



WORKING PAPER

Building strong WASH systems
for the SDGs

A hub keeps WASH systems in motion: Lessons from Ghana

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The IRC WASH systems series connects you to the latest thinking around safe water, sanitation and hygiene services that last.

This working paper is part of the series Building strong systems for the SDGs that explains IRC's approach to strengthening water and sanitation systems. Systems are made up of all the people, components and functions needed to deliver WASH services as well as people, institutions and factors (infrastructure, finances, policies and environmental conditions) that affect the system. Other papers in this series are:

Understanding the WASH system and its building blocks (Huston and Moriarty, 2018)

Engaging with the complexity of the real world leads to more meaningful and sustainable solutions to build strong and healthy water and sanitation systems. The paper outlines nine building blocks that have to be in place for strong WASH systems: institutions, policy and legislation, finance, regulation and accountability, monitoring, planning, infrastructure, water resource management and learning and adaptation. By assessing the condition of each building block and linkages between them, it is possible to identify weak points and target interventions.

How to use learning alliances to achieve systems change at scale (Darteh et. al, 2019)

Effective learning platforms are problem-solving bodies that strengthen their members to take collective action in pursuit of a common vision. Learning alliances are multi-stakeholder platforms at different institutional levels (national, district, community, etc.) that promote social learning and collective action. This paper sets out how they can speed up the process of identifying, developing and scaling up innovations. They provide a safe space to review what has been happening, learn from experiences and resolve how obstacles can be overcome. The working paper offers practical guidance on how to adopt the approach and discusses experiences from Ghana and Uganda that show how learning alliances depend on the relationships between people and the skills of those supporting them.

A hub keeps WASH systems in motion: Lessons from Ghana (Duti et. al, 2022)

The hub model examined in the current paper can be seen as a complementary methodology to support change towards strengthening water and sanitation systems.

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Abbreviations

ANAM	Asutifi North Ahonidie Mpontuo
ANCSONET	Asutifi North CSO Network
ANDA	Asutifi North District Assembly
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CLTS	Community Led Total Sanitation
CONIWAS	Coalition of NGOs in Water and Sanitation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DDHS	District Directorate of Health Services
ESHD	Environmental Health and Sanitation Division
GIFMIS	Ghana Integrated Financial Management System
GoG	Government of Ghana
IPC	Infection Prevention and Control
IWRM	Integrated Water Resource Management
MMDA	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSWR	Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources
NADEF	Newmont Ahafo Development Foundation
NDPC	National Development and Planning Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SHEP	School Health and Environmental Programme
SWN	Safe Water Network
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WVG	World Vision Ghana

Executive summary

IRC has worked for more than two decades with governments in Ghana, at national and district levels: strengthening their capacity, as accountable bodies, to develop and sustain water and sanitation services that reach whole populations.

This paper presents IRC Ghana’s experience of acting as a ‘hub’ to support collective action in the Asutifi North District of Ghana. It forms part of a series that explains how IRC is working in partnership to strengthen systems to achieve universal access to water, sanitation and hygiene.

Delivery of safe and sustainable services that reach everyone requires durable and well-functioning systems. IRC’s Theory of Change illustrated in Figure 1 shows a vision of strong systems at district and national levels that deliver and maintain universal access, and address the other water-related targets in Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6).

WHAT IS A HUB?

Given that no single actor can deliver the ambitious SDG 6 targets alone, IRC acts as a hub in the districts where it works, supporting broad-based alliances that put learning at the heart of work to bring about lasting change.

A hub supports the system of individuals, organisations, technologies and institutions (political, financial and regulatory) to work more effectively. It brings stakeholders together, ensuring that partners share knowledge and information at district and national level, and integrating partners who may otherwise operate in isolated silos.

The hub helps actors to focus on a common goal, ensures continuity and consistency of effort, and that emerging lessons are distilled and shared. This collective action gives a voice to socially excluded people and minimises duplication in service provision. Hubs make collective action more effective.

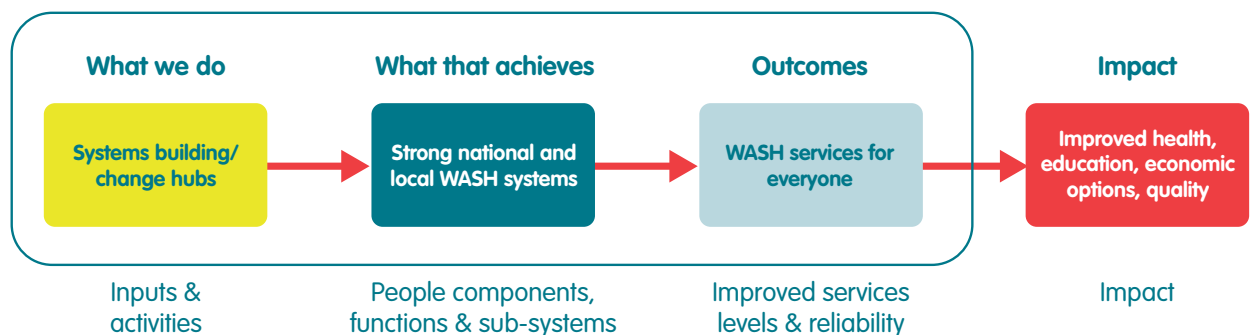
GOALS AND CHALLENGES IN THE ASUTIFI NORTH DISTRICT

IRC’s hub role is part of the Asutifi North Ahonidie Mpontuo (ANAM) initiative that aims to achieve district-wide access to water, sanitation and hygiene services for 85,000 people by 2030.

Before the start of the ANAM initiative in 2018, water and sanitation services in Asutifi North were characterised by a range of systemic shortcomings. A baseline assessment of WASH governance before the start of the ANAM initiative revealed obstacles to coordinating development interventions and partners. Despite a legal requirement to do so, NGOs did not collaborate closely with the District Assembly or inform them of their developmental investments. Many activities did not align with the district strategic plan and some NGOs did not even register their presence in the District, so their activities were unregulated and not included in district reports.

The local government lacked the ability to inspire and lead people working in development, or to guide and coordinate sector operations. Citizens had less voice in setting the water and sanitation agenda or in prioritising services. In many settlements, they were unwilling to protect communal installations or to pay the going rates for services.

IRC Theory of Change



Agencies in the district operated in silos and often at cross purposes. Investments were largely focused on installing new infrastructure. In the absence of a jointly owned agenda, investments and services were fragmented, duplicated or erratic, demonstrating little accord with national policies, norms or planning systems.

ESTABLISHING THE ANAM INITIATIVE AND MASTER PLAN

The ANAM initiative in Asutifi North District was devised to test whether a local authority-led partnership with NGOs, service authorities and providers, civil society, traditional leaders and the private sector, could overcome these hurdles to achieve universal coverage by 2030.

The ANAM hypothesis is that strong local government leadership, supported at regional and national levels by robust policy, public finance, and skilled technical partnerships, can provide and sustain safe water services for every household, school, and health facility.

ANAM partners agreed to a master plan which set out a joint vision and common agenda and translated this into a set of actions, with targets and a monitoring process to inform on progress and guide adjustments. The plan describes the current state of provision, identifies priorities, highlights gaps and outlines how to fill them. It is used to attract funding and partnerships; to increase investment in the right places; to link policies, institutions, systems and processes; and to improve technical expertise and share knowledge about what works.

The vision and master plan were adopted in March 2018 following a year of analysis and consultation led by the District Assembly, supported and facilitated via a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with IRC Ghana.

Donors have proved willing to support this approach. The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation became the primary external donor, in line with its Safe Water Strategy.

In 2021 more donor backing came from the Latter-day Saints Charities to expand access to water and sanitation services in five schools and five unserved hard-to-reach communities, and to build the capacity of district officials, service providers and other stakeholders. Financial support also came from the mining company Newmont Ghana Gold Limited.

HOW THE HUB WORKS

The master plan provides for a dedicated facilitating and coordinating hub, a role filled by IRC Ghana under

an MoU with the District Assembly. The hub has two full-time staff and an office in the district which it shares with partners. The hub office facilitates day-to-day interaction and continuous dialogue and shared problem solving between partners.

The hub's role is to:

- guide the process of **agreeing a joint** vision for universal access to water and sanitation services, led by the Asutifi North District Assembly with implementing agencies, traditional leaders and civil society;
- coordinate and manage a **multi-actor partnership for collective action**;
- provide core **staffing, technical expertise, capacity support and a hub office**;
- provide support to **partners that do not have a base** in the country;
- facilitate **policy dialogue and learning** in aid of adaptation, replication and scaleup;
- provide support and training for **monitoring**, including the process of agreeing a set of core indicators, with tracking and reporting processes, ensuring mutual accountability for progress;
- conduct studies to support **innovation**, learn more about needs and solve problems;
- lead process documentation and **knowledge management**.

By collaborating through these processes, partners remain engaged, each using its special strengths and competencies to contribute to the collective agenda.

A complementary national hub was created, based in the IRC office in Accra. The national hub connects what happens in the district to the wider sector; notably the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources, the National Development Planning Commission, the Community Water and Sanitation Agency and development partners such as NGOs.

WHAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE?

During the first three years of ANAM, the District Assembly has become more confident in its ability to guide the WASH sector. Organisations delivering WASH services harmonise their activities in line with national guidelines and are focused on sustainable service delivery. Monitoring and learning inform decision making, and feedback from citizens is taken seriously.

For the first time, the District Assembly has comprehensive, real-time data on water and sanitation

services, and can generate annual performance reports that integrate activities and outcomes from all key actors.

WASH Service Monitoring Reports show steady progress for drinking water. By 2021, 61,068 people were benefiting from improved water services compared with the baseline figure of 51,355 in 2017. More than half of Asutifi North's 56 communities have shifted to paying for water at the tap, in contrast to drawing water for free or paying a flat rate whenever a water facility broke down.

In 2020, the District Assembly invested more than US\$ 100,000 in capital investment, capital maintenance and operational expenses, several times the pre-ANAM total. A proactive maintenance culture results in the repair of all broken-down water facilities.

