

Driving Access and Equity in Water: The enabling environment for reaching last-mile communities in Ghana

Access to safe drinking water is recognized by the Government of Ghana as a fundamental human right and a critical public health necessity. While substantial progress has been made in urban and peri-urban areas—thanks to government initiatives and private sector participation—many last-mile communities remain severely underserved. These communities are typically small, remote, and low-income, making water service delivery both challenging and costly. This NLLAP session discussed insights from Saha Global's last-mile service delivery approach with a specific emphasis on the financial challenges and realities of serving small, scattered, and hard-to-reach rural communities in Ghana.

On 24th April 2025, Saha Global and the Ministry of Works, Housing and Water Resources (MWHWR) in collaboration with the Resource Centre Network, hosted 106th edition of the National Level Learning Alliance Platform (NLLAP) at the Coconut Grove Hotel, under the theme: **Driving Access and Equity in Water: The enabling environment for reaching last-mile communities in Ghana.**

This edition of NLLAP brought together key stakeholders within the water sector to deliberate on strategies required to foster an enabling environment that ensures safe, reliable, and equitable access to water for all, with particular focus on Ghana's last-mile communities. The session also advocated for the Ministry in developing frameworks that ensure equitable access to safe water for all, leaving no one behind.



Cross-section of participants at the event

Presentation Highlights

Mr. Theo Boateng began his presentation by highlighting statistics from the Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) regarding surface water usage in Ghana's rural and urban areas. Although there was slight progress between 2020 and 2022, over one million people in rural communities still depended on surface water. Data from Ghana Statistical Services indicated that 1% of urban and 14% of rural households rely on it, emphasizing the need for improvement.

Boateng explained that last-mile communities often rely on dugouts and rainwater for their supply, making them unattractive to small water enterprises due to small populations. Saha Global partners with local women, training them to treat surface water with materials like aluminium sulfate and chlorine. The organization currently serves 464 communities, providing clean water access to over 138,816 people.

He discussed Saha Global's training model and emphasized the organization's impact-driven approach, which aims to provide clean water affordably. During the COVID-19 pandemic, water consumption increased significantly due to free water initiatives, prompting Saha Global to adjust its pricing model. In 2023, they lowered costs to 10 pesewas for 20 liters to encourage usage. Boateng concluded by stating that Saha Global is exploring innovative financial solutions to better serve last-mile communities.

In addition to Saha Global's initiatives, Mr. Boateng shared a case study on Uduma Organization, a private water enterprise operating in Burkina Faso. Uduma's model involves entering into contracts with local governments, contributing a portion of their generated revenue to support local water services especially to the last-mile communities. He expressed interest in assessing the applicability of similar models within the Ghanaian context for expanding water services to last-mile communities.

He concluded his presentation by emphasizing the urgent need to explore resource-based financing and other innovative solutions to ensure sustainable and equitable water delivery to Ghana's last-mile communities, while suggesting several ideas to guide the upcoming discussion.

Group Discussions

Discussions centered around the unique challenges faced by last-mile communities—characterized by their geographical remoteness, economic marginalization, and limited political influence. Participants emphasized the need for tailored, context-specific approaches to address these barriers.



Participants during the group discussion

The group discussions addressed several critical themes that centered around the life cycle cost framework for WASH services. This framework includes three key components:

- CAPEX – Capital Expenditure: Group 1 explored CAPEX, the capital required to establish water infrastructure. They proposed several financing solutions, including:

- I) Requiring related water service companies to contribute a fixed percentage of their funds through binding legislation.
- ii) Establishing district-level partnerships with centralized fund management.
- iii) Enforcing policy-driven contributions from private water-using companies.
- iv) Partnering with stakeholders such as government agencies, NGOs, and international bodies.
- v) Forming alliances with small water enterprises.
- vi) Creating revolving funds for increased water access.
- vii) Holding a portion of donor funding from NGOs and CSOs. They also recommended involving unrelated companies to provide technical support, including machinery and tools.

- OPEX – Operational Expenditure: Group 2 presented second, breaking their analysis into three parts: facility components, operational costs, and financing mechanisms. They defined last-mile communities as those lacking access to potable water due to limited water sources and economic hardship. The facility components included dugouts, treatment containers, and

chemicals such as Aqua Tabs and alums. Operational costs included staffing, logistics, chemical procurement, and minor maintenance. For financing, they proposed options such as user fees, District and MP common funds, economic empowerment activities, 2% project fund contributions, supplier subsidies, and enabling policies targeted at last-mile communities.

- CAPMANEX – Capital Maintenance and Expenditure: Group 3 focused on CAPMANEX, emphasizing infrastructure maintenance, human resource efficiency, and long-term sustainability via monitoring and evaluation. Their six financing proposals were:

- I) Allocating a portion of all organizational income toward maintenance and expansion.
- ii) Partnering with District Assemblies for subsidies.
- iii) Mobilizing in-kind community support via religious bodies and VSLAs.
- iv) Partnering with local businesses.
- v) Leveraging corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs.
- vi) Utilizing results-based funding models tied to performance outcomes.

Key Insight and Conclusion

A notable case study presented was Saha Global's women-led service model, which has successfully provided clean water access to over 138,816 individuals across 464 communities in five regions. This initiative demonstrated the effectiveness of empowering local actors, especially women, in delivering community-driven solutions to water insecurity.

The platform also explored a range of innovative financing mechanisms, including user fees, district and MP common funds, economic empowerment activities, and multi-stakeholder partnerships. These models were proposed to ensure both the initiation and sustainability of water service systems in last-mile areas.

The 106th NLLAP successfully brought together stakeholders to address the pressing issue of water access in last-mile communities in Ghana. Through presentations, discussions, and breakout sessions, innovative ideas were generated on how to enhance water service delivery and ensure sustainability.

The collaboration between the government, private sector, and civil society stakeholders was emphasized as essential for achieving equitable and sustainable water access. The event marked a significant step towards realizing the vision of driving access and equity in water for all, particularly in the most underserved communities.

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.org.

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