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**ACCESS TO SANITATION AND SAFE WATER:  
GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS AND LOCAL ACTIONS**

## **Mainstreaming SEA in water and environmental sanitation in Ghana**

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*Building the capacity of sector practitioners in applying Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to water and environmental sanitation policies, plans, programmes (PPPs) is a pre-requisite to meeting MDG 7, Target 9. In Ghana, SEA has been applied to the process of developing a new National Water Policy and revising an existing Environmental Sanitation Policy and in the process stakeholders appreciation of SEA and capacity to use derived tools has been enhanced. This paper presents a number of key elements of applying SEA to water and environmental sanitation PPPs, the drivers for mainstreaming SEA in all sectors and challenges of institutionalisation the use of the SEA tools that have been developed.*

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### **Background**

An important outcome of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS1) in 2004 [1], is the recommendation for the mainstreaming of “environment” and institutionalising of SEA in all key sectors to take on board the close linkage of environment to social, natural resource, institutional and economic issues. This is important as achieving sustainable management of the environment is an important ingredient to meeting Millennium Development (MDG) Goal 7 “*integrate the principles of sustainable development in country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environment resources*”.

In Ghana, SEA has been applied in the water and environmental sanitation sector at policy and plan levels. Firstly, SEA was applied to the harmonisation of the National Water Policy from three separate sub-sector (urban, rural and water resources) policies and the resulting policy measures subjected to sustainability testing by sector actors in a very thorough participatory manner. Secondly, the sustainability testing of an existing Environmental Sanitation Policy published in 1999 resulted in recommendation for revision of specific sections, and thirdly assessing the strategic nature of a number of district water and sanitation plans which led to recommendations for integrating of health impact assessments and related tools in district water and sanitation planning as a means to achieving strategic objectives of improving health.

SEA is an evolving concept and there are a number of definitions emerging. In its application in the water and sanitation sector the working definition adopted is derived from the principle that “SEA facilitates consultation, broad stakeholder participation in the evaluation of environmental aspects of policies, plans and programmes” with a view to strengthening the PPPs and enhancing its scope and aiding decision-making by appropriate authorities.

### **The SEA capacity building process**

The process of applying SEA in Ghana has been very participatory and practical with learning-by-doing exercises that went with the assessment of specific policies and plans. The main activities followed in achieving the capacity building objectives are shown in Table 1.

Process activity	Outputs	Comments
Stakeholder Identification	List of all stakeholders, roles and responsibilities	For the WES sector, key sectors like energy, transport and agriculture were brought on board by this activity
Stakeholder Consultations	Policy measures for other users such as energy and transport defined	This activity ensured credibility and buy-in to the policy process and provided documentary evidence of participation required for cabinet-level approval
Awareness raising and building capacity in the use of SEA tools	Enhanced understanding of SEA among sector actors	Participatory stakeholder engagement in developing SEA tools such as sustainability criteria and hands-on application

### Key outputs

The tools developed through the participatory process and learning-by-doing capacity building exercises include:

- **Tools for Policy Assessment**, comprising forms for *sustainability testing* of individual policy objectives and/or measures as means to ensuring overall sustainability of a policy under consideration as well as a compatibility test tool for comparing policy actions to identify and eliminate areas of potential conflict and reinforce areas of synergy;
- **Tools for Health Impact and Environmental Assessment**, comprising *health impact profiling* tool to aid analysis and planning for water and environmental sanitation facilities and hygiene education, *health impact planning* tool used for specifying needed interventions based on community health profiles, *environmental assessment tool*, used for assessing critical environmental issues to aid the development of the environmental profile of a district (or community), and the *environmental assessment planning* tool used for identifying shortfalls of planned policy actions as far as the natural environment is concerned;
- **Tools for monitoring and evaluation**, comprising *M&E planning tools*, *M&E tools for health impact*, the *M&E Report sheet* and *sustainability indicators* for M&E, all prepared to assist in monitoring and evaluation for health improvements related to provision of water and environmental sanitation facilities;
- **Tools for quality assurance of feasibility studies**, consisting of tools for checking the *contents of a feasibility study* and for *appraising sustainability elements* of a feasibility study, developed to aid evaluating and appraising of feasibility studies;
- **Tools for River Basin Planning**, developed to facilitate the participatory processes in Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) planning at basin level consisting of *screening tool* for identifying main problems in a basin, the *ranking* tool for scoping and assignment of responsibilities, *assessment of effects* tool used in public hearing to test the effects of planned IWRM actions and a *sustainability test* tool to assess plan actions; and
- **SEA Practical Guide**, which is a compilation of the tools described above with practical examples applied in assessing specific policies, plans (also projects). The guide also have sections on *basic concepts and principles of SEA*, a complete *training guide* with modules on all the developed tools, and *resource requirements* for undertaking SEA adequately.

The Practical Guide on SEA of Water and Environmental Sanitation serves as a useful reference document that will refresh those already familiar with using the tools in applying the principles in routine tasks, and also as a source of material for carrying out 'training-of-trainers' exercise on all the modules for the uninitiated.

