



GHANA WASH PROJECT

Lessons Learned:

Small Grants Facility



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

BCC	Behavior Change Communications
GWASH	Ghana Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Project
IGF	Internally-Generated Funds
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
PCV	Peace Corps Volunteer
SGF	Small Grants Facility
SHEP	School Health Education Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WatSan	Water and Sanitation

INTRODUCTION

USAID's Ghana Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (GWASH) Project launched the Small Grants Facility (SGF) in 2013 with the objective of providing complementary support to activities in infrastructure development, capacity building, and behavior change in schools, health clinics and at the household level. The SGF also aimed to provide seed funding for innovative, locally developed and driven solutions in the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector.

The SGF advertised opportunities and aimed to provide funding to community groups and associations, to broaden the impact of its activities. There was a strong focus on the "software" component of water and sanitation— such as behavior change and capacity building – to ensure proper function and use of WASH facilities. The SGF funded both independent software applications as well as applications for hardware, for which a supporting software component was required.

Preliminary activities supported included hygiene promotion, social marketing, civic participation and advocacy, supply chain strengthening, infrastructure provision and repair, management of water and sanitation supply, community monitoring and support, and innovative technology solutions. In two grant phases over a yearlong period, the Small Grants Facility received 68 requests, including applications from Peace Corp Volunteers (PCVs) based in GWASH's five regions of implementation. The SGF approved 25 applications from PCVs.

This research will explore the impact of the SGF with a focus on the applications received from PCVs to improve WASH in their communities, with a focus on the following questions:

Part 1: Small Grants Facility as Innovation

- Did the Small Grants Facility address communities' WASH needs?
- In what ways was the Small Grants Facility more "innovative" compared to other approaches?

Part 2: Local Adaptability of the Small Grants Facility

- Did the SGF enable modifications to its existing approach to make its WASH support more appropriate for the local context?

Part 3: Sustainability of Funded Interventions

- Is the receiving community enthusiastic and making use of the funded interventions?
- How does the initiative support long-term sustainability? Are communities well equipped to address future challenges encountered?
- What were the challenges encountered for SGF-funded interventions?

Methodology

For this lessons learned document, field work was undertaken in Greater Accra, Volta and Central Regions, visiting four beneficiaries of SGF funding. The fieldwork targeted a range of interventions, both in terms of WASH activities and geographic scope. The research included field-based interviews, interviews with the SGF committee members, as well as reviews of SGF applications, evaluations and final reports on funded activities.

Below is a graph representing Small Grants applications that were funded by GWASH.

