

## “Without post-construction M&E, sustainable WASH services will be an illusion” – Van Ess

This was one of the strong messages from Mr. R. K.D. Van Ess, who presented his review of the project cycle, undertaken within the framework of the Triple-S project, to the National Level Learning Alliance Platform meeting of October 27, 2011. This message was further echoed by participants of the 21<sup>st</sup> edition of the NLLAP meeting.

The 21<sup>st</sup> edition of NLLAP took place on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2011 and facilitated by Mr. Patrick Apoya. The topic for discussion was, “*The application of water and sanitation project implementation cycle & impact on long-term sustainability in Ghana*”. During this meeting, Mr R. K.D. Van Ess presented his review of the project cycle, undertaken within the framework of the Triple-S project. This was followed by reactions from a panel consisting of representatives from different stratum of the Ghana WASH sector. Further discussion was stimulated by Dr. Patrick Moriarty, Country Director of IRC Ghana, who asked the question, “How do we move from the project implementation phase to the provision of long term sustainable services?” and by Dr. Esther Ofei, who focused on the question, “How do we better position RCC's and DA's to support communities in delivering water services?”

### Review of the Project cycle and shortcomings in its implementation

In his presentation on the review of the project cycle for community water and sanitation in Ghana, Mr. R.K.D. Van Ess identified a number of shortcomings in the current application of this project cycle. He found that the *Promotion and identification step* is often rushed through at district level in the form of a brief presentation at the District Assembly (DA) meeting. Although this step should include sensitization at community and town level, this does not or hardly take place. This step is before the selection of communities and towns, and resources to undertake this for all towns and communities is often insufficient. The *proposal formulation step* is often not done by the district, but by the Regional Coordinating Committee (RCC) or CWSA. The *Tendering and contracting step* is generally done outside the DA. Not having the contracts or the workplans makes it difficult for DAs to follow-up and reduces their sense of ownership. However, transferring responsibilities of contracting POs entirely to assemblies comes with its own challenges. As one District Water and Sanitation Team (DWST) member explained: “when money is transferred to us, the DA sometimes uses the money for something else. We like the arrangement of having the payment done at regional level, with co-signing at district level.”



The *Post project follow-up / Operation and Maintenance (O&M) step* is a newly introduced phase, which is not yet part of all projects. The DA is to *audit* WSDB account, but in reality, this does not happen. According to Van Ess there is ad hoc monitoring, but that there is not really a formalized, systematic ongoing monitoring and evaluation procedure in place.

### The heart of turning WASH into service, is monitoring

It was agreed that continuous monitoring is key for ensuring sustainable WASH services. This does not only include monitoring implementation of projects,

like construction of new facilities, or rehabilitation of existing facilities, but also ongoing monitoring of services provided by (existing) facilities, (long) after construction.

Some efforts have been made in the sector to improve ongoing monitoring of services, including the work on the District Monitoring and Evaluation System (DiMES). However, systematic monitoring is not taking place yet. In order for Assemblies to be able to take concerted action based on monitoring and in order for communities to be able to hold Assemblies responsible for delivered services, real-time accessible (online) data on WASH services are essential. This requires appropriate monitoring systems and technologies.

### **Roles, responsibilities and capacities related to sustainable services**

Participants agreed that there was a great need to start emphasizing more and more on the “post construction” phase related to WASH service delivery. Defining clear roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, and ensuring sufficient capacity to take up these roles and responsibilities in this phase is key. As presented by Dr. Esther Ofei Aboagye, local government has the responsibility for monitoring Water and Sanitation Development Boards (WSDBs) and WATSANs, and for providing technical support and advice accordingly. In reality however, this hardly happens according to participants.

Assemblies are provided with new facilities, whether they are monitoring, auditing and supporting existing facilities or not. It was suggested that allocation of resources to assemblies should rather be linked to performance of the assembly, including its performance in monitoring and sustaining WASH services.

CWSA should take up more and more of its role as regulator. Related to this, CWSA is putting in place a

legislative instrument for the sub sector, including guidelines and standards.

According to Dr. Ofei Aboagye, local government has an essential part to play in the WASH sector, but often they are not considered as part of the sector. As a sector we have to ask ourselves “How do we interact in a better way with local government?” She added.

### **“Do we need a service delivery cycle rather than a project cycle?”**

This question was raised by Dr. Patrick Moriarty. He explained that the service delivery cycle can be thought of as a continuous cycle for the provision of sustainable services. The planning and construction of new facilities can be seen as finite projects, which follows a project cycle. Participants argued that on one hand both interlinked linked cycles are indeed needed: a continuous service delivery cycle with in-built project cycles. On the other hand, it was argued that the project cycle could be elaborated to become a service delivery cycle. In that case, there would only be one cycle that takes care of both projects and services. This would mean the project cycle should include more emphasis on post-implementation and looking into issues of upgrading and expanding systems, including identifying and allocating of resources needed for this.

### **Way forward**

The process of elaboration of the project cycle is part of a wider process of developing the District Operational Manual, which will include all roles and responsibilities of district level stakeholders. The feedback from this meeting should be incorporated into the further development of the DOM, which will include regional and district level stakeholder engagements. The expectation is that the draft DOM will be ready to be presented to stakeholders in the National Level Learning Alliance Platform meeting by March 2012.

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 meeting are summarized and shared with the 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](http://www.washghana.net).

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