IRC/

TRIPLE –S PROJECT

RESEARCH ON LEARNING ALLIANCE APPROACH

FINAL REPORT

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CLTS	Community Total Led Sanitation
CONIWAS	Coalition of NGOs in Water and Sanitation
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
CWSA	Community Water and Sanitation Agency
DAs	District Assemblies
DLAP	District Learning Alliance Platform
DPs	Development Partners
EHSD	Environmental Health and Sanitation Directorate
FLOW	Field Level Operations Watch
GoG	Government of Ghana
GWF	Ghana Water Forum
GWCL	Ghana Water Company Limited
KNUST	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MDBS	Multi Donor Budget Support
MLGRD	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
MMDAs	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies
MWRWH	Ministry of Water Resources Works and Housing
NESCON	National Environmental Sanitation Conference
NESPOCC	National Environmental Sanitation Policy Coordination Committee
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NLLAP	National Learning Alliance Platform
PRONET	Professional Network Association
RCC	Regional Coordination Council
RCN	Resource Centre Network
RICCS	Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Committee on Sanitation
RLAP	Regional Learning Alliance Platform
TPP	Tripartite Partnership Project
TREND	Training Research and Networking for Development
UNICEF	United Nations Children and Educational Fund
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WD	Water Directorate
WRC	Water Resources Commission
WRI	Water Research Institute

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The central purpose of the Triple-S project is to enhance the learning and adaptive capacity of the key actors in the rural water sub-sector. The intent is to create a sector that learns, innovates and adapts to emerging changes. The theory of change underpinning Triple-S is that when learning is strengthened in the rural water sub-sector, concepts, policies and best practices in sustainable service delivery would be promoted through strategic partnerships and learning platforms. In pursuit of this, the project has worked with the Learning Alliance Approach, and has used learning platforms as the main vehicle for promoting sector learning. In Ghana, a learning platform already existed at the national level for the WASH sector. Triple-S has strengthened and worked with this platform. In addition, the project has initiated actions towards the establishment of three regional Learning Alliances, one in each of its pilot regions of Northern, Brong Ahafo and Volta. The project has initiated steps towards the establishment of District Learning Alliance Platforms, one in each of its three pilot districts: Gonja East in the Northern region; Sunyani West in the Brong Ahafo region; and Akatsi in the Volta region.

The study on the Learning Alliance Approach is one of the recommended actions that the project committed to, following the midterm assessment in October 2012 and the re-planning that took place thereafter in the context the 'innovation lab' approach where a range of experiments as well as other action learning activities were to be pursued. The purpose was to establish the significance of the Learning Alliance Approach in influencing learning and adaptive capacity in Ghana's rural water sector. The study was also meant to assess the efficacy and sustainability of the Learning Alliance Platform as a vehicle for sector learning at the national, regional and district levels. These insights from the study are also intended to inform the exit strategy of the project. Sections 1 – 3 of the report provide this background and objectives of the study.

In chapter four, the study report has helped to define which of the numerous learning spaces in the WASH sector could properly be classified as a learning alliance platform. This has led to the identification of NLLAP, Mole, GWF and NESCON at the national level and the newly established Triple-S led Regional and District Learning Platforms as where multi-stakeholder learning and adaptive capacity are being developed.

In chapter 5, the study has mapped out what kinds of learning take place and which kind are missing. Using an adapted version of David Kolb's learning cycle and the learning loops developed by Prof. Argyris and Peter Senge, the study shows that there is a lack of a guiding model/framework for facilitating and managing learning in the sector. The result is that there is no systematic process for building up knowledge and deploying them to influence policy, programming, and practice.

In Chapter 6, the study report identifies the main factors that drive and/or inhibit stakeholder participation in the learning alliances and platforms. It was found that organisational and personal interests, the need for networking and the search for validation are the dominant factors that promote participation. Lack of enforcement of agreed

procedures, standards and guidelines seems to be the main factor discouraging stakeholder participation on the platforms.

Chapters 7 and 8 of the report respectively address the issues of ownership and financial sustainability of the platforms; and their relative the efficacy and influence in promoting learning and adaptive capacity in the sector. Chapters 9, 10 and 11 provide recommendations related respectively to: a.) The adoption an agreed learning framework to guide the facilitation and management of learning; b.) The institutional architecture that would promote systematic learning and knowledge management in the sector; and c.) The need to prepare a business case for learning and knowledge management as a basis to justify the financial and economic returns on learning, and to use these insights to promote and market learning as a worthwhile undertaking in the sector.

The report ends in Chapter 12, indicating that the sector has great potentials to improve learning and adaptive capacity.

PART I: BACKGROUND, PURPOSE AND DESIGN OF THE STUDY

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Brief Background of Triple-S

The Sustainable Services at Scale (or Triple-S) project is a six-year multi-country learning initiative with the overall goals of improving **sustainability** of rural water services and bringing about greater **harmonisation** through increased sector capacity. Triple-S uses action research to investigate the causes of problems associated with sustainable delivery of rural water services, and to work out field-tested solutions that could be up-scaled through collaborative learning with all the key stakeholders in the rural water sector. Triple-S includes a strong focus on behaviour and harmonisation, because of the belief that focusing on content alone is not enough. Identifying, analyzing, piloting and testing a model or models will not in and of itself lead to sector change. To achieve lasting impact, it is essential to address a change in thinking and practice around service delivery. That calls for a process approach that focuses working on sector harmonisation, building capacity for learning and achieving true national ownership of research findings and the adoption of new approaches based on learning insights attained by the key actors in the sector.

Operating in Ghana under the auspices of the Community Water and Sanitation Agency and in partnership with other relevant stakeholders, Triple-S Ghana works within existing country frameworks towards the following outcomes:

a. A rural water sector monitoring, planning and financing in pilot districts and at national level is guided by clearly defined indicators, models, guidelines and frameworks for service delivery
b. A learning agenda in Ghana is strengthened, and services, concepts, policies and best practices in rural water are being promoted through strategic partnerships/learning platforms
c. Rural water service delivery is based on nationally agreed sector operational documents and guidelines and government provides leadership in coordinating the sub-sector

1.2 Scope and Purpose of the Study

A careful analysis of the objectives of Triple-S shows that learning is the central purpose of the project. The primary outcome of Triple-S is to enhance the learning and adaptive capacity of the key actors in the rural water sub-sector. The intent is to create a sector that learns, innovates and adapts to emerging changes. The theory of change underpinning Triple-S is that when learning is strengthened in the rural water sub-sector, concepts, policies and best practices in sustainable service delivery would be promoted through strategic partnerships and learning platforms.

In pursuit of this, the project has worked with the Learning Alliance Approach, and has used learning platforms as the main vehicle for promoting sector learning. In Ghana, a learning platform already existed at the national level for the WASH sector. Triple-S has strengthened and worked with this platform. In addition, the project has initiated actions towards the establishment of three regional Learning Alliances, one in each of its pilot regions of Northern, Brong Ahafo and Volta. The project has initiated steps towards the establishment of District Learning Alliance Platforms, one in each of its three pilot districts: Gonja East in the Northern region; Sunyani West in the Brong Ahafo region; and Akatsi in the Volta region.

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1.3 Specific Research Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were:

a. To better understand the current status of the Learning Alliance Approach in Ghana and how it contributes to sector learning and adaptive capacity in the rural water sector and to identify actions to enhance desired learning outcomes
b. To better understand the learning alliance processes, their decentralisation to regional and district levels, and their sustainability beyond project funding.
c. To document evidence of the effectiveness of the approach, processes and interventions towards reforming the sector.

1.4 Research Questions

The key research questions were:

- How have we used the learning alliance approach as a concept at the District, Regional and National levels in the Ghana WASH services sector? How effective has this approach of bringing together sector stakeholders been in shaping the sector agenda and planning joint actions?
- What is the significance of the structure/vehicle for implementing the approach (that is, the *Learning Alliance Platforms)* at National & Regional levels in Ghana? At National level this is the National Learning Alliance Platform (NLLAP) facilitated by the Resource Centre Network (RCN). In the

absence of existing platforms at Regional and District levels, Triple-S have worked through other platforms and more recently worked with partners to establish new ones at those levels. Do these learning platforms, as key vehicles to the learning alliance approach, enhance the effectiveness of sector learning, innovation and scaling up?

- Is there evidence that the presence of a learning platform leads to more sustainable outcomes due to the engagement, funding and ownership of its members?

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology involved **a desk study and interviews** on the learning alliance approach and how this unique approach to learning has been applied in the WASH sector in Ghana at the national, regional and district levels. The desk study entailed establishing an operational definition of the approach (at least in the way it is understood and practiced in Ghana), to ensure that respondents are addressing this specific way of learning in the sector, and not any other. The study sought to **track the historical development** of the learning alliance approach and the effective use of the learning alliance platform in the Ghanaian WASH sector over the past 10 years at the various levels; national, regional and district levels. Through **snowballing survey techniques**, the study sought to map out trends in stakeholder participation, hosting, ownership and the financing of the learning alliance approach and the learning alliance platform in Ghana.

In addition, the study used **focus group discussions** to establish the perspectives and experiences of various stakeholders in the sector, regarding the effectiveness of the approach and the platform in promoting sector learning and the uptake or up scaling of innovations in policy, technology and practice. These **dialogue series** with various stakeholders also enabled the identification of factors that serve as drivers and barriers to sector learning and the formation of learning platforms.

Further sub-questions that the study sought to address included:

1	How did the Learning Alliance in Ghana start? (The history of RCN and NLLAP)
2	How did this approach and the vehicle (NLLAP) evolve over the past 10 years and more?
3	How is knowledge sharing influencing sector change?
4	What drives stakeholders to join a Learning Alliance?
5	What motivates learning?
6	What are the drivers and barriers to sector learning and to Learning Alliance formation?
7	How can stakeholder interest be sustained?
8	How are innovations influencing sector change in the Ghana WASH sector currently?
9	What issues are discussed in the Learning platforms at national, regional level? What, if any, issues are omitted, but should be included?
10	Where is the convergence point for decision making for uptake, policy reforms, etc.?
11	If the efficacy of the LA approach is located in joint ownership of the vehicle, is this being achieved in the Ghana context at National and Regional levels?
12	Is the objective of Learning Alliance Platforms as the prime vehicle for taking innovations to scale being met? What are the key elements that make the approach, and the vehicle, work?
13	What are the most effective platforms? Is there a comparable structure to the NLLAP? How best to use these effective platforms?

14	How to institutionalise learning in the activities of CWSA to promote continuity of this approach?
15	Where best to anchor the learning structure? Within, or outside the main bodies of the WASH Services 'system'?
16	Incentives and how to fund the LA and keep it alive? What will allow the LA approach to be sustainable?
17	How to receive national level guidance from the RCN to help set the agenda without sacrificing the Regional LA identity and agenda?
18	How do we effectively link the various levels of the LA Platforms – community, district, regional and national?

3. DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS

3.1 Desk Study

The learning research process began with a desk study. Here the consultants used conceptual frameworks for collaborative learning as well as the Triple-S learning process of Narrative 1 and Narrative 2 to map out how learning has been occurring, who has been learning what, and the effect/impact of learning in leveraging changes in discourse, practice and policy in the WASH sector. In essence the study sought to map the history and the architecture of the Learning Alliance Approach, including the Learning Platforms in Ghana. The study then deployed the learning frameworks to review reports, documents and other materials from RCN, Triple-S, CWSA, the Water Directorate of MWHWR, CONIWAS, UNICEF and other stakeholders on how the learning alliance approach has been effective in influencing learning, adaptive capacity, coordination and harmonisation in the WASH sector at the national and regional levels.

The desk study helped to establish an operational definition or understanding of what the learning alliance approach entails, and the key elements or features that define this approach to learning. The desk study also identified and prioritised the learning platforms in the WASH sector, and identified who set them up, who runs them, who owns them, who finances them, and who facilitates learning on the platforms. In addition, the desk study assessed how learning occurs through the learning alliance approach, and the effects/impact of the learning platforms in influencing change in discourse, practice and policy in the WASH sector. Finally, the desk study established the extent to which the Learning Alliance approach is: relevant in the sector; responsive to changing dynamics; able to leverage adoption of best practices, adaptive capacity and coordination in the sector; and also influence policy. Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 provide some of the conceptual framework that guided the study.

FIGURE 1: LEARNING CYCLE

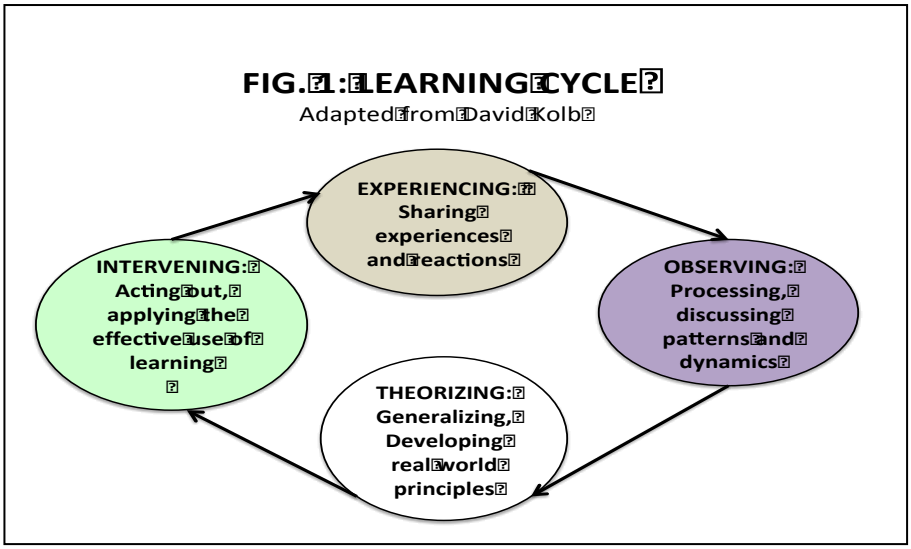
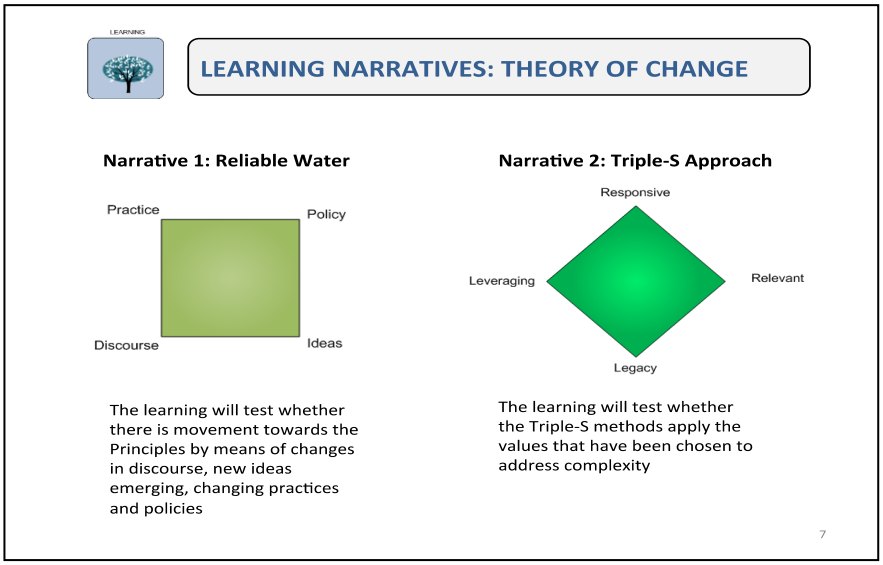


FIGURE 2: LEARNING FRAMEWORK OF TRIPLE-S



Source: Triple-S Learning Framework, 2010

In addition, the desk study verified the extent to which the theory of change that motivated Triple-S to deploy the Learning Alliance Approach as a means towards behaviour change and organisational learning in the WASH sector has been achieved or validated. Box 1 provides a summary of the rationale of Triple-S in promoting the Learning Alliance Approach.

Box 1: Motivation of Triple-S for Deploying the Learning Alliance Methodology

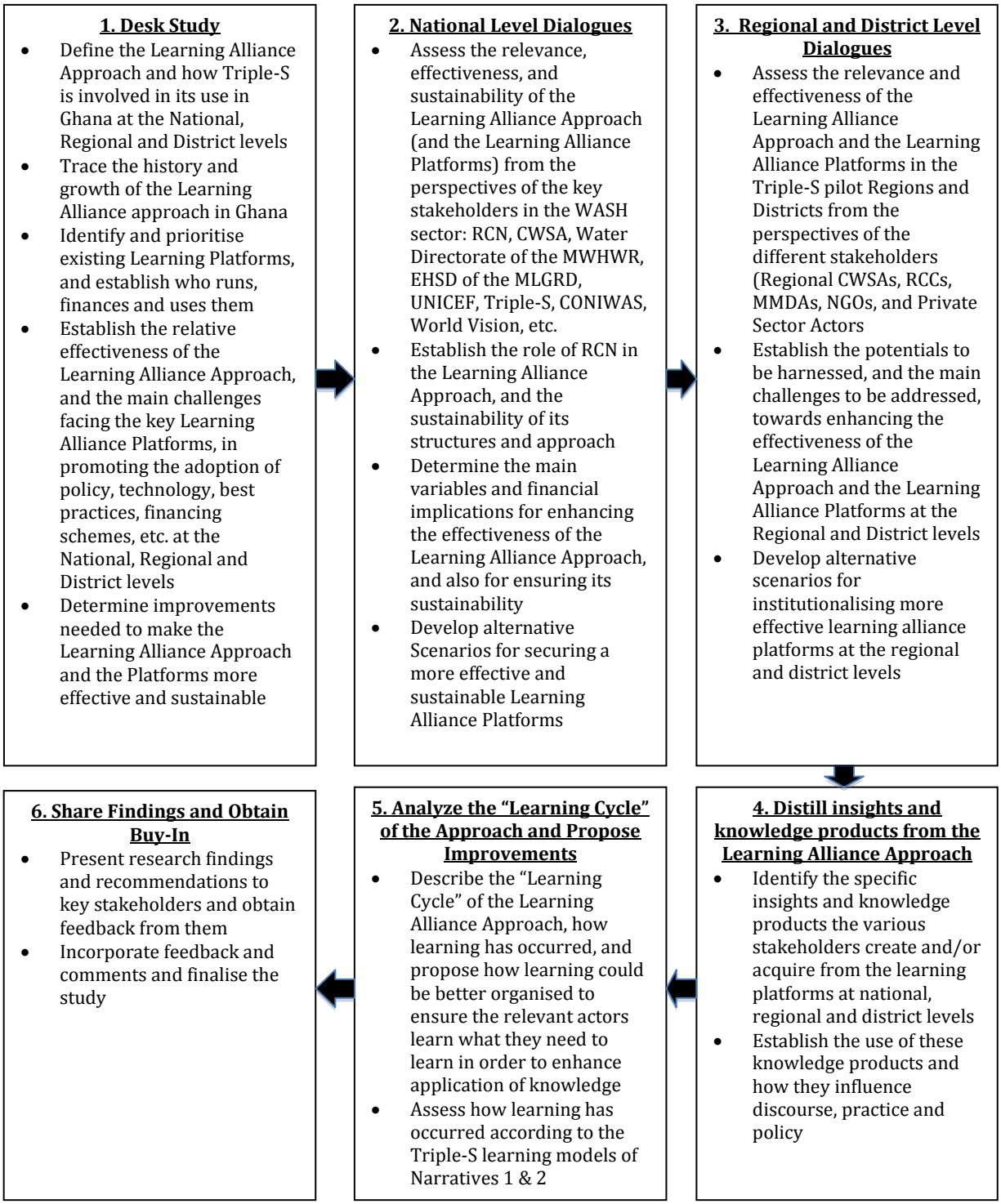
In many of its project documents, Triple-S proposes the Learning Alliance Approach/Methodology (a form of cooperative learning), as aimed at enabling "…stakeholders cooperate, learn from each other's experiences and develop the model [of rural water service delivery] in a step-by-step action research process …[*and that, it is*] explicitly aimed at tackling the complex area of institutional behavior change that will be required if new models are to be not only implemented, but also picked up and replicated." Triple-s further argues that through the Learning Alliance Approach, "successful mechanisms can then be more readily scaled up across the country, precisely because stakeholders have gone through a process of reflection, learning and negotiation, during which obstacles and objections have been analyzed and addressed."

