THE CRS GHANA WASH IN COMMUNITIES MODEL AND STRATEGY

INTEGRATED COMMUNITY WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (ICOWASH)

SCAN ME

Developed by

Catholic Relief Services (CRS)

Ghana WASH Program

ABOUT US

Who We Are:

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) is a global humanitarian organization dedicated to helping the poor and vulnerable. Founded in 1943 by the Catholic Bishops of the United States, CRS works in over 100 countries and serves people based solely on need, regardless of their race, religion, or nationality. CRS Ghana is an integral part of this global network, with a strong presence in the country since 1958. Our mission is to support the most vulnerable communities in Ghana, enabling them to lead dignified lives and fostering long-term sustainable development.

Our Mission:

Our mission is rooted in the Catholic faith, promoting human dignity and social justice. We are committed to empowering the poor and marginalized, alleviating human suffering, and addressing the root causes of poverty and injustice in Ghana.

CRS Ghana focuses on five key areas:

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), improving health and nutrition, promoting sustainable agriculture and livelihoods, enhancing education and youth empowerment, and providing emergency response and recovery. Through these programs, CRS Ghana aims to improve the well-being of vulnerable communities, foster long-term development, and build resilience. By collaborating with local partners, government agencies, and international organizations, CRS Ghana ensures that its initiatives are effective, culturally appropriate, and sustainable.

Our work is guided by our core values of compassion, integrity, stewardship, and partnership.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Documentation of the Integrated Community Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Improvement (ICOWASH) project experience and lessons into models and reference documents is a critical component of the design. The rationale was to capture elements of the ICOWASH experience and share them with sector stakeholders on national and international platforms to increase adoption, replication, and policy influence. As a result, inputs were solicited from many individuals and groups.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Ghana extends its deepest gratitude to the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust (US-based Charity) for funding the implementation of the ICOWASH Project for seven years. Their funding enabled us to reach over 307,000 children and adults with safe water, sanitation, and hygiene services.

We are also grateful to TREND Ghana for their invaluable work and professionalism during the documentation process. TREND Ghana led the documentation process as the consultant.

We want to specially acknowledge the following offices for their technical contributions and critical review of the model; Talensi District Health Management Team, Mamprugu/Moagduri District Health Management Team, and West Mamprusi Municipality Municipal Health Management Team. We also want to specially acknowledge the following individual CRS WASH Staffs for

their technical contributions and critical review of the model:

1. **Festus Barfi Fofie**, WASH Program Director, CRS Ghana
2. **Chimbar Tom Laari**, ICOWASH Project Manager, CRS Ghana
3. **Victor Raul Puobabangna Plance**, ICOWASH Senior Project Officer, CRS Ghana
4. **Alfred Avenona**, ICOWASH Senior Project Officer, CRS Ghana
5. **Joshua Abem**, ICOWASH Senior Project Officer, CRS Ghana
6. **Ubaidatu Braimah**, ICOWASH Senior Project Officer, CRS Ghana ,
7. **Juliana Lamise Atinga**, ICOWASH Senior Project Officer, CRS Ghana
8. **Richard Bekyieriya**, , ICOWASH Senior Project Officer, CRS Ghana
9. **Abdul-Rahman Suleyman**, ICOWASH Project Officer
10. **Issifu Abubakari**, ICOWASH Project Officer

Special thanks go to the CRS Ghana Country Representative, Daniel Mumuni; the Head of Programming, Christina Gallagher; Emmanuel Kogo, Head of Programming for the Liberia Country Program for creating the enabling environment for the development of the models.

TABLE OF CONTENT

TABLE OF CONTENT – Cont.

LIST OF PICTURES

LIST OF PICTURES – Cont.

LIST OF PICTURES – Cont.

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CRS	-	Catholic Relief Services
CWIT	-	Community WASH Improvement Team
ICOWASH	-	Integrated Community Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
MMDA	-	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assembly
SAG	-	Sanitation Advocacy Group
WASH	-	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WSMT	-	Water and Sanitation Management Team

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Background to the Model/ Strategy

Like many other developing nations, Ghana has faced persistent challenges in ensuring adequate water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) at the community level. The need for improved Community WASH arises from historic gaps and challenges that have hindered sustainable progress. Over the past decade, Ghana has made some significant progress in its Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) situation. The 2021 Population and Housing Census (PHC) in Ghana reported that 92% of households have access to improved drinking water sources, with rural areas having slightly lower access at 83% (PHC, 2021).

However, the WHO and UNICEF's Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) reported that, only 41% of the population in Ghana have access to safely managed drinking water (UNICEF/WHO JMP, 2020). This figure dropped to 16% (PHC, 2021).The 2021 PHC shows that 59.3% of Ghanaians have access to improved sanitation facilities, with a significant urban-rural disparity. In rural areas, the access is about 49.1% (GSS, 2021). The 2020 JMP report also indicates that only 15% of rural areas have access to safely managed sanitation (PHC, 2021).Hand hygiene practices have reportedly declined post-COVID-19, which could be attributed to various socioeconomic factors and reduced emphasis on public health campaigns once the immediate threat of the pandemic receded.

These findings highlight the progress made in Ghana's WASH sector and underscore the continuing challenges, particularly in rural areas. Addressing these issues requires sustained efforts in policy implementation, community engagement, and resource allocation. The Integrated Community Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Improvement (ICOWASH) Project and similar initiatives are important vehicles for delivering improved WASH services to Ghanaian populates, especially the last mile people.

The ICOWASH project, builds upon the successes of the Integrated Sanitation, Hygiene, and Nutrition for Education (I-SHINE) project, implemented by CRS, generously funded by the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust (US-Based Charity) from January 2014 to June 2017. Operating in two phases, ICOWASH 1.0 (2017-2020) and ICOWASH 2.0 (2020-2024), the project implemented various WASH interventions in communities, schools, and healthcare facilities to influence adoption of positive WASH behaviors.

