

A STUDY ON

**DRIVERS AND BARRIERS TO
COORDINATION AND HARMONISATION
OF WATER SERVICE DELIVERY
AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL**

FINDINGS FROM BONGO AND SUNYANI WEST DISTRICTS

NOVEMBER 2017



COMMUNITY WATER AND SANITATION AGENCY

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAP	Annual Action Plan
AAP	African Assistance Plan
AFD	Agence Française de Développement
BDA	Bongo District Assembly
CHPS	Community-Based Health Planning and Services
CLTS	Community-Led Total Sanitation
CWSA	Community Water and Sanitation Agency
DA	District Assembly
DACF	District Assemblies Common Fund
DED	District Education Directorate
DHD	District Health Directorate
DLAP	District Learning Alliance Platform
DOM	District Operational Manual
DP	Development Partner
DPCT	District Project Coordinating Team
DSWCD	Department of Social Welfare and Community Development
DWD	District Works Department
DWSP	District Water and Sanitation Plan
EHSD	Environmental Health and Sanitation Division/ Directorate
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GI WASH	Ghana Integrated Water Sanitation and Hygiene
GoG	Government of Ghana
GSOP	Ghana Social Opportunities Project
GWCL	Ghana Water Company Limited
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDA	International Development Association
ILGS	Institute of Local Government Studies
LA	Local Authority
LGS	Local Government Service
LI	Legislative Instrument
LMS	Limited Mechanised System
MLGRD	Ministry of Rural Government and Rural Development
MMDAs	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies

MP	Member of Parliament
MWH	Ministry of Works and Housing
MWRWH	Ministry of Water Resources, Works and Housing
NCWSP	National Community Water and Sanitation Programme
NCWSS	National Community Water and Sanitation Strategy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
O&M	Operations and Maintenance
PIM	Project Implementation Manual
PRSTWSP	Peri-Urban, Rural and Small Town Water and Sanitation Project
PC	Pump Caretaker
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RCC	Regional Coordinating Council
SRWSP	Sustainable Rural Water and Sanitation Project
STAR	Strengthening Transparency, Accountability and Responsiveness
SWDA	Sunyani West District Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WRC	Water Resources Commission
WSMT	Water and Sanitation Management Team
WSSDP	Water Sector Strategic Development Plan
WVG	World Vision Ghana

1. INTRODUCTION

Universal access to clean water and sanitation is one of the 17 global goals that make up the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In line with this, Ghana envisions a water sector where, by 2025, 100% of its population (rural as well as urban) has access to sustainable water services (MWRWH, 2014). This paper contends that ensuring universal access to safe and affordable drinking water by 2025, while ambitious, is attainable. It will, however, require strengthening the existing policy, institutional, regulatory and financial frameworks (WSSDP, 2014).

Following the de-coupling of rural and urban water delivery in the early 1990s, substantial gains have been made in sector investment, resulting in improved coverage levels. Access to water supply in rural communities (and small towns) have more than doubled, from a low of less than 30% in the 1990s to about 64% in 2015 (CWSA, 2015). Urban water coverage similarly increased from 64% in 2013 to 77% in 2015 (Martey, 2016).

Sustaining access to water services depends on the construction of new infrastructure and management of existing systems through structured rehabilitation and maintenance practices. However, infrastructure provision dominates in the current scheme of things, leading to failed investments. For rural Africa as a whole, some 50,000 water supply points are not working, amounting to a wasted investment of US\$215-360 million (Fairwater Foundation, 2009). A survey in northern Ghana found that 58 per cent of wells to be dysfunctional, and in need of repairs (Skinner, 2009). Adank et al. (2013) assess that more than 30% of rural water supply infrastructure in Ghana is not functional and only 2% provides the basic level of service¹ for which they were intended.

These trends in failed investment and suboptimal service levels have been largely attributed to conceptual approaches which have largely been donor-led and fragmented (Lockwood and Smits, 2011), resulting in poor programming and disharmonious implementation (Breslin, 2010). Mechanisms for sustaining sector

¹ A rural water facility such as a handpump is said to have provided a basic level of service if the following conditions are met simultaneously: a) it serves not more than 300 people, b) all dependents on the water source have access within a 500-metre round trip, c) the quality of water meets sector standards, d) the water facility works for a minimum of 95% of the time in a year, and e) all dependants get at least 20 litres of water per capita daily.

investments beyond project completion were based on unproven assumptions such as the effectiveness of decentralised structures in ensuring continuity of service delivery, prioritisation of water delivery by government through increased budgetary allocations, and effectiveness of management structures at the community level. Left unresolved, future investments in the water sector would only result in marginal or stagnating coverage levels, with poor performance with respect to service level indicators (Nedjoh, Thogersen and Kjellerup, 2003; Lockwood and Smits, 2011).

Coordination and harmonisation form part of a wider set of efforts aimed at maximising impacts of development interventions through the promotion and use of nationally-owned and agreed policies/ strategies by all actors involved in the water service delivery chain. The National Community Water and Sanitation Programme (NCWSP) attempts to articulate roles for the multiplicity of sector stakeholders, with a view to fostering a harmonised approach.²

At the national level, IRC Ghana and the Ministry of Water Resources, Works and Housing (MWRWH) have previously attempted to assess the extent and quality of harmonisation and alignment in the water sector. The study sought to appraise the cohesiveness of water sector partnerships, with the view to fostering greater consensus around management, and ultimately improving donor alignment with national systems and procedures (Duti et al., 2014: 8). The study observed that the global and country partnership agreements and frameworks to which Ghana and its Development Partners have committed make a compelling case for more effective coordination and harmonisation of development assistance (Duti et al., 2014). IRC (2014) again identified poor government leadership and ineffective operational documents as two barriers to coordination of water service delivery.