The Hub has supported innovative studies to secure greater resilience in the sector to deal with issues such as the Covid-19 pandemic. Service providers have been able to maintain up-to-date information on their operations and as a result were able to secure full reimbursements from the state and to provide services without interruption during the first wave of the pandemic.

THE VITAL HUB ROLE AND ITS CHALLENGES

The hub role is a vital one but largely unseen. Since the hub does not provide finance or hardware, its ability to achieve results is entirely one of persuasion. Its networking ability is paramount. It has ensured that civil society, communities and other stakeholders all have a stake in the collective agenda for universal WASH access.

The Hub is a catalyst, not a magic bullet. It would be unrealistic to expect a change process which involves multiple partners, an extended time frame, and new ways of interacting to proceed without challenges. Sustained sector change is a long process: it may take ten years or more to adapt to new approaches and learn from experiences.

However, the Asutifi North ANAM initiative is a success, and not only in its own terms. It is prima facie evidence of the strength of the hub model in any change process with multiple partners.

A hub can be expensive in terms of money and time and there will rarely be funding for a separate stand-alone team. However, the functions of the hub can be integrated into systems as part of the cost of sustainability. It will be important to institutionalise

aspects of the hub function within Asutifi North and within Ghana more broadly. Incorporating the lessons and strengths of the hub role into the wider water and sanitation sector in Ghana will become a priority as part of a governmental drive to strengthen the sector, so that it learns from its experiences and becomes more resilient.

1. Introduction – The collective action approach

People and relationships are at the heart of work to achieve the human right to safe water, sanitation and hygiene via services that last. WASH systems need to be robust and resilient to address the complex web of interdependent actors, activities, relationships and incentives involved in water and sanitation service delivery (Fig. 1)¹.

This working paper is part of a series published by IRC to interrogate those complexities and report on practices in which IRC has played a role. Like other papers in this series, it shares an emerging praxis (intertwined theory and practice) to deepen our understanding of how to achieve universal coverage and the ambitious global aims for water and sanitation set out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By describing IRC’s practice and those of our partners in a joint enterprise in Ghana, we highlight the challenges and how they can be addressed.

At the heart of this paper is a collective endeavour (“the ANAM initiative”) where IRC Ghana plays the role of a supportive hub. This communal effort is led by the Asutifi North District Assembly – the local government responsible for services – and is supported by a strong and innovative network of implementation partners and donors. The purpose of this paper is to examine whether, and to what extent, the hub role adds value to such a collective effort and,

if it does, what can we learn about the qualities of being a hub that may be useful elsewhere?

IRC has worked for more than two decades with governmental institutions in Ghana, at national and district levels, towards strengthening the capacity of the accountable bodies to develop and sustain water and sanitation services that reach whole populations. This work included the Triple-S Project (2009 –14) to drive sector change towards a greater focus on delivery of sustainable water services², the WASHCost project to understand the real costs of WASH, collaboration with the SMARTerWASH project³ and later work to strengthen local government capacity to deliver water services in rural Ghana⁴. Each development brought new understandings and successes. Collectively, they highlighted the need for a comprehensive and inclusive approach if services and institutions are going to reach everyone and last. Ghana is a good place to convert this understanding into practice because the Government of Ghana has a commitment to achieving SDG 6 for water, sanitation and hygiene.⁵

IRC’s Theory of Change illustrated in Figure 1 (below) shows a vision of strong systems at district and national levels that deliver and maintain universal access to water, sanitation and hygiene, and address the other water-related targets in SDG 6⁵. IRC seeks to strengthen the systems that deliver water and

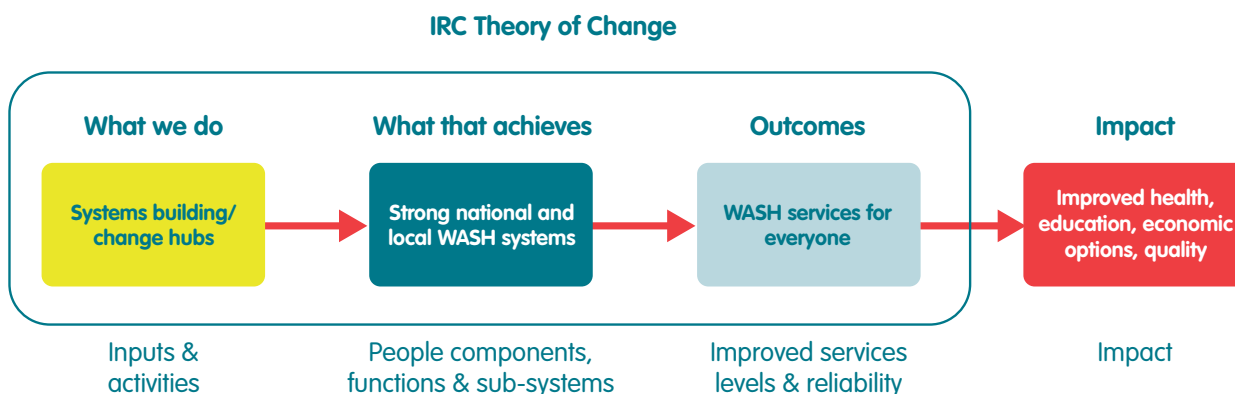


FIGURE 1: IRC’S THEORY OF CHANGE (SOURCE: IRC STRATEGY FRAMEWORK 2017-30)

1 [IRC Strategy Framework 2017-2030](#)
 2 [Lockwood, H., and Duti, V., Whole system change: capturing the change process in the Ghana rural water sub-sector :: IRC \(ircwash.org\)](#)
 3 [Grift, V., Aji-Bonte, V., Wumbei, A., and Daalen, T. van, Smart solutions with SMARTerWASH : stories of the project and its successes :: IRC \(ircwash.org\)](#)
 4 [McIntyre, P., Duti, V., Strengthening local government capacity to deliver water services : documenting the process of transformation :: IRC \(ircwash.org\)](#)
 5 [Duti, V., Atengdem, J., and Wumbei, A., Working together for safe water in Ghana: the journey so far :: IRC \(ircwash.org\)](#)

sanitation services and applies a systems approach in doing so.

IRC views water, sanitation and hygiene systems through the lens of nine critical 'building blocks': institutions, policy and legislation, finance, regulation and accountability, monitoring, planning, infrastructure, water resource management, and learning and adaptation. By assessing the condition of each building block and the linkages between them, it is possible to identify weak points and target interventions⁷. The roles that ANAM partners play in strengthening these building blocks are described in Section 4.

1.1 THE CHALLENGE IN ASUTIFI NORTH DISTRICT

Local governments in many countries are responsible for ensuring that people have access to water and sanitation services. IRC sees such decentralised administrative units as the right level: with reasonably clear lines of authority and a manageable scale at which to model behaviour, test approaches and identify solutions to drive the quest for universal access. Districts and countries can serve as impact centres for change and spread these lessons to inform policy and scale up practice in other places. Given that no single actor can deliver the ambitious SDG 6 targets alone, IRC seeks to support broad-based alliances that put learning at the heart of efforts to bring about collective and lasting change. This 'learning alliance' approach engages stakeholders in action research designed to address systemic challenges to service delivery, so that change is owned and carried out by sector stakeholders themselves. Social learning inspires a network of actors to take collective action in pursuit of a common vision and to reflect on the action and draw out lessons.

Local political leadership is crucial as it has the legitimacy to coordinate and lead. The initiative in Asutifi North District set out to address the challenges of weak leadership and ownership, and create a collective vision to articulate WASH strategies and local aspirations to achieve SDG 6. The initiative adopted the principles of collective action to fuse the individual strengths of partners into a common purpose.

Asutifi North District Assembly covers a population of 64,000 people now –projected to rise to 85,000 by 2030 – and is aiming to achieve universal coverage for water and sanitation at basic level or above by 2030. For water the targets are 30% access to safely managed water services and 70% access to basic water services. For sanitation the vision is that 38% of the population will have access to safely managed sanitation services and the remaining 62% access to basic sanitation services (Fig. 2).⁸ By 2021, progress towards the target was already evident for water with 15% of the population having safely managed water, 64% having basic services, 10% a limited service and only 11% still unserved.

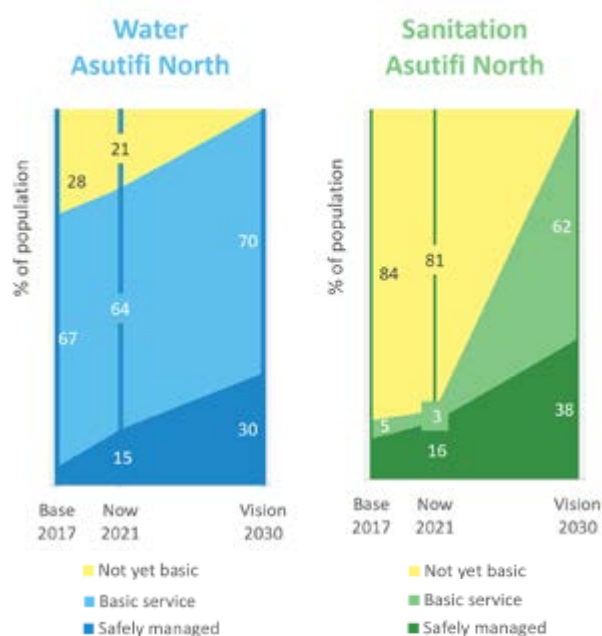


FIGURE 2: PROGRESS TOWARDS THE 2030 VISION OF ASUTIFI NORTH DISTRICT (SOURCE: IRC MONITORING REPORT 2021)

1.2 WHAT COLLECTIVE ACTION CAN ACHIEVE

Collective action is a catalyst for change: a group of actors working to a common agenda using structured collaboration to address persistent social issues⁹. IRC has been guided by a collective action approach from the USA education sector¹⁰ which shows that stakeholders working together in collective action are

6 Sustainable Development Goal Target 6.1 is "By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all." Target 6.2 is "By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations." There are also targets for water quality and wastewater treatment. Target 6B is to "Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management."

