



IRC

Asutifi North: what the water challenge means for communities

A baseline picture

Peter McIntyre and Abubakari M.S. Wumbei

Supporting water sanitation
and hygiene services for life

We have a once in a lifetime opportunity to make access to safe water and sanitation available for everyone, for good. The UN has set a target to achieve this by 2030 – known as ‘Sustainable Development Goal 6’ (SDG6).

Resilient systems: the only way

We know that the only way to achieve this goal is through resilient local and national water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) systems that transform lives. We know how to build and strengthen these systems – but we need to do it now.

It will take everyone, in all parts of the system, changing the way they think and work.

Everyone, together

Each part of a country’s WASH system must work effectively: from people using pumps, to monitoring tools, to finance systems. This can only be achieved if everyone in the system knows and plays their part.

Achieving universal access calls for collective action by a broad movement of government, civil society, private sector service providers, financiers, academia and others.

Our unique position

As a change hub, we’re in a unique position to unite people to drive and champion change from the ground up. We need to convince district, country and global decision makers of what it’ll take to achieve SDG6.

Now is the time

We need to act now. We’re halfway through but not halfway there. We need everyone to commit to massive-scale change – and as you’re reading this, that also means you.

© 2019 IRC

Permission is hereby granted for sharing and adaptation of this material, in whole or in part, for non-commercial use, educational, scientific or development-related purposes, provided that the appropriate and full citation is given. This publication is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Netherlands License. View terms of license here:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/nl/deed.en>

Photos used in this publication are the work of Peter McIntyre, IRC Associate

Editor: Cheryl White

Design and layout: Punt Grafisch Ontwerp, Utrecht, The Netherlands

All IRC publications are accessible on the IRC website for free download. Visit www.ircwash.org or send a request to IRC’s online contact form at www.ircwash.org/contact-us.

Cite this publication as follows:

Asutifi North: what the water challenge means for communities. A baseline picture. Accra: IRC

Asutifi North: what the water challenge means for communities

A baseline picture



Contents

Preface.....	4
Abbreviations.....	7
Executive summary.....	5
Context – the Asutifi North initiative and WASH master plan.....	9
Why focus on Asutifi North?	9
The ANAM master plan.....	10
Drinking water.....	11
Sanitation.....	11
Targets in the master plan	11
The purpose of this document	15
Community visits	19
Wamahinso.....	19
Agravi.....	21
Kensere.....	24
Goamu Camp	26
Asamang.....	28
Tawiahkrom.....	30
Partnerships.....	35
Discussion	39
Notes.....	45
References.....	46

Preface

We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make access to safe water and sanitation available for everyone, for good.

To achieve this goal we need resilient national and local water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) systems that transform lives.

In Ghana, we are working in partnership with the government of Asutifi North district and NGOs to make this a reality.

The first step towards building and strengthening systems is to collect baseline data. In 2017 we started to do this, using three methods: consultations with sector stakeholders; reviewing existing sector data; and by assessing the building blocks that make the WASH system. On top of this evidence based work, we undertook in March 2018 an activity to document stories from the communities of the Asutifi North district, touching on the baseline situation, prospects and challenges to help inform dialogue and collaboration. The result of that activity is represented in this paper, and in a series of short videos.

Having the baseline in place, will help everyone involved to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the current WASH systems and service levels, and what we need to do to improve them. Using this data, we and our partners can develop, change and scale our systems approach in Ghana.

Vida Duti, country director, IRC Ghana



Abbreviations

ANAM	Asutifi North Ahonidie Mpontuo (Clean Asutifi North) initiative
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CWSA	Community Water and Sanitation Agency (Ghana)
GH¢	Ghanaian cedi
KVIP	Kumasi Ventilated Improved Pit
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WSMT	Water and Sanitation Management Teams



Executive summary

In March 2018, the Asutifi North district in the Ahafo region of Ghana embarked on an initiative to give every person in the district access to sustainable safe water, sanitation and hygiene services.

The ANAM (Clean Asutifi North) initiative has a target date of 2030 to transform services so that half of urban households and 20% of rural households have access to safely managed water, with everyone else at least having access to basic water services. All urban households use safely managed household latrines while all rural households will have access at least to basic sanitation.

Asutifi North was chosen out of 250 districts in Ghana to pioneer a district wide approach – designed so that the District Assembly leads and partners combine efforts to build maximum coordination and unstoppable momentum towards achieving full coverage.

This booklet and a series of linked videos show a baseline pattern of intractable problems faced by communities who feel powerless to resolve their water and sanitation crisis.

- Wamahinso is a rapidly growing small town that has outstripped its water supplies; women are frustrated and angry at queueing for water at a pump that frequently dries up.
- In Agravi repeated attempts to solve problems by digging new wells have failed. The community relies on an open handwell that is more than 25 years old, where women sometimes wait half the night for water.
- In Kensere, a larger community with scattered farms, many people returned to open defecation after the communal toilet block collapsed.
- In Goamu Camp water quality is an issue as well as unreliability. When their most reliable well starts to smell the water is unsafe for use.
- In Asamang people sometimes have to travel to the next village for water.
- In Tawiahkrom the main water supply is an open well where women pull up water in buckets. Sanitation has failed and men and women share the same public latrine.

All these communities experience regular interruptions of service when everyday life is put on hold and children cannot get to school.

Community leaders contrast the situation with the time when their parents and grandparents obtained water from traditional sources and they felt a greater level of autonomy and self-reliance. In 2018 there were few signs of effective community management or payment systems.

The challenge is not only about more provision but also about building new relationships between the district and communities. George Padmore Mensah, district coordinating director of the Asutifi North district assembly said, “Getting the communities on board is a huge challenge because they see the assembly as government- that somebody should come and do everything for them.”

This baseline picture shows the journey that is still left to travel. Vida Duti, country director, IRC Ghana says: “Having the baseline in place, will help everyone involved to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the current WASH systems and service levels, and what we need to do to improve them.” The ANAM strategy is one where partnerships are central. As Robel Lambisso, World Vision program manager puts it: “When we clap together we will be heard”.



Context – the Asutifi North initiative and WASH master plan



In March 2018, the Asutifi North District in the Ahafo¹ region of Ghana embarked on the ANAM² initiative to transform the low coverage of water and sanitation by 2030 to give every person in the district “access to sustainable safe water, sanitation and hygiene services in a conducive environment where water resources are sustainably managed”.³

Why focus on Asutifi North?