FIGURE 1: SMALL GRANTS FACILITY AREAS OF SUPPORT

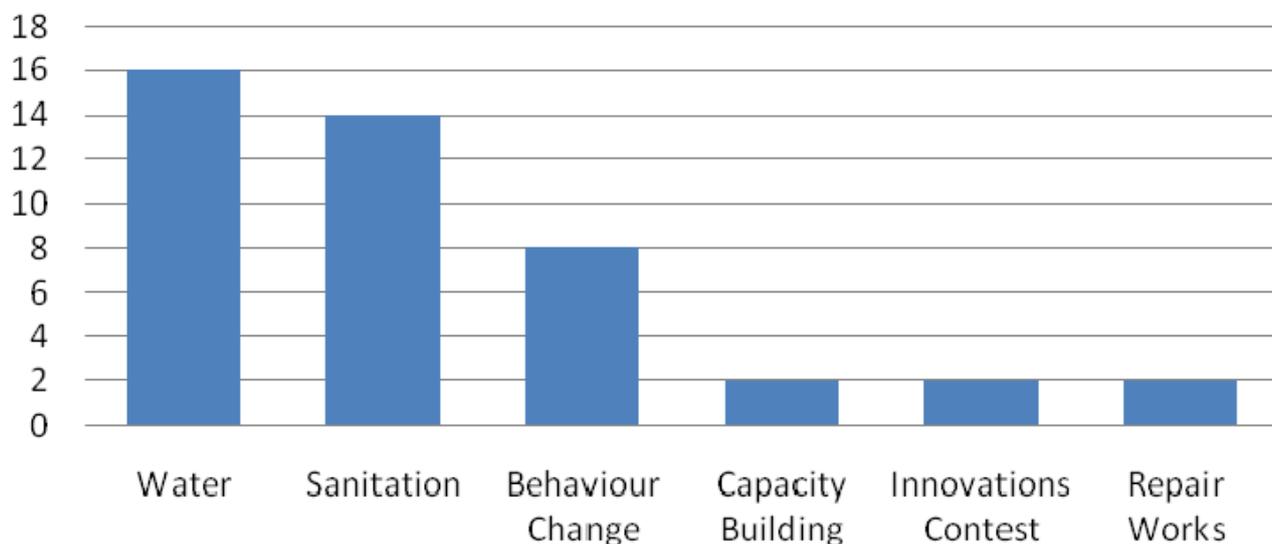


TABLE 1: INSTITUTIONS AND COMMUNITIES VISITED

INSTITUTION	LOCATION	FACILITY/ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED	COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION
State School for the Deaf, Greater Accra Region	Adjei Kojo, Ashaiman Municipality Greater Accra Region	Water storage tank (2) Rainwater harvesting tank (1) Underground storage tank (1)	No community contribution.
Abutia Agorve EP Schools	Abutia Agorve, Ho Municipality Volta Region	Six-seater institutional KVIP with rainwater harvesting (1) Four-seater institutional KVIP with rainwater harvesting (1) BCC support (materials to start a WASH club)	Dug pits for the construction of the institutional latrine. Provided stone chipping and water.
Lume Atsyame Healing Camp	Lume Atsyame, Ho Municipality Volta Region	Mechanization of existing borehole (1)	Cash contribution (5% of the total project cost, GHC854). Communal labor for excavation of trench for pipe lines, crack stones for concrete works for elevated tank.
St. Francis Anglican Basic School (Part of School Hygiene Project, involving four schools)	Opembo, Awutu Senya District Central Region	Incinerators Handwashing stations Murals (1) Hygiene education	Students designed and painted murals. Gathered stones for soak-away pit.
Obrachire Senior Technical School (Part of School Hygiene Project, involving four schools)	Obrachire, Awutu Senya District Central Region	Soak away pits (3) School Health Club School Health Fair Murals (3)	Students designed and painted murals. Gathered stones for soak-away pit.

PART 1: A NEW APPROACH TO IMPROVING WASH

Did the Small Grants Facility address communities' WASH needs?

GWASH worked to reach communities and institutions in need through a variety of channels:

GWASH field staff advertised the opportunity locally, and GWASH also worked with district and municipal assemblies and posted information on the GWASH project website. In addition, GWASH engaged directly with PCVs, presenting the SGF and its opportunities at U.S. Peace Corps trainings for new volunteers:

- "SGF was advertised at meetings with District Assemblies and communities, through LNGOs and Peace Corps Volunteers and on the GWASH website." – *GWASH SGF Coordinator*
- "The Small Grants Facility was advertised through the website, brochure, through the field staff, emails to PCVs and through the LNGOs [Local NGOs] we worked with." – *GWASH SGF Committee Member*

The grantees visited reported that the facilities and activities undertaken with Small Grants Facility support addressed a particular need:

As part of the application process, community organizations and bodies identified their own needs and desired interventions. They were then required to provide justification for the support of their desired activity or intervention; this justification was a critical component of the evaluation process. In turn, before any grant was approved and funds disbursed, The SGF committee worked with field-based GWASH staff to ensure the authenticity and accuracy of the community's needs and the appropriateness of the envisaged intervention.

