

Challenges of the Implementation of Water and Sanitation Projects in Gushegu District

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Abstract

Achieving the goal and objectives of projects implemented remains the desire of project decision makers in the Gushegu district. The Gushegu district assembly in collaboration with the development partners have implemented water and sanitation projects in most of the communities in the district. However, many of these projects have not achieved their desired objective of ensuring availability of water and good sanitation due to varied challenges. There are many people especially in the rural areas in the district who still do not have access to drinking water all year-round while others are still living in very poor environment condition after decades of interventions in the area of water and sanitation.

This research sort to uncover the main challenges of the implementation of these important projects aimed at leveraging the people from poverty and disease in the Gushegu district of the northern region of Ghana.

The study found that inadequate commitment level of project staffs, lack of involvement of the project beneficiaries in planning and decision-making process and some cultural beliefs system of the people of Gushegu challenges the successes of the water and sanitation project implementations. Also, inadequate financial resources on the part of the Gushegu district assembly and unpredictable funds flow from the development partners as well weak monitoring of the planned implementation challenged the successes of the water and sanitation projects in the districts.

Therefore, the Gushegu district assembly, the development partner in the water and sanitation area, the community members who are the direct beneficiaries needs to work towards behaviour change and re-examine the institutional partnership to succeed in these projects.

Keywords: Sanitation, implementation, water challenges.

Introduction

Water and sanitation planning at the district level remains the responsibility of the Gushegu district assembly. Under the section 10 of the local government act of the 1993, Act 462, the district assemblies (DAs) have been assigned the key roles as managers and planners of the overall socio-economic development of communities within their jurisdictions. The preparation of the district water and sanitation plan (DWSP) is a requirement by water and sanitation (WATSAN) sub-sector players so as to facilitate the implementation of WATSAN activities using the Gushegu district assembly resources. The Gushegu district assembly have been trained and assisted to prepare and implement the water and sanitation plan. The district received a lot of interventions from both local and international NGOs over the past decades in the area of water and sanitation. These interventions geared towards ensuring the availability of water for households and good sanitation in the Gushegu district. The impact water and sanitation projects make on beneficiaries are significant in the district. Notwithstanding this, the implementation of the DWSPs over the years has been fraught with considerable challenges. This research work discusses the challenges and makes recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of DWSPs in the Gushegu district to improve the water and sanitation situation. Undoubtedly, access to potable water and safe sanitation is a pre-requisite for sustained human development.

Methods

In the first stage, the participatory approach was used to conduct the study. This approach involved the participation of some important players in the Gushegu district such as WASH project managers, project stakeholders, the community youth and beneficiaries throughout the research, right from entry

and development of research instruments and tools, to the actual research and report preparation. Data collection techniques employed in the research included interviews and administration of semi-structured questionnaires.

The study used the purposive and convenience sampling techniques to select respondents.

The first phase of the study involved meetings and discussions with key personnel in water and sanitation project intervention areas on the challenges associated with the implementation of the projects. The purpose of the meetings and discussions was to gain first-hand information from persons with practical knowledge in water and sanitation project management so as to compile a comprehensive data to undertake the research. This helped in preparing the research tools and instruments. The meeting was held for 15 individuals from different background whose contributions led to the successful development of research tools.

The second phase involved administration of research instruments (questionnaires) to both junior and senior staff of various organizations into water and sanitation, interview of stakeholders as well as the water and sanitation project beneficiaries on the research topic. A total of 250 individuals were involved at this stage of data collection.

This research was carried out in the Gushegu Township and some four (4) bigger villages within the district: Gaa, Katinga, Yawungu and Bulugu.

Data and information collected from the field were analyzed to bring out consistencies between different sets of data in order to draw meaningful conclusions. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data collected. The first task of the data analysis was to 'display' the data i.e. put them in an organized form in order to facilitate cross-referencing of findings and aggregation of data. This made it possible for quantification of key responses to the questions asked.

Some initial data cleaning, information gathering, and analysis were carried out at various stages of the data collection exercise to fill in gaps that emerged during the initial analysis to allow cycling forth between thinking about the existing data and generation of new strategies for collecting new data.