Triple S further submits that Learning Alliances is a methodology for facilitating processes of change, and that: "The central premise of Learning Alliances is that barriers to the uptake and replication of innovation can be overcome if as much attention is paid to the process of innovation and scaling up innovations as is normally given to the subject or model. Learning Alliances use action research to address complex problems that are difficult to resolve with technological solutions, that cannot be solved by one group of stakeholders and for which alternative strategies have to be considered to deal with risk and uncertainty. Learning Alliances make research more relevant and innovation more context-specific, by probing the linkages between implementation, policy and organisational behavior.

Learning Alliances may go through stages of development from experience sharing to negotiation to joint planning. Learning Alliances need their own dynamics of development, but also need structured processes, guidance and strong facilitation, with a champion for motivation, commitment and enthusiasm.

Fig. 3 below presents a schematic description of the design of the research process. Sequel to the desk study, the research process entailed a series of dialogues and interviews at the national level where the key participants of the learning alliance approach and the learning platforms were enabled to share their perspectives on the relevance and efficacy of the approach. Similar dialogues and interviews were held at regional and district levels. The insights gained through these dialogues helped to identify what learning has taken place and what impacts have been achieved from the learning.

FIGURE 3: SCHEMATIC DIAGRAM OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS



3.2 National Level Dialogues and Interviews

This step in the research process focused on obtaining the perspectives of key participants in the learning alliance approach and on assessing the effectiveness of the approach in leveraging change in knowledge, practice and behaviour and ultimately in policy change within the WASH sector. Specifically, the national level dialogues:

- Assessed the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of the Learning Alliance Approach (and the Learning Alliance Platforms) from the perspectives of the key stakeholders in the WASH sector: RCN, CWSA, Water Directorate of the MWHWR, EHSD of the MLGRD, Triple-S, CONIWAS, World Bank, etc.
- Assessed the role of RCN in the Learning Alliance Approach, and the sustainability of its structures and approach
- Determined the main variables and financial implications for enhancing the effectiveness of the Learning Alliance Approach, and also for ensuring its sustainability
- Analyzed the extent to which the learning alliance approach serves as, or promotes, a convergence point for decision making for the uptake of innovations, programming and policy reforms in the sector.
- Developed alternative Scenarios for securing a more effective and sustainable Learning Alliance Platforms at the national level.

3.3 Regional and District level Dialogues and Interviews

The research process further entailed conducting dialogues and interviews at the regional and district levels in the Triple-S pilot regions and districts. This took the form of mini-workshops and focus group discussions as well as a few one-on-one interviews with some key actors in the RCCs, MMDAs and NGOs. The essence of these activities was to:

- Assess the relevance and effectiveness of the Learning Alliance Approach and the Learning Alliance Platforms in the Triple-S pilot Regions and Districts from the perspectives of the different stakeholders (Regional CWSAs, RCCs, MMDAs, NGOs, and Private Sector Actors)
- Establish the potentials to be harnessed, and the main challenges to be addressed, towards enhancing the effectiveness of the Learning Alliance Approach and the Learning Alliance Platforms at the Regional and District levels
- Develop alternative scenarios for institutionalising more effective learning alliance platforms at the regional and district levels

3.4 Distilling Insights and Knowledge Products

This stage of the research process focused on identifying and classifying insights and knowledge products that the various stakeholders create and/or gain from the learning alliance approach and the learning platforms. In specific terms, the research focus was to:

- Identify the specific insights and knowledge products the various stakeholders create and/or acquire from the learning platforms at national, regional and district levels
- Establish the use of these knowledge products and how they influence discourse, practice and policy

3.5 Analyzing the Learning Approach and Proposing Improvements

At this stage, the research came up with conclusions on the:

a. Current status of the learning alliance approach in Ghana and how it contributes to sector learning and adaptive capacity in the water sector and to identify actions to enhance desired learning outcomes
b. Learning alliance processes, their decentralisation to regional and district levels, and their sustainability beyond project funding.
c. The effectiveness of the approach, processes and interventions towards reforming the sector.

In doing this, the research process was informed by the conceptual framework espoused in the adapted version of David Kolb's "Learning Cycle" (Fig. 1 in Section 3.1 above), and the Learning Alliance Approach, and the Triple-S learning models of Narratives 1 & 2 presented in Fig. 2, Section 3.1 above.

In addition the consultant's insights were informed by the key elements in the concepts of single loop, double loop and triple loop learning as espoused by Prof. Chris Argyris (2003), and which Peter Senge (cited in Yuthas et all, 2004) calls adaptive and generative learning. The principles are that: single loop learning occurs when an error is detected and corrected in ways that permit the organisation to carry on its present objectives. Double loop learning occurs when error is detected and corrected in ways that involve the modification of an organisation's underlying norms, policies and objectives. Triple loop learning refers to a continual reflection on the learning process, the context within which learning occurs, and the assumptions and values motivating the learning and influencing of outcomes.

Figs. 3 and 4 below present a graphic depiction of single loop, double loop and triple loop learning. This study may rightly be considered as the first triple loop learning initiative in the rural water sector of Ghana.

FIGURE 4: SINGLE LOOP AND DOUBLE LOOP LEARNING (PROF. CHRIS ARGYRIS)

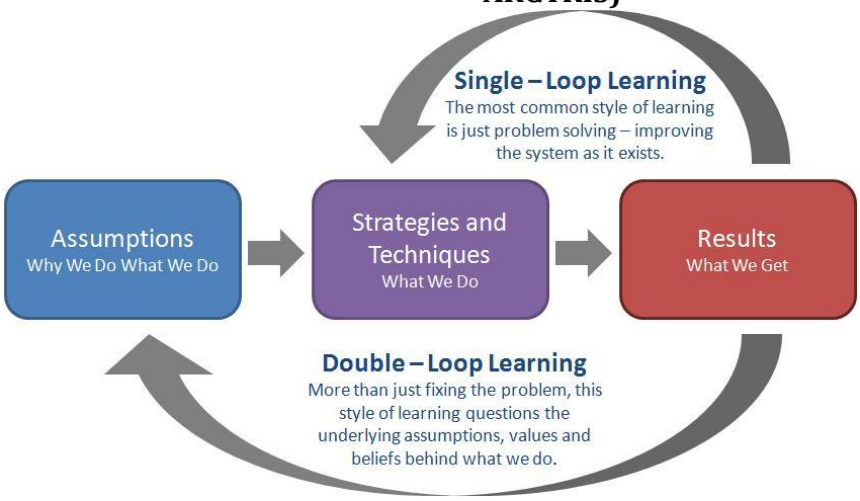
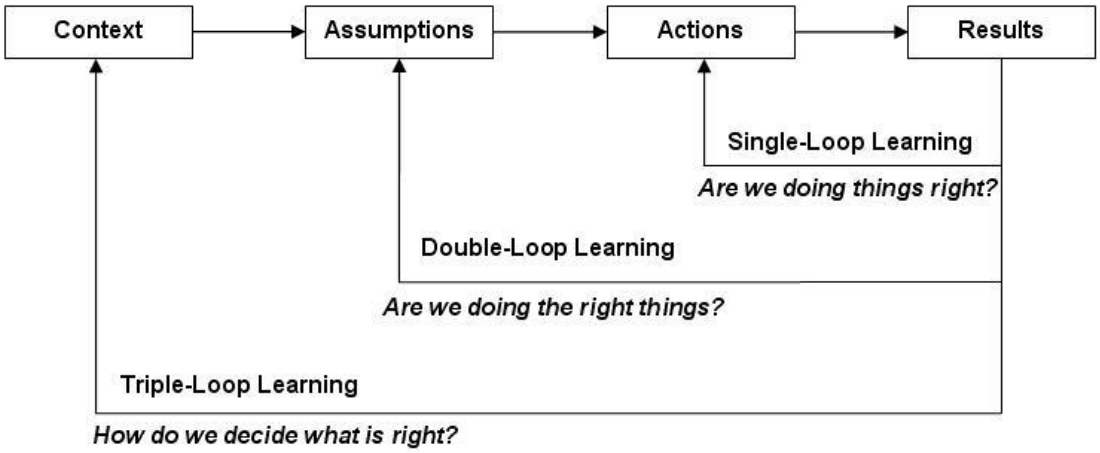


FIGURE 5: SINGLE LOOP, DOUBLE LOOP AND TRIPLE LOOP LEARNING



PART II: FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

4. HISTORY, OWNERSHIP AND ROLES OF LEARNING ALLIANCES IN GHANA

4.1 Definition of Learning Alliances and Learning Platforms in Ghana

The main research question explored under this theme was:

> *How have we used the learning alliance approach as a concept at the District, Regional and National levels in the Ghana WASH services sector? How effective has this approach of bringing together sector stakeholders been in shaping the sector agenda and planning joint actions?*

This section of the study provides an operational definition of the learning alliance approach and an explanation on the nature or character of learning alliance platforms in Ghana. The second part of the research question related to the effectiveness of the learning alliance approach is addressed in later sections of this report.

The study took off by adopting a definition of the *"learning alliance approach"* that the IRC, Triple-S, CWSA, the Water Directorate and all key stakeholders in the WASH sector in Ghana uphold. By this understanding, the learning alliance approach is a process of organising multiple stakeholders (key individuals, groups and organisations) to undertake joint research, learning and sharing, and to implement concerted actions aimed at addressing commonly identified problems towards a desired outcome in which each participant has a stake. In the WASH sector in Ghana, this is a facilitated process that brings together representatives from government, civil society, universities, research institutions, private sector actors and development partners to jointly explore solutions and innovations, and agree on concerted actions to achieve identified changes and improvements in the sector. The intention has included the adoption of commonly agreed standards and the up scaling or rolling out of commonly approved technologies and approaches.

Related to this understanding is the nature of learning alliance platforms. These are widely recognised by sector players as: regular thematic multi-stakeholder forums; annual, half-yearly or quarterly multi-stakeholder program or project review meetings and workshops hosted by various sector agencies and institutions at the national regional and district levels. The distinctive character of learning alliance platforms is that they are multi-stakeholder meetings meant for sharing and interrogating knowledge, innovations, policy, standards and practice that emerge from research or field experiences in the sector. They are also used for formulating, reviewing and advocating sector policy, standards and operating guidelines.

By this operational definition, the study determined that a number of forums in the sector do not qualify as learning alliance platforms. These include intra-agency learning and sharing processes and mechanisms for intra-agency innovation or

decision-making. Examples of these are project steering committees and Boards of institutions; District Assembly Meetings and meetings of District Assembly Sub-Committees; meetings or working groups of DPs; as well as internal project planning or review meetings and structures of sector agencies. These forums, structures and processes do not bring together a sufficient variety and mix of the different stakeholder groups in the sector, made up of NGOs, Government agencies, DPs, private sector and the media into a common space for facilitated exchanges.

From a systems perspective, the current learning alliance approach in Ghana occurs at a large number of inter-connected *"learning alliance platforms"* at the national level, and a relatively small set of emerging and fledgling platforms at the regional and district levels. Annex 1 is a list of existing platforms that were identified at a sector stakeholders' workshop in June 2013, organised by IRC Ghana and Triple-S. The list shows the various platforms, the stakeholder groups who participate on them, and the main activities that take place on these platforms. The perceived interconnectedness among these platforms exists by default, rather than by design.

Currently, the main national level platforms are:

a. The monthly National Learning Alliance Platform established since October 2009 and managed by RCN, where stakeholders share results of pilots and field research, introduce new innovations in technology or service delivery approach, including sector financing, etc.;
b. The annual Mole Conference Series, initiated in 1989 by PRONET and Water Aid, and currently managed by CONIWAS, and used primarily as an advocacy platform where civil society engages with government and other stakeholders;
c. The annual Ghana Water Forum, started recently (in 2010) and managed by the Water Directorate of MWRWH, for a multi-stakeholder review of progress in the water subsector, and for the identification of issues related to policy review and the management of partner relationships and programs in the water sub-sector; and
d. The annual NESCON, also initiated in 2010 and managed by the Environmental Health and Sanitation Directorate of MLGRD, for reviewing progress and re-strategising for impact in the sanitation sub-sector. It is worth noting up front that NESCON has been held only twice (2010 and 2011) since its inception due to inadequate funds from government and development partners

These national level platforms augment one another as knowledge, policy decisions, accepted standards and practices, and service delivery approaches are often shared across these different platforms and the corresponding technical working groups, core groups and or policy coordination groups that undergird and support each of the platforms.

At the regional level, a small number of learning gatherings exist. These are mainly multi-stakeholder project-based progress review and lesson learning forums, and do

not have the full character of learning alliance platforms. Examples are the regional annual review meetings of UNICEF, CWSA, and Wash Alliance as well as the progress review meetings of donor-funded projects such as NORST, IDA, FDA, etc. in selected project regions. In this regard, mention could be made of the Tamale Learning Festival that SNV used to organise. There is also the Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Committee on Sanitation (RICCS) in the Northern and other regions, set up under the various RCCs by the current CLTS project, and managed by EHSD.

Under the CWSA-Triple-S programme, three regional learning alliances have been established recently (i.e. in 2012/2013), one in each of the three pilot regions of the project: Northern, Brong Ahafo and Volta regions. Then there are the three fledgling district learning alliance platforms that have most recently (2013) been established by the CWSA-Triple-S program in its three pilot districts of East Gonja, Sunyani West and Akatsi. Annexes 4-9 provide more information about these Regional and District Learning Alliances established by the CWSA-Triple-S project.

Besides the Triple-S initiated regional learning platforms, there is another learning alliance initiative: the "Afram Plains Skuul of Innovation" under the SHEP-GES project, where innovations are field-tested by a cross section of sector stakeholders towards the development of best practice and standards. The future of these regional and district level learning platforms are uncertain, as the financing mechanisms for ensuring their sustainability remain unclear beyond the projects that have initiated them.

It is worth noting that by this operational definition and delineation of learning alliance platforms in the Ghana WASH sector, the study has refined the list of learning platforms that was generated by sector stakeholders at a workshop organised by Triple-S/IRC in June 2013. That new list, presented as Annex 2 of this report, also profiles each learning platform, indicating the focal issues shared and learned, and the financial sustainability of each platform.

4.2 Origins and Sustainability of Learning Platforms in WASH in Ghana

4.2.1 Overview

This section of the study report addresses aspects of the first research question and three subsidiary research questions:

How have we used the learning alliance approach as a concept at the District, Regional and National levels in the Ghana WASH services sector? How effective has this approach of bringing together sector stakeholders been in shaping the sector agenda and planning joint actions?

1. *How did the Learning Alliance in Ghana start? (The history of RCN and NLLAP); and*
2. *How did this approach and the vehicle (NLLAP) evolve over the past 10 years and more?*
3. *What are the most effective platforms? Is there a comparable structure to the NLLAP? How best to use these effective platforms?*

There are five main narratives about the origins of the learning alliance approach and the various learning alliance platforms in Ghana. The first narrative relates to the National Learning Alliance Platform and the evolution of the Resource Centre Network. The second narrative is about the origins of the Mole Conference Series, hosted by civil society stakeholders in the Ghana WASH sector under the leadership of CONIWAS. The third narrative is about an inter-connected, institutionalised and systematic mechanism for learning that used to be convened and managed by CWSA. This learning process and structure is slowly disappearing due to financial constraints, and poor institutional commitment to learning in CWSA. The fourth narrative tells about the origins of the Ghana Water Forum (GWF) and the National Environmental Sanitation Conference (NESCON). The fifth narrative is about specific institutional or project-based learning platforms.

4.2.2 The National Learning Alliance Platform and RCN

In 2002, an IRC-funded project, *the Resource Centre Development Project*, initiated the idea of a learning and knowledge management component in the WASH sector. It facilitated the establishment of a task force led by CWSA and other partners (KNUST, WRI, CONIWAS, Water Aid, TREND, etc.), the inauguration of RCN, and the introduction of learning and learning platforms as part of the approach to addressing knowledge management issues in the WASH sector. Through the Resource Centre Development project, and the RCN, a concept note was produced and shared with sector stakeholders to develop and sustain learning in the sector.

Initially, CWSA was hosting RCN, as part of the project structures. However, when the project ended and funding declined the continued significance of RCN within CWSA was compromised. Thus, up until 2006, funding for RCN was coming through the RCD project of IRC. Between 2007 and 2009 new projects such as the Tripartite Partnership Project (TPP) and WASHCost came on stream, focusing on developing capacity for sector learning and knowledge management. IRC, under the then West African Regional Programme (WARP) partnered the TPP, led by TREND to setup the RCN secretariat, which then reconstituted the RCN core group. During this period IRC partnered with the RCN to attract funding and technical support from PSO, a Dutch umbrella organisation for the promotion of capacity development of civil society organisations in developing countries for enhanced sector learning and knowledge management in the WASH sector. This initiative gave birth to the National Level Learning Alliance Platform (NLLAP) in October 2009 and the consolidation of RCN as the convener, coordinator and documentation centre for the WASH sector learning in Ghana.

It must be noted that PSO funded the operational costs of RCN as a secretariat from 2009 till June 2012, while TREND provided office space, stationery and other utilities from 2008-2012. The TPP project and IRC jointly paid the salaries of the RCN personnel from 2008-2011. From 2012 to date, IRC has been financing the salaries of RCN personnel, and also, from 2013 to date has been providing office space, stationery and other utilities. To address the financing challenges associated with hosting the NLLAP and managing the learning and documentation processes

associated with it, the RCN in collaboration with sector stakeholders have found a creative way of keeping the monthly NLLAP in operation. This arrangement has enabled any stakeholder or stakeholder groups who have findings, insights, innovations or policy issues to share at the NLLAP to cover the cost of the meetings. As these arrangements have not as yet included the cost of maintaining and developing the personnel in RCN, and the cost of office space and equipment, it would be fair to conclude that a sustainable financing arrangement in the long term for the RCN and NLLAP is yet to be established.

Proposals to address the long-term sustainability of NLLAP and RCN include the need for stakeholders to commit to a "basket fund" – agreed annual budgetary allocations to fund RCN to which they contribute proportionately. The raising and management of this fund as well as oversight on the operations of RCN and NLLAP would then be the responsibility of the RCN multi-stakeholder Steering Committee under the leadership (not the ownership) of the WD-MWRWH or CWSA. An alternative would be to register RCN as an entity not-for-profit, owned by the various stakeholders. This could enable RCN to hire competent personnel to undertake the necessary research, trend analysis and consultancy services that would strengthen its capacity to function as the home and manager of learning and knowledge products in the WASH sector as a self-financing venture. It is worth noting that in November 2011, RCN formulated a business plan pointing to this direction for ensuring its financial sustainability. The key stakeholders responsible for learning and knowledge management in the sector (CWSA, GWCL, WRC, MWRWH and MLGRD) need to come together to work out an agreed structure and financing mechanism, using the proposed business plan as a starting point.

