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Up-scaling WASH through Endogenous Development

The time has come to for serious consideration to be given to a development process that respects and utilizes traditional Ghanaian culture, the wisdom of elders and indigenous resources in combination with alternative (global) cultural, material, and social resources and science.

This was the thinking of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) sector stakeholders after WaterAid Ghana (WAG) and the Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Organizational Development (CIKOD) showcased how their partnership in Ghana is helping to scale up WASH services through the Endogenous Development (ED) approach.

CIKOD and WAG jointly presented at the 44th edition of National Level Learning Alliance Platform (NLLAP), which took place on Tuesday, 22nd July, 2014 at the Erata Hotel, East Legon in Accra, to introduce the ED approach to stakeholders. NLLAP 44, which was chaired by Kweku Quansah of EHSD- MLGRD and supported by Dr. Afia Zakiya, Country Representative, WaterAid Ghana , was on the theme: "The Current National Sanitation Challenges and the potential role of the Endogenous Development Approach (ED) in Ghana." In this communiqué, we share with the wider WASH community the key issues brought up during NLLAP where a combination of presentations and case studies were presented by CIKOD and community representatives.

Context

For nearly three years, CIKOD and WAG have been collaborating to integrate indigenous and local knowledge in development planning, particularly across the water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) sector.

The pair's partnership is taking place at a period when it is increasingly being recognized that the culture and indigenous wisdom of any society is the main source of any development innovations.

Over the years, local NGO CIKOD has been promoting the "Sankofa" principle as the basis for encouraging the integration of local and indigenous knowledge and their resources for national development. The Centre posits that when encouraged and strengthened, Traditional Leaders can provide effective and efficient leadership for the mobilization of their communities and their cultural resources for development.

Indeed globally, development practitioners and planners are recognizing the wealth of local and indigenous knowledge that has gone untapped as a development resource. And more importantly, decision makers are acknowledging different cultural understandings of what development is and together with local communities are demanding that different world views be included in development planning and practice.

Against this backdrop and in view of the ongoing challenges to the provision of clean and safe WASH nationally (especially sanitation), the WAG country programme seeks innovative means to design appropriate strategies and approaches that would contribute to addressing WASH challenges.

Thus, the Endogenous Development (ED) approach provides an alternative solution to the ever increasing challenge of achieving transformational change towards sustainable development not only in the WASH sector but broader human development.

ED is an alternative path and strength-based approach that involves interfacing indigenous and western knowledge and resources (where appropriate) for holistic development.

Sanitation conundrum

Kick starting the business for the day, Ibrahim Musa, Head of Policy and Partnership at WAG rendered a paper on "Ghana Sanitation Overview: Prospects and Challenges"

Essentially, he posited that Ghana has a sanitation conundrum which can best be captured in the terms:

- Strong culture of communal, public and shared latrines with about 45.6% of population shared facility;
- Weak culture of individual household toilet;
- 14% improved national sanitation coverage at 2013

against 54% MDG target by year 2015;
- Poor attitudes and behaviours; and
- 50% of Ghanaians practice hand washing with soap.

Additionally, "Health-threatening pan latrines still exist in our cities and towns especially government bungalows and quarters," he said.

Also, households use other means for defecation, particularly black polythene bags.

Emanating from these are policy and practice issues including the need to recognizing indigenous knowledge, diversity of religious and cultural practices as well as the importance of community participation and social intermediation.

In this regard, the Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach has provided useful outcomes and experiences such as enhanced community awareness and capacity; Information, Education and Communication; communities now seeing hygiene issues as central. As well, environmental cleanliness is being appreciated; and community ingenuity has been unearthed as communities adopt local materials for latrine construction.

Strengthening Endogenous Development in Ghana

After Musa had provided participants with the contextual tonic, it was time for Bern Guri and Wilberforce Laate, Executive Director and Deputy Director respectively of CIKOD to walk participants through *"Perspectives in endogenous development and indigenous sciences: Potentials and Challenges for Community-led Development"* as well as "*CIKOD's approach to Endogenous Development.*"

The two officials were clear in their mind that ED is already present in communities and was responsible for driving community living.

According to them, in ED the local people's values, knowledge, institutions, livelihoods priorities, culture and locally available resources are the starting point for dialogue.

This point is even made stronger when ED is viewed from the direction of its characteristics or features. These include the fact that it focuses on assets or "haves"; draws on internal potentials and capacities; relies on local knowledge; communities become directors of development and communities tend to be citizens. Also the concept builds on strengths, focuses on well-being of people, and focuses on beneficiaries as owners.

Ultimately, ED creates a sense of self-reliance and ownership by shifting attention away from community needs towards opportunities.

When adopted, ED brings about:
- Increased ownership, support and responsibility for the programme;
- More likelihood of, and sustainability for, behaviour change due to community support & enabling environment, role models etc.;
- More cost-effective programming in the sense that project resources are supplemented by community resources;
- Better response to community needs and concerns because they participate in problem identification, prioritization and decision-making;
- Better solutions because of community input;
- Increased coverage and access to information and services;
- Increased advocacy for service and policy change; and
- Increased programme success because there is results and sustainability.

The way forward

At the close of NLLAP 44, participants had individually and as a grouped concurred that the ED approach was worth considering. Beyond that they suggested measures for addressing the present sanitation conundrum:
- There is the need to entrench Sanitation and Health Appeal by emphasising the relationship between WASH and Health;
- It has become imperative to promote credit for latrines/ sanitation;
- The Sanitation Marketing strategy should be seriously pursued;
- Monitoring and Support to communities should be highly observed;
- There is the need to encourage Endogenous Development approaches;
- Role of Traditional Authority should be amplified; and
- Communities must be handed frontline roles to ensure the sustainability of WASH interventions.

The 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) in collaboration with government and partners. 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 and opened to all interested parties. The discussions of each NLLAP meeting are summarized and shared with the wider WASH community. Information on past editions are available on RCN website, **www.washghana.net**.

If you are interested to propose a topic for a meeting please contact us on,
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