7 Huston, A. and Moriarty, P., [Understanding the WASH system and its building blocks:: IRC \(ircwash.org\)](https://www.ircwash.org)

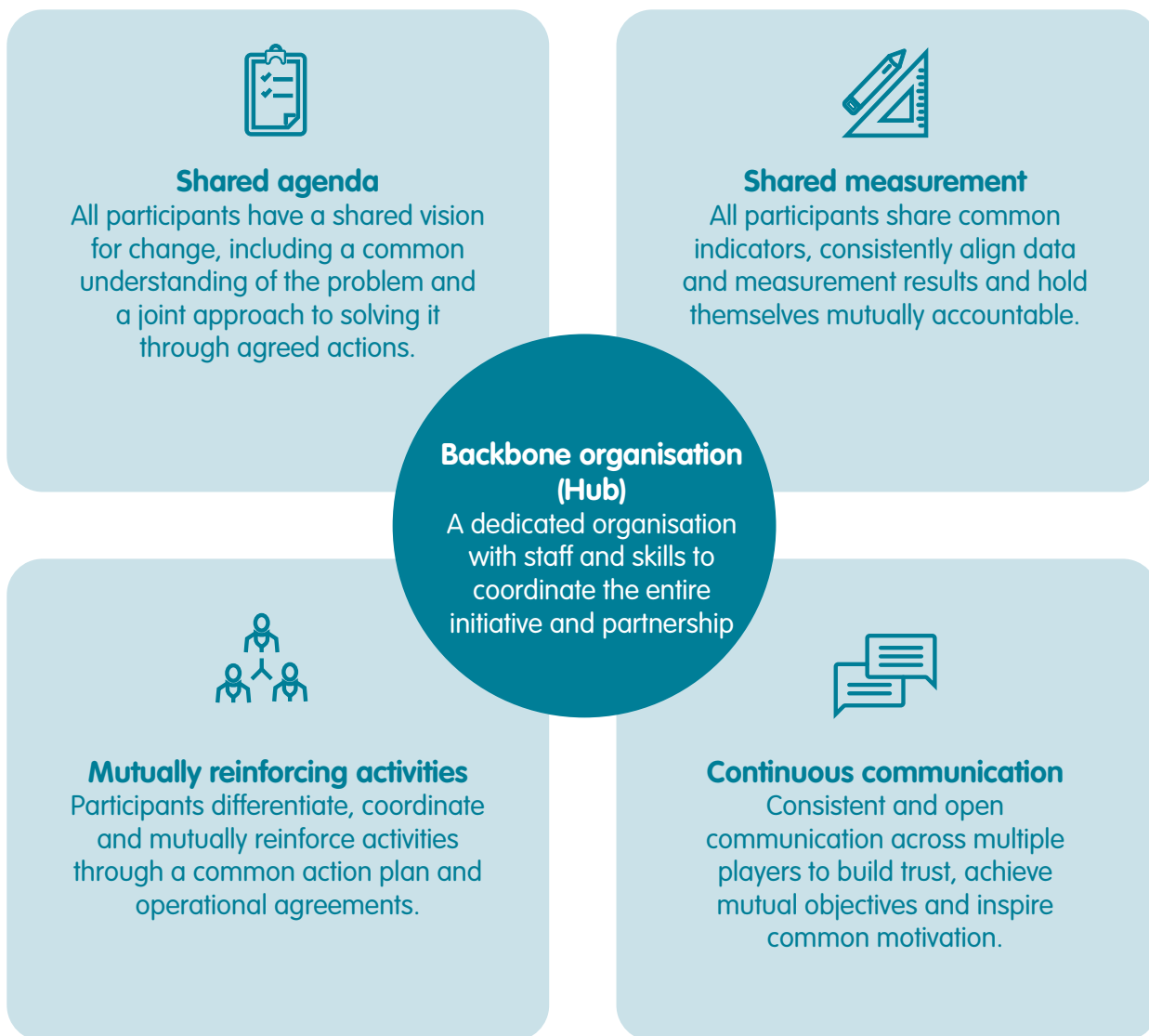
8 IRC Monitoring Report 2021 [IRC monitoring report 2021 :: IRC \(ircwash.org\)](https://www.ircwash.org)

9 Darteh, B., Moriarty, P., and Huston, A., [How to use learning alliances to achieve systems change at scale :: IRC \(ircwash.org\)](https://www.ircwash.org)

10 First articulated in the 2011 Stanford Social Innovation Review Article Collective Impact, written by John Kania, Managing Director at FSG, and Mark Kramer, Kennedy School at Harvard and Co-founder FSG.

more likely to produce results. Researchers examining the Collective Impact Framework in the USA identified five conditions for success, which include a common agenda, mutually reinforcing activities, shared measurement indicators and continuous open communication (Figure 3). Notably, the fifth condition is the inclusion of a dedicated organisation with staff and skills to coordinate the initiative. In the Collective Impact Framework, this role is referred to as the 'backbone' of the partnership. We call it the 'hub'¹¹.

Hubs make collective action more effective. A hub supports the system of individuals, organisations, technologies and institutions (political, financial and regulatory) to work more effectively¹². It brings stakeholders together, ensures that partners share knowledge and information, and integrates partners who may otherwise operate in isolated silos.



Adapted from: Hanleybrown, Kania and Kramer, 2012

FIGURE 3: CONDITIONS FOR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

¹¹ Hanleybrown, F., Kania, J., and Kramer, M., [Channeling_Change_Cover.pdf \(mappofskp.net\)](#)

¹² Lockwood, H. and Duti, V., [Whole system change: capturing the change process in the Ghana rural water sub-sector :: IRC \(ircwash.org\)](#)

2. The context that framed the challenge

A 2014 study commissioned by the Ministry of Water Resources, Works and Housing, with technical support from IRC¹³, concluded that weak sector leadership and a lack of clear strategies was undermining the cohesiveness of water sector partnerships. Investment was characterised as fragmented, duplicative and unpredictable. The study concluded that a collective vision and leadership at national level was urgently required to restore confidence.

The Government of Ghana (GoG) sought to strengthen sector leadership by aggregating WASH mandates under a new Ministry for Sanitation and Water Resources (MSWR) set up in 2017. The National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) led the development of significant policy and coordination frameworks¹⁴ while the Ministry of Finance (MoF) introduced a medium-term expenditure framework, a composite budgeting process and a policy to improve the effectiveness of development partnerships. The Ghana Integrated Financial Management System (GIFMIS) was also reformed.

MSWR has initiated processes to update its policy and plans. These promise stronger alignment, consolidating fragmented WASH interventions under a single lead institution, improving accountability, effectiveness and efficiency, and the coordination of partnerships. However, this has not yet been achieved. Remedies are not yet systematically applied or effectively monitored, and there is no systematic process for setting priorities so that goals, targets, and indicators can be clearly defined.

Water and sanitation continue to be delivered through discrete ministries and agencies and primarily through infrastructure-focused projects. This leads to poor quality and unreliable or unsustainable services. Sector plans are patchy, with insufficient attention to issues of inequity, vulnerability and exclusion. Management information systems are uncoordinated and lack timeliness.

National planning processes are further disrupted where international development partners and donors introduce their own strategies.

2.1 LOCAL GOVERNMENTS STRUGGLE TO FULFIL THEIR MANDATE FOR WASH

Local governments in Ghana are nominally responsible for ensuring the delivery of water and sanitation services. In practice, they fulfil this role via a confusing patchwork of overlapping and sometimes contradictory mandates for service delivery.

Ghana's Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936), identifies the 261 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) as the highest local political, administrative and planning authority responsible for governance and development including district water and sanitation service delivery. In rural areas these are simply known as District Assemblies and that is the term used in this paper when referring to Asutifi North. Local governments are politically answerable to the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development while policy responsibility for water and sanitation service delivery rests with the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources¹⁵. Planning and reporting is to the National Development Planning Commission and budgeting and financial reporting to the Ministry of Finance.

In rural areas and small towns, District Assemblies have long taken direct responsibility for water service provision, but through a mixture of partnerships and direct provision¹⁶. There are 28,473 boreholes, 3,993 hand-dug wells, 126 small community pipe schemes, 381 small town pipe schemes, and 526 limited mechanised systems under different management models.

The majority are under local government oversight, with management responsibilities delegated to Water and Sanitation Management Teams and private contractors. The tariff regime is fragmented because

¹³ Duti, V., Gyasi, K., Kabuga, C., and Korboe, D., [Water sector harmonisation and alignment study \(ircwash.org\)](#)

¹⁴ The National Development Planning Commission is the coordinating body responsible for the decentralisation of development planning in Ghana. Significant frameworks include the [Ghana Beyond Aid Charter](#) (2019 which sets out a vision for weaning Ghana off aid dependency, the Coordinated Programme of Economic and Social Development Policies (CPESDP 2017-2024), and the Medium-Term National Development Policy Framework (MTDPF) – Agenda for Jobs: Creating Prosperity and Equal Opportunity for All (2018-2021).

¹⁵ The Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources operates through the Community Water and Sanitation Agency, Ghana Water Company Limited, the Water Resources Commission and the Sanitation and Water Directorates.

¹⁶ Duti, V., [Silver linings of the COVID-19 crisis in Ghana :: IRC \(ircwash.org\)](#)

each District Assembly sets its own arrangements. In addition, some of the 460 water systems under NGO and private sector arrangements are outside District Assembly supervision.

Not surprisingly, this leads to a fragmented patch-work of provision with incomplete and inconsistent data about who is delivering what, when, how and where. As a result communities are littered with broken-down and disused facilities while service levels consistently fall short of national standards for quality and access.

District Assemblies face major challenges in managing interdepartmental relationships, fostering links with national institutions, translating policies into action, and coordinating partnerships. Sector policies, agency plans and budgets rarely align with District Assembly development plans and budgets.

Responsibilities for WASH delivery also remain fragmented within the district internal structures with different parts of the mandate undertaken by the District Works Department, the School Health and Environmental Programme (SHEP), the District Directorate of Health Services (DDHS) and the Environmental Health and Sanitation Division (ESHD). Since there is no clear coordinating point, the sector lacks leadership and is generally weak in planning, finance, monitoring and accountability. Citizen engagement and partnership relationships suffer, and the District Assembly lacks the ability to document local activity or connect to national government bodies in such a way as to bring successful pilots to scale¹⁷.

