Norm harmonisation can boost CLTS efforts

There is consensus among stakeholders in the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Sector that harmonisation of legal, social and moral norms can help accelerate efforts at changing attitudes to make access to, and utilisation of WASH facilities more beneficial. Particularly, efforts at discouraging open defecation through the Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach can be more successful if social norms are harmonised with legal and moral norms. This is underlined by the fact that behavioural change informs most of the work done in the WASH sector. These were some of the main issues emphasised at the 24th edition of the National Level Learning Alliance Platform (NLLAP 24) which took place in Accra on 23rd February, 2012.

> The NLLAP 24 was chaired by Mr Minta Aboagye, WASH consultant and ex-Director of Water at the Ministry of Water Resources, Works and Housing (WD-MWRWH), while discussions were facilitated by Harold Esseku of RAPHA Consult. The forum was on the theme: "Social Norms for Social Change in the WASH sector in Ghana". The presentation of the day was by Mr. Othniel Habila, Chief WASH at UNICEF. This was followed by a panel discussion featuring Ms Theodora Adomako-Agyei of the Community Water and Sanitation Agency, Ms. Margaret Owusu Amoako of CHF International, Farouk Braimah of CONIWAS and Leonard Shang-Quartey of ISODEC. This communiqué is intended to share with the wider WASH community the main issues brought up during the meeting.

Social Norms simplified

Mr Othniel Habila defined Social Norms (SN) according to Cristina Bicchieri of the University of Pennsylvania, as a behavioural rule that applies to a large class of situations, and usually individuals know that the rule exists and also know when it applies.

"We can also say that social norms are "*social constructs" and they* depend on the mutual beliefs and conditional preferences of members of the relevant population" He added.

Conformity or compliance with the rule would occur at two levels, Mr. Habila told his audience. Firstly, individuals prefer to conform to the rule when they expect a sufficiently large part of the population to conform to the rule. This can be termed as empirical expectation.

He illustrated that "if a colleague has always gotten a coffee in the morning, we can form the empirical expectation that he will get coffee tomorrow morning."

The second level of conformity occurs when individuals believe that a sufficiently large part of the population think they ought to conform and may sanction their behaviour. This is termed as normative expectations.

A general illustration can be that in Ghanaian culture, if a younger person does not greet an older person whom

they meet on the way, they expect the older colleague to get angry with them and challenge the behaviour.

Juxtaposing SN with Legal Norm (LN) and Moral Norm (MN), the WASH chief indicated that LN flows from law and its application. Its positive incentive is that one must comply because of acceptance of legitimacy by others. On the other side, its negative incentive is the fear of legal sanctions. Thus, the presenter thinks that LN is "Often too far from Social Norm and so becomes ineffective."

On the other hand, MN emanates from internalised social norms with external incentives replaced by internal ones. Its positive incentive is that compliance leads to a feeling of happiness and fulfilment while the negative incentive is non-compliance leads to a feeling of guilt.

SN differs from the two in that it flows from norms people respect because of what other people think and do. Often, the positive incentive is social recognition while the negative incentive is social rejection and shame.

Nonetheless, a social norm may not be followed at a given time, particularly if some potential followers come to the realisation that very few obey SN. Mr. Habila cautioned, stressing: "whether a SN is followed at a given time depends on the actual proportion of

followers, on the expectations of conditional followers about such proportion, and on the combination of individual thresholds."

He added that changing expectations is a relatively long process, which involves trust, public pressure, collective deliberation, common pledges and attaining common knowledge of what the group is going to do and expects one to do.

Integrating SN in WASH in Ghana

According to Mr Habila, there is opportunity for integrating Social Norms into the WASH sector in Ghana. He said there are three areas of integration including the upstream, midstream and downstream areas.

The upstream level includes actors such as political leaders, policy makers and technocrats while the midstream area has opinion leaders, traditional leaders and media practitioners as actors. The third area, which is the downstream level, has actors like community leaders, natural leaders, household heads and individuals.

A specific opportunity for integration, he identified, is the CLTS module. "CLTS helps solve the Social Dilemma of Open Defecation (OD) by turning it into a Coordination Game with different incentives," he assured.

So Social Norm can help substitute the incentive that says OD is cheap in the short-term and involves no cost of building and maintaining latrines with hand washing with soap (HWWS) facilities with the incentive that says using latrines is cheap in the long long-term because it saves one from medical expenses on diseases.

Similarly, the CLTS approach offers the opportunity for replacing the incentive that OD seems convenient because one can have a pleasurable, air blowing squat in a whole open field with the incentive that using latrines is convenient at night, provides ease of access,

and helps avoid snakebites and harassments.

So in the end, we see that there is a lot of benefit for keeping Social Norms. These include social acceptance, honour, dignity, respect, inward fulfilment of being a responsible member of society. There is also value to community as individuals feel a part of a network and social safety net with long term benefits.

The way to go

The following summarised views emerged after intense discussions by panelists and participants:

- The best situation is for all three norms to be harmonised. A strategy that combines all three steps should be formulated to strike a balance to bring about change.
- At some age you get into a mindset of resisting ? change and change comes with changing our own mindset. Therefore, SNs should be incorporated into the education system at early age rather than waiting for people to grow before trying to change their mindset.
- Consider revising projects on changing mindset which have timelines because changing mindset is a process and does not become effective if it has limited timelines.
- Status of people leads them to adopt some norms. Therefore there is need to link CLTS to some economic programme to change the status of people and also improve access.
- The UN General Assembly recognizes right to water and sanitation. Therefore, we should also demand rights to safe water and sanitation whilst we try to promote the habit of good WASH practices.
- Government must develop a framework to make these norms work. When we force people without means it becomes difficult for them to adhere.
- Don't neglect the sceptic (rich) but involve them because in a way they influence
- Finally, there is the need to establish sustainability procedures among others.