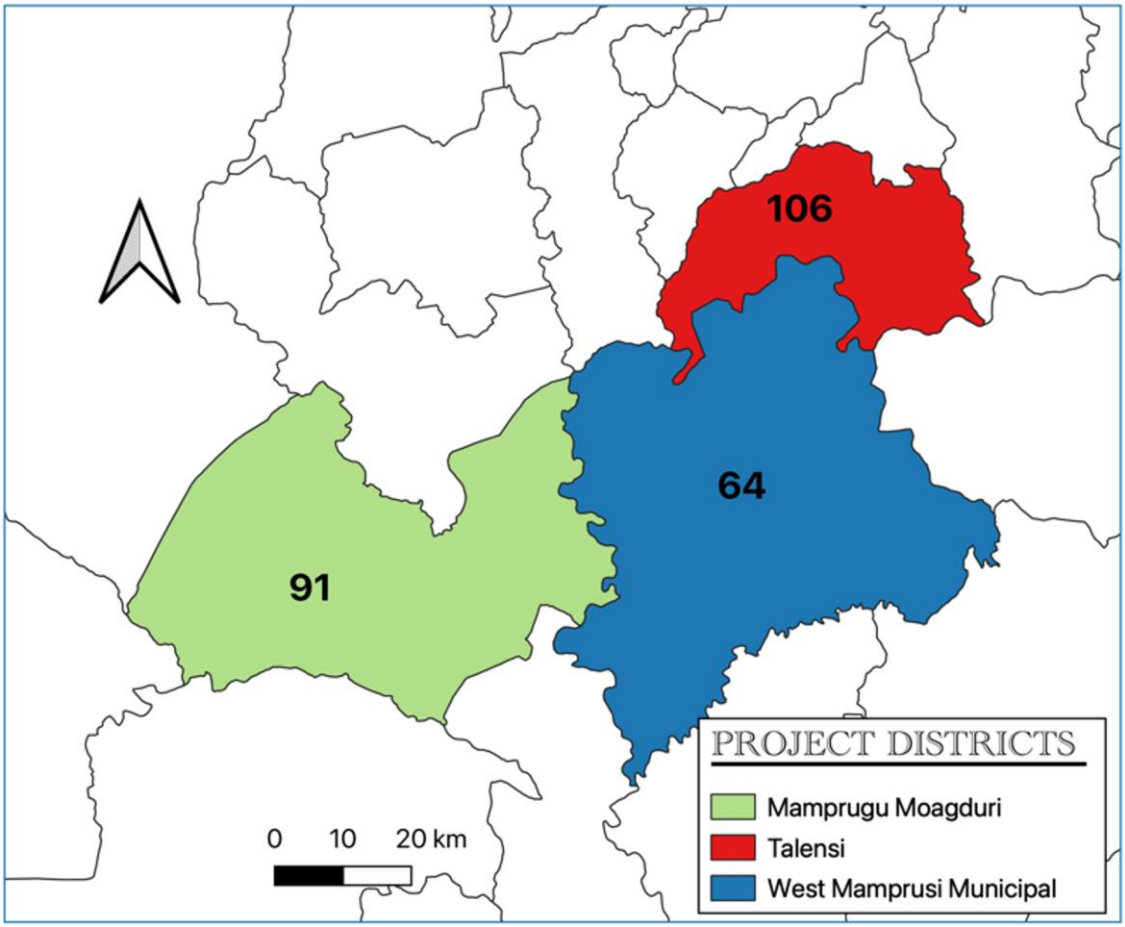
The project targeted reaching over 307,000 children, male and female adults in West Mamprusi, Talensi, and Mamprugu Moagduri, with WASH interventions. The project employs successful strategies from I-SHINE, sensitizing households, installing water sources, promoting safe hygiene, enhancing educational infrastructure, and supporting healthcare facilities, through strategic partnerships with relevant institutions to ensure sustainable mainstreaming.

Key areas of intervention included

- ❑ WASH in communities, WASH in Schools (WinS), and WASH in Healthcare Facilities
- ❑ Savings and internal lending communities (SILC) and alternative livelihoods programs
- ❑ Market-based sanitation
- ❑ Documentation and Strategic engagements with stakeholders to share strategies, lessons, and innovations to foster widespread adoption.

The WASH in Communities Model/Strategy is a realization of the need for a more integrated and community-focused approach. It acknowledges that addressing Community WASH requires a multifaceted strategy that considers local contexts, engages communities, and promotes sustainable practices. The WASH in Communities Model/Strategy is a response to the historical challenges and gaps in Community WASH in Ghana. It represents a commitment to more effectively address the diverse needs of communities, ensuring sustainable improvements in water supply, sanitation, and hygiene practices and livelihoods.

PICTURE 1: The CRS ICOWASH Project Intervention Districts and the number of communities involved in each of them



1.2 Goal and Objectives of the WASH in Communities Model/Strategy

The WASH in Communities Model/Strategy aims at enhancing water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), as well as livelihood outcomes in rural communities. Specifically, the model/strategy is designed to promote safe handwashing behaviors at the household level, implement Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) to eliminate open defecation, raise awareness on proper waste disposal, and implement Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) strategy to ensure communities have financial access to WASH facilities and services.

The Model/Strategy is purposed to achieve the following:

- To provide simple, but comprehensive information on lessons and innovations for the design and delivery of an integrated approach to delivering WASH and Livelihood Interventions in rural communities, particularly at the household level.
- To guide the integration of financial components of interventions, and promotion of community-driven savings groups
- To guide on creating and encouraging active participation and ownership among community members
- To guide project managers on how to integrate cutting-edge technologies for efficient and sustainable WASH Solutions.
- To guide collaborative learning, which will enhance adaptability and effectiveness through shared experiences.