In 2017, in discussion with the Hilton Foundation, IRC began looking for a district in Ghana where a number of initiatives to improve WASH services by focusing on steps to strengthen sustainability could be brought together in a strategy that would pool governmental, NGO and private sector resources and skills. The aim was to achieve full coverage in one district and demonstrate the reality of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in a system that is financially, technologically and socially sustainable. With the full support of the Government of Ghana and the Hilton Foundation as donor, IRC invited expressions of interest from districts that would share in this ambition and provide the necessary commitment and skills.

From more than 250 districts in Ghana, a short list of five emerged and a detailed assessment was made of their capacity of WASH delivery alongside with stakeholder mapping and analysis. Asutifi North district demonstrated efficiency and a willingness to work with a wide range of partners.

Asutifi North is one of the smaller districts in the Ahafo region, and contains 149 settlements as well as 49 small villages with populations below 75 people. Population growth and urbanisation is being driven by the thriving mining industry. Some illegal mining and poor agronomic practices are responsible for the heavy pollution of surface water. However, revenue from mining activities and agriculture give the district authority the potential to invest in water and sanitation.



George Padmore Mensah

George Padmore Mensah, district coordinating director of the Asutifi North District Assembly, said that the district had been held back from meeting WASH challenges by limited resources. “Once this opportunity came from IRC, we decided to commit ourselves to be selected. We have a committed team from the chief executive to the coordinating director to the planning unit. We have a strong district planning coordinating team. The whole country will benefit from this project.”⁴



Chris Dunston at the launch of the Asutifi North initiative

The donor also believes that what happens in Asutifi North will have implications for the whole of Ghana. Chris Dunston, senior program officer for the Hilton Foundation, links this initiative to the decentralisation strategy of the Government of Ghana. “We believe that if you can demonstrate the processes and procedures and the know-how at the district [level], while at the same time working in collaboration with regional and national governments to contribute and gain ownership of these processes, this could be replicated and adapted to many different districts. It is a building process and this is the foundation.”⁵

“We think that focusing this effort will demonstrate the processes to engage with communities so that they have a very clear and representative voice and common vision.

“We need to keep the communications and feedback within communities and constantly share the knowledge and lessons we are learning with other regions and other districts throughout the country.”

The ANAM master plan

In March 2018 the district adopted a WASH master plan for universal, long-term sustainable access. Historically, coverage in the district for both water and sanitation has been very low: in 2018 most of the rural population in the district still lacked access to improved communal water services and the majority of people did not have access to basic sanitation.⁶ The challenge is all the greater because the district population is expected to grow by more than one third from 62,817 in 2017 to about 84,500 people by 2030.



More than half the rural population lacks access to improved water services

The master plan was based on a year-long process of consultation with partners who included: local and national government leaders, chiefs, market women, water service providers, private sector, local NGOs and circuit water providers to reflect on how to provide WASH services for everyone in the district. The Hon. Anthony Mensah, chief executive of the Asutifi North District Assembly, says that the master plan represents “the resolve of the Assembly to leverage resources and expertise of strategic partners to achieve a common vision for universal access to WASH services by the year 2030.”⁷

The plan has been endorsed by all major governmental, community and development agencies and partners and it sets a 13 year timetable to meet basic service standards that are realistic and achievable.

The scale of the challenge can be seen in the status of water and sanitation services at the point where the initiative was being planned in 2017/2018.

Drinking water⁸

- The district lacks the capacity to protect water sources and monitor water quality.
- 58% of the rural population lacks access to improved communal water services - with the greatest deprivation in poorer and rural areas.
- Only 11% of the urban population and 3.6% of the total district population have household connections with safely managed water.
- There is intermittent water supply in towns and water from safe sources is low: only eight litres per capita per day in Kenyasi, the district capital.
- More than a third (36%) of handpumps are out of action for more than 18 days per year.
- Most community water and sanitation management teams are poorly constituted, lack gender balance and perform poorly.
- Some health facilities and most schools lack handwashing facilities.

Sanitation

- Fewer than one in six (15.6%) use improved household latrines.
- About half of the population use public latrines - in rural areas these are mostly unimproved.
- Less than a quarter of public latrines can be considered clean and fewer than one in 20 have facilities for handwashing.
- There are few facilities for collecting, transporting, treating and disposing of solid and liquid waste.
- More than half of schools and almost half of health facilities have dirty latrines.

Targets in the master plan

The strategic plan sets goals and actions for attaining universal access to sustainable basic water services by 2030. By 2030:

- half of urban households will have access to safely managed water - this implies a 600% increase in household connections. The remaining 50% will have access to basic water services within a 30-minute round trip.
- one in five rural households (20%) will have access to safely managed water - through household connections to existing small town schemes or through self-supply. The remaining 80% will have access to basic water services.

The strategy also plans to increase access to improved and reliable environmental sanitation services. By 2030:

- all urban households will make use of safely managed household latrines with safe onsite or offsite treatment.
- all rural households will have access to at least basic sanitation.



Fewer than one in six families use an improved household latrine

In addition:

- all schools and health institutions will have basic access to both sanitation and water services, sustainably managed by well-trained staff.
- water resources will be sustainably managed to guarantee water availability of acceptable quality for commercial, industrial and domestic uses.
- the plan will tackle problems of surface and groundwater pollution and illegal mining and will reclaim degraded lands.
- the district will explore options to provide water facilities for 49 unserved communities and to improve facilities in communities that are currently underserved.

Strategies will be adopted to establish water and sanitation management teams; enhance the capacity of area mechanics; improve the quality of construction and establish WASH user fees at community level. A combination of strategies, including Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), will be adopted to improve access to sanitation.

The strategy will be managed by the district working through local partnerships with district level civil society organisations; traditional authorities; private sector; Newmont Gold Ghana Limited and Newmont Ahafo Development Foundation. The district has also engaged with external partners such as national and regional ministries, departments and agencies. Significant development partners in the ANAM initiative include IRC, Safe Water Network, World Vision International, Netcentric Campaign and the Aquaya Institute, with input from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

A stakeholder network has been developed to support planning, implementation, advocacy and engagement to influence behaviour and attitudinal change, and to win support for key messages such as equity and inclusion, payment of tariffs, prioritisation of WASH; business opportunities and financial accountability.



Chapter 2

The purpose of this document

As part of its partnership work, IRC Ghana commissioned a paper and a series of short videos to document stories from communities of the Asutifi North district, touching on the baseline situation, prospects and challenges to help inform dialogue and collaboration.

In the week leading up to the launch, a consultant accompanied a team from the Asutifi North planning office and from IRC Ghana on short visits to six communities in the district. Interviews were conducted with community members, community leaders and with district officials. In the same week, interviews were conducted with representatives of partner organisations. The consultant also attended the launch of the ANAM initiative.

