

WASHCOST GHANA:

PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING PROCESSES FOR SUSTAINABLE RURAL WATER SUPPLY, SANITATION AND HYGIENE IN GHANA

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ABSTRACT

Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) in Ghana exercise their authority to plan for the overall socio-economic development of communities within their jurisdiction by preparing Medium Term Development Plans and other sector plans to guide them in the mobilisation and allocation of resources for sustainable development. This paper examines the role that planning plays in the decision making processes for sustainable Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) service provision from the national through the regional to the District level. Analysis of both primary and secondary data gathered revealed weak linkages between planning and budgeting with decision making at the local level, as well as duplications of plans. The analysis further revealed limited realistic unit cost for planning. The need for collaboration and rationalisation of the different WASH sector plans is considered crucial for sustainable WASH services delivery.

Key Words: Planning, decision making, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), sector

1. Introduction

Planning and decision making processes are critical for sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services delivery because they can guarantee adequate allocation and judicious use of resources. There are many stakeholders involved in the delivery of WASH services in Ghana and their active participation in the planning and decision making processes for sustainable WASH services delivery is very critical. The multiplicity of stakeholders at different levels is the result of the adoption of a decentralized system of development administration over two decades ago and the implementation of incremental reforms in the WASH sector since 1994.

The formal division of responsibility between the different levels is such that the main concern of the national level stakeholders is policy making and allocation of resources for the development of the WASH sector at the local level. Those at the regional level are supposed to concern themselves mainly with the harmonisation and coordination of activities at the district level. While planning and decision making for implementation of WASH services should take place at the district level where plans such as District Medium Term Development Plans (DMTDPs), District Water and Sanitation Plans (DWSPs) and District Environmental Sanitation and Strategic Action Plans (DESSAP) are formulated to guide decision making for the allocation of resources for investment towards the provision of WASH services in the various communities.

According to Ampadu-Boakye et al (2008) the preparation of WASH sector plans was in response to the marginalization of water and sanitation in the allocation of resources. Whilst these efforts are being made to improve the planning and decision making processes in the sector, Ewool (2003) has observed that plan implementation in general has been fraught with many challenges including inadequate co-ordination between planning, budgeting and financing. With this observation, it is doubtful whether planning and budgeting actually significantly influence the decision making process for the judicious allocation of resources for investment to guarantee sustainable WASH service delivery.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the planning process within the WASH sector and its relationship to decision making for the allocation of resources for sustainable WASH services delivery. To achieve this purpose the methodology below was adopted.

2. Methodology of Study

Considering the challenges facing the implementation of plans for sustainable WASH services, it is not clear whether planning actually influences the decision making process for the WASH sector in Ghana. In order to clarify the situation the following research questions were posed.

1. What concepts and principles underpin WASH sector planning and decision making processes?
2. What institutional framework is in place for WASH sector Planning and Decision Making?
3. How does the DWSP Process influence decision making in the WASH Sector?
4. What is the relationship between the DWSP and other WASH sector planning?

In order to fully understand the planning and decision making processes at the local/district level where implementation is supposed to take place there was the need to trace the influence from the national through the regional to the district level. For that purpose relevant institutions at the national, regional and district levels were purposively selected and contacted for both secondary and primary data. The sampled institutions at the national level included Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA), National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), and the German Aid Agency (Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau i.e. Kfw). The Regional Coordinating Council (RCC) and the Regional Water and Sanitation Team (RWST) in the Ashanti Region provided regional level data for the study. In order to delve deeply

into the contemporary issues regarding decision making for WASH service delivery at the local level, two districts in the Ashanti region i.e. Bosomtwe and Ejura-Sekyedumase, were purposively selected using two main criteria, i.e. existence of DWSPs/DMTDPs and the presence of multiple WASH services providers. The sampled respondents at the district level included members of the District Water and Sanitation Team (DWST), the District Planning Officers, Budget Officers, Community Development Officers, District Environmental Health Officers and Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs) in the sampled districts.

3. Concepts and Principles for WASH Sector Planning and Decision Making

This section analyses the influence of the various concepts, policies and principles of the WASH sector including governance, reforms and decentralisation on WASH service delivery.

3.1 WASH Governance, Planning and Decision Making

With increasing concerns about sustainability coupled with competing demands for financial resources, WASH governance has become as important as technical solutions to water and sanitation problems. This paradigm shift can be attributed to the emergence of water governance which is considered to cover a range of political, social, economic and administrative systems put in place to develop and manage water resources and service delivery at different levels of society (Moriarty et al, 2007; Rogers and Hall, 2003; Plummer and Slaymaker, 2007).

WASH governance encompasses the establishment of institutions and structures for decision making. The pressure of demand for WASH services in some urban environments can lead to the emergence of a market system where small scale providers flourish and they, together with utility agencies influence WASH planning and decision making. In rural areas local governments assume the responsibility for water provision and management, thus limiting the role of the private sector actors (Plummer and Slaymaker, 2007).