Results

Gender consideration

In managing water and sanitation projects in a developing district like Gushegu, issues of gender are very important because of the increasing campaigns for gender equality. The study seeks to understand the gender representation in water and sanitation projects implementations in the Gushegu district. Data collected revealed that 133 persons (53.2%) involved in the water and sanitation projects implementations in the district were males and 117 persons (46.8%) females. The results appears to be good because some women are involved in the implementation water and sanitation project activities, but I think there is the need for extra work to be done to close the gap between the male and female representation in project implementations in the district because of its sensitiveness. This would in part offer women the opportunity to play more meaningful roles on project implementation.

Sources of water for household use

The research sort to establish the main sources of water for the people of Gushegu district. The data gathered indicated that a total of 51 respondents (20.4%) derive their water from community dam, 97 (38.8%) regards the boreholes as their source water, and 49 (19.6%) said the hand dug wells are the source of their water. Also 20 (8%) responded that pipes are the sources of water to them while 33 (13.2%) mentioned streams/rivers as their source of water. This means that though majority of the people draw water from the borehole for their household use, there are many others in the district who derives their water from unsafe sources for household consumption. This should be a concern to many people especially development partners who invested a lot of monetary and other resources towards they provision of portable water in the rural communities in the district.

Sources of drinking water in Gushegu

Though the 2010 population and housing census report for the Gushegu district indicated that the sources of water that majority of the households depend on are: borehole/pump/tube well (55.1%) river/stream (16.2%), the data gathered by this research work shows that a total of 99 respondents

(39.6%) drinks from community dams, 50 (20%) relies on the boreholes as their source drinking water, and 53 (21.2%) uses water from the hand dug wells drinking. The results further indicates that 21 (8.4%) uses pipe water for drinking and 27 (10.8%) finds their drinking water from the streams/rivers. The results informed the researcher that although majority of the people in the research area derived water from the boreholes for household usage, the dams are rather main source of drinking water. This prompted the researcher to prop further to establish the reason why the community dams are the referred source of drinking water instead of the boreholes provided. From the interview with community leaders on the reason why some people do not drink from the borehole, they responded that the borehole water as well as the pipe water does not have good taste compared to the dam water. Hence, they consider those water sources as artificial which their tradition does not permit them to use such water for drinking, pouring of libation or preparation of food for the ancestors. The women also indicated that they are not able to preserve their food more a day when they use water from the borehole and pipes to cook. It is therefore clear to conclude that belief systems and tradition were considered seriously during the planning stage for the water and sanitation projects in the communities.

Households have sufficient drinking

The research also sort to find out how sufficient water is to the residents of the Gushegu district by asking the respondents. 20% of the respondents (50) stated that they have sufficient water for their household use all year round, 27.2% (63) has sufficient water only during the rainy season and 40.8% (102) has sufficient water for only 9 months period. However, 30 respondents representing 12% do have sufficient water all year round. It is clear from the data presentation that water situation in the Gushegu district is very challenging since high number of household do not have access to water throughout the year.

Toilet facilities

The majority of households (84.0%) have no toilet facilities and therefore use the bush or field for defecation. Households that use public toilets (WC, KVIP, Pit, Pan etc.) are the highest accounting for 7.3 percent, followed by KVIP (5.3%) and pit latrine (2.1%). At the locality level, nine in every ten (91.5%) households in dwelling units have no toilet facilities in the rural areas, the people resort to the use of bush or open fields. In the urban localities the proportion that do not have toilet facility is 59.5 percent. However, public toilet is the mostly used facility in urban localities (28.4%) while in rural areas the highest is the use of KVIP (4%) according to the 2010 population and housing report. Adequate sanitation is the foundation of development in modern era. But we cannot achieve or release good sanitation without the considering decent toilet or latrine facilities. Denying people basic sanitation is not only inhuman, but also kicks out the first step of a community's development. When the research sort to know the number of respondents with toilet facilities the results shows that 98 representing 39.2% stated that they have household toilet facilities while 153 representing 60.8% of the respondents do not have household toilets facilities. The results of the interview and the group discussion on the ownership of toilets show that some people cannot afford the cost a household toilet while others especially the elders feels that it is not necessary to have toilet in the house when there is vast land and bush where they can defecate freely. This means that majority of the people or residents of the Gushegu district do not have household toilets, they rather defecate in the open while few others used the public toilets available.

