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GHANA WASH PROJECT
Lessons Learned from Experiences
in Project Partnerships



INTRODUCTION

The Ghana WASH Project has now been engaged in developing and implementing a number of Public-Private Partnerships for the past two years. Some partnerships, such as with Rotary International and Coca-Cola, had been provided as components within the Cooperative Agreement from the outset. Others, such as associations with Water Health International, Safe Water Network and WATER NGO, were developed through areas of mutual interest and also to obtain our PPP objective of raising more than \$1,000,000 in attributable cost share to broaden the impact of the Ghana WASH Project beyond the bilateral assistance of the US Government.

The purpose of this document is to explore the experiences of the USAID Ghana WASH Project's major partners to identify key lessons learned in order to improve our partnership activities and also to strengthen USAID/Ghana's ability for establish Global Development Alliances and PPP relationships that have a high likelihood of success in future endeavors. While there are a number of key strengths that the project has brought to these partnerships, shortcomings and weaknesses do exist. Some of these shortcomings were directly the fault of the implementing partners, while others could be attributable to the manner in which the cooperative agreement and the budget allocated resources to encourage outreach into the private sector. By exploring these points, the aim is to improve performance in implementing activities – with the goal of strengthening our partnerships to achieve a more positive and more lasting impact in the communities that we work in.

This lessons learned content is drawn from interviews with the following partners:

Philippe Ayivor, Public Affairs and Communications Director of The Coca-Cola Company's Equatorial Franchise and The Coca-Cola Africa Foundation

Kwadwo “Mr.” Keteku, Rotary International

Charles Nimako, Director of African Initiatives at Safe Water Network

Jim Niquette, Managing Director of Water In Africa Through Everyday Responsiveness (WATER) NGO

Mawunyo Pupilampu, General Manager of WaterHealth Ghana

Victoria Norgbey, Coordinator for Community Education and WASH Programs at WaterHealth Ghana

USAID AND THE GHANA WASH PROJECT: STRENGTHS

Complementary skills as a partnership strength

One strength mentioned by many was that the partnerships are well-suited, thanks to complementary strengths between USAID, the Ghana WASH Project and the partner organizations. While the organizations differ in their makeup and focus areas, each individual mentioned that working with USAID and the Ghana WASH Project brings benefits, strengths, and/or expertise that their respective organization, on its own, did not have.

Partnership effectively leverages partners' complementary strengths – Coca-Cola

“This partnership brings together two organizations [USAID and The Coca-Cola Company] that are both very passionate about helping communities,” Mr. Ayivor said. “Coca-Cola is concerned about communities because that is where we make our money, so sustainability of communities is critical to our success. We do not have community outreach expertise. That's what makes this unique. USAID is a development partner. They have these kinds of competencies to be able to develop communities.”

“Both of us bring strengths,” Mr. Ayivor continued. “ USAID brings technical expertise and Coca-Cola brings marketing, and we both bring funding. Coca-Cola looks at things from a business point of view – we force things along. That said, [USAID and the Ghana WASH Project] have very good people, they have technical expertise.”

Independent operations allowed partner to focus on construction activities – WATER NGO

Overall, the technical aspect of things and the locational siting of facilities worked well, according to Mr. Niquette. Because the GWASH Project already had staff on board with the technical and managerial expertise necessary for planning and implementing activities, this was not a burden for his organization. The project absorbed the managerial process and overhead.

Mr. Niquette also mentioned another strength for his organization. Throughout this partnership, his NGO organization was able to operate independently. He and his NGO did not have to get involved in the day-to-day administration issues, which was a positive experience as he lacked the time to do that.

Bringing together complementary strengths to achieve a shared goal –WaterHealth Ghana

“We bring our skills and competencies together, especially in terms of the baseline survey we did in Northern Volta (Tapa Abotoase, Dambai, Asukawkaw),” Ms. Norgbey said of WaterHealth Ghana’s experience working with USAID and the project. “[The Ghana WASH Project staff] brought research skills for baseline data, and we brought the resources.”

“The partnership brought the WASH Program into completion – we can’t bring in water without sanitation,” she said. “We have to educate people on water-related diseases; we have to provide water and sanitation alongside WaterHealth water. So we complemented each other’s efforts.”