National governance system normally has an impact on WASH governance. In centralized systems, WASH governance responsibilities are taken by central government agencies whereas in decentralized systems, local governments play critical roles in decision making. In many developing countries like Ghana, centralized governance failed to address the problems of WASH service delivery. Consequently many countries have sought alternative governance systems in order to address water supply and

management challenges. The emerging governance systems recognize the fact that there is the need for a pluralistic approach to water governance. This has led to the emergence of multi stakeholder platforms for WASH governance involving government agencies, private sector institutions, NGOs and users.

3.2 WASH Sector Reforms

The WASH sector in Ghana went through a number of reforms within the last two decades. Until 1994 the provision of WASH facilities was supply driven and urban biased. Numerous problems such as inadequate financial resources, continuous breakdown of facilities and lack of maintenance affected the sector's capacity to deal with ageing infrastructure and expansion into the rural areas. To facilitate WASG service delivery to the rural population and to forestall the lack of interest of the then para-statal agency for water and sanitation, i.e. the Ghana Water and Sewerage Cooperation (GWSC) in rural communities, a Community Water and Sanitation Division (CWSD) was established as a semi-autonomous institution within the GWSC in 1994. The CWSD was subsequently converted into the Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA) in 1998 and placed in the Ministry of Works and Housing to facilitate the provision of rural water supply and sanitation related services.

The search for alternative policies and strategies to ensure sustainable supply of water and sanitation facilities resulted in the birth of **the National Community Water and Sanitation Programme (NCWSP)** as a framework for the rural water and sanitation sector. Under the NCWSP, improved access to adequate potable water and safe sanitation facilities is to be achieved using the following principles:

- Provision of water and sanitation services to communities who will in turn contribute toward the capital costs and assume full operation and maintenance costs of facilities;
- Ensure sustainability of facilities through community management and private sector provision of goods and services with public sector promotion and support;
- Maximizing health benefits by integrating water, sanitation and hygiene interventions.

The NCWSP adopted the concepts of Community Ownership and Management (COM) and District Ownership and Management (DOM)¹ of water and sanitation facilities in order to ensure sustainable supply of water to rural communities and small towns in Ghana. These concepts are derived from the principle of subsidiarity which advocates for assigning responsibilities between the District Assemblies (DA) and the communities according to capability (Braithwaite & Jagri, 2007). Under the COM concept communities exercise ownership of facilities by electing Water and Sanitation (WATSAN) Committees for point sources in smaller communities and Water and Sanitation Development Boards (WSDB) for small town water systems in larger communities. The WATSAN Committees and WSDB assume full responsibilities² for the operation and maintenance of the water facilities provided.

3.3 Decentralised WASH Services Provision in Ghana

The strategies of the NCWSP and the national decentralization programme have been mutually re-enforcing. The decentralization policy backed by the necessary legislative instruments has had significant influence on rural WASH service delivery. In a similar vein the NCWSP strategy of transferring ownership and management of water and sanitation facilities to DAs and communities has strengthened the decentralisation policy. The policy has ensured the establishment and strengthening of local government structures to offer intermediary level support to communities. Currently all the DAs have DWSTs in charge of water supply and sanitation delivery to communities in their districts as a way of implementing the DOM Concept.

4. Institutional Framework for WASH Sector Planning and Decision Making.

This section presents an overview of the institutions/structures that undertake WASH sector planning and decision making in Ghana. The purpose of this review is to identify the prescribed roles of the various stakeholders and the linkages that are expected to exist between them for planning and decision making within the sector. In subsequent sections the

¹COM is more widely operationalized than DOM.

² The Stakeholders have different interpretations of the commitment to operation and maintenance ranging from day to day operation and minor maintenance to major repairs, rehabilitation and replacement of older systems.

degree to which these institutions influence planning and decision making and whether the linkages function as intended will be examined. Fig 1 shows the institutional framework for the WASH sector.