The multiplicity of institutions and actors in water delivery at the district level in Ghana has been both fascinating and challenging. These actors have collectively contributed to the relatively high rural water coverage in Ghana by sourcing funding, implementing projects, and providing some post-construction support. The increase

² The NCWSP is the national blueprint for the delivery of WASH services to rural communities and small towns facilitated by CWSA. It is implemented through MMDAs, with funding from the Government of Ghana (GoG) and its external development partners (DPs). It was launched in 1994 when less than 30% of the rural population had access to safe water, and an even lower proportion had access to improved sanitation. At the outset, the Programme aimed to increase coverage of safe water, sanitation and hygiene services to 85% by 2015 (CWSA, 2014).

in stakeholder interest has been accompanied by a corresponding expansion in the pool of service providers (consultants, contractors, area mechanics, spare parts dealers and facilitators of service provisions, among others). The downside is that the multiplicity of actors has fuelled:

- diversity in approaches to the design, implementation and monitoring of water service delivery;
- divergence in the interpretation and application of sector documents;
- inconsistency in modalities for disbursing sector funding; and
- poor reporting and ineffective feedback, thereby undermining continuous improvement in the water service delivery cycle, especially at the district level.

These developments make a compelling case for effective harmonisation and coordination, especially at the district level where project interventions are carried out, and are to be sustained. This research examines the enabling conditions and inhibiting factors to harmonisation and coordination of water service delivery at the district level.

1.1 Research objectives

The research, which was conducted in two districts – Bongo in Upper East Region and Sunyani West in Brong Ahafo Region – sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine how water delivery is planned and coordinated among institutions and stakeholders at the district level;
2. To determine budgeting, allocation and disbursement channels for water delivery at the district level;
3. To identify approaches employed for water delivery and the use of sector documents and standards;
4. To distinguish factors which facilitate or inhibit the uptake and use of sector documents among various stakeholders;
5. To establish stakeholders' roles and responsibilities in water delivery interventions at the district level;
6. To identify the mechanisms for reporting on water delivery interventions through the use of agreed sector monitoring indicators.

1.2 Key state actors

The lead sector ministries in the delivery of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services in Ghana are the Ministry of Water Resources, Works and Housing (MWRWH)³ and Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD). The MWRWH, working through its Water Directorate, is responsible for convening and coordinating sector actors at the national level, harmonising policy, and monitoring and evaluation of sector policy outcomes. The Ministry is also responsible for overseeing and monitoring its sector-specific organisations, among which are the Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA), the Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL) and the Water Resources Commission (WRC). The roles of other state actors – such as the Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs) and the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) are described below.

Regional Coordinating Councils

The Regional Coordinating Councils, established under the Local Government Act, 1993 (Act 462), are intended as administrative and coordinating (rather than political or policy-making) entities. Among their core functions are:

- monitoring, coordinating and evaluating the performance of MMDAs in their respective regions;
- monitoring the use of public funds allocated to MMDAs;
- resolving conflicts between MMDAs and agencies of GoG, public corporations, statutory bodies, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and individuals;
- coordinating district development plans and programmes, and ensuring that these are compatible with national development objectives.

Community Water and Sanitation Agency

The Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA) is mandated to facilitate the provision of safe water and related sanitation services to rural communities and small towns. A key function of the agency is to provide technical assistance to

³ A new ministry – the Ministry of Works and Housing (MWH) – has recently been hived off the old MWRWH.

MMDAs in implementing their water and sanitation projects. The agency's facilitation role is defined in the CWSA Regulations 2011 (LI 2007) as "carrying out reasonable acts essential to expedite the implementation of water and sanitation activities, including the regulation of the community water and sanitation sub-sector".

Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies

Within Ghana's decentralisation framework, MMDAs are vested with significant authority over planning and enforcement of development controls within their respective jurisdictions. These local authorities (LAs) are required to deploy their executive, deliberative and technical support structures to articulate the aspirations of their local communities into district development plans. They are further expected to foster broad-based ownership of the development agenda and effort by subjecting drafts of their development plans to public hearing (ILGS, 2010). Their mandate, as specified in the Local Government Act, includes coordinating activities of essential service providers at the district level.

The MMDAs – or simply District Assemblies – are responsible for developing and updating their Water and Sanitation Plans to respond to the policy objectives, strategies and interventions in the national Water Sector Strategic Development Plan (WSSDP). District Assemblies are directly responsible for implementing the rural and small towns' water supply and basic sanitation interventions in the WSSDP. This broad function includes authorising tariffs, infrastructure development (planning and implementation of capital WASH projects), appointing water service providers and fostering compliance through effective oversight of community management structures.

While there has been some progress in fulfilling this mandate, the situation has been uneven between districts. According to a report by WaterAid, more than one-half of MMDAs are confronted with huge challenges of inadequate funding, mis-prioritisation in their development agendas, poor coordination, weaknesses in their monitoring and evaluation regimes, poor community mobilisation and ineffective citizen participation (WaterAid, 2011). These challenges have militated against equitable planning and efficient resource utilisation particularly in the delivery of sustainable services to the water poor.

