

State of Water Services in the Western Region and Progress of the Rural Water 'Utilitisation' Project

On 26th March 2024, IRC Ghana, in collaboration with the Rural Water Utilisation Project (R-WUP) partners, hosted a dissemination and progress update meeting on the National Level Learning Alliance Platform (NLLAP) with over sixty-five stakeholders drawn from government, development partners, civil society organisations, local and international NGOs, academia, and the media participating.

The R-WUP is a three-year project that was co-conceptualised by the Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA), Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor (WSUP), IRC Ghana, and Safe Water Network (SWN). The project is supporting CWSA to establish an effective rural and small-town water utility model/approach in the Western Region, with strengthened capacity at the national level, which can be replicated across the country. The project also seeks to support the CWSA in its internal change management processes, improve CWSA operational efficiency in the management of water systems, develop infrastructure for delivering safely managed water, as well as support sector strengthening and learning.

The main objective of this NLLAP was to share findings from the State of Water Services in the Western Region report and to provide a platform to facilitate discussions and share insights on the progress of implementation of the R-WUP to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector stakeholders. It aimed to improve partnerships, coordination, and increase clarity on CWSA's approach to becoming a rural utility, which is in sync with project objective four: promoting sector strengthening and learning.

The discussion was led by the project partners – IRC and the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) presenting the report on the state of water services in the Western Region; CWSA provided an update on the construction of safe water infrastructure and WSUP on the internal organisational change management process; SWN and WSUP then provided updates on the component on operational efficiency in the management of water systems.



A cross section of participants at the event

CONTEXT

The Government of Ghana's vision in the WASH sector is 'water and sanitation for all'. The Water and Sanitation Sector Development Plan (WSSDP, 2012-2025) provided clear details with projects and activities. Its successor, the Ghana WASH Sector Development Plan (GWASHSDP, 2021-2030), confirmed the Government's vision articulated in the WSSDP with a timeline of 2030. Development partners and international NGOs have, since 2016-2017, aligned their programmes and projects to support the Government's vision, which aligns with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) six: ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all by 2030. The National Water Policy (2024) has been finalised and approved by the Cabinet, awaiting publication by the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources (MSWR). The revision of the National Environmental Sanitation Policy is progressing well, and it is expected to be finalised and rolled out by the end of 2024.

The CWSA is undergoing reforms to strengthen its roles in the rural and small-town water sector. CWSA initiated policy reform in 2017 to expand its mandate to include the management of piped water systems in rural areas, and thus, in effect, become a rural utility. Four years into the reform agenda, CWSA recognises that it needs to evolve to become the provider of safe water to residents served by the approximately 1,200 piped water systems in Ghana.

The "Rural Water 'Utilitisation' Project" (R-WUP), funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, aims to support the Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA) in its growth as a professionalised public utility in Ghana and to play a stronger regulatory role within the sector in the context of rural water reforms in Ghana. The project is supporting CWSA to establish an effective rural and small-town water utility model/approach in the Western Region, with strengthened capacity at the national level, which can be replicated across the country. The implementing partners working on the

project are the Community Water and Sanitation Agency, IRC, Safe Water Network (SWN), and Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor (WSUP).

HIGHLIGHTS

Three main presentations were made. These provided participants with information on the R-WUP findings on the state of water services in the western region, and progress of project implementation.

A. Presentation on the State of Water Services in the Western Region Report

The mapping exercise conducted by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) covered 14 Metropolitan, Municipal, and Districts and mapped all water service delivery models in Shama, Ahanta West, Ellembelle, Jomoro, Sekondi-Takoradi, Tarkwa-Nsuaem, Wassa Amenfi East, Wassa Amenfi West, Wassa East, Nzema East, Mpohor, Ahanta West, Effia-Kwesimintim (EKMA), and Prestea Huni Valley. The findings were shared in the validation and dissemination workshops at the regional level involving the 14 districts.

The findings of the mapping exercise revealed that 88% of people (1,804,345 people) in the Western Region have access to a safe water supply. This is made up of 77% basic/limited access and 11% safely managed. 12% of the population is unserved/underserved and possibly depends on unimproved sources such as polluted streams, rivers, and unprotected wells. The mapping identified the main delivery models in the Western Region as:

1. **Utilities** – Ghana Water Limited (GWL) as the national utility, responsible for providing water services in urban areas, through seven schemes, and CWSA evolving from being a facilitator of community management towards (also) being a utility, providing water services directly to clients through 15 schemes.
2. **Community Management** - Water and Sanitation Management Teams (WSMTs) managed some 33 piped schemes and 341 LMSs, while community leaders managed 139 LMSs and three piped schemes.
3. **Small Water Enterprises** - The Small Water Enterprises were identified for a total of 50 piped schemes.
4. **Institutional Management** - Religious institutions managed 22 LMSs and one piped scheme; schools managed some eight LMSs; and healthcare facilities managed one LMS and one piped scheme.
5. **Private Management** - Private individuals managed three piped schemes and 278 LMSs, while private organisations or NGOs managed three piped schemes and 87 LMSs.
6. **Other Management** - These are management types that could not be classified under the above categories. Seven LMSs fall into this category.