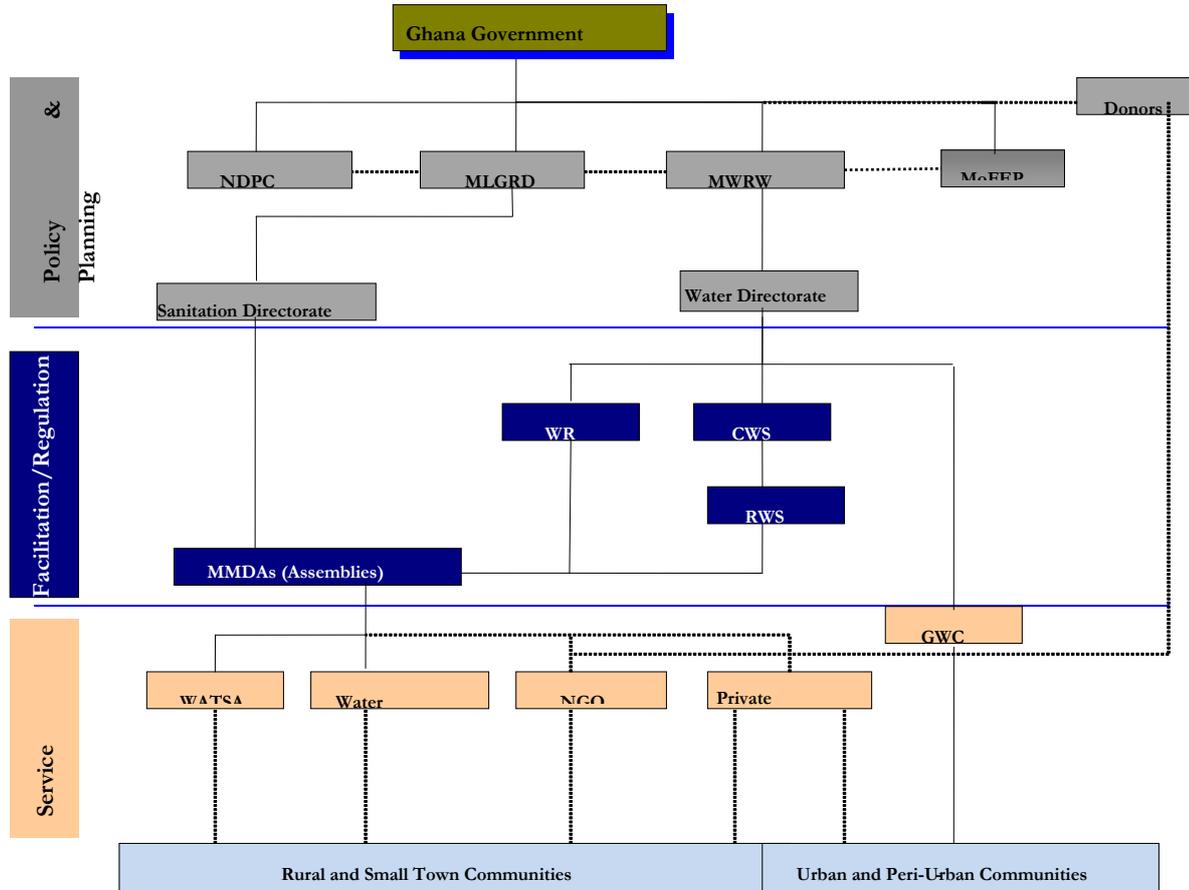
At the national level, sector ministries such as the Ministry of Water Resources, Works and Housing (MWRWH), the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD), the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MoFEP) and the NDPC constitute the principal stakeholders engaged in policy and planning in the WASH sector. Other ministries such as Health and Education play (minor) collaborative roles with the principal stakeholders for the implementation of many WASH sector programmes.

Development Partners/Donors provide financial, material and technical assistance for WASH activities and they also participate in policy dialogue, monitoring and evaluation and project steering committee meetings. According to CWSA (2007) about 88% of investment finance for WASH facilities in 2006 was obtained from these partners with less than 12% from domestic sources. The policies and principles of these partners often influence the sector's policy formulation, planning and allocation of financial resources for the sector's activities, which in turn, impact on the WASH service delivery at the local level.

4.1 National Development Planning Commission (NDPC)

The NDPC is mandated by Ghana's Constitution to guide the formulation of Development Plans and to undertake Monitoring and Evaluation of the country's developmental effort. The NDPC also advises the President and Parliament on the performance of public policy and programmes, their outcomes/impacts, and on the need for policy reforms. The NDPC issues guidelines for the preparation of MMDA plans and sector plans including WASH.

Fig. 1: Institutional Framework for WASH Sector



Source: WASHCost Project, 2009

4.2 Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD)

The MLGRD is responsible for developing policies and legislations on MMDAs' operations including the implementation of WASH sector projects. In 1995, the Ministry assumed responsibility for environmental sanitation (including both solid and liquid waste) when the environmental health and sanitation unit was ceded from the Ministry of Health. Within the MLGRD, the Environmental Health and Sanitation Directorate (EHSD) is responsible for coordinating the activities of key sector institutions involved in the sanitation sector. The mandate of the directorate includes policy and strategy coordination, monitoring and supervision of MMDAs in implementing environmental sanitation projects. A National Environmental Sanitation Strategic Action Policy has been developed and is awaiting approval by cabinet for the formalisation of an Environmental Health and Sanitation Directorate.

At the local level the MMDAs are assigned the responsibility of planning and management of the overall socio-economic development of communities, including WASH services provision. As part of this responsibility they are expected to prepare MTDPs and sector specific plans, such as DWSP, DESSAP etc. to guide local level development.

