



Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene for Health (W4H) Activity Performance Evaluation: Overview and Key Findings

W4H Context and Evaluation Background

The Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene for Health (W4H) Activity is a five-year (2015–2020), US\$19M cooperative agreement funded by USAID/Ghana and implemented by Global Communities (GC). The goal of W4H is to accelerate sustainable improvement in water and sanitation access and improve hygiene behaviors in 15 target Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs).

USAID/Ghana commissioned the USAID Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Partnerships and Learning for Sustainability (WASHPaLS) Project to undertake a performance evaluation of W4H with an emphasis on assessing sustainability. Five evaluation questions covered the effectiveness of policy uptake, sustainability of investments and private sector engagement in sanitation, strengthening of local governance systems for water services, and increased handwashing behavior. Between July and October 2019, the evaluation team reviewed contractual deliverables and related documents and conducted key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and site observations in 10 of the 15 MMDAs in which W4H is active (Figure 1). The team conducted a total of 90 KIIs/FGDs with a broad range of stakeholders; 75 percent of the interviewees were based in the MMDAs visited, and 25 percent of the total were female.

Summary of Findings

Policy Gaps and Pro-Poor Guidelines. The Government of Ghana (GOG) has developed a comprehensive set of policies aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the WASH sector. Interviewees at all levels expressed a lack of understanding, however, of how the different policies fit together and how they support the delivery of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6.

USAID/Ghana and GC supported a participatory process with the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources to develop the Pro-Poor Sanitation Guidelines to target those who cannot afford or manage their basic sanitation services. Although there is growing recognition of their value, government agencies have not yet sufficiently owned or championed the guidelines since their launch in June 2018.

Sustainability of Sanitation Achievements. According to GC, targets for sanitation are being exceeded and the evaluation team observed a majority of declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) communities with a clean environment, hygienic toilets, and handwashing stations. However, GOG's emphasis on the ground is on counting ODF communities without necessarily establishing longer-term support to ensure these gains are maintained. Still, small, remote communities are likely to continue to invest in construction of toilets, due to community reinforcement and mutual accountability. In response to the low durability of many latrines and resulting high rates of slippage, in 2018 GC developed the Digni-Loo, an affordable, easily installed, and durable technology option. More reasonably priced than other sub-structure options on the market, the Digni-Loo

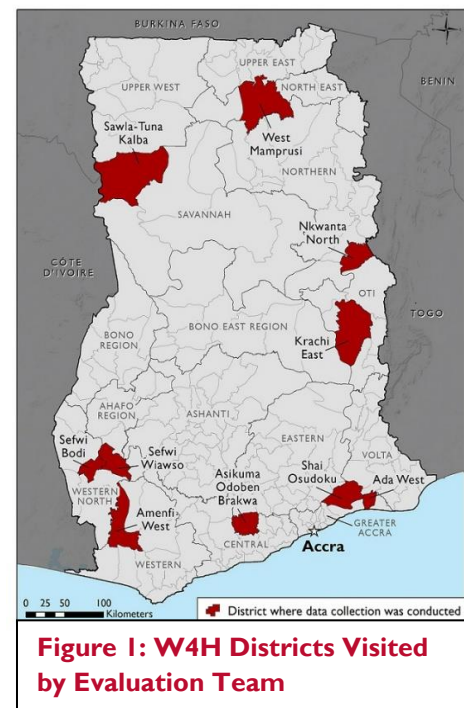


Figure 1: W4H Districts Visited by Evaluation Team

consists of a slab with one ring and a vent pipe and is appropriate for areas with loose soil. As a result, the Digni-Loo is considered by numerous interviewees as a possible “game changer” for household sanitation.

While Environmental Health Officers welcome a solid working relationship with GC staff, local authority involvement and ownership at more senior levels have generally been weak. This will ultimately affect the sustainability of WASH systems put in place. Although the quality of initial triggering stages of community-led total sanitation is high, systematic post-ODF sustainability monitoring and support were less in evidence.

Private Sector Engagement in Sanitation. Global Communities has excellent and emerging relations with national-level private sector actors, offering a strategic partnership that delivers commercial benefits and perceived reputational gains through contributions to the SDGs. Duraplast initially supplied vent pipes for discounted sanitation facilities, then expanded into manufacture of the Digni-Loo toilet, per GC’s specifications. GC also has a relationship with Ghacem Limited (a Ghanaian cement producer) to supply materials to households at discounted prices. While demand is aggregated at the MMDA level, household distribution modalities are still evolving to synchronize supply and demand. As market-based solutions begin to take root, conflicting approaches to subsidies by government authorities and development partners even in adjacent communities create confusion for households. Thus, other implementers have the potential to distort the market if applying a heavily subsidized, ill-targeted approach.

Local Governance Strengthening to Sustain Water Services. By the end of 2018, the W4H activity had installed 203 boreholes (some mechanized) in communities, schools, and health care facilities. While beneficiaries appreciated these systems, some gaps in local governance systems particularly related to the effectiveness of the Facility Management Plans are likely to affect the sustainability of these services. Little evidence emerged of MMDAs dedicating resources to monitor water infrastructure. At the community level, W4H trained Water and Sanitation Management Teams (WSMTs) to manage newly installed facilities. WSMTs interviewed generally understood and took their responsibilities seriously. More study is needed as to whether communities are setting and collecting tariffs in sufficient amounts to maintain and repair water points. An intervention with promising potential, the GC-supported piped water system implemented in Tuna (STK District) through a local Water Board with oversight from the MMDA has established a competent and professional management unit, efficient monitoring system, fiscal transparency, and satisfied customer base.

Increases in Basic Handwashing Behaviors. Community by-laws are usually silent on the need for handwashing facilities, possibly due to minimal emphasis on handwashing in the ODF Verification Protocol. Regardless, the evaluation team observed handwashing facilities near or adjacent to the toilet in most communities visited. GC’s implementation approach to handwashing behavior change relies on Natural Leaders as a key entry point to sensitize communities to the importance of investing in and maintaining handwashing facilities. Beneficiaries expressed a belief that behavior change contributed to reduction in illness.

W4H provided schools with toilets, handwashing facilities, and rainwater harvesting tanks, and engaged in hygiene education and promotion. The activity also supplied mechanized boreholes, bringing improved water closer to 12 healthcare facilities to enhance delivery of health services. Tensions have, however, arisen in communities where schools may have access to water and sanitation facilities, but households do not. Any future emphasis on sustainability should be reflected in the number of people having access to comprehensive, functioning WASH services across all primary areas of life. The ultimate goal would, thus, be to strive for “Sustainable Sanitized Communities” status, as per the GOG ODF Verification Protocol.

Conclusion

By all accounts, the W4H activity is having a positive impact and making a meaningful contribution to addressing Ghana’s WASH service delivery backlog. Due to a perceived neutrality with good relationships across the sector, GC could contribute more to national debates around the learning being generated from the activity. Such learning revolves around how effective operating environments require clear designation of roles, coordinated linkages and incentives, and greater levels of dedicated government resourcing. While having clear experience to share, many of these challenges are beyond the control of GC alone.