



National Sanitation Policy in Ghana

A case for improved co-ordination?



Summary

The best estimate of current sanitation coverage in Ghana is around 35% but there are significant regional variations with coverage in some regions being much lower. Despite the relatively low sanitation coverage, investment in sanitation, which is currently about \$25 million per annum, is only about 25% of that in water supply.

Ghana has had a National Environmental Sanitation Policy since 1999. This takes a wide view of sanitation, covering food hygiene and solid waste and excreta disposal. Its decentralized approach reflects Ghana's commitment to developing decentralized forms of government. This Briefing Note has a narrower focus on excreta disposal.

The policy was developed by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD). It is a fairly concise document that sets out basic principles and objectives, identifies roles and responsibilities and also covers environmental management and protection, legislation and funding among others.

The Ministry of Works and Housing (MWH) has overall responsibility for water resources and supply and has developed policies and strategies that cover provision of 'water-related sanitation', which in essence means sewerage.

There is an urgent need for improved coordination between sector stakeholders. In particular, there is a need for shared policies and strategies that are owned by all the main stakeholder ministries and departments, clearly setting out the roles to be played by those ministries and departments.

Headline issues

- Sanitation coverage in Ghana remains fairly low, particularly in the Northern, Upper Eastern and Upper Western Regions. In each region, coverage does not exceed 20%.
- Diarrhoea accounts for around 25% of deaths of children under 5, highlighting an urgent need to raise awareness of the need for improved sanitation and hygiene.
- In theory, institutional responsibilities for sanitation are clear, with the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) having overall responsibility for formulating environmental sanitation policies. Water supply falls under the Ministry of Works and Housing (MWH).
- In practice, the MWH is involved in facilitating sanitation provision in rural areas and small towns, through its Community Water Supply and Sanitation Agency (CWSA).
- Ghana's National Environmental Sanitation Policy (ESP) dates from 1999. It sets out the roles of a number of ministries and institutions, but needs to be updated to include reference to the roles of MWH and CWSA. The policy mentions the role of the Ministry of Health in supporting hygiene education activities and contributing to regulation and standard setting for environmental sanitation services, but does not expand on what this role might entail.

There is a need to update policy to make good these deficiencies. While updating policy, the possibility of requiring that the various stakeholders working in the sector follow a sector-wide approach should be considered.



Background

Ghana's population in 2004 was about 20.6 million and growing at a rate of around 2.9% per annum. UN assessments suggest that the population will reach 26.4 million in 2010 and 33 million in 2020. About 42% of the population is urban and this figure is expected to grow to about 46% in 2015.

Infant and under five mortality rates had been steadily dropping until 1998 but then showed some increase in the period up to 2003, to 64 per thousand and 111 per thousand respectively. Deaths from diarrhoea account for around 25% of deaths in the under five age group, suggesting a need to create awareness of the importance of improved sanitation, provide improved facilities and promote improved hygiene.

There are variations between estimates of sanitation coverage. In its Strategic Investment Programme (SIP), the Community Water Supply and Sanitation Agency (CWSA) estimates current coverage figures of 31% for rural areas and 40% for urban areas, giving an overall national coverage of 35%. There are considerable regional variations, with coverage in the Upper Eastern Region only about 10% and that in the Northern and Upper Western Regions not exceeding 20%¹.

WHO figures indicate that annual investment in sanitation in Ghana over the period 1990 to 2000 was only about 25% of that in water supply². The sanitation sector was heavily dependent on external funding, with over 90% of funds coming from donors and only \$1.15 million per year funded from national sources. This heavy dependence on external funding has meant that the sector tends to be project driven. This is important because many projects are implemented through CWSA and focus heavily on water supply. Government's direct funding for water and sanitation has tended to decrease in recent years, but is likely to increase in the future as allocations are made from HIPC funds.

Ghana's sanitation policies and strategies

The National Environmental Sanitation Policy

Ghana's National Environmental Sanitation Policy (ESP) dates from 1999. It was prepared by the MLGRD in consultation with other stakeholders. The policy covers all aspects of environmental health, including excreta disposal and solid waste management. It sets out responsibilities for the various stakeholders, from individuals through community organizations to the MLGRD, Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs), Ministries of Environment Science and Technology, Health and Education, educational institutions and the private sector.

In accordance with Ghana's overall commitment to decentralization, as reflected in the Constitution and various enabling acts, the policy assigns an enabling role to higher levels of government and the departments and agencies that fall under them. MMDAs are given direct responsibility for waste management, public health management, environmental monitoring, planning and monitoring. However, responsibility for developing appropriate environmental sanitation infrastructure, including domestic and communal toilets, rests with communities, which are directly responsible for planning, technology selection and implementation.

The policy makes no mention of the CWSA. The reasons for this are not clear, although one contributing factor may be the fact that CWSA was created while policy formulation was in progress. This is a serious omission, given the high reliance of sanitation programmes on external funding and the fact that much of the funding for rural and small towns is channelled through CWSA.

The National Water Policy

MWH has recently developed a National Water Policy, which consolidates three existing policy/strategy documents, prepared separately by CWSA, Ghana Water Company Ltd (GWCL) and the Water Resources Commission (WRC), into one policy. While the main focus of this document is on water supply, it does refer to sanitation.