The DWST and the relevant sub-committees (e.g. the Social Services Sub-Committee) of the MMDA are the established structures for the overall governance of WASH services. The DWSTs are normally made up of an environmental health officer, community development officer, and a technical officer (e.g. engineer) and they are supposed to make regular visits to communities to inform and advise them on water and sanitation issues, and monitor the community's own progress towards improving their water and sanitation situation. In addition each MMDA appoints a DWST coordinator, usually the Planning Officer, to lead and manage water and sanitation activities. The DWSTs with the support of their senior officers prepare and submit annual work plans, budgets and procurement plans for approval by the DA. These can be based on their DWSPs where they have been developed for approval by the DA. In addition to sometimes being asked to prepare and review DWSPs they are also expected to manage a general database on community water and sanitation facilities.

Other stakeholders in the WASH sector at the DA level are the executive committee, the core staff, Assembly members, the relevant sub-committees

of the Assembly and the District Tender Board. The community level stakeholders include the Unit Committees and the Urban/Area Councils, which are intended to serve as communication links between the District Assembly and the communities. They are responsible for identifying development needs of the people and relaying these needs to the Assembly. The area councils provide direction and support for WASH planning and implementation at the community level through the WATSAN Committees and WSDBs.

4.3 Ministry of Water Resources, Works and Housing (MWRWH)

The MWRWH has the responsibility for overall policy formulation, planning, coordination, collaboration, monitoring and evaluation of water supply and sanitation programmes and mobilizes funds for water and sanitation provision. The Ministry, through its Water Directorate, oversees and monitors the activities of the Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL), the CWSA and the Water Resources Commission (WRC).

The WRC is responsible for the regulation and management of the utilization of water resources, and for the co-ordination of any policy related to its functions. It prepares comprehensive plans for the utilization, conservation, development and improvement of water resources. It also initiates, controls and coordinates activities connected with the development and utilization of water resources including granting of rights to MMDAs for the abstraction of water resources.

The CWSA consist of a Head Office in Accra and ten regional offices with multi-disciplinary personnel constituting the Regional Water and Sanitation Teams (RWST), who offer technical assistance to Assemblies for the delivery of WASH services. The CWSA prescribes standards and guidelines for WASH services provision and oversees the implementation of the NCWSP.

4.4 Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MoFEP)

The MoFEP is responsible for sourcing funds on behalf of the Government for WASH projects under Development Partners/Government of Ghana (GoG) rules and regulations. The Ministry ensures the transfer of funds to the appropriate entity for the implementation of projects through the necessary statutory arrangements. The MoFEP also ensures that GoG budgetary allocations for projects are released. As previously mentioned the WASH sector relies substantially on donor funds some of which come as budgetary support through the Multi-Donor Budgetary Support (MDBS) arrangement that allows government to decide on the allocation of funds to

sectors. There are also cases of isolated funding for individual projects which may be transferred either directly to the DA for procurement of goods or through the MWRWH/CWSA.

4.5 The Private Sector, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and NGOs
The private sector, including contractors, consultants and Partner Organisations (POs) are contracted by MMDAs/CWSA to provide works, goods and services. They collaborate with the relevant stakeholders such as CSOs, Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and NGOs in project evaluation, sector capacity building and operation and maintenance of facilities.

Some CBOs engage in self-help activities whilst the NGOs engage in service delivery, thematic research and knowledge sharing, advocacy and policy dialogue mainly with external financial support. Some of these NGOs include Water Aid, World Vision International (WVI), Training Research and Networking for Development (TREND), Plan Ghana etc. The NGOs in the sector have come together to form the Coalition of NGOs in the Water Sector (CONIWAS) and they organize annual meetings to discuss thematic issues in the WASH sector.

5. How does the DWSP Process influence Decision making in the WASH Sector?

The Planning System in Ghana as established by the National Development Planning System Act, (Act 480) 1994, established two levels of planning; national and local or district level. At the national level, the NDPC is the body responsible for the coordination of national planning and it issues guidelines for Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and MMDA planning. The MoFEP liaises with NDPC to prepare the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), fiscal and financial strategies and annual national budgets. The CWSA headquarters prepares medium term Strategic Investment Plans (SIP) to mobilise financial resources for investment in the WASH sector. The second level of planning is at the local level where the MMDAs have the authority to prepare and implement plans for the development of their areas of jurisdiction.

At the regional level, the Regional Plan Coordinating Unit (RPCU) of the RCCs is responsible for coordination of MMDA plans and harmonising them with national development policies and priorities for eventual approval by NDPC. The RCCs are also expected to provide MMDAs with such data and information as are necessary to assist them in the preparation of their plans. They also monitor and evaluate the performance of MMDAs. The decision

planning and decision making processes as practised in the sampled districts are examined in the sections that follow.

