

Learning from the Indian experience to improve Wash services in communities and schools in Ghana

In India, there appears to be many successful innovative WASH initiatives including: the *Total Sanitation Campaign*, where hardware support is provided by local government for *below the poverty line* (BPL) families, with some communities attaining 100% latrine coverage and usage rate, both at household and school levels; the institution of the *Clean Village Award* at district and state levels; the use of *Child Cabinet*, where school children mobilize colleagues for the cleanliness and maintenance of school WASH facilities and also collaborate with school authorities and Village Education Committees in promoting hygiene behaviour change in villages, through regular interaction with the communities. These and many more were some of the Key lessons shared by the team of three Unicef-sponsored sector practitioners, who participated in the fourth International Learning Exchange in India.

The Ninth National Level Learning Alliance platform (NLLAP) took place on Thursday July 29, 2010 on the theme, "Water Supply and Sanitation in Communities and Schools: Lessons from India". The NLLAP offered a stage to enable the team of four UNICEF-Sponsored Ghanaians to the Fourth International Learning Exchange in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene organized by UNICEF India, UNICEF WES New York & Government of India, 13th – 23rd April, 2010, in India, to share with the wider sector stakeholders the lessons learnt and what could possibly be replicated in Ghana. This communiqué is intended to share with the wider WASH community the most burning issues brought up during the meeting

The well attended platform was chaired by Charlotte Engman of CWSA who stood in for the Chief Executive.

The Sanitation Specialist of UNICEF, Loretta Roberts in her brief remarks on the meeting objectives indicated that her outfit was mandated by the UN to build the capacity of the human resource base of communities and institutions to improve service delivery in the WASH sector globally. She added that the team was on the platform to share lessons from India and seek observations from the experts and practitioners present, as well as identify and recommend possible areas of replication in Ghana. This was followed by three presentations by Paul Nutsugah, Environmental Health and Sanitation Unit [EHSU] of the Central Regional Coordinating Council; Bernette Kafari, Northern Regional Coordinator of the School Health and Education Programme [SHEP]; and Patricia Buah, WASH Specialist of the Ministry of Water Resources, Works and Housing [MWRWH], on the topics, *Household Sanitation and Home Hygiene*; *WASH in Schools*; *Community and School Water Supply and Sanitation in Tribal Areas*, respectively.

The Indian situation: WASH Initiatives in Communities

The presentations painted a picture of how quality

service could be achieved in the WASH sector in the developing world. There were a number of familiar and new WASH innovations from a number of communities and schools in India. The government of India was said to be committed to meeting the MDGs for water and sanitation through a *Total Sanitation Campaign* with emphasis on rigorous information and education on WASH issues at all levels. *Sanitation Marts*, had also been established to serve as one stop point for water quality and innovations for water infrastructure, and items for personal hygiene like tooth brushes were sold at subsidized prices. These Marts were managed through a management contract between government and local NGO's, and had led to the establishment of a water quality monitoring laboratory, slab production center, water filter production center and vermi-compost plant.

Furthermore, there were various initiatives to manage solid and liquid waste in India, which included energy generation for household use through the production of bio-gas. Also, there were basic means of monitoring water quality through the provision of "Water Monitors", which ensured clean drinking water services in communities among others. Other initiatives included, a *volunteer*

motivation system to motivate people to keep clean, *sanitation subsidy* for households living below poverty line and the *rewarding of communities* as incentives for keeping their surroundings clean.

WASH initiatives in Schools

The presentations emphasised the need for a sustained linkage between the school and community for a proper WASH sector management, which could be done through the use of technology and children in promoting hygiene and sanitation in schools and communities. It was revealed that in India local materials were used to construct innovative and cost effective technology for communities. Examples include the *force lift pumps*, which lifts water from boreholes to overhead tanks through hand pumps for storage in flushing school toilets among others. Children were also used, through the *Child Cabinet* system, to inspect colleagues' hygiene behaviours - finger nails, hair, uniform, teeth and hand-washing, etc.

Discussions and Recommendations

The team recommended the provision of adequate sanitation kits for all SHEP schools, curriculum modification for Teacher Training, and School periods to include Sanitation and Hygiene Education. They emphasised the need for government and management of schools to provide adequate hygiene and gender-friendly sanitation facilities in schools. They suggested the championing of the idea of harvesting of rain water and the construction of water systems that take into consideration the physically challenged at all levels as done in India.

Charlotte Engmann was quick to say that the Sanitation Mart concept was in practice in Ghana and that 39 sanitation marts were to be established at the various Water Boards in Ghana, commencing with the Central and Western regions.

As a way forward, participants agreed that a detailed report outlining key areas for replication must be prepared and sent to the relevant institutions for possible adoption. It was agreed that the following initiatives from India could be further investigated and possibly replicated in Ghana:

1. Clean Village (ODF) Award Scheme at national, regional and district levels
2. Use of force-lift pumps and play pump at communities and schools
3. Rainwater harvesting and grey water treatment and re-use, particularly in institutions;
4. Review of institutional latrine designs to include incinerators for the safe and convenient disposal of used sanitary towels;
5. Establishment of Village Information Centres as local resource centres;
6. Child friendly learning environment – using bright colours to write sanitation messages in the school environment;
7. Sanitation and hygiene campaigns using programmes in the media to educate children
8. Using Child Cabinets to promote sanitation and hygiene in schools;
9. Sanitation and hygiene practices, recitals and pledges be integrated in pre-school education curriculum;
10. The Management Model for the Sanimart concept be adopted- Sanitation marts managed through a management contract between government and local NGO;
11. Solid and liquid waste management initiative, including energy generation for household use through the production of bio-gas from animal dung;
12. Knowledge management backed by substantial investment from the government

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 are organized and facilitated by the Ghana WASH Resource Centre Network (RCN), and take place on the last Thursday of every month. They are open to all interested parties. The discussions of each NLLAP meeting are summarized and shared with the wider WASH community in the form of a communiqué after the meeting. 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.ghana.watsan.net.

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