Residents using toilet facilities in gushegu district

Owning a household toilet or latrine is not enough to ensure good sanitation in the Gushegu district but also using it appropriately is equally important. Responding to the question on whether the respondents uses toilet facilities for defecation or not, a total of 63 (25.2%) of the respondents confirm using toilets facilities for defecation while majority (187) representing 74.8% are not using toilet facilities for defecation. This confirms the baseline (2017) figure of 26.1% defecate in the open by World Vision Ghana (NGO) and 25.8% by USAID-RING project 2017 annual report for the Gushegu district. It also means that majority of the people in the district defecate in the open. Through the interviews and focus discussions, the residents indicated that their tradition (The Dagomba tradition) is

against defecating on another person's faeces. Therefore since they cannot afford for individual toilet or latrines, the best way is to defecate in the open to avoid curses from the gods. This belief and perception in my opinion is affecting the progress of the community led total sanitation (CLTS) model introduced some of the development partners.

Refuse dumps in gushegu district

As part of the ways to establish how intentional the people of Gushegu district are towards sanitation, the researcher questioned to know where refuse are kept in the communities and even in the township. The response indicated that most of them do not keep refuse into the refuse dumps for varied reasons. While some complain of not having dust bins, others said the refuse dumps are too far from their houses. Also, few others stated that the district assembly failed to empty the refuse containers for them anytime it gets full. To avoid bad odor, residents prefer to throw refuse discriminately rather than sending it to the refuse dumps.

Feasibility study prior to water and sanitation project implementation

Conducting a feasibility study before the undertaking water and sanitation projects is very crucial to the success of the projects. Base on this, the research sort to find out from the interviewees whether or not feasibility study is often conducted for the water and sanitation projects in the district before implementation. The results indicated that 193 persons representing 77.2% said feasibility study is always conducted while 25 respondents representing 10% is of the view that no feasibility study is often conducted and 12.8% were not sure.

Because of the importance of feasibility studies to implementation of the water and sanitation projects, the research further prop to establish if the feasibility study conducted sometimes prior to implementation of water and sanitation projects in the district are always adequate or not. The analysis of the response indicated that the feasibility studies before the implementation of projects is inadequate. This can be interpreted that most organizations do not carry out feasibility studies prior to the implementation of most water and sanitation projects in the district, and even the few who do feasibility study fails to pay greater attention to the details of the study or the results before the implementation. This poses a lot of challenges to the projects during and after implementation.

Involvement of water and sanitation project staff in project planning

Planning contribute greatly to the success or challenges of any project in recent times. With this opinion in mind, the research asked interviewees to find out if water and sanitation project implementing staffs in the Gushegu district are always involve in the planning process before the implementation. A careful examination of the results indicated 202 representing 80.8% confirmed that the project staff are not always involved in the planning processes, 19 persons (7.6%) said the project staff are always involved and 29 respondents representing 11.6% were not sure if the staff are always involved or not. The differences in the responses are clear enough to conclude that water and sanitation project implementing staffs who are responsible for the implementation of the project plans does not participate in the planning process of projects. The researcher believe that full understanding of the project plan minimizes the challenge that affects the implementation.

Participation of project Beneficiaries in project planning

In recent time, international, government and non-governmental agencies realized that the main reason why many water and sanitation projects was (and still) face challenges during and after implementation is lack of active, effective and lasting participation of the intended beneficiaries. The research further sort to find out if the beneficiaries of water and sanitation projects are always involved in planning stages. The responds of the interviewees indicates that beneficiaries are always left out of the planning session. This is because, a total of 77 (30.8%) said the beneficiaries are always involve in the planning stage while 135 respondents (54%) is of the view that beneficiaries are not always involved. This simply means that planners of water and sanitation project in the district often left out an essential component (beneficiary participation and ownership) which fuels some challenges during implementation.

Reason for no Beneficiaries participation in project planning

After the research sort to find out why beneficiaries are not often involved in the planning of projects within the research area, majority of the respondents representing 45.2% said the misconception that beneficiaries cannot contribute meaningfully to the decision making of project is the main reason for the neglect. Other factors identified include: time constraints, organization requirements or policies and the assumption that planning does concern beneficiaries. Despite that respondents identified some reasons for the no involvement of beneficiaries in project planning process, some respondents did not know why beneficiaries are often left out.