Five short videos have been published on YouTube and can be found at <http://bit.ly/AsutifiNorthGhana>.

This paper describes the situation in the communities and the reflections of partner organisations. It is a snapshot in time of March 2018 from observations and interviews in these communities. The communities were selected by the district planning office as demonstrating some of the most intractable problems and how decades of piecemeal provision have left people without access to safe water or secure sanitation. The history of water and sanitation services in these communities is largely one of provision donated from outside in response to appeals for help. Communities have come to feel relatively powerless to help themselves without outside intervention.

For these reasons, this document illustrates problems rather than solutions. It should be seen as complementary to the data collected by the district and partners for the baseline study⁹ that enable policy makers to analyse and plan. These interviews and observations reflect daily life experiences and show the human impact of failing services.



The team documenting WASH in communities includes (second left) James Ataera, Asutifi North Senior Planning Officer and (third from right) Benjamin Agbemor, IRC Ghana, who is helping the district to implement the master plan.

Asutifi North: what the water challenge means for communities

The main value of this document and videos is as a baseline. They show how people in particular communities acted and thought at this point in time. Future visits can help to show the distance travelled and the value gained during the journey.

Our working party included officials from the district assembly and outsiders (as documenters) and this probably impacted on the way that communities presented their situation, as we appeared as a potential source of help.¹⁰ However, what we saw and heard confirmed that the picture presented was broadly accurate.



Asutifi North Chief Executive, Anthony Mensah

It was instructive to compare notes with the district chief executive, Anthony Mensah, who conducted his own independent fact-finding tour of communities at the same time and found very similar issues. “Almost every community complained of potable drinking water. Some of the communities have the water - but the quality of the water was a problem.”¹¹ He had taken the opportunity to explain the ANAM initiative and the partnership work that was beginning to take place but noted that communities were naturally interested in when they would see actual changes. “We are trying very hard to put matters forward for our people to understand the processes that we are going through before the programme starts. As we speak many people in our communities are aware of the programme. Therefore they keep asking when the final product will be put in place.”



Community leaders at Wamahinso





Chapter 3

Community visits

The team visited six communities: Wamahinso, Agravi, Kensere, Goamu Camp, Asamang and Tawiahkrom. In each community we were greeted by the chief or representative. After a discussion with them we visited WASH facilities and spoke to the women and men who were using wells or were members of the community water and sanitation management teams.

Wamahinso

As we approached the main water point in Wamahinso South there was an outcry from women waiting to fill their containers from a limited mechanised borehole (LMB). The water had slowed to a trickle and a group of about 30 women, who had been waiting for hours, had been left dry. Many had their children with them.

Women were shouting with frustration. One of the women had arrived at 7am and said they sometimes wait all day without getting water. “We stay a long time - sometimes until 6pm and still we don’t get water to take home. Why is that? Sometimes it is three days before we can take a bath.”

Another woman, waving her container above her head, protested, “The children are not able to go to school because they are queueing for water. Even when the water flows it cuts out. We are really struggling.”

Wamahinso is one of the rapidly growing small towns in Asutifi North, home to many people working for the Newmont Ahafo gold mine, and reflects growing urbanisation with many rural characteristics.

The town has four boreholes provided by Newmont and the local government, but they often run dry and water services are not keeping pace with demand.



Protests in Wamahinso after the water ran dry

Asutifi North: what the water challenge means for communities

Problems with water in this community are not new. Nana Amoako Gyampah, the krontihene (sub-chief) for Wamahinso, recalls queuing for water in the evening as a child and how it would run dry. Things are no better today. “When I was young, water was a problem in this town. It has been a problem for ages.”



Nana Amoako Gyampah,
Wamahinso Krontihene
(sub-chief)

The krontihene is proud of his community. Town leaders organise special days to clear the town of litter and prevent gutters from providing breeding grounds for mosquitoes. But he says that water shortages affect people’s happiness and the education of their children. The whole town will give thanks to God, he says if the water problems can be solved.

“Currently some [water points] have dried up so that women who come to collect it don’t get any. Whoever arrives first gets to fetch water and the others have to wait for the borehole to fill again.”

The day we visited was one such day. Ama Ampomah had arrived at dawn to collect water but when it was almost her turn, the water stopped. She had returned in the afternoon and the water had almost stopped again. If she could not collect here she would have to travel more than four miles to Amomaso by foot to collect water from a stream for washing.



Ama Ampomah faces a
four mile journey if the
pump fails

Across the road in Wamahinso North there is a smaller private tap with a slow but steady flow. Attendant Gloria Badu collects money from the women: 10 pesewas for a small bucket and 20 pesewas for 25 litres. This helps to keep this water point flowing. However, water shortages in both south and north Wamahinso are a daily fact of life.

Nnuro Ameyaw, assembly member for Wamahinso South, said it was common for women to wait for three hours to collect even one container of water. “Sometimes they have to fight,” he reported bluntly, “and children don’t go to school because of water.”

Sanitation is also a problem because few houses have toilets and people have to queue to use public toilets.

The assembly member said that the community relies on outside help for these services. They had written to the district assembly, and now officials had seen the problems for themselves they were proposing new borewells and he now hoped for fundamental change. “I hope that in the next ten years, everybody in the area will get water and the water will not be difficult for us here.”

Although the assembly member sees water and sanitation as major problems, he actually identified the greatest need in the community as improved mobile phone coverage.

The assembly member for Wamahinso North, Owusu Ansah Samuel, agrees that water has been a problem all his lifetime. “There are few water sources here and many have broken down. There are many people and visitors arrive day in and day out, so the water is not sufficient. We have to do something about it. We need new water sources.”



Assembly member Nnuro
Ameyaw

Agravi

Agravi, a community of 600 people, has made multiple attempts to solve their water supply problems but all had ended in frustration. New borewells were drilled in 2012 and 2017, but at the time of our visit these had failed and the community relied on an open handwell that is more than 25 years' old.

Women stand precariously on the well apron surrounds, lower their buckets into the depths and pull them up without the benefit of a pulley. The well is on the edge of the community - for most women it is an uphill walk back to their homes carrying large containers on their heads. Collecting water takes much of their time and sometimes women wait all night for this well to fill up.

Faustina Benenye makes three trips a day and her daughter carries a fourth bucketful. They have to filter the water to remove the worms and she says the whole process is a great source of stress.