With minor variations, this picture is mirrored across Ghana (and many other countries). However, progress is being made. The Local Government 2018 annual performance evaluation report revealed that 164 out of 216 (76%) MMDAs mainstreamed environmental and sanitation issues into annual action plans, and 162 out of 216 (75%) achieved 10% or greater growth for household toilets.¹⁸ The assessment concluded that most MMDAs were generally competent in administrative duties but require further training in record management, organisational development, conflict management, ICT and monitoring and evaluation.

2.2 BASELINE SITUATION IN ASUTIFI NORTH DISTRICT

A baseline assessment of WASH governance¹⁹ in the Asutifi North District before the ANAM initiative revealed similar obstacles to coordinating development interventions and partners. The district leadership and responsible units for WASH did not have adequate skills or capacities to convert national sector regulations into relevant local by-laws or to review them. Regulations were not fully applied or enforced, and managing and ensuring accountability was an obvious challenge.

Despite a legal requirement to do so, NGOs did not collaborate closely with the District Assembly and generally did not inform them of their developmental investments. Many activities did not align with the district strategic plan and some NGOs did not even register their presence in the District with the result that some activities were unregulated and not included in district reports. The District Assembly had instituted stakeholder engagement platforms, but coordination was weak, particularly between local government, NGOs/CSOs and citizens, who lacked a voice in consultation processes. These challenges undermined local ownership of the delivery agenda and the effectiveness and sustainability of investments.

Until they were addressed it would be difficult to localise and achieve the SDG of “ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”.

¹⁷ Documented in 2019 internal report prepared by IRC for ANAM

¹⁸ Local Government Service. 2018 annual performance report of Metropolitan Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs)

¹⁹ Asutifi North District, Ghana. [Water, Sanitation and Hygiene \(WASH\) Master Plan :: IRC \(ircwash.org\)](https://www.ircwash.org)

3. A district master plan to achieve universal coverage

The ANAM initiative in Asutifi North District was devised to test whether a local authority-led partnership with NGOs, civil society, traditional leaders and the private sector, could overcome these hurdles and drive district-wide access to water services. ANAM stands for the *Asutifi North Ahonidie Mpontuo* – or in English, *the Asutifi North Cleanliness Initiative* – a name adopted by the District and its communities to build on citizens' desire for a clean society and their understanding that this can only be achieved with safe water, sanitation, and good hygiene.

3.1 ANAM THEORY OF CHANGE

The ANAM hypothesis is that strong local government leadership, supported at regional and national levels by robust policy, public finance, and skilled technical partnerships, can provide and sustain safe water services for every household, school, and health facility across that district by 2030. Access to water can become universal and sustainable if partners combine to change the delivery methods. Key changes include: adequate investment in WASH combined with technological choices grounded in credible field evidence; tariffs set at economically viable levels; operations and management systems implemented efficiently; and measures to ensure equity and inclusion. If evidence is shared at district and national levels, it is more likely that investments in implementing universal WASH services will follow.

The ANAM initiative focuses on delivering safe water services to everyone in the Asutifi North District by 2030 through a whole WASH systems approach. Partners, led by the District Assembly, agreed to align their efforts by working together²⁰. The central aim was to accelerate coverage in this district, but also to learn how to reach everybody with services that last with lessons that are applicable elsewhere. Through action research the District Assembly would develop

skills to lead the process and learn how to transform the sector. Partner organisations would share expertise and solve problems together as part of a wider team rather than to their own agendas.

This district was selected because Asutifi North District Assembly and its leadership were ready to address the water crisis in their district, traditional leaders were on board, and strong implementing agencies already working there were willing to collaborate.

An extensive process took place in 2017 which involved stakeholders at local, regional and national levels. The National Development Planning Commission, IRC, Safe Water Network, World Vision International, the Community Water and Sanitation Agency, the Asutifi North District Assembly and Brong Ahafo Regional Coordinating Council all played a role along with traditional and religious leaders, citizen organisations, women's groups, youth groups and the private sector.

On 16 March 2018, the District Assembly, along with these partners committed themselves to achieving universal WASH access in Asutifi North District by the end of 2030²¹. The process to reach this stage was supported and guided by IRC Ghana – in effect its first role as a hub for ANAM.

Donors have proved themselves willing to support this approach. The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation became the primary external donor for the initiative, in line with its own Safe Water Strategy²² which presents a vision of every disadvantaged and vulnerable person, health facility and school having reliable access to safe and affordable water by 2030. IRC Ghana had worked with the Foundation between 2014 and 2016, to strengthen local government

20 Partners in this initiative include several Ghana-based international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), direct service providers (Safe Water Network, World Vision), as well as IRC. US-based Conrad N. Hilton partner organisations the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, Aquaya Institute, and Netcentric Campaigns each play a specialised role. A further group of US-based technical support partners support aspects of the initiative. DataBoom works on the initiative's model for partnerships and systems change, and the Stanford programme on Water, Health & Development (WHD), focuses on evaluation.

21 [Water, sanitation and hygiene \(WASH\) master plan: Asutifi North District :: IRC \(ircwash.org\)](https://www.ircwash.org)

22 The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation introduced its [2017-2021 Safe Water Strategic Initiative Strategy](#) to extend safe water services to at least one million people in six countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, strengthening in-country capacity, and acting as a catalyst for the development and dissemination of relevant knowledge, providing the space to explore new solutions and expand approaches that work.

capacity to deliver water services in 13 autonomous districts in Ghana²³. The Foundation supported the view that SDG 6 can be achieved in a geographical setting if the right partnership (government, development partners and citizens) is in place.

In 2021 more donor backing came from the Latter-day Saint Charities which agreed to support Asutifi North District Assembly to expand access to water and sanitation services in five schools and five unserved hard-to-reach communities and to build the capacity of district officials, service providers and other stakeholders. Financial support also comes from the mining company Newmont Ghana Gold Limited that co-funds WASH facilities with royalties directly to the District Assembly and corporate social responsibility investments through its social development arm, Newmont Ahafo Development Foundation (NADeF).

3.2 THE ANAM MASTER PLAN

“The master plan represents the resolve of the Assembly to leverage the resources and expertise of strategic partners to achieve a common vision for universal access to WASH services by the year 2030. It will also provide a platform for dialogue among WASH actors, and the standard by which collective progress towards a better future for WASH in the District will be measured.”

- Hon. Anthony Mensah, District Chief Executive, Asutifi North District Assembly March, 2018²⁴.

The vision and master plan were adopted in March 2018²⁵ following a year of analysis and consultation led by the District Assembly, supported and facilitated via a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with IRC Ghana. ANAM includes all the major NGO providers of water and sanitation services in the District, civil society and citizens’ organisations, working to a common agenda with mutually reinforcing responsibilities. The District Assembly and implementing partners agreed a set of core indicators, along with tracking and reporting processes to inform progress towards the goals and to guide adjustments. The model aims to give a decision making voice to socially excluded beneficiaries and to stimulate citizen

engagement and support through a network of civil society organisations and by direct communication with communities. The master plan is ‘owned’ and led by the Asutifi North District Assembly and guides work towards achieving the vision of universal access to water and sanitation by 2030. IRC signed an MoU with the District Assembly to act as the hub for ANAM.

The master plan describes the current state of provision, identifies priorities, highlights gaps and outlines how to fill them. It is used to attract funding and partnerships for strong and resilient systems and services; to increase investment in the right places; to link policies, institutions, systems and processes; and to improve technical expertise and share knowledge about what works²⁶.

The master plan also translated the vision into an actionable and trackable set of steps. It provides a framework for the district WASH sector over a period of 13 years (2018-30) for coordinating and aligning the efforts of all actors towards achieving the shared goal of universal WASH access. It sets out actions to address technical capacity and resource constraints, and a path to strengthen local institutional capacity for efficient resource prioritisation, maintenance and tariff payment.²⁷

3.3 SUSTAINED CHANGE TAKES TIME

Sustained sector change is a long process: it may take ten years or more to adapt to new approaches and learn from experiences²⁸. Figure 4 shows the repeated cycles of “praxis,” as practice is adjusted based on theory, and theory is revised based on experience. The cycles move from vision and diagnosis, to finding and testing solutions and scaling up successful results.

In line with this thinking, ANAM was planned as three intersecting phases.

Phase 1: Collective visioning and diagnosis: working to build a collective vision of the desired change and establishing the partnerships took a year (2017-18).

23 The [Strengthening Local Government Capacity to Deliver Water Services](#) Project sought to coordinate efforts to maximise resources and improve systems for service delivery at district level. It built on earlier work by the Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA), IRC and the district assemblies, notably in the Triple-S project. Between 2015 and the end of 2017, the project expanded efforts to plan and deliver sustainable services in 13 largely rural districts in five regions of Ghana.

24 Preface to the [Water, Sanitation and Hygiene \(WASH\) Master Plan, Asutifi North District, Ghana :: IRC \(ircwash.org\)](#)

25 Press release of the Launch of Asutifi North District based full WASH coverage initiative ([ircwash.org](#))

26 For more on master plans see [People, systems and change: Harnessing the power of collective action through the Safe Water Strategy :: IRC, P7 \(ircwash.org\)](#)

27 Tillet, W., and Smits, S., [A roadmap for universal access to sustainable WASH services at district level \(ircwash.org\)](#)

28 See for example the findings from the Triple-S Project in Ghana. See Lockwood, H., and Duti, V., [Whole system change: capturing the change process in the Ghana rural water sub-sector :: IRC \(ircwash.org\)](#)

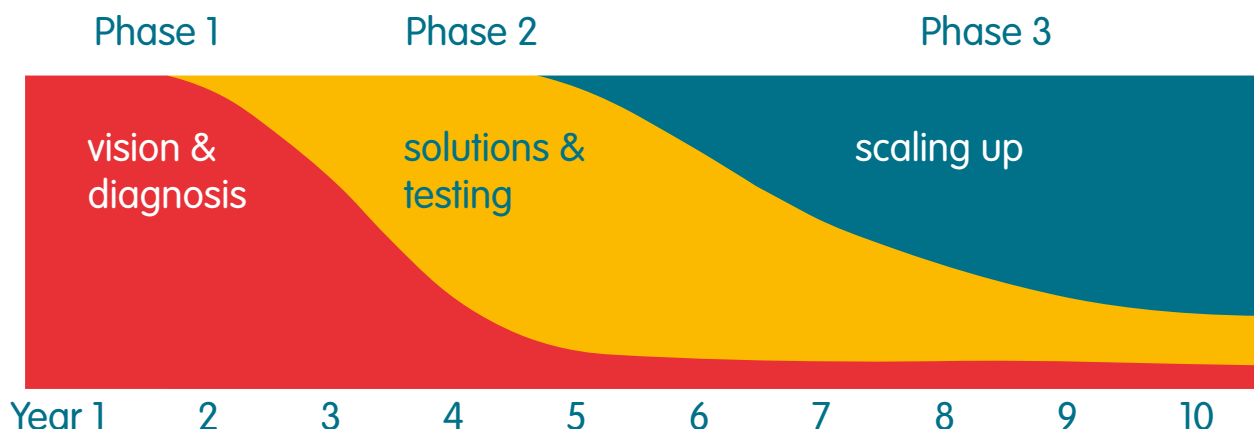


FIGURE 4: CYCLES OF “PRAXIS” FROM VISION TO SCALING UP (HUSTON AND MORIARTY, 2018)

Phase 2: Implementation and evidence building: where communities see services being transformed and the District begins to meet its WASH goals. It provides the evidence and models that will influence national and regional implementation.