5.1 The District Water and Sanitation Planning Process

As Planning Authorities, the MMDAs are responsible for the preparation and implementation of DMTDP as well as sector plans including WASH. These sector plans outline programmes and projects for achieving sector goals in the district and they should feed into the overall DMTDP as well as the national sector plans. The DMTDP, DWSP and DESSAP are the main strategic plans as far as WASH services are concerned. Whilst the DMTDP embodies the plans and decisions of all sectors including WASH, the DWSP covers only WASH sector plans and it is supposed to be an elaboration of water and sanitation objectives outlined in the DMTDP. This implies that the objectives set out in the DWSP must be linked to the WASH objectives in the DMTDP.

Although the NDPC guidelines for District water and sanitation planning suggested the establishment of planning teams for DWSP preparation none of the study district had done so, leaving the task entirely in the hands of the DWSTs. Whilst all members of the DPCU took part in the preparation of the DMTDP only a few were involved in the DWSP preparation.

DWSP preparation in the study districts started with data collection from the communities for situational analysis. The study districts had computerised databases on WASH facilities, coverage and population distribution by communities and Area Councils. Additional data gathered from the field were used to validate and update the existing databases. The Planning Officers worked closely with the DWSTs in the situational analysis. None of the study districts organized public hearings to present the analysed data to the stakeholders for their views. The failure to organise these validation workshops was attributed to financial constraints.

The next stage in the DWSP planning process involved projections of population growth and determination of future needs and translating them into measurable targets and this was mainly done by a technical team comprising of the Planning Officer and the DWST. This stage fed into the Programming phase which involved community selection and prioritization for WASH projects. The need for a technical and political interface at this stage was recognised. The technical interface involved the use of a set of technical criteria to select a list of prioritized communities to benefit from WASH projects. The political interface involved selecting the actual beneficiary communities from the prioritized list. In the Bosomtwe District,

the District Chief Executive and the District Coordinating Director were involved in the community selection process.

The draft DWSPs were presented at public hearings and the participation was in line with the NDPC recommendations. The General Assembly is the final authority that approves the DWSP after it has passed through the Development Planning Sub-Committee and the Executive Committee for consideration. Copies of the approved plans were submitted to the RWST. The approved DWSP then formed the basis for the preparation of annual action plans which are sometimes called sub-projects by the RWST for consideration by the Development partners. The District Chief Executives and the Coordinating Directors actively participated in the selection of communities in the annual action plans or sub-projects. The approval of sub-projects at the RWST level permitted the contracting process to start.

Contracting for services of consultants and contractors were undertaken according to the requirements of the Public Procurement Law. At the district level, the District Tender Evaluation Team evaluates bidding documents from contractors and submits reports to the District Tender Committee, the District Tender Review Board or the Regional Tender Review Board. Award of contracts below GH¢50,000 is done by the District Tender Committee. Those between GH¢50,000 and GH¢200,000 are done by the District Tender Review Board whilst contracts above GH¢200,000 are sent to the Regional Tender Review Board for consideration.

5.2 The Influence of the DWSP on WASH Sector Decision Making Process

For efficient and effective utilization of limited resources, there should be a strong linkage between policy, planning and budgeting (Overseas Development Institute, 2005). The budget for the DWSP is one of the main instruments for translating the priority needs into activities through the allocation of resources. Priorities are more likely to be implemented when planning and budgeting processes are linked. Linkage between plans and budgets is also enhanced when there are credible and reliable information sources for both planning and budgeting. For instance, information on sources of revenue and the costs of service provision over the full life-cycle

cost³ of WASH services are essential for planning and budgeting but were found to be limited in the study districts. This made unit cost estimates, which were considered essential in the planning and decision making process, difficult to make. Knowing the full life-cycle cost of providing a service facilitates planning and decision making by ensuring realistic budgets, and uniformity in cost estimates. A solid understanding of the life-cycle cost related to different types of service could therefore enhance the links between plans and budgets.

At the district level, in practice as noted in the sampled districts, WASH services were provided by a range of actors, many of whom have historically tended to use different approaches of achieving the shared objectives of improving access to WASH services. These differences in approach sometimes appear to be sending mixed signals that do not auger well for sustainable WASH service delivery. Lack of uniformity in the approaches and procedures of WASH service providers confuses beneficiary communities with the potential to degenerate into conflicts and unpredictable community responses. Common sources of confusion among communities include the range of expected community contribution (of 0%, 5%, 10% etc.) towards capital cost and responsibilities for operation and maintenance. This explains the reluctance of some community members to accept WASH services from providers who demand these varying conditions. For harmonization and avoidance of conflicts, there is the need for a common framework with the necessary linkages between planning and decision making by the various stakeholders involved in WASH service delivery at the local level. The DOM Concept of the NCWSP is intended to mandate the MMDAs to coordinate all WASH activities including those of NGOs in order to ensure uniformity of approach.