The National Level Learning Alliance Platform has been convened monthly since October 2009 and is attended by almost all key stakeholders of the sector to share and learn about research results, innovations from successful pilots, new technologies and new approaches or best practices. It is organised by the RCN, and primarily serves as a sharing and learning platform that enables stakeholders to take away insights and approaches that they might want to adopt and or adapt. Outcomes of NLLAP sessions are documented and made available in various formats and products. Insights gained are sometimes fed into the annual Mole Conference, organised by CONIWAS, in which RCN serves as a critical and significant partner

4.2.3 The Mole Conference Series and CONIWAS[1]

The second narrative on the origins of sustainability of learning platforms in Ghana's WASH sector has to do with the Mole Conference Series. In 1989, a group of non-state actors in the sector organised a national conference in the Mole Game Reserve, bringing together policy makers and practitioners in the sector. The objectives were to create a forum for dialogue on sector issues; and to build the capacity of local organisations in sharing their experiences and articulating key emerging issues to

[1] The contents of this section are cited almost verbatim from report obtained from CONIWAS on the Mole Conference Series.

government for redress. Participants included local NGOs, WaterAid and some individuals with special interest in the sector. Following the success of this forum dubbed, Mole I, the group decided to make it a permanent feature in the work of NGOs in the water and sanitation sector to be organised annually. Each year the Conference decides on a theme and the key issues to be addressed. The practice has been to decide on a suitable venue on a rotational basis for the hosting of the conference.

Throughout the 24 years of its existence, from 1989 to 2013, the Mole Conference has grown in importance as interest and participation by civil society stakeholders, policy makers, local government and development partners alike have steadily increased. The Mole Series, as it is known today, has evolved from what was primarily an NGO forum into perhaps the most important annual multi-stakeholder platform within the WASH Sector. Over the years, the conference has attracted government actors, donors and other stakeholders (including local authorities) on an annual basis to deliberate on critical issues affecting the sector. The conferences are designed to encourage maximum involvement from all participants. At the end of each conference a communiqué capturing the key issues and decisions is agreed and widely disseminated among stakeholders and in the national media. Insights gained from the Mole Conference are also documented and disseminated as reports and other knowledge products in the sector.

In the main, the Mole Conference serves as a citizens' engagement platform with government, DPs and private sector, where civil society stakeholders in the sector advocate for pro-poor policy changes and the adoption of new approaches and affordable, user-friendly technologies. It also enables civil society to track and demand the implementation of commitments made by the government and DPs. During the 24 years of its existence, the Mole Conference has contributed to learning and knowledge management and a number of policy changes in the sector. Among these are:

a. *Networking and Capacity Building of WASH Sector NGOs:* The Mole series has played a major role in facilitation of networking and capacity building of sector NGOs and in the establishment of CONIWAS as the umbrella body for the network of the WASH Sector NGOs that ultimately led to the establishment of a formalised coalition of NGOs (CONIWAS) in mid-2003.
b. *Influence on Sector Policy:* The Mole conference has been a central forum for pursuance of an advocacy effort aimed at changing government policy towards key sector issues such as the adoption of hand-dug wells as viable sources for potable water delivery in Ghana. The Mole series has also been an important venue for debating the issue of 5% community contributions to capital cost.
c. *Facilitation of NGO Participation in Sector Reform Process:* Before the formation of CONIWAS, the Mole conferences played a key role in facilitating NGO participation in the Water Sector Reform. The Mole series played a significant role in the debate that led to the formation of Community Water

and Sanitation Division (CWSD), which subsequently evolved into the Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA) in 1998.

d. *Highlighted the Neglected Status of Sanitation*: The Mole conferences held in 2007 and 2008 were both centred on the theme of Sanitation. A press conference organised to disseminate the communiqué of the 2008 conference generated a high level of dialogue at the national level. The increased awareness on sanitation also triggered other key interventions such as the first presidential debate on sanitation. The conference has thus played a major role in raising the profile of sanitation and in leading the effort to establish sanitation as a major development and political issue.
e. *Facilitation of Learning and Knowledge Sharing:* The format for Mole conference has increasingly shifted onto the sharing of state-of-the art knowledge on topical issues such as sector monitoring, coordination, sanitation services delivery, knowledge management. The launching of the "Afram Skuul of Innovation" was the fruit of ideas that emanated from the Mole Series and is aimed at further strengthening the profile of the Mole Series as a platform for knowledge management.

The current financing arrangements for the Mole Conference Series seem to be well grounded and sustainable. CONIWAS works with the support of its members and a core planning group to develop concept notes and write proposals to source funds from DPs, the private sector, member organisations as well the government agencies to operationalise the conference annually. Participating organisations or agencies finance their representatives, while CONIWAS tries to provide subsidised or discounted boarding and lodging for the event through the generated funds. The continued growth in participation and significance of the Mole Conference speaks to its success over the years.

4.2.4 Inter-connected Learning Platforms Managed By CWSA

The third narrative on learning alliance platforms in the WASH sector tells about an inter-connected, institutionalised and systematic mechanism for learning that used to be convened and managed by CWSA. The narrative submits that between 1994 and 2009, CWSA had a multi-stakeholder and multi-tiered learning mechanism that harnessed learning and insights from projects and all stakeholders at the district, regional and national levels on a quarterly, half-yearly and annual basis. It was structured in such a way that learning at the district level fed into the regional level, which in turn fed into the national level. The architecture of the learning process also enabled stakeholders to address software issues in the sector (having to do with issues such as community mobilisation, participation and ownership, and the governance of water systems, etc.) and to link them to technical issues such as technology, standards and specifications. This learning system consisted of:

- District level quarterly project review meetings for projects
- District level quarterly stakeholder meetings involving all stakeholders
- Regional level quarterly project review meetings for the purpose of coordinating learning and insights from the projects

- Regional level quarterly stakeholder meetings for coordinating learning from stakeholders on various thematic aspects of rural water service delivery
- National level midyear review meetings for all stakeholders
- National level annual software forum (for extension and other soft issues)
- National level annual technical forum (for technical and engineering issues)
- National level annual review meetings for all stakeholders
- National level donor-review conference meeting (between donors and government stakeholders)[2]

At the district level, stakeholders would discuss extension issues and issues pertaining to technical standards in the sector, and other institutional issues. District level stakeholders (including NGOs, CSO, faith based organisations and private sector operators) discussed and learnt about emerging issues, changing trends, and fieldwork experiences. The recommendations that came out of the district level meetings would then filter up into the regional level meetings and the national level mid-year review meeting and also the annual review meeting. In the following year, the performance review and actions/activities taken would filter back into the district level meetings so that stakeholders could be updated on what worked and what remained outstanding for the sector to deal with or handle.

At the operational level people with the requisite expertise were put together and tasked to deal with issues bordering on extension and governance at the software forums. Their insights were fed into the technical meetings where approaches were discussed, leading to the development of standards, manuals and guidelines for the sector. At these meetings, issues that required in-depth studies and analyses were then assigned to a small group of experts to research and write draft briefs, which were then brought back for multi-stakeholder discussions and approval. So at the national level, they would receive these documents and craft policies to allow these practices to be rolled out or implemented. It was from these learning experiences that CWSA was able to develop most of the standards guidelines and operational documents such as the Community Ownership and Management (COM), District Operational Manual (DOM), and Project Implementation Manual (PIM) that are currently in the sector, based on field-tested evidence.

All of these CWSA-managed interconnected platforms were financed largely through project funds and normal government administrative budget allocated to CWSA. With the reduction in donor-funded projects and financial challenges of government, CWSA has been unable to maintain this learning system. Besides the usual limited funding support for learning and knowledge management in the sector, other factors that have contributed to this include: a.) Government, donor and NGO funds are now being channelled directly to DAs to implement WASH activities in their District WASH Plans and Medium Term Development Plans; b.) Many donors and funding partners are re-focusing and re-prioritising their funds and activities towards the

[2] This meeting was originally managed by MWRWH. The 2008 edition revolved to expand the conference to include other sector stakeholders and to the change of its name to "Ghana Water Forum" from 2009.

sanitation sub-sector; and c.) CWSA has not really institutionalised learning and knowledge management as a functional responsibility of any schedule officer at the regional or national levels, in ways that could be reflected through its budgeting, internal human and other resource allocation, staff performance appraisal and reward systems.

The effect of these factors has been that the district level forums were the first to discontinue; followed by the regional level meetings. What has remained is the annual review meeting. But even that is under threat, as it has not been held since 2012.

A number of sector stakeholders recall that CONIWAS and the Mole Conference grew out of these mid-year and annual review meeting, because CWSA insisted that the NGO sector stakeholders (led by PRONET and WaterAid at the time) would have to come to these platforms with one voice. This was between 2003 and 2004. Initially they were invited as individual organisations but it was decided that it would be better for the NGOs and civil society organisations to speak with one voice at the annual meeting. Consequently, with the budget crisis in CWSA taking its toll, the General Secretary of the NGO stakeholders was asked to host the NGOs conference separately and bring their issues to the CWSA –led annual review meetings to be addressed.

From this narrative one can appreciate that the WASH sector has had a long history of sharing and learning, documenting insights, analysing to identify patterns and establishing principles about what would work for the Ghanaian context. These learning processes led to the development of standards, operational guidelines and policy to guide actions in the sector. Unfortunately, this systematic and institutionalised learning process has fallen into decline in face of funding challenges and inadequate institutional arrangements to support learning that confronts CWSA. Nearly all the engineering and extension personnel of CWSA who created and operationalised the institution's learning processes are still at post in CWSA. What is required is an institutional leadership and commitment to allocate resources for learning and knowledge management, and to ensure that dedicated personnel are assigned to, and made accountable for the multi-stakeholder learning and knowledge management functions of the institution.

It is apparent that the initial study on learning and knowledge management in the Ghana WASH sector that the IRC-supported project, Resource Centre Development project, undertook in 2002[3] did not adequately consider the CWSA learning and knowledge management system with sufficient significance as a potential hub and fulcrum on which to anchor sector learning and knowledge management processes.

[3] TREND-IRC: Resource Centre Development, Project Final Report: Assessment of Knowledge Management Needs and Capacity of Potential Partner Resource Centres within the Water and Sanitation Sector in Ghana, July 2003, pages 13, 15, 31, 33

4.2.5 Ghana Water Forum and National Environmental Sanitation Conference

The fourth narrative on learning alliance and learning platforms in the WASH sector relate to the origins of the Ghana Water Forum (GWF), started in 2009; and the National Environmental Sanitation Conference (NESCON), started in 2010. These are more recent creations of the Water Directorate of the Ministry of Water Resources Works and Housing, and the Environmental Sanitation and Health Division of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development respectively. These two platforms (one mainly on Water, and the other on Sanitation) serve primarily as government-led annual platforms where all WASH sector stakeholders (especially development partners, civil society and private sector) come together with the respective government agencies to review progress, re-set government priorities and commitments and re-define key milestones and deliverables of government for the subsequent year in the form of communiqués. These seem to have originated from the need for government to jointly review progress and account for its achievements and challenges openly with sector stakeholders, especially the DPs and other non-state actors. The format of these learning platforms encourage stakeholders to review progress in the development of pro-poor policies, program design and choice of technologies, and well as the exposure to state of the art methodologies and approaches in WASH service delivery.

It has become noticeable that the agenda and resolutions of at the GWF and NESCON are fed and influenced by insights emanating from the NLLAP, Mole Conference, and other institutional or project-based learning platforms in the sector. These two national level learning platforms (GWF and NESCON) are heavily dependent on donor funding and have a precarious future if donor support for learning and knowledge management processes decline. It is actually the reason why NESCON has met only twice (2010 and 2011) since it was established in 2010. It is nevertheless gratifying that sanitation service delivery issues are handled by the national Technical Working Group on Sanitation (NTWGS) and the National Environmental Sanitation Policy Coordination Committee (NESPOCC). These are multi-stakeholder forums where learning and sharing on sanitation take place; admittedly, in a less open format.

4.2.6 Other Institutional and Project-Based Learning Platforms

The fifth narrative on the origins of the various learning alliance platforms in Ghana's WASH sector relates to a number of initiatives created by various sector institutions and the projects they sponsor. These platforms seek to foster coordinated, multi-stakeholder participation in project progress reviews and program designs, as well as the coordination of policy and standards related to service delivery. This is the story behind the creation of *"institutional or project based learning platforms*" such as:

- CWSA Annual Reviews related to various donor-funded projects
- Water Aid Annual Reviews
- UNICEF-GoG Annual Reviews

- NESPOCC/NTWGS
- MDBS Annual Review

Based on information obtained during the study, these structures could not be classified as learning alliance platforms, as they tend to be more concerned with project implementation review than a multi-stakeholder engagement in sector learning, joint research, and knowledge management.

4.3 Sub-National Level Learning Alliances and Platforms

The few regional level learning alliances that exist are primarily project-based review forums and multi-stakeholder project steering committees. These platforms serve as monitoring and evaluation forums where insights from various projects/programs are discussed and disseminated to sector players. They are funded as part of the implementation management structures of these projects. Insights from these projects are usually taken up at the national level platforms, such as the Mole Conference, the NLLAP, GWF and NESPOCC.

In this regard, it is worth making special mention of three *"District Level Learning Alliances and Learning Platforms" t*hat were established under the Tripartite Partnership Project (TPP) implemented from 2008 to 2010 in Ashaiman, Mankessim and Huni Valley. The project (the implementation of which was led by TREND Group) introduced innovative management models for delivering WASH services to the urban poor. It successfully established and operationalised broad-based, representative, and multi-stakeholder platforms that were deeply responsible for (and variously involved in handling) the planning, implementation and post-construction management of WASH facilities and infrastructure in these communities. These DLAPs still exist and are functioning even after the end of the project. They are made up of the key political and technical leaders of the respective district assemblies, (including Assembly men) who have become the champions and main drivers of the platforms/groups. Other stakeholders include: traditional leaders (including queen mothers); representatives of physically disabled groups; government agencies such as CWSA, GWCL; various CBOs/NGOs that are operational in the communities, market women's associations; and a cross section of service users and service providers. The functions of these DLAPs/groups include: deciding on the types of facilities; the location and design of facilities; as well as managing the revenue collection, and the operation and maintenance of the facilities after construction. The study learnt that these structures are still very active in the post-construction management and maintenance of the facilities that were delivered with their participation.

It must be noted here that these three successful *"DLAPs"* established under the initiative of TPP and TREND Group may be properly classified as project implementation and project management structures that have morphed into learning platforms of some sort. They are not by definition and character functioning as learning alliances per se in the sense that their primary functions are not to harness learning for improved practice or policy in the sector. Nevertheless,

they have value as successful pilot cases of community- and district-owned multi-stakeholder structures that learnt by doing through innovations - (a form of action research or action learning). The lessons and knowledge they have generated and are still producing ought to be harnessed into regional-level learning platforms, where their experiences and insights could be couched and located within a learning framework for the sector.

These TPP/TREND initiated district learning platforms differ from the recently established regional and district level learning alliances and platforms initiated under the Triple-S/CWSA project. These latest platforms are partnering with the regional CWSA structures, the RCCs and District Assemblies in the pilot regions and districts to explore much broader multi-stakeholder learning and adaptive capacity opportunities. It is intended that all the sector stakeholders in the regions and the districts would own, manage and finance these platforms. The three Regional Learning Platforms and three District Learning Platforms are still exploring mechanisms that would enhance their technical and financial sustainability beyond the Triple-S program. Currently the learning facilitators who are managing these platforms are staff of the Triple-S project. It is still uncertain that these learning alliances would survive beyond the Triple-S project, as the key stakeholders (CWSA regional structures, the RCCs and DAs) are yet to commit in real terms to taking up the costs associated with facilitating and managing the platforms and the learning products that emerge from them.

4.4 Summary of Findings

The study established that:

a. Four learning alliances and learning platforms exist at the national level. These are NLLAP, Mole Conference, GWF, and NESCON. In comparative terms, the NLLAP (facilitated by RCN in collaboration with government and partners) functions as a monthly thematic learning and sharing platform for sector stakeholders. The Mole Series serves as a civil society-led forum for pro-poor advocacy, learning and sharing. The GWF and NESCON are government-led initiatives for performance and policy review, and also for stakeholder engagements on jointly determined priorities of government, DP and private sector stakeholders in the water and sanitation sub sectors respectively
b. A number of structures and forums exist at the national level that appear to function as learning alliance platforms; but are actually project or institution driven project review meetings. These do not have the attributes of, and do not function as learning alliance platforms. This is because their primary functions are not geared towards sector learning, action research, introduction or dissemination of innovation and research outcomes or for uptake and roll out of best practices. These structures include the UNICEF-GOG Annual reviews, NTWGS, CWSA Annual Project Reviews, WaterAid Annual reviews, etc.

c. At the regional and district levels, some platforms exist; but are all related to projects under the auspices of one or the other sector institution or agency. Under the Triple-S/CWSA project three regional learning Alliance Platforms have been initiated since 2012. These are hosted by the Regional CWSA Offices, and have started functioning as learning platforms where all sector stakeholder groups in the regions have started coming together to learn and share sector-related research results, innovations in technology and service delivery approaches; and have started having up-scaling effects as stakeholders begin to take up and roll out best practices they learn about on these platforms[4].
d. In addition the EHSD has established Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Committees (RICCs) in nearly all regions under the RCCs in connection with the CLTS and ODF program in the sanitation sub-sector. This platform has a relatively limited stakeholder participation relative to the Regional Level Learning Alliance Platforms
e. Three district level learning alliance platforms that are functioning currently have been established under the CWSA-Triple S project in the pilot districts; and three other district learning and project management structures established under the TPP/TREND initiative in Ashaiman, Mankessim and Huni Valley that are still effective in 2014, after the project that created them ended in 2010.

[4] See Annex 2 for more details on the Regional Learning Alliance Platforms initiated by Triple-S/CWSA in the Northern, Brong Ahafo and Volta Regions

5. TYPES OF LEARNING THAT TAKE PLACE ON THE PLATFORMS

5.1 Overview

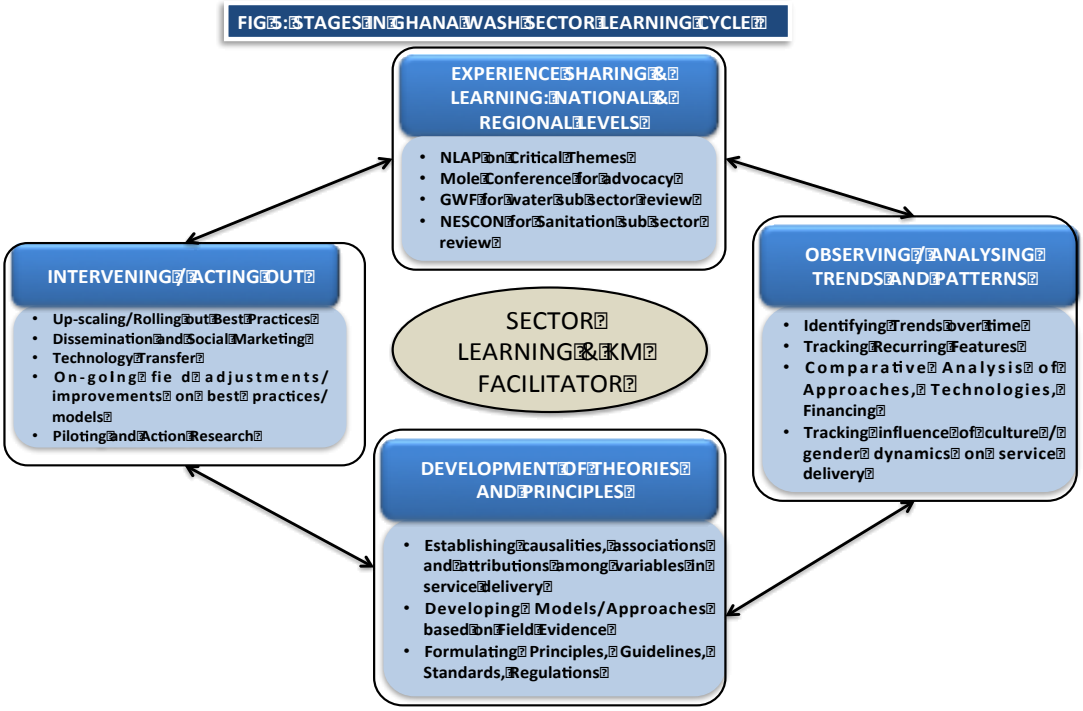
This section of the study sought to answer a number of the research questions and sub-questions, related to the efficacy of the learning alliance approach and the learning platforms in Ghana. The issues investigated in this context were:

a. How effective has this approach of bringing together sector stakeholders been in shaping the sector agenda and planning joint actions?
b. How is knowledge sharing influencing sector change?
c. How are innovations influencing sector change in the Ghana WASH sector currently?
d. What issues are discussed in the Learning platforms at national, regional level? What, if any, issues are omitted, but should be included?
e. Where is the convergence point for decision making for uptake, policy reforms, etc.?
f. Is the objective of Learning Alliance Platforms as the prime vehicle for taking innovations to scale being met? What are the key elements that make the approach, and the vehicle, work?

