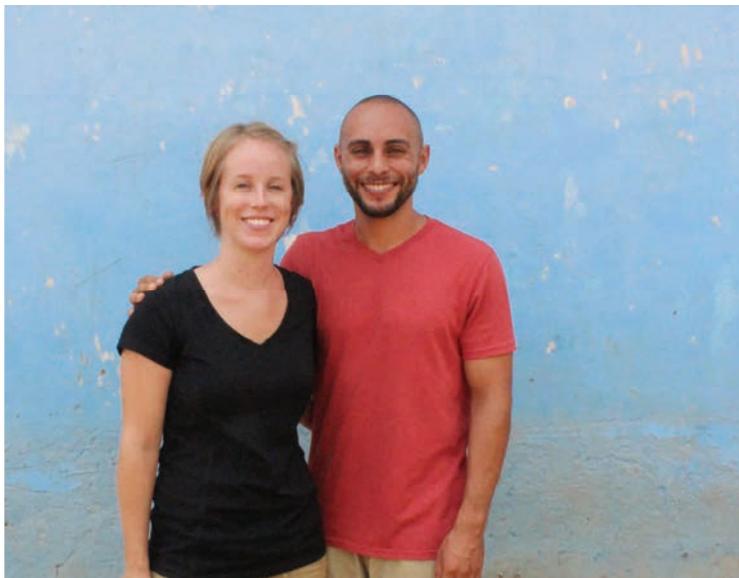




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Partnering with Peace Corps Ghana: Working Together Toward Sustainable Impacts



GHANA WASH PROJECT



It's mid-December, and Uncle Yaw, an affable and spry man in his 50s, supervises the work of a handful of artisans who have come to his community to build household latrines. It's early afternoon and hot, typical for the middle of the dry season. The local artisans are gathered, Uncle Yaw amongst them, crouched, circling a wide, deep pit. It's at least six feet deep, perhaps seven, and bears a nearly complete sub-structure: In a circular pattern from the floor of the pit and upwards, the artisans have been constructing a round, undergird structure, block by cemented block. Their clothes are spotted with earth, cement and sweat. The sun is high in the sky, and the artisans have likely been working most of the day.

The gang breaks under the shade of a palm tree just a few feet away. One of the older artisans remains at the deep hole. He sports a football jersey for Inter-Milan, an Italian football club. Barefoot, he stands at the edge of the deep pit. With one hand, he balances himself with the help of his shovel, the other on his hip. He stares down into their morning work, examining the effort of his own team. Together, they have nearly transformed the hole into a block-lined pit.

Soon, this pit will be a finished substructure; it will be fully lined with cement blocks that run round in a series of layers from its base to its top. Then, it will be sealed (save for a squat hole) and fitted with a cement floor. On top of this base they will construct a superstructure from more blocks. Once finished, it will be one of 83 latrines that are coming up in the community. This soon-to-be latrine, and the others found throughout the community, are built not only out of the manual labor of these artisans, but also the efforts of community members, leaders like Uncle Yaw, and of the Ghana WASH Project; but their existence begins with the innovative collaboration between the project and U.S. Peace Corps in Ghana.

A Rural-Focused Partnership

In late 2011, the Ghana WASH Project launched its hybrid community-led total



In this community in Twifo-Hermang-Lower-Denkyira District, Central Region, a latrine artisan surveys the work of his team. They are building 83 household latrines in the community.

HYBRID COMMUNITY-LED TOTAL SANITATION

With a focus on triggering communities' own awareness and action to improve their sanitation behavior, CLTS is a strategy that emphasizes modest project support and increased community action. In the traditional or "pure" form of CLTS, communities achieve open defecation-free status as a result of each and every household constructing its latrine entirely on its own. As a time-bound project working to achieve results in less than four years, the Ghana WASH Project adopted a hybrid approach, with much of the demand-creating vision of the pure version of CLTS, but providing modest support to further incentivize households.

Ideally, this modest support—coupled with behavior change consultation—would reduce the time span for individual households to construct their latrines and provide the needed push to jumpstart and achieve open defecation-free communities.

