

TECHNOPOLICY BRIEF 18

WHAT ARE THE POLICY GAPS HINDERING
FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY
WATER AND SANITATION PROGRAMMES IN
GHANA?

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ABOUT THE AFRICAN TECHNOLOGY POLICY STUDIES NETWORK

The African Technology Policy Studies Network (ATPS) is a multi-disciplinary network of researchers, policy makers, actors in the private sector and other end-users interested in generating, promoting and strengthening innovative science and technology policies in Africa. With a regional secretariat in Nairobi, the network operates through national chapters in 23 African countries, with an expansion plan to cover the entire sub-Saharan Africa.

One of the objectives of the network is to disseminate research results to policy makers, legislators, the organized private sector, civil society, mass media and farmers' groups through publications, dialogue and advocacy. Among its range of publications are the Working Paper Series (WPS), Research Paper Series (RPS), Special Paper Series (SPS) and the Technopolicy Briefs.

Technopolicy Briefs Series are commissioned short papers written by experts from all over the world specifically to address current science and technology policy concerns and questions in Africa. The briefs are also summaries of technical papers published under our WPS, SPS and RPS written to highlight significant policy recommendations. These briefs are written with the busy policymakers and non-specialists in mind. The materials are designed for general readership and help advance the advocacy and knowledge brokerage roles of the ATPS.

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Acronyms

ATPS	African Technology Policy Studies Network
GPRS	Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy
GWCL	Ghana Water Company Limited
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NCWSA	National Community Water and Sanitation Agency
NCWSP	National Community Water and Sanitation Program
NEPAD	New Partnership for African Development

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1.0

Background

A national water policy of Ghana was launched in October 2005. It seeks to provide a framework for the sustainable development and utilization of Ghana's water resources. The policy outlines Ghana's Water Vision for the year 2025; – "to promote an efficient and effective management system and environmentally sound development of all water resources in Ghana", (Ministry of Water, Works and Housing, 2005).

Three important development frameworks inform Ghana's water policy, namely:

- Global – Millennium Development Goals, (Ministry of Works and Housing, 2003)
- African Region – New Partnership for African Development, (NEPAD, 2001)
- National – Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS), (Ghana Government, 2000).

The GPRS document is a follow-up from other development programmes of previous administrations including the National Community Water and Sanitation Programme (NCWSP) that was launched in 1994 to address the challenges of providing improved water and sanitation services to rural communities and small towns in Ghana. These communities previously did not benefit from the national piped domestic water supply programme operated by the Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL) under a centralized system. The NCWSP was later carved out of the GWCL by an Act of Parliament (Act 564, December 1998) with mandate to facilitate the provision of safe drinking and related sanitation services to rural communities and small towns in Ghana.

In the context of the NCWSP, communities are classified as rural with populations of between 75 to 2,000 and small towns that have populations from 2,001 to 50,000. Inclusion of a community in the programmes of the NCWSP requires, among others, a commitment from the community in the form of counterpart funding to the tune of 5% of the cost of the project in addition to another 5% from the district assembly in which the community lies.

2.0

What are the Policy Gaps and Problems of Implementation?

Sizes of communities determine the types of technologies that can be accessed by the community. A rural community can access a protected communal hand-dug well system with or without a water lifting device whilst a small town can only access piped systems that involve a number of inter-connected boreholes or a surface water treatment system.

The policy on sanitation is that communities are presented with technical designs produced by the NCWSA. These designs do not receive any inputs from the communities involved and they are not permitted to alter the designs provided. This stems from the design criteria adopted by the NCWSA (CWSA, 2004) that:

- Household latrines are designed for an average of eight (8) persons per one latrine.
- Institutional latrines are designed for an average of fifty (50) persons per squat hole.

This provision means that designs are fixed and cannot, therefore, be altered.

To further compound the issue, many communities cannot appreciate the strong link between good sanitation and well-being. This perception discourages the communities from accessing sanitation services especially since, according to them, such facilities are expensive.

3.0

What is the Current Status of Water and Sanitation Delivery under NCWSP?

The African Technology Policy Studies Network (ATPS) recently sponsored a study to assess community water and sanitation programmes in Ghana. The research interviewed one hundred and forty (140) respondents in three (3) regions, eight (8) districts and thirteen (13) communities. The respondents were made up of fifty-seven percent (57%) females and forty-three percent (43%) males and some problems and recommendations for the improvement of the program were put forward.

The policy directive governing the National Community Water and Sanitation Agency (NCWSA) introduces three major setbacks that result from:

- The inability of a community to provide its required commitment.
- The inability of the district assembly to provide its required counterpart funds.

A community that falls below the threshold population cannot access the technology for that threshold. A community that falls below a population of 75, for example, is not served at all. If the community is above 2,000 people it only qualifies for a piped system from networked boreholes and in the situation that the community cannot afford its commitment fee for the piped system, it fails to access the technology.

The study recommended, among others, the following:

- Deprived communities that are unable to provide the 5% commitment fees for facilities should be supported under the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) funds. These funds are available for the nation through the implementation of the HIPC initiative.
- Budgetary allocations to the districts in the form of district assemblies' common fund should be released on time to enable districts to provide the district's matching funds of 5% of the cost of facilities.
- There is the need to provide access to populations under the minimum threshold with water and sanitation programmes as a right.

There is the need to educate and impress on communities the strong relationship between poor hygiene and disease incidence to encourage them to participate in improved sanitation services and improve the health of rural communities.