The study used an adapted version of David Kolb's Model on Learning Styles or Learning Cycle (as presented in Fig. 1 and elaborated as Fig. 5 below) to assess the kinds of learning that take place on the various learning platforms at the national and sub-national levels in the Ghana WASH sector. The significance of using this model is that it enabled the study to differentiate among the various types or forms of learning on the platforms; that is, whether learning was happening by way of:

a. Sharing and discussions of experiences and insights on the outcomes of pilot projects; or field research on approaches, technology, financing schemes; or the introduction of some form of innovations in the sector;
b. Sharing and assessment of findings and outcomes that have been distilled through trend analyses of previous and on-going field experiences and various research results in the sector over time. The distinctive character of this form of learning is that it maps out and profiles emerging patterns, trends, or consistent developments over time in any of the thematic areas of the sector for sharing and learning. Qualitatively, this form of learning builds on the first one, and is enhanced through careful documentation and analysis of the outcomes and insights from the first form of learning. In addition, this form of learning seeks to address positive and negative trends and patterns in the sector with the intention of raising awareness of systemic and structural issues in the sector, related to technical and software aspects of service delivery, and calling for actions and decisions.

FIGURE 6: STAGES IN THE GHANA WASH SECTOR LEARNING CYCLE



c. Sharing and discussions on emerging theories of change or principles of engagement in the sector that arise from an appreciation of the trends or patterns that have been distilled in the second form of learning. In this type of learning, sector stakeholders would be presented with, and encouraged to discuss the results of applied research that have tested fundamental assumptions underpinning the trends and patterns identified in service delivery in the sector. The products to be discussed would include models, principles, best practices, and cooperation mechanisms for enhanced service delivery. Stakeholders would be looking at associations and causalities among the different variables that influence service delivery in the sector, with the intention of modifying service delivery approaches, programming, policy, and engagement mechanisms.
d. Sharing of insights from field level implementation of adopted decisions, models, guidelines, best practices and approaches that have emerged from the theories, principles and practices that identified, designed, disseminated or promoted on the learning platforms. On one hand this would complete a learning cycle, but also set in motion fresh learning through the experience sharing with sector stakeholders.

5.2 Findings on Types of Learning in the Ghana WASH Sector

Based on the model above, the study found that:

a. The dominant type of learning on all the platforms (at the national and sub-national levels) is **"Experiencing"** or the sharing of field experiences, pilots and research results, accompanied by open discussions. This could be considered the first step in the learning cycle. It occurs when various sector stakeholders come together to share experiences from different pilot projects, research initiatives, or some innovations in ways that enable other stakeholders to interrogate their submissions based on their varied field experiences and to arrive at commonly agreed propositions for the way forward. Usually, the presentations and discussion outcomes are documented as flyers, or some forms of publications, as is the case with RCN and NLLAP. Most often the key conclusions and insights are also documented as Communiqués or Highlights of the learning process as is the case with Mole, GWF and NESCON. On account of this type of learning, the RCN has a considerable number of publications, manuals, newsletters and flyers on the outcomes and insights from the NLLAP series. These cover various technical thematic aspects of WASH services. Occasionally, policy and governance issues in the sector are also shared at meetings of NLLAP. In the same vein CONIWAS also has a number of publications on the Mole Series. There are a few reports and communiqués also from the GWF and NESCON.

   Based on information obtained during the study, it would be safe to conclude that the WASH sector in Ghana is very vibrant when it comes to this ("Experiencing") type of learning. And the predominant issues discussed at the NLLAP relate to technical thematic aspects of WASH service delivery. Various stakeholders who bring the issues for discussion up on the platform also tend to drive the deliberations.

b. The study found that the second type or step in the learning cycle, (**"Observing"),** does not take place in the Ghana WASH sector as deliberately and as consistently as the first. This type of learning that entails analyzing what is happening in the sector in ways that enable the determination of trends or dynamic patterns of what prevails in the sector is neither regular nor consciously facilitated in the sector. Nevertheless, the study found that this type of learning takes place in a relatively limited manner in the learning alliances in Ghana's WASH sector; for, it by virtue of this type of learning that sector stakeholders are able to identify trends and patterns, such as:
   - Improvements in sector financing over the years with regard to decreasing or growing proportions of funds coming from Government of Ghana and Development Partners respectively. This insight was reflected, for example, in the draft Water and Sanitation Sector Development Plan prepared in 2012. In the same vein, the sector has been able to track the

persistent and growing inability of GoG to deliver on pledges it makes at SWA High Level meetings over the years.

- The predominant mode of increasing rural water coverage has been to provide more facilities, even though the maintenance culture is poor, and facilities continue to breakdown without being repaired. The sector has been able to determine that key sector actors continue to provide facilities without adhering to agreed guidelines to precede facility provision with community mobilisation and establishment of CWSTs and post construction services and management structures.
- The need to upgrade the DIMES and other tools for assessing rural water coverage and service delivery, as some service providers tend to either misrepresent or misreport on the facilities they provide with data that cannot be collaborated through field monitoring
- Efforts, approaches and standards that are applied in the sector have been disjointed, uncoordinated and fragmented even though consolidated manuals and guidelines have existed (at least) since 2011, and training is often provided. The observation is that these persistent violations come from all actors - NGOs, Private sector providers as well as agencies of the government of Ghana – as there is hardly any enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance
- The WASH sector has, over the years, not placed enough emphasis on the sanitation sub-sector, leading to a woeful under performance of Ghana in the MDG goals with respect to sanitation. This has led to a refocusing of resources and attention on sanitation in recent times.
- Several successful pilot initiatives and innovations with great promise have been shared, promoted and acknowledged by most sector stakeholders, yet they have not been rolled out or up-scaled; while more pilots are being undertaken
- MMDAs have over the years been consistently weak in implementing their governance and service monitoring roles due to financial and human resource capacity constraints, even though training in various aspects of their functions in the WASH sector have been provided. The persistent tensions between the DWSTs and the DWDs and other structures in the District Assembly system continue to undermine effective delivery of services from the district assemblies in relation to supervising and capacitating the facility level management structures (CWSTs and Water Boards)

This type of learning has led to the definition and implementation of several remedial or corrective measures with limited sector-wide effect. For example, the formulation of guidelines, the production of various manuals and even the formulation of a Legislative Instrument in the sector have not resulted in much change as the disjointed practices and approaches continue.

c. The study found that the reason for this trend is that the learning process in the WASH sector in Ghana seems to skip or pay relatively little attention to the third step or type of learning in the learning cycle; namely **"Theorising".** Admittedly this step in the learning cycle, or this type of learning, that entails applied research to identify causalities, associations and attributions among operating variables in the sector somehow does take place; but, in an unstructured and non-systematic manner. The main issue here has to do with failure of those supposed to be managing learning in the sector to feed the research insights systematically into decisions, policy and action. For example, some research have been done on:

- The relationship between community contributions of 5% to the capital cost of facility provision and the sustainable service delivery or effectiveness of post construction management services by communities[5]. But there has not been any consistent follow up to establish the validity or applicability of this theory in the subsequent design of service delivery and facility management
- An RCN publication in June 2010 on the outcome of research into "Management Models for Urban and Small Town Water Supply" identified that: *"There is the need for clarity on the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders under different small town and urban water management models. These roles and responsibilities have to be spelt out with clear guidelines, backed by a legal, regulatory and monitoring framework. This is one of the most important findings of the eighth NLLAP meeting in which small town and urban water supply management models were discussed."* These insights have not as yet been translated fully into action, as some Water and Sanitation Management Teams (formerly - Water Boards and WATSANs) are functioning outside the agreed guidelines, while DAs and their District Water and Sanitation Teams / District Works Department remain relatively impotent to enforce compliance.

  Simply put, the theoretical foundations and underlying principles in many of the proposed approaches and initiatives in the sector are not sufficiently grounded in applied field evidence, as the link between research outcomes and field actions are not dutifully managed at any learning platform – at least not deliberately yet.

d. As a result the next step in the learning cycle **"Intervening"** that should be based on applied knowledge on best practices emerging from the first two steps and anchored in field-based evidence is weak. The study found that this accounts for the numerous and frequent use of pilot schemes in the sector. New propositions and innovations in the sector are not largely to up-scale proven approaches; but are rather to try new concepts and technologies.

[5] Refer to WSA publication: *"Financial contributions and sustainability of rural water supply services: Lessons from the Afram Plains of Ghana*, SWSD Policy Brief No.5, July 2012.

This is because the theoretical foundations are not often home-grown and/or anchored on local field evidence.

The findings of the study with regard to the four stages in the learning cycle (according to the Kolb Model) may be summarised in the following statements from some key stakeholders:

- *"Sharing and learning is happening, but the analysis to identify trends and patterns, which will then lead to concepts and new actions, are missing. The exception is perhaps in the WASH Tech project where learning and sharing moves into concepts and new policy."*
- *"Generally speaking, there is no system in place within the sector for systematically analyzing, tracking and sharing patterns, trends and concept development. But NGOs or CONIWAS on its 20th Anniversary of Mole did catalogue all trends and shifts. They were able to show the patterns and trends in the sector. Our weakest learning style is theorising. NGOs are better positioned to do this; but they do not systematically document their experiments to come up with theories or generalised principles. So, they do not get documented for action.*
- *"This* [referring to trend analysis and applied research to define theory and principles] *is our weakest link. This type of documentation and tracking of patterns is not happening in any consistent way in sanitation … Yes we don't have this capacity to track and be informed on patterns and impact in the sanitation sector. Which also means we are unable to up-scale what we pilot … CWSA, for instance, has plans to revive the research unit and this was discussed at the Board level. EHSD can also get a focal person to theorise and document on sanitation. The ministry has a Research Directorate, but the challenge is that the person is not a technical person and does not know the issues. If it has to be done, the person will have to sit in EHSD. The temporary arrangement is Sanitation Knowledge Management Initiative (2014 – 2016) - this is a project to document and theorise to develop solutions. We want to have a coordinator who will do this. But the project ends in 3 years and we don't know whether it will continue. We expect that in the next 3 years EHSD will grow, and someone can be hired to take up this responsibility because it is key to the ministry."*

In addition to these general findings on the types of learning that is occurring in the sector, the study also found that the learning system that the CWSA had in the past was much more effective and systematic in deploying insights and lessons shared on the various platforms into the production of operational guidelines and manuals, and even policy reforms. This was because that learning system was anchored into the way the lead agency in the rural water sector was doing business with its key partners and stakeholders. The system made learning an integral part of quarterly, mid-year and annual reviews, resulting in experts taking key issues up and developing new ways of improving operations and policy.

It is an unfortunate commentary that such a functioning system has been virtually truncated as a result of dwindling funds, and institutional inertia (or negligence?) regarding investing in learning and adaptive capacity. The additional loss is that stakeholders (such as RCN and CONIWAS) who are not direct decision makers or lead agencies to implement learning insights drive the current learning systems, struggling to have their insights adopted. The effect is that insights and lessons are consolidated in the form of communiqués and publications, instead of policy guidelines, rules, regulations or standards to be enforced. The study found that when learning was driven and owned by CWSA, insights were better deployed into manuals, guidelines and policy changes than the current learning processes where CWSA functions as a weaker party in the learning and knowledge management processes.

5.3 Single Loop, Double Loop and Triple Loop Learning in the Sector

The study further analyzed the learning that takes place in the WASH sector in terms of levels of learning, and found that the dominant form of learning on all the national and regional level platforms is Single-Loop learning. The learning process on the Ghana WASH sector learning platforms is that, the effectiveness or otherwise of actions (pilots, innovations, approaches) that are implemented is judged against desired results, and when there is a mismatch, changes are introduced by way of formulating new or alternative actions, while the basic assumptions remain relatively unchanged or unchallenged. For example, in order to improve the effectiveness of MMDAs in the governance and service monitoring aspects of rural water services, DWSTs, Water Boards and CWSTs continue to be trained and re-constituted, while MMDAs continue to be encouraged to adopt new budgeting processes to increase financial allocations to the water sector plans. This is single loop learning and seems to be the dominant learning process in the sector at all levels.

Double loop learning would challenge some of the basic assumptions the sector has held over the years. For example, it would challenge the efficacy of the assumption of using volunteers in the governing structures of water services at district and community levels. It would also question the whole concept of community ownership as currently practiced, and the current roles of MMDAs and the CWSA at the regional, district and community levels, in the context of emerging trends in rural areas (and especially in peri-urban areas) where private water service providers and powerful community leaders and individuals are apparently implementing a form of "business or commercial model" of water supply services with success. These, and similar questions, are not being researched systematically to identify possible alternatives that could challenge or replace the existing fundamental assumptions on which rural water services are being delivered.

Admittedly, some recent initiatives (such as the service monitoring framework, the functionality indicators, and full life cycle cost model, developed through the CWSA/Triple-S and the WASH Cost projects) have challenged long-held assumptions in the sector and have pointed to the potential that a more systematic effort at

double loop learning could bring to the sector. For example, the Triple-S action research initiative on service monitoring has led to a clearer distinction between coverage and functionality and also led to the categorisation of service levels in rural water services. In the same vein, the full life cycle initiative seems to have challenged and reformed the planning and budgeting processes and format used in the District Water and Sanitation Plans.

Double loop learning was also applied (even if inadvertently) during the formulation of the current Water Policy, as fundamental assumptions about water being a right and/or a social good was challenged, leading to the crafting of a middle ground that also accommodated the principle that water is an economic good that can be managed for profit. The weakness in the sector is that there is no dedicated structure or agency that is officially mandated and resourced to define, track and coordinate learning and adaptive capacity development along a defined learning framework on the various platforms. The results are that the learning process and products are not sufficiently consolidated and systematised into new service delivery approaches that define new ways of doing business in the sector. This has not as yet happened at a scale that would become a national effort.

Triple loop learning is essentially about learning how learning is happening in the sector. It seeks to question how learning is supported, how insights are deployed, what supports the utilisation of learning insights; and make provision for an environment and a process where learning and knowledge products are given due prominence as a mechanism for self-improvement. The study found that though three sector studies on learning and knowledge management have been undertaken in the past, all with IRC funding support[6], it is the current study in 2014, initiated under the CWSA/Triple-S project that is perhaps the first major effort towards triple loop learning in the WASH sector in Ghana. It is this study that is actually interrogating how learning is happening in the sector.

In conclusion, the study found that first loop learning is the dominant form of learning in the sector. This has led to the redress of a number of functional and operational challenges in the sector through pilot programs on various thematic aspects of WASH services. Double loop learning has also been happening, albeit in an unstructured manner. Through this form of learning, driven by action research and some applied research, some of the foundational assumptions of WASH service delivery have been challenged; yet, they have not been followed through sufficiently. A few policy reviews and the development of new delivery mechanisms in the sector can be attributed to double loop learning. Triple loop learning is relatively new to the sector; and this study appears to be the first effort at learning about how the learning alliance approach and adaptive capacity is being managed in the sector.

[6] These studies relate to the establishment and further development of RCN and were conducted in 2002-2003 by TREND/IRC; in 2009 by RCN and in 2011 by RCN.

6. DRIVERS AND INHIBITORS OF STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

6.1 Overview of Research Issues Interrogated on Participation

This section of the study report addresses the following research questions:

- What drives stakeholders to join a Learning Alliance?
- Do these learning platforms, as key vehicles to the learning alliance approach, enhance the effectiveness of sector learning, innovation and scaling up?
- If the efficacy of the LA approach is located in joint ownership of the vehicle, is this being achieved in the Ghana context at National and Regional levels?
- How do we effectively link the various levels of the LA Platforms – community, district, regional and national?

The thrust of inquiry here was to determine the main factors that promote or inhibit stakeholder participation in the learning alliances and the learning platforms. The intent was to explore ways of increasing participation in the learning alliances, and also enhancing the effectiveness of the learning platforms as vehicles for knowledge sharing, dissemination and uptake of innovations and best practices.

The study found that different interests drive different stakeholders to participate in the learning platforms. Some stakeholders are there to obtain information and be able to adapt to the new ways of doing things in the sector. At these platforms, the organisations are able to learn about new technologies and approaches, and be abreast with new learning in the sector. Others attend to network and get to know new people in the sector that they can partner with on projects, or ask questions from them about innovations and new approaches. Because these platforms bring together all the key stakeholders, they offer opportunities for networking and information gathering that would normally take much longer time and effort to organise. In addition, stakeholders participate on these platforms because the information or innovations to share are in their interest as an organisation. So they either attend to defend or accept new ideas about how to approach their methods, technologies, and innovations.

6.2 Factors Driving Stakeholder Participation in Learning Alliances

On the whole, the study found that the main factor motivating stakeholder participation in the various learning platforms is the desire of each stakeholder or stakeholder group to achieve their program or organisational/agency objectives. This is understandable, and agencies and groups are driven primarily by their objectives, rather than the desire to learn per se.

The statement below from a key person in CWSA states this case quite aptly:

"Each active stakeholder [on the learning platforms] is boxed in on their own agenda and participates to meet their own needs. Members pick to attend the platform based on their interests and miss out on other aspects of the learning; and this causes a setback."