“We had a compressed implementation schedule due to the slow start of the project, and we needed motivated, objective agents living at the rural community level that could provide oversight, support and new ideas to help with our sanitation implementation plan”

—Sean Cantella, GWASH

sanitation (CLTS) approach, moving away from high subsidies for latrines and toward more increased community mobilization and individual household participation. Working at this household level requires a consistent presence in the communities. Partnering with Peace Corps was a way to increase its manpower to cover more communities, and partner with a complementary program sharing many of the same goals.

“[We were] in a situation where we had more work than we could handle,” says Sean Cantella, the project’s Chief of Party, who also served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Senegal in the early 1990s. “We had a compressed implementation schedule due to the slow start of the project, and we needed motivated, objective agents living at the rural community level that could provide oversight, support and new ideas to help with our sanitation implementation plan.”

Peace Corps Ghana is a longstanding program that focuses on grassroots-level community development and cultural exchange. Currently Ghana WASH is working with 21 Peace Corps volunteers across its five regions in three distinct levels of collaboration. First, seven volunteers were seconded directly to the project by Peace Corps Ghana; these indi-

viduals bring professional experience in construction, engineering, architecture, community planning, public health and business development. Second, the project also has PCVs working with other projects who have requested household latrine building assistance from GWASH for their communities. Third, the project also has a small grants facility, which provides other volunteers with opportunities to develop WASH improvements in their communities through GWASH assistance.

Supporting CLTS Activities

Ghana WASH is implementing its hybrid CLTS strategy in more than 130 communities. Six of the seconded volunteers are placed in rural communities, where they support the activities of local NGO partners and field staff in triggering communities’ desire to improve their sanitation status, in mobilizing household demand for latrines, in mobilizing their materials, and in monitoring the work of the latrine artisans and overall construction progress. The seventh volunteer, based out of the project’s head office, supports monitoring and evaluation activities with regular trips to the field to verify the construction and usage of the facilities by the project.

Ryan Amico is a seconded volunteer



Volunteer Ryan Amico conducts school health education activities in Volta Region.



Volunteer Adam Perrell leads hygiene and hand washing activities in Central Region.



working with Ghana WASH in Ho Municipality, located in the Volta Region.

“Right now we’re doing latrines, part of the CLTS program,” he says. “I’m working with the hygiene promoters to make sure that people are properly using their [completed] latrines. For the ones that haven’t been completed, we’re trying to get the beneficiaries to provide their materials.”

Ryan works hand-in-hand with ED-SAM Social Network, the project’s local NGO in the Volta Region.

“Through that, I’ve gone to a lot of different communities, about 20 [in total] in the Ho Municipality.”

Many of the volunteers draw from their existing skill sets to execute their activities. For some, it’s easier than others. Luke and Malia Campanella, a married couple, were seconded to the project and based in Aowin Suaman District in the Western Region. Malia, who studied and practiced urban planning in California, says her experience in the rural setting is a marked change from her professional experience, but still applicable: “As far as urban planning, I’ve had to really

wrap my head around where the connection is between health, water, sanitation and community planning... for me, it’s mostly in mobilizing the community and getting them to understand, awareness of their hygiene and sanitation activities,” she said. “I’m learning how rural development works, as opposed to city planning. There are a lot of similar challenges, everyday is learning.”

For Luke, the line between his experience and his work on the project is more straightforward. “For me, it falls pretty much directly in line with what I studied [environmental health]...I feel like I’m using my expertise, it’s relevant to the project,” Luke said.

Luke and Malia are working to establish a smooth working relationship with their community counterpart, PROMAG (Ghana WASH’s local NGO) and the project’s field officer. For them and all of the seconded volunteers, coordinating their work activities is critical to avoiding any redundancies, achieving the project’s WASH goals, and also ensures a positive experience for the volunteers.

A volunteer’s relationship with the Ghana WASH local NGO partner and field staff can strongly influence and inform his or her experience, as well as impact in the community. These counterparts are local NGOs and direct project staff that may not be used to closely working with community-based volunteers or Americans, so the relationship could be easily fraught with challenges, says John Addipa, Associate Director of Health/Water and Sanitation for Peace Corps Ghana.