Nana Kwaku Sokpor says children's health and education suffers

The chief, Nana Kwaku Sokpor says the only alternative is a two mile car journey. He says it is hard to retain teachers who want to live and teach in a place with better facilities. The children's education and health suffer as a result. "It is difficult for a girl to wake in the morning and not be able to bathe before school."

The open well was installed in 1991 as part of the Programme of Actions to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment (PAMSCAD), a joint Government of Ghana, World Bank, UNICEF initiative. The community petitioned the district assembly to provide more water points. In 2012, the district sent engineers who installed a pump with a foot treadle. The foot treadle broke and was replaced with a handpump. But this proved not strong enough to pump the water up from depth.



Women perch on the edge of an open well in Agravi





Taking the strain for another journey home

Alex Gafli, secretary of the Agravi WATSAN committee told us, “Frankly speaking, we did not even get water for a week. After drilling it was spoiled in three days.”

In 2017 a team from China installed a borewell and handpump under the 1,000 Borehole Project.¹² This lasted scarcely a week before it failed, and although the implementing team returned to carry out repairs it only lasted another week before failing again.

The two new wells had provided water for less than a month between them and the community returned to the older handwell.

Even this runs out of water in the dry season. Alex Gafli said, “The women sit around the well and wait until it fills, sometimes all night. If you don’t come early you don’t get anything.”

Villagers removed the lid to make it easier to draw up water, but this leads to problems as rats and other animals can fall in. On one occasion a woman with mental health problems threw faeces into the well and the villagers had to empty it and clean it out.

At one stage the community was promised a mechanised pump but the assembly member who promised this is no longer in office and it did not materialise.

The chief, Nana Kwaku Sokpor, is optimistic that the ANAM initiative will change all of this. “With new water policies and God’s good grace, Agravi will get good drinking water”, he said.



Kensere

Kensere is a rural community of about 1,800 people, including outlying farms. People pay a small amount to collect water from the handpumps and with this money they are able to maintain them. But the boreholes have become muddy and are inadequate for a growing community. According to the village leaders, this is the largest community in the district without a good water supply.



Kwasi Appiah says sanitation is the biggest problem he has faced in 22 years as community chief

The most immediate problem is sanitation. The system has collapsed - both physically and figuratively - and the evidence of outside defecation is clearly visible. Kensere chief Kwasi Appiah says it is the biggest problem he has faced in his 22 years as community leader.

A large toilet block was built in the community in 1996 and was used by 400-500 people. In 2013 it became full and the community used its cash reserves to rehabilitate it.

In October 2016, there was a major collapse of the pit hole, followed by a partial collapse of the superstructure. The toilets are now unusable and there are no funds for repairs. Theophilus Adu Kwasi, assembly member for Kensere Manhyia A, Kensere, says people were supposed to pay a small amount to use the toilet but this system had quickly fallen into disuse. “We were not familiar with that so we put an end to the payments,” he said. As a result there is no community money for rebuilding and the toilet block had been out of action for 18 months at the time of our visit.

The community had written to the district assembly asking for help and the engineer who inspected it said that the whole block needed rebuilding. Since then nothing has happened. Kwasi says, “We have never heard anything about it and now we are finding it difficult to get a place to go.”



Rebecca Dankwah with one of the few household latrines in Kensere



Kensere Assembly member Theophilus Adi Kwasi outside the latrine block that collapsed, where open defecation is now common

Asutifi North: what the water challenge means for communities

The situation was made worse when a toilet block built by a Dutch NGO for the local school also had to be closed for repairs.

A few people do have household latrines. Rebecca Dankwah built one so that her elderly mother would have somewhere safe to go. It is used by the whole family and some neighbours. She paid local builders to dig the pit and bought cement and iron rods for the superstructure. In all it cost her GH₵ 400 - about US\$ 90 - and she considers it money well spent and is especially appreciated at night.

However, Chief Kwasi Appiah says that poverty prevents most people from acquiring their own toilets.



Mary Oduro

Mary Oduro, mother of ten children, said the women were especially concerned at the lack of sanitation as they could not go into the bush to relieve themselves as men did. They use a chamber pot and when they go to the farm they throw the contents away with the rubbish.

Children used to defecate anywhere and it was a disease risk. Now parents sweep it up and put it in the rubbish or throw it in the bush. “We will be very happy if we get a toilet. If need be we can contribute as we do for water.”

Goamu Camp

Goamu Camp is the centre of an area of 2,700 people when outlying villages and farms are taken into account. They too experience poor water supply and sanitation.

There are three handpump wells in this community and each has its problems. The first was provided by an NGO 30 years ago and the community has habitually used its own money to carry out repairs. Because of its age it soon breaks again.



Goamu Camp: three handpumps for 2,700 people



Swarms of butterflies are a sign to plant yams

A second well was provided by a benefactor and this is the most reliable in terms of delivering water but the quality is unacceptable. Every few months, for reasons that the villagers have not been able to discover, the water gives off a foul smell and they have to stop using it. After three weeks the water is usable again.



Chief Kwabena Mensah – not enough water even when all pumps are working.

The third was provided by the local government and was solar powered. When it broke down it was converted into a handpump well and has since been the most reliable source.

However, Chief Kwabena Mensah says that because a lot of outlying villages also fetch their water here, there is not enough even when all three pumps are functional. “If we could get one in addition, it will help us a lot.”

One of the mothers Dorcas Owusu-Ansah says that the well they use most sometimes becomes unusable. “When the water starts to smell we can’t use it for anything. We can’t wash or bathe. We can’t do anything with it. The water smells like faeces – it smells like a toilet. Sometimes we have to wait three weeks or a month before we can collect water again. This year the smell has come back three times. Last year we could not count the number of times. We don’t know what makes it smell.”



Dorcas Owusu-Ansah - well becomes unusable

Sanitation is also a problem. The village has dug two community pit latrines and was planning a third. Chief Kwabena Mensah said that one of the district engineers had talked about building them a KVIP latrine. “He didn’t assure us it would be any time soon, but said if things go well, he will come and build us one.”

Asamang

Asamang covers a population of about 1,800 people when outlying farms are included. There are 400 school age children who attend the kindergarten, primary and junior high schools in this community, and with no significant streams or rivers, the area's three boreholes fail to provide adequate water for everyone.



Felicia Agyemang

Grandmother Felicia Agyemang says that the three pumps are the only source of water in the whole area. "If your farm is at a distance, you have to come here to fetch water and carry it back, so when the well breaks down we suffer. We must go with our husbands to fetch water at night so that in the morning our children can go to school."

One of the pumps is close to the primary school. On our visit it took 20 vigorous pumps of the handle before water began to flow, and a whole posse of children to fill a bucket.