This statement is collaborated by similar ones from other key stakeholders as presented below:

- *At most of the NLLAP meetings if the focus is on water you will find that mostly personnel from the Water Directorate and CWSA would be attending, and not people from EHSD. If the focus is on sanitation, you will find the sanitation (EHSD) people will be present, and not the water agencies. This is not good for the sector.*
- *In theory, stakeholders want to learn and know what is happening in the sector. In reality, however, stakeholders attend the platforms based on their interests; namely which learning event is linked directly with what the stakeholders are involved in. For a learning platform, this is not good news at all.*
- *If an institution has a particular interest, you will find that the Chief Director and other key decision makers and technical staff will be in attendance. So the learning platforms are very interest driven. Sector people who have sector issues or recommendations to make normally dictate the subject matter at the meetings.*
- *NLLAP is very interest driven and therefore there is no holder or repository of the learning and knowledge management products. RCN is just a host and a convener, but there is no particular place or agency in the sector where consolidated sector learning is assembled and managed. For this reason, donors and external stakeholders are able to drive their interests through the sector, even if it does not conform to the sector learning and insights.*
- *There is no clear ownership of the learning process and the resultant knowledge products in the sector. No follow up from the previous year's meeting to understand where we were and whether we have overcome last year's hurdles and what progress has been made.*

In conclusion the study found that different interests drive different stakeholders to participate in the various learning alliances. Some stakeholders come to obtain information and to be able to adapt to the new ways of doing things in the sector. At the platforms, stakeholders are able to learn new technologies and be abreast with new learning in the sector. Others attend in order to network and get to know new people in the sector that they can partner with on projects or ask questions from them about innovations and new approaches. In a number of cases stakeholders participate in order to market their programs and/or products. Because these platforms bring together all the key stakeholders, it serves as a cost-effective forum for gathering all sorts of information and also for networking. In addition,

stakeholders participate on these learning platforms because the information or topics being discussed are in their interest as an organisation. So they either attend to defend their ideas, accept new ideas about how to approach their methods, technologies, and innovations; and even to market their products and to compete with others, or protect their interests.

6.3 Factors Inhibiting Stakeholder Participation in Learning Alliances

The study found that the most significant factor inhibiting stakeholder participation in learning alliances is the failure of CWSA and the Water Directorate of MWRWH to ensure the implementation of decisions, guidelines and standards that are agreed upon by stakeholders. Stakeholders complained about the frustrations associated with attending these learning meetings to rehash the same problems over again when solutions had been agreed upon in previous meetings. The lack of enforcement mechanisms and/or sanctions against noncompliance to sector guidelines and standards seem to discourage participation in learning alliances.

The second most important factor is that many of the key stakeholder organisations send different representatives at different times to different platforms. Often, these representatives are not decision makers; in addition, the knowledge gained from the different platforms by the different persons are not shared and consolidated in the stakeholder organisations. This has the effect that different aspects of the body of knowledge generated in the learning alliances remain dispersed and lodged in different individuals, making knowledge aggregation and follow up rather difficult. Associated with this concern, and particularly with reference to public sector stakeholders, is the phenomenon where administrative/bureaucratic requirements and personal interests account for who participates in which learning event and how often. Simply put, organisational level learning does not seem to be happening effectively and in any systematic manner in the sector stakeholder organisations and institutions. This in turn affects sector level learning and knowledge management.

A third concern is that some stakeholders (primarily at the regional and district levels) are unable to obtain funding to participate regularly in the learning alliance platforms. A stakeholder aptly stated this concern along with the other inhibiting factors during the dialogues conducted in the study:

- *"Lack of funding is a stumbling block to full participation; but if the Ministry can create a budget line and bring interesting topics where people are interested and invested in, participation will always be high*.

7. PARTICIPATION AND CONTENTS OF LEARNING ON PLATFORMS

7.1 Overview

This section of the study report addresses a number of research questions:

- Is there evidence that the presence of a learning platform leads to more sustainable outcomes due to the engagement, funding and ownership of its members?
- How effective has this approach of bringing together sector stakeholders been in shaping the sector agenda and planning joint actions?
- What motivates learning?
- What are the drivers and barriers to sector learning and to Learning Alliance formation?
- How can stakeholder interest be sustained?
- Where is the convergence point for decision making for uptake, policy reforms, etc.?
- If the efficacy of the LA approach is located in joint ownership of the vehicle, is this being achieved in the Ghana context at National and Regional levels?
- Is the objective of Learning Alliance Platforms as the prime vehicle for taking innovations to scale being met? What are the key elements that make the approach, and the vehicle work?

Many of the stakeholders who were contacted during the study argued that all the sector stakeholders jointly own (or should jointly own) the various learning alliances and learning platforms. Yet, a careful look reveals that some specific stakeholders own and manage various learning platforms. This section presents the findings related to ownership and management, contents of learning, the financing and sustainability of the various platforms.

Annex 1 of this report presents the list of national and sub-national level learning spaces in the sector, the stakeholders who participate on each of these platforms and the main focus or contents of learning[7]. It is evident from the list and the multiplicity of platforms that learning is disjointed, dispersed and far from being coordinated or consolidated in commonly agreed and clearly defined ownership spaces. There are just too many platforms with too many different agenda and too many different assembly points for effective knowledge management in the sector. This does not support harmonisation and coordination, especially because there is no agency or space that is acting in the role of coordinator, responsible to steer and manage learning and adaptive capacity in the sector.

The study concentrated on the four national level learning platforms (NLLAP, Mole Conference, GWF and NESCON), and the newly established Regional and District learning Alliance Platforms, as the others do not have the characteristics of a learning alliance platform, and actually do not function as such.

[7] Sector stakeholders at a national learning workshop organised by IRC Ghana/Triple-S in Accra in June 2013 generated this list and profile of platforms.

7.2 Ownership and Management of National Level Learning Platforms

7.2.1 NLLAP and RCN

There is a sense among sector stakeholders that they jointly own NLLAP, and have inadvertently ceded to RCN the role of convening and managing the platform, and documenting and disseminating the outcomes of deliberations on the platform. It is with this understanding that all the sector stakeholders have accepted the current financing arrangements for NLLAP, where whoever would like to present or share insights and learning would bear the cost of hosting the meeting. It must be noted, however, that the hosting cost does not include, the salaries of RCN personnel and the running cost of the office and the publications.

The study found that NLLAP is regarded as the most open and regular platform where all sector stakeholders (including the private sector) come to learn, share and network. The neutrality and professionalism of RCN promotes this sense of joint-ownership and value addition among sector stakeholders who attend the NLLAP. This notwithstanding, it was also observed that the subjects discussed and conclusions arrived at during NLLAP gatherings do not systematically complement or build on one another in terms of themes or service delivery problems to be addressed. In addition, insights, conclusions and decisions reached at NLLAP gatherings are not taken up systematically into policy or programming and practice, because most times decision makers of the stakeholder groups do not attend. And, also because the platform has not as yet created the clout and follow-up mechanisms (beyond facilitating discourse and reflection and disseminating publications and reports) necessary for influencing policy, programming and practice in the sector. The result of all this is that sector stakeholders are aware of, participate in, and honour learning events organised under NLLAP and RCN; but have not developed a conscious and deliberate mechanism to take insights and learning into policy and practice.

It is obvious that the main sector actors (CWSA-MWRWH, EHSD-MLGRD and CONIWAS) could work with RCN to harness the outcomes of decisions and insights from NLLAP to inform policy, programming and practice in the sector in a more systematic and effective manner. This would entail a facilitated dialogue among these key sector stakeholders on how learning and knowledge management could be better orchestrated and resources/financed; and how insights could be harvested and utilised to influence policy and practice in the sector. The absence of a more deliberate and focused institutional attention and resource commitment for learning and knowledge management and harmonisation in the sector accounts for the current low level of usefulness of the NLLAP and RCN. Yet, with a little institutional commitment and resourcing from sector actors, the NLLAP and RCN could harness their potentials to handle the entire sector learning and knowledge management process along the lines (or within the framework) of the learning cycle and the learning loops presented in Section 5 above. This way the NLLAP and RCN could provide distilled learning insights and field-based research results that could be the basis for advocacy, policy review and financing priorities in the sector.

7.2.2 The Mole Conference and CONIWAS

The Mole Conference Series have evidently become the most effective annual advocacy events spearheaded by civil society stakeholders in the WASH sector. The high level of stakeholder interest and participation in the Series, make the gatherings a more effective forum for evaluating progress in the WASH sector, with regard to trends and patterns in service delivery and coverage of water and sanitation services in the country. This is happening, but not in a systematic and structured manner. Undoubtedly, insights and learning that occur at the Mole Series are influenced by insights and learning that a generated at the monthly NLLAP discourses. This is because the core group that plans and organises the Mole Series includes all the key actors in the NLLAP and RCN. These structural inter-linkages exist, and help to determine the themes and main issues to be addressed in the Mole Series.

What is missing, however, is that neither CONIWAS/Mole nor RCN/NLLAP has been officially acknowledged or mandated to steer learning and knowledge management in the sector, along any agreed learning framework. Their effectiveness in moving knowledge and learning into policy, programming and practice are therefore limited, being primarily in the form of raising awareness, mobilising energy and interest, and advocacy. Given this reality, the achievements of the Mole Series in influencing change in the sector (as summarised in Section 4.2.3 and Annex 3) can be regarded as very impressive.

7.2.3 GWF and NESCON

The Water Directorate of MWRWH convenes and manages the Ghana Water Forum for the purposes of enabling government to take stock of the activities and achievements of public sector agencies annually. This is what happens also at the annual NESCON, which the EHSD of MLGRD organises and manages. These annual forums are also used to attract private sector actors in terms of investments and innovations, and also to win support of DPs and other stakeholders, including state entities, for partnerships towards enhanced service delivery in WASH. Though the emphasis at the GWF is on the water sub-sector, deliberations and learning usually include sanitation; especially, water-related sanitation. On the other hand, NESCON focus more on sanitation, including water-related sanitation. The annual GWF and NESCON are often very well attended by all WASH sector stakeholders and have served to review policy, financing, prioritisation and standards and guidelines in the sector.

The additional event of GWF is to have roundtable discussions with DPs as a means towards consolidating priorities in the sector and to define the scope and nature of cooperation between GoG and DPs in the ensuing year. Deliberations at the roundtable cover, among other issues, a review of the financing and other policy and programming commitments that were worked out in the previous year (including commitments and agreements at the SWA High level meeting) and leads to the determination of new scope of engagement for the ensuing year.

As the highest government-led forum for sector performance review and re-prioritisation, the GWF and NESCON have the potential to be better enriched by distilled learning insights and knowledge management outcomes from NLLAP-RCN and Mole-CONIWAS than what happens currently, where contributions from these knowledge sources are presented primarily as advocacy issues or ideas to enrich discourse. Evidence-based decision making and knowledge-based policy review and re-programming is what the GWF and NESCON are expected to add as value to learning and knowledge management in the WASH sector. In many ways this is not happening enough.

7.3 Ownership and Contents at Sub-National Level Platforms

At the regional and district levels, the study focused on the three regions and three districts that Triple-S is working with. In all these regions and districts, it is the Triple-S that owns and manages the fledgling learning alliance platforms that have been recently established. Neither the respective regional CWSA management, nor the RCCs own the regional learning alliance platforms as yet. In the same vein the District Assemblies do not as yet own the district learning alliances and the platforms. Membership and participation is obviously growing steadily in these sub-national level platforms. But, it is a common and worrying concern among all the key stakeholders that when Triple-S comes to an end, these platforms are most likely going to fold up as well. This is because proposed arrangements for their financial sustainability and expert/professional management and facilitation of the platforms are not as yet secured. As part of the exit strategy of Triple-S, decisions and possible scenarios for enabling CWSA to own, resource and utilise the regional learning platforms are still being explored.

The district assemblies and a few NGOs attest to the learning and insights they have obtained by participating on the platforms, and how that knowledge is beginning to influence their way of doing business in the sector. For example, the insights they have gained through the service monitoring research, the full life cycle cost training and the assets management workshops, are beginning to reflect on how the district assemblies are increasing their budgetary allocations for the WASH sector, and paying more attention to post-construction management. However, in as long as the district assemblies and other sub-national stakeholders are unable to finance the sustainability of the platforms, their future is precariously tied to the duration of the Triple-S initiative. Here again, efforts are still being made under the Triple-S/CWSA project to enable DAs to allocate specific budget lines for supporting and facilitating WASH sector learning and adaptive capacity development. It is too early to notice any changes in this direction.

7.4 Financing Arrangements and Sustainability of Platforms

As has been alluded to earlier in this report, the current learning alliances and their respective platforms at the national and sub-national levels (with the exception of the Mole Series) are all variously dependent on donor funding. Nearly all the platforms function by soliciting funds from various development partners and

donor-funded programs. The Water Directorate of the MWRWH, the CWSA and the Environmental Health and Sanitation Directorate of the MLGRD are the agencies responsible and mandated to handle these learning processes on behalf of the government of Ghana. These GoG agencies have just recently begun to set aside some very limited funds for organising or participating in the various learning and knowledge management platforms. Until alternative funding mechanisms are worked out, the future of these learning alliances and platforms would continue to be dependent on donor funds.

Admittedly, the Mole Conference, and to a lesser extent the NLLAP and the Northern Regional Learning Alliance Platform in Tamale have come up with some self-financing arrangements that enable any stakeholder(s) that would like to share their research results, market their products and/or motivate an issue on the platform to cover the cost of the meeting in terms of snacks and other operational costs. Yet, these costs are insignificant compared to the salaries and other sunk-in costs of the facilitators and their maintenance. It must be noted in this context that the quality of learning at the platforms depend to a large extent on the competence and motivation of those who facilitate the learning process. This is where more attention is required in ensuring the sustainability of the platforms.

Though private sector sponsorship of GWF and NESCON is steadily increasing (as seen by the involvement of Coca Cola, Polytank Ltd., Guinness Ghana Ltd., etc.), more could be done to harness more private sector participation on all the platforms at national and sub-national levels.

Some statements from key stakeholders provide a sharp picture on the current financing situation:

- *"If you look at Mole Conference, this sustainability issue was a key factor in how it was structured and organised. Initially, the conference was fully funded by donors. Later on, CONIWAS shifted it to cost per head and used some of the funds raised to subsidise membership participation and attendance. As a result all the dependence on donor funds and donations reduced.*
- *"Unlike the Mole Conference, the Ghana Water Forum is almost fully donor dependent. As such, sometimes if the funds are not available they do not hold these platforms".*
- *"These platforms can attract sponsorship from private companies and can be income generation events. This has not been accessed yet."*

8. EFFICACY AND INFLUENCE OF LEARNING ALLIANCES AND PLATFORMS

8.1 Overview

This section of the study report addresses research questions related to the impact of the learning alliance approach and the learning platforms at national and sub-national levels.

- How effective has this approach of bringing together sector stakeholders been in shaping the sector agenda and planning joint actions?
- Do these learning platforms, as key vehicles to the learning alliance approach, enhance the effectiveness of sector learning, innovation and scaling up?
- Is there evidence that the presence of a learning platform leads to more sustainable outcomes due to the engagement, funding and ownership of its members?
- How is knowledge sharing influencing sector change?
- Where is the convergence point for decision making for uptake, policy reforms, etc.?
- Is the objective of Learning Alliance Platforms as the prime vehicle for taking innovations to scale being met? What are the key elements that make the approach, and the vehicle, work?
- Incentives and how to fund the LA approach and keep it alive? What will allow the LA approach to be sustainable?

All the sector stakeholders who were consulted during the study were sure that the learning alliances and the platforms have contributed significantly in enhancing learning, knowledge sharing and dissemination of improved service delivery approaches, as well as approved standards and guidelines. They also submit that the platforms have contributed significantly to improved awareness and uptake of best practices, successful pilots, innovations and technologies for WASH service delivery. Sector stakeholders are able to point to changes in the sector that were initiated or agreed upon at one or the other learning alliance platform.

The following statements point to some of the effects and limitations of the learning platforms:

- *"The platforms are very informative. For instance, at one of these platforms I learnt from financial benchmarking to determine how much rich and poor communities will pay for water. This came up in SWITCH project but the recommendation was not taken up."*
- *"The prepaid water card is an example of policy that is introduced or debated without field based evidence or systematic way of tracking.*

It is not easy to find systematically documented evidence to support claims about the effects/impact of the learning alliances and learning platforms. CONIWAS has documented some changes in the WASH sector that could be attributed to the influence of work done through the Mole Conference Series. RCN is also able to point to some changes in the sector attributable to work done on the NLLAP. These and other anecdotal evidence is all there is with regard to evidence on the effectiveness

or impact of the learning alliances and the learning platforms. This problem can be easily addressed, as reports, communiqués and other publications on the outcomes of deliberations on each platform exist, and their links to changes in the sector could easily be mapped. The reason why a systematic documentation on the effects and impact of the learning alliances and platforms is not yet widely available is that no stakeholder(s) has taken on the full responsibility of being the holder, facilitator and repository of learning and knowledge management in the sector. RCN and CONIWAS are playing some aspects of this role; but they are not tracking, documenting and researching into learning within or guided by a defined learning frame (as for example the Kolb's learning cycle (Fig. 1 and Fig. 5) or the learning loops (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4).

8.2 Influence of Learning Alliances and Learning Platforms

The study found a number of anecdotal evidence pointing to the influence of the learning alliance platforms in shaping policy, standards, guidelines and even regulations in the sector. Many stakeholders readily indicated that the principles, standards and approaches they are using in providing services in the sector were based directly on insights and knowledge products (manuals, guidelines, operating standard) they obtained from participating in the learning platforms. Whatever the weaknesses of the learning alliances, it can surely be said that they have been responsible largely for the creation of the prevailing body of knowledge and standards in the WASH sector. For example, the values and principles undergirding the current Water Policy and the emerging Sector Strategic Development Plan, as well the standards and delivery approaches contained in existing manuals, guidelines and regulations are all products of the learning alliance platforms in the sector. The study established that, it is a matter of fact that all the major stakeholders of the WASH sector have regularly participated and contributed to the development and finalisation of the service delivery manuals, guidelines, standards and regulations that have been in use in the sector for so long, and which were finalised, published and launched at the national level in March 2014. These operating documents along with the sector policy and strategy documents (National Community Water and Sanitation Policy and Sector Strategic Development Plan) are products of the various learning alliances and learning platforms.

Besides these, many stakeholders allude to the fact that their current bodies of knowledge and practices in the sector have been shaped by their participation in the learning alliances over the years. The changing nature of sector programming and financing regimes that are now more tilted towards sustainable service delivery as scale, and also being more and more in tune with pro-poor and equity parameters, speak to the effect of the learning alliance approach. The design of new facilities in the WASH sector now build in post-construction management costs, in line with the full life cycle costs of the facilities; and also include more robust governance systems for the new facilities. These are some anecdotal evidence pointing to the influence of these learning alliances on the ideas, discourse, practice and policy in the sector.

Annex 3 maps some of the major changes in the WASH sector and how these changes were influenced or created at the respective learning alliance platforms.

8.3 Learning Platforms as Forums for Critiquing Non-Compliance

It is a logically expected outcome of the learning alliances and the platforms that sector stakeholders seeking to provide services would appraise themselves of current and approved approaches, standards and best practices in the sector from lead agencies, and also by participating in the learning platforms. This is happening in a discernibly increasing manner, as recent donor-funded programs (such as the IDA, AFD, NORST, SKMIP, etc.) in the sector have all been designed in line with approved guidelines and service delivery approaches arrived at on these platforms.

Within this context, the learning platforms have also enabled sector stakeholders to openly critique other recent service delivery initiatives that fail to comply with approved standards, guidelines and approaches. Examples of these are:

a. The GoG program to provide 20,000 boreholes without due diligence to established guidelines and service delivery approaches
b. The business model, Water Kiosks and other PPP approaches introduced by Water Health and other service providers that seem to function on commercially determined high tariffs;
c. The "Enviroloo" technology from South Africa that was going to be introduced without prior field testing to ascertain their cultural suitability;
d. The initiative of GWCL to introduce pre-paid water meters, without prior field testing and research on pro-poor implications; and
e. The WSA-initiated introduction of "FLOW" technology and sustainability indicators for service monitoring.