Adam Perrell, a seconded volunteer based in Agona East District in the Central Region, also experienced a rough start with his local NGO, Development Fortress. “I would say the biggest challenge was their expectation that I could be available at the drop of a hat,” he says. “They would show up or call me at six o’clock in the morning, and expect that I’d be willing and ready to jump over to a site that’s thirty minutes away. It took a while for them to understand ...how Americans generally work; we like to know ahead of time what we’re going to do.”

“I suggested numbering the latrines for easier verification and follow-up,” Monica says. “I was given the opportunity to test out the process, and then roll it out.”



Volunteer Monica Jeannormil poses with beneficiaries in Volta Region.

The ability to coordinate schedules between the local NGO, the volunteer, and the project field officer can be crucial to maximizing impact in the communities. Working out this challenge meant sitting down with his LNGO counterpart to discuss these cultural differences on time and settling on shared expectations. “Now, they’ll let me know a day or two in advance where they are going to go, what they need of me... So once we covered that, our relationship started to grow,” he said.

Since they began coordinating their movements with Adam, it has helped him play a strong supporting role. “If I know they’re going [to a community], I’ll go first and tell them [local NGO] what’s going on... This helps us monitor and evaluate, because if I go and I walk around and see everything, it helps Ishmael [from Development Fortress] or Nuella [GWASH CLTS agent],” he went on.

Adam is still building his language skills, and he says effectively communicating with community members is a challenge, so he focuses on monitoring households’ mobilization of materials and latrine construction in his and nearby neighboring communities, which gives him ample opportunity to work on his local language

skills. He relates this information to GWASH and the Development Fortress staff. With this information, he says, “they don’t have to see every single [latrine],” he explains. “They know what the situation is before they get there, and they can do problem solving in the local language. I can go around and [monitor], and save them time.”

Monica Jeannormil, the seconded volunteer based in the head office, supports monitoring in a different way: by completing verification trips across the five regions. Monica visits, one by one, each household latrine, institutional latrine, each borehole, and capturing it with photos and GPS coordinates. With this data, the project is mapping its impact across Ghana.

While it’s a new experience, it’s also a chance for her to use and even expand her existing skill set: “I find myself in the field working with our local NGOs that are responsible for triggering our beneficiaries; these activities enable me to transfer my professional and educational skills to the local NGOs i.e., time management, relationship building, and follow-up,” she says.

Early on, Monica saw a way to im-

prove the project’s processes for tracking progress of beneficiaries’ latrines. When a community has built demand for sanitation support, the project uses a registration process to create a list of potential beneficiaries. Individuals provide their names and other key information at this stage, and then again once they’ve mobilized their own materials. During the construction process, the LNGO, the volunteer and other GWASH staff monitor construction of each latrine.

Unfortunately, the project was encountering the challenge where different officers were recording different names for the same household latrine – sometimes the name recorded was the male or female head of the household, other times the person who they happened to encounter. In an environment where many people have a local name (such as Kwabena or Abena) as well as a Christian name (like Isaac or Mary), each time someone came to check the progress of construction, a different name might be recorded, even for the same household latrine. The variations meant keeping track of individual latrine progress was a hurdle.

“After a few challenging field visits, I suggested numbering the latrines for

easier verification and follow-up,” Monica says. “I was given the opportunity to test out the process, and then roll it out.” She set up a system of numbering each latrine with a four-letter, four-digit code, with the letters indicating the community name, followed by the latrine number. This code was painted onto the physical latrine and also recorded in the project’s database. So far, Monica has verified facilities in four out of the project’s five regions and enumerated 872 latrines with her new coding process. “This process has improved both verification and our knowledge of household latrine facility completion and usage,” she says. [View the Ghana WASH Project’s map of beneficiary facilities [here](#).]

Cudjoe Azumah is the project’s Field Coordinator and supports the management of the local NGOs, field staff and Peace Corps volunteers’ activities. He works directly with the Peace Corps volunteers, including supervising their activities and their overall integration into the project “My job is to make sure this weaves into a very coherent set of activities,” he says. The rural focus of both the project and the Peace Corps Ghana program brings a strong advantage to supporting the project’s outcomes. “This advantage is simple,” Cudjoe says.