Chief Nana Amoah Baafi

Felicia who has eight children and several grandchildren was working with two other women to fill their buckets. "This pump used to help us a lot, but now it is hard to pump water from it. By the time my container is full I will be really tired."

She believes they need outside help to improve their water supply service and that their children's education is being affected.

The chief Nana Amoah Baafi agrees. "Water is a big problem here because of the number of people. When the water points break down, we suffer a lot. If they break we have to walk to a nearby village for water."



It takes three women to pump water from this well



Frimpong Patterson examines the pump they exhausted their funds to repair

Many men have bicycles and can put a canister on the back but women often have to walk three miles to carry the water home, sometimes also with a baby on their back.

The most reliable flow comes from the oldest well with a handpump installed by the district assembly in 1984. It is at the bottom of a hill on the edge of the main part of the community. The district installed two further boreholes closer to the heart of the community in 2003 and 2012.

They are overseen by a water and sanitation management team (five men and two women) and adults of working age are each supposed to pay GH¢ 1 a month to maintain their supplies. They collect about GH¢ 300 a month but it is not enough.

Frimpong Patterson, community teacher and secretary of the WSMT, says that the oldest pump had no proper maintenance until it broke a month before our visit. They had to buy parts to repair it and this exhausted the maintenance fund. “As of now we are bankrupt,” he said.

Chief Nana Amoah Baafi is looking for help. Asamang is on the electric grid and he would like to see one of the pumps mechanised to save time and labour.

“For all these villages, what we see is that for schools, water and other things, it is the district assembly that helps us and NGOs also come and help,” says the chief. They had not been accustomed to doing these things for themselves. “If it falls on us to do something, the entire community will deliberate and we will also help. If we had to pay a small amount, we could manage it, so that we could get water any time at all.”

They have also asked the district assembly for help with their toilets. A communal block (a drop pit with planks) has broken. The school has a toilet block but it has not been kept clean. Patterson says that some of the children run home for water or to use the toilet and miss lessons.



School toilets and (insert) lack of hygiene inside

The chief says that if they had a KVIP (Kumasi Ventilated Improved Pit) block latrine, villagers would pay to use it, but there is no history of paying for sanitation here and no system in place for doing so.

As in other communities, a few households have their own latrine. One villager, Kate Osei-Owusu said that her family had installed a latrine a year before which had cost GH□ 250 (about US\$ 50) and found the convenience of having a household toilet to be good value.

Tawiahkrom

A sizeable meeting in Tawiahkrom greeted the team from Asutifi North district assembly and began a wide ranging discussion of WASH problems before leading a tour of the facilities.

Kyei Fordjour, spokesman for the chief, said water shortages had been acute for almost 30 years. “I remember our mothers used to collect water from the stream. As time went on, the water dried up completely.”

Their grandfathers had sunk the first wells but these did not last. In 1995 the assembly helped them dig two more wells. One collapsed and the other is still used today. “We reached a point where there was no longer enough,” says Fordjour.

There is no water and sanitation management team in this community.

Two women brought a bucket of milky white/brown water from one of the satellite pumps to show assembly members the poor quality from alternative sources.

At the well outside the main village women drop buckets into an uncovered hand dug well and pull them up by hand. This is the main water supply used by about 1,800 people in Tawiahkrom, five satellite communities and a number of outlying farms.



Community meeting about WASH in Tawiahkrom

For most women it means an uphill walk back home carrying water. Men also collect water and carry it home on the back of bicycles.

Lydia Adjei, a mother of four children, recalls that before this well was dug, women used to sleep by the water point so they could collect water at midnight when it had recharged.

“At times the water would finish so we sat there until the water would start again. So we decided to dig for groundwater here. We dug here and we made a well. We could not get cement and the well collapsed. If you go that way you will see several places where we dug. But water was still hard to get. You dig for water, it collapses. You dig and it collapses.”

The well that was dug by the assembly in 1995 transformed the situation. However since the lid of the well broke, frogs, millipedes and snakes get into it and diarrhoea breaks out in the community.

Lydia Adjei said that her daughter had been infected by worms which had affected her skin and nails resulting in hospital treatment.

Nevertheless, the water is clearer here than in surrounding communities and people from other places drive here to fill their containers putting the resource under pressure.

Sanitation is also a major problem in Tawiahkrom. Many families build a pit toilet on their own farms but these are not encouraged in the main part of the community for fear of polluting the water. There is one communal toilet, a roofless construction of planks and logs over a pit that does not have segregated areas for men and women.

A complex social arrangement has developed to allow both men and women to use this facility.



Cloudy water from an outlying well

A man or a woman approaching the toilet pauses behind a nearby bush and calls out 'agoo'. If a man is already there he calls out 'barima' (man) and if a woman is there she calls out 'obaa'. If someone of the opposite sex is using it, the man or woman approaching must wait.

Women complain that they usually wait longest. Lydia Adjei says, "You wake at dawn and go to use the toilet. You call and realise there is a man in there. You have to stand there until the man comes out. If another man arrives you have to give way to him. If men keep arriving you have to look for an alternative and go to the bush."

Recently a cobra was seen in the pit. They brought in a young man with a gun to kill it.

Obeng Sarkodie is one of the villagers who wants to see improvements. "We realise this is not doing us any good. We have started digging another one in such a way that when it is finished we can divide it." He was frustrated that at the time of the visit the new toilet had been under construction for four months and had not got beyond the stage of digging the pit. "You came to Tawiahkrom and this is the toilet we use," he says. "That is just how it is."

In the village meeting there was a vigorous discussion about why they had not done more to improve their own situation.

Why for example had the lid on the well not been replaced? They said that they did not have the skilled carpenters who could make one, although skills were clearly available to build homes in the community.

In general, there was a feeling that they had always relied on the district assembly and had not seen it as their own role to deal with the problems. The community contribution had been in supplying labour or in providing food for the workers.



Obeng Sarkodie talks about the Tawiahkrom latrines which have no superstructure and where men and women have to queue behind a nearby bush.



Spokesman Kyei Fordjour says his community will do more to support the Master Plan

The chief's spokesman, Kyei Fordjour, said that if the new approach meant they should do more, they would. "The assembly has come to tell our community we should help ourselves so they can also help us, then the whole community accepts it."

One of the older men declared strongly that the community would be willing to pay for water in the future. However, there was no clear consensus on whether people would save to contribute to costs. Financing the construction and upkeep of new facilities would clearly require more discussion.