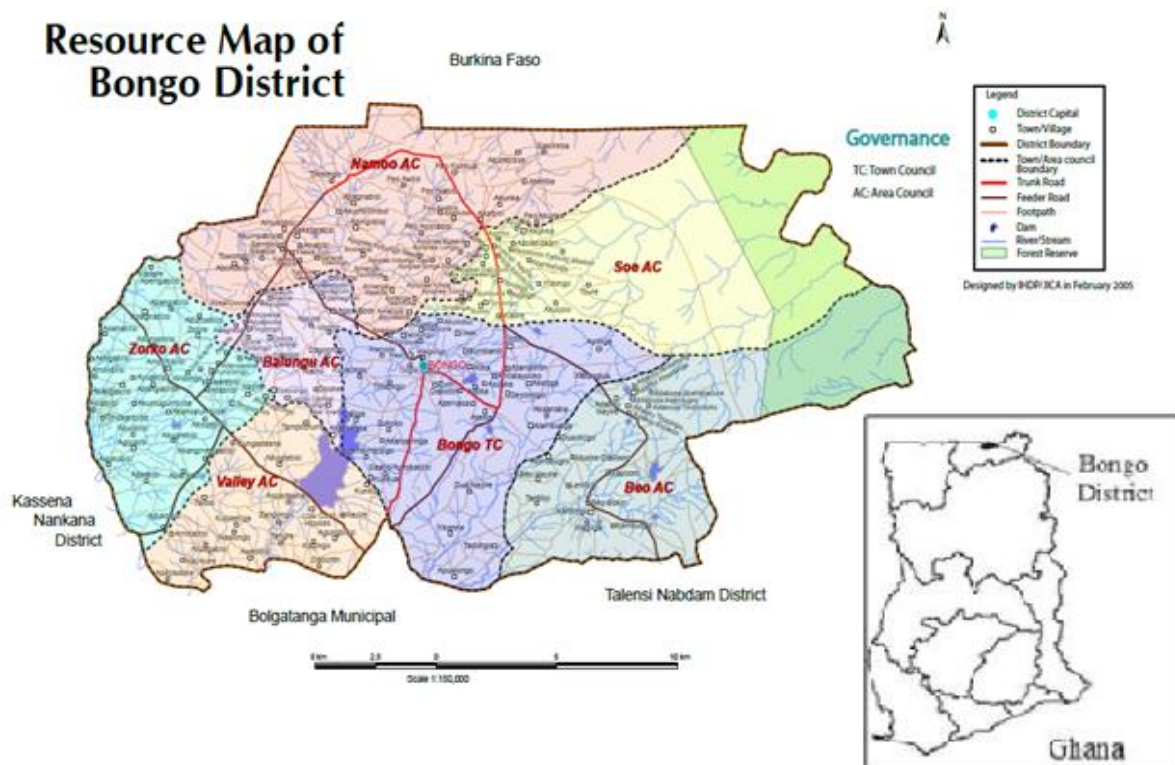
2. BACKGROUND TO STUDY DISTRICTS

2.1 Bongo District⁴

Some one half of the boreholes in Bongo District have unsafe levels of fluoride contamination. According to a 2009 water quality test on the district's 278 functional boreholes, as many as 46% exceeded the 1.5 mg/l fluoride threshold considered safe for human consumption. Within the expanse known as the Bongo Granite Formation, only 4% of boreholes have fluoride levels within the safe margin (Alfredo et al, 2014).

As at 2016, 93% of the district's 498 boreholes were functional while 7% were broken down. The district also has three small town water schemes and three limited mechanised small town water systems (Bonda, 2016).

Figure 1: Map of Bongo District



⁴ By the 2010 Population and Housing Census, Bongo District had a population of 84,545, equivalent to 8.1% of all residents of Upper East Region.

2.2 Sunyani West District⁵

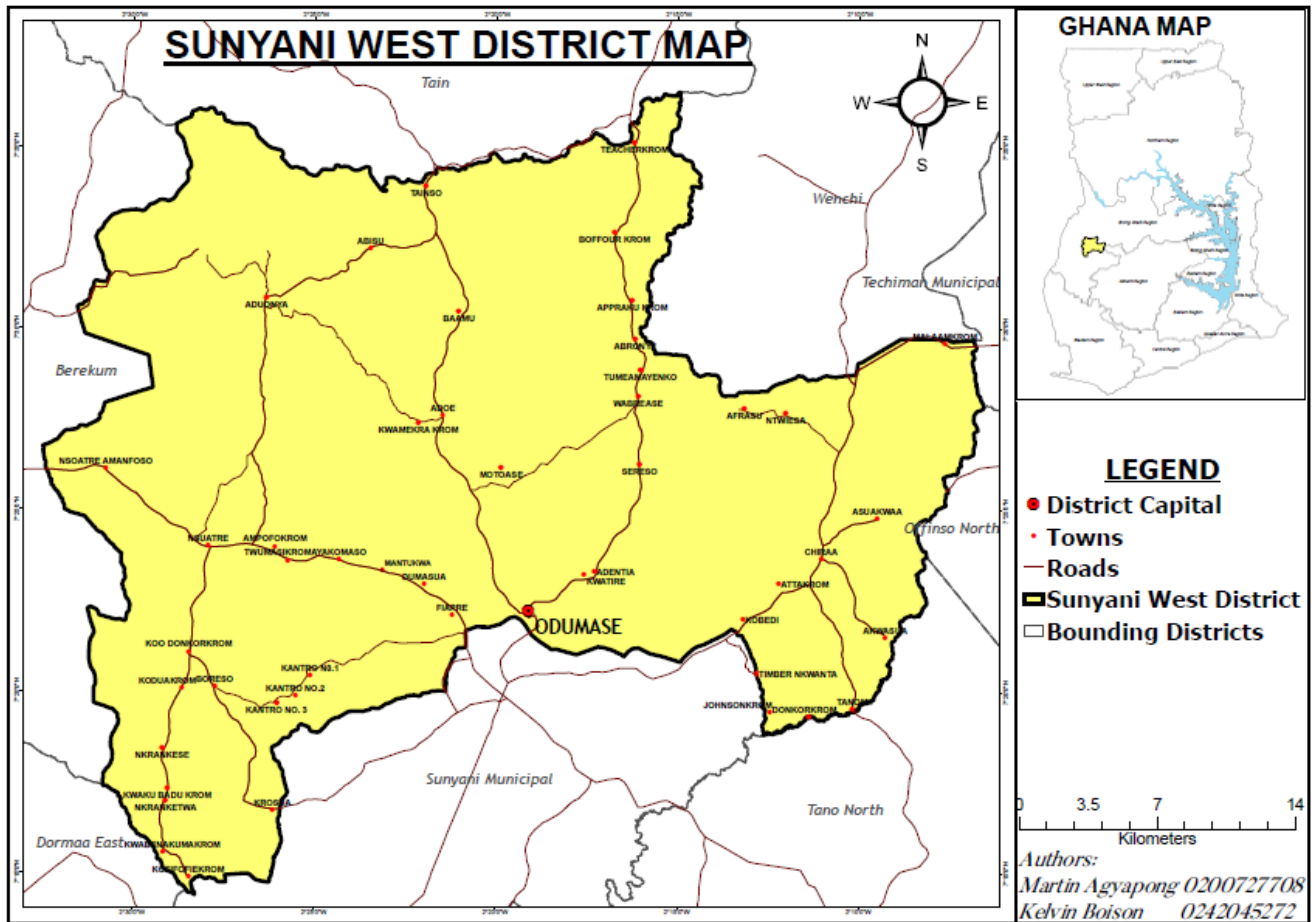
Of the 203 boreholes fitted with handpumps in the district's rural communities and small towns, some 88% are functional while 12% have broken down (SWDA, 2016). In addition to these handpumps, the district had a further 33 mechanised boreholes in 2014.