“They [Peace Corps volunteers] are motivated to live in the rural community with the people. We [Ghana WASH] have staff who are based at the district capitals, and sometimes it’s not easy for them to get to all the communities in their zone. So we

have found lodging and located our volunteers in clusters, so they live in a community, but are surrounded by other [GWASH] communities, so it’s easy for them to bike and reach these as well. They can get information to us very quickly, sometimes even more quickly than our field staff can, so this is a big advantage for us,” he said.

This is critical for the project’s CLTS construction, Cudjoe says. “We need to know in a very time-sensitive fashion – are materials reaching the beneficiaries? Are people contributing their supporting materials for us to complete the latrines on time? We need this information back to the office very quickly, and our volunteers do a very good job of sending this information to us quickly by email, sometimes by text message, and this works very effectively for us.”

New Opportunities to Extend Latrine Construction, Sanitation and Hygiene

Eighty-three household latrines are surely and steadily coming up in Uncle Yaw’s community, and it all started with the initiative of three Peace Corps Volunteers and their community partners. Ghana WASH is working in more than 20 districts, but that hadn’t included any communities in Twifo-Hemang-Lower-Denkyira District, in the Central Region. But when these individuals organized and put forth a formal request, the project decided to expand its reach, to Uncle Yaw’s and five other communities. Across these six communities, the project is now constructing more

than 400 household latrines, and this expansion of the project is the result of some planning on the part of these volunteers, their community counterparts, and a drive to get household latrines built to improve community sanitation.

For example, Uncle Yaw is partnered with Katie Woodruff, agricultural Peace Corps volunteer, and the project works directly with this pair. Uncle Yaw has built a strong reputation in the community as a pastor, farmer, and Ghana Health Service community volunteer. Working together, the two facilitate construction progress, with Katie channeling information between the project and Uncle Yaw; Uncle Yaw in turn engages directly with the community. “He makes announcements on the morning radio, and they listen to him, he’s respected in the community,” Katie says.

Uncle Yaw seems pleased with the progress so far. “Things are going well,” he says, adding that community members are requesting support to build household latrines. Everyone will want to improve their sanitation status, but the challenge is that not all can afford to construct latrines, he explains. Despite need, he says, “not everyone can afford a facility.”

The community makes contributions, he says, but the Ghana WASH support makes sanitation improvements available where otherwise they would not be. “The community will play part, and Ghana WASH will play part. It helps the community, so that everything develops in the community.”

The combination of the volunteer’s untiring efforts, the community’s strong mobilization, and the project’s prompt supply of materials capitalized on the community’s drive to improve their sanitation situation.



With their community counterparts and with support from the Ghana WASH Project, volunteers Danielle Dunlap, Katie Woodruff, Steve Burgoon and Bob Forrester are facilitating household latrine construction efforts and more to improve community sanitation and hygiene in Central Region.

According to Katie, with Uncle Yaw and the community driving their side of the effort, she's taking the back-seat, a role which she thinks is appropriate. "They [the community] really take care of the management of the small issues amongst themselves...I'm kind of like the middleman," she says. "One of the important roles of [Peace Corps volunteers] is as a middleman, linking up GWASH with the people in the community who can actually help get things done. I think that's what we're supposed to be, that middleman, until people can do it on their own," she says.

In addition, Katie says her experience has reinforced the importance of community initiative to any improvement effort. "Things only happen if the community wants it to happen, that's the biggest thing," she said. "I kind of expected it, but I didn't understand the true value of that until I started working on projects here." Danielle Dunlap, a health volunteer, is just a short distance away from Katie. Danielle is working with her community partner Nana Enock on household latrine construction, too.

"We have 190 latrines being built in [mine and two nearby communities]," Danielle says. All of this work is happening with the support of Nana Enock, a carpenter and her community partner. "We're working together

on the latrine project and Nana goes around and talks with the masons... he's been helping me do a lot of the ground work," she says.

Already, Danielle and Nana say they can see the difference that the latrines are making in the lives of the community members. "It's an improvement in the quality of living," Danielle says. "I passed by one latrine that was already built...[the owners] have taken pride in painting it white, they put a shower component next door to it, so it also ups their status or reputation in the community—that they now have a private place to use the restroom and to shower."