Phase 3: Replication and institutionalisation: documenting processes and lessons from delivery to inform sector engagement and to develop a model for reaching 100% water access in a district. The third stage overlaps with implementation and peaks as results from phase two become visible. In this phase relevant government ministries review existing policies, models and guidelines. It involves leveraging partnerships to replicate and scale the approach to other districts in Ghana and across the globe.

There are no sharp boundaries between phases. By the second year of the ANAM initiative, infrastructure and services had begun to be delivered. By the third year, the process of sharing results and scaling up had begun, but implementation in the District continued. The vision is refreshed, revisited and shared on a continuous basis.

3.4 THE RATIONALE FOR A COORDINATING HUB

The master plan provides for a dedicated facilitating and coordinating hub, a role filled by IRC Ghana under its MoU with the District Assembly. The hub has two full-time staff and an office in the district which it shares with partners. It supports the District Assembly, guides the processes of visioning and implementation, fosters harmonisation, supports and documents innovation, and ensures mutual accountability for progress. The hub facilitates partner coordination and acts as a backbone for the delivery architecture. It draws local WASH actors

together to pursue their vision and to generate evidence that drives advocacy for change. It supports efforts to foster citizen voices in the expectation that this will unleash a spirit of shared ownership and mutual support.

THE CHANGE HUB AND THE CO-CREATION OF KNOWLEDGE

“The change hub is the structure that initiates, drives and facilitates the change we seek to achieve. It is analogous to the backbone organisation in collective impact and comparable to catalyst, transition manager, change facilitator, collective impact driver and systems leader...”

“The change hub also builds the systems leadership capacity of stakeholders – encouraging them to view the system as a whole, promoting reflection and conversation, helping stakeholders to find different ways of working, fostering the co-creation of knowledge, providing space for creating a vision, and taking a forward-looking perspective on the issues. The visioning and action research process puts the stakeholders in a position to work differently: they think ahead rather than provide reactionary responses to issues.

“In practice, the change process builds on the resources, competencies and capacities of local systems. Although the change hub facilitates the process, the lead and true decision makers are local with, in WASH services, a special role for local government.”

Darteh, B., Moriarty, P., and Huston, A., 2019. *How to use learning alliances to achieve systems change at scale*. Pp 12&13.

A complementary national hub was created to link experiences documented in the district to the policy level. The national hub is based in the IRC office in

Accra and is led by the IRC Ghana Country Director and her senior team, with expertise in sector change, policy and institutional development; project management, research and monitoring; and communication, learning, advocacy and finance. The national hub connects what happens in the district to the wider sector; notably the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources, the National Development Planning Commission, the Community Water and Sanitation Agency and development partners such as NGOs.

The hub was designed to deliver on a complex range of tasks:

- guide the process of agreeing a joint vision, leading to the adoption of ANAM in 2018;
- coordinate and manage a multi-actor partnership for collective action;
- provide core staffing, technical expertise, capacity support and a hub office in the District where partners can work together;
- provide support for out-of-country partners;
- facilitate policy dialogue and learning to support adaptation, replication and scaleup;
- provide training for monitoring, facilitating the process of agreeing core indicators, and tracking and reporting processes;
- conduct studies to support innovation, learn about needs and solve problems;
- lead process documentation and knowledge management.

To what extent the hub has contributed to progress through these objectives in ANAM is discussed in Section 5.

4. The partners and their roles

The defining characteristic of the ANAM initiative lies in the commitment of the District Assembly and its partners to their collective vision; contributing complementary inputs to build a strong district WASH system. The achievement of universal access to water, sanitation and hygiene requires technically and financially efficient solutions that enhance resilience, align with national planning norms and standards,

and prevent fragmentation and duplication. Partner roles are structured towards creating such an integrated system that identifies service gaps and prioritises interventions to fill them. By collaborating, partners remain engaged, each using its special strengths and competencies to contribute to the collective agenda.



FIGURE 5: PARTNERS' ROLES IN THE ANAM WASH SYSTEM

Asutifi North District Assembly (ANDA): The District Assembly represents the Government of Ghana in district development and is the ANAM leader and principal stakeholder. ANDA takes responsibility for mobilising, consulting and coordinating stakeholders, including traditional authorities, public and private sector agencies, CSOs and citizens. It is responsible for costing the WASH master plan, providing rising levels of financial support and mobilising additional human and financial resources. ANDA integrates the master plan into its Medium-Term Development Plan and oversees governance and accountability mechanisms to safeguard the integrity and longevity of investments.

Traditional authorities: Paramount and Divisional Chiefs are highly influential as custodians of customary lands and citizen representatives. They collaborate with the District Assembly to enforce by-laws on sanitation and the protection of water bodies and forest reserves. They support ANAM fundraising efforts and mobilise citizens for behaviour change.

Civil society organisations (CSOs): CSOs work through existing platforms²⁹ to create the Asutifi North CSO Network (ANCSONET) to build popular support for implementing the ANAM master plan. They advocate for inclusion, gender and equity issues, resource allocation, water quality and environmental protection.

IRC is an international think-and-do tank that works with governments, NGOs, businesses and people around the world to find long-term solutions to the global crisis in water, sanitation and hygiene services and integrated water resource management (IWRM). Within ANAM, IRC Ghana serves as the hub organisation: convener, networker, documenter and sharer of knowledge.

Safe Water Network (SWN) is a champion of market-based safe water services, working to identify solutions to challenges of sustainability and scale. It is helping to deliver peri-urban and small town water services in Asutifi North through locally-operated water stations that are sustained through consumer payments.

“One key thing that has come out of this initiative is an endorsement of the fact that local government authorities are willing to invest in water services, provided that as partners we are also willing to invest a lot more time and effort. We need to understand the fact that the duty bearers must

account for every single dollar spent; they have a responsibility of being able to explain to the constituents the reason why they are making that investment. That takes a lot of time. It takes a lot of consultation.”

Joseph Ampadu, Sector Engagement and Partnerships manager for Safe Water Network, Ghana

World Vision Ghana (WVG) is a humanitarian and development organisation with expertise in providing water, sanitation and hygiene services to the poorest. In Asutifi North, World Vision implements ANAM initiatives, providing WASH services to households, schools, and health facilities in remote rural and peri-urban areas with 2,000 people or less as part of ‘leaving no one behind’ (an SDG indicator). It implements ‘pay-as-you-fetch’ services in communities to cover costs and to provide for schools and health centres. It is also introducing community-led total sanitation (CLTS), and a revolving fund for household sanitation.

“For me, the most important thing here is the complementarity. The way the consortium is organised is such that each and every partner is coming with its unique capabilities and then those unique capabilities are coming together to serve a common agenda of achieving universal WASH services in the district. The Assembly is the owner of all this and the leader of the master plan itself towards achieving universal WASH.”

Robel Lambiso, World Vision Ghana

Aquaya Institute is a US-based global leader in research and evidence-based action around water safety management. It works in Asutifi North and Wassa East to understand how to make water services more financially sustainable and safer at the point of collection. A Water Quality Assurance Fund facilitates quality testing by the Ghana Water Company.

“The results are already pretty useful in the District with the water systems, for the District Assembly and other partners to discuss microbial contamination and how to make the water safe to drink.

“We’re beginning the process of replicating this in other districts to try and increase the prevalence of

²⁹ They include a Youth Parliament (an affiliate of the National Youth Authority (NYA); OMAN Butantem, an environmental CSO; and the Global Alliance for Development Foundation (GADEF).

water quality testing to ensure that water systems all over Ghana are meeting the Ghana Standards Authority requirements for testing.”

Jessie Press-Williams, Aquaya Institute

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is the US national public health agency and a global public health leader. In Asutifi North, CDC provides technical advice for WASH infection prevention and control (IPC) in health care facilities and schools; training enumerators, supervising data collection, analysing reports and providing guidance on WASH-IPC interventions.

Netcentric Campaigns is a US-based non-profit, focused on mobilising advocacy networks to catalyse change. Netcentric Campaigns facilitates citizen engagement through the ANAM WASH network to galvanise and sustain popular support for WASH. Initiatives include a monthly community radio programme, a customer service desk within the District Assembly headquarters to handle complaints, and publicity through an ANAM website and Facebook page. Netcentric introduced a GIS tracker that enables the District to track WASH-related complaints and remedial actions.

The partnership is established on the basis of an MoU and associated compacts between the District Assembly and its partners. These include a District Hub Office facility service agreement between IRC, World Vision and Aquaya Institute.

5. Progress in ANAM and the role of the hub

Three years into the ANAM initiative several of the pathologies that had characterised WASH planning and delivery in Asutifi North are beginning to fade.

The District Assembly has led a process to incorporate the master plan into its district Medium-Term Development Plan and expenditure framework. By aligning the master plan with Ghana's state planning and financial management systems, the District has become eligible to disburse public funds for associated activities. As of 2021, the District and its partners have invested US\$ 555,000 in developing water infrastructure in 23 communities.