The DWST and the Planning Officers undertake monitoring and supervision visits to contractors, Partner Organisations, WATSANs/WSDBs during projects implementation. In some districts like Ejura-Sekyedumase, the District Engineer and the District Chief Executive occasionally take part in

³ The elements that make up any WASH service (i.e. boreholes, pumps, pipes and taps, etc), are all expected to require operation, repair, rehabilitation and eventually replacement over time. A life-cycle cost based approach to service delivery takes into account all these costs over the life time of all elements of the service , including the cost of support services provided by agencies such as CWSA (see WASHCost Project)

the field visits. The RWST and the Development Partners also undertake monitoring visits to project sites. As part of its quarterly monitoring visits to the districts, the RCC also monitors water and sanitation projects. To assess progress of work, quarterly review meetings were held. Participants at the review meetings included the DWST, the District Chief Executive, the Coordinating Director, Planning Officer, Budget Officer, Works Engineer, Finance Officer, RWST and Development Partners. The study revealed that the District Chief Executive and the District Coordinating Director rarely attend the review meetings in both districts.

According to the DWSTs and the Planning Officers in both Districts the development partners sometimes indirectly influenced the community selection process by indicating which community projects they were willing to fund. Development Partners also received reports on bid evaluations from the District Tender Evaluation Teams and they had to indicate their no objection before the Assembly could proceed with any contract award. According to the NDPC, some districts prepared DWSP just to meet the demands of development partners for funding. This was mentioned as one of the reasons for the difference in timings between the DMTDP and DWSP.

6. The Relationship between DWSP and other Plans

The relationship between DWSP and other plans such as the DMTDP, DESSAP, and NGO Plans formed the basis of the analysis in this section. The relationship between the DWSP and national level planning was also considered.

6.1 *The DWSP and DMTDP*

All respondents in the study districts indicated that the DWSP was an elaboration of the WASH sector plans and decisions contained in the DMTDP. They contended that the goals and objectives set in the DWSP were in line with the WASH objectives in the DMTDP. However a critical examination of the DMTDPs and DWSPs of the two districts revealed some inconsistencies in the objectives and targets, which could be attributed to the fact that the two plans were prepared at different times and had different planning periods. For instance, whilst the two districts had their DMTDPs for the period 2006-2009, DWSP for Ejura-Sekyedumase was for the period 2009 -2012 whilst that of Bosomtwe District was for 2008-2012.

According to district respondents, the NDPC normally initiates the process of preparation of the DMTDP by organizing orientation workshops for the Assemblies. In the case of the DWSP the process was initiated by the development partners through the CWSA and the NDPC was not actively

involved. The CWSA (with the financial support of the development partners) contracted a consortium to facilitate the DWSP process. Even though the DPCU was expected to play a role in the DWSP process, only the District Planning Officers were actively involved. The situation was attributed to lack of financial incentives to win the commitment of the other DPCU members. Although the Development Partners expected the MMDAs to contribute financially towards the DWSP preparation to ensure their ownership, the latter was reluctant. This confirms the inherent challenges in terms of District ownership and implementation of DWSPs because some Assemblies looked up to the RWST as if the latter were owners of the DWSPs.

In both Districts, completed DWSPs were submitted to the RWST whereas the DMTDPs were submitted to the RPCU for harmonization and onward submission to NDPC. The DWSPs were used at the District level and they did not directly inform WASH decisions at CWSA Headquarters because the approved DWSPs remained at the regional offices and with the development partners.

Responses from the RPCU confirmed that the RCC played an active part in the preparation of the DMTDPs. The RPCU organised workshops for the MMDAs on guidelines for the medium term planning process, monitored progress of the preparation and offered technical support when needed. The RPCU also participated in public hearings organised by some MMDAs and reviewed some draft DMTDPs. The RCC after harmonizing the DMTDPs into regionally harmonized district plans and submitting them to the NDPC, made sure that the programmes and projects reflected in the annual development budgets of the MMDAs. The MMDAs normally defend their annual budgets at the RCC before approval. Copies of the approved budgets are sent to the NDPC, MLGRD, Common Fund Administrator and the MoFEP.

For the DWSP, the RCC did not participate in the process except during contract awards for the construction of facilities. The RCCs together with the RWST constitute the Regional Approval Committees (RACs) for community water and sanitation projects at the regional level. The RACs consider and approve WASH contracts that are beyond the threshold of the District Tender Committees and they also provide overall management guidance and coordination during project execution. In addition, the RACs appraise performance of DAs based on joint monitoring and evaluation reports submitted by RPCUs and RWSTs. The RACs also endorse districts' annual water and sanitation investment plans after which the RWSTs consolidate the annual district plans into an annual regional water and sanitation investment plan.

6.2 The DWSP and the DESSAP

Interviews with the Regional and District Environmental Health Departments and the Environmental Health Directorate of the MLGRD revealed that DESSAP was yet another WASH sector plan aimed at establishing the framework for developing a comprehensive environmental sanitation investment plan. DESSAP was expected to address both solid and liquid waste management, storm water drainage, environmental sanitation education and enforcement, and special industrial waste management in urban and rural areas.