She is already thinking about new activities she can do to complement the latrines. People don't typically wash their hands with soap after going to the toilet, before eating and at other critical times, she says, and it is something she would like to address: "Diarrhea is the second largest killer of kids under five, and diarrhea is common around here," she says. After seeing food vendors and other community members washing their hands with only water, she is certain that building the community's awareness on hand washing and germs will go a long way towards improving community health.

She would like to start by educating

young girls on soap making—an opportunity for them to build income and to address the shortage of hand washing soap in the community.

"[Sometimes] it's understood that they should be washing their hands, but...you can't preach to use soap if they can't access soap or can't afford it," she explained. "It's the same with the latrines; you can't preach not to open defecate if there isn't any place for them to use."

* * *

Steve Burgoon, in Sefwi Wiaso District in Western Region, learned about the opportunity for household latrine construction through word of mouth. "I first heard about Ghana WASH through two of my neighboring Peace Corps volunteers working with water and sanitation projects," Steve says.

After meeting and discussing the opportunity with the Ghana WASH and his community in January, Steve says activities commenced in the following month. "The actual process of sensitization meetings and getting a beneficiary list started in February," he says. Actual construction started a few months later, he says, with the last of the communities' 48 latrines finished in November.

In the beginning, mobilizing his community for materials was challenging.



The project funded a new institutional latrine and hygiene education activities for the primary and junior high school in Bibiani District, Western Region.

“At first, I went around, made announcements, had meetings,” Steve says. “Slowly but surely, I got more and more names, and we actually kept extending the deadline,” he continued. While many were interested, some suspicion remained, due to unfulfilled promises on the part of other NGOs in the past. Some didn’t believe the project would really take off.

“When the materials actually came, a lot more people came up to me and says they wanted to do it,” but it was too late, he says. “I think a lot of times [communities] hear about projects that are going to happen, that are coming, and it never does. This was a situation where it happened, so they got really excited,” he says.

Steve’s community now has 48 household latrines. With the project having done its part, household latrine owners are now adding their own, additional, investments. “I notice that many have constructed adjacent bathhouses, or renovated existing bathhouses, that’s the most apparent change I’ve seen so far,” Steve says. Even with the construction done, Steve is intent on helping his community to continue moving forward:

“We’re still in the early stages... behavior change would be the next

step.”

Like Katie, Steve sees himself as a middleman between his community and the project. “I feel like I’m more of a liaison,” Steve says. “I showed them Ghana WASH and linked them up – it was essentially my counterpart [the headmaster at the junior high school] and Richard [Boateng, GWASH field officer] who were working together.”

“In my village, they just needed to be shown and how to get things, but they can do it themselves,” Steve said. “I think that’s more empowering—it gives them more ownership through the community contributions, but also in just organizing themselves. They don’t need me to do everything for them and hold their hand, walk them through every step. They can do it themselves, they just didn’t know it.”

Funding Community WASH Interventions Through Small Grants

In many cases, communities have identified their own needs, and they possess the technical capacity to manage the interventions, but they lack the financial capacity to realize these important changes. Funding such WASH sector interventions, en-

visioned and carried out by community members and leaders in their own communities, is the aim of Ghana WASH’s Small Grants Facility.

In Maggie Ernest’s community in Bibiani District, Western Region, the primary and junior high school, constructed in 1955 and 1979 respectively, were built without any institutional latrines for students, teachers or staff.

Maggie Ernest serves as a Peace Corps agricultural volunteer. Early on, she noticed the lack of toilet facilities, and began asking students and teachers about how the lack of facilities affected them. “I soon learned it was not only an inconvenience, but also a detriment to the students’ education,” she says. “Staff and students were forced to either use the bush behind the schools to relieve themselves, which of course brings with it a host of health and environmental problems. Beyond this, if staff or students chose to go home to use their private latrines, this meant needless loss of class time. In some instances, the students would use the need of a toilet as an excuse to leave school and not return.”

Maggie said she had a limited understanding of how latrines work and the steps needed to construct such facili-



Above, community education in Bibiani District, Western Region. Below, a hand washing drawing created by a student.