These criticisms and reviews have become visible through the learning platforms. The significance of the learning platforms in this regard may be deciphered from the statements below, expressed by two key stakeholders in the sector:

- *"Coordination of innovations in the water sector is very difficult, because private people or politicians sometimes do not pass their projects through the Ministry for due diligence to be performed and standards to be upheld. It happens all the time. Sometimes, even NGO-funded projects do the same thing. This is why the SWAp is important and being enforced in the rural water sector."*
- *"Learning starts from district level. For instance, adoption of technology. Technology is piloted in the district and learning is done there (as is done in a lab). But there has not been a systematic tracking at the sub-national level to feed into the national-level learning platform. Rather the reverse is happening, where at national level, they are sharing and learning; but in actual fact, they are sharing what happens at the district level. Because there is no systematic way to document at the district level, the project/pilot is where information/learning should come from to enrich regional and national level platforms.*

The study found that key stakeholders expect all sector actors to regulate themselves, or be regulated, by the approved guidelines, standards and approaches known or agreed upon on the various learning platforms. Within the prevailing context of a rather weak enforcement regime in the sector, this role being played by the learning platforms help to encourage compliance to approved service delivery standards, guidelines and approaches.

PART III: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING LEARNING IN THE SECTOR

9. AGREE ON A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR MANAGING LEARNING

In Part II of this report, the point was made that learning, knowledge management and the development of adaptive capacity are not being managed systematically in the WASH sector, because of the multiplicity of learning structures and the absence of a mechanism that systematises or links them towards decision making and enforcement of approved standards and guidelines. It was also established that the dominant types of learning on all these platforms are "Experiencing" or sharing and learning, and "Acting Out" (as explained with the adapted versions of Kolb's model in Fig. 1 and Fig. 5). Simply put, "Observing" or analyzing for trends and patterns, and "Theorising" or the development of principles and theories to guide field actions and the identification of best practices are not as yet sufficiently significant aspects of the learning cycle in the sector. Moreover, in Part II of this report it was argued that double loop learning, which helps to challenge prevailing policy framework and assumptions, needs to be better structured and managed more deliberately. In the same vein, triple loop learning could be undertaken periodically to interrogate how learning is taking place and to explore improved ways of managing learning and adaptive capacity in the sector.

To address these issues, the study proposes that sector stakeholders agree on a conceptual framework that would be used to guide the facilitation and management of learning and the strengthening of adaptive capacity in the sector. The study recommends the learning framework outlined in Fig. 5 above for adoption by the sector to organise and manage learning. This will help to differentiate the following types of learning and sequence them in ways that would enrich and systematise learning and adaptive capacity development:

a. **"Experiencing"**: This is learning and knowledge transfer, dissemination and information sharing that take place through sharing and discourses on results of pilots, field-research, and lessons from projects. This is already happening on all the four national level platforms and the regional and district level learning platforms. Documentation, publication and dissemination of outcomes and reports from these platforms would have to be improved in ways that enable all key actors in the sector at all levels (especially DAs and communities) to be abreast with approved guidelines, standards and approaches
b. **"Observing"**: This has to do with analyzing to identify trends and patterns that are emerging with respect to various aspects of WASH service delivery. These could be trends in sector financing, emerging patterns in community ownership and management, developments in equity and pro-poor dimensions of service delivery. This type of learning could only happen when dedicated actors undertake longitudinal and comparative studies over time

using materials from the sharing and learning or 'Experiencing' stage. This may take place annually or every two years.

c. **"Theorising":** This has to do with undertaking applied or field research to determine causal relations, associations or correlations that exist among various variables and parameters in WASH service delivery. The learning here would challenge prevailing assumptions undergirding policy and service delivery approaches, and provide insights into the development of principles, guidelines, policy and program design based on field evidence. This kind of learning will also enable the sector to build on local knowledge and have a basis for the design and contextualisation of pilots and action research to advance the body of knowledge, competence and practice in the sector. This may be undertaken every 2-3 years at most.

d. **"Intervening/Acting Out":** This has to do with up-scaling and rolling out of best practices, and further refinement of principles and guidelines through action research. This could be more often, as it is linked with "Experiencing".

This learning frame would define the boundaries and dimensions of learning in the sector, and also help sector stakeholders to distil insights from the "Experiencing" stage of learning into trend analysis and subsequently into the development of guiding principles and theories of change for program design and policy. The significance of this recommendation is that it is the "Observing" and Theorising" types of learning that promote "double loop learning" where assumptions are interrogated in ways that lead to the development of alternative service delivery approaches based on field evidence. By adopting this conceptual framework to guide the facilitation and management of learning in the sector, a more systematised approach to learning and a better means towards strengthening adaptive capacity would be achieved.

The management of learning based on this conceptual framework would have to be orchestrated by a clearly defined institutional set up.

10. DEFINE INSTITUTIONAL SET UP FOR MANAGING LEARNING

10.1 Context

There is evidence that previous attempts to establish a research division in CWSA to manage learning and adaptive capacity in rural water and the WASH sector did not work. Recent efforts in EHSD to develop learning and knowledge management structures and processes for the sanitation sub-sector are also fraught with human and financial resource constraints. The situation does not appear to be very different in GWCL and WRC. Within this context, NLLAP (managed by RCN) and the Mole Series (managed by CONIWAS) have proved to be very effective structures for multi-stakeholder learning and research in the WASH sector. The GWF and NESCON may be seen primarily as annual forums where the respective sub-sectors review their programs, overall performance and also interrogate their policies and partnership mechanisms, leading to re-planning for the subsequent year.

In view of this, the study wishes to recommend a number of institutional arrangements for managing learning and knowledge in the sector.

10.2 Sector Agencies to Own and Manage Learning Process and Structure

It is recommended that the RCN and NLLAP should be formally owned, recognised and operationalised as the facilitator, manager and holder of learning and knowledge management for and on behalf of all stakeholders in the sector. The process of formally recognising and operationalising the RCN to function as a bone fide structure owned by all stakeholders of the sector may entail a series of discussions and actions with the two sector Ministries (MWRWH and MLGRD) and the key Non-State Actors of the sector. In the immediate term, the process may require an administrative decision of the two sector ministries to jointly own, finance and operationalise RCN and NLLAP as a joint venture hosted by IRC or TREND. In the medium to long term, formalising RCN as sector-owned entity might entail some legal or major administrative processes that would legitimise regular allocation of government financial and human resources. Sector stakeholders need to explore options for realising this.

In order for the lead sector agencies (such as CWSA, GWCL, EHSD, WRC, and the Water Directorate) to work closely and professionally with and through the RCN and the NLLAP, it would be expedient for each of these agencies to establish a learning and knowledge management desk with dedicated schedule officers whose responsibilities would be to facilitate and manage organisational learning and knowledge management that influence decision making, programming and resource allocation in the respective agencies. These schedule officers would be assessed annually in terms of how far they have advanced learning and adaptive capacity in the agency and the sector directly, and also in collaboration with RCN.

It is foreseeable that these schedule officers would be WASH sector experts or specialists who would work in and/or with RCN as technical personnel of the parent agencies that own RCN.

10.3 Strengthen RCN and NLLAP to Manage Learning in the Sector

All sector stakeholders who were contacted during the study agree that RCN is doing a commendable job in managing the NLLAP, documenting outcomes and disseminating them widely as useful publications among stakeholders. In view of the strengths and potentials of RCN and the NLLAP, it is recommended that all sector stakeholders should jointly own, mandate and resource this structure to serve as the facilitator, repository and manager of the learning and knowledge management processes and products in the WASH sector. The idea here is to wean off RCN as a project structure, and make it a permanent entity jointly owned by all sector stakeholders, and duly registered and managed by its stakeholders as a representatively constituted Board or Council. All sector stakeholders would then formally own RCN as their facility for managing the NLLAP and the entire learning and knowledge process for and on their behalf in the form of paid services.

This could take two forms. First, RCN could be constituted as an independent quasi-governmental entity, jointly owned and funded by government of Ghana and its key non-state partners in the WASH sector in the form of equity shares. Stakeholders may opt to take shares by taking responsibility over a 10 year period to pay for any of the major cost items of RCN such as: Office Space and Utilities; Equipment and Technology Needs (Hardware and Software, including their maintenance); and Personnel Cost. Operational costs could be covered by way of fees RCN is allowed to charge for its facilitation, research and other services. An alternative option would be to compute the total cost of establishing and running an effective RCN over a period of 10 years, and ask stakeholders to contribute lump sums to cover the full cost. The proportion of a stakeholder's contribution becomes its share in RCN. In either scenario, the Representative Board or Council will be responsible to define the functions, scope of work, deliverables, performance indicators and modus operandi of RCN. In short the Board/Council will supervise the RCN Secretariat.

Towards these ends, it would be essential to revisit the Business Plan, which RCN formulated in October 2011, and subsequently shared with many of the key stakeholder institutions in the sector. This business plan sets out a workable governance, management and financing strategy for strengthening RCN to manage learning and the NLLAP for and on behalf of the sector. The additional aspects that would need to be included in the business plan are that:

a. The work and products of RCN would include facilitating and managing learning on the NLLAP, along the 4-stage learning framework proposed in section 10.1 above, such that learning would entail acquiring insights from analyses of trends and patterns, applied research, theories and the development of principles and best practices.

b. The capacity of the RCN Secretariat would be strengthened in terms of human resources, equipment and funds to facilitate learning and the development of adaptive capacity in the sector. This would enable RCN to also provide paid services to stakeholders, and/or provide quality control services with regard to learning and knowledge management
c. RCN would be recognised as the home, repository and manager of learning in the sector, coordinating learning initiatives in the sector for and on behalf of all sector stakeholders.
d. RCN would report to its Board or Council, made up of all stakeholders who own it.

10.4 Improve the Functional Links between NLLAP and Mole Conference

The role of the Mole Conference Series as the primary pro-poor advocacy forum, and civil society-government engagement platform in the sector is highly recognised and useful for learning. The Mole Conference Series also enhance dissemination and uptake of best practices and innovations in both the sanitation and water sub-sectors. The study established that there are structural and thematic links between RCN-NLLAP and CONIWAS-Mole in the sense that, the core group that plans and manages the Mole Conference Series include personnel of RCN. Also, the identification of themes/issues and the development of background concept papers for the Mole Series include views from RCN-NLLAP. In this regard the two learning alliances and learning platforms are very closely connected, structurally and thematically.

What needs to improve is for CONIWAS and the Mole Series to deliberately and strategically build on and/or challenge insights, discourses and deliberations from NLLAP; and for RCN-NLLAP to do the same with regard to insights and discourses from the Mole Series. This would serve to deepen and expand on learning from one platform to the other, based on analyses of trends and patterns, and the results of applied research or emerging theories and principles for improved service delivery. This would contribute significantly towards addressing the fragmented and uncoordinated nature of learning that is currently taking place in the sector. In addition, it would promote harmonisation and coordination as the development, revision and dissemination of approved service standards, guidelines and service delivery approaches would be more focused on these two prominent platforms of the sector.

It is further recommended that RCN should lead a process that would design and implement a mechanism to foster deliberate and systematic links between district and regional level learning and the use of insights from them at the national level in ways that enhance adoption and scaling up of best practices. A statement from a key stakeholder at the regional and district levels puts this recommendation in a fuller perspective:

> *"If we strengthen district and regional level learning, what is shared and documented there as learning can be moved into the other stages of the*

learning cycle. Then the national level can learn from the districts (as results from the lab). Regional LAP will be the best place for sharing and up scaling, and the national level will be used for advocacy and policy. This will bring a clear distinction; in that, the stakeholders who share at the national level are operating at the district and sometimes at the regional level. Therefore, if the impact of learning can be tracked and used to improve knowledge and experience, then the district and regional platforms have to be strengthened. The national level will then remain for policy, advocacy and donor support, etc."

10.5 Re-Define the Focus and Scale of GWF and NESCON

The study recognised that GWF and NESCON are primarily Joint Sector Review platforms that seek to enable the Water Directorate of MWRWH and the EHSD of MLGRD as the respective Ministry structures responsible for the water and sanitation sub-sectors to:

a. Review the performance of the various sector agencies under their remit annually; and on the basis of these reviews, establish new-priorities, and targets, and also improve their policies and strategies towards enhanced service delivery;
b. Review the implementation of agreed partnerships arrangements and co-financing mechanisms between GoG and DPs; and based on the outcome, redesign improved partnerships and financing arrangements (including commitments made at the SWA High Level meetings) for improved service delivery;
c. Provide the platform for engagement with the private sector and civil society stakeholders to provide inputs on policy issues, service delivery strategies, innovations and improved technologies for the consideration and uptake of GoG and DPs operating in the WASH sector

The study recommends that in order for GWF and NESCON to achieve these objectives more effectively, preparatory work towards these forums should establish annualised Key Outcome and Output Indicators for different segments of the user population (as for example, water and sanitation coverage or service levels for urban, peri-urban and rural populations; Northern Ghana, Middle Belt and Southern Ghana). These indicators should also include financing targets that would ensure the attainment of the performance indicators. The indicators should be disaggregated in ways that enable their achievement to be tracked as annualised performance targets of the different sector agencies. These Key Performance (Outcome and Output) Indicators would then be the basis for national agencies to present their achievements, and strategies at the forums. Discourses and decisions at GWF and NESCON would thereby focus on why targets were achieved or not; and explore ways of enabling the sector agencies to achieve clearly planned targets with enhanced strategies and service delivery approaches.

By the same token, discourses on financing arrangements and commitments from GoG, DPs and the private sector would be strategically directed towards achieving these measurable targets (or KPIs) that have been transparently agreed upon by all relevant stakeholders. This would provide a firmer basis for the roundtable discussions between GoG and DPs that are usually held as aspects of these forums.

11. PREPARE A BUSINESS CASE FOR LEARNING IN THE SECTOR

There is the need for the key stakeholders in the WASH sector to finance the preparation of a business case for learning and knowledge management. This exercise will help to determine the financial and economic justification for making learning a significant issue n the WASH sector. It will also enable sector stakeholders to appreciate the opportunity cost of not learning, and the impact that has on the sector. The results of the business case could be used for social marketing and as justification for mobilising funds to improve service delivery in the sector.

For example, the exercise could quantify or otherwise measure the avoidable costs communities have to pay, owing to non-compliance with sector standards and service delivery approaches by service providers. It could also measure costs associated with lack of information or knowledge about where to source technical backstopping for operation and maintenance. There is some preliminary evidence from East Gonja and Akatsi District Assemblies that point to the financial and economic benefits of learning. For example, based on insights the Assembly had gained from the service monitoring and full life cycle costs pilots they had done with Triple-S, the Assembly was able to negotiate with one of their NGO partners to rehabilitate 10 broken down boreholes serving various communities. The NGO had initially sought to deploy the same amount to provide a new borehole for one community. In the Akatsi District, the Assembly has used insights gained from the District Learning Alliance Platform to justify the mobilisation of funds to rehabilitate 33 boreholes that had broken down for some years. That fund could not have provided a new borehole for even one of those communities.

The study strongly recommends that a business case for learning in the sector should be prepared; and the insights used to market and justify resource allocation for enhanced learning and knowledge management. The business case could also explore or even buttress the determination of options for operationalising RCN as an independent quasi-governmental structure to facilitate and manage learning for the WASH sector at national and sub-national levels as paid services.

12. CONCLUSIONS

The study on learning and adaptive capacity in the WASH sector of Ghana has traced the history of learning alliance approach and learning platforms in Ghana since 1989, and identified a number of improvements and achievements in the how learning takes place in the sector. It has also identified the most important learning platforms and the relative strengths and focus of learning and knowledge management on each of these platforms at the national and sub-national levels.

The study has also identified weaknesses in how learning is managed; and recommended ways by which insights and knowledge could be more systematically deployed for policy and program review to ensure better service delivery. The study made further recommendations on institutional arrangements that would improve learning and adaptive capacity in the sector. , It also proposed how to link the various learning platforms so as to improve synergy and coordination of learning and knowledge management towards improved policy and programming and ultimately establish outcome and output indicators that would be used to measure and track sector performance.

These findings and recommendations of the study would hopefully be taken up and implemented in order to improve learning and adaptive capacity in the WASH sector of Ghana in view of the widely recognised significance of learning in the sector.

ANNEX 1: LEARNING ALLIANCE PLATFORMS IN GHANA WASH SECTOR [8]

Platforms	Participation	Main Focus and Contents
NATIONAL LEVEL LEARNING PLATFORMS		
Regular Learning Platforms		
NLLAP	*1-6	Learning, sharing and Dissemination
WASH Radio	*1-6	Dissemination
Annual Platforms		
Mole Conference	*1-6	NGO WASH sector review, coordination and advocacy platform, Learning Forum & Exhibition
GWF	*1-6	MWRWH-led (Water) sector review; Engagement with DPs & private sector; Learning and sharing of innovations; Children and youth forum
NESCON	*1-6	MLGRD -led sector review; Youth forum Engagement with MMDAs; Exhibition of Products, Innovation etc.
Institution Based Platforms		
CWSA Annual Review	1,2,3,5	Agency performance review
Water Aid Annual Review	1,2,3,5	Institutional Performance review
UNICEF/GOG Annual Review	1,2,3,5	Institutional Performance review
Technical Working Group		
National Technical Working Group on Sanitation (NTWGS)	1,2,5	Policy/Practice dialogue, Coordination
NESPOC	1,2,5	Policy Dialogue on Sanitation
Water and Sanitation Sector Working Group (WSSWG)	1,2,5	Sector Reporting Policy Dialogue on Water and Water related Sanitation & Coordination
Sanitation and Water for All (SWA)	1,2,4,5	Inter-Ministerial Coordination on Sanitation and Water and Hygiene Putting together government commitments Monitoring implementation of GoG & Partners Commitment
High Level Sector Retreat	1,2	GoG Consensus building GoG policy decision making platform (clearing House)
Policy Level Platforms		
MDBS working group	1,2	Funding decisions; Monitoring PAF - agreeing on Targets and Triggers; Negotiations on DP support; Coordination of Aid to ensure Aid effectiveness; Convergent point of all sector groups & Annual review of MDBS
National Policy Fair	*1-6	Dissemination of sector policy and identification interface with other sectors
Stakeholder organisations that normally participate in the respect national level learning platforms are: 1 = GoG Agencies; 2 = DPs; 3 = Private Sector Actors; 4 = Research/Academic Institutions; 5 = NGOs; and 6 = Media		

[8] This list and profile of learning alliance platforms was developed at an IRC Ghana/Triple-S sector stakeholders learning workshop held in June 2013. The format has been modified for this report.