All MMDAs were tasked to prepare DESSAPs and the process was at various stages of completion. At Ejura-Sekyedumase, the Planning Officer and the District Budget Officer assisted the District Environmental Health Department to prepare the plans whereas at Bosomtwe, only the District Planning Officer was involved in the process.

The DESSAPs were to be submitted to the National Environmental Sanitation Directorate through the Regional Environmental Health Unit. According to the National Director, the DESSAPs from all the districts will be put together to prepare a comprehensive National Environmental Sanitation Investment Plan. Although funding was yet to be secured for DESSAP implementation, all respondents indicated their awareness of the fact that some aspects of sanitation (e.g. institutional and households latrines) were also components of the DWSP. They further indicated that the current DESSAP was more comprehensive because it included all aspects of sanitation.

Both DWSP and the DESSAP aim at addressing sanitation challenges. Whilst the mandate of CWSA in sanitation is limited to liquid waste (i.e. household and institutional latrines), the DWSPs of the study districts included solid waste management. Though both DWSP and DESSAP prepared in the study districts covered aspects of sanitation it was surprising to note that the lead institutions at the district level, i.e. the DEHD and the DWSTs did not collaborate effectively with each other in the preparation of the plans. Whilst there was general agreement by respondents that the implementation of DESSAP could result in duplication of efforts as far as the DWSPs were concerned, no mechanism had been put in place at both the district and national levels to avoid that.

6.3 DWSP and NGO Programmes and Projects

According to Ampadu-Boakye et al (2008) the DWSP process provides an opportunity for the identification of potential stakeholders both in public and private sectors with a view to promoting partnerships for delivery of sustainable WASH services. The study revealed that although the partnerships existed the linkages appeared to be weak. According to the NCWSP, all parties including NGOs should obtain MMDA approval for water and sanitation projects to ensure that there is a link between programmes and projects of NGOs and DWSP. It is expected that if the identification of NGO projects and their locations were to be based on the DWSP then they would link up with national level WASH plans and decisions.

Since the involvement of NGOs in WASH service provision predated the advent of the NCWSP, many NGO plans were not in conformity with DWSPs. However some of them tried to adapt their approaches to conform to the NCWSP. In the Ejura-Sekyedumase District for example WVI started its operation in 1994 and it has since constructed about 241 boreholes, several household latrines, formed and trained WATSAN committees, area mechanics and latrine artisans. Clearly the major part of WVI's activities was undertaken at the time when the district had only the DMTDP and no DWSP. WVI had its own plan and set up an Implementation Committee comprising of the heads of the relevant Decentralized Departments. The Planning Officer was a member of the committee representing the District Assembly on water and sanitation. WVI had a representative who took part in the preparation of the DMTDP. At the end of its water programme, WVI handed over the structures and facilities it had established including WATSANs, Boreholes, Area Mechanics, Pump Attendants, etc. to the Assembly.

According to the Planning Officer and the DWST, WVI had certain principles that were inconsistent with the NCWSP. These inconsistencies included the non-requirement of communities to contribute to the capital cost of the facilities, provision of boreholes without considering population thresholds and continuous reliance of communities on WVI for repairs and maintenance. These inconsistencies resulted in the reluctance of communities to pay 5% capital cost contribution towards WASH projects under the NCWSP and to assume full responsibility for operation and maintenance of facilities.

In the Bosomtwe District, the Rotary Club and the Church of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) provided facilities to communities without referring to the DWSP and the DMTDP. The Mormons consulted the DWST before embarking on their projects but according to the respondents this was more a matter of informing them of their presence in the district than collaboration.

None of the NGOs required communities' contribution towards the cost of facilities. They neither established user committees for the management of the facilities nor mechanisms for raising funds towards operation and maintenance. Consequently, many communities were reluctant to pay the 5% capital cost contributions and assume operation and maintenance responsibilities of WASH facilities.

The study revealed that whilst some NGOs like WVI tried to collaborate with the Assembly by playing at least some roles in the preparation of the DWSP others did not. The MMDAs therefore need to compel all NGOs to collaborate and adopt the NCWP principles since the NDPC and MWRWH/CWSA guidelines stipulated the inclusion of NGOs in the DWSP process.

6.4 Relationship between DWSP and SIP

The Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) of CWSA is based on the WASH sector policies at the national level articulated primarily in the NCWSP. The DWSPs do not directly feed into the SIP. During the preparation of the 2008-2015 SIP, data on population and functionality of water and sanitation facilities countrywide were obtained from updated regional databases of RWSTs.

The link between the DWSP and the national plans is similar to that of the DMTDP and the national plan. The link comes in the form of guidelines from the national plan through NDPC to the district level. After the formulation of the national policy framework, the NDPC facilitates the process of translating the policy into programmes and actions through the development of NDPC planning guidelines.