“This vision has become a reality,” Maggie says. “My primary and JHS now have access to a six-seater latrine with hand washing capabilities. In addition, [the students] have been educated on the importance of hand washing and other hygiene practices. The staff and students are now able to improve their health and environment, as well as spend more time in the class room.”

ties. Three months into her service, she attended a Peace Corps training for current volunteers. It was there that she learned about Ghana WASH and opportunities with the Small Grants Facility. The project launched the facility in 2012, opening it up to all Peace Corps volunteers serving in its five targeted regions.

John Addipa of Peace Corps Ghana sees the Small Grants Facility as an important funding option available to volunteers. “Peace Corps doesn’t

have funds for WASH activities specifically,” he says. “It’s a unique opportunity to get funding to do these types of activities.”

With an interest in getting a small grant for her community, Maggie brought the information back to her community’s chief, opinion leaders and school staff to see if they were, too. “Soon afterward, I began discussing with [them],” she says. “We all decided that a small grant would

allow for the construction of a latrine, as well as hygiene education.”

Working with the community chief, Maggie wrote a small grant application requesting an institutional latrine and support for hygiene activities. The application was approved; in August, the community was awarded GH¢ 12,920 (approximately US\$ 6,870) for the construction of the institutional KVIP latrine and for hygiene activities. Maggie and Richard Boateng, the project’s field officer in the Western Region, oversaw con-

struction of the institutional latrine, and Maggie and Anita Agyei, the project's behavior change agent in Western Region, carried out the hygiene education.

The latrine was completed in mid-October. At the end of October, Maggie and Anita led a week-long hygiene education course for the 259 students and 15 of the school staff. Using a mélange of behavior change techniques – hand washing activities and demonstrations, a play adapted from GWASH material and performed by JHS students, and communication messages, students and staff were educated on proper hygiene practices, the health and environmental consequences of open defecation, and how to properly maintain their facility. They've now become emissaries to send these same messages to further educate their friends, families and community.

"This vision has become a reality," Maggie says. "My primary and JHS now have access to a six-seater latrine with hand washing capabilities. In addition, [the students] have been educated on the importance of hand washing and other hygiene practices. The staff and students are now able to improve their health and environment, as well as spend more time in the classroom."

With the Small Grants Facility, the project supports locally led community interventions, but places the responsibility on the community to maintain their facilities. The community is being proactive with the future of their latrine: the school administration, the parent teacher association (PTA) and Maggie have already developed a facility management plan for the latrine. Students clean and maintain the facility, under the supervision of their teachers and the school headmaster. Each term, the PTA seeks contributions to raise funds for toilet paper, soap, and any necessary maintenance. They save these funds in the school's bank account, so that when needed, the re-

sources will be available. In addition, the school has begun budgeting GH¢ 50 (about US\$ 26) each term for the latrine facility.

For Maggie, the role of both Peace Corps and Ghana WASH in impacting her community is clear. "This project aligned with Ghana WASH goals in that it sought to provide proper hygiene facilities and hygiene education to a rural community in need. This project aligned with Peace Corps goals in that it not only provided a more sanitary option for people to relieve themselves, but also empowered the community to make better hygiene decisions through various educational activities and programs." Now, the community has a latrine facility that will contribute not only to the health and wellness of its young students, but also high school retention rates, since more youngsters will be able to stay in school.

So far, the project has funded 17 small grant applications from Peace Corps volunteers across the project's five regions. These small grants are supporting the construction of institutional latrines in schools, community hand-dug wells and hygiene education activities, such as materials to start youth groups focused on health, hygiene, water and sanitation.

Some of these applications come from volunteers the project is already working with, including almost all of the seconded volunteers. For example, Jen Ballard, one of the project's seconded volunteers, organized a collective small grants application between herself and three other volunteers. The application, which was recently approved, is a school hygiene project between four different schools in a cluster of communities. Each of the volunteers noted that their schools lacked proper hand washing facilities and the students lacked a strong understanding of how germs and WASH-related diseases were transmitted. The group recently received GH¢ 1,785 (US\$ 950) for the construction of hand

washing stations and hygiene education activities).