1.3 Scope of WASH in Communities

The Model/Strategy adopts a comprehensive approach, strategically addressing diverse challenges within the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) sector. It integrates behavioral change, infrastructure development, and financial empowerment to achieve sustainable improvements in rural communities.

Key elements of the strategy include:

- **Open Defecation Eradication:** In Rural Community WASH Program, a pivotal strategy is the comprehensive elimination of open defecation practices. This is achieved by implementing awareness campaigns, constructing sanitation facilities, and fostering behavioral change within the community. This does not only improve overall hygiene but also contributes to a healthier and safer living environment.

PICTURE 2: A household using a tippy tap by his constructed household latrine facilitated as part of the ICOWASH Project Intervention

- **Sanitation Improvement:** At the core of the strategy is a commitment to enhance sanitation conditions across communities. By focusing on infrastructure development, educational initiatives, and community engagement, the model aspires to ensure that every household has access to a toilet. This does not only address basic sanitation needs but also contributes to the overall well-being of the community.

- **Clean Environment:** The strategy emphasizes the cultivation of clean and hygienic environments through a two-fold approach – encouraging daily cleaning practices and considering community engagement as pivotal activity. By fostering a sense of collective responsibility for cleanliness, a sustainable and pleasant living space that promotes the health and dignity of community members is created.

- **Capacity Building:** Prioritize continuous training and capacity building for community members, community WASH and livelihood management structures, and other stakeholders to enhance skills in maintenance, management, and sustainability

- **Financial Support and Livelihoods:** Facilitating financial empowerment schemes that seek to encourage savings through the formation of savings and internal lending communities at the community level to promote livelihood enhancement and economic well-being, and support the financing

- **Improved Water Access:** WASH in communities is committed to ensuring improved water access for every household. Through strategic implementation of water infrastructure projects, promoting responsible water usage practices, and ensuring equitable distribution, accessibility to clean water for all is assured in the communities. This does not only address a fundamental need but also contributes to the overall resilience and prosperity of the community.

PICTURE 3: Before and After Pictures of CRS ICOWASH Project interventions in Water Provision

1.4 Relevance of the Model/ Strategy

The WASH in Communities model/strategy implemented by CRS holds profound significance for both CRS and the broader Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) sector. Embracing a comprehensive approach, it integrates behavioral change, infrastructure development, and financial empowerment, reflecting a commitment to address multifaceted challenges.

This holistic strategy is essential for CRS and the sector at large as it not only focuses on immediate interventions but also emphasizes sustainability, scalability, and replicability. By tailoring interventions to rural contexts, the strategy ensures cultural relevance and community acceptance. Notably, its focus on promoting health through improved WASH practices directly aligns with CRS's mission and global commitments (Sustainable Development Goal 6) and contributes to alleviating the burden of waterborne diseases in vulnerable communities.

Furthermore, the integration of livelihood interventions recognizes the symbiotic relationship between economic well-being and WASH, aligning with CRS's broader mission of promoting human dignity. The strategy's emphasis on capacity building and research-driven innovation enhances its adaptability to evolving challenges, contributing to continuous improvement within the WASH sector. Overall, the model/strategy serves as a valuable tool for CRS, offering a community-centric, sustainable, and innovative approach to WASH interventions that can bring enduring positive changes to rural communities while providing lessons and insights for the broader WASH sector.

2.0 CRS APPROACH/STRATEGY AND INTERVENTIONS

Broadly, the strategy for implementing the WASH in Communities model was hinged on the CLTS approach with a focus on stopping open defecation and promoting toilet acquisition and use as the prime focus. In addition to the sanitation interventions, provision of water infrastructure and structures for O&M were supported, particularly in communities who demonstrated high commitment and showed results regarding open defecation and toilet construction. Other key intervention areas included the support to the formation of savings and internal lending communities (SILC) to improve their financial capacity to support sanitation access and other livelihood needs.