[WASH Service Monitoring Reports](#) show steady progress for drinking water. By 2021, 61,068 people were benefiting from improved water services compared with the baseline figure of 51,355 in 2017. Coverage with safely managed water services increased from 5% in 2017 to 15% in 2021, while the unserved population reduced from 18% to 11%. The District achieved its master plan mid-term target for safely managed water services a year ahead of schedule and is on course to achieve its water vision by 2030. Attention is shifting to unserved communities and hard-to-reach populations, and to addressing sanitation and resiliency issues.

More than half of Asutifi North's 56 communities have shifted to paying for water at the tap, in contrast to drawing water for free or paying a flat rate whenever a water facility breaks down.

Pay-as-you-fetch is securing financial and physical sustainability. Water and Sanitation Management Teams can meet the costs of minor repairs and preventive maintenance, reducing the burden on the District Assembly which frees up funds for investment. In 2020, the District Assembly invested more than US\$ 100,000 in capital investment, capital maintenance and operational expenses, several times the pre-ANAM total. A proactive maintenance culture results in the repair of all broken-down water facilities.

These gains derive from the whole partnership – the leadership in the District Assembly, the partners responsible for infrastructure, payment systems and

innovations, the network of community organisations, the traditional community leaders and the hub role played by IRC. The hub role is catalytic – supporting the whole system to work effectively – and it is not possible to try to attribute specific outcomes to hub inputs.

However, many benefits flow from the inclusive process that informed the vision and master plan, and the sense of a joint enterprise that has led to greater collaboration, communication and understanding. It is instructive, therefore, to consider how the hub roles have contributed to changes leading towards this improved performance.

“My Chief Executive is a very happy man. All the chiefs in three paramountcies and two divisions I must say are very proud. What is driving the whole initiative is total political commitment and the dedication of the staff. Also there is a high commitment from our partners. We believe there is strength in numbers, people with like minds coming together to move on with the initiative. We have Aquaya working on water quality, World Vision are experts when it comes to providing water in the rural areas, Safe Water Network are experts when it comes to providing water in peri-urban and urban areas. IRC are managing the hub functions and coordinating, and the Assembly is giving political leadership and commitment. So if you look at the whole initiative, we have high calibre personnel, human resource, and their dedication and commitment is what is driving us.”

James Ata-Era, Asutifi North District Development Planning Officer

5.1 GUIDING THE PROCESS OF AGREEING A JOINT VISION

The master plan adopted in March 2018 by the District Assembly, local CSOs, NGOs, private sector, traditional authority, and youth groups in Asutifi North District³⁰ represents a commitment to joint enterprise³¹. Key actors agreed to work together to implement a common long-term plan, guided by the shared vision of universal and reliable access to safe

³⁰ [Launch of Asutifi North District based full WASH coverage initiative \(ircwash.org\)](#)

³¹ [Water, sanitation and hygiene \(WASH\) master plan: Asutifi North District :: IRC \(ircwash.org\)](#)

and affordable water across the District. This contrasts with the individual, uncoordinated, short-term agendas that are common in the sector.

IRC was instrumental³² in selecting Asutifi North as the most promising district candidate for the initiative, based on the willingness of the District to focus on water and sanitation issues and the presence of capable implementation partners. Under an MoU with the District Assembly IRC supported baseline surveys, inception meetings and strategic planning workshops to build consensus for the collective WASH vision and master plan. Subsequently, IRC supported the Assembly in implementing the plan and in citizen engagement at town hall and stakeholder review meetings. This process can be seen as the first hub role in ANAM.

5.2 COORDINATING AND MANAGING THE PARTNERSHIP FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

“IRC’s role in the partnership is to ensure that we have a master plan that everybody believes in and everybody has contributed to, that everybody is committed to, and ensuring that no-one takes their eye off the ball of the vision of universal WASH access. We are constantly reviewing the performance of the plan and ensuring that we are on track, and if we are falling short, we identify areas where we need to redouble our efforts.”

Jeremiah Atengdem, IRC hub coordinator, Asutifi North

The District Operational Partnership is a formal agreement between Asutifi North District Assembly and each ANAM partner, and the commitments and responsibilities are monitored at periodic meetings that provide regular updates and ensure that commitments are kept. Partner meetings, facilitated by the hub, resolve potential conflicts or duplications. The hub plays a daily role in maintaining dialogue and collaboration in formal and informal structures.

At the annual review forum and formal planning meetings, partners review performance, identify challenges, and decide how to enhance progress, minimise duplication and resolve issues. Coordination and problem solving also take place outside formal meetings during day-to-day interaction between partners.

The results of coordination are visible within ANAM in a sequence of assessment, planning, delivery, documentation and review:

- The District Assembly, IRC and CDC conduct needs assessments in communities and schools;
- The District Assembly selects and prepares communities for interventions, co-funded with World Vision and Safe Water Network;
- World Vision and Safe Water Network sign agreements with communities on payment and maintenance arrangements and then install hardware;
- Aquaya Institute complements implementation with water quality assurance funds and kiosks for water vendors;
- Netcentric Campaigns supports networks to increase citizen participation and improve customer services;
- IRC documents the process and shares communication products;
- IRC organises and facilitates stakeholder reviews and planning meetings to share experiences, acknowledge achievements, identify opportunities and respond to challenges;
- As a result of these reviews, activities may be expanded, modified or cancelled.

The hub role has been catalytic in enabling service delivery in Asutifi North to become more inclusive and systematic, with a corresponding increase in the level of engagement and collaboration and a broader involvement in planning. Implementation is better aligned and partners have developed mutual respect for each other’s expertise and contribution.

5.3 PROVIDING CORE STAFF, TECHNICAL EXPERTISE, CAPACITY SUPPORT AND A HUB OFFICE

IRC established a hub office as a base for partners in Kenyasi, close to the District Assembly headquarters. An IRC water expert is based there full-time to oversee day-to-day coordination, with a process documentation officer to ensure that significant events are captured, recorded and shared.

The hub office facilitates day-to-day interaction between partners, continuous dialogue and shared problem solving. Key workers see each other almost

³² In consultation with Safe Water Network and World Vision Ghana

daily so the hub office promotes relationship building in and beyond the workplace. Operating from one location enables field staff to be aware of each other's activities and to coordinate community visits and stakeholder engagement, optimising resource use and making best use of time. The shared workspace provides a convenient one-stop-shop for communities, organisations and District Assembly staff, reducing the logistical difficulties and time taken in liaising with partners at different locations. These strong relationships enabled the District Assembly to respond quickly and effectively to Covid-19 challenges.

Additional hub support is provided by a mix of IRC Ghana professionals and international associates to support research, monitoring and learning, product development, international communication and sector finance.

The hub office provides utilities such as electricity, water and internet services, and support staff to look after reception, and cleaning and security services. At national level, the broader hub operational team coordinates missions and events.

5.4 SUPPORT FOR OUT-OF-COUNTRY PARTNERS

The hub supports specialist international partners who provide expertise to the initiative and visit Asutifi North when necessary. They include the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention to assess WASH service levels in institutions; Netcentric Campaigns to support the District Assembly in building a civil society network of people and institutions; DataBoom to assess how well learning captures the role of partnerships and systems for change; and Stanford University to assess how the strategy is achieving impact. Support includes assisting in obtaining work permits, facilitating payroll administration, and providing transport for field work. The hub also hosts Aquaya Institute monitoring staff in the hub office.

5.5 FACILITATING POLICY DIALOGUE AND LEARNING

“An equally important bit about the hub role is the issue around learning scaleup and institutionalisation – to be able to provide decision-support tools and knowledge products

that will support uptake of the good innovations that we are testing in Asutifi North, the good experiences and cases. We help to coordinate this particular process through our District Learning Alliance Platform, and our National Level Learning Alliance Platform where we meet and share new knowledge. We believe this new knowledge will enable us to scale up this interesting district-based learning approach.”

Jeremiah Atengdem, IRC hub coordinator, Asutifi North

ANAM experiences are widely shared inside and outside the District. The District Chief Executive, the Coordinating Director and the District Development Planning Officer are able to confidently present and discuss ANAM's approach and interim outcomes at national and international fora.

The national hub connects what is happening at district level to the wider sector and national institutions. ANAM contributes to national sector discourse in sector working groups and the Coalition of NGOs in Water and Sanitation (CONIWAS) advocacy on WASH issues. Lessons from ANAM are shared at a National Learning Exchange annual meeting jointly organised by the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) and IRC, where development partners and NGOs reflect on Ghana's progress towards SDG 6.

Asutifi North is one of three districts in Ghana selected by NDPC to document inspiring efforts towards achieving SDG 6. The district approach is included in the “Good Practice of WASH” compilation shared with district assemblies all over Ghana³³. NDPC is considering incorporating lessons from the initiative in its next cycle of WASH guidelines.

The national hub supports Asutifi North District Assembly leaders to present results and share the approach at the annual NGO conference run by CONIWAS, (the “Mole” conference) and at significant international events such as African Water Week, World Water Week, UNC Water and Health Conference³⁴.

Partners such as SWN and World Vision International are introducing elements of the ANAM approach into other districts of Ghana and other organisations are

³³ [Good and innovative WASH practices in three districts in Ghana :: IRC \(ircwash.org\)](#)

³⁴ [What is all the Hubhub about having a Hub? & The UNC Water and Health Conference through the lens of IRC :: IRC \(ircwash.org\)](#)

adapting the principles in other districts³⁵. These experiences are also shared at the annual National Learning Exchange meeting.

Within the District, the hub facilitates and helps to organise learning events convened by the District Assembly. It also facilitates District Learning Alliance Platform meetings and the ANAM core learning group that brings together partner agencies. External stakeholders are invited to share in successes and instructive failures, which are consolidated into lessons and reflection papers to influence sector dialogue and policymaking.

The Platform meetings and the ANAM core group on learning have covered a wide range of issues, including gender empowerment, water quality, the government's Covid-19 response, budget tracking and service benchmarking. These engagements shape the focus of innovations and inform resource allocation decisions. One study by the District Assembly and IRC provided evidence to negotiate for an increase in the district budget for water and sanitation³⁶.