Working Together with Shared Goals

"The Peace Corps has three main goals," explains Ryan Amico: "Help the country with technical activities, cultural exchange, and the third one is to teach Americans about Ghanaian culture." Ryan, Adam, Monica, and all of the other seconded volunteers are achieving this first goal – by supporting the local NGOs with construction, monitoring and educational activities.

"The [Ghana WASH Project] is supposed to build the capacity of our local NGOs as well," says Cudjoe. "So at the end of the project, we're expecting to have LNGO field staff who now have a certain level of capacity to be able to undertake certain projects, even without necessarily waiting for an international intervention," he says.

In the same way that the project aims to build the technical capacity of its local NGO partners, the Peace Corps volunteers also make their own contributions to this goal, Cudjoe says. "These local NGOs now have a certain resource in their district, in their zone, which is the Peace Corps volunteer. It could be just mastering the art of Microsoft Excel to do their reports. These Peace Corps volunteers are a valuable resource that can help build the capacity of these local NGO field staff," Cudjoe says.

Additionally, volunteers like Katie and Danielle, who sought out and organized their own partnerships with the project are also having this impact, are seeing the new technical expertise of their community counterparts. In his own community, Nana Enock has moved from a carpenter to building management through his collaboration with Danielle. "I can tell you that now, I've gained experience in supervising people to do work," Nana says.

Nana Enock has moved from a carpenter to building management through collaboration with Danielle.

“I can tell you that now, I’ve gained experience in supervising people to do work,” Nana says. “While she’s away from site and I’m taking care of everything, I got to know how to supervise the masons here to do things, and almost all the community as a whole.”

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Danielle agrees. “I think it’s good when you do a program and you have people that are from [here] coming to help, because then the networking is stronger,” she added. Working with the building suppliers and masons, Nana can continue to serve as a resource with not only the understanding of how to execute the work, but also the necessary contacts in order to source materials and skilled labor.

“I think that’s one of the most invaluable things, that’s not something I can actually give, because I’m not Ghanaian...I won’t be here forever,” Danielle says. “So as far as sustainability goes, that’s probably the most invaluable thing from this project.”

Katie sees that Uncle Yaw has bolstered his skills as he has evolved from her partner to primarily managing the latrine project, working with

the project staff. “That’s what the whole point of Peace Corps is,” she explains. “Eventually when I leave, he can take over doing other projects.”

Together, Making Positive Impacts, Sustainability

For Felix Amofa, GWASH’s Sanitation Coordinator overseeing the construction of the project’s 5,400 household latrines, this partnership has been a serendipitous one.

“[These volunteers] came in at the right time,” he says, adding that their efforts are contributing major numbers toward the project’s goal. “If you look at the broader picture, trying to put all these figures together, in fact, they sum up to quite a number of latrines, which will go a long way to help us achieve our target.”

Thanks to these volunteers’ efforts, the project is working in nine additional communities outside its original scope, and constructing more than 530 household latrines with PCV assistance. “That is the juicy part of it,” says Felix. “Some of these communities, we had never planned to

Nana Enock, Danielle Dunlap’s instrumental community counterpart.



go there, but they are also adding to the number of communities and the number of districts that we are working in. In a way, we are able to get to some of these districts or communities that we never thought we would go to.”

“Quite frankly, I’m very happy about the way things are moving,” Felix continues. He points to Katie, Danielle and David’s communities in the Twifo-Hemang-Lower-Denkyira district, where more than 400 household latrines are in progress. “All their materials were provided, all their pits are dug,” he said. The combination of the volunteer’s untiring efforts, the community’s strong mobilization, and the project’s prompt supply of materials capitalized on the community’s drive to improve their sanitation situation. “They are doing marvelously well,” he said.

Dominic Dapaah, who coordinates Ghana WASH’s hybrid CLTS activities, says the volunteers have turned out to be a greater resource than he and his colleagues first imagined. “They have assisted in monitoring CLTS



“I’m learning how rural development works...everyday is learning.”

Malia Campanella teaching students about hand washing.

activities with regards to latrine construction in the areas they are located,” he says. “They have helped us to get the exact situation, the progress of work at various stages of construction. Besides that, some have also introduced some innovations, which has helped the process a lot.”