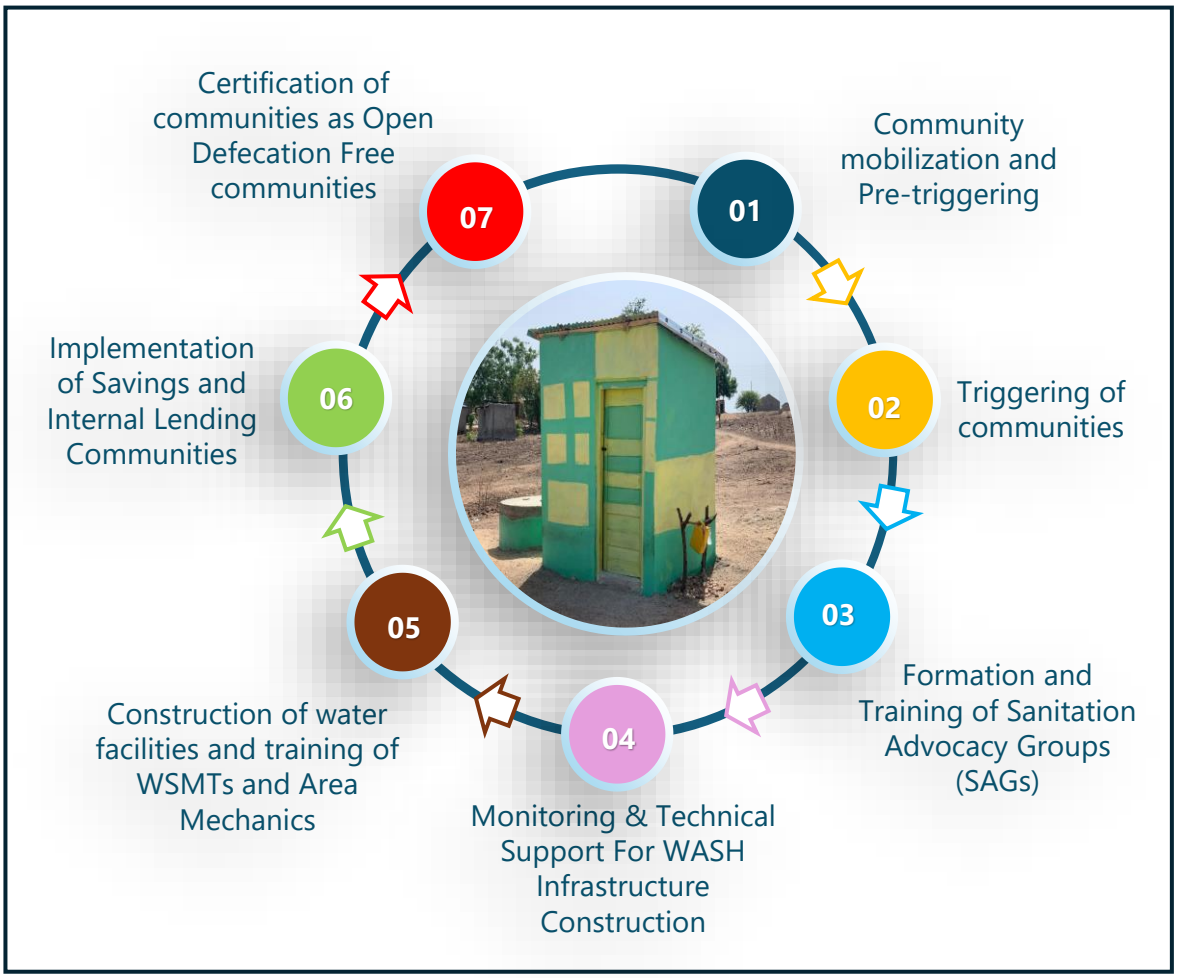


FIGURE 1: The WASH in Communities Model and Interventions

1. Community Mobilization and Pre-Triggering

This process involves actively involving community members, building partnerships, and creating a sense of ownership in the project. This model and strategy propose an integrated community mobilization strategy that envisions a holistic approach, addressing the interconnected needs of water, sanitation, hygiene, and livelihoods.

The Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) Approach was adopted as the main approach. In this respect, the ICOWASH project spent considerable amount of time understanding community dynamics, collecting relevant data and establishing rapport with relevant stakeholders for successful implementation of sanitation interventions at the pre-triggering stage.

PICTURE 4: Community Entry, Sensitization, and Pre-Triggering activities as part of ICOWASH Project Intervention

2. Triggering of Communities

The ICOWASH project staff worked with Environmental Health and Sanitation Units of MMDAs to support communities analyze their sanitation profiles and plan to take actions on their own to end open defecation. The team deployed participatory tools and techniques such as defecation mapping, transect walks, feces calculation, medical expense calculation and faeco-oral transmission routes to demonstrate possible ingestion of human feces as a result of open defecation. Effective use of these tools triggered shame and disgust among community members and ignited passion for collection action to end open defecation.

In addition to the traditional CLTS methods, the project used video caravans to facilitate discussions on positive and negative sanitation and hygiene practices and behaviors in communities.

PICTURE 5: Community Sensitization, and Triggering Exercise as part of ICOWASH Project Intervention

3. Capacity building initiatives

In recognizing the need for local capacity enhancement, the ICOWASH project facilitated capacity building workshops for various groups at the community and district levels. Key amongst them were training of district partners on the use of community-Led Total Sanitation approaches and tools, causes and prevention slippage, Training of SAGs, WSMTs, latrine artisan, sales agents and SILC groups as well as use of BaSIS for monitoring and data capture. The trainings equipped them with requisite skills and knowledge and positive attitudes for community engagements, sensitizations and technical support.

The project also supported several community level trainings, giving community members practical skills required for construction of household WASH infrastructure and general sanitation and hygiene improvements. The project particularly developed content, reviewed training guides and provide training materials. The project also provide financial resources fore district partners to carryout the community level trainings.

PICTURE 6: During a capacity building training workshop field trip as part of SAGs Training under the ICOWASH Project

4. Monitoring & Technical support for sanitation infrastructure construction

PICTURE 7: During monitoring visit to one of the household latrines under construction

The project provides logistical and financial support to district partners to monitor and offer technical support to households and community groups as they implement interventions to improve WASH in their households. During community and household visits, facilitating teams provide on-the-spot technical information and guidance to WSMTs, SAGs, and SILC groups on the construction, operation, and maintenance of WASH facilities, as well as on action plan development, updates, and community self-assessments. They also facilitate connections between sanitation entrepreneurs or latrine artisans and households for latrine construction services. The project also supports the sanitation supply chain to ensure that sanitation products are readily available to communities when needed through private sector participation, creating opportunities to explore local supply chains for various materials or inputs. A robust monitoring and evaluation system tracks the adoption rate of household toilets, and an adaptive management approach allows for real-time adjustments based on feedback, emerging challenges, and changing community dynamics, ensuring sustained effectiveness.

5. Construction of water facilities and training of WSMTs and Area Mechanics

The provision of new boreholes for communities and the mechanization of existing boreholes were instrumental in improving access to clean water sources. The project facilitated the selection ands training of Water and Sanitation Management Teams (WSMTs) for operation and maintenance of water facilities. The project facilitated establishment of Area Mechanic Networks to ensure proper coordination and delivery of effective and efficient services. Most WSMTs were supported mobilize financial resources and operate bank accounts to ensure prudent financial managements and accountability.