The District Water and Sanitation Plan (DWSP, 2017-2020) of the Sunyani West District identifies poor operations and maintenance (O&M) routines by WSMTs as a major challenge to the sustainability of WASH services. Some of the district's WSMTs are inappropriately constituted, while others have never received any training on their roles and responsibilities. Thus, WSMTs generally lack the knowledge and skills required for the effective management of the water systems in their care. This has contributed to a high rate (12%) of long-term breakdowns in the district's stock of hand pumps. In several cases, WSMTs are failing to collect tariffs, making it difficult to finance repairs of broken-down facilities, resulting in facility downtimes rising beyond the national annual threshold of 18 days.

The district intends to undertake a technical audit to ascertain the causes of non-functionality of their facilities and to ensure that corrective measures are effected (SWDA, 2016). Based on this agenda, the district has already prioritised WSMT formation, training and monitoring in its current DWSP (2017-2020). The DA also hopes to engage further with its WASH sector NGOs through the District Learning Alliance Platforms (DLAPs) to disseminate its WASH plans and sector documents, as a way of fostering greater alignment with its WASH agenda.

⁵ Sunyani West District had 85,272 residents, representing 3.7 percent of the total population of Brong Ahafo Region, in 2010 (GSS, 2014).

Figure 2: Map of Sunyani West District



Source: Sunyani West District Assembly (SWDA, 2016)

3. METHODOLOGY

The main tools employed in the study were focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews. FGDs were held with three government institutions in each of the participating regions – namely the RCCs, CWSA’s regional offices, and the District Assemblies. Key informant interviews were conducted for the District Finance Officers. Further FGDs were also held for selected NGOs with on-going projects in the water sector in the participating districts.

The research teams were constituted of staff from CWSA, with limited support from external facilitators from IRC Ghana. With the permission of respondents, interview sessions were recorded, and later transcribed to support the notes taken

during the FGDs. A purposive sampling approach was adopted to enable the researchers/ interviewers to harness relevant experiences in water service delivery, in line with the research objectives. On similar grounds, World Vision Ghana (WVG) was singled out for interviewing in the Brong Ahafo Region, as a Hilton grantee.⁶

Prior to the data collection phase, two interviewers were identified from each participating CWSA Regional Office to jointly review and pilot the field guides in Accra. Through this, members of the research team did not only become more familiar with the study's objectives, but also came to own the field guide and its constituent questions. The bulk of the fieldwork took place between July and October, 2016.

A key challenge encountered during the study was the difficulty in getting key staff of some respondent institutions to be available simultaneously for the FGDs. This resulted in quite significant delays in the data collection phase.

4. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

4.1 Planning and coordination of institutions and sector players

There are several actors playing diverse roles in the delivery of rural water services, necessitating effective coordination in planning and delivery. Stakeholders at the MMDA level include public institutions such as CWSA, the RCCs, the Environmental Health and Sanitation Directorate (EHSD), the District Health Directorate (DHD) and the District Education Directorate (DED). Other stakeholders include implementing NGOs, private service providers and consumer communities. Contrary to the guidelines provided in the NCWSP, the roles played by stakeholders tend to vary quite significantly depending on how funds are mobilised.

Tables 1 and 2, below, indicate the key actors and their interventions in water service delivery in the participating districts.

⁶ WVG has recently received financial support from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, the institution which supported CWSA to carry out this study.

The most significant rural water service delivery interventions in the Bongo District in the last five years include drilling of boreholes, construction of small town piped water systems, construction of institutional latrines, rehabilitation of broken down water facilities and capacity building at the district and community levels.

Table 1. Water sector interventions, Bongo District

Financier	Key actors in project implementation	Project/ intervention	Duration
BDA and GoG ⁷	BDA	Drilling of boreholes, monitoring and supervision	2012-2017
IDA	CWSA, RCC and BDA	SRWSP ⁸ (drilling and construction of boreholes, construction of small town water systems, construction of institutional latrines, CLTS, ⁹ capacity building of DA and grassroots management teams)	2012-2017
UNICEF	UNICEF and BDA	Limited Mechanised Systems (LMS), drilling of boreholes	2016
Conrad N. Hilton Foundation	IRC, CWSA and BDA	Rehabilitation of boreholes and capacity building of WSMTs, Area Mechanics (AMs) and Pump Caretakers (PCs)	2015-2017
WaterAid	WaterAid and BDA	Rehabilitation, construction of LMS	2016-2020
Chinese Government	GoG, CWSA, BDA	Chinese-assisted boreholes (drilling of boreholes)	2015-2016
Rotary Club	Rotary Club, BDA	Rotary Club (drilling of boreholes)	2014-2016
GWCL ¹⁰	GWCL	Water quality testing	2012-2016
World Bank	BDA	GSOP ¹¹	2015-2016

⁷ Bongo District Assembly

⁸ Sustainable Rural Water and Sanitation Project

⁹ Community-led total sanitation

¹⁰ Ghana Water Company Ltd

¹¹ Ghana Social Opportunities Project

Namoo University	Namoo University and BDA	Drilling of borehole	2016
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The most significant rural water service delivery interventions in the Brong Ahafo Region in the last five years have been financed through cooperation agreements with Ghana's development partners. These include:

- the Sustainable Rural Water and Sanitation Project (SRWSP, 2010-2017), funded by an International Development Association (IDA) credit; and
- the Peri-Urban, Rural and Small Town Water and Sanitation Project (PRSTWSP, 2009-2015), financed through an agreement with Agence Française de Développement (AFD).