It is probable that organizations such as CWSA, which fall under MWH, will look to this policy for guidance on sanitation-related matters rather than the more comprehensive Environmental Sanitation Policy. The result may be a tendency for sanitation to be marginalized.

Resource availability

Ghana has limited resources for sanitation development and this is reflected in the fact that over 90% of sanitation-related investment



Institutional context

The 1992 constitution of Ghana created a vision of a decentralized system of public administration and governance. In accordance with this vision, successive local government acts have allocated significant powers to Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs). The Local Government Act (Act 462) required the setting up of District Works Departments in District Assemblies (DAs)³. In practice these did not develop as intended. Projects are supported by District Water and Sanitation Teams (DWSTs), which are temporary project-level entities, created by CWSA as a stop-gap measure and staffed by people seconded from various departments within the DA. These lapse on the completion of projects and must then be revived to support subsequent projects.

DAs fall under the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD), which has overall responsibility for formulating policies relating to environmental health and sanitation. The CWSA and its Regional Water Supply and Sanitation Teams (RWSTs) on the other hand, are part of the Ministry of Works and Housing (MWH), which is responsible for formulating policies relating to water supply and water resources.

The National Environmental Sanitation Policy Coordinating Council (NESPoCC) is responsible for coordinating activities relating to environmental sanitation. The Sanitation and Environmental Health Unit, housed within the MLGRD, acts as the secretariat to NESPoCC. It is also responsible for developing strategies for policy implementation and monitoring environmental sanitation aspects of Ghana's Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) and MDG targets.



over the period 1990 – 2004 was externally funded (based on WHO figures). This suggests a need to ensure that international donors are aware of policy and work in accordance with it.

The available figures suggest that there will be a need for increased investment if the MDG sanitation target is to be met. An even greater increase in investment will be required to meet the higher target set out in CWSA's Strategic Investment Plan.

Achievements and challenges

- MLGRD is universally recognized as the lead ministry for sanitation policy development.
- The responsibility of MMDAs, which fall under MLGRD, for the implementation of development programmes, including sanitation, is recognized in the Constitution and Civil Service Law. The policy recommendations on decentralization are broadly being followed, although there are capacity issues at the local level.
- NESPoCC was formed in 2000, ceased to function in 2002, but has now been revived.
- The GPRS includes specific short term targets (2000-2005) for rural and urban sanitation, emphasizing the role of sanitation and water supply in achieving targets for reductions in infant and under-five mortality rates.
- A 'sanitation week' has been held annually as required by policy. The first day of the week, national Environmental Sanitation Day (ENSADA), is often accompanied by high level political participation and speeches.

Despite these achievements, challenges remain. The greatest of these is to develop policies and strategies that are accepted and followed by MLGRD and MWH, together with their subsidiary organizations. Each Ministry currently has its own priorities, programmes and procedures and makes little formal reference to the other.

Recommended actions

Specific recommended actions relating to policies, structures and strategic plans are:

- revise the environmental sanitation policy to reflect the role played by CWSA;
- seek convergence between the recommendations and requirements of the National Environmental Sanitation Policy and the National Water Policy;
- more clearly define the roles of the Ministries of Health and Environment in relation to sanitation and ensure that the Ministry of Health and its staff are actively involved in an integrated approach to sanitation promotion and provision; and

- reconcile the strategic planning and funding requirements of the Environmental Sanitation Policy and the National Community Water Supply and Sanitation Guidelines. The first requires that local authorities develop Strategic Sanitation Plans and calls for the creation of a District Environmental Sanitation Fund. The second requires District Water and Sanitation Plans and the creation of a District Water and Sanitation Fund.

Ways forward

Ghana clearly needs a revised environmental sanitation policy, which takes account of the roles played by all stakeholders, including the MWH and CWSA. In order to ensure that the policy is widely owned, particularly by the key ministries, the policy development process must be participatory. The team implementing the process should ideally be drawn from all key sector ministries, including Works and Housing, Finance, Environment and Health. MLGRD, as the lead sector ministry, should initiate and lead the process.

Donors can and should provide support for the development of the revised policy. As with national stakeholders, it will be important to consult them about the content of the policy. Conversely, it will be essential that donors then work within the overall framework provided by policy, rather than pursuing their own individual agendas. Ideally, they should do this through a shared Sector-wide Approach and this might be one point to be covered by policy.



This Briefing Note presents an overview of key challenges and opportunities facing Ghana in the coordination and implementation of national sanitation policy.

It is based on the findings of research undertaken in 2003-2005, as part of a DFID-funded research project *Application of tools to support national sanitation policies (R8163)*.

Other research outputs include:

- Sanitation Policy: Why it is important and how to make it work – an overview guidance note
- Implementing national sanitation policy in Nepal: challenges and opportunities – a briefing note from Nepal
- Comparing National Sanitation Policy Content – a note summarising and comparing the content of sanitation policies from 9 countries

Key references

Elledge, M. F., Rosensweig, F. and Warner, D. B. (2002). *Guidelines for the assessment of national sanitation policies* (EHP strategic report no.2), Arlington, USA.

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Footnotes

¹ Annual Progress Report of the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2003.

² WHO Global Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Assessment 2000 report, Africa Region, Part 1. http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/monitoring/globalassess/en/ (accessed Sept 2005).

³ Municipal and Metropolitan Assemblies have different institutional arrangements and different names for their departments. The focus here is on the District Assemblies, with which CWSA mostly works.