Chapter 4

Partnerships

Partnerships are central to the Asutifi North initiative and success will depend in large part on how the partners sustain commitment in the long term.

Indeed, George Padmore Mensah, district coordinating director of the Asutifi North district assembly says they may need more allies. “If you look at our objective for achieving full WASH coverage by 2030, we still need a lot of partners to team up to achieve that. We don’t want the situation where we get midway and because of inadequate funding we will not be able to achieve the target. So we want everybody on board so that the funding source will not be a deep burden on one particular partner. We will all share the difficulties and be able to meet our target.”¹³

Each partner has a track record of achievement and brings specialised experience to the initiative.



Vida Duti, Country Director,
IRC Ghana

IRC will provide a backbone for the partnership and work with local government to build capacity. Patrick Moriarty, IRC chief executive officer, believes the strength of the master plan is due to its ownership by the district authority and the range of complementary skills of partners to help them achieve it.¹⁴

“Right from the word go, we are clear on our vision, which is universal access. We are clear on the different partners and the complementary skills that those partners bring. This is a plan that has 2030 as its horizon and there is a firm intention of all the partners to keep going until 2030. This initiative is going to be largely predicated on keeping that partnership enthusiastic and focused on the task.



Patrick Moriarty, Chief
Executive Officer, IRC

“One key is to know if we are moving in the right direction. Part of IRC’s role is to create a monitoring framework which allows us to look at all the things that are important: whether more people are getting better services and which of the techniques that were introduced are working and which aren’t working, and to try to learn lessons about how we address some of these.”

World Vision International has been working on water, sanitation and hygiene solutions in Ghana, mainly focusing on rural and semi-urban communities, for more than 30 years and brings expertise, technical capacity and experience. Robel Lambisso, World Vision WASH program manager, says that working with partners is great capital since no single agency can make advances on their own.¹⁵



Robel Lambisso,
World Vision

“The answer doesn’t lie with a single partner or just the government or district. When we join our hands we will be acting with a strong force that can transform the communities. When we clap together we will be heard.”

The communities, district government and supporting agencies all have a role to play. “All of us have different strengths and capabilities so we pull that together. I think that will be very, very helpful for the success of the programme.

“I believe full coverage is possible because we have spent quite a lot of time in organising ourselves and planning it. Individual communities have been visited to assess which community has what kind of gap and what can be done to fill the gap.

“World Vision is committed to bringing the strengths and capabilities and expertise we have together with other partners and contributing to the realisation of full coverage in Asutifi North district. I believe if all these partners come together with the commitment we can achieve it.”



Open well at Tawiahkrom



Joseph Ampadu-Boakye,
Safe Water Network

Safe Water Network specialises in developing small water enterprises and in mobilising partnerships and leadership replicators to take this to scale. They provide know-how, tools and support to ensure that systems provide affordable, reliable and safe water.

Joseph Ampadu-Boakye, programme manager for the Safe Water Network, says that small water enterprises succeed because they bring business and enterprise approaches into water service delivery. “There is strong emphasis on getting a cash flow to support the operating and maintenance of the water system. We also emphasise strongly the operating capability. This is backed by a reward mechanism where the person gets compensated for delivering a service and performance is benchmarked against his ability to improve volumes, improve revenues and make the water system sustainable in the long term.”¹⁶

The Asutifi North initiative offered them the opportunity to demonstrate how small water enterprises can contribute to achieving universal coverage. “What we are doing differently with this initiative is to look at the opportunity for working with other implementers to impact the skills and collectively work towards scaling up the lessons we learnt.

“Our objective is to be able to provide safe water for everyone and we are hoping to tap into this opportunity to develop sustainable and scalable small water enterprises, one that meets the water needs of the market both now and into the future.”



A.J. Karon

The **Aquaya Institute** is a non-profit research and consulting organisation that uses evidence to find innovative solutions to tackling traditional WASH problems. Their role in the partnership will highlight ways to improve water quality.

A.J. Karon, Aquaya research and program officer, said, “In rural areas traditionally there is no monitoring and so essentially we don’t know what the water quality is. That has been one of the major challenges of the WASH sector in terms of understanding the real health hazards and the risks of drinking from these sources.”¹⁷

Aquaya has focused on drinking water quality throughout sub-Saharan Africa, looking at microbial parameters such as E. coli and indicators and hazards of faecal contamination that can cause diarrhoeal illnesses. They also study chemical parameters associated with long-term health effects.

Karon said that there are major water quality problems in improved sources like handpumps, and quality can be related to weather patterns and environmental health factors. “These are very well understood as far as knowing where the risks are but poorly documented as far as using them to make decisions to help with water system safety.

“Our hope is to help the district to better understand water quality and to develop a system for monitoring the water systems throughout the district that is sustainable long term and really guides decision making to ensure that higher quality, safe water is being provided to the people who live here.”

Working with partner organisations will add value to this work. “There are great opportunities to collaborate with the different partners, to work synergistically and achieve the ultimate goal of improving water quality. It is a great opportunity to involve communities in this decision-making process for their water systems.”

There are other significant partners in this initiative. The **Newmont Ahafo Development Foundation (NADeF)** was established in 2008 between Newmont Ghana Gold Ltd and the Ahafo Social Responsibility Forum, and provides funds to support WASH infrastructure and protect natural resources.

GIZ works to achieve international cooperation for sustainable development.

Water.org Inc. helps families to finance access to safe water and sanitation and seeking to establish a Water Credit model in Ghana.



Chapter 5

Discussion

The most striking feature in these communities is the extremely low level of WASH services, both in terms of the quantity and quality of the water being delivered and the virtually non-existent levels of acceptable sanitation. While these six communities are not necessarily typical of all communities in Asutifi North - field visits were planned to highlight problems - they convey the distance that the district has to travel to achieve full coverage.

All six communities experience regular (almost daily) interruptions of service because of breakdowns and falling water levels combined with rising demand. Some communities have gone back to using open wells because they seem to be more reliable, although clearly they quickly become polluted especially when they are not covered.

They illustrate complex histories of water provision and collapse. Every community was able to point to a number of wells and water points provided by the district assembly or by outside agencies (NGOs and others) which are no longer in use. In several cases water points failed almost immediately because a poorly sited handpump could not reach the water or because it broke and nobody knew how to mend it. Some failed and were abandoned almost as soon as they were installed.

Community leaders contrasted the situation now with the time when their parents and grandparents obtained water from traditional streams or other sources. Service levels in those days were also extremely low but there was a greater level of autonomy and self-reliance. It was a poor service delivered by self-help. Today poor levels of service are courtesy of outside donations and accompanied almost by a sense of fatalism.