Table 2. Water sector interventions, Sunyani West District

Financier	Key actors in project implementation	Project/ intervention	Duration
GoG and SWDA	SWDA	Drilling of boreholes, monitoring and supervision	2008-2017
Chinese Government	GoG, CWSA, SWDA	Chinese-assisted boreholes (drilling of boreholes)	2016-2017
IDA ¹²	CWSA, RCC and SWDA	SRWSP	2010-2017
AFD ¹³	CWSA, RCC and SWDA	PRSTWSP ¹⁴	2009-2015
GoG	CWSA and SWDA	Drilling of boreholes, training of WSMTs	2009-2017
Rotary Club Sunyani Central	Rotary Club Sunyani Central and SWDA	Drilling of boreholes	2008-2017
AAP ¹⁵	AAP and SWDA	Drilling of boreholes, training of WSMTs	2009-2017
Map International	Map International and SWDA	Drilling of boreholes, training of WSMTs	2015-2017
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (Triple-S)	IRC (Ghana and the Netherlands), CWSA, SWDA	Water service monitoring, Capacity building for WSMTs and Service Authority, Area	2011-2014

¹² International Development Association

¹³ Agence Française de Développement

¹⁴ Peri-Urban, Rural and Small Town Water and Sanitation Project

¹⁵ African Assistance Plan

		Mechanics, creation of Learning Alliances	
Conrad N. Hilton Foundation	IRC Ghana, CWSA, SWDA	Capacity building for Service Authority and WSMTs, water service monitoring	2015 - 2017

Stakeholder coordination is less proactive when funding is provided directly from Government of Ghana (GoG) coffers. GoG-funded projects lack routinised platforms for project coordination. On GoG projects, officers from different stakeholding organisations may simply have opportunistic discussions when they meet in the course of their official duties. However, information and conclusions from such discussions tend not to be available to the wider organisations. Informants further opined that CWSA’s participation in quarterly RCC coordination meetings is irregular.

There are wide variations in the levels of consultation and coordination effectiveness on projects implemented or funded by sector NGOs. Too often, NGOs fail to furnish the respective districts with financial and other details of the projects they are implementing.¹⁶

- Overall, NGOs fail to routinely involve the regional CWSA offices and the assemblies directly in the execution of their projects. For example, World Vision Ghana did not involve the Brong Ahafo Regional Office of CWSA in the direct execution of their projects.¹⁷ Gaps such as these have the tendency to undermine the quality and relevance of the respective District Water and Sanitation Plans.
- Even with the same NGO, levels of coordination can be inconsistent across districts. Thus, in Bongo District, for example, Rotary Club’s implementation procedures generally bypass the assembly, with a resulting duplication of investments. By contrast, in the Sunyani West District, Rotary actively engages the District Assembly through MoUs which indicate roles and responsibilities for both parties. The Club also obtains lists of needy communities from SWDA and continues to involve the DA actively during project implementation.

¹⁶ Investments by current and aspiring Members of Parliament (MPs) were similarly found to routinely ignore the respective district plans.

¹⁷ They however involved the Kintampo South District (where they have their project sites/communities) in their project implementation processes.

- The African Assistance Plan, another NGO, does consult its district assemblies for the lists of their “neediest communities” and depends on the assemblies to introduce them to those communities. In those projects that it funds, the organisation implements the procurement and disbursement activities directly. Further, the NGO fails to include the assembly when conducting training for WSMTs. This practice breaches the approved sector guidelines on the formation and strengthening of WSMTs. Further, because the procurement and disbursement functions bypass the assembly (similar to the situation with the Rotary Club), relevant data are missing from the district’s records, undermining coordinated planning.
- MAP international, another NGO operating in Sunyani West, does involve the assembly in its community mobilisation, WSMT training and supervision activities.
- On their part, World Vision Ghana engages with RCCs to nominate project districts for WASH interventions. The selected districts are not only notified about WVG’s intentions, but also participate actively in screening applications from and profiling beneficiary communities. The technical wing of WVG, known as Ghana Integrated Water Sanitation and Hygiene (GI WASH), is responsible for drilling and construction of water facilities. Soft activities including community mobilisation and capacity building, as well as sanitation and hygiene promotion are carried out in collaboration with the WASH Schedule Officer (typically, the District Engineer) and DA field staff – typically from the units responsible for Environmental Health and Sanitation, and Social Welfare/ Community Development. WVG further invests in orientation for the DA staff to enhance their effectiveness in executing the project.
- The study also found that religious organisations and individuals who invest in the provision of water facilities often do so without the prior knowledge of the respective assemblies, fuelling the spiral of disharmonious investment. For instance, the Maranatha Church completed a project (fitted borehole) without notifying SWDA, and only invited the assembly to the commissioning ceremony. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints likewise provided water to a Community-Based Health Planning and Services (CHPS) compound before informing the District Assembly about it.

The effectiveness of convening platforms appears to be linked to the availability of dedicated funding for coordinating WASH activities. Donor-financed projects were found to typically provide dedicated funding for coordinating the activities of implementing partners. Convening avenues include the (typically) quarterly meetings of the District Project Coordinating Teams (DPCTs) and Project Steering Committees (PSCs). Under the SRWSP (in both districts studied) too, regional and district project coordinating meetings were instituted, funded by the IDA. Similarly, in the PRSTWSP in Sunyani West, meetings of the Project Steering Committee were funded by AFD. In Upper East, short-term funding from UNICEF and STAR Ghana currently enables the RCC to organise stakeholder fora. These donor-supported coordination meetings take place regularly as do the Learning Alliance Platform (LAP) meetings financed through Hilton Foundation resources. By contrast, District Stakeholders' Meetings – which the district assemblies are responsible for funding – have not been consistent, owing to the assemblies' inability to resource them.

To the extent that RCCs are explicitly mandated to monitor and harmonise the development efforts of their respective MMDAs, they must share in the responsibility for suboptimal coordination of water projects in the districts. However, as with their MMDAs, RCCs too tend to be poorly resourced (arguably even more so than the MMDAs they supervise) and are thus unable to commit much more resources to monitoring and coordination. In the face of increasingly constrained budgets, state actors need to prioritise and explore ways of raising the efficiency of existing monitoring and coordination resources. This will entail decisive measures to ensure that meetings/ platforms become more productive than they currently are.

4.2 Relationships

Within each MMDA, there are several distinct departments and units whose effective involvement is crucial to the sustainable delivery of water services. The Water Unit of the District Works Department (DWD) has direct responsibility for supervising constructional works and providing post-construction support to beneficiary communities. The Department of Social Welfare and Community Development (DSWCD) is responsible for mobilising communities and educating them on their roles in respect of managing and maintaining the facility, while the

Environmental Health and Sanitation Directorate (EHSD) carries out sanitation and hygiene promotion. The Central Administration and Planning Units are responsible for planning, budgeting, coordination and monitoring progress of activities.

In practice, different funding modalities come with different roles (along with different power dynamics) for the key actors, with a resulting tendency to fuel unhealthy competition for control. How key actors appreciate the roles of other actors tends to be flawed, and often different from how each actor understands their own role. Such a situation adds to the wrongful arrogation of roles.