In this regard, the SGF was able to address community-level demand for improved water, sanitation and hygiene, as demonstrated by these comments:

- "The sanitation was very poor and the [school's pit latrine] structure was dilapidated... They didn't complete it, and the pupils started using it. It was a dangerous scenario because of the slabs so you could easily fall inside, and fowls have been entering into it, because it was not properly constructed. The flies also invaded the place and in the afternoon, it gave a bad odor on the compound. Some of the kids refused to use the latrine because of its dangerous nature. They preferred entering the nearby bush, to defecate and when it rains; it washes it back into the school because of the topography... We had been asking for toilets, but they [Ho Municipal Assembly] did not come to our aid, until we heard of GWASH. We have been asking for the latrines for so many years, about eight years or more. Now, everyone is using the latrines, including the teachers." – *Head Teacher, Abutia Agorve EP School*
- "We were not having dust bins or trash cans, but through the SGF, we were able to purchase some trash cans, which helped improve the sanitation of the school. Students have always had a problem disposing of refuse, especially the sachet water. So when we got the trash cans, it really helped us" – *School Health Education Program (SHEP) Coordinator, Obrachire Senior High School*
- "Now we do not have much problems of seeing litter, around, as it used to be. It has come to keep the environment clean for us. It has come to create the awareness in the students for us, even to the point that if one sees anything, mistakenly dropped by one of them on the ground; they take it to where it should be." – *Teacher, Obrachire Senior High School*
- "We have been to the Assembly before seeking for funds for a borehole, but we were put on

hold before GWASH came. The situation was difficult for us. We had a stream, but it dries up during the dry season. Since this is a healing camp, the people are not feeling too well, so they sometimes task people to get the water for them at a fee ...The nearest stream took about an hour to fetch water and come back...Formerly, those who were sick could not go and fetch the water; but now, they can all go and fetch because the borehole is mechanized...People have stopped urinating blood because they now have clean water to drink. Everything is working. People, who are supposed to go to the farm, fetch water and they go to the farm. Formerly, they spent so much time looking for water. The farmers cultivate banana, plantain, cassava etc. and now there is no competition to get water." – *Prophet, Lume Atsyame Healing Camp*

- "There are 306 students and 48 staff members in the school. Everybody is benefitting from the facility." – *Head Teacher, State School for the Deaf*

GWASH also attempted to provide support to marginalized groups, particularly girls, women and disabled populations:

- "With regards to marginalized groups, the SGF funded a facility for the State School for the Deaf and a latrine with disabled access to a beneficiary with disability in Ga West. However, with regards to addressing the needs of women, I believe that women and girls suffer most when they lack access to water as they will have to travel long distance to find water. In the same vein, girls miss school during their periods when there are no proper sanitation facilities in their schools so providing a latrine or water facility helps alleviate this challenge for women and girls." – *GWASH Deputy Chief of Party*

In the case of the State School for the Deaf, the school admitted that it had received additional support, providing additional water sources in addition to the facility provided through GWASH's SGF. They had other sources of water, but GWASH provided them with yet another source of water.

- "The water situation was not that bad. We have the Ghana Water Company supplying us with water; we have pipes all around the school. We also have polytanks that we fill when the water starts flowing so that when the taps do not flow, and when the tap is not flowing, we use the polytanks. It was on rare occasions that the polytank will also get finished. It will take us some time, just a day or two, and then the taps will start flowing [again]." – *Teacher, State School for the Deaf*

In what ways was the Small Grants Facility more "innovative" compared to other approaches?

Through the SGF, GWASH expanded its reach to new communities, with local support: Through the facility, GWASH was able to expand its impact within five regions implementation, by working in more communities and with more local partners. First, GWASH was able to reach areas that otherwise it would not have worked in. Examples of this include working with Peace Corps Volunteers in coastal districts of Western Region to provide 20 institutional latrines; building 100 household latrines and repairing five broken-down boreholes in a community in northern Volta Region and leading hygiene activities in eight schools with eight PCVs in Central Region. "We are able to leverage and work through the Peace Corps to provide facilities including user education to areas that had most need," points out GWASH Deputy Chief of Party, also a member of the SGF committee. "Through the SGF, we were able to add to and exceed the USAID targets and deliverables. An unintended benefit was also that we were able to strengthen our collaboration with Peace Corps through the SGF...Furthermore through the SGF, the project funded the installation of the inno-

vative geodesic storage tank and a latrine for a disabled person.”