50% of the population is served by Limited Mechanised Schemes (LMS), 30% served by piped schemes, and 20% served by hand pumps. 17% of the LMSs were non-functional. 32% of piped schemes are non-functional. Over 90% of

hand pumps and hand-dug wells are managed by communities. However, there are 57 hand pumps that are not managed by anyone, imposing serious consequences on the sustainability of these hand pumps.

B. Presentation on Construction of Water Infrastructure

The Western Region Director of CWSA, Mr. Henry Asangbah, indicated that CWSA is leading the component that seeks to ensure that CWSA provides optimised water supply infrastructure which meets all the key benchmarks of water services delivery in two communities in the Western Region. The two water systems are supposed to be model water systems that are ideal for the supply of modern water services.

- At Wassa Dunkwa, feasibility/baseline studies have been completed, hydrogeological prospecting completed, and five boreholes drilled. Design for transmission and distribution network completed. Storage tank and management office are also completed. Progress on civil works is 95% complete, with five pump houses under construction, grid power extension ongoing, and installation of submersible pumps and solar farm in progress.
- At Mpohor, feasibility/baseline studies have been completed, hydrogeological prospecting completed, and five boreholes drilled were unsuccessful. Design for transmission pipelines is outstanding and design for distribution pipelines completed. At Adum Bansa, borehole siting is completed and borehole drilling is ongoing.

C. Internal Organisational Change Management Process

Mr. Anthony Addae presented the Utility Strengthening Framework, a process for driving long-term change that places the utility and its staff in charge, whereby representatives from each department or function and across all grades self-assess and score their own organisation, ensuring ownership of the change process. He also presented the priority staff engagement/development interventions. He highlighted the successes so far, which included staff engagement training for CWSA management and Human Resource and Administration Department to build their capacity towards owning the process; leadership training to CWSA leadership and water system staff; and developing a staff development roadmap to better engage staff and address challenges.

D. SWN Presentation on Operational Efficiency of Water Systems

SWN and WSUP lead in the implementation of the objective on improving operational efficiency of the CWSA. This presentation was done by Charles Yeboah and Joseph Osei Owusu of SWN. SWN and WSUP are also supporting CWSA to deal with issues of water safety, energy efficiency, and non-revenue water management, preparation of sales and marketing programmes, and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for commercialisation of the rural water sector. This update dealt with training and related activities aimed at improving the operational efficiency of the CWSA in the Western Region.

Improving Water Quality Culture: A three-day interactive residential training was held for 33 technical and managerial staff of CWSA with some fieldwork. The topics covered were basics of water quality, water quality standards, waterborne diseases, water treatment methods, and removing contaminants. A follow-up training was held and water safety planning was

added with sub-topics such as risks and hazard identification and mitigation measures. The Esiama Water System was used as a model and improvements have been carried out. Corroding balustrades on top of the tank have been replaced and the corroding faulty valves replaced as well. The rotten manhole lids have also been replaced and the storage reservoir cleaned, with the refurbishment of the iron-removal unit ongoing.

Billing Software: The first phase has been implemented, with training provided for 60 relevant staff of CWSA. Piloting of the billing software was done with same-day billing and electronic distribution of bills. Forty tablets and computers were provided to CWSA to support the billing data collection.

PARTICIPANTS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Participants asked questions, made contributions, and shared their perspectives during the open forum. A participant wanted to know the effect that 'galamsey'/illegal mining activities had on water bodies in the Western Region. The partners explained that the scope of the water services mapping was to conduct mapping of water facilities and hence did not include "galamsey" issues.

The discussions also provided further information on whether there was a policy or law backing the transition of CWSA. The Director of Planning and Investment at CWSA, Mr. Ibrahim Adokor indicated that there is legal policy backing for the reform. He explained that the National Community Water and Sanitation Reform Framework was entrenched in the revised National Water Policy, 2024.

Participants also enquired how the information gathered from R-WUP was going to inform the reforms at CWSA. Mr. Ibrahim Adokor indicated that one thing that has emerged from the water services mapping was the number of private individuals providing water services in the sector. He acknowledged that apart from the emergence of private individuals, which they didn't avert their minds to, all the other known players have been part and parcel of the reform.

Participants suggested that the CWSA and NGOs should stop handing over boreholes and water systems to untrained community leaders to manage since water management is a serious business with major health and sustainability implications if poorly managed by unqualified people.

WAY FORWARD

CWSA partners noted that even though extensive consultations have been made in the sector with the Coalition of NGOs in Water and Sanitation (CONIWAS) and many presentations made at the civil society led MOLE WASH conferences, they have received feedback indicating that further broad consultations are needed. CWSA will aim to have an all-inclusive reform process and to ensure all relevant stakeholders participate actively in the reform process.

Overall, participants agreed that the progress of implementation of R-WUP by the different partners was good and will meet agreed implementation timelines. The various construction works were all found to be on schedule and will be completed, providing safe water supply to needy communities.

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 (with modifications when necessary) and are open to all interested parties. The discussions of each NLLAP 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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