Activities are well planned, with implementation on track so far – Safe Water Network

Mr. Charles Nimako said: “Thanks to proper structuring of the partnership agreement and responsibilities, every part knows what they are to do, and there are no ambiguities. Our activities and organizations are complementary. With Safe Water Network focusing on construction and mapping health and hy-



Charles Yeboah (Safe Water Network) and Mike Sowah (Ghana WASH Project) , District Baseline Assessment, Kpando, Volta Region.

giene, and GWASH staff leading community mobilization.”

Additional feedback:

Impressive donor support, professional and knowledgeable GWASH staff

– Rotary International

From the start, there was tremendous cooperation from USAID, and Mr. Keteku described how his Rotary International colleagues were impressed by the knowledgeable and professional staff. From his perspective, initial stages of the relationship were also strong. He also spoke about the positive experience working with USAID administratively, because there was much less bureaucracy than he and his organization had expected. “We approach things differently, in terms of reporting and accounting; working with USAID was a new, but positive experience,” he said.

Strong current leadership for the project – Rotary International

Mr. Keteku commented that another point of strength for the partnership has been in the current GWASH Chief of Party (Sean Cantella) who, thanks to deep regional experience, is familiar with managing similar projects in West Africa. “He brings a lot of relevant experience and he is good at what he does,” Mr. Keteku said. “The COP is also supported by a strong local staff, who have the local knowledge necessary for success.”

Increasing capacity to address water, sanitation – Rotary International, WATER NGO

“Overall, we are very happy,” Mr. Keteku said, and he described how the partnership multiplies his organization’s capacity to address water and sanitation issues in Ghana. “The amount involved, the experi-



Rotary International leadership with District Assembly, monitoring unsafe water sources for intervention, Aboano, Central Region.

ence...it gives us more clout. It also gives us the high provide that we need to highlight these problems that we work on.”

WATER NGO founder Jim Niquette also highlighted this strength. From his perspective, the Ghana WASH Project’s efforts provided an additional contribution to work his organization was already focused on doing. To have done a similar effort independently would have taken more time, money and effort. Therefore, working together enabled an even greater contribution to water improvements. “The contribution that GWASH provided was useful,” he said.

Positive community impacts without our organization needing to contribute monetarily – WaterHealth Ghana

Ms. Pupilampu cited additional benefits that have increased her organization’s satisfaction with this partnership: “WaterHealth is not contributing monetarily for education and mobilization, [the Ghana WASH Project] is doing that – this is a strong benefit,” she said. “In addition, [the Ghana WASH Project] has NGOs on the ground handling parts of the project.”

Strong planning, communications and participation – Safe Water Network

Mr. Nimako said that a major strength is that the initial planning was done very well, executed by Charles Yeboah (Safe Water Network) and two staff from the Ghana WASH project (Dominic Dapaah, CLTS Coordinator and Mike Sowah, M&E Specialist). “When there is lots of communications support and participation up front, for me, that’s a very big indicator of how successful this project can be,” Mr. Nimako said. “When things are done well up front, it makes everybody’s lives easier.”

USAID AND GHANA WASH PROJECT: CHALLENGES

At the project’s beginning stages, inconsistent and frequent leadership changes undermined implementation – Rotary International

In the early implementation phases, Rotary International experienced “rough spots” due to the project’s changing leadership. With each change, each leader came in with his or her unique leadership and management style, and Mr. Keteku commented that it became difficult to adjust and to know how to work with each leader. He described the experience as “frustrating.”

Mr. Keteku also said these leadership changes affected the project’s progress overall. Maintaining activities’ progress was not feasible, and it reached a point where the Ghana WASH Project “wasn’t making much progress at all,” he said. When the current COP came on board, he reorganized things quickly; however, things were already very behind.

Unstable management – Coca-Cola

“There has been very unstable management staff: Sean [Cantella] is the third or fourth leader we have had to work with in the past 1.5 to 2 years – high turnover. That didn’t bode well. When without a senior leader, we don’t get same level of contribution from second-tier management team. There has been a lack of competence, or at least in communications skills. They need to build up second-tier leadership at [the Ghana WASH Project]. We couldn’t get decisions made, and the point of contact was changing as well.” With the current COP, he said things have improved immensely. “We speak clearly and have good communication,” he said.

