

## District Learning Alliance Platform to drive SDG 6 in Asutifi North District

The Asutifi North District is currently pursuing a development agenda which will ensure that in the next 12 years, an enviable feat of a universal access to safe water, improved sanitation and hygiene services is attained. The district-based full WASH coverage initiative was developed in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 6, and was inaugurated as the Asutifi North Ahonidie Mpontuo (ANAM) in the first quarter of 2018. It is being implemented with funding from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, and in partnership with IRC, World Vision International, the Aquaya Institute, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Netcentric Campaigns, as well as Safe Water Network. The role of 'communications', 'advocacy', and 'networks' in the successful implementation of the initiative was duly anticipated and duly given prominence in the District WASH Masterplan which was developed under the leadership of the District Assembly, to guide implementation of the ANAM programme. The establishment of the Asutifi North District Level Learning Alliance Platform (AN-DLLAP) brings to the fore a stage for facilitating learning, knowledge exchange and communications within framework of the District WASH Masterplan towards full coverage.

The DLLAP will initially be used to create awareness, promote broad-base participation, and provide opportunities for learning on the district-based WASH initiative. Subsequently, it will be used to sustain improved WASH related behaviours and attitudes. The maiden AN-DLLAP meeting was held at the District Assembly Hall in Kenyasi, on the 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2018. Participants were made up of representatives of Non-Governmental Organisations, Civil Society Organisations, Heads of Agencies and Departments, youth groups, the Traditional Authorities, and selected Water and Sanitation Management Teams for Small Towns in the district. The meeting was used to discuss the need and modalities for establishing and operating an effective DLLAP. Presentations and discussions at the meeting were led by IRC Ghana (Mr. Abubakari Wumbei, Communications, Learning and Advocacy Coordinator) with support from the Asutifi North District Assembly (Mr. James Ata-Era, Development Planning Officer).



### ***Establishing the district learning platform: the process and the output***

From the outset, participants' expectations for the workshop were elicited, and these are categorised under the following broad recurring themes: to know more about WASH issues/challenges in the district; to know more about the delivery of safe water and management of water resources; to understand various ways of disseminating district level information to a wider audience; and to understand the mandate of the learning alliance platform. These expectations were

addressed at various points in the course of the meeting.

In his opening statement, Mr. James Ata-Era on behalf of the Chief Executive reiterated the Asutifi North District's commitment to the success of the ANAM Initiative. He added that the district is open to every opportunity aimed at improving access and sustainability of WASH services to its inhabitants. He declared the district's readiness to support in any way necessary for the establishment and the sustenance of a district learning platform.

In the first part of a two-phase presentation, Mr. Abubakari Wumbei discussed the concept of 'knowledge management' and 'sector learning' in relation to WASH delivery. He provided some statistics on Ghana to emphasise the magnitude of the WASH challenges the country is confronted with. He noted, for example that, improved sanitation coverage was as low as 14% in 2017, while access to safely-managed water was 27% in Ghana. With this background, Mr. Wumbei explained how WASH actors in the country could collectively improve upon the sector's performance through a 'double-loop learning' process

whereby, new ways of doing things are explored; analysis, reflections and learning from past mistakes occur in a structured manner; and platforms are created for scaling up of innovative and successful solutions to local problems. In three buzz groups, participants mapped the existing engagement platforms in the district; the focus of these platforms; frequency of meetings; the target groups as well as convening institutions. With this exercise, the absence of a multi-stakeholder platform with focus on social learning and advocacy towards improved WASH delivery was clearly established. Participants unanimously supported the idea of creating a new and dedicated learning platform in the district to fill this vacuum.

During the second part of his presentation, Mr. Abubakari Wumbei explained the concept of learning alliance; why the learning alliance approach was necessary; the various levels at which learning could take place; and the membership of these platforms. He defined learning alliance as 'a group of different stakeholders organised into a platform at various levels - global, national, regional, district - working together to learn, innovate and scale-up'. He identified some of the existing learning platforms in Ghana. This include the Mole Conference; the National Level Learning Alliance Platform (NLLAP); the Brong Ahafo Regional Learning Alliance Platform, and some district-based learning platforms in the country. Mr. Abubakari made reference to some studies which identified the culture of weak learning in the WASH sector of Ghana, and how the establishment of the AN-DLLAP, with vertical and horizontal channels of communication could help in closing the sector learning cycle.

At plenary discussion, participants agreed on the following: a) the Asutifi North District Assembly will host the learning platform; b) the platform will be chaired by Mr. Frank Tweneboah-Koduah; c) a Core Group comprising the District Assembly, Ghana Education Service (School Health Education Programme), IRC, Global Alliance for Development

Foundation, United Youth in Mining Affected Communities and Social Development Foundation, will support the running of the DLLAP. The District Assembly would officially write to the Core Group Members and specify their expected roles and functions. It was agreed that the AN-DLLAP will be organised quarterly. Learning meetings which will occur outside this regular schedule will however be considered on case by case basis. The Core Group will meet more frequently, and in a manner that will guarantee successful and regular DLLAP meetings. It was agreed that IRC will be responsible for documentation of key issues and development of reports/reflection papers. Participants agreed that the AN-DLLAP will operate on a lean budget which will only support feeding/refreshments during meetings. It was also agreed that learning meetings will be kept as short as possible. The district pledged to incorporate activities of DLLAP in its Annual Work plan so that continuous funding could be guaranteed. There were also suggestions for additional funding and logistical opportunities to be explored by the Core Group for activities of the DLLAP.

### Conclusion

In wrapping up, Mr. Abubakari Wumbei mentioned that the RCN website which currently hosts the NLLAP reflection papers at the national level could be used to share reports from the AN-DLLAP until a dedicated platform is secured by the district. The Core Group was notified about some recent studies which were undertaken as part of the ANAM Initiative (research on water quality, and baseline assessment of WASH in schools and health care facilities) as some interesting information which could be shared on the platform. The Core Group was also tasked to reach out to other members/institutions to join the platform, namely, persons with disabilities.

#### ABOUT AN-DLLAP

The Asutifi North District Learning Alliance Platform (AN-DLLAP) is a WASH sector, multi stakeholder platform with the overall goal of improving sector learning and dialogue. It was established in July, 2018, and is being hosted by the Asutifi North District Assembly. 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 the district and beyond. AN-DLLAP meetings take place quarterly (or more frequently, when necessary) and are open to all interested parties. The discussions of each AN-DLLAP meeting 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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