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## Participation - which way?

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## Participation which way?

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THE GHANA NATIONAL Community Water and Sanitation Programme (NCWSP) is now in its second phase which has a long-term period of ten years. This second phase is being implemented in three stages, with each stage lasting approximately three years. The long duration of the NCWSP II enables districts and communities to play a central role in project implementation.

The policy of decentralization, which encourages participation in the water and sanitation activities by all stakeholders at the district level, is laudable considering the history of development projects in the country. In the past, the government provided infrastructure without community participation. There was therefore no maintenance culture and when facilities broke down, beneficiaries did nothing about them – they expected the “government” to maintain broken-down facilities be they water supply facilities, schools or roads. With the decentralization policy, however, all stakeholders from the community, private sector, District Assembly (DA), the Regional Coordinating Council and the Nation are participating in the programme. Roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders are clearly defined and stakeholders are to be trained accordingly.

This paper presents the key elements of the NCWSP II, which are participatory, Comments on the issues that may arise and makes recommendations.

### The NCWSP strategy

The key elements of the National Community Water and Sanitation Strategy which fall within the Ghana decentralization policy have the aim of devolving central administrative authority and divesting implementation responsibility to the district level.

These elements are summarized as follows:

- Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA) to play a facilitating role in ensuring equity and wide-spread coverage of water and sanitation facilities through targeted subsidies supporting basic service level.
- Ensure community ownership and management and maintenance of facilities
- District Assemblies to play a central role in supporting community management
- Private sector provision of goods and services
- Private sector provision of goods and services
- A demand-responsive programme, in which the communities make informed choices on facilities and their management

- Special focus on women as the principal users of water, operators and managers of community-level water systems
- Integrated approach to hygiene promotion, water and sanitation

### Comments and issues

Community members are involved in the decision-making process; - the demand responsive approach lends itself to that. They contribute 5% of the capital cost and open a bank account for the operation and maintenance of facilities – in fact, they bear 100% of O&M cost. They are involved in siting and monitoring the construction of the facilities. They also participate in hygiene education which is the third component of the water and sanitation programme. The community is made aware of the structures that have been put in place – Area Mechanics, private contractors and consultants etc.

Beneficiary communities therefore participate fully in and manage the programme – through the WATSANs/WSDB.

Conflicts between Water and Sanitation Committees and Water Supply Development Boards on the one hand and Unit Committees and Town Councils on the other hand is however, a problem facing the participatory policy. THE WATSAN/WSDB have accounts for running the facilities. However, they are not legally recognized. Unit committees and Town Councils are the lowest legal body in the local government. They can make by-laws but they don't have finances. There is therefore conflict between the two bodies where the Unit Committees/Town Councils insist that WATSAN/WSDB hand over their bank accounts for general community use.

The voluntary nature of the WATSAN is an issue at the community level because they are not committed; everywhere are dormant WATSANs.

### District assembly

The District Assembly is the focal point in NCWSP II – it is the manager of the programme with the CWSA Regional and Nation levels facilitating the process. The DA's role is to apply for participation in the programme and meet laid down conditions – agree to pay 5% of capital cost contribution for community sub-projects. It is to promote the programme at the District level, select communities that will benefit and contract the private sector to provide the goods and services for the implementation of the programme. The DA has to set up an office for the water and

sanitation programme with a 3-member team comprising a Community Development Officer, an Environmental Health Officer, and a Technician. It is also involved in the monitoring and supervision of the programme.

However, it is common knowledge that the DA has not a wide revenue network (revenue collection Ghana is poor with revenue collectors conniving and cheating). The DA therefore relies on the central government for the Common Fund which is to be paid quarterly. The Common Fund is never paid on time thus rendering efforts at development futile. To ask the DA to participate by contributing 5% capital cost of sub-projects will delay the process because even in NCWSP I, the DA could not pay for the running cost of the DWST offices. Community members can mobilize their 5% capital cost contribution but the DA's inability to contribute this amount will frustrate the programme.

Apart from finance, the DA lacks the capacity to manage the programme. Even though it is to recruit a 3-member DWST to manage the programme, the DA is not able to recruit and maintain qualified staff. Trained DWSTs are lost through transfers since most of them are on secondment.

Also, DA personnel, like the District Chief Executives, District Coordinating Directors, District Finance Officers and District Planners do not avail themselves for training. They either do not come at all, or when they do, they do not sit in for the training. This is the challenge of capacity building at the District Assembly.

Logistics for running the DWST office is another identified problem that will hinder the DA's participation in the programme. NCWSP II makes provision for sector strengthening in the form of finance but this amount is not enough and the DA is not able to continue from where the programme leaves off. In NCWSP I, motorbikes were provided for DWST use but when they broke down, the DA could not maintain them.

Motivation of DWST by the DA is another issue. Since the DWST manages the programme on behalf of the DA, it undertakes a lot of activities which demand an amount of motivation – night allowances for example. However, the DA is unable to pay these allowances and the DWST has left most of their responsibilities unattended. For instance, it is supposed to follow-up after the private sector's contract has elapsed, but it does not.

### Private sector

The private sector which is to provide services lacks the capacity, finance, logistics and qualified staff. The field of community mobilization and facilitation is relatively new to the private sector. This used to be the work of the public sector like Social Welfare, Community Development Department, Ministry of Agriculture, etc. The up-coming private sector in this field are community-based organizations which do not have the relevant skills for community animation. They also lack marketing skills that would enable them to expand to other fields of development for their sustenance. NCWSP II has packaged training pro-

grammes for the private sector but should the Agency bear all the costs for training?

There is also the issue of moon-lighting staff of the private sector – these are not permanent. In this regard, the private sector is very weak.

Spare part dealers and outlets are non-existent because dealers encounter difficulty in obtaining credit to meet working capital needs. When facilities break down, communities know what to do but the spare parts outlets are not there and so they have to rely on Intermediate Technology Transfer Unit (ITTU) for spare parts which most often are not immediately available.

## CWSA

CWSA regional staff have been accused of being managers instead of facilitators because they virtually have to “push” the District Assembly to be up and running.

## Recommendations

In view of the above:-

- CWSA should institute an effective system for the delivery of goods and services.
- The Private Sector should stay a little longer into the post-delivery phase to give support to WATSANS.
- Spare part outlets should be put in place by NCWSP II.
- DA need to be committed to the project by recruiting permanent staff for the DWST.
- DA should not be made to contribute to the capital cost because it depends solely on the local government common fund as the source of its revenue. The District Assembly should be strengthened in financial and time management.
- NCWSP has tried to solve the conflict between the Watsan/WSDB and the Unit Committees but to no avail. This problem should be revisited and a permanent solution found.
- Strengthening the DA would solve the problem of CWSA “managing” the programme.

## ACRONYMS

NCWSP	– National Community Water and Sanitation Programme.
CWSA	– Community Water and Sanitation Agency
O&M	– Operation and Management
WATSAN	– Water and Sanitation Committee
WSDB	– Water and Sanitation Development Board
DA	– District Assembly
DWST	– District Water and Sanitation Team
ITTU	– Intermediate Technology Transfer Unit.

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