Communities were very appreciative of earlier efforts by the district assembly to provide them with more modern and better built wells. But at the same time they had never become true partners in these developments, except by providing labour or food and shelter for teams that came in to dig. In particular they did not have effective means of maintaining and improving their facilities.



The daily task of fetching water is a huge strain on women physically and in terms of their time.

Asutifi North: what the water challenge means for communities



Men carry water too but often they can use a bicycle for transporting it home

There is strong awareness among community members of the damage that service failures do to health and development. It is common for women to spend many hours waiting by water points for the flow to return. Because water is so essential for daily living, when the water supply breaks down then everything is put on hold. One regularly repeated message was the impact on education as children fail to get to school because there has been no water for morning ablutions.

Rising population levels are also putting extra strain on water points. In more than one community it was pointed out that some people come from outlying areas, sometimes with cars, to fill up from their wells. There is the contrast between those who can drive to collect water and the women living in these communities who still carry water home in containers on their heads. The sheer physical labour for women is a striking feature. While it is by no means unknown for men to also collect water and take it home, this is usually achieved by strapping containers to the back of a bicycle. All the women we saw collecting water were carrying it on their heads.

Sanitation services remain below the lowest acceptable level of service. Many communities rely on communal pit latrines with crumbling superstructures and in one case no superstructure at all, and where division between male and female is achieved only through a complex system of social signalling.

There were few signs of effective community management even where water and sanitation management teams exist. There were some payment systems in place but these were not working effectively and repairs were handled ad hoc and hand-to-mouth. The only regular payment system we saw was at one privately run well.

Communities are experiencing rapid changes both technologically (mobile phones) and socially as urbanisation gathers pace. This can lead to some of the traditional customs being abandoned. Nana Adwoa Gyamfoa, the Guantao Queen of Ntotroso, south of the Ahafo Region capital of Sunyani, says that the traditional way to protect water sources is to plant the area around them.



Nana Adwoa Gyamfoa,
Guanfoa (Queen) of
Ntotroso

“In the days of our forefathers water bodies did not dry up. We used to have certain plants around the water points. This prevented the sun from scorching the water bodies so we could always get water. But now we clear the land around water points and they can dry up at any time.”¹⁸

“As mothers at home we cannot make a success of anything without water. If the water supply is cut even for a short time it causes hardship. If you wake up without water you cannot even bathe your child so water is very important to women. Not just for women but for everyone on earth.”

Aside from the low level of service the other striking feature was the level of dependency. These are highly adaptable communities which have survived for many generations on hard work and practicality. Farmers are can-do people and the development of the mining industry also generates workers who are capable and hard working. So the relative passivity in relations to WASH services cannot be attributed to weakness of will or abilities. When communities were asked whether they could adopt new systems, they were willing to do so but playing a more active role in planning and managing services was not (yet) on their agenda. Almost every interview included a plea that the district or you should help, accompanied by a description of the desperation of their plight. The pattern of provision seems to have trained communities to expect someone else to take the lead on these issues. As Chief Nana Amoah Baafi from Asamang put it: “What we see is that for schools, water and other things, it is the district assembly that helps us and NGOs also come and help.”



Nana Asante Gyambibi,
traditional leader from
Ntotroso

Nana Asante Gyambibi, the interim chief from Ntotroso community, said traditional rulers had a big role in bringing the initiative into existence. However, he saw the role of community members as mainly being to support the district authority in cash or in kind. “During the [planning] workshop we did last year we said that the traditional leaders would support the project by providing land and also provide any assistance in the form of communal labour or anything that will move it successfully because we want our community towns to be a conducive place to live by the year 2030.”¹⁹

These are learned attitudes based on experience. Communities are ready for change but unclear about their role in seeing it achieved. Just as women have become accustomed to standing waiting at wells for hours to collect water, so communities have become accustomed to waiting for months and years for outside help to flow in and relieve them. And in both cases the relief is often short lived.

The challenge for the Asutifi North initiative is not only a planning and financial hurdle but one of convincing communities to take ownership of solutions in the same way that they own the problems.

The district assembly and partners had already started the process of working with community service organisations to engage communities with the new approaches where they could take more responsibility for sustaining services. This requires deep cultural changes within communities if systems of payments and maintenance are to be sustained.

George Padmore Mensah, district coordinating director of the Asutifi North district assembly said, “Getting the communities on board is a huge challenge because they see the assembly as government - that somebody should come and do everything for them. Because they have been involved in the preparation, they are all aware of this change that is coming and we are sensitising them: attitudinal change, behaviour change, commitment, so that they see themselves as part of us. That is why we take the opportunity to train them, build their capacity and let them see the project as their own, with whatever support in terms of the little contribution that they have to give to us and management of the facilities after we have completed them and handed them over.”

Asutifi North: what the water challenge means for communities

As the initiative was launched in March 2018, Netcentric Campaigns and the Global Alliance for Development Foundation Ghana (GADeF) were starting to mobilise community support for ANAM by using local networks. They were focusing on youth networks and also on training women in using social media to improve communications.



Emmanuel Marfo,
GADeF Ghana

Emmanuel Marfo, executive director of GADeF Ghana said, “We are working with IRC and Netcentric Campaigns to build the capacity of a strong network behind WASH so that we focus on behaviour change as well as getting more social accountability mechanisms around WASH implementation.

“As part of our advocacy campaign we will build the capacity of CSOs to engage more citizens, as well for citizens to understand their roles in the community. We will build on the strengths of local leaders in communities for them to be able to work with citizens to understand their roles and responsibilities when it comes to WASH.

“When the citizens understand the basic needs of all the things they are doing regarding their capacity and strengths, we believe that they will be able to respond to what the WASH agenda is.

“We are confident enough to see Asutifi North achieving the WASH goal that we all have safe water for drinking and a very good sanitation environment for all.”

It is clear that some traditional leaders understand the change needed inside communities as well as at governance level. At the launch meeting in Kenyasi, the Saamanhene of Kenyasi No.1 area, one of the most senior traditional leaders in the region, told his fellow citizens, “It is you and I in Asutifi who need to change our attitude to make this initiative a success.”