Partnership work by IRC with the District Assembly has improved its capacity to present information in a coherent and convincing manner. This is being applied in other district activities as the District Assembly begins to apply ANAM-type consultations more broadly, for example in Covid-19 public education campaigns.

5.6 TRAINING FOR MONITORING

The hub plays a significant role in training District Assembly staff in collecting data, monitoring progress and reporting. This enables the District Assembly and partners to generate accurate and timely data for evidence of progress and to identify necessary corrective measures. Skills in budget tracking and service monitoring have improved and IRC has trained staff as enumerators to collect data for every WASH facility in the District and to conduct household surveys on the user experience. The hub coordinates monitoring together with field activities, and works with the District and its partners on data analysis and reporting. By 2021, three water and sanitation service monitoring surveys had been

conducted to measure the WASH service levels and the performance of service providers³⁷.

Budget tracking studies provide an insight into cost components and potential sources of finance across WASH sub-sectors – water, sanitation, institutional WASH, and water resource management. These assessments allow for a comparison between current expenditure and available resources, identify gaps, and examine other potential sources of funding. Each partner conducts studies related to its interventions, and shares findings with the partnership at the District Learning Alliance platform or with the core learning group.

Information is used by the District Assembly for action planning, in annual stakeholder review meetings, and contributes to annual performance reports. Data is presented on virtual platforms including the mWater platform, used by more than 100,000 users in 180 countries to map and monitor water and sanitation³⁸.

The results have transformed the district plans and budgets. For the first time, the District Assembly has comprehensive, real-time data on Asutifi North water and sanitation services and is able to generate annual performance reports that integrate activities and outcomes from all key actors. The legal requirement for District Assembly departments and development partners to submit quarterly reports had previously gone largely unheeded. Today, district staff undertake regular monitoring visits to implementation sites and report at quarterly meetings.

Record keeping has also been transformed. Since July 2020, service providers for four limited mechanised water schemes (at Gambia, Obengkrom, Wamahinso and Kenyasi No. 2) have been able to maintain up-to-date information on their operations. This was especially important when the Government of Ghana introduced a temporary free water policy as a measure in stemming the spread of Covid-19. Thanks to accurate and reliable data, these facilities were able to secure full reimbursements from the state and to provide services without interruption.

35 The Latter-day Saint Charities will incorporate lessons in their programmes in Africa. Anesved Spain has contracted IRC Ghana to support the development of a WASH master plan as part of Ghana Health Service work to combat skin diseases in Upper Denkyira East district.

36 [Costing and financing sustainable WASH services in Asutifi North District :: IRC \(ircwash.org\)](#)

37 The water service survey covered all handpumps, all Limited Mechanised Boreholes (LMBs) and all the Small Water Treatment Plants (STPs) serving the District. Random sampling surveys were carried out in the two urban communities and 139 rural communities to assess the level of water and sanitation services as experienced by residents.

38 For the ANAM initiative's joint monitoring platform visit <https://www.anamwash.com/anam-wash-console>

More frequent monitoring by the Water and Sanitation Management Teams and the Works Department, coupled with more diligent auditing of the accounts of the district water systems by the Internal Audit Unit have contributed to ensuring compliance and minimising cash leakages.

A culture of support for monitoring has developed. In 2020, the Assembly disbursed US\$ 9,400 for monitoring, enabling reports to the Works Committee and the District Assembly to be more timely and to guide deliberation and remedial action.

5.7 STUDIES TO SUPPORT INNOVATION, ANALYSE NEEDS AND SOLVE PROBLEMS

One of the hub roles has been to initiate or support studies and action research to solve problems and improve the performance of the master plan.

An early study looked at capacity within the District Assembly to identify areas that needed to be strengthened. This resulted in a capacity development plan that has helped to improve the skills needed in needs assessment, planning and monitoring.

Aquaya Institute has conducted research into mechanisms for targeting and providing subsidies to the most deprived households to ensure that the new systems of payment do not exclude any families. The hub worked with Aquaya to help them select stakeholders and conduct studies in two parts: to identify the poorest households and to find the best ways of administering the subsidy. The hub also connected Aquaya with the CWSA at national level so that they could present their findings. The research will inform the next stage of work by the District Assembly, World Vision and Safe Water Network to ensure that every family can access quality water and that costs will be covered.

The arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic highlighted how plans can be knocked off course by external events. The hub commissioned a specialist to look at building resilience into the master plan so that it can, as far as possible, be protected against unforeseeable events. ANAM has been able to help the District's overall

response to the pandemic. In April 2020, the Assembly led the preparation of a district Covid-19 response plan, synchronising the efforts of ANAM partners, other NGOs, the private sector and philanthropists. This timely response raised more than US\$ 120,000 to implement a range of short- and medium-term WASH-IPC actions in health care settings and to initiate an emergency response system.

5.8 LEADING PROCESS DOCUMENTATION AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Process documentation is a systematic way to capture what happens in a process of change and to reflect and analyse how and why it happens, and to organise and disseminate findings (Schouten, 2011)³⁹.

The hub maintains and aligns records of activities, facilitating the provision of regular updates, documenting progress, and showing the contribution of partners in achieving the master plan goals. The aim is to use process documentation to provide information for monitoring, inform stakeholder dialogue and learning, and develop storytelling for communication. The work is overseen by the IRC process documentation officer based in the District. Templates were developed to document key issues from learning alliances, annual partner meetings, master plan implementation, community visits and global events.

Evidence of progress or significant change is captured through key informant interviews, budget tracking and outcome harvesting. Results are presented in articles, booklets and briefing notes⁴⁰. IRC has led on the documentation of stories and a series of short videos from communities on the baseline situation⁴¹ and on how progress has changed people's lives⁴².

The District introduced user-friendly means of information sharing and public engagement. These include an ANAM website and Facebook page, a Hubupdate newsletter⁴³, and a monthly programme on Radio Anapua FM with a focus on the drive for high quality and comprehensive water and sanitation services. A WASH desk officer is placed within the Assembly to interact with the public and direct complaints for remedial action. The officer advertises a

39 Da Silva Wells, C., Le Borgne, E., Dickinson, N. and de Jong, D., [Documenting change: an introduction to process documentation :: IRC \(ircwash.org\)](#) & Schouten, T., [Briefing Note on Process Documentation :: IRC \(ircwash.org\)](#)

40 Duti, V., Atengdem, J., and Wumbei, A., [Working together for safe water in Ghana – the journey so far :: IRC \(ircwash.org\)](#)

41 McIntyre, P., and Wumbei, A., [Asutifi North: what the water challenge means for communities :: IRC \(ircwash.org\)](#)

42 McIntyre, P., [Asutifi North water partnership impact sends ripples across Ghana :: IRC \(ircwash.org\)](#)

43 Hubupdate available at <https://www.anamwash.com/news>

telephone number and web address on the radio programmes and reports back to listeners on what has happened to issues raised by the public. A tracking system allows the District to monitor the range and sources of complaints and the relevant responses. The proportion of complaints addressed rose from negligible levels before ANAM to 74% in 2021.

Knowledge management is not only about documenting experiences and making reports. It requires information to be shared in meaningful ways that impact on stakeholders.

Asutifi North had consultative platforms before the ANAM programme but these were neither consistently nor effectively conducted. Town hall community meetings have become more structured, with more instructive reports, informed by data generated through the District's monitoring framework. Data is presented visually, which makes it more comprehensible, aids inclusivity and helps to keep discussions focused and informed.

Stakeholders contend that meetings of the District General Assembly and subcommittees are more informative and inspiring because of improvements in data collection, analysis and reporting. Where reports were previously hand-written, photocopied and distributed as loose sheets, updates are now delivered as PowerPoint presentations, with accompanying printouts, making the meetings more engaging.

6. Reflections on the role of a hub

“Our major achievement, I would say, has been the ability to mobilise the people with the interest to support this cause. They have been part of the whole process of formulating the vision, having the master plan and then agreeing the main targets. Since then we have had the chiefs on our side, we have the people being re-orientated on the need to pay for the water services and then also to ensure the maintenance of these facilities that are being provided. So we think we are doing very well on the water side. I am very, very hopeful that we will even meet the target before 2030.”

“The Assembly has shown interest right from the beginning, but we are also seeing their understanding of the processes improving day by day and we also see stronger leadership and commitment. You see the District Chief Executive and the team always being there at the partner meetings. What we also see happening is increasing accountability when annually they meet all the stakeholders and provide updates on the status of implementation of the programme.”

“It is possible to scale up the Asutifi North initiative of reaching everyone with water and sanitation by the year of 2030 in many more districts. We need to be intentional about aligning the partnerships in the various districts and ensuring that we stimulate the political and technical leadership to drive the process.”

Vida Duti, Country Director IRC Ghana

A hub organisation must be a competent and trusted partner, independent of special interests, in order to make meaningful connections with local government, civil society and other stakeholders. The hub plays a significant role in keeping the focus on lasting and reliable services rather than just on infrastructure. The Asutifi North hub ensures that the District Assembly and its partners have access to relevant information on each other’s services, investments, and implementation, and remain engaged in wider issues of problem-solving and learning.

The hub is a catalyst, not a magic bullet, and it would be unrealistic to expect a change process which involves multiple partners, an extended time frame, and new ways of interacting to proceed without challenges. In this section we look at some of the

opportunities and challenges that will be faced by hubs in a variety of settings.

6.1 FINANCIAL AND TIME COSTS

The hub carries a substantial cost in financial and human resources. In Asutifi North, the hub has two full-time staff and a hub office with attendant services. In addition, the key staff within the District Assembly and its partners invest time in the collaborative processes, especially in reviewing results, learning from these experiences and deciding on the way forward.

There are opportunity costs for senior District Assembly staff who spend more time on water and sanitation, and therefore have less time for other priorities. There are costs in arranging visits from outside experts and partners who do not have a local base. The hub role leads to greater interaction with communities and therefore more travel and associated resources.

There are also added costs in time and money to maintain a desk officer in the District Assembly to handle complaints, the monthly radio programme and the extra effort put into town hall meetings and collaboration with civil society. At the national level too, there is a cost for stronger collaboration and interaction. The workload on the central hub is considerable, but there is also a significant investment in the time of senior staff within governmental institutions.

