Facilitating change in a complex environment

Delivering rural water services in Ghana

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Between 2009 and 2014 IRC through the Triple-S project, supported Ghana’s rural water agency, the Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA), to build consensus around a new vision of adequate water services that are sustained over time and develop an approach to make that vision a reality.

This poster shares some lessons from how CWSA, pilot districts (East Gonja - Northern Region; Sunyani West - Brong Ahafo Region; Akatsi North and Akatsi South - Volta Region) and partners were supported to navigate the sector’s complex realities.

A phased approach

Triple-S took a phased approach to change and sector strengthening. In the first phase it sought to build trust with key actors, foster awareness around the sector’s problems and promoting concepts, and support CWSA in that aspect effectively.

The second phase focused on a collaborative exercise to test a range of operating solutions in three pilot districts. In consultation with sector stakeholders, the project diagnosed the root causes of failed water systems, generated alternative solutions, and interrogated and refined them through experimentation. Through regular feedback and reflection workshops, the models were continuously improved and internalized. By providing empirical evidence for informed policymaking, the results of the pilots also served to boost the confidence and leadership of CWSA.

The third phase, which underlines the initial five-year project, is working to institutionalize the gains and actively promote scaling of the new pathways to delivering sustained water services.

A partnership and learning approach

Whereas previous projects had typically been managed externally, the Triple-S initiative was deliberately led by CWSA while the new organizational systems, evidence-informed policy development and sustainability of interventions formed the basis for knowledge sharing and learning. A partnership and learning approach, together with evidence-informed policy and its dissemination and support for the delivery of services, were the main outcomes of the project. CWSA is now building on this experience to deliver evidence-informed policy development and sustainability of interventions.

Between 2009 and 2014, the CWSA was supported to rethink its organizational systems and develop evidence-informed policy documents and tools needed for scaling the drive towards service delivery. The project also facilitated exchange and reflection with the pilot districts and other sector stakeholders.

The costs of facilitating sector change

Costs of facilitating sector change are high, and are valued at US$1 million per year for the Triple-S project. These costs include:

- Partnerships and trust building
- Learning at scale: testing ideas, refining in messy real-world environments
- Piloting and documentation
- Scale up emerges through adoption and replication
- Systemic changes at policy and organizational level
- Legacy planning to support continuous improvement
- Policy acknowledging the service delivery approach
- Communication.

Service monitoring has been scaled up from 3 to 131 districts in partnership with World Bank, CWSA, UNICEF, Akvo and SkyFox. There is increased accountability of CWSA in adhering to national norms and standards.

There is increased confidence and leadership by government, especially the CWSA, to guide the sector providing sustainable services at scale.

Service delivery at all levels: from upstream planning and programme development through to adoption and replication, there is increased awareness of CWSA to enhance its regulatory role of ensuring that sector stakeholders adhere to national norms and standards.

Partnerships are emerging to take results to scale.

Policy acknowledging the service delivery approach: and actions developed to operationalize it, implementation includes explicit requirement to budget for service delivery.

There is increased awareness of CWSA in adhering to its regulatory role of ensuring that sector stakeholders adhere to national norms and standards.

Partnerships are emerging to take results to scale.

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