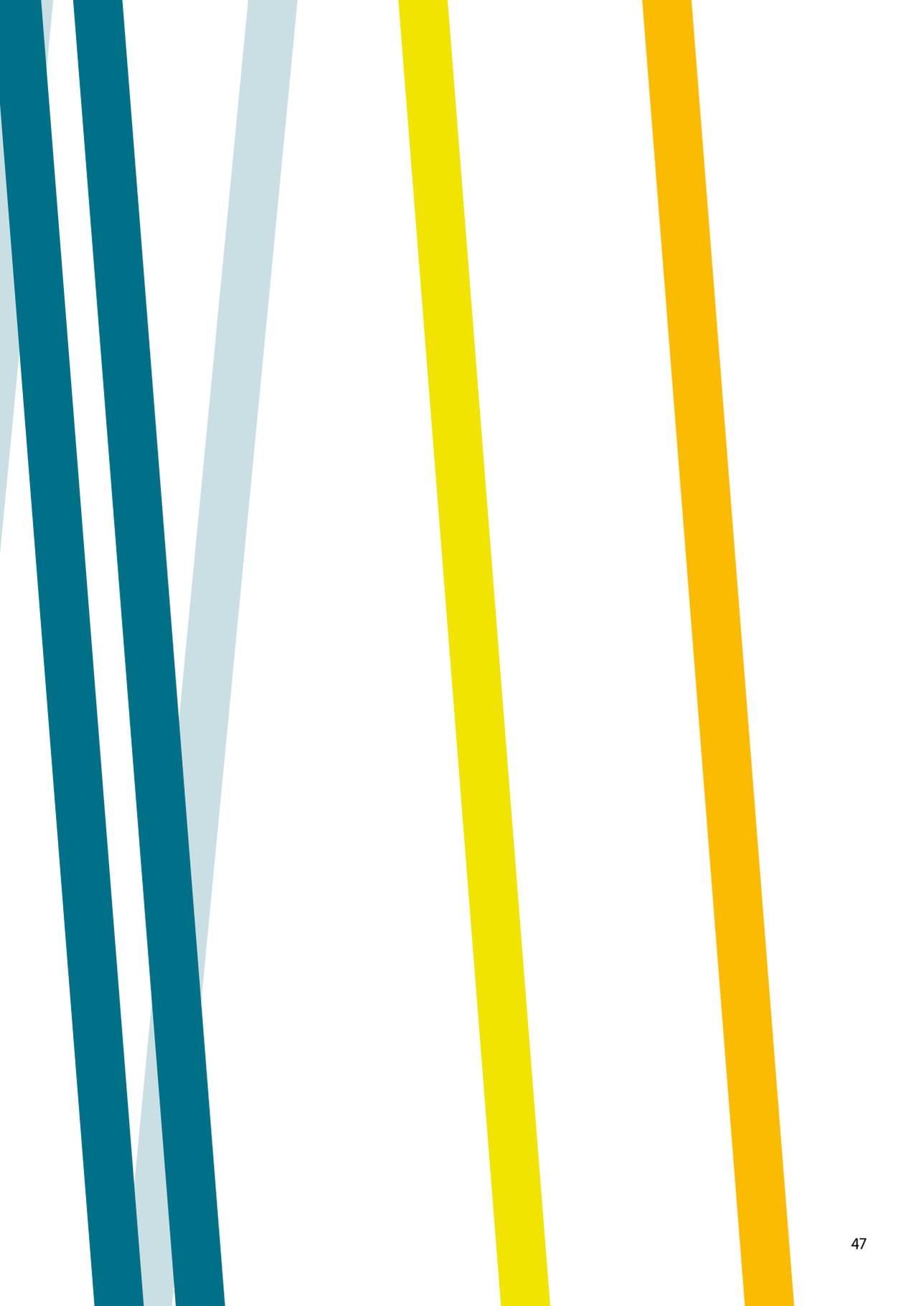


Notes

- ¹ Previously Brong Ahafo Region
- ² ANAM stands for Asutifi North Ahonidie Mpontuo (Clean Asutifi North) initiative
- ³ Asutifi North District Assembly, 2018. Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) master plan, Kenyasi, Ghana
- ⁴ Interview Kenyasi, 15 March 2018
- ⁵ Interview Kenyasi, 16 March 2018
- ⁶ Asutifi North District Assembly, 2018. Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) master plan, Kenyasi - Ghana
- ⁷ Asutifi North District Assembly, 2018. Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) master plan, Kenyasi - Ghana
- ⁸ All data taken from the Asutifi North District Assembly Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) master plan
- ⁹ IRC, 2019. Baseline study report. Asutifi North Ghana. IRC: Accra. Available at: (forthcoming). For the baseline overview, IRC, 2019. IRC baseline data. Asutifi North, Ghana: a district overview. Creating systems change in districts begins with knowing what's in place. IRC: The Hague.
- ¹⁰ The IRC team was made up of consultant Peter McIntyre and IRC Ghana staff members Abubakari Wumbei and Benjamin Agbemor. We were accompanied for some visits by the Asutifi North senior development planning officer, James A. Ata-Era, and on all visits by members of his team. Translation was conducted on site by J.B. Ntim-Adjei, while video interviews were later translated by Albert Kwame Ansah. The research and program officer from Aquaya accompanied the team for one day. IRC Netherlands staff members were present for the final day.
- ¹¹ Interview with Anthony Mensah, district chief executive, 15 March 2018.
- ¹² The US\$20 million 1,000 Borehole China Aid Project was agreed between the governments of Ghana and China in 2015. It began in February 2016 and was scheduled for completion by the end of 2018.
- ¹³ Interview 15 March 2018
- ¹⁴ Interview 19 March 2018
- ¹⁵ Interview 15 March 2018
- ¹⁶ Interview 15 March 2018
- ¹⁷ Interview 15 March 2018
- ¹⁸ Interview at the launch of the Asutifi North initiative 16 March 2018.
- ¹⁹ Interview at the launch of the Asutifi North initiative 16 March 2018.

References

- Asutifi North District Assembly, 2018. Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) master plan, Kenyasi – Ghana, Available at: < <https://www.ircwash.org/resources/water-sanitation-and-hygiene-wash-masterplan-asutifi-north-district-ghana>>
- IRC, 2019. IRC baseline data. Asutifi North, Ghana: a district overview. Creating systems change in districts begins with knowing what’s in place. IRC: The Hague. Available at: < <https://www.ircwash.org/resources/irc-baseline-data-asutifi-north-ghana-district-overview>>
- IRC, 2019. Baseline study report. Asutifi North Ghana. IRC: Accra. Available at: (forthcoming).



Visiting address

Plot no.61 at no.18
Third Close
Airport Residential Area
Accra, Ghana

Postal address

P.O. Box CT 9531
Cantonments
Accra, Ghana

T +233 302 797 473

T +233 302 797 474

ghana@ircwash.org

www.ircwash.org/ghana