These investments may be seen as cost-effective if results are beneficial, but they still have to be met. Even in an environment with many NGOs and project-driven financing this would be very challenging to replicate. In countries such as Ghana, where the financing landscape is changing to reduce aid dependency, alternative pathways for scaling the approach are emerging, which rely on experiences and lessons being shared and absorbed. They include:

- regional replication - WASH planning and district cross learning within the region;
- scaling by development partners in their areas of operation;
- supporting change through national government institutions - in Ghana through NDPC tool kits and sector policy.

Scaling up will be contingent on enabling governmental structures to incorporate lessons into national guidelines and policies and to support their application in other districts through other development partners.

6.2 ORGANISATIONAL AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

On a formal level, the change partnership exists between institutions and organisations. But in a relatively small setting such as one district, it effectively becomes a partnership between individuals, and depends on people working closely together.

Partnerships are always about people and managing human relationships is one of the most challenging hub roles.

In the long run, the value of spending time on reviewing experiences and drawing out lessons is appreciated, but partners who are implementation-focused may find it frustrating to spend time on discussions when they could be installing water systems. The hub has to build relationships rather than simply organise and facilitate meetings.

Just as change does not occur quickly in institutions and processes, people need time to process new ways of working, absorb new concepts and learn. The quality of the core staff within the hub is therefore critical to bringing about these changes. As well as being knowledgeable, they must be supportive motivators, able to demonstrate patience and work with emotional intelligence. When issues arise or things are not going well, partners will look to the hub for answers. At such times, individuals playing the hub role must be personally resilient and they need to be supported in their roles.

6.3 CONTINUITY

Changes in partner organisations are inevitable over a long period of time, possibly reflecting changing priorities and almost certainly involving changes in some key personnel. In Asutifi North, there was an early change in the District Chief Executive who represents Government in the district, and there have been three District Coordinating Directors – the senior district official. Fortunately, the new post holders have also adopted water and sanitation as a priority. One of the first things that the then new District Chief Executive did was to tour communities to observe for himself the poor conditions of their water and sanitation services. However, even when key personnel do not change, there can be periods of uncertainty,

such as after elections. The hub plays an important role in ensuring the continuity of the initiative and helping new staff to integrate into the partnership.

6.4 INTEGRATION INTO PLANNING AND FINANCIAL STRUCTURES

While the Asutifi master plan has status within the District, it is not a statutory document. And as a plan for a 13-year initiative it does not fit neatly into the four-year planning cycle used in Ghana. With support from the hub, the District Assembly has integrated the master plan into its Medium-Term Development Plan and has therefore been able to access government funds. At the national level, the hub team works to keep the initiative on the agenda of the most critical institutions and to influence the planning cycle, so that the collaborative approach is built into the national planning process and financed. In the medium and longer term it will be vital to incorporate essential components of the hub role into district and national structures so that they are institutionalised as government capacities strengthen over time. The strengths of the hub should no longer be reliant on special initiatives that require extra resources. The functions of coordination, cooperation, continuity and maintaining commitments must become a mainstream part of sector performance, learning and resilience.

6.5 MAINTAINING COMMITMENT

It is easier for partners to sign up for an initiative when they're enthused by new opportunities and horizons, but it is harder to maintain that enthusiasm over a long period.

In Ghana, enthusiasm has remained high through positive feedback from communities seeing positive changes, and periodic assessments and reviews leading to changing priorities and new plans. It is also maintained by making individuals and the various levels of the initiative feel connected.

It is also generated by good leadership – in this case from the District Assembly. The hub has supported the top-level officials in the District to broaden their approach by exposing them to international conferences – in person or online. They have been energised by presenting the ANAM initiative to an international audience and seeing the respect it has generated and how it has put Asutifi North on the map. They have seen that what they are doing is making a difference and feel a responsibility not to fail their people or their country. They have also been exposed to what others were doing in other regions and countries.

Within the District, they have seen the change that has come about when communities and civil society feel they have a stake in the outcome and a role in the decision making. By presenting progress to their own people, they have learned the benefits of downwards accountability rather than simply upwards to the centre.

Enthusiasm is also maintained by the way meetings are conducted. A wider range of District Assembly staff and partners are able to present findings so that they are meaningful to their audiences.

In December 2021, more than 50 key stakeholders from partners, communities and civil society attended the annual master plan review. A few days later, 200 people from communities and civil society attended a town hall meeting in the town of Kenyasi where the District Chief Executive named the communities that had seen improvements in their water and sanitation services.

Community members were able to raise their concerns about being able to reach places to access water at the meeting, and the extent to which open defecation continues to blight their environment. Through events like these, commitments are renewed and enthusiasm maintained.

6.6 COMPETING DEMANDS

All local governments have a wide range of responsibilities. In Ghana, these include health, education, roads and other vital functions.

The District Assembly has to meet these complementary but competing demands. It can draw its focus away from water, sanitation and hygiene and put pressure on budgets. However, ANAM can also be a benefit for other sectors, especially health where hygiene improvements are critical and where water is a priority. In schools and health centres, water and toilets are provided free for users, paid for through revenue raised at community water points.

Making connections between sectors and ensuring that skills are shared through the local government structure is one way that a hub can navigate competing demands.

6.7 INVISIBILITY CLOAK

ANAM is led by the District Assembly and the physical improvements in the water and sanitation structures are provided by the implementing partners.

The hub role is a vital one but largely unseen. Since the hub does not provide finance or hardware, its

ability to achieve results is entirely one of persuasion. Its networking ability is paramount. There can be some tension between the need to provide support and be a reliable partner for the District Assembly, and the need to take a back seat so that it remains clear who is in charge and where the buck stops.

Partner organisations that install hardware and establish payment systems that transform communities justifiably have high-visibility roles. This is celebrated in communities as articulated by one village leader in his expressive phrase, “Where World Vision goes, water flows”. Being the hub means celebrating the successes and contributions of all partners and accepting relative anonymity for its own role.

However, the hub should never become entirely invisible. The value of its contribution must be felt and appreciated for it to retain influence and financial backing. In the long run, all the partners need to appreciate what the hub does, so that they remain willing to work closely with it.

6.8 UNEXPECTED EVENTS

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown in the most dramatic fashion that programmes can be knocked off course by events. Climate change, civil conflict, epidemics and economic crises can all dislocate the best-laid plans.

The pandemic interfered with the ability of partners to meet, visit communities and to work efficiently, but critically it did not bring these things to a halt. Indeed, the hub was supportive in helping the District to prepare and deliver a Covid-19 response. The pandemic has also provided an opportunity to raise the profile of hygiene as part of the master plan.

The monitoring and reporting system made it possible to interact productively with government initiatives to provide free water in 2020. Building resilience into systems and having strong local supervision of facilities is vital. The internet services provided as part of the hub support have also been helpful.

6.9 CITIZEN VOICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Downwards accountability to citizens is an important part of securing the human right to water, sanitation and hygiene. The network of citizens and CSOs has become more effective in holding duty bearers to account, contributing to a more responsive culture of service delivery. The spread of customer engagement channels – radio phone-ins, town hall meetings, the ANAM website, the WASH desk and social media platforms – all enable service users to make

themselves heard and to receive prompt and relevant feedback. Having a customer service desk inside the Assembly offices has transformed its ability to respond to complaints from communities. The monthly radio programme has opened direct lines of communication with the public and social media has enabled ANAM to showcase and communicate successes and events.

The hub team has worked with Netcentric Campaigns to develop an effective network and the local government leadership has engaged fully with the process. Input from the hub has been central to building confidence and ensuring public engagement.

7. Conclusions

The change hub is pivotal to the ANAM initiative. The changes that have taken place show the promise of achieving much more efficient and effective water and sanitation services that can deliver universal access. The hub has played a significant role in helping these changes come about.

Benefits include a collectively owned and ambitious vision together with clearly defined WASH targets and means of measurement, citizen engagement, a culture of learning, an ability to adapt, mutual accountability, and an integrated approach to documentation.

IRC Ghana succeeded in establishing a respected hub role and technical and project management support to partners at the district level because the District Assembly provides an institutional anchor, and because the partners were committed to the process and to change. A master plan with clear vision, targets with measurable indicators and pathways provides a common framework for mutual accountability. The collective approach has fostered partnership. Strategic positioning at national level has also been essential to support the Government in delivering national and SDG targets.

Asutifi North District Assembly is more confident and capable of effective leadership for water and sanitation services. Citizens feel a greater sense of shared ownership in the water and sanitation agenda and a genuine stake in increasing levels of service. Traditional authorities – custodians of the land – work with the Assembly to enforce by-laws designed to protect water resources and to promote healthy sanitation behaviour. In a clear break from the past, the organisations delivering WASH services now work to the district master plan, align with national guidelines and harmonise their activities with each other. Decision making is informed by monitoring and learning.

An improvement in citizens' willingness to pay for water services resulted from intensified communication and sensitisation on the community's roles and responsibilities in ensuring uninterrupted delivery, coupled with the District Assembly's greater willingness to be accountable to its citizens. These things have come about through teamwork and partnership, and the hub role has contributed substantially to this.

The hub will continue to play an important supporting role so that the initiative continues to make gains through to 2030 and attracts financial support.

The challenges will change, and the hub needs to stay one step ahead. The District needs more partners to support the water, sanitation and hygiene aspects of the ANAM master plan and SDG 6 targets. The challenge of leaving no-one behind by extending services to small, dispersed settlements and areas with geographical or technological constraints will become more pronounced as larger communities become better served. Reaching the last mile will entail gaining a better understanding of the poverty and vulnerability dynamics in underserved and unserved communities.

The strength of the hub model lies in how sector actors can address such challenges, how commitment is sustained, and how the capacity and leadership qualities of the District Authority develop. The Asutifi North ANAM initiative is not only a success in its own terms; it is prima facie evidence of the strength of the hub model in any change process with multiple partners. Incorporating the lessons and strengths of the hub role into the wider water and sanitation sector in Ghana will become a priority as part of a governmental drive to strengthen the sector so that it learns from its experiences and becomes more resilient.

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