The effectiveness of project planning and design

Establishing the implementation challenges of water and sanitation projects within the research area, the respondents were asked to describe the level of effectiveness of the planning and the designing process of projects carried out in the past. The results of the their responds shows that 77.6% said the planning and designing process is always not effective, 17.6% indicated that the process is effective and 1.6% responded to show that the process is very effective. Also, 4% felt the process is somehow effective, 2.4% of respondents saw the process to be poor while 4% do not know anything about the planning and designing process. The data implies that most if not all the planning and design processes for implementation of water and sanitation projects in the district is poor. Due to this, many water and sanitation project do not meet the expectations in terms of budget, deadline, and product quality.

The effectiveness of the water and sanitation project leadership

When participants were asked on the competence level of leadership in water and sanitation projects implemented within the district or the research area, the results proved that 39.2% project leaders are very competent, 36.8% of project leaders are competent and 20% said they are always fairly competent. However, 2% thought that project leadership are always incompetent while 8% could not tell whether or not the project leaders are always competent. Based on the views of the respondents it is clear that the competence of water and sanitation project leadership is not a challenge in the research area since the respondents indicated that the leaders are always very competent.

Water and sanitation projects decision making

The research recognized the fact that decision making may be a challenge to the implementation of most water and sanitation projects in the Gushegu district. The views of respondents were sort on who influences decision making process on projects. The outcome of the research shows that top management members who are not in the project area most often influences the decision making of the projects in the research area while the project team members are the among the least in terms of decision making regarding the implementation of the project they are working on. The fact that water and sanitation project managers and staff who are supposed to monitor and manage project activities as well as handle issues with beneficiaries, report on progress among others do not actually influence the decision making of the project is a challenge that affect the successful implementation.

Working relationship between project staff and beneficiaries

Considering the beneficiaries acceptance of interventions in water and sanitation projects is very crucial. The working relationship between the project staff and the beneficiaries can influence its acceptance which eventually affect the success of the project implementation. As a result of this, the research also sorts to find out from the respondents the relationship that often exists between project staff and the beneficiaries as far as water and sanitation is concern. The results show that 22.4% of the respondents felt the relationship is often good, 36.8% said the relationship is always very good, 38.8% also felt the relationship is average and only 2% indicated that the relationship is poor. Therefore, the working relationship between water and sanitation project staff and the beneficiaries is average and therefore may not be too good to achieve project success. Water and sanitation is an issue that related to human behavior. There is the need for very good working relation between the project staff and its beneficiaries.

Mode of water and sanitation project managers' selection

The research suspected that the selection procedures for the project manager position can affect the success of the project implementation. As part of the question on the challenges of water and sanitation projects within the area of study, the respondents were asked on the project manager selection criteria in most water and sanitation projects carried out within the research area. The responds gathered indicates that 51.2% of the respondents said the selection of water and sanitation project managers is always base on the academic qualification of persons, 18.8% responded that the selection is based favoritism and 14.8% said the selection is based on the competence level of the persons. Also some respondents (11.6%) said the selection criteria is based on the experience of persons and 9% of the respondents felt the selection criteria for the project managers is based on the length of service of persons. From the results it is clear that the selection criteria are based on other factors such as academic qualification and favoritism rather than competence of people. Since competence and experience are not the major components considered during the selection of project managers within the study area, which explains why most water and sanitation projects implementation are challenged. It is enough therefore to conclude that the mode of project managers' selection is one of the many challenges of water and sanitation projects in the Gushegu district.

Mode of project field staff selection

The contribution of the project field staffs to the success or otherwise every water and sanitation projects implementation cannot be underrated, this explains why the study was interested in finding out from respondents the mode of selection of the water and sanitation project staffs in projects implemented within the research area. The responds gathered shows that 53.2% said the selection mode is based on academic qualification of persons, 20% indicated the selection is based on the competence level of persons and 14.4% thought the selection mode is based on favoritism. Other respondents representing 9.6% chose to say that the selection criterion is based on the experience level of persons while the remaining 2.8% indicated that the selection is based on length of service of the people. The results clearly show that the selection criteria are based on other factors such as academic qualification and favoritism rather than competence and the experience level of people. Since competence and experience are not the major components considered during the selection of water and sanitation project field staffs within the Gushegu district, the projects are often opened to many implementation challenges such as missing of targets, under execution etc. in the Gushegu district.