6.5 Linkages between DWSP and District Budgetary Allocations

The study revealed that budgets of the DAs cater for the operational costs of the DWST and the DAs' contribution to the capital costs of WASH facilities. Budgetary allocations for the operations of DWSTs were taken from the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF), whilst the investment costs were based on the amount that the Development Partners were willing to offer. The implication here is that the link between the DWSP and the actual budget allocations of the Assemblies remain weak and heavily reliant on development partners.

There appears to be some misconceptions regarding the ownership and responsibility of implementation of the DWSP. The Development Partners (e.g. DANIDA and the World Bank) regarded their support towards the preparation of the DWSPs as their contribution to the development of the human resources capacity of the MMDAs for the DWSP process. Once

developed, they saw the DWSPs as tools that could be used by the MMDAs to mobilise financial resources from various sources (including sources other than the donors), to implement the plans. In short, while helping to develop the DWSPs they do not expect to fund all the projects contained in them. Meanwhile some MMDAs have the misconception that the DWSPs and the projects therein are implicitly underpinned by the Development Partners who supported or initiated the process. Consequently the MMDAs fail to use the DWSPs to mobilise funds for WASH projects. When NGOs offer to help districts with funds to implement WASH projects they are given projects outside the prioritised ones in the DWSP because those in the DWSPs are reserved for the Development Partners.

7. Implications of Findings, Recommendation and Conclusion

The study revealed the misconceptions surrounding the purpose of the Development Partners' support for the DWSP process. This misinterpretation could negatively affect the DOM concept. The consequence of this development is that the DWSP has become less important in guiding the MMDA overall WASH planning and decision making process.

The absence of collaboration between the DWST and the DEHD for the preparation and implementation of the DWSP and DESSAP could lead to duplication of efforts and unnecessary competition for limited resources for sanitation provision at the district level. This development may further aggravate the challenge of streamlining interventions in the WASH sector using the decentralized structures as identified by DANIDA (2007).

The study also revealed that some NGOs in the WASH sector, who are the other major source of investment in new infrastructure, did not collaborate effectively with the DAs. There is therefore a weak linkage between NGO projects and programmes and District WASH planning and decision making for WASH. The consequence of this is that, projects are implemented in communities without considering the threshold population and the NCWSP strategies and principles.

The fact that the DWSP was being used at the local level to guide decision making for the allocation of financial resources means that sustainability of WASH services could be improved if effective strategies are devised to foster ownership of the DWSP process by the districts. This will encourage them to use the DWSPs to source for funding.

7.1 Recommendations

There is the need to erase the misunderstanding that the DWSP belongs to the RWST/CWSA as the first step to ensuring that the DWSP is considered as a complement to the DMTDP. Within the Assembly, increased awareness could improve participation in the DWSP process and the provision of adequate motivation to sustain participation. This will help to avoid the situation whereby only the Planning Officer and the DWSTs take active part in the process. NGOs could be made aware of the existence of DWSPs by making available to them copies of the DWSPs. This could influence their decisions on strategies for WASH service provision.

In order to enhance the linkage between the DWSP, DESSAP and the DMTDP, there is the need to synchronize the calendars for the preparation of and the duration of the plans by ensuring that only one institution, i.e. the NDPC facilitates the process. All capacity building support should be channelled through the NDPC for the development of all plans. This will ensure that WASH decisions at the district level gain prominence at national level planning through the NDPC.

The importance of synchronising the DWSP and DESSAP processes cannot be over-emphasised. It is therefore recommended that the DWST should be expanded to include senior officers like the Coordinating Directors, the Budget Officers, and the Environmental Health officers and charged with the responsibility of preparing both the DWSP and the DESSAP as annexes to the DMTDP. The DWSP should be concerned with only water whilst DESSAP covers all sanitation matters in a comprehensive manner. Just as WATSANs and Water Boards have been formed and given responsibilities for the management of water facilities, so too should Sanitation Committees be formed to manage all sanitation issues including both solid and liquid waste and drainage. Private sector participation in the management of sanitation facilities should be encouraged.

As in the case of the DMTDP, participation of the RCC in the DWSP and DESSAP processes is essential and should be considered. The RCC could monitor the process and provide technical support to DAs for the preparation of the DWSP and DESSAP and demand them as appendices to the DMTDPs. In addition the RCC could as part of its role ensure that the DWSP and DESSAP objectives and targets are in harmony with the WASH objectives in the DMTDP.

7.2 Conclusion

The importance of the DWSP process in guiding decision making in the WASH sector cannot be over-emphasised. The intended benefits could be

enhanced by ensuring that it is properly differentiated from the DESSAP and fully integrated into the DMTDP. This will consolidate the gains made so far and chart the path for sustainable and comprehensive WASH sector planning locally and at the national level.

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