.

To maximize the benefits from the census data to support the sector to make the right decisions and plans, the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources (MSWR), through the GAMA Sanitation and Water Project in collaboration with the RCN convened a regional level Learning Alliance Platform (RLLAP) in Kumasi on Thursday, 28th July 2022, to begin a series of census WASH data dissemination.

3.0 Census Data on Water

The target of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6.1 on safely managed drinking water aims to ensure the right to safe and affordable water for all, thereby fulfilling the SDG Goal of the human right to access to safe water. However, the 2021 Census data estimated access to basic drinking water in Ghana at 87.7%, with 96.7 % access in urban areas and 74.4% access in rural areas. The key highlights of census data on water are:

➢ 79.9% of Ghanaians use surface water, 12% unprotected well and spring; 7.9% tanker

➢ 37.4% of Ghanaians use sachet water as the main source of drinking

➢ 70.7% of people in Greater Accra use sachet water as the main source of drinking

- ➢ North-East Region has the least of 1.8% of its population which uses sachet water as main source of drinking water
- ➢ North-East Gonja in Savana Region is in the worse situation of use of unimproved drinking water
- ➢ In the regions, the time spent is longest in the Savannah (33 minutes), Northern and North-East (32 minutes), and shortest in Central and Ashanti (13 minutes) Regions.
- ➢ In terms of time spent to access drinking water, Saboba District in the Northern Region is the worst in Ghana (48.4%).

Dr. Peprah delivering his presentation at the Workshop on 28.8.22

Dr. Peprah revealed the above highlights during a presentation he made at the Regional Level Learning Alliance Platform (RLLAP). He revealed that there were codes which guided water data collection. Codes **H11-H13** were focused on water and indicated some key questions that were asked on water: **H11a:** What is the main source of drinking water for the household**? H11b**: How long does it take to go to the water source, get water and come back? (Including waiting time)

H11c: What is the main source of water used by your household for domestic purposes such as cooking and washing?

He concluded his presentation with some advice to the WASH sector leadership and actors to take advantage of the comprehensive WASH data in the 2021 PHC report to set-up a national WASH database using the baseline from the 2021 PHC.

4.0 Census Data on Sanitation

Mr. Godfred F. Boadi delivering his presentation

Mr. Godfred Fiifi Boadi presented on the sanitation module from the 2021 Census Report. He mentioned that 75,000 data collectors were trained to observe and collect sanitation data in under various components: Solid waste, toilet facilities, wastewater disposal and defection points. Separate data was collected on containment and user interface. He revealed that the use of improved technologies ensured Geographic Information System captured the locations of all sanitation structures/facilities.

He indicated that the listing form identified some key sanitation questions such as:

- • Does this structure have a toilet facility?
- • What type of toilet facilities are available in this structure?
- • Is this toilet functional?
- • How many usable toilet rooms (cubicles) are functional in this structure?
- • How does the household mainly dispose of waste?

The data on WASH was collected at the household level and not at the individual level. He further indicated that separate data was collected on both containment and user interface.

The key highlights of the Census data on sanitation were:

- ➢ 59.3% of Ghanaians have access to household toilet facility: **69.5%** urban and 49.1% rural, meanwhile, only 25.3% are improved and not shared.
- ➢ Tricycle accounts for 13.2 percent of methods of solid waste collection and is mainly an urban phenomenon (21.4%), with only 0.5 percent in rural areas. It is most prevalent in Greater Accra (42.4%) and Ashanti (20.1%) regions.
- ➢ 23% of Ghanaians use public toilet: 25.2% urban and 19.7% rural
- ➢ 18% of Ghanaians practice open defecation (OD)
- ➢ **Open defecation** has reduced in all regions except in Ashanti, Oti, Bono East, Ahafo and Bono Regions. In Ashanti and Ahafo it increased from 6% to 7% from 2010 to 2021.
- ➢ No region has obtained open defaecation-free status. In five regions, more than 50 percent of households practise open defecation
- ➢ 89.6% of the population of Wa East District practice OD, the highest in Ghana.

5.0 Data Management opportunities for WASH Sector/Way forward

Participants contributed to discussions which centred on harmonizing WASH data sources and promoting home grown WASH data through the GSS and the National Development Planning Commission. Participants suggested the need to establish a joint working group between the GSS & Sanitation stakeholders to promote the generation of evidence-based data for use.

There is need for the WASH sector to take advantage of forthcoming national surveys such as the Demographic and Health Survey, the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) and the Ghana Living Standard Survey. Hygiene is particularly 'orphaned' and needs to be remedied. The sector should prioritize the development of hygiene indicators which should feed into future national surveys to establish home-grown hygiene data to aid decision-making.