

Recognize WASH as a Climate Adaptation Strategy —WASH Actors in Ghana Advises

Inadequate knowledge or lack of it on climate change issues and how it affects the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector among Ghanaians has been identified as one of the major inhibiting factors militating against the country's effort at combating climate change in Ghana. Policy makers and majority of actors in the WASH sector either lack adequate knowledge of climate change issues or how it impact on WASH or generally does not have interest on climate change. That according to actors in the WASH sector account for the haphazard implementation of climate changes strategies and low understanding of the climate change among the populace and therefore called on policy implementers, civil society and all WASH sectors actors to intensify their learning and sensitisation activities on WASH based climate adaptation strategies in the Ghana. They also called for WASH to be recognized as climate change adaptation strategy. These were among a myriad of sentiments echoed by WASH sector actors at the fifty-eighth (58) edition of the National Level Learning Alliance Platform in Accra.

The 58th NLLAP took place on Thursday 3rd November, 2016 on the theme, WASH Based Climate Adaptation Strategies in Ghana. Dr. Chaka Uzundu, Ag. Head of Policy, Advocacy and Campaigns Department of WaterAid Ghana made the first presentation on "Climate Change is Water Change, So Should Ghana Prioritize Human Water Centered Adaptation as Our Key Response to Climate Change?" Dr. Emmanuel Tachie-Obeng of the Ghana Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) gave an insight into the "National Climate Change Policy Framework in Ghana." Lovans Owusu-Takyi, Director, Institute for Sustainable Energy and Environmental Solutions (ISEES) took actors in the WASH sector through "Climate Smart Solutions for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene." NLLAP 58 was chaired by the Executive Secretary of the Water Resources Commission, Ben Y. Ampomah.

According to WaterAid Ghana (WAG) and the Ghana Youth Environment Movement (GYEM) the National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) which is Ghana's policy response to climate change, must provide the vision and guiding framework for an integrated response to climate change and that they added must be anchored to the national sustainable development priorities such as:

- (1) Agriculture and food security, (2) Disaster preparedness and response, (3) Natural resource management, (4) Equitable social development, (5) Energy, industrial and infrastructural development.

Stakeholders were also clear on the fact that, adequate steps have not been taken at national and local levels to strengthen resilience to climate change/variability. They also contend that, climate change policies and strategies have been weakly decentralised; and adaptation strategies are not well elaborated and WASH in particular is not recognised as a fundamental adaptation strategy. In this regard, WAG and GYEM are of the view that Climate Change has an enormous impact on water and with the increasingly volatile and insecurity in the availability of water in the right quantities, communities require access to water and sanitation if they are to survive and thrive in the face of the change. In view of that, WAG and GYEM recommends that:

i) WASH Should Be Recognized As a Climate Adaptation Strategy

By that, WAG and GYEM are urging the Government of Ghana, the agencies and institutions responsible for implementing the National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) and the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (NACCAS) as well as developing partners to recognize the rights to WASH as a climate adaptation strategy.

ii) Stakeholders Should Develop and Implement Robust WASH Based Climate Adaptation Strategies

To achieve this, WAG and GYEM has called on implementing bodies of the programme of actions to develop, implement and promote sustainable WASH based climate adaptation strategies such as, rain harvesting technologies, waste management infrastructure, tree planting programs, water resources management systems and the provision of adequate sanitation facilities in public places(e.g. Health care facilities, Schools, major markets and transportation hubs)

iii) WASH Based Climate Adaptation Strategies Should Be Decentralized

To achieve the desired results, WAG and GYEM have suggested that, implementing institutions should mainstream WASH based climate adaptation strategies at the local government level and commit to supporting participation in programs at the Metropolitan, Municipal, and District levels through capacity strengthening and technical support to officers and officials of all MMDAs in the areas such as; climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. Additionally, MMDAs need to develop Water Security Plans that are appropriately funded and implemented.

iv) Efforts to Achieve Full WASH Coverage by 2025 Should Be Strengthened

The Government and implementing bodies of WASH and climate adaptation strategies should form an effective and efficient partnership to work towards ensuring full WASH coverage for all by 2025 through the implementation of all the

WASH based climate adaptation strategies outlined in the NCAAS and the GH-INDC document.

v) Sustainable Finance for Full and Effective Implementation of WASH Based Climate Adaptation Strategies to Reduce Inequalities Should Be Provided.

To achieve results, the Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change Unit (NRECC) of the Ministry of Finance has been urged to coordinate and track the flow of funds from both domestic and international sources for the implementation of WASH and climate adaptation strategies and make sustainable funding available from the national level down to the local level. To this end, a conscious link should be created between the Ministry of Local Government & Rural Development (MLGRD), the Local Government Service and the MMDAs to ensure regular flow of funds to the local levels. WAG and GYEM is of the firm believe that local leaders and community members should be empowered to play leadership roles in the monitoring and implementation of climate resilient WASH projects.

vi) Parliamentary Oversight on WASH and Climate Adaptation Finance Delivery Should Be Enhanced

Stakeholders at the forum also called on Parliament to recognize and make WASH a priority. Stakeholders contend that, Parliament, especially, the Parliamentary Select Committee on Environment, Science and Technology should push for adequate allocation of budgetary support to climate changes issues and institutions. The Parliamentary Select Committee should strengthen legislation that would enable MMDAs to receive the technical and financial support to develop integrated adaptation plans that are aligned with their national planning systems and development goals.

vii) Civil Society Should be Engaged More in WASH and Climate Adaptation Program of Actions

The success of any WASH and Climate Adaptation Programme according stakeholders depends on Government's ability to engage with CSOs and all implementing bodies of WASH Based Climate Adaptation Strategies. For CSOs and Implementing bodies to play their advocacy roles effectively they require the needed knowledge and skills set, and to achieve that, WAG and GYEM further suggested that their capacities should be strengthened.

viii) More Youth Should Be Given Adequate Roles in Decision Making on WASH and Climate Change Adaptation

WASH sector actors says the youth of Ghana are endowed with so much talent and therefore must be involved in all activities intended to promote or implement WASH and climate adaptation strategies by the Government and implementing bodies through the National Youth Authority (NYA) as well as involving the NYA in all decision-making processes and programme of actions both local and national level. Implementing bodies should use youth friendly outlets like social media, entertainment, and other educational platforms to ensure active and diverse youth participation in the process.

Specific Recommendations

Participants at the end of the NLLAP 58 proposed the following:

- That school level activities with behaviour change communication materials and tree-growing activities with integration of water harvesting should be scaled-up.
- That, there is the need to increase awareness/education on climate change issues in general and WASH in particular
- That implementation of WASH and climate change related issues should be harmonised
- That, policy makers should create more knowledge sharing and learning opportunities to educate themselves on climate change related issues
- That, the youth should be engaged adequately on climate change & WASH issues
- That, monitoring the implementation of climate-related activities at the community level should be intensified as well as identify clearly the actors engaged in the monitoring.
- That, there is the need to deepen people/citizens understanding of the climate change vis-à-vis WASH
- That, there is the need for WASH Climate Resilient Development: since, "Climate Change is WASH Change"
- That programmes for and engagement of the media should be intensified
- That, a Communication Strategy for effective dissemination of climate change issues at all levels—regions, district and community should put in place.
- That, the role of CSOs in the climate change interventions—monitoring implementing agencies and issues of accountability should be highlighted.

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 and opened to all interested parties. The discussions of each NLLAP meetings are summarised and shared with wider WASH community. The topics of upcoming meetings are decided on by the RCN secretariat and a list of upcoming 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,
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