4.0

What are the Alternative Approaches?

Providing water to human settlements is an emerging principle of community participation and responsibility. This derives from the concept of sustainability of the resource or project. The research shows high community mobilisation and participation in maintaining the installed system by paying levies and cleaning the surroundings of installed water and sanitation systems.

In some instances when limited numbers or poverty among some communities denies them access to the provision of the systems, it is proposed that the 5% commitment fees of communities be translated into labour and provision of services during construction. This will enable deprived communities access to facilities. However, the provision of labour and some services may not add up to the commitment fees. This is a demerit but the total fulfilment of the requirements can be waived considering that the community would have demonstrated some level of commitment. In the spirit of flexibility and the need to provide access to all, the district assembly or the HIPC funds may be used to absorb the remaining costs.

In every society some communities are more endowed than others. This, in many countries, has resulted in the institution of the welfare system to empower more deprived persons and communities. Urban communities in Ghana pay a levy equivalent to a percentage of their water use to cater for rural water provision. There is need to institute policies that govern the collection and disbursement of these funds to meet the water and sanitation requirements of extremely deprived communities who are unable to access water and sanitation systems. This will enable them to access the facilities. The demerit in this approach is that the affected communities will not have the opportunity of demonstrating commitment which could undermine the ownership principle upon which the water provision concept is born.

The programmes should be flexible enough to enable communities to access various options that best serves their needs. In addition to districts not receiving their budgetary allocations on time, priorities in the administration of district assemblies' common fund also inhibits the timely development of water and sanitation systems in some communities. District assemblies were instituted to implement government policy at the grassroots through a decentralisation process to ensure a wider and more effective implementation of government agenda. It is, therefore, suggested that district assemblies adopt national development programmes to meet the over-riding national policy goals. The provision of water and sanitation should, therefore, according to the GPRS, be also



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a priority of the district assemblies. This should feature prominently in the policy initiatives on the operation of district assemblies. This will obviously ensure that more communities are served with water and sanitation programmes.

District assemblies supplement funds for development programmes from the national coffers through levies collected within the district. It is suggested that in line with the national agenda, a portion of extra funds collected through levies should be put aside for the provision of water and sanitation programmes for deprived communities within the districts. This should feature prominently in the policy initiatives on the operation of district assemblies. This will ensure that more communities are served with water and sanitation programmes.

Buying-in into sanitation programmes requires an involvement in the form of inputs to the design process. This will enable the communities to appreciate the cost implications of their inputs. As a matter of policy, education of communities on health implications of improper disposal of faecal matter should be aggressively pursued.

5.0

What are the Best Alternatives?

Issues raised as solutions to speed up the access of communities to water and sanitation provision include the following:

- support deprived communities under the HIPC funds.
- release budgetary allocations to the districts on time to facilitate development.
- provide populations under the minimum threshold access to water and sanitation programmes as a right.
- allow the programmes flexibility to enable communities' access options that best serves their needs
- translate communities' commitment fees into labour and provision of services during construction.
- institute adequate policy in collecting and disbursing water levies from more endowed communities within and without the district to meet the water and sanitation needs of extremely deprived communities
- encourage district assemblies to adopt national development programmes when prioritising projects so as to meet the over-riding national policy goal
- put aside a portion of extra funds collected as levies to provide water and sanitation programmes for deprived communities within the districts in support of national policy goals
- pursue education on the health implications of improper sanitation as a matter of policy
- Communities should be encouraged to buy-into sanitation programmes by encouraging their contribution to the design process of sanitation systems.

The above options all contribute to solving the water and sanitation issues of communities that are deprived and therefore need interventions. A combination of these approaches, clearly spelt out in policy statements regarding the provision of water and sanitation services to communities will not only assure the deprived communities of an essential requirement for poverty reduction as indicated in the GPRS document but ensure that Ghana's attempt to meet the MDGs are realized. The limitation of these interventions will occur when communities are not willing to comply with the necessary requirements for inclusion into the programmes. Persistent chieftaincy disputes, lack of communal cohesion and peace, and lack of interest in the intended programmes are all issues that will not allow the goals of the government relating to water and sanitation provision to be met in the short term.



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Lack of commitment in the formulation of effective policies as well as implementation and monitoring strategies from central government and the local government authorities could also derail the process of extending water and sanitation services to the communities especially the deprived ones.

6.0

What are the Policy Recommendations?

The arguments developed have been targeted at deprived communities who without such support and interventions would not be able to access improved water and sanitation services. The impact of the above is that more communities will be able to access such systems thereby enabling the country to reduce poverty on a wider scale and in a shorter time scale.

HIPC funds to support deprived communities to access water and sanitation systems in the following ways:

- release budgetary allocations promptly to the districts to facilitate water and sanitation development
- provide access to populations under the minimum threshold with water and sanitation programmes as a right
- initiate flexible programmes to enable communities to access options that best serve their needs
- translate communities' commitment fees into labour and provision of services during construction
- institute adequate policy for collecting and disbursing water levies from more endowed communities within and without the district to meet the water and sanitation needs of extremely deprived communities
- encourage district assemblies to adopt national development programmes when prioritising projects to meet the over-riding national policy goal
- put aside a portion of extra funds collected as levies for the provision of water and sanitation programmes for deprived communities within the districts in support of national policy goals
- pursue education on the health implications of improper sanitation as a matter of policy
- encourage communities to buy-into sanitation programmes by through contributions to the design process of sanitation systems

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