



## Community management practices in Ghana

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THE NATIONAL COMMUNITY Water and Sanitation programme was launched in March 1994. Prior to this there were many projects that used different strategies of implementation. The National programme, among others aims to ensure conformity to a common strategy.

### The national strategy

Main Features of the National Strategy are:

- Contribution by beneficiary communities to the capital cost of water and sanitation facilities.
- Community responsibility for all operation and maintenance costs of facilities.
- Community participation in planning, design, siting, construction and management of facilities.
- Integration of water, sanitation and hygiene education activities.
- Significant role of private sector in the provision of goods and services.
- Coordinating, facilitating role of public sector.

### Community management

Features of Community Management include the following:

- A popularly elected community management committee (WATSAN) of 5-9 members (men generally outnumber women and occupy decision making positions) In southern Ghana, communities of over 2000 population have WATSANs at ward level and WSDB (Water and Sanitation Development Boards) at larger community level.
- Community expression of demand for facilities; provision of proof of demand and of commitment.
- Community choice of type number and site of facilities and in small towns in initial design of piped systems (within limits of options available).
- Community preparation and implementation of facilities management plans which outline how communities will raise funds for capital cost and O&M, ensure continued functioning of facilities and improve their hygiene practices.

### Fund mobilisation

While communities generally raise funds to cover the 5 per cent capital cost through per capita contribution, (for individuals of 18 years and above) funds for O&M are raised differently.

Communities mobilise O&M funds for operational costs including protocols, maintenance and repairs as well as possible expansion. Major rehabilitation plans are often not factored into O&M planning. (Government policy is not as yet very clear as to who should fund major rehabilitation for rural systems.)

Communities raise O&M funds through a number of ways: Water Vending, "House" Levying "Household" Levying, Auctioning of donated farm products ("Harvest"), Volunteer contribution from the rich, Cash crop deductions ("Kilo, kilo") and undertaking income generation ventures.

### Pattern of occurrence

Water vending can be found in every region but on a minimal scale. However, in the central region the practice was institutionalised by the Project executing Agency, BURGEAP and therefore it is the dominant practice there. Household and house levies are the most commonly and frequently occurring practice country-wide. It is traditional to levy individuals and groups (as in the "tow" practice, where the costs of a funeral are shared among adult extended family.) The idea of selling "ordinary" water (not "iced" water) which is a symbol of life and sustenance is generally, not culturally acceptable in most rural communities.

Cash crop deductions occur most in the forest regions where cocoa and coffee are cultivated.

Income generating activities are more frequent in the northern part of the country where it is often the women who undertake such ventures.

The decision to adopt a particular practice is often made by community leadership and generally adopted/endorsed by community members.

### Organisation of O&M practices

#### Water vending

An aluminium bucket that holds 18 litres of water is the standard measure for vending. A standard volume sells for between 20-50 cedis (0.75-1.50-pence). Vending is organised in a number of ways:

- Hired male vendors (old men or physically challenged young men) sell at water points.
- Watsan members sell water at water point.
- Old women exempted from communal labour spend the whole day near water point collecting fees.

**Table 1. Average networks daily consumption**

Month in 1997	Litres/capita/day
February	5.62
March	5.40
April	4.88
May	4.66
June	3.92
July	4.01
August	4.70
September	5.38
October	5.03
November	6.18
December	6.72

Source: CWSA Central Region, 1997

- Women in different houses of different wards of the community, take turns in vending.

One commonly occurring feature is the use of old men and women. It is obvious few energetic men or women are willing to sit around water points. It is also obvious that the older citizens are more patient and can withstand most of the quarrels and insults that characterise water vending activities.

The other feature is the monetary reward that is given. Hired vendors get 30 per cent of daily or monthly sales. Others get token rewards of different amounts depending on what is agreed upon by community members.

The greatest advantage of water vending is the availability of funds for O&M. The greatest disadvantage is that community members buy as little of potable water as they can and so also use as little of potable water as they can, which in the end defeats the developmental objective of programme interventions. The chart above shows a trend in the central region where water vending has been institutionalised. Consumption level is below the 20l/c/day standard by WHO and falls to its lowest in June/July, the peak of the rainy season in southern Ghana.

My experience in the field is that community members do not differentiate between safe and unsafe water, except where they have a clear connection between a health problem and their water source. They differentiate between "Clean" "sweet" "satisfying" water and distasteful bad, smelly, coloured water. They also differentiate between plentiful and scarce water. Thus communities demand improved water sources mostly as a supplement to existing sources if those existing sources are perceived as "good" but not plentiful all year round, or if the existing source has perceived danger. Even where the old source is believed to be unsafe, community members use it for non-drinking purposes. This happens in other communities where water is not vended. The situation is worsened in water vending communities.