PICTURE 8: Drilling and construction activities as part of CRS Ghana ICOWASH Project Implementation

6. Implementation of Savings and Internal Lending Communities

SILC groups, typically comprising 15-25 members, are user-owned and self-managed savings and credit groups. These groups offer accessible, transparent, and flexible financial services tailored to the needs of their communities. Members benefit from safe and frequent opportunities to save within their local areas, allowing them to accumulate lump sums available at predetermined times. Additionally, SILC provides easy access to small, flexible loans or emergency grants, offering a crucial safety net for poor households.

PICTURE 9: SILC Group Meeting ongoing as part of CRS Ghana ICOWASH Project Implementation

Beyond their financial advantages, SILC groups play a significant role in strengthening social bonds among members, contributing powerfully to Integral Human Development. These groups thrive in rural and remote areas, where formal financial institutions often do not reach, and are appreciated as substantial improvements over traditional Rotating Savings and Credit Associations (ROSCAs). Even in regions with available formal financial services, SILC groups remain popular due to their flexibility and unique combination of services.

SILC operate one the following key principles:

- ❑ Voluntary membership of 15-30 individuals who choose their group members.
- ❑ Entirely member-operated and managed, with no external financial injection.
- ❑ Regular, in-person meetings, typically held weekly, fostering transparency and accountability.
- ❑ Flexible savings based on individual member capacity and short-term loans from pooled savings, ensuring that all money stays within the group.
- ❑ A separate social fund to support emergencies and additional earmarked funds for specific purposes, such as education, WASH or agricultural inputs.
- ❑ Annual liquidation of assets, providing significant lump sums during periods of high cash demand.

From 2020 to 2023 alone the 346 have mobilized over GHC 24,000,000 in savings to support household livelihoods and investments as shown in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1: Savings mobilized by SILC Groups to support household livelihoods and investments as part of CRS Ghana ICOWASH Project Implementation between the year 2020 and year 2023

Year	Savings (GHS)	Loans (GHS)	Social Funds (GHS)
2020	2,104,905.60	875,210.90	95,707.60
2021	3,312,495.90	2,001,951.20	294,715.93
2022	9,559,749.70	3,811,475.70	305,664.70
2022	9,749,932.00	3,927,490.70	303,570.30
TOTAL	24,727,083.20	10,616,128.50	999,658.53

7. Use of Amplio talking books to enhance SILC operations

In order to enhance SILC operations, the project introduce Amplio talking books. The Amplio Talking Books are audio devices designed to deliver messages in a format that is easy to understand and accessible to all, regardless of literacy level. Recognizing the diverse linguistic landscape of our project areas, the project recorded 15 key messages in three local languages: Talen, Mampruli, and Gurune. These messages cover crucial topics related to SILC methodology, Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), and Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM). The instruction for operating the device is also in the local language with visual aids to help SILC groups navigate the various components of the device. The project in collaboration with literacy bridge Ghana deployed 100 devices with 100 SILC groups across the project districts. To ensure the effective use of these devices, at least one member from each SILC group was trained on their operation and maintenance.

PICTURE 10: Beneficiary of Amplio Device training practicing its operations during Training.

Additionally, 20 Field Agents (FAs) and Private Service Providers (PSPs), who provide technical support to these groups, participated in the training. Each district also designated one partner to oversee the integration and use of the Amplio Talking Books.

8. Integration of SILC with livelihoods

In order to enhance savings and encourage SILC groups to invest in WASH, the project introduced livelihood interventions. These interventions was piloted with 22 SILC groups, focusing on activities such as guinea fowl rearing, soap making, and shea butter production. Participants received technical training and starter packs, equipping them

with the skills and resources needed to generate income and improve their livelihoods. Despite recent economic challenges and catastrophic invasion of bird flu in 2022, 13 groups have continued production and maintained profitability over time. In response to natural challenges like bird flu, affected groups pivoted to other sustainable livelihood interventions such as livestock rearing and the aggregation of shea nuts, leveraging investments from their social funds. The resilience and adaptability of these livelihood groups led the project to register 13 active groups as cooperatives. All these 13 (4 in West Mamprusi Municipal and 9 from the Talensi district) groups have now been formally and officially certified as cooperatives, further strengthening their economic sustainability and community impact.

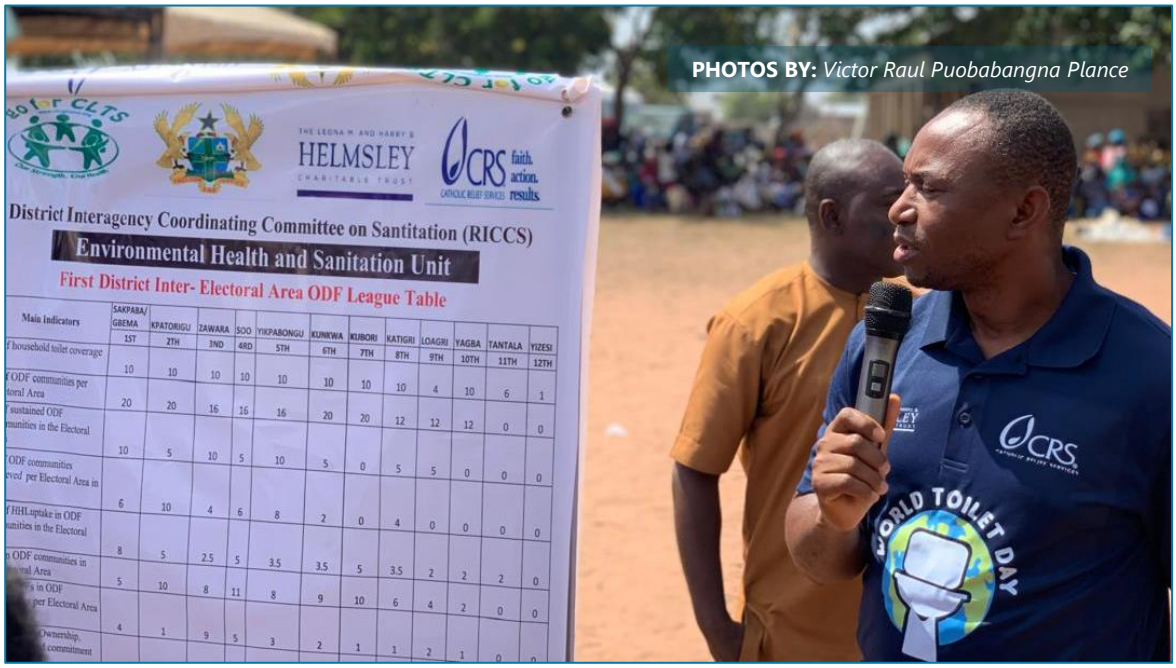
PICTURE 11: Banmarigu SILC Group members in the process of soap production.

