

State of WASH Services in Health Care Facilities in Wassa-East and Asutifi North Districts

At the ninety-ninth National Level Alliance meeting at the Coconut Regency Hotel in Accra on August 31, 2023, sixty-five participants from District Assemblies, Ministries, NGOs, civil society, academia and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) consultants discussed the importance of having safe and functional WASH services in all health facilities in Ghana. They indicated that such services do not only promote infection prevention and control but also ensure women and children who attend health facilities feel satisfied and confident of receiving effective treatment. WaterAid Ghana undertook an assessment of WASH in health care facilities in Wassa-East and Asutifi North Districts over a period of two months (July-August 2023) and shared the findings to elicit policy makers' support to provide urgent solutions to the poor water and sanitation situation in many of the health care facilities in the two districts studied.



District Chief Executives, Coordinating Directors, District Health Directors and Planning Officers at the meeting

Background and Context

We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make access to WASH available to everyone, everywhere for good. Making safe WASH available and functional in health care facilities is not just an output, but an outcome that improves public health and a critical life-saving endeavor. What matters most is that health care facilities have safe WASH that caters adequately for patients to use at all times in the health care facility, but most importantly for doctors, nurses and other paramedics and other staff to use as well. In a health care facility setting, hand hygiene is critical to reducing the transmission of infectious diseases, and is fundamental to a resilient health system. Despite being such an important preventative health measure, it suffers from chronic under-prioritization and insufficient investments by government and development partners.¹

WaterAid Ghana is implementing the strengthening systems for WASH in health facilities in Wassa-East and Asutifi North Districts in Western and Ahafo Regions. It is a project

designed to strengthen WASH and Health systems, accelerating the coverage of reliable WASH in health care facilities to promote inclusive and sustainable health care delivery in communities. A key objective of the project is to develop the evidence base around WASH in HCF to inform policy and practice and to advocate prioritization of WASH access in HCFs.

OVERVIEW OF WASH IN HCF DATA COLLECTION

The study purpose was to assess the WASH services in health care facilities in the Wassa East and Asutifi North Districts in the Ahafo and Western Regions, respectively for evidenced-based advocacy. It was also to gather evidence from previous modelling of WASH service delivery in HCFs in similar contexts and the development of content to support advocacy in the Asutifi North and Wassa East Districts and at the regional and national levels. The scope of the data gathering was limited to Public, Mission and Private health care facilities in the Asutifi North and Wassa East districts of the Ahafo and Western Regions, respectively.

¹WHO-UNICEF JMP, 2023: Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, 2000–2022.

The study was to gather WASH in HCF for social accountability work and support life cycle costing analysis. The study applied a mixed-method approach to data collection and synthesis. This included the application of participatory, qualitative, and quantitative approaches. The qualitative aspect focused on key informant interviews, focus group discussion sessions and direct observations of WASH facilities in health care facilities, and other observable phenomenon. The study applied the census approach to selecting health care facilities. A total of 50 operational HCFs comprising of 22 HCFs in Asutifi North District and 28 HCFs in the Wassa East were assessed.

KEY FINDINGS

Water: About 3.6% and 5.6% of HCFs in the Wassa East and Asutifi North Districts, respectively, had no water service. The high proportion of health care facilities with basic water service in the Asutifi North District was attributed to the Asutifi North Ahonedie Mpumtuo (ANAM) initiative. The partners of the ANAM initiative, such as World Vision International and Safe Water Network, have contributed immensely to urban and peri-urban water supply, rural water supply, and most health care facilities in the district.

Safe Water Network (SWN) applied their **safe water enterprise model** to provide services in towns (2 locally-operated water stations). Consumers pay for water services, supporting the operational expenses and sustainability. World Vision through the 'Nsupa' model, about 226 water points have been established (134 taps from 12 mechanized systems, 51 drilled boreholes and 41 rehabilitated wells). Seven (7) HCFs were supported with improved WASH facilities.

Additionally, the MOU signed with 4ward, a limited liability company in Ghana established by the international NGO Water4, has been of great help in expanding water coverage (NUMA-purified water) in communities through an agreement for a 'pay-as-you-fetch' system. The proportion of HCFs with basic water could have been higher considering the huge investments made, issues of operations and maintenance derailed some aspects of the progress made in terms of frequent breakdowns.

Sanitation

53.6% of HCF in Wassa-East District lacked basic sanitation service. 28.7% of HCF in Asutifi North District had no basic sanitation service. The Disability Act (Persons with Disability Act, 2006) enjoins institutions or individuals that provide public services to put in place the necessary facilities that make the service available and accessible to

a person with a disability. Ironically, the study reveals that about 10.5% of facilities in the Asutifi North and 8.0% in the Wassa East Districts had toilet facilities accessible to people with reduced mobility or other impairments.

The study found that the choice of latrine technologies limited patients' access to toilet use due to (a) Irregular water supply in HCFs, (b) Poor use of toilet facilities because latrine technology is unfamiliar to the patients (c) Poor maintenance of the toilets, especially cleaning, repair, and maintenance. In most cases, the cleaning was done by health workers themselves.

Health care Waste Management

About 7 in 10 HCFs in the Asutifi North had functional waste collection containers available in close proximity to all waste generation points for non-infectious (general) waste, infectious waste, and sharps waste. Approximately 4 in 10 HCFs had functional waste collection containers available in close proximity to all waste generation points.

PARTICIPANTS CONTRIBUTION AND COMMENTS

The quality of water quality supplied to the HCF was of concern to participants. It was revealed that the study did not include water quality assessment. However, in Asutifi North, the Aquaya Institute takes monthly water samples from all facilities for testing with payment made from water revenues whilst District Assembly pays for laboratory test for facilities that are unable to pay.

Participants also called for intensified user education and sensitization to minimize frequent breakdown of toilets and handwashing facilities at HCF. It was also mentioned that the advocacy plans are being developed to cater for increased community collaboration with the District Assemblies and health administration on sustainability of WASH services.



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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