Other challenges that go with water vending include improper accounting by vendors, buying water on credit, favouritism by vendors, wastage and unaccounted water loss.

### House levies

Each house in the community is levied a flat rate irrespective of how many members occupy the building. Levies are monthly (ranging between 100 –500 cedis i.e. between 3 pence and 12.5 pence) or annual ( ranging between 4000-6000 cedis i.e. between 1 and 1.5 pounds) Collection is often by watsan members and not very successful. Records are kept and sanctions threatened against defaulters but often not carried out. It is only when defaulters are taken to the district tribunals that things seem to work. Generally however, Watsan members tend not to risk their popularity by taking such steps.

House levying is practised in fairly large communities of over 500 population.

### Household levies

Every household in a house pays a monthly levy that ranges between 200 and 500 cedis ( 6-12.5 pence) irrespective of how many members are in the household. Collection is often by Watsan members and situations under house levying also apply. Household levying is mostly practised in small communities that have a few houses.

For both house and household levies, it is the head of the family who often pays; women are sometimes household heads.

### Auction of donated farm produce

This is a seasonal activity where instead of contributing cash, community members voluntarily contribute farm products which are auctioned at festive functions called "harvests" in communities in southern Ghana; these activities often happen around the Easter Season when funds are generally raised for community development projects.

### "Voluntary" contributions from the rich

A few rich individuals, often resident outside the communities either freely or feeling obliged, volunteer to take up O&M costs for a year or two. Businessmen and politicians are often in this group.

### Cash crop deductions

Often called "kilo" deductions, cocoa and coffee farmers seasonally contribute measures of the produce which are sold and kept in Community accounts ( not watsan accounts) requests for O&M activities are made to the town development committee.

### Income generation activities

These are of two kinds: activities that centre around the provision of the improved water facility, such as beer brewing or existing income earning opportunities such as community farming or mining or basket weaving. In northern Ghana, women generally undertake such activities and generate incomes more specifically to keep their water systems functioning. In the south incomes generated this way are for community development generally and may be used for the water and sanitation programs as and when needed and considered essential.

### Observations

- A major feeling among field officers and watsan members is that communities are not fully aware of O&M implications of community ownership and management. The enthusiasm that characterises fund raising for capital cost is lost when it comes to O&M fund mobilisation.
- The extent to which communities value the improved system is the extent to which they respond to O&M challenges.
- Communities tend to have a short term ,problem solving perspective of O&M rather than preventive/routine maintenance.

### Management of pump site and toilet cleanliness

Communal cleaning activities are common in Ghana. These occur as part of regular community cleaning exercises or as part of ritual during festivals etc. Where cleaning is part of ritual , the management patterns have tended not to change; the actors and the timings remain unchanged.

In other contexts, communities organise their cleaning activities to reflect social change. Communities that are near regional and district capitals organise communal cleaning by non- government workers on taboo days while public and civil servants do theirs on Sundays. Traditional roles are not rapidly changing but are being modified to reflect current realities.

Women do regular cleaning of the pump site ,while men occasionally do heavy work. School boys clean the male toilet facilities and school girls clean that for females. Teenagers not in schools, clean on taboo days others on Sundays. Cleaning is generally organised on a weekly rotational basis according to wards and houses.

### Peculiar O&M practices

- Women alone contribute to O&M costs but keep the generated funds with a man.

- Rotational pump site cleaning is by religious groups.
- Male vendor organises his own pump site cleaning.
- Young women exempted from all communal labour activities have sole responsibility for pump and site cleaning.

### Challenges of community management

The greatest challenge is how to sustain community commitment to O&M support. This is possible given a number of factors:

- Strong and sustained community value for the improved facilities (related to productive worth, health values, status values, religious values).
- Community peace and harmony.
- External support factors such as availability of pumps, parts and repairmen; training opportunities for watsans and care takers.

### Conclusion

Communities tend not to differentiate between safe and unsafe water, except where there are clear cut linkages between unimproved sources and a health problem.

Communities are enthused about initial contributions for O&M, but have challenges contributing continuously for O&M.

All these call for continued support to communities in order to sustain community management.

### References

COMMUNITY WATER AND SANITATION PROJECT, Implementation Manual, (revised, August 1997).

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