- As “development authorities” DAs’ roles comprise three main pillars – planning, implementation and coordination of stakeholders in the district development effort. Based on this understanding, the districts see CWSA’s role in the WASH delivery framework as merely “facilitative” (Act 564 of 1998) – interpreted as a restricted provision of relevant technical support to the WASH delivery effort.
- CWSA was perceived to sometimes overstep its facilitative role, encroaching into the role of implementer. It appears, however, that this tends to occur when relevant district capacity is limited. The activity of borehole siting is one example. Such gaps in districts’ technical capacity often arise when trained staff are transferred across districts by the Local Government Service (LGS). It is also the case that the recruitment of certain categories of professional staff (like hydrogeologists) continues to be centralised because such positions are not available in the local government service.
- DAs tend to perceive Development Partner (DP)-funded projects as CWSA-driven because of the dominant role played by that agency in the project design and fund mobilisation stages – even though the investment plans developed by CWSA are routinely formulated on the back of the community profiles¹⁸ assembled by assemblies. The DAs expressed unease with such situations, whereby their respective RCCs sometimes collaborate with CWSA to execute procurement functions on their behalf. DAs feel that this undermines their control over development activity in their areas of jurisdiction.
- In practice, CWSA does sometimes exercise exclusive responsibility for procurement when projects are funded directly by central government. For

¹⁸ These profiles typically include data on population, the status of existing facilities, and a list of communities where new facilities are required.

example, in the “20,000-boreholes” project and the GoG/ CMB Solar-powered Borehole Construction Project, both the procurement of goods and services as well as the disbursement of funds were carried out by CWSA Head Office, to the reported exclusion the Sunyani West District Assembly. The assembly expressed concern that its role was restricted to selecting the beneficiary communities, strengthening the capacity of the management structures, and monitoring installation activities, even though it was legally the service authority.

- On its part, CWSA laments its outright exclusion by the DAs when projects are funded through the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF). Not uncommonly, assemblies have procured drilling services and forged ahead to mechanise boreholes with their DACF resources without any prior knowledge or involvement of CWSA. This kind of exclusion has a potential to undermine the dependability of subsequent CWSA support.
- NGOs too typically misinterpret the role of the assemblies as essentially supervisory in nature. Thus, they find no need to involve the latter in their procurement and disbursement activities. By contrast, assemblies expect to be more actively involved in these processes, as well as to receive some logistical support to enable them carry out their monitoring and other functions. While planning and coordination do appear to be enhanced when NGOs make provision for logistical support to district assemblies, the sustainability of NGO financing of local government recurrent costs, as a long-term practice, seems problematic and cannot be justified.

The boundary between the coordination role of the RCCs and that of their MMDAs similarly remains blurred. This is partly accounted for by the fact that RCCs tend to be relatively worse resourced than their MMDAs, compelling them to shirk much of their inter-district coordination responsibility.

The transition from the District Water and Sanitation Team (DWST) and WASH Focal Person concept to leadership by the Water Unit has been an unsteady one for the MMDAs, and has been accompanied by some turf wars. Under the initial arrangement, the Planning Officer (or sometimes the Budget Analyst) was the Focal Person for WASH activities, and had responsibility for coordinating representatives from the other departments/ directorates (DSWCD, EHSD) in WASH delivery

activities. With the establishment of Water Unit, headed by the District Engineer, the new roles are often unclear and in some districts, Planning Officers are still initiating activities relating to WASH delivery which they regard as a planning function. The District Works Department on the other hand feel such functions should be performed by them as indicated in the DOM.

For a credible and sustained dent to be made in the state of water poverty, it will be important to begin to proactively address the kinds of challenges raised by this study – key among which are the lack of respect for the differential roles outlined in the NCWSP and deficient state of cooperation fuelled by competition for scarce resources and power. Further education and discussion will be needed to clarify the functions and relationships between the various stakeholders in the decentralised system. The Learning Alliance concept provides a useful mechanism for fostering such shared learning.

For now, unfortunately, the persistent delays in the release of statutory DACF grants by the central government leave DAs routinely constrained in honouring their side of MoUs with their partners. Some NGOs complained about districts defaulting on basic roles such as monitoring and supervision, and expecting the partnering NGOs to resource them for such activities.

4.3 Approaches and procedures

There is a conspicuous lack of adherence to sector guidelines, with an adverse effect on the quality and sustainability of service delivery in beneficiary communities. Overwhelmingly, sector NGOs are not adhering to the procedures, norms and standards set out by CWSA under the National Community and Sanitation Programme. They typically fail to follow the approved project implementation cycle, often neglecting to invest in the software aspects such as community sensitisation and the formation and training of WSMTs to manage the facilities sustainably. Often too, handpumps are installed without water quality tests being conducted. As an official of Bongo District Assembly (BDA) observed, *“some people just come in, ... go to a community and start drilling boreholes ... If you attempt to prevent them, you will get into a head-on collision with the community.”* Such disharmonious practices have tended to undermine maintenance routines and prolong facility downtime.

In some cases, the initiators of the law (MWRWH) and the legislators (MPs) have themselves been at the helm of breaching the law. In the Chinese borehole project, for example, the contract was reportedly signed by the ministry (MWRWH) rather than by the participating districts, and without the prescribed software component, contrary to the provisions of CWSA Regulations 2011 (LI 2007). The contractors were also selected in Accra, by MWRWH, with no input whatsoever from the beneficiary districts. The regional CWSA offices were only notified after the contractors had been mobilised. Because the project did not align with the Project Implementation Manual (PIM), CWSA found it challenging providing the required levels of monitoring and supervision.

The deficits arising from the lack of a systematised approach to project delivery reflects in the topmost priorities and concerns cited by the districts. For example, in Bongo District, the availability of spare parts is the most significant water sector priority. Closely linked is the community's capacity to maintain their facilities. Logically, one would expect replacement parts and maintenance challenges to be less of a problem in a regime that standardises the range of pumps used. Similarly, local maintenance capacity would be less of a burden if procedures for forming and training facility management teams were to be followed diligently by all sector investors. For Sunyani West, the topmost priorities again include the rehabilitation of broken-down facilities and capacity deficits among WSMTs. The failure of DAs, contrary to their mandate, to ensure realistic tariffs designed to fund repairs and maintenance further feeds the cycle of unsustainable delivery.