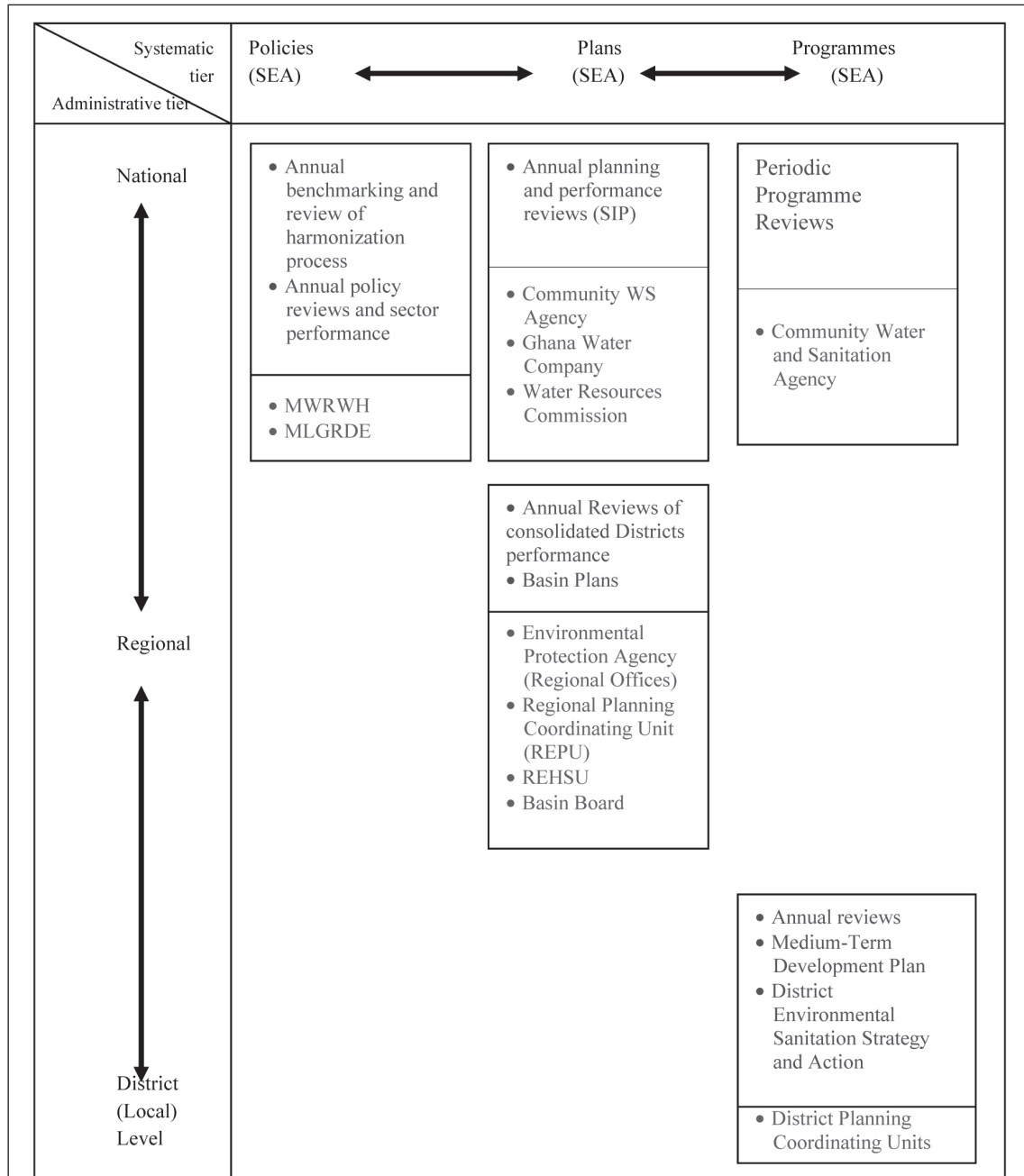
### Ensuring value responsiveness in the application of SEA

Whilst the capacity building process and the assessment of policies and plans have been through a participatory and hands-on process, mainstreaming and institutionalising the use of SEA in the sector is another matter. This will depend not only on the sense of ownership of the Practical Guide [2] by sector actors but more importantly on the value-addition that is perceived to be gained from applying SEA tools.

The National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) responsible for overall development planning in Ghana has incorporated SEA principles in guidelines to districts in the preparation of Medium-Term De-

velopment plans and it is expected that this will enhance mainstreaming of SEA tools at the district level.

Identifying areas of routine application and the ease of adapting SEA tools to suit specific settings will enhance decision-making and value and therefore enhance adoption and institutionalisation [3]. The SEA Practical Guide for Water and Environmental Sanitation therefore, allows users to adapt the tools (and criteria) to specific local conditions. Figure 1 below gives examples of routine applications of SEA principles that can aid institutionalising its use.



**Figure 1: Value responsive application of SEA – showing routine applications and proponents**

Source: MWRWH/MLGRDE/Environmental Protection Agency (2006)  
*SEA of Water and Environmental Sanitation – A Practical Guide*

## Conclusions

Important conclusions that emerged from the practical application of SEA in the water and environmental sanitation sector include the following:

- 1. By applying SEA and building capacity of high level staff of agencies and institutions in the water and environmental sanitation, the sector in Ghana has availed itself of the SEA pre-requisite of key development partners such as the European Union (EU) Directive on SEA.
- 2. While the development and application of SEA tools in the water and environmental sanitation has followed a participatory approach, institutionalising the use of the tools cannot be achieved through a one-off, short-term capacity building and training exercises. It is therefore important that right from the beginning of applying SEA, routine practical of the tools and formats developed be identified. Compiling the tools in the form a Practical Guide will also help the process of institutionalisation by as it will aid in Training of Trainers and serve as a useful reference.
- 3. The fact that SEA has become integrated to the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS), Ghana's main development policy framework and the inclusion of SEA tools in guidelines for the preparation of district plans by the main development planning oversight institution (i.e. NDPC) has aided the process of mainstreaming SEA in policies, plans and programmes in Ghana;
- 4. To have the full benefits of applying SEA in a participative manner requires planning and allowing for adequate resources as demonstrated in the water and environmental sanitation example.

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## Keywords

compatibility testing, value responsiveness, health impact profiling, integrated water resources management, strategic environmental assessment, sustainability testing

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