PICTURE 12: SILC Group members engaged in soap production processes as part of the ICOWASH Project.

9. Certification of communities as Open Defecation Free communities

As the communities were being monitored and support to make incremental gains in terms household WASH facility construction and adoption of positive WASH behaviors, the field teams also prioritized updates of open defecation maps, updates of community action plans and intermittent self-assessments. These actions propelled the communities to implement actions required for WASH improvements. Upon collective analysis and deeper reflection on the self-assessment reports, District Interagency Coordinating Committee on Sanitation (DICCS) are notified for actual verification of the communities' status. If any community meets benchmarks for certification, they area awarded the status of ODF basic. In a similar manner, Regional Interagency Coordinating Committee on Sanitation (RICCS) are invited to reverify ODF basic communities to confirm complete elimination open defecation.

If they pass the certification test, they awarded the status of the status of fully open defecation communities. The certification on one hand is ODF confirmation process and on another hand stimulates competition among CLTS communities.



PICTURE 13: Certification of communities as Open Defecation Free communities during a World Toilet Day Celebration as part of the ICOWASH Project.

2.1 Alignment of the model with RSMS and international best practices

The WASH in communities' model was developed based on the Rural Sanitation Model and Strategy (RSMS), Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) training manual developed by Kamar Kar, and international best practices but allowed for incorporation and testing of innovations. The ICOWASH WASH in communities model aligns with the five pillars of the RSMS: Demand creation; Facilitating supply of sanitation technology, products, and services; building local capacity; creation of enabling environment; and monitoring and data management.

FIGURE 2: The work of ICOWASH Project around the pillars of RSMS

Alongside the use of RSMS as a guide for the model's development, the project also evaluated its weak areas and made modifications for improvement in results achievement and sustainability. One of the pronounced modifications was the review of the training content of Sanitation Advocacy Groups (SAGs) or Natural Leaders to provide them with relevant skills to function as "miniature sanitation officers" in their communities.

Today, SAGs or Natural Leaders under the ICOWASH project have basic skills in latrine siting and construction of sanitation and hygiene infrastructure (household latrine, Tippy taps, and Soakaway). Hitherto, SAGs or Natural leaders were only trained on volunteerism, group formation and dynamics, and sanitation and hygiene communication, which limits them when it comes to technical support to households.

Additionally, an umbrella body dubbed Community WASH Improvement Team (CWIT) was constituted at the community level to provide a coordinating platform and to oversee all activities of the SAGs, WSMTs, school management committees (SMCs), and community health management committees (CHMCs). CWITs have proven be a very useful body when it comes to community level coordination and accountability. It was very instrumental in getting other community level groups to be more accountable for their stewardship.

2.2 Major innovations

Introduction of CWITs – Community WASH Improvement Teams (CWITs) is an amalgam of selected members of WSMTs, SAGs, SILC groups, Community Health Management Committees CHMCs, School Management Committees (SMCs). The CWITs have the responsibility of mobilizing the other committees in the community to plan, design and implement actions as one community to bring about desired changes and sustain them.

Use of market storms for sanitation marketing – The project organized market storms in selected market centers and communities to create awareness on alternative latrine models and other sanitation and hygiene products and services purposely to stimulate interest. The approach literally brought sanitation products and services closer to the households in CLTS communities and provided them with more information on where, how, how much, regarding sanitation products and services.

Negotiated payment mechanisms for latrine construction – The project facilitated flexible payment terms for latrine construction in its operational districts. As a result, households were not pressured to make 100% before commencement of latrine construction. They were allowed to make an advance payments of about 40% of the total and spread the remaining over a reasonable period of time. Households that had their own materials only paid for labor, while those that did not have money used farm produce or animals in exchange for latrines. This approach resulted in quick proliferation of resilient latrines.

Use of video caravan for sanitation and hygiene promotion – The project complemented the CLTS approach with the use video caravan for sanitation and hygiene campaigns. In this innovation, short videos of sanitation and hygiene scenes and practices were captured and later shown as video shows in the communities. They triggered discussions and ignited passion to reinforce positive behaviors and end negative practices.

Use of animal droppings for compost making – As a means to quickly rid ODF communities of animal droppings and prevent environmental enteropathy, the ICOWASH project trained household on compost making using crop residue and animal dropping. Many households imbibed the knowledge and skills associated with compost making and decided to try. This has no only helped in safe removal of animal droppings from their environments but has saved families some money that would have been used for purchase of chemical fertilizers.

PICTURE 14: Compost preparation ongoing as part of the ICOWASH Project.