In DP-funded projects, CWSA typically assumes responsibility for the design while the procurement of goods and services is led by the RCCs, in collaboration with CWSA and the district assemblies. CWSA provides technical support (notably to the bidding process). The RCCs, acting on behalf of their MMDAs, receive the bid documents, and constitute Bid Evaluation Committees, with representatives from the assemblies and CWSA. The evaluation committees submit evaluation reports to the RCCs, based on which the Regional Tender Committees recommend award of contracts to the winning service providers (contractors and consultants). The respective clients (district assemblies) then sign contracts with the service providers and introduce them to the beneficiary communities for the commencement of works.

Key stakeholders in projects that are donor-financed (especially the RCCs and CWSA) carry out complementary monitoring activities during the contract implementation period, with the aim of ensuring quality in service delivery. Monitoring schedules are developed at the regional and district levels, linked to the work plans of service providers. At the assembly level, these monitoring plans may be incorporated into the Annual Action Plans (AAPs) for WASH. CWSA is largely able to implement its monitoring plans during the implementation of the DP-funded projects because of the availability of resources (e.g. fuel, vehicles, allowances and office equipment) provided by the projects. However, monitoring frequency and effectiveness tend to tail off once project implementation ends.

Awareness of, and the importance attached to, different operational documents varies widely between sector stakeholders. In projects where planning is led by CWSA, the most significant documents used are CWSA's Sector Investment Plans (SIPs) and the WSSDP. On their part, DAs have found a range of documents helpful in implementing their water projects. These include the District Operational Manual, (DOM), National Community Water and Sanitation Strategy, (NCWSS), Project Implementation Manual (PIM), the WATSAN Handbook, the Model Bylaws for WSMTs and sample contract documents. Consultants have tended to lean more on the Model Bylaws, WATSAN Handbooks and CWSA Design Guidelines in delivering their outputs. Overall, NGOs interviewed tended to be unaware of the water sector documents or guidelines. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the processes which they employ for constituting and training WSMTs generally fail to follow the approved sector guidelines. World Vision Ghana has even developed its own set of guidance documents. The study found the same lack of respect for state systems in interventions led by MPs and religious benefactors (e.g. Catholic Secretariat, Maranatha Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints).

Even though CWSA and the DAs demonstrate an awareness of GoG's sector documents, questions remain regarding the degree to which these documents are actually utilised. As noted previously, there is greater adherence to the sector guidelines on projects funded by DPs. This is partly accounted for by the more stringent monitoring and compliance regimes associated with such projects. That level of rigour tends to be absent in GoG projects. In one curious example reported during the interviews – specifically GoG's "20,000 boreholes" intervention – drilling was

largely complete in most communities before funding was provided for community animation and WSMT training. The requirement under LI 2007, for WASH investors to receive prior authorisation from the DAs, continues to be sidestepped and is poorly enforced by the DAs. The participating districts cited logistical challenges as constraining their ability to monitor activities proactively. Further, the requirement for WSMT bylaws to be gazetted by the respective assemblies (service authorities) as a precondition for the WSMTs becoming operational is not being followed. This undermines the legitimacy of the WSMTs, as a result of which they are often unable to confront individuals who usurp control over boreholes.

Among those familiar with the sector documents, some found CWSA Regulations 2011 (LI 2007) challenging to comply with. The timelines were singled out as being particularly problematic. For instance, Article 1 clause 3 provides that “*the District Assembly shall in consultation with [CWSA] consider the application within ten (10) days of the receipt of the application*” The related appeals procedure was also perceived to be unduly cumbersome and unrealistic.

Nevertheless, the CWSA guidelines were assessed to be relevant and useful. Activities such as community sensitisation, the formation of WSMTs as community representatives to manage and operate the water facilities were adjudged to be reasonable prescriptions.

Overall, the study finds a patent lack of coherence in implementation arrangements. Only in DP-funded projects are the stipulations for implementing water service delivery (as provided in the NCWSP guidelines and other GoG’s operational documents for the sector) broadly followed.

4.4 Monitoring and reporting for water

At the assembly level, several units/ departments have roles in monitoring – the Water Unit of the Works Department, the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development (DSWCD) and the Environmental Health and Sanitation Directorate (EHSD). Other key actors – typically CWSA, the RCCs and sector NGOs – also reported carrying out monitoring both during project implementation (to ensure adherence to the provisions of the project design) and at

the post-construction phase (to track the functionality of WASH facilities and protect the sustainability of investments).

The indicators employed for monitoring vary depending on project design and funding source. While some projects assign monitoring roles to the districts, others do not. District participation in implementation monitoring is further dependent on the level of dedicated resourcing allocated to the districts by the implementers of the project. Post-construction monitoring, on the other hand, is recognised more as a direct responsibility of the district and is often planned for as a quarterly activity. In practice, functionality tracking tends to be limited to hardware (whether the facilities are working or not). Monitoring of software indicators, such as performance of WSMTs, rarely occurs.

An ICT-based monitoring framework developed by CWSA under the SMARTerWASH Project has been used to varying degrees by the districts for post-construction monitoring since 2015. The framework's core indicators include functionality, service level, reliability, non-crowding, distance, quality and quantity. Recent monitoring reports from the Sunyani West District have prioritised indicators of functionality and attempted to cover all water interventions in the district. The findings resulted in some follow-up maintenance and repair actions in the district. However, not all actors operating in the district use these indicators. In the case of Bongo District, the use of the indicators is not seen as a priority. By contrast to SWDA, the framework is perceived by BDA to be too comprehensive and requiring copious amounts of time and other resources to operationalise. On its part, CWSA would wish for the framework to be mainstreamed for periodic monitoring of water services.

While the assemblies clearly appreciate the framework for facilitating a more effective regime of remedial actions, they nevertheless identify resource constraints (especially transport and fuel) as posing an extant threat to its continued utilisation. Oddly, however, vehicles provided to DAs in Brong Ahafo under AFD and IDA-funded projects have not been used exclusively for WASH activities and field staff responsible for WASH monitoring often lack access to the vehicles.

4.5 Financing: budgeting, allocations and disbursement channels

District budgets and accounts only partially capture WASH funds provided by other sector actors beyond the District Assemblies. Not even all GoG resources are routinely captured in DAs’ financial records. NGOs too often implement their projects off the financial radars of the respective districts. Procurement and fund disbursement in GoG-funded projects tend to take place at the national level, with the beneficiary districts typically excluded from financial discussions and, sometimes, even contract notification.

