



Partnerships with partner organizations in Ghana



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THE NATIONAL COMMUNITY water and sanitation programme (CWSP) of Ghana was designed to work through the private sector for the provision of all goods and services. Specifically, it is central to the CWSP's approach to contract Partner Organizations (PO's) to assist communities in developing their own capabilities, provide technical assistance and deliver hygiene education.

A PO, under the CWSP concept is supposed to be a small village or district level association oriented towards self help activities under contract (Project Preparation Contract) to provide planning and organisational service support to communities to enable the communities plan their own water supply and sanitation facilities.

Nature

POs in Ghana generally have the following characteristics:

- Each is made up of at least 12 members of staff with at most 5 of them designated field staff. It is the latter who actually performs the functions in the PO contract. The rest constitute the management board and administrative staff.
- About 80 per cent of their field staff are seconded staff (from the public sector) who still maintain their loyalties with their parent organisations.
- About 90 per cent of the POs are adhoc in nature, in that, they were not existing before CWSP. They registered as bodies only for the purpose of taking up the CWSP's project preparation contract.
- Consequently, CWSP's contract are the only sources for their survival as a group.

It is firstly observed that, the PO management is top heavy. Secondly, assignments from parent organisations have not allowed the POs to always follow their workplans and thirdly, some kind of friction is created between the seconded POs and some other role players. Consequently, the trust and confidence the communities can build for the POs is affected.

Functions

POs activities centre around:

- Publicity – disseminating project information
- Community mobilization – ensuring women and minority group involvement in planning, establishment and or strengthening of WATSAN Committees etc.
- Participatory planning – providing technical advice in facility options and service levels that communities want, can afford and can maintain.

- Facility Management Plan (FMP) preparation – assisting communities to prepare FMPs indicating proposed designs, expected cost and financing plan.
- Follow-ups – consolidating Watsan Committee and supporting the establishment of community ownership and management.

Through the above, communities are motivated to take up full and effective participation in planning their facilities, thereby, creating a sense of ownership and further motivation for long term operation and maintenance.

It is observed that all the above functions are basically what all the PO contract is about, and is performed directly by only the field staff. It stands to reason therefore that, the establishment of the PO management board and administrative staff as well as the Small Business Development Unit (SBDU) whose job is to identify and train the POs is because of the 4 or 5 field staff and the work that they do. The management is therefore top heavy.

Links with other role players

The POs have links with all the role players in the CWSP, in particular, with the DWST (District Assembly's staff assigned to Water and Sanitation), the Regional Water and Sanitation Team (RWST) and the SBDU (contracted by CWSP to provide capacity building services).

It is the SBDU that identifies and trains the PO's. The DWST supervises and supports the PO's activities. The RWST links the POs through its project management as well as its on the job support for DWST.

The numerous links of the PO's with other role players has in many ways increased communities' confidence in the PO's. The regular change of faces show how important the programme is and for that matter the POs. Communities therefore view with seriousness whatever they discuss with the POs.

On another hand however:

- The POs see themselves as being supervised by too many groups, the DWST, RWST and the SBDU. This at times frustrates them.
- The SBDU and the POs see themselves as partners in the private sector as against the RWST and DWST as partners in the public sector. This leads to some kind of cold war between the Non governmental (anti-governmental?) and governmental (pro government?) organisations: Between the SBDU and the RWST at the regional level and the POs and the DWSTs at the district level.

- Consequently, the POs tend to see themselves accountable directly to the SBDUs other than any other group since they were identified and trained by them.
- Between the DWST and the RWST, also, the DWSTs see the RWSTs as programme staff who are better motivated. This situation has psychologically not motivated the DWSTs enough. They are therefore either lax in the work they do or exploit situations.
- Between the PO and DWSTs, the DWSTs see the PO as a highly motivated group than they themselves who are supervisors. To compensate for this, the DWSTs try to lord themselves over the POs, thus policing them for them to see “who is to supervise who”.

Public sector support

Although the public sector has shifted from provider to facilitator, in order to ensure more wide-spread and sustainable coverage of facilities, the public sector promises to make equipment and materials required by POs available under lease/buy arrangement, the cost of same reimbursed through deductions from contract payments.

The general observation is that, the public sector has not been able to meet deadlines in the procurement of equipment and materials required by the POs example, provision of motorbikes and training materials.

This often creates distortions and inconsistencies in the POs work programmes.

Recommendation for future considerations

The following recommendations are made not as a blueprint of solutions but rather as issues for further consideration.

- Public sector support for POs should not only be prompt but in addition be increased. This can be considered along the lines of comparing the support provided to institutions at the regional level and above vis-a-vis those to institutions at the district level and below.
- In terms of mobility in particular, consideration should be given to providing one pick-up vehicle for the PO field team instead of three motor-bikes.
- To ensure stability and consistency of PO activities, reliance on bigger and established organisations as POs instead of “ad hoc POs” should be investigated. Such POs could eventually provide community animation services for other public sector programmes.
- The need to reduce the number of PO management board and administrative staff and hence expenditure

should be looked into. Reliance on only one or two POs per region which will maintain their management board and administrative staff and spread over the region with field staff in the districts can be considered. In this direction, the CWSP can avoid establishing SBDUs permanently in the regions but still rely on their services as and when needed as with, for example, TREND and COWATER.

- Alternatively, given the project preparation contract to the SBDUs directly so that they spread over the project districts with field staff engaged by them may be considered.
- Whichever form the PO takes, there is the need for its management to regularly visit the field in order to appreciate the problems of the field staff.
- The need to redefine the PO’s job description or provide the PO’s with technical training and equipment, so that they would be able to carry out some technical functions like hand dug well siting should be considered.
- To encourage team spirit among the role players, especially between the DWST and the PO
 - Both should attend relevant training sessions together.
 - Team building workshops need to be organised for them.
 - DWSTs and POs should do or discuss their workplans together.
 - District Ownership and Management notwithstanding, the need for the donor and Central Government Financing to provide some kind of motivation for the DWSTs should be considered.

Conclusion

It is obvious from the above that the PO plays a very important role in ensuring sustainability of water and sanitation facilities provided. It is the view of the writer that further consideration be given to the issues raised in particular, the nature of POs contracted. It is hoped that the necessary changes here will go a long way to lay a stronger and sustainable foundation upon which community ownership, management and control could be built to ensure long term community operation and maintenance.

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