SUCCESS STORY:

Productive use of animal droppings in Sagote Yaare

Madam Rita Sapak is a 42-year-old married woman in Sagote Yaare, a small community in Talensi District. She participated in compost making training organized by the ICOWASH project in April 2024. She took the training serious and proceeded to make compost using farm residue and animal droppings. At the onset of the farming season in June 2024, she applied the compost to a portion of her farm and monitored the growth and chlorophyll development in the foliage of the plants and observed marked difference. Astounded by the difference in crop development, Rita whished she had made more compost because she would have been saving a lot of money from purchase of chemical fertilizers. In her own words, Rita says ***" am very excited and grateful to the ICOWASH project for the knowledge and skills in compost making. I will make more in the next dry season, so that I can have more compost to spread on my farm. It will save my family a lot of money"***.

PICTURE 15: Productive use of animal droppings in Sagote Yaare – Success Story.

2.3 Partnerships and collaborations

The sustainability of WASH in rural communities relies on effective collaboration among institutions at various levels. In the implementation of the WASH in Communities Model, various stakeholders at different levels played pivotal roles. The project piggy-back on existing institutional roles to faction out its partnerships and collaborations to ensure long-term success of project gains. The project emphasized local ownership through community-level partnerships as the cornerstone of the ICOWASH project.

The different levels of partnerships and collaborations are explained below.

1. Community Level Engagements (*involving WSMT, SAG, SILC, Chief and Elders, Assembly Members, Private Actors***):**

These local groups were pivotal in the day-to-day WASH improvement process. WSMTs, comprising mainly women, play a central role in borehole management. The project strategically involved these groups to ensure community participation, collaboration, and ownership. WSMTs, SAGs, Chiefs, and Elders were oriented to collaborate to enforce by-laws, manage boreholes, and promote hygiene. The decision-making on construction, maintenance, and strategies for achieving ODF status involved these collaborative efforts. These groups regularly met to ensure effective coordination in the various communities. At the center of this collaboration was CWIT.

2. District Level Collaboration:

At the district level, the project collaborated various relevant government agencies and departments to implement its interventions. These included, offices and staff Ghana Health Services, offices and staff of Ghana Education Service, District Planning and Coordinating units, Environmental Health and Sanitation Units, District Department of Agriculture and Department of Community Development and Social Welfare. Each one of them had specific roles and responsibilities in the implementation of the ICOWASH project. However, they sometimes worked together leveraging on each others' strengths and capacities. Directors of various units were often involved in joint monitoring and community reflection meetings, providing inputs and suggestions for improvements, which compelled their subordinates to own the interventions and their outcomes. In fact, multi-sectoral approach to planning, implementation and monitoring is key to project or program implementation

Regional and National Involvement:

The collaborations extended to the regional and national levels institutions including the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources, Regional offices of Community Water Sanitation Agency, Regional Environmental Health Sanitation units, National and Regional Offices of Ghana Education and National and Regional offices of Ghana Health Services to ensure alignment with national policies and frameworks. These collaborations were also strategic to ensuring mainstreaming of innovations and lessons from the ICOWASH Project in the WASH delivery processes.

3.0 OUTPUTS/OUTCOMES

- The construction and use of the sanitation and hygiene infrastructure in the CLTS communities and practices of safe behaviors have resulted in complete elimination of in **196** communities and transitioning of **9** ODF communities to sanitized communities. reduction of open defecation from **55%** to **25%** in 2023. In communities where open defecation persists, household toilet construction was actively ongoing.

- Due to continuous monitoring and technical support, access to household toilets has increased from **45%** to **70%** of households. Most communities visited had attained ODF status, and few of these have taken additional steps (fencing water sources, improved household sweeping and handling of solid waste, practice of safe household water handling and storage, and safe management of animal feces) to attain the status of sanitized communities.

- The project facilitated formation and training of **346** Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) groups, who have mobilized over **GHS 24,000,000** savings and periodically disbursed among themselves to support household expenditure, investments in livelihood ventures and WASH improvement. Unfortunately, direct expenditure of SILC savings on WASH is very marginal.

- The project constructed **91** boreholes and **10** LMSs and rehabilitated **61** boreholes in project communities, improving safe water access from **80%** in 2021 to **94%** (by 14 percentage points) in 2023 (*TREND 2023*)

- The project facilitated the formation and training of **162** Water and Sanitation Management Teams for effective and efficient operation and maintenance of water infrastructure in project communities. Most of the WSMTs are still in place and performing their duties.

PICTURE 16: Children from an ICOWASH beneficiary community using a tippy tap by their constructed household latrine facilitated as part of the ICOWASH Project Intervention

4.0 IMPORTANT LESSONS

- Effectively combining CLTS implementation and use of video caravan for hygiene and sanitation education in communities helps beneficiary communities to deeply analyze their sanitation profiles and begin to take quicker actions to end open defecation and adopt safe sanitation and hygiene behaviors.

- Simultaneous implementation of CLTS and sanitation marketing activities provides households with alternative safe sanitation options and enable them construct resilient latrines to avoid perennial latrine collapse.

- The SILC methodology is a very strong local financial mobilization tool and helps community members to come together as groups to pool resources and later share out to support household investments and consumption. However, the current methodology is not effective in getting SILC members to invest their loans and shared-out funds into WASH improvement.

- Institutionalization of technical review meetings (TRMs) is very effective in bringing together all stakeholders at the district and regional level on a quarterly basis for a comprehensive review of activity implementation and development of tailor-made or district-specific solutions for resolution of challenges. These meetings are quick in generating solutions and harnessing local capacities for implementation. In fact, such meetings were very useful in moving the ODF communities to sanitized levels.