Another barrier to effective DA financial management has been the “lead district” concept employed in the management of IDA and AFD-financed projects, whereby contracts are signed and managed by lead districts on behalf of other districts subsumed under their respective contract lots. This perception of role conflict has tended not only to subvert cooperation but has also undermined record keeping in the non-lead districts. The perception that districts lack control merely because others sign a contract on their behalf may not be wholly accurate, however. For example, when a lead district signs a contract on behalf of other districts, the other districts constituting the lot participate in the procurement process as panel members. The respective districts also monitor and certify the relevant works (as part of the procedure for authorising payments) before payments are made to the consultants or contractors.

The assemblies opined that project implementation tends to run more smoothly in DP-funded projects, and funds are more likely to cover all key implementation activities. The replenishment of funds similarly tends to be more timeous, upon the submission of relevant invoices and certificates.

Table 3. WASH allocations in Sunyani West District

No.	Name of project	Funding source (donor component)	Funding source (DA component)	Project cost (GHS)	Disbursement channel	Remarks
1	SRWSP – construction of boreholes with handpump	IDA: 95%	5%	290,586.80	Lead District Assembly	DA honoured GHS 14,529.30, representing 100% of its commitment

2	SRWSP – construction of piped system	IDA: 95%	5%	1,141,495.37	District Assembly	DA honoured GHS 1,803.78, representing 0.16% of its contribution
3	Rehabilitation of broken down or partially functional boreholes	DACF	100%	50,000.00	District Assembly	These activities were captured in the district’s Annual Action Plan for WASH
4	Monitoring of WASH activities (post-construction)	DACF	100%	950	District Assembly	These activities were captured in the district’s Annual Action Plan for WASH

Source: Sunyani West District Assembly, Finance Unit

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- In practice, DAs are not fully exercising their mandates as development authorities, responsible for planning, implementation, coordination and monitoring of water delivery interventions within their jurisdictions. While there is some cooperation with other institutions such as CWSA, the RCCs, DPs and NGOs in these tasks, DAs often lack de facto leadership and ownership of various aspects of the WASH agendas. Projects initiated by Central Government appear to be particularly notorious in undermining district ownership and control.
- Thus far, the source of funding has been a significant driver of the coordination and management arrangement employed in delivering water sector interventions at the district level. The deficit in DA control manifests in disharmonious approaches to delivery and weak adherence to sector guidelines. Such sub-optimal adherence to the sector guidelines undermines the quality of service delivery and sustainability of investments in beneficiary communities.
- In large part, DP-funded projects attempt to follow the approved sector documents and guidelines; these projects also tend to be coordinated more consistently. For projects funded centrally by GoG, the use of sector documents tends to be limited and erratic. Other sector actors generally lack adequate awareness and appreciation of the sector’s guidance documents.
- Overall too, stakeholder coordinating platforms tend to be active mainly when there is donor funding to resource the coordination meetings.

- Political interference and apathy were also found to undermine orderly WASH planning and implementation, with political actors (typically serving and aspirant MPs) routinely sidestepping approved processes in a bid to hasten the delivery of hardware. The study found that communities selected for intervention are not always the most water-deprived, presumably influenced by political considerations and the poor coordination.
- Stakeholder monitoring tends to be disjointed, with the diverse actors failing to coalesce their efforts around a common set of indicators.
- There is a conspicuous lack of regulation of the rural water sector. Whereas there is a clear legal mandate for regulating urban water delivery, no such provision exists for rural water.

5.1 Recommendations

The study's findings suggest the following recommendations:

- The lack of a formal regulator for the rural water sector will need to be addressed as a matter of urgency. An ongoing organisational assessment of CWSA will hopefully help to clarify the steps that need taking to equip the organisation for the role of an effective regulator of the sector.
- Given the poor level of awareness and the limited application and utilisation of the sector investment guidelines, there is a need for continuous dissemination of, and education on, these documents to sector NGOs, MPs and other providers. Existing avenues such as the DLAPs, district assembly mid-year and annual reviews, project launches and DPCT meetings should be exploited more intensively to this end.
- In the same vein, it will be important to improve on mechanisms by which stakeholders can provide feedback on the use of the documents, as part of a larger strategy to enhance shared ownership, utilisation and relevance of the guidelines.
- Finally, in the face of the increasingly straitened state of public sector budgets, the response to the monitoring and coordination challenges must lie primarily in increasing *efficiency* (as opposed to quantum) of available monitoring and coordination resources. This will entail, for example, ensuring that meetings/

platforms become significantly more productive. That, in turn, will entail greater attention to pre-specifying meeting outputs, reflecting carefully on data/ reports in advance of meetings, assigning action points from meetings more purposefully and pursuing follow-ups in a diligent and timeous manner.

While these will not resolve all of the problems documented, they do represent tangible and effective actions. Equally importantly, they are each within the power of the state to implement promptly.

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Annex 1: Research questions

The research was guided by the following questions:

- 1.1 Who are the key actors in water service delivery?
- 1.2 What are the processes for coordinating stakeholders for water delivery?
- 1.3 What platforms exist for coordinating stakeholders for water service delivery?
- 1.4 How does the coordination procedure for water compare with those for other sectors?
- 2.1 What are the most significant documents used to guide water service delivery?
- 2.2 What challenges prevent the fuller utilisation of sector documents in the water service delivery?
- 2.3 What mechanisms exist for providing feedback on the use of sector documents or when there are conflicts with other documents?
- 3.1. Are there conflicts, overlaps and gaps in the roles of stakeholders in water service delivery?
- 3.2. What is working well in managing the relationship among various actors/ institutions in water service delivery?
- 4.1 Are stakeholders aware of the indicators for monitoring water service delivery?
- 4.2 Do stakeholders report consistently on these indicators?
- 4.3 What are the monitoring results used for?
- 4.4 What measures are employed to capture learning to improve water service delivery at the district?
- 5.1 Which sources of funds are captured in districts' budgets and reported on in their accounts?
- 5.2 Which sector resources are excluded from districts' budgets and accounts?
- 5.3 What are the reasons for continuing fragmentation in planning at the district level?