SUB-NATIONAL LEVEL LEARNING ALLIANCE PLATFORMS		
Platform	**Participants**	**Main Focus and Contents**
Northern Region		
Northern Regional Learning Alliance Platform	1,2,3,4,5,8	Learning, sharing and dissemination of WASH Sector innovations, best practices and policy guidelines Uptake and use of knowledge
CWSA Regional Review meeting	1,2,4,5,6	Multi-stakeholder review of WASH sector performance in the region Dissemination of best practices, innovations and guidelines
RICCS	1,2,4	Multi-stakeholder review of performance in the sanitation sub-sector, with a focus on CLTS and ODF initiatives Dissemination and up-take of innovations, guidelines and best practices
IDA Review Meeting	1,2,4,5,6	Project progress review meetings with sector stakeholders
NORST Review meeting	1,4,5,6	Progress review of project with sector stakeholders
WASH Alliance meeting	1,2,3,8	Annual review of performance of sector WASH Alliance initiatives with sector stakeholders; sharing of results of pilots, and planned projects in the following year
UNICEF Review meeting	1,2,4,5,8	Annual review of UNICEF projects and activities, and dissemination of information on UNICEF initiatives in the following year with sector stakeholders
Tamale Learning Festival	1,2,3,4,5,6,8	Used to be organised annually by SNV as a multi-stakeholder learning and sharing platform on WASH sector initiatives in the region Dissemination of policy guidelines, and best practices
District Executive Committee Meeting	5,6,7	Policy and budget decisions on WASH Dissemination of policy guidelines and innovations in the WASH sector
General Assembly Meeting of DAs	1,2,4,5,6,7,8	Sharing of results of pilots and dissemination of learning insights Advocacy on WASH sector priorities
Stakeholders in the Northern Regional Learning Alliance Platforms include the following: 1 = Decision makers (RCC, CWSA, EHSD, MOFA, NADMO, etc.); 2 = Regional Level Networks (WASH Alliance, etc.); 3 = Research Institutions (WRI, UDS, Polytechnics); 4 = Donors (WVI, CRS, Water Aid, UNICEF, SNV); 5 = NGOs (New Energy, Church of Christ); 6 = Service Providers (POs, consultants); 7 = Community Service Providers (Area Mechanics, Spare Parts dealers); 8 = Media		

Platforms	**Participation**	**Main Focus and Contents**
Brong Ahafo Region		
RCC Meetings	1,2,3,4,7,8	Presentation of concepts, sharing and learning of lessons and experience, sharing research findings

CWSA meetings Management meetings Project implementation team meetings	2 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8	Review of project implementation status and sharing and learning on pilot results Dissemination of innovation, guidelines and best practices
District Assembly Meetings General Assembly meetings Executive committee meetings Sub-committee meetings	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8 3 3	Presentation of concepts, sharing and learning of lessons and experiences, and results of pilots Lobbying for WASH sector budgets and resources
Community meetings Durbars	2,3,4,6	Sharing of information, dissemination of best practices and guidelines
Stakeholders in Brong Ahafo Regional Learning Alliances include: 1 = RCC; 2 = CWSA; 3 = DA; 4 = Community; 5 = GWCL; 6 – NGOs & Private Sector; 7 = Academia; 8 = MDAs		

Platforms	Participation	Main Focus and Contents
Volta Region		
Platforms	**Participants**	**Main Focus and Contents**
Regional Interagency Coordinating Committee (RICCS)	1,2, 5, 7, 11	Sharing and learning on sanitation sub-sector project progress review, especially on CLTS and ODF initiatives
CWSA Management Meetings	2	Multi-stakeholder sharing and learning on the performance of the agency and its projects
General Assembly Meetings	3, 7, 11	Presentation of field evidence, Reflection papers and Briefing notes
Executive Committee Meeting	3	Lobbying, Presentations of evidence, Sharing of reflection papers
District Assembly Sub Committee meetings	3	Presentation of evidence from pilots, and lobbying for budget
Solar Disinfection System Management Committee meetings	2, 4, 7	Sharing of pilot results and project progress review
Regional Learning Alliance Platform	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11	Multi-stakeholder sharing and learning of results of pilots, research and best practices Dissemination of policy guidelines, innovations, etc.
Monthly Steering Committee Meetings for WVI/KOICA Project Meeting	2, 3, 4	Presentation of pilot results, and review of project progress reports
Stakeholders in Volta Regional Learning Alliances include: 1 = RCC; 2 = CWSA; 3 = DA & Community; 4 = NGOs/CBOs (Plan Ghana, LTWs, E.P Church, Catholic social services, WVI, GWASH, Water Health, Safe Water Network); 5 = UNICEF; 6 = Academia (UHAS, Ho Ploy and School of Hygiene); 7 = GES (SHEP/GHS; 8 = Department of Women; 9 = GWCL; 10 = PURC; 11 = EHSD		

ANNEX 2: PROFILE OF LEARNING ALLIANCE PLATFORMS IN GHANA WASH SECTOR

PLATFORM & CONVENER / MANAGER	STAKEHOLDERS PARTICIPATING	FOCUS OF LEARNING & INFLUENCE	FINANCING MECHANISM & SUSTAINABILITY	REMARKS ON LEARNING CYCLE
National Level				
National Learning Alliance Platform (NLLAP) Convened and managed by RCN since Oct. 2009 Regularly held every month since October 2009 Well patronised as themes or issues discussed always relate to some key stakeholder groups	All stakeholders of the Sector: CWSA, GWCL, Water Directorate of MWRWH, EHSD of MLGRD, WRC, CONIWAS, NGOs, CSOs, Private Sector, DPs and Media	This platform is for sharing, learning and dissemination of best practices, pilots & case studies, innovations, research results, new technologies, and policy issues to be considered Private sector stakeholders can introduce or market their technologies or service delivery approaches RCN documents the insights and conclusions in the form of various publications and reports that are widely disseminated to sector stakeholders Insights and lessons learnt are used by stakeholders to inform their practice and policy Lessons and insights feed into Mole Conference and other national level platforms Has the potential to be the resourced to serve as the facilitator and home for learning and knowledge management in the WASH sector, that is professional, neutral and co-owned by all sector stakeholders	Financed fully from 2009 – 2012 by IRC-TREND projects Since 2012, staffs and facilities in RCN for facilitating platform and documenting insights and outcomes are paid by IRC Since late 2012 various stakeholders cover the operational cost of hosting the platform (venue, meals, etc.) Financial sustainability is fairly guaranteed if RCN staffs are retained under current arrangements	The main form of learning is "Experiencing" – i.e. sharing and learning related to pilots, best practices, new technologies and other forms of innovations, etc. Occasionally, research results showing analyses of trends and patterns in the sector and innovations based on field practice are also shared and discussed No structure or systematic mechanism exists to follow up with analysis of trends, and for undertaking research into underlying causes, associations and correlations among various variables in the delivery of WASH service.

PLATFORM & CONVENER / MANAGER	STAKEHOLDERS PARTICIPATING	FOCUS OF LEARNING & INFLUENCE	FINANCING MECHANISM & SUSTAINABILITY	REMARKS ON LEARNING CYCLE
Mole Conference Series Convened and managed by CONIWAS on behalf of civil society stakeholders Initiated in 1989 and has been held annually since then at different venues Has been growing in importance and patronage Includes exhibitions and show casing of best practices and technologies	All stakeholders of the Sector: CWSA, GWCL, Water Directorate of MWRWH, EHSD of MLGRD, WRC, CONIWAS, NGOs, CSOs, Private Sector, DPs and Media Has the added patronage of DAs, RCCs and the Media	This remains the most influential citizens-government engagement platform and most effective forum for advocacy on pro-poor policy and practices in the sector It is also for dissemination of lessons learnt as well as being a forum for sector NGOs to review their performance and coordination efforts Varied annual themes and formats are informed by insights and lessons from NLLAP and other learning platforms Has been effective in promoting sanitation and pro-poor aspects of WASH in national agenda Attracted the attention of Ministers and even the Presidency on pro-poor policy in WASH	Financed through proposal writing and leveraging of support from a wide range of stakeholders, including private sector A core group/or working group consisting of a cross-section of stakeholders has given it a sector-wide significance and ownership that almost surely guarantees funding	As an advocacy platform, it is primarily for learning and sharing and dissemination of insights and findings in the WASH sector No systematic mechanism or structure exists for follow up, analysis of trends and research into causes, reasons for improved service delivery, or no-compliance by stakeholders Has the potential to be the national forum for research-based advocacy on pro-poor service delivery
Ghana Water Forum (GWF) Convened and managed by Water Directorate of MWRWH Initiated since 2010 and held annually	All stakeholders of the Sector: CWSA, GWCL, Water Directorate of MWRWH, EHSD of MLGRD, WRC, CONIWAS, NGOs, CSOs, Private Sector, DPs and Media	MWRWH-led (Water) sector agencies' annual performance review and re-prioritisation for the following year It is a high-level sector policy and performance review forum that generates issues for government – DPs negotiations, culminating in a Roundtable for joint commitments for the following year Engagement with private sector for improved service delivery/technology Learning and sharing of innovations and new products/technologies Includes Children and Youth forum used for education and advocacy	This platform is heavily dependent on donor-funding, making its sustainability a bit uncertain GoG financing for the platform is increasing slowly, but still relatively low	Primarily a sharing and learning forum on performance reviews of sector agencies Has an untapped / un-utilised potential to be a forum for sharing results of trend analysis, field-based policy analysis, and research results on causes of successes and challenges in WASH sector service delivery

PLATFORM & CONVENER / MANAGER	STAKEHOLDERS PARTICIPATING	FOCUS OF LEARNING & INFLUENCE	FINANCING MECHANISM & SUSTAINABILITY	REMARKS ON LEARNING CYCLE
National Environmental Sanitation Conference (NESCON) Convened and managed by EHSD of MLGRD Initiated in 2000 and met twice since then (in 2010 & 2011)	All stakeholders of the Sector: CWSA, GWCL, Water Directorate of MWRWH, EHSD of MLGRD, WRC, CONIWAS, NGOs, CSOs, Private Sector, DPs and Media Has the added patronage of MMDAs	MLGRD/EHSD-led annual sanitation sub-sector performance review and re-prioritisation for the following year High-level focus on sanitation sub-sector policy and program impact A forum for the exhibition of products, best practices, pilot results, innovations and technologies Serves as forum for Private sector-GoG engagement Policy considerations are fed unto this platform from NESPOCC and NTWGS	This platform does not have secure funding. It could not be held in 2013 and 2014, primarily because donor-funds were not forth coming. Its sustainability is highly uncertain at the moment	As a forum for learning and sharing on sanitation, NESPOC serves as a crucial national focal structure where stakeholders can learn, share, disseminate and take up research results, best practices and policy guidelines. It does not as yet serve as a forum for consciously tracking trends and patterns in service delivery the sub-sector
CWSA Annual Review Convened and managed by CWSA Initiated 1995/6 as part of a systematic learning and KM system that has collapsed due to financial constraints and institutional neglect	All stakeholders of the Sector: CWSA, GWCL, Water Directorate of MWRWH, EHSD of MLGRD, WRC, CONIWAS, NGOs, CSOs, Private Sector, DPs and Media	Currently focused on performance reviews of projects/programs the agency is implementing with various donors and DPs.		

PLATFORM & CONVENER / MANAGER	STAKEHOLDERS PARTICIPATING	FOCUS OF LEARNING & INFLUENCE	FINANCING MECHANISM & SUSTAINABILITY	REMARKS ON LEARNING CYCLE
Regional Level				
Northern Regional Learning Alliance Platform (NRLAP) Hosted by CWSA/Triple-S Established in February 2013 and has met 5 times Addresses rural water and water-related sanitation issues Still attracting potential members to join	All stakeholders of the WASH Sector at the regional level. So far over 15 member organisations, including (e.g. CWSA, GWCL, SNV, WASH Alliance, UNICEF, WVI, Water Aid, RCC, and East Gonja DA)	Sharing and learning of results of pilots, and field research implemented by various stakeholders WASH issues that are important for regional level stakeholders Dissemination of guidelines, standards and service delivery approaches Uptake of best practices and successful pilot cases	Currently financed by Triple-S Budget Template has been agreed and used to enable other stakeholders to bear the cost of the meetings Still exploring ways of sustaining the financing of the platform	Learning remains at the level of experience sharing UNICEF and SNV have taken up successful pilots from East Gonja D that were shared on the platform and up-scaled it to 12 other Das Trend analysis is not yet done
Brong Ahafo Regional Learning Alliance Platform (BARLAP) Hosted by CWSA / Triple-S Established in July 2013, and have met twice since then	All stakeholders of the WASH sector at regional level: (e.g. CWSA, GWCL, WRC, Media, DAs and local NGOs)	Sharing and learning of results of pilots, and field research implemented by various stakeholders WASH issues that are important for regional level stakeholders Dissemination of guidelines, standards and service delivery approaches Uptake of best practices and successful pilot cases	Financed almost fully by Triple-S, making sustainability uncertain Initial steps are being taken to write proposals to private sector and DP stakeholders for funds	Learning remains at "Experiencing" stage Realisation that GoG programs and NGOs are by-passing agreed procedures and guidelines for water supply services
Volta Regional Learning Alliance Platform (RLAP) Hosted by CWSA Established in 2013, and met 3 times	All stakeholders of the WASH sector at regional level: (e.g. CWSA, GWCL, WRC, Media, DAs and local NGOs)	Sharing of results of pilot research in Assets management, service monitoring and full life cycle cost Membership is still growing and seek to share pertinent regional issue in WASH	Financing beyond Triple-S is not certain yet	Membership is still picking up, making the dominant learning remain at information sharing

ANNEX 3: CHANGES INFLUENCED BY LEARNING PLATFORMS

Sector Level Changes	Learning Platform That Influenced The Change
CLTS accepted by stakeholders including donors & development partners. We were discussing policy etc., but at NESCON we got the opportunity to hear from the community and this changed the perception of donors and government on CLTS	NESCON 1 & 2
Micro-finance – from the sharing and leading we realise micro finance is possible for some communities.	NESCON 2
Urban & Small town CLTS - it was piloted and we shared how it works and stakeholders were informed.	NLLAP
Household Water Treatment and safe storage (HWTS) – is a new concept in the last 2 years. This was promoted and shared at the NTWGS.	NTWGS
National CLTS stock taking forum is another active platform, which has been running for 2 years now.	
Coordination – At the national level, EHSD has been able to improve it coordination of actors in the sector through these platforms. They are able to call actors to share what they are doing in the sector and have others learn from it. This is reduction the turf wars that was typical of the sector.	NTWGS
EHSD Annual Review – Policy and implementation. This is platform where we invite the MDAs and	EHSD Annual Reviews
Water Policy recognising access to water as a social right and also an economic good	Mole Conference
Adoption of hand-dug wells as viable sources for potable water delivery in Ghana. And debating the issue of 5% community contributions to capital cost.	Mole Conference
Raising the profile of sanitation and establishing sanitation as a major development and political issue.	Mole Conference
Standardisation of hand pumps and mechanised bore holes	CWSA Annual Reviews
Production of guidelines and manuals in the sector and their dissemination to stakeholder	NLLAP and Mole Conference
FLOW Technology in service monitoring	CWSA stakeholder reflection meetings
Full life cycle cost as a framework for budgeting	WASH Cost Progress review meetings
Sustainability and functionality indicators more measuring coverage	Triple S project review meetings
Increase in GoG funding levels for the sector	SWA, GWF

ANNEX 4: NORTHERN REGIONAL LEARNING ALLIANCE PLATFORM

The Triple-S/CWSA project spearheaded the establishment of a regional learning alliance platform in the Northern Region in February 2013 with support from RCN. The purpose is to promote learning, sharing and sector dialogue on WASH. An eleven-member Core Group was also constituted and charged with managing the day-to-day affairs of the platform. They are made up of the following organisations and their representatives:

1. CWSA – Regional Director and/or his Deputy
2. Mr. Jeremiah Atengdem- TRIPLE-S,
3. Ms. Rita Ambadire-SNV
4. Mr. Eric Chimsi- WASH ALLIANCE
5. Mr. Steve Adongo-UNICEF
6. Ms. Martha Tia-Adjei- EHSD
7. Ms. Bernedette Kafari- SHEP, GES
8. Dr. Clifford Braimah-Dept. of Engineering, Tamale- Polytechnic.
9. Mr. David Nunoo-World Vision
10. Mr. Sulaiman Issah-Bello-WaterAid in Ghana
11. Ghana WATSAN Journalist Network-Northern Region Branch.

At the time of the study in April 2014, the platform had held five learning sessions covering pertinent sector issues in the region The first meeting under the theme *"Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) knowledge management through the learning alliance approach*" was sponsored by SNV. The second meeting under the theme *"Application of functionality and service monitoring framework in East Gonja district: Lessons and Experiences*" was sponsored by CWSA/Triple-S. The third meeting under the theme *"Findings of functionality and service monitoring in 8 I-WASH project districts"* was sponsored by CWSA/UNICEF. The fourth meeting under the theme *"Trends and Patterns in Water Service Delivery: Findings from Second Round of Functionality and Service Monitoring and Baseline Household Survey of Water User's Satisfaction of Water Services in East Gonja District*" was sponsored by CWSA/Triple-S. The fifth meeting was on Behaviour change communication and was sponsored by a stakeholder from the national level. It can be seen from this development that though CWSA is hosting the platform and serving as its Secretariat it does not dictate the topic to be discussed, but rather serves as one of the stakeholders. All stakeholders in a meeting agreed upon the topics and the list is revised regularly at the platform meetings.

Membership and participation on the platform is still growing. It is envisaged that all stakeholders in the region, including the DAs would join the learning alliance. The average participation for the five meetings has been 25 participants. The learning process at the NRLAP has been that organisations that are implementing projects or undertaking action research in the districts come to the regional learning platform to share their experiences. Discussions and insights are then shared. Good products or results are then acknowledged and offered for adoption by other stakeholders. Through this process the following have been achieved through the NRLAP:

- Functionality and service monitoring has been scaled up to 12 additional districts in Northern Region with support from UNICEF and SNV
- The regional office in collaboration with Upper East Office, with support from SNV, is working with 2 district assemblies in Upper East to collect baseline functionality and service levels data

- The regional Office is exploring potential partnerships with World Vision and CRS on how to support districts to carry out water quality testing and analysis

Outside the normal project funds, it is not envisaged that CWSA will be able to allocate funds to sponsor the continued meeting of the stakeholders. This is because CWSA has had difficulty with funding from the government of Ghana. Therefore, for the long-term sustainability of the platform, it will be astute for stakeholders to finance their own attendance. The risk is that with time attendance will dwindle or rise based on interest. Currently though, the NRLAP stakeholders seem to agree that lack of funds should not hinder them meeting regularly to share and learn on the NRLAP. At the regional level, the platform is funded by whoever is coming to share (provide snack and water). They come to share for validation, for input, and for learning. There is a budget template, which is shared to allow stakeholders to pay for the meeting.

Typically, sanitation issues are discussed separately in the RICCS under the auspices of the CLTS/ODF project. As a result, learning and information on one platform is not systematically linked to each other. Normally, EHSD handles issues pertaining to solid and liquid waste, while CWSA is involved with water related sanitation. So unless, water issues come up at the RICCS, it is not discussed. In this regard, the NRLAP is ahead of the other regional platforms because it is open to any WASH issues.

The major concern for the NRLAP is how to get the districts to participate. As the prospect of NRLAP grows, it will become difficult to sponsor other districts to come and share on NRLAP the activities that are ongoing in their districts. Currently, East Gonja District Assembly has been able to attend a couple of meetings and has successfully taken up service monitoring and LCCA and included WASH into their budgeting albeit government cash in-flow has not been forthcoming. Interestingly, the motivation for attending the NRLAP will continue if stakeholders learn something new and relevant to their communities and districts in which they work in.

Suggestion for the way forward towards improving the learning alliance and the platform include:

a. That management should be able to create a desk office from CWSA Regional office for collecting and selecting information desirable for partners and be able attract some attention and interest when presentation was made.
b. WASH Alliance agreed to support the NRLAP programme in collaboration of other stakeholders like CWSA but called for a bigger forum for the commitment to be confirmed.
c. SNV unofficially pledged to continue to support the NRLAP programme but the representative requested that a follow up to the Country Director was of essence to validate and reinforce the outcome.
d. WaterAid representative asked that he could not make any commitment unless Management was consulted. Therefore, the RLF was tasked to follow up on that.