Mr. Ayivor illustrated his point by describing a visit to Ledzukuku Krowor Municipal Assembly (LEKMA), where the partnership is building a rainwater harvesting system, institutional latrines and other facilities. “At LEKMA North, Sean [Cantella] looked at the setup and asked, ‘why don’t we have rainwater harvesting systems here?’” Mr. Ayivor said. “The second-tier management either lacks capability or the capacity to speak up,” he said. “They could have used their own expertise (to suggest a rainwater harvesting sys-

tem at North LEKMA), it didn't doesn't take a manager to say that." He also added an additional point, that due to inconsistent leadership at the Ghana WASH Project, there was a lack of attention on key budgeting issues.

“Missed opportunity” to work with Community Water & Sanitation Agency (CWSA)

– Rotary International

“I think [the Ghana WASH Project] missed a tremendous opportunity by failing to work with CWSA,” Mr. Keteku said. He also pointed out that collaborating with CWSA is a requirement for community water projects like that of the Ghana WASH: The Government of Ghana mandates that organizations engaged on water in rural areas should work with CWSA as a facilitator. As Mr. Keteku described, the problem was in providing certain fees to CWSA. CWSA includes a 2% incremental fee for their services, which the US government is unable to pay to a foreign government agency such as CWSA. However, there were ways around it, Mr. Keteku noted, such as the project paying for transport costs, per diems and/or other overhead items, all of which would have been fine with CWSA.

Mr. Keteku said that the previous COPs refused or were unable to negotiate this possibility, and the amount of paperwork required was “absurd.” As a result, CWSA lost interest. By the time the current COP came onto the scene and sought to revive this opportunity, CWSA had given up.

“In the future, we wouldn't be able to work without CWSA,” Mr. Keteku said. He elaborated on how CWSA plays a key role in community water development. In his view, one of the most important and useful aspects of the agency is its research from years of on-the-ground experience on the viability of various communities. “[CWSA] has both institutional and historical knowledge. They know the communities that are needy and ready – working with them would have helped in circumventing present challenges that we are experiencing in some of our communities.” His point is that to work with them would



Completed borehole at Papase community, constructed in partnership with WATER NGO, Greater Accra Region.

have significantly benefited the project. He further noted that Rotary International's own experience working with CWSA has been only positive. The organization partnered with CWSA to identify communities and contractors, he has seen impressive and positive results, including few, if any defaults by contractors, and few experiences of dry wells.

“Poor” system for monitoring construction in beneficiary communities – WATER NGO, Coca-Cola

“All along the way, my organization and the Ghana WASH Project were receiving information from the contractor that work was moving along and that the construction was progressing toward completion,” Jim Niquette said. The reality turned out to be that construction was not moving forward as they were being told. “Contractors were saying that boreholes were being drilled, but they weren’t,” he said. In addition, he said, “[the Ghana WASH Project staff] wasn’t following up.” Mr. Niquette estimates that these miscommunications cost the project at least three to four months of delay for the construction of boreholes.

Mr. Ayivor of Coca-Cola brought up a similar point, saying: “We could have paid attention more to construction as it was going on.”

Implementation delays can also impact project partners’ other projects – WATER NGO

Delays with the Ghana WASH Project cost Mr. Niquette’s NGO money. He said that he had a funder who gave money for boreholes, but said funder held 20 percent of the contract amount until he could complete the 2011 contracted boreholes (including three boreholes for GWASH). So delays on the GWASH boreholes held him up and his other contract with his funder. To resolve this, the funder added the GWASH boreholes (planned for 2011) to his 2012 budget and allocation but maintained the same funding level, which also reduced his 2012 budget by the cost of the late boreholes. “It affects the commu-



Sean Cantella (Ghana WASH Project), Philippe Ayivor (The Coca-Cola Africa Foundation) and Emmanuel Odotei (USAID) receive gifts from the local community at the launch of the WaterHealth Center at Asukawkaw, Volta Region.

nities because now there are some that won't get a borehole," he said.

Slow in decision-making process – Coca-Cola

"[Coca-Cola is] more open-minded. USAID is slow. In some ways that delayed things; they were slow to make decisions," Mr. Ayivor said.

Too resistant to trying new, innovative ideas – Coca-Cola

In Mr. Ayivor's perspective, the project has been too resistant to innovation, change and new ideas. He described how initially, he promoted the idea of communities paying for water to help promote sustainability. "USAID fought the WaterHealth system to death, and the idea that people pay for water wasn't in their model," he said. "But this was part of making this effort sustainable. When you build in sustainability it may cost a bit more money, it may be a new concept. But the idea that communities put money into project so that they own it – we took this into account."