Project implementation teams' commitment to work

The role of the entire water and sanitation project team members is very important to the success of projects in the research area. The project team members are mostly the field workers and implementers of project activities and their commitment level contribute the success or failure of a projects. The research also sorts to find out if they are always committed to their work. A total of 142 representing 56.8% were sure that project teams are not always committed to their responsibilities, 67 representing 26.8% said project staffs are committed to their work and 41 representing 16.4% were not sure of the commitment of project team to project work and their responsibilities. The results above indicate the commitment of water and sanitation project teams is a challenge to the implementation of the project in the Gushegu district. Water and sanitation project activities requires field visit, observation, use and management of project funds, collecting data on progress and reporting etc. All these and others requires commitment to achieve results.

Water and sanitation Project teams' motivation

Everyone gives his or her best to doing something when well-motivated. Most projects succeed when the project staffs or the team involve are given the necessary motivation. In lieu of this, the research sorts to find out from respondents how their feelings are when it comes to the water and sanitation project team motivation. In this regard, 38 percent of interviewees believe that project teams are well motivated with 31.6 percent stating that the project staffs are motivated. Only 20 percent said they are not motivated while 10.4 percent are not sure of project staff motivation. It is clear that water and

sanitation project team members are well motivated yet they are not commitment to their responsibilities which is a challenge to the success of the water and sanitation plans in the Gushegu district

Weak monitoring of water and sanitation project implementation

Monitoring of the implementation of the district water and sanitation plan as well as the implementation of the water and sanitation projects activities in the Gushegu is generally weak. Effort at monitoring the implementation of water and sanitation projects to a large extent only carried out on donor funded projects from world vision, RING, SPRING and UNICEF where some financial support is made available to the DWSTs to undertake routine monitoring exercise. As for the Gushegu district assembly, monitoring of water and sanitation intervention in communities' end upon the completion of the project just because of lack of financial resources to the DWSTs.

Water and sanitation project goals and objectives

A well written goal and objective is always crucial because of its effects on every step of the project life cycle. When you create a goal and a specific objective, you give your team a greater chance of achieving the objective because they know precisely what they're working towards. When asked if goals and objectives set are always SMART enough to have a successful implementation of the projects, 67.6 percent of the interviewees said the set goals and objectives are always not SMART, 17.6 percent said they are SMART enough and 14.8 percent said they were not sure of the goals and objectives been SMART. This simply means that though there are Goal and objectives for the water and sanitation projects of the district, these goals and objectives are not always SMART enough to guide the implementation process of the intervention. It is therefore considered to be one of the challenges facing the success of the projects in the Gushegu district.

Water and sanitation projects funds commitment

The Gushegu district assembly and development partners fund the implementation of water sanitation projects. The disbursement of the funds from the district assembly common fund (DACF) is always unpredictable likewise the development partners for the implementation of water and sanitation projects outlined in the district water and sanitation plan (DWSP). This situation affects payment of drillers, contractors, suppliers, consultants and other service providers working on the water and sanitation projects at the Gushegu district level.

Discussion

Institutional framework of water and sanitation projects in gushegu district

Throughout the history of Gushegu, water resources development as well as water service provision has generally been treated as a government task. Water is often viewed as a public good, requiring government investment and management for various reasons.

The implementation of the district water and sanitation plan (DWSP) is to a large extent by the district water and sanitation team (DWST) with the active collaboration of other relevant agencies/departments at the Gushegu district assembly. To date, the DWSTs have not been fully integrated into the institutional framework of the Gushgu district assembly

The works department of the Gushegu district assembly is responsible for the provision of portable drinking water to the people according to the local government act of 2009 (LI.1961). Under the works department, the Water Board and the Water and Sanitation Management Teams (WSMTs) are formed to manage, maintain and repair water facilities as well ensure sustainability in the districts. As part of their responsibilities, the environmental health unit of the Gushegu district assembly works to ensure good sanitary environment in the district. The district assembly relay on government of Ghana (GOG) funding as well NGOs and private individual support to implement the activities of water and sanitation.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the gushegu district