Dominic points to one of the seconded volunteers, Paul Michaels, who is based in East Akim Municipality, Eastern Region. In addition to monitoring latrine construction and support the local NGO in mobilizing communities, he’s helped build up the management skills of the community’s water and sanitation (watsan) committee, which the project helped put in place to ensure sustainable management of facilities. “He has also been working very closely with the watsan committee, and that’s a very great effort that we need to recognize. He has even reac-

tivated their activities to perform more than they would have done,” Dominic says.

The community’s watsan committee has been in place since 1999. Paul says he was excited about the opportunity to support the watsan committee, and it was an opportunity for him to maximize his work efforts.

“What GWASH allowed me to do here was support those efforts that they are already doing,” he said. “It’s given me a place to vent my extra energy. At the same time, I can support my counterpart, the watsan committee secretary.”

Together, Paul and Ibrahim Abbey, the watsan committee secretary, applied for a small grant for support in starting a youth health club, to organize the youth and educate them on water and sanitation. They based

their activities off of Ghana WASH’s strategy for hygiene education in schools, but they focused on all the community youth, whether they were in school or not. The project funded the grant, providing the funds Paul and Ibrahim requested to purchase exercise books, notebooks, and pens for 20 members.

“He adapted the SHEP [school health education program] activities that we are doing in other communities and brought it to his community,” Dominic said. Dominic went on to explain the SHEP program is implemented through the collaboration between the project and school institutions. “In his community, there’s no school there, but he’s been able to use that concept to organize the children in his community to have a health club there. And he’s given them training, in collaboration with the local NGO and our CLTS agent.” In addition, the



Left: Steve Burgoon with students at the community junior high school. Their school is receiving an institutional latrine through the Ghana WASH Project's Small Grants Facility. Right: Seconded Peace Corps Volunteers, GWASH Staff and Local NGO staff.

youth health club is overseen and supervised by the community's water committee.

"I think it's a very good innovation and initiative that he has taken," Dominic said. "The community has appreciated it a lot."

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"The collaboration with Peace Corps has given an impetus to the project," says Emmanuel Odotei, USAID's Program Specialist for WASH in Ghana. It has really helped, especially with the Small Grants Facility, he notes. Funding WASH sector interventions, envisioned and carried out by community members and leaders in their own communities, is the aim of the Small Grants Facility. In many cases, communities have identified their own needs, but they lack the financial capacity to realize these important changes. USAID has funded 17 small grant applications from Peace Corps volunteers across the five regions. These small grants are supporting the construction of institutional latrines in schools, community hand-dug wells and hygiene education activities, such as materials to start youth groups focused on health, hygiene, water and sanitation.

Kristine Hoffer, the Director for Programming and Training for Peace Corps in Ghana, describes the collaboration between Peace Corps and GWASH as an effective "harmonization of partners": "It's all complementary," she says. She adds that it is an important opportunity to maximize the complementary skill set between the Peace Corps in Ghana's grassroots approach, and USAID's technical expertise and funding support.

These types of partnerships also make sense at the government level and are in line with directives from the U.S. government, which looks to see strong collaborations between its agencies and supported programs and projects, Kristine says. "We're all working together," she says. Through this collaboration, USAID and Peace Corps in Ghana are maximizing the impact of those on behalf of which they serve: "We're extending the impacts of the U.S. taxpayer," she says.

As a result of USAID's work in rural and peri-urban Ghana, almost 80,000 people are gaining access to improved sanitation, through 5,400 household latrines and 138 institutional latrines. In addition, 112,200

are benefitting with access to improved water, and more than 106,000 people reached with behavior change messaging. In the end, the partnership between USAID and Peace Corps in Ghana is critical to improving not only community's WASH access and education, but also their dignity.

"Sanitation is dignity," Emmanuel explains, and together, USAID and Peace Corps Ghana, by providing these necessary latrines, are raising community dignity, "in our eyes, in their own eyes, and in that of the public," he says. With each new household latrine, these partners are providing the power to improve a household's status in the community.

Learn more about the Ghana Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Project: www.ghanawashproject.org

Learn more about our partner, the U.S. Peace Corps in Ghana: www.ghana.peacecorps.gov