Photos from the WaterHealth Center launch at Nsakina, Greater Accra Region. Pictured: Mawunyo Puplampu (top left) and Victoria Norgbey (top right) of WaterHealth Ghana.

“Overall, [USAID and the Ghana WASH Project] have strong technical expertise – but [USAID] is slow to change, slow to make decisions,” Mr. Ayivor said. “When submitting proposals, it was back and forth. In the private sector, it’s difficult to work like that – the marketplace isn’t waiting for you to make your decisions,” he said.

“We are not planning together” – WaterHealth Ghana

“We are not planning together,” Mrs. Norgbey said. “Sometimes we attempt to plan. Several times, we wanted to go to the field together, but schedules kept changing. So we have plans on paper, but when it comes to implementation, we aren’t able to work together. It’s because of the multitasking that we all have. One is ready, the other is not.”

The location of the local NGOs may be a problem in the future – Safe Water Network

So far, Mr. Nimako said he wouldn’t list it expressly as a weakness, but he would say that the location of the local NGOs is too far from the communities in which the project operates. He sees this as a possible constraint in the future that could make moving around tedious. That said, whether this distance will present problems for the local NGOs still remains to be seen, as this partnership and the local NGO activities in the partnership communities is still very new.

USAID AND GHANA WASH PROJECT: LESSONS TO LEARN

Leadership consistency is key, and build second-tier management – Rotary International, Coca-Cola

“If the project had consistency of leadership from the beginning, we would likely be further ahead, and we would have been more efficient,” Mr. Keteku said.

“Since the country manager position is critical, a project or program needs to have a competent person there, or it needs to build the next levels of management so that they can fill in,” Mr. Ayivor commented. “You need to have management, but you also need to have a strong technical team.”

Working with CWSA is key, and a Ghana Government mandate – Rotary International

“If both partners had decided to work with CWSA, we wouldn’t have wasted time in communities where our efforts failed to make progress,” Mr. Keteku said.

Treat all partners as equal partners – Coca-Cola

“When you are main implementing partner, you can’t look at things from one partner point of view,” Mr. Ayivor said. “But it’s always from the point of view of USAID. [USAID and the project] need Coca-Cola, and they must take a more balanced point of view.”

A visit to Manhean and Nsakina communities (Greater Accra Region) had been set up for WaterHealth, USAID, GETF, Coca-Cola and Ghana WASH Project staff – the partners wanted to see progress of the treatment centers. However, although things were well planned in advance, no one from the Ghana WASH Project was at the site at the agreed time. The community started complaining that the project-staff had set expectations about mobilization, but had just disappeared. The community didn’t know what was happening, and staff from the Ghana WASH Project arrived late.

Mr. Ayivor commented that it seemed that because USAID had not asked for the visit, it was not taken seriously. “If it’d been USAID, the project staff would have been early. We felt that because GETF had called the site visit, wasn’t taken as seriously.” The key is to make all partners feel that their contributions to projects make their concerns are taken to heart equally, he said.

Partners should come together more often to plan and review activities

– WaterHealth Ghana

If it is feasible for us [WaterHealth staff and Ghana WASH Project staff] to have planning meetings, this would be worthwhile,” Mrs. Norgbey said. This would ensure that both parties have an idea of what is happening and when. Mrs. Norgbey also suggested renew meetings together as partners – so staff could come together to brainstorm, provide more insight, and to review their activities as partners. “We could do this even quarterly, even if monthly would be difficult,” she said. She also suggested more frequent reports to let each other know the status of activities in the field.

PERSPECTIVE ON WORKING WITH USAID IN THE FUTURE

“It makes sense that we work together” – WaterHealth Ghana, Rotary International, Coca-Cola

“Why not, we are complementing each other’s efforts to solve the water challenges in our country,” Ms. Puplampu said. “We don’t have the resources for sanitation, so it makes sense that we work together.”

For Rotary International, this is the first time in memory that the organization has partnered with USAID as part of development collaboration. In the past, the organization has worked with non-governmental organizations, including WHO, UNICEF, as well as the Government of Ghana. After this experience, Mr. said that his organization would be ready and willing to partner with USAID and the implementing organizations again, if given the opportunity.

“The process gone through – it was a bidding process and there were number of NGOs with proposals based on expertise,” Mr. Ayivor said. “Based on that, we would work with you [USAID] again, depending on the project and what you bring to it.”