Through the SGF, GWASH deepened its intervention in communities: At the same time, through the SGF, GWASH provided additional WASH interventions in communities where it had already provided some support previously, enabling more well-rounded interventions to improve health. One example is in the communities of Abochia and Adjakaa in Western Region, where GWASH provided 69 and 99 household latrines, respectively. The two PCVs who were based there worked with their communities to identify further needs, and ultimately applied for the provision of a four-seater institutional latrine with behavior change education in Abochia and one six-seater institutional latrine and the deepening, lining and installation of pump on the existing hand-dug well, community user education and Water and Sanitation (WatSan) Committee training in Adjakaa.

PART 2: LOCAL ADAPTABILITY OF THE SGF

Did the SGF enable modifications to its existing approach to make its WASH support more appropriate for the local context?

Although the original intention of the SGF was to support behavior change activities, the demand (as indicated by community applications) was more in the areas of hardware, especially support for the construction of institutional latrine facilities. The SGF therefore received applications for hardware include supporting software components, such as hygiene education and capacity building, to support sustainability. It did fund these activities in response to community demand and interest for WASH improvements.

- “Need-based support at community level was provided. This was why the support was for hardware provision and repair.”– *GWASH SGF Coordinator*
- “I think it was more community demand and interest, however the time left on the project was also a factor. Therefore the [SGF] Committee looked at activities that could “burn” more funds, as BCC activities do not take up a lot of funds.”– *GWASH SGF Member*

PART 3: SUSTAINABILITY OF FUNDED INTERVENTIONS

Is the receiving community enthusiastic and making use of the funded interventions?

The institutions and receiving communities are enthusiastic. As a rule, the SGF asks beneficiaries to provide community contributions to support the interventions. For example, Abutia Agove EP Schools, which received an institutional latrine and BCC support, was required to contribute by providing stone chipping and water and also undertake the digging of the pits for the construction of the institutional latrine.

In addition, discussions with beneficiaries demonstrated that there is a high level of usage of the SGF-provided facilities:

- “The refuse dump is quite a distance, and the children do not want to walk there and the classrooms were much littered. The trash cans were good, because the students sorted out the litter and they were burning the sachet water inside the can...the students were taught how to dispose of the rubbish, so we were not carrying it up and down.”– *Head Teacher, Obrachire Senior High School*

- It has really been useful to the schools. First disposal of the sachet water; they used to drink and then drop them on the floor and go away. But after that they know they are not supposed to drop them off just anywhere. So they drop them in the trash cans and burn them...the facilities that were provided through the GWASH SGF have come to enlighten the students. They will walk from their classrooms to wherever there is a handwashing stand and they wash their hands...when I went round the classroom, I saw they had provided some containers for themselves so when they finish whatever they use they put the rubbers into it. It created awareness." – *SHEP Coordinator, Obrachire Senior High School*

How does the initiative support long-term sustainability? Are communities well equipped to address future challenges encountered?

In some cases, PCVs applied for Small Grants for their communities independently, not in collaboration with community counterparts: With a focus on supporting local-led and bottom-up activities, GWASH envisioned that the application would be completed by the beneficiary in question (or in collaboration with the beneficiary in question), but in many cases of the institutions surveyed, beneficiaries admitted it was in fact the Peace Corps Volunteer or Local NGO (LNGO) that completed the application, with minimal input from the beneficiaries (or at times, no opportunity for input at all). This was reflected in interviews, including:

- "In terms of the application process, [the PCV] had already done it. We were not aware of the funding. We haven't seen it [the application] and we never saw what [funds] came and what was funded. We were there and they started bringing in the materials. If we had known, we would have added our input on the type of materials they could be using." – *Head Teacher, Obrachire Senior High School*
- "I heard it from [the PCV]. He said he had been given some money for the project to be undertaken. Even two of his PCV colleagues also came. They came to help us in the making of the trash cans." – *SHEP Coordinator, Obrachire Senior High School*
"We were not involved in the application. When we directed to [the LNGO], the Assembly only asked us to follow up and when the time came, [the LNGO] came to survey and we were provided with the facility." – *Prophet, Lume Atsyame Healing Camp*

The lack of participation in the planning stages for the interventions could impact long-term sustainability, since the interventions may or may not be in line with the desires and incentives of the beneficiaries. In the case of St. Francis Anglican and Obrachire Senior High School, the PCVs' idea to create incinerators was well-supported, but the materials used were not durable. School authorities said they would have liked alternative, stronger materials to be used, and that if they had been consulted initially, they would have pointed this out. By the time the lessons-learned fieldwork was carried out, the incinerators were broken down and in most cases were no longer being used:

- "The incinerator is spoilt. The wire mesh is burnt. We burn the refuse in it. It needs to be stronger. We think the material was not strong." – *Head Teacher, St. Francis Anglican Basic School*
- "The wire gauze of the incinerator got spoilt. Now we have plastic bins with covers, but we do not sort them out like they way we used to with the incinerator." – *SHEP Coordinator, Obrachire Senior High School*

The schools need the WASH facilities, but while some were ready to take on full financial and operational management of SGF–provided facilities, others lacked this initiative, bringing challenges for sustainability:

For schools, a key challenge is putting in place a sustainable financial mechanism to plan for future repairs of provided facilities. “In terms of sustainability, I believe the same issues that come up with providing facilities apply here,” says Deputy Chief of Party. “Operation and maintenance of the facilities is a major challenge. Especially with facilities that are provided for schools, as students cannot be charged a fee for the use of the facilities. The institutions have to come up with innovative ways to maintain these facilities.”

With regards to community ownership, since the request for the support comes directly from the community rather than from GWASH I feel that there is ownership already from the onset.

Some of the communities and institutions appear well-equipped to address future challenges. In the case of Abutia Agorve EP Schools, the school administrators’ cleaning, maintenance and financial organization to maintain the quality of their new institutional latrine demonstrates their enthusiasm. Abutia Agorve’s school administration uses internally-generated funds to ensure future proper maintenance:

- “We clean it. We wash there once a week. We buy our own [toilet] rolls. We have educated them to use toilet rolls... We organize funds to buy it for them. The school generates funds; we refer to it as the IGF, or internally-generated funds. On Wednesdays, we ask them [the students] to bring foodstuffs, which we sell to raise money not just for the toilet facilities, but for any project in the school. We also make sure we clear the bush around the KVIP. We remind them [the students] every morning when we go to the school parade – that is how we educate them on how to use the facility. We also monitor them. We have sanitary prefects, a boy and a girl. They provide soap every morning. We also educate them during our classroom interaction, whenever something on hygiene comes up.” – *Teacher, Abutia Agorve EP Schools*

That said, as part of its original application activities, the school intended to support improved hygiene intervention through the creation of a WASH club. Until now, this intervention has not been followed through. The school administrators attributed this to a scheduling challenge and school priorities on other coursework, which prevented the SHEP teacher and students from meeting until now:

- “The problem we had was, here we use a time table. We do not actually get time to meet [SHEP]; that is why we have not met yet. We decided to meet once in a week, but so far we have met only once. We have subject teachers, and they do not want to use their periods for hygiene promotion since it is not an examinable course. Our directors were also concerned about our curriculum. They were not so interested in the extra curricula because, the children are evaluated on the other courses.” – *SHEP Teacher, Abutia Agorve EP Schools*

