



ANAM WASH REFLECTIONS

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ASUTIFI NORTH DISTRICT LEVEL LEARNING ALLIANCE PLATFORM: PAPER 3

Developing A Water Quality Monitoring System For The Asutifi North District

The Aquaya Institute is working with the Asutifi North District Assembly to develop a robust framework for monitoring drinking water quality. This is being undertaken as part of the on-going Asutifi North Ahonidie Mpontuo (ANAM), an initiative which seeks to achieve a district-wide coverage for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services by the year 2030, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal six. At the 3rd District Level Learning Alliance Platform (DLLAP) at Kenyasi, participants discussed issues relating to water quality at public water facilities in Asutifi North. The first part of the discussions focused on findings from a formative study on water quality management undertaken by Aquaya Institute. The second part discussed how Aquaya intends to work with the Asutifi North District Assembly and relevant stakeholders to institutionalise routine water quality monitoring.

Focusing first on the formative research, AJ Karon, Research and Programme Officer at the Aquaya Institute explained the parameters tested for water quality (E. coli, total coliforms, arsenic, fluoride, mercury, turbidity, conductivity, cadmium, among others); and the testing methods used (membrane filtration, industrial test systems econo-quick arsenic test kit). He reported that, a total of 13 in-depth interviews were conducted, 7 focused group discussions held, and 77 water systems were randomly chosen for primary data collection. It was reported further that faecal contamination was widespread and was found in more than half of the water systems sampled in the district. According to Mr. Karon, arsenic concentration was detected above permissible limits in some water systems, and that water quality testing was infrequently done by the water and sanitation management teams for both small town and small communities in the district. Water quality results from some of the water points visited in the district were shared with participants. Participants were also taken through how to interpret and make sense of such results.



At plenary participants expressed dissatisfaction with the level of faecal contamination in public water sources in the district. Mr. AJ Karon explained that though water contamination with e. coli was common, it is also the easiest to treat. It was further indicated that, though traces of chloride and arsenic were found in some water facilities, they pose danger only when consumed in high concentrations over a long period of time. Participants conceded that water quality analysis was important, and that the quality of water could

only be established through regular monitoring and testing.

Having established the importance of undertaking regular water testing, the second part of the DLLAP was used to provide clarity on how much it would cost WSMTs to sample and perform regular water quality testing as proportion of total revenue generated from water systems; and the cost for centralized versus decentralized arrangements for water quality testing. Mr. AJ Karon explained that even though WSMTs have primary responsibility for water quality testing (as specified by CWSA LI 2007), majority of water systems are collecting insufficient revenue to finance the cost of routine water monitoring.

Mr. AJ Karon noted that Aquaya Institute is working with the District Assembly to pilot a two-pronged strategy for improving revenue collection at selected water systems, and for institutionalising a centralised water quality testing structure involving the use of facilities and personnel at the Ghana Water Company Limited

(GWCL), Sunyani. On improving revenue collection, Aquaya will undertake the following: erect stands/kiosks near selected standpipes/boreholes; equip the kiosks with an official DA certificates; establish rates for service in a publicly visible space; encourage payment of private connection bills at the water kiosks; provide uniforms for kiosks vendors, and a built in accountability mechanism. In point source communities, meters will be installed on handpumps in addition to training on financial record keeping. It is anticipated that these interventions will address commonly cited reasons for non-payment for water, namely, vendor absenteeism due to adverse weather conditions (rain or sunshine), lack of respect and recognition of the vendor by water users, and poor accountability for revenues collected by water vendors. According to Mr. AJ Karon, Aquaya will facilitate an agreement between the Asutifi North District and GWCL, Sunyani. This will enable the latter to commence monthly testing of eligible water supply systems. To make the cost of testing affordable and test results useful, the testing will focus only on specific parameters such as turbidity, pH, E. coli and conductivity.

WSMTs at the DLLAP expressed readiness to co-operate with Aquaya Institute, GWCL and the District Assembly on the pilots by paying for the routine water quality sampling and testing, providing access to stand pipe meters for independent monitoring by the Aquaya Institute, documentation of revenue at standpipes and boreholes, and allowing selected handpumps to be fitted with meters to track water consumption and revenue levels. The WSMTs also agreed to allow selected vendors to receive payments from private connections (households/institutions). Suggestions were made for the inclusion of electronic payment options (mobile money) for customers to pay their bills during the pilot phase.

Given the level of contamination of public water facilities, participants were worried about the

quality of water from privately-mechanised boreholes being operated in the district and urged the Assembly to step up its monitoring activities to ensure that such service providers comply with water quality testing requirements specified in the LI 2007. The association of persons living with disabilities appealed to the District Assembly and the various WSMTs to consider engaging their members as vendors for WASH facilities since they are always likely to be available to collect user fees.

Coordinating Director for the Asutifi North District, Mr. George Padmore Mensah expressed gratitude to Aquaya Institute for their interventions towards improving water quality management in the district. He noted that the District Assembly has instituted periodic audit of its small-town water systems and this will result in improved revenue generation and accountability by the various WSMTs. He supported suggestions by other participants for water vendors to be held accountable for money received from the sale of water. He noted that the level of investment being made in the provision of water in the district requires some level of diligence, professionalism and transparency in the management of installed facilities to ensure sustainability. Mr. Mensah noted that the District Assembly is considering the option of participating in the on-going reform initiative of the Community Water and Sanitation Agency for the management of small-town water systems in the district. This consideration is being made in view of challenges hindering the effective management of some of the district's piped systems, notably, poor revenue collection, poor accountability of funds generated, and the intermittent breaks in water distribution.

In conclusion, the Coordinating Director reminded participants of the uniqueness of the WASH initiative being implemented by the District Assembly and its partners. He urged DLLAP members to support this worthy cause.

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 opportunities for sector players as one of the practical approaches to improving sector engagements 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 ANAM WASH website [www.anamwash.com] or RCN website [www.washghana.net]

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

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