5.0 CHALLENGES

The ICOWASH project encountered a few challenges implementing the WASH in communities' intervention. These include:

- At project conception, it was thought that SILC would facilitate mobilization of community level financial resources to support investment in WASH. Indeed, SILC supported financial mobilization, but did not contribute significantly to household investments in WASH, primarily because of the methodology which does not direct what SILC loans or share-out funds should be used for. Its overall impact on livelihoods has been significant.

- When COVID 19 struck, Ghana government with guidance of WHO developed and enforced safety protocols, which limited number of people at single public gathering, including trainings, workshops, and community sensitizations. The government also always prescribed a social distance of at least 2 meters among people in a group. This directive slowed down COVID 19 transmission rate and saved lives but impacted negatively on community level activity implementation and delayed delivery of project outputs and outcomes.

- Most of the communities travel over 2 Kilometers in the dry season to collect water for household use. This has negatively impacted latrine construction and adoption of safe hygiene practices, especially hand washing with soap.

- Most parts of the ICOWASH project districts are low lying and susceptible to perennial flooding. As a result, households lose their latrines to incessant rains and flooding, resulting in reconstruing every year. The project's sanitation marketing activities are causing a shift from the construction of simple pit latrines to more resilient ones, but the rate of change is relatively slow. The project has recently supported 120 very poor households in ODF communities to construct and use resilient latrine using the pro-poor guidelines. resilient latrines.

- Over 90% of the people in the project communities are peasant farmers, cultivating small pieces of land and rearing animals to augment farm harvest. They also practice open grazing and find it difficult manning animal feces, which hindered migration of ODF to sanitized status. The project has acknowledged the challenge and recently organized compost making training for household heads in 30 ODF and sanitized communities. This intervention provided households with requisite knowledge and skills to be able to utilize animal droppings safely and positively.

6. 0 SUSTAINABILITY MECHANISMS

1. Technical Sustainability

The WASH infrastructure provided by the ICOWASH project are technologies that have gone through Technology Assessment Framework (TAF) and have been approved for construction and use in Ghana. Local capacities have been built for construction and operation and maintenance of such facilities. E.g., Area Mechanics, Latrine artisans, and WSMTs have all been trained to support in O&M.

2. Institutional Sustainability

- The capacities of district facilitation teams have been built in various components of the RSMS, particularly sanitation demand creation using CLTS, sanitation promotion using sanitation marketing approaches, use of BaSIS for monitoring and data management etc. These have strengthened the capacities of the district facilitation teams to be able to provide adequate technical support during monitoring visits.

- Additionally, capacities of WSMTs, Area Mechanics, latrine artisans, SAGs have been adequately building for effective community mobilization and action.

- The project established a Technical Review Meeting, which brings project teams together to conduct joint monitoring , review of progress and find solutions to challenges.

- The project support gazette and implementation of sanitation by-laws, that will compel deviant households to conform to national sanitation and hygiene standards

3. Environmental Sustainability

- All the project districts experience perennial flooding and collapse of household latrines. The project is vigorously promoting resilient latrines that can withstand flooding and other natural disasters. The project also support construction of 120 resilient latrines in ODF communities for very poor households using the pro-poor guidelines. Conduct of feasibility study on fecal sludge management

- To ensure continuous safe removal of animal dropping from the community environment, the project trained households in 30 communities on compost making use crop residue and animal droppings. safe removal Construction/upgrade of resilient latrines

- The ICOWASH project is collaborating with AfES Consult to conduct feasibility study on Fecal Sludge Management (FSM) in rural and peri-urban communities. The outcome is supposed to provide context specific designs, BoQs and guidance on construction and management of FSM plans.

4. Social And Cultural Sustainability

- In all aspects of the implementation, the communities led with technical support from project staff and district partners. As a result, they own the interventions and outcomes.

- Communities were extensively consulted in the choice of interventions and their opinions influenced project decisions. So, all project interventions and socially and culturally compatible.

- The project established effective feedback mechanism that collated community grievance and concerns and channeled them to appropriate offices for consideration and response. This ensure the project interventions were responsive to the needs and aspirations of project participants and partners.

Financial sustainability

- WSMTs have been supported to open and operate accounts. They are mobilizing local financial resources for operation and maintenance of water facilities. The SILC and livelihood interventions are augmenting local level financial mobilization. What remains is getting SILC members to commit investing parts of their savings and loan in WASH improvements.

- Environmental Health and Sanitation units and Department of Community Development and Social Welfare have been supported to develop costed sustainability plans which are being reviewed and approved by DPCUs for funding. They plans will be integrated into district annual plans and campsite budgets

- Districts have also committed to leveraging resources from other projects to continue monitoring and technical support after project closure.

7.0 REFERENCES

- CHPAIR-Africa (2021). Final Baseline Report – ICOWASH 2.0. A Report Submitted to Catholic Relief Services (CRS).

- CRS (2022). Terms of Reference (additional information) - Consultancy for Technical Documentation of the ICOWASH Models

- EDS Ghana (2020). Sustainability Assessment of the Integrated Community Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Improvement (ICOWASH) Project in the West Mamprusi and Talensi Districts, Ghana. A Report Submitted to Catholic Relief Services (CRS).

- GSS (2023). Ghana 2010 and 2021 Population and Housing Census – Water Report

- JMP (2020). WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (JMP) - Progress on household drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene 2000 - 2020

- TREND (2023). KII/FGD Analytical Report Submitted to Submitted to Catholic Relief Services (CRS).

CRS | Ghana

THE CRS GHANA WASH IN COMMUNITIES MODEL AND STRATEGY

Donor

THE LEONA M. AND HARRY B. HELMSLEY CHARITABLE TRUST

SCAN ME

Partners

Government of Ghana / MMDAs

Ghana Education Service (GES)

Ghana Health Service
Your Health Our Concern

www.crs.org/Ghana