Obrachire Senior High School has a well–functioning SHEP club to continue hygiene impacts and ensure proper usage and maintenance of their facilities:

- “The health club – we meet every Thursday. We make sure that, every morning, students are assigned to it [handwashing station] and when it is empty, they fill it and wash the napkins for the next day. There are students in charge and that is their morning duty.”– *SHEP Coordinator, Obrachire Senior High School*

Lume Atsyame Healing Camp's WatSan Committee has opened a bank account and regularly collects funds for the maintenance of the facility:

- "We sell the water and everyone pays. The basin is sold for 20 pesewas and the bucket is sold for 10 pesewas for people who just come for healing. We also make some collection of foodstuffs, for the people who reside in the camp. We sell the foodstuffs to raise money for the account. We have 800 cedis in the account." – *Prophet, Lume Atsyame Healing Camp*

For an institution like the State School for the Deaf, no management structures were put in place (or are in place currently) to sustain the facilities. There is regular maintenance through an on-site caretaker. When asked how the school would address the need for funds to provide for future repairs, school administration and staff responded that they would appeal to parents, or would appeal to GWASH again or another donor for further support. These responses demonstrate a lack of initiative critical to ownership and proper management of these water facilities, an intended outcome for the SGF:

- "Every morning, Nicholas does routine checks. He also ensures the children do not play near the facility." – *Head Teacher, State School for the Deaf*
- "We solicit funds from parents. When there are no funds, at times when parents come around, we ask them for money and they give us like 10 cedis. Then we use it to solve the issue. Currently we do not have any account for the water facility maintenance... We will depend on the PTA. We were thinking of writing applications to GWASH to help us solve the issue." – *Head Teacher, State School for the Deaf*

What were the challenges encountered for SGF-funded interventions?

As expected, maintenance repairs have been needed for facilities. There are also external factors (e.g., power) that impact the operation of facilities, as in the case of the mechanized borehole at Lume Atsyame Healing Camp and the State School for the Deaf:

- "The generation of the power is the only issue. When the lights go off we cannot pump water. This morning like this, we heard that there was no water in the tank; so they could not flush the toilets, so we had to divert the power because the block that it is connected to, does not have water." – *Facility Attendant, State School for the Deaf*
- "The problem is that the tank does not get full before and the pump stops working." – *Prophet, Lume Atsyame Healing Camp*

From the GWASH perspective, a key challenge was proper monitoring and evaluation (M&E) to follow up on each funded intervention:

- "I believe the main challenge was monitoring and incorporating the results with the GWASH M&E system. We probably needed field staff and members of the SGF committee to conduct more monitoring and documenting progress of the projects... I believe that monitoring was a major weakness in the SGF setup." – *SGF Committee Member*

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE SGF

- Thanks to the SGF collaboration with U.S. Peace Corps, GWASH both expanded its reach in its districts and regions of work and deepened its impact in communities where it was already working. This highlights the importance and opportunity for improving WASH impacts through such collaborations with local actors.

- Through the SGF, GWASH was able to address local community needs with a more bottom-up approach to improving WASH, address disability as well as gender concerns.
- The willingness of GWASH to adapt the SGF to local demand was key in supporting the bottom-up approach for improving WASH.
- While some PCVs worked directly with their community partners in devising applications, some worked independently and without community consultation. Although PCVs are locally based, their stay in communities is temporary; in the future, PCVs should be required to apply and demonstrate their collaboration with permanent local entities, to support sustainability.
- As part of the application process, applicants should provide information on facility management plans, ability to address future maintenance challenges, and how they would address these through existing or new community or institutional management structures.
- Applicants should be required, as part of the application process, to identify and devise funds generation mechanism to maintain the facility provided through the GWASH SGF. M&E activities for the SGF should be integrated into the overall M&E tracking and reporting for the project.



Youth are at the lead for maintaining their school's institutional latrine, provided



Women fetch water from the Lume Atsyame Healing Camp borehole, mechanized with SGF funding.