ANNEX 5: EAST GONJA DISTRICT ALLIANCE PLATFORM

At the district level, Triple-S and CWSA have collaborated with the East Gonja District Assembly to pioneer the establishment of a District Learning Alliance Platform for WASH. The district level learning platform has met once since it was established in early 2013. Meanwhile the DA structures (the expanded DPCU, Executive Committee and the General Assembly) have been exposed to the service monitoring framework and full life cycle cost research results conducted in the district. Some of the effects of this learning process are that:

- There has been an improvement in the capture of water related activities in the revised Water and Sanitation Plan, DACF, DDF and Composite budgets of the district
- This approach was commended by the RCC and has since served as a template to other districts in the region to emulate.
- Allocation for water activities in the DACF budget increased from Ghc60,000 in 2012 to Ghc138,000 in 2013 after the sharing of findings from the first round of service monitoring. An allocation of Ghc 64,000 was made in the DDF budget for the water sector
- Out of the GHc 60,000 budgeted for investments in the water sector in the DACF, more than half of the amount had been utilised in the areas of procurement of a water pump for the Salaga Water System, rehabilitation of three broken down boreholes and training of Salaga Town Water and Sanitation Management Team
- Monitoring data has informed remedial actions undertaken alone by the District Assembly or in partnership with other organisations. For example the repair of three broken down boreholes by the District Assembly and another 10 with support from Humanity First, a local NGO
- The district has partnered SNV to train six Area Mechanics; and also partnering with CWSA under SRWSP to rehabilitate broken down boreholes and the Salaga Small Town Water System

With regard to ownership and participation in district learning processes, the study found that in East Gonja, any of the stakeholders could call a meeting to address a particular issue in the WASH sector. Triple-S does not necessarily convene meetings. The district had a platform to convene stakeholders but it died out after donor funding ended. The way to sustain meetings is to avoid having too frequent and regularised meetings. People would not attend, because they are too busy with their regular jobs. But if there are important issues and interests are aroused people will attend. Part of the challenge is that we cannot have too many meeting because it drives down participation. This way, the budget, finance, planning, environmental health and other WASH sector officers of the DA can meet twice in a year with other external stakeholders (with their own contributions) to share and learn at a common platform on WASH issues. The district would be able to budget for this, and it would not be too much for the various parties. In the East Gonja District Assembly budget for the WASH sector in 2014, three learning meetings have been budgeted for 2014. Besides, the technocrats, the Assembly level officials have equally been informed of WASH sector priorities through the executive committee meetings. They have been sensitised and indeed they passed the budget. The most critical issue here is that central government does not release funds on time and in the anticipated amounts; thereby creating problems of implementation.

The following statements from members of the DA team participating in the DLAP provide further insights on what the see as the benefits or usefulness of the platform:

"Yes, there's evidence that NGOs in the WASH sector in East Gonja have used the information provided by the DA for their operations. For instance, Choice Ghana looked at the WASH situation in the district and the number of boreholes for the community and we noticed that Salaga area had a lot of water crisis. Choice Ghana did their own fieldwork and came out with data. Originally, the main purpose of the fieldwork was to assess the extent of water service delivery in the East Gonja DA (this was sponsored by IBIS). And we had consultative meeting with the members of the District Assembly. At the meeting the assemblymen indicated that there was no water flowing from the water facilities provided. Based on this information we rehabilitated the broken down boreholes and now the situation is better.

"At a meeting with East Gonja District Civil Society Associations (EGOCSA) and Choice Ghana, the DA indicated to them that the indicators they got from the fieldwork they conducted do not fall in line with the standard that have been set by the DA (with support from CSA and Triple S). So we advised them to pick up the data and indicators set by the DA, so that they look at the gaps, which they can work with instead of reinventing priorities and indicators. They agreed and came and picked the baseline data. Initially Choice Ghana wanted to assess the water quality in Salaga Township (Kpembe); but they changed their focus after meeting with the DA WASH team.

With regard to how the DA is coordinating with stakeholders who do not come through the DA before drilling boreholes, and providing other WASH services in the communities, the study obtained the following responses:

- *There are district laws that guide enforcement. The laws dictate that the contractor has to meet all the standards as a service provider*
- *The district gets private people to comply because the assemblymen will call the DA to inform them if any NGO or private people are doing anything in their community. Also some of the private owners are just not aware that drilling a borehole is not enough; and that there needs to be tests on water quality, etc. conducted before use.*
- *This therefore means that Assemblymen, Unit Committees should be sensitised on these activities so they can be informed and can act as cross check in the communities.*
- *The challenge for the district is how to track such NGOs and service providers who fail to comply*
- *Assembly meetings are held three times a year and can serve as another platform to sensitise the officials.*
- *Area mechanics are also a good reference and information source for the DA on on-going projects.*
- *Sometimes CWSA Regional violates their process. CWSA regional has contracted a contractor to do work in the district without finalising with the DA. Weak supervision by CWSA Regional makes contractors to short-chain the rules and process.*

An on-going challenge facing the newly established DLAP is how to encourage and motivate more local NGOs in the district to participate in the platform meetings, so as to learn about approved guidelines and service delivery standards and approaches. This way it would be easier to ensure they comply with national standards for WASH service delivery. Another challenge is that it was assumed the District Assembly would have a budget line to support these meetings since they know the value of learning. However, the district assembly also has

difficulties getting funds from the central government to sustain such a platform. So essentially, at the district level there is not as yet a DA-sponsored learning platform; rather the DLAP is project-based and they come to the regional level platform to share.

Some recommendations on how to improve learning in the East Gonja district are:

a. The DA could liaise more with the East Gonja Civil Society Association (EGOCSA) to convene meetings with partners to inform them, and also find out what CSOs are doing in the districts. This way the DA and all EGOCSA members can inform each other on work in WASH and where CSOs can channel their resources and also write proposals to leverage funds (from IBIS, Water Aid, etc.)
b. CSOs could also be engaged as advocates on social issues using data already collected by the District Assembly. The challenge for CSOs is that sometimes because of their advocacy responsibility, they are unable to partner with the Das, as they see the DA as being responsible for the problem. Some education and information sharing would address these challenges
c. EGOCSA is having slight issues with active participation of its partners and support could be channelled to them to enable them work on enhancing the role of CSOs and partnership with DA for learning and coordination
d. Two times a year, the district organises town hall meetings for public accountability. This is also an opportunity for CSOs to find out what DA is doing.

ANNEX 6: BRONG AHAFO REGIONAL LEARNING ALLIANCE PLATFORM

The Brong Ahafo Regional Learning Alliance Platform (BARLAP) is relatively new. It started on 4th July 2013 and was attended by a few stakeholders. At the time of the study (February 2014), the platform had met twice; but the persons from the institutions represented had changed and some did not have any knowledge of the maiden platform meeting and subsequent meetings. In these two meetings, participants learnt about: sector guidelines and standards, especially the framework for water service monitoring and functionality tracking; the need to move from facility provision towards service monitoring; full life cycle cost involved in delivering sustainable water services.

The BARLAP was too new to get lessons learnt from the service monitoring orientation that stakeholders were taken through. However, some stakeholders admitted that the BARLAP provides coordination and keeps participating stakeholders informed on the procedure and guidelines. For example, they have learnt that they are to contact DA before doing anything in the communities. The challenge for Brong Ahafo is that the LAP has not attracted all the stakeholders and many are still trying to come on board. At the time of the study, it was not fully decided among the stakeholders how the BARLAP was going to be sustained after Triple-S; although many admitted to its necessity. Some stakeholders noted that the platform provided an opportunity to network/learn from other sectors and other stakeholders (environmental, health, sanitation, etc.).

For CWSA, the platform gave them the opportunity to know who works in WASH sector in the region. Initially, the assumption was that NGOs know what to do but now through the platform, CWSA engages NGOs to give them the standards and what is expect in WASH sector. Through the platform, CWSA is aware of the stakeholders in the sector including educational institutions, mining sector and private sector. BARLAP is unique because the media forms part of the group.

Concerning the sustainability of the BARLAP, it was decided that the only way to survive after the end of the Triple S project was for stakeholders to source funding from the mining and other big companies like Cadbury in the region. They decided to hold further meetings to develop this idea and assign some members of the alliance to lead in proposal writing to source funds.

ANNEX 7: SUNYANI WEST DISTRICT LEARNING ALLIANCE PLATFORM

Triple-S and CWSA facilitated the establishment of the District Learning Alliance Platform (DLAP) in Sunyani West in July 2013. A core group comprising 5 members was also established, with the Secretariat of the DLAP at the Sunyani West District Assembly. The DA has used the platform to disseminate findings from the service monitoring surveys. The effect of the DLAP is that influenced the budgeting and allocation of funds for WASH related issues in the composite budget. It was clear that between the budget officer, the Works engineer and the planning officer at the district level, that all the necessary WASH costs were captured to enable the district set up management teams in the communities to manage the water services post construction. The district officers admitted that it has improved the service delivery in some communities. The district assembly was however limited by lack of available funds from central government. Through the composite budget, they could ring fence the funds from DACF and DDF for WASH.

Some further effects of learning in the district include:

- Appreciation of the concept of service delivery approach among the district staff and other sector stakeholders
- Increased budgetary allocations under IGF and DDF since 2013, mainly to improve water service levels: Allocations from the DDF is GHC25,000.00; and from the DACF it is GHC43,367.00
- Creation of budget line for DWD activities for the first time with an amount of GHC20,000.00
- Financial support for third round service monitoring; an allocation of GHC929.00
- Meeting with operators of limited mechanised boreholes to regularise their activities according to CWSA norms
- District commitment to addressing the findings from the service monitoring surveys:
    - 2013 and 2014 WASH Action Plans were revised to reflect findings from service monitoring;
    - DA has budgeted for technical assessment and rehabilitation of all broken down boreholes
    - Following the service monitoring nine (9) hand pumps have been rehabilitated
- Appreciation for the need for learning and coordination of activities of WASH sector NGOs in the district
- Inclusion of service monitoring and asset management in the DWSP (2014-17)
- Budget lines are being looked at for DLAP activities
- Leveraged corporate sponsorship for improving water service levels (re-constitute WSMTs and repair of broken hand pumps

The statements below speak to some of what the DA requires to make the DLAP more effective:

- *"The learning platform has allowed us to pull in line and collaborate, and to tell each other the things that are standardised. The DA officials and the Assembly members meet at General Assembly meetings, where we get them to alert the people about getting in touch with DA."*
- *"Communities are learning to contact the DA before construction starts."*
- *"We need a strong position backed by the approved operational manuals, guidelines and the LI to partner with private sector, NGO, faith based organisations properly."*

ANNEX 8: VOLTA REGIONAL LEARNING ALLIANCE PLATFORMS

The VRLAP started in 2013 and had held 3 meetings as at the time of the study. In March 2013 the platform had its maiden meeting where the stakeholders tasked CWSA to be the secretariat to document the minutes of the platform. There is a core group made up of: EHSD, CWSA, SHEP, School of Hygiene (under Ministry of Health), Plan Ghana and EDSAM. And they have met twice since March 2013. The initial meetings were to prepare for the larger stakeholder learning alliance meetings including how to sell the DLAP idea to stakeholders, generate interest and participation. The second meeting was held when TREND brought the TAF (Technology Applicability Framework) initiative to share with VRLAP. TAF took the stakeholders through indicators for accepting technologies (technology assessment). The training of stakeholder on technology assessment was helpful, as it has had the effect of raising awareness on the usefulness of certain technologies in the WASH sector. TREND used the training to obtain inputs and for improving the technologies.

Beside the VRLAP as a platform for learning, there is the annual stocktaking forum hosted by EHSD. Then there is the annual and midyear review of CLTS which is related to a sanitation project. The CLTS meetings are a multi-stakeholder platform. Also, Plan Ghana has a platform where other organisations from selected communities meet to share and learn. It was held three times in 2013 and two times in 2012. The focus of the meeting has been to assess progress of work in the communities and share ideas about how project is being implemented and its impact. There is no clear transfer of knowledge from the Plan Ghana review meetings unto the VRLAP meetings or vice versa. Also, there is no documentation of patterns and trends, perhaps because it is relatively new.

Furthermore, there is no transfer of knowledge or learning within the organisations represented on the platform. As a result, institutions though represented on the VRLAP act in an ad-hoc manner, because persons on the VRLAP are not decision makers, nor do they report back to decision makers. This is one of the main challenges of the VRLAP. Some of the effects of the platform as indicated by participants who were interviewed are:

- Improvement in knowledge of staff on functionality tracking and water service monitoring using the new framework
- Improvement in the capacity of staff to analyze service monitoring data
- Staff accepting the need to move away from counting numbers of facilities to monitoring of water services
- Staff have the capacity to support districts plan and budget for WASH service delivery using Life Cycle Cost Approach
- Staff are able to effectively support Districts to use service monitoring data to develop infrastructure assets register for WASH facilities

In terms of sustainability of the platform, stakeholders agreed that the only way forward was to have a budget template to guide what stakeholders have to pay to share on the platform. CWSA was willing to serve as a host but it was not feasible in the near future to consider monetary allocations for learning from CWSA budget. Because CLTS is a nationwide priority now, UNICEF/GoG is funding it. Also, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation funds Plan Ghana to hold stakeholders meetings. So these platforms are competing with VRLAP. At the regional level, RCC have a meeting but WASH issues are not shared there. It is difficult to get space to share WASH issues at that meeting.

ANNEX 9: AKATSI DISTRICT LEARNING ALLIANCE PLATFORM

At the district level, the Akatsi South district learning alliance platform had just started about a month prior to the time of the study. There was therefore very little to report as activities or outcomes of the learning platform.

In spite of this the study learnt that through the work of Triple-S, the District Assembly had been educating the Water Boards to meet regularly and also comply with the guidelines and standard operating practice set out for the Water Boards. Through this learning and sharing, and the training on service monitoring the DA has been working to address the issue of proper staffing and establishing proper accounts for the management and maintenance of the water systems. Also, the training has led to more accountability by the water management team to the community. For instance, initially they had only one account for the water management. Now through the engagement with Triple S, they have rectified that and established the required three separate accounts.

For the district assembly, the training has led to increases in budgetary allocations for WASH related issues. Through the composite budgeting, WASH is separated and funds are dedicated for water and sanitation in the district. It has also led to more consultation among the Works Department, the Planning and Budget officers of the district assembly. It was evident that the training on LCCA and service monitoring was helpful to the district assembly and the community.

On sustainable financing of the DLAP, the study found that members of the learning alliance expected the DA to be responsible. After some deliberations the DA took responsibility to ring fence funds for WASH related issues. The challenge, however, is that often the Central government does not release the DACF and other funds for the DA on time and in the expected amounts, making it difficult for the DA to implement its plans.

ANNEX 10: LIST OF PERSONS AND GROUPS INTERVIEWED DURING THE STUDY

List of Individuals Engaged in Dialogues:

1. Abu Wumbei – RCN
2. Emmanuel Gaze – CWSA
3. Harold Esseku – Consultant, World Bank
4. Patrick Apoya – Sky Fox
5. Vida Duti and Veronica Ayi Bonte – IRC and Triple-S
6. Kwaku Quansah – EHSD, MLGRD
7. Mr. Demedeme – EHSD, MLGRD
8. Kwabena Gyasi-Duku – Water Directorate, MWRWH
9. Harold Clottey – Water Directorate, MWRWH
10. Rita Amdadire – SNV, Northern Region
11. Jeremiah Atengdem – Triple S, Regional Learning Facilitator
12. John Aduakye – Deputy Director, CWSA Northern Region
13. Mr. E. F. Boateng – Director, CWSA Brong Ahafo Region
14. Mrs. Mabel Taylor – Extension Services, CWSA Brong Ahafo Region
15. Wigbert Y. Dogoli – Director, CWSA Volta Region
16. Eugene Larbi - TREND

Focus Groups Engaged in Dialogues

1. Focus Group Discussions with East Gonja District Learning Alliance Platform on Triple S Learning Research		
Name	**Organisation**	**Position**
Bakari Ibrahim	Choice Ghana	Project Coordinator
Khalid Abubakar Giwah	EGDA	DPO
Bashiru Shahadu	EGDA	DWST Team leader
Yakubu Mohammed	EGDA	District Budget Officer
Kotoku Godwin	CWSA	Extension Specialist
James Dehana	EHU	DEHO
Iddrisu Rauf	EGOCSA	Project Officer
Dauladi Anaba	EHU	
Abdul-Karim Y Iddrisu	EGDA	DCD
Jeremiah Atengdem	Triple S/CWSA	RCF

2. Focus Group Discussion with Brong Ahafo Regional Learning Alliance Platform on Triple S Learning Research		
Name	**Institution**	**Position**
Nana Osei Kyeretwie	Ghana News Agency	Editor
Kwame Asiedu Marfo	Daily Graphic	Editor
Rhoda Donkoh	GWCL	Assistant HR Officer
Piontus Nimwiiri	MIHOSO International	AAC M&E
Peter Subaab	CSD	Director
John Baidoo	Sustainable Development Focus	CEO
Justice J Stephen	African Assistance Plan	Programme coordinator
Frank Tsidzi	CWSA	ITS
Matilda Birago-Djan	Access to Development Foundation	Administrator
Eunice Ofori-Attah	Map International	Project Assistant
H. Mensah Akrutteh	GWCL	QA manager
Ben Agbemor	CWSA	RLF
E. F. Boateng	CWSA	Regional Director

3. Focus Group Discussion with Sunyani West District Learning Alliance Platform on

Triple S Learning Research		
Name	**Institution**	**Position**
Benjamin Asante	SWDA	DBA
Daniel Nnebini N	SWDA	ADPO
George Amertey	CWSA	ESS
Kwasi Owusu Mintah	SWDA	District Planning officer
Kyei Asare-Bediako	SWDA	Water Engineer

4. Focus Group Discussion with Akatsi South District Learning Alliance Platform on Triple S Learning Research		
Name	**Designation**	**Institution**
Seth Kwame Damasah	Water Engineer	ASDA
Enkson Dennis A.	IAU	ASDA
Daniel Y Gidi	Secretary	Akatsi Water and Sanitation Development
Hopey Adawuso	Secretary	Lume Avete
Kwami Syrer Agbadeku	Chairman	Dagbamate
Paul Atkli	Ghana Health Service	GHS
Daver Samuel	Schedule Officer	ASDA
Chimbar Tom	RLF	Triple S
Famous Matsi	Chairman	Water Board
Lydia Deglor	ABA	ASDA
Majors Ndurinnon	Administration	Ghana Fire Service
Lawrence Senya	Ass. DEHO	ASDA
Batinge Pmelu	HDUB	ASDA

5. Focus Group discussion with Volta Regional Learning Alliance Platform on Triple S Learning Research		
Name	**Designation**	**Organisation**
Constant K Dzakpasu	SHEP	GES
Emmanuel Agbesi Foli	PR & EA officer	PURC
Fiagbenu Anastasia	Assistant Project Manager	CHAUFRA
Bosumkui Felix	VR CLTS Coordinator	EHSD, Ho
Chimbar Tom L.	RLF	Triple S
Rev. John Nkum	Consultant	Nkum Associates
Kwame Nkum	Consultant	Nkum Associates
Oscar Ahanyu	ESS	VR CWSA
Abodoo Elvis	CLTS Contractor	Plan Ghana
V. K. Darkey-Mensah	Director	Edsam
Smile Ametsi-Do	Tutor	School of Health
P. Dwamena-Boateng	RPM	GWCL
Bismarck B. Friko	ITS	CWSA
Wigbert Y. Dogoli	Regional Director	CWSA

6. Focus Group Discussion with DP Sector Working Group on Triple S Learning Research Attended by Representative the Following Organisations
UNICEF
Water Aid
CIDA
AFD
IRC