Over the years, NGOs in Ghana have adopted several measures aimed at supporting the central government to address the socio-economic conditions of the people to redressing the imbalances between rural and urban areas in terms of development. In the Gushegu district, many NGOs have

implemented and continue to implement varied activities geared towards improving water and sanitation situation issues in the district. These NGOs include; World Vision Ghana, UNICEF, USAID-RING project, SPRING, Water Aid and New Energy. Aside these development organizations, there are private institutions and individuals whose contribution to the water and sanitation projects implementations cannot be underrated. Over the years, these NGOs have partnered with the Gushegu district to implement water and sanitation activities in over 300 rural communities in the district.

Roles and responsibilities of institutions in water and sanitation in gushegu

The small towns' sector policy recognizes the district assemblies as the focal point for the delivery of water and sanitation facilities and as the decentralization policy places the responsibility of development at the local level on the district assemblies, as such, all other development programmes are routed through the Gushegu district assembly. These responsibilities make the Gushegu district assemblies engaged in all year round multiple development programmes. The district assembly is noted to be confronted with challenges of inadequate numbers of skilled staff, lack of office space and residential accommodation for staff, etc., making them inefficient in meeting deadlines. It is imperative to state that the district assemblies as the highest political authorities in the districts have been involved in unproductive interference in the works of other actors in the water and sanitation sector. The DWST under the district assembly also monitor technical and financial issues regarding the water and sanitation project implementation in the communities.

The Gushegu district's development partners such as world vision Ghana (WVG), The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), USAID-RING Project, SPRING, New Energy, Water Aid etc., have been involved in the provision of water and sanitation services to the people of Gushegu. These development partners provide either 100% financial support to the district assembly who then implement water and sanitation activities in the communities or they provide the assembly the material support and capacity building of their staff and other community leaders on sanitation and water management.

There are also private institutions and individuals such as pump tech ventures, chasey ventures and others who provide consultancy (design and construction supervision, training, institutional support, etc. relating to water and sanitation in the Gushegu district. These institutions and individuals also supply equipment, spare parts for boreholes constructions and repairs as well as the constructions and repairs of toilets facilities.

At the community level, the community water and sanitation management teams (WSMTs) formed by the district assembly also work towards ensuring transparency in water and sanitation facilities Management in their respective communities.

Exploring the cultural values of gushegu towards water and sanitation projects

As part of the ways of uncovering the implementation challenges of water and sanitation projects, the research explored and examine the socio-cultural values of the people of Gushegu district who are Dagomba and Muslim dominated. The researcher suspected that the way of life of the people (Culture), the tradition and their beliefs system could affect the implementation standards of water and sanitation in the district.

Influence of development partners

Since the Gushegu district assembly is unable to raise enough funds internally for the implementation of the DWSP and has to rely on the support of the development partners, they have to succumb to the schedules and terms of the development partners. Most of the development partners' projects are time bound with tight schedules while some are not tailored to suit the socio-cultural milieus of the Gushegu district.

Conclusion

The Gushegu district assembly have generally not been able to expand the tax base of the district and often rely on returns from a few revenue items and heavily on the development partners for the implementation of water and sanitation projects in the communities. This issues allows the development

partners to influence the operations of the district assembly on very essential issues such as water and sanitation. The Gushegu district water and sanitation teams (DWSTs) are under-resourced in terms of logistics and funds by the assembly. This affects their effective implementation of the district water and sanitation plans (DWSPs).

Also, the results of the research indicated that most of the water and sanitation projects goals and objectives are not always SMART enough to succeed. The ambiguity of the goals and objectives in most time affects the implementation and the final impact the projects in the research area.

Another important challenge worth mentioning is the behavior and attitudes of the people of the research area. Though the government of Ghana and the development partners have invested a lot of resources aimed at improving sanitation and the water situation the Gushegu district the attitude of the residence of in the district is challenging the implementation of the projects.

As part of the ways of uncovering the implementation challenges of water and sanitation projects, the socio-cultural values of the people of Gushegu district who are Dagomba and Muslim dominated serve as a challenge to the smooth implