



Rural water supply in Asunafo District

Fati Mumuni, Ghana



THE ASUNAFO DISTRICT in the Brong-Ahafo Region of Ghana is a cocoa producing area with small farming communities surrounded by large acreages of cocoa.

However, it has poor rural water supply with a majority of the communities depending on streams and ponds.

A brief historical background

Shortly after the Sunyani Diocese of the Catholic Church was established in 1973, a feasibility study was carried out in the Diocese and among the findings was the existence of guinea worm and drought/poor water supply in the Ahafo and Atebubu Districts respectively.

Asunafo, which is also the Ahafo District, was on the second phase of the Diocesan Water Supply Programme. The Diocese therefore secured funding from Italian Caritas to supply this district with sixty boreholes in 1985.

However, only a few communities benefited from the Caritas project as most communities showed little interest.

According to the cocoa farming communities, at the time, they had lots of running water surrounding their villages. Moreover, they could not assign guinea-worm to polluted water. They also alleged that the fifty thousand cedis (c50,000.00) - (equivalent of US\$ 29, current dollar rate) commitment fee was too high for them.

Another possible reason why the people did not patronise the project was the absence of education before drilling. According to the Diocesan Development Coordinator, it was after drilling that maintenance education - on tariff collection was given to beneficiaries.

Community water supply programme in Asunafo District

In 1994, when the National Community Water and Sanitation Programme (CWSP) was launched in the Brong Ahafo, the Asunafo District was one of the two pilot districts.

Objectives of the CWSP

The objectives of the National Community Water and Sanitation Programme are:

- Provision of basic water and sanitation services to communities that will contribute towards the capital cost and pay the normal operations, maintenance and repair costs of their facilities.
- Ensure sustainability of these facilities through community ownership and management, community de-

cision-making in their design, active involvement of women at all stages in the project, private sector provision of goods and services, and public sector promotion and support.

- Maximize health benefits by integrating water, sanitation and hygiene education interventions, including the establishment of hygiene education and latrine construction capabilities at village level.

Community selection criteria

The criteria of selection of communities for water supply are; population, access to water supply, health status, geographic location (coverage by cluster), task record (organisational capacity/experience) and money contribution/bank account deposit are taken into consideration. The selection is done by the District Water and Sanitation Team (DWSTs) with the approval of the District Management Committees (DMC).

In the Asunafo District, the programme is now operating in forty communities.

Water supply technology options

Three options are promoted in the CWSP namely;

- Boreholes
- Hand-dug wells with pump
- Hand-dug wells with rope and bucket.

It is therefore important that communities are able to choose the technology that gives them the highest service level they want, can afford, and can maintain.

Mobilisation and education

A Partner Organisation (PO) contracted by the programme mobilises and educates beneficiary communities over a period of one year after which the DWST continues with the education. When the facility is in place, it is handed over to the community to manage.

Water supply

Apart from the sixty already existing boreholes supplied by Caritas and traditional wells constructed by individuals in the District, the Community Water and Sanitation Division has also constructed thirty-eight boreholes, eight hand-dug wells with pumps and fourteen hand-dug wells without pumps. The thirty-eight boreholes only one was fitted with a pump during the launching of the programme.

Issues

The rural water supply programme is a laudable one but for it to succeed in the Asunafo District, the following issues must be addressed by all stakeholders.

- Although criteria for community selection exists, it has been found that this is not strictly adhered to. There is always pressure on the DWSTs from assemblymen and political leaders to select their communities.
- The Partner Organisation in the district is not well organised. There is always in-fighting among the management team. Secondly the field teams are not adequately motivated in terms of salaries and incentives.
- The DWST has turned itself into a political tool. Communities are selected based on their political leanings. At the time of writing, one of them has completely left the DWST office to campaign for the ruling party.
- Some communities which are not pro-government have also refused to participate in the programme.
- Most communities have not met their commitment fee of paying the capital and operation maintenance costs even though facilities have been provided.
- Watsans are ineffective – they are redundant. They seem not to be motivated to do the work.
- The design of the well head had not been comfortable to the users. Women and children have to climb over the head before getting access to fetch the water.
- Structures which are designed to help sustain the facilities are not in place, i.e. pump suppliers, pump spares outlets, area pump mechanics, etc.

Recommendations

- Since Community Water and Sanitation Programme has come to stay, the DWSTs should be given the free hand to select communities using the selection criteria.
- Each Region has been authorised to work with a fix number of Partner Organisations – the private sector which should be community based. Provision should be put in place so that when a Partner Organisation (PO) is not functioning efficiently, the region can replace it. Competition should be encouraged.
- DWSTs should be recruited based on their qualifications and not on their political affiliations
- Both the DWSTs and RWSTs should make sure that beneficiaries pay their capital and operation and maintenance fees before facilities are put in place.
- Watsans should be motivated at community level to encourage them to work.
- Structures to sustain the programme should be put in place.

Conclusion

These recommendations, if implemented, will go a long way to improve the water supply situation in the Asunafo District.

FATI MUMUNI, Training and Management Officer,
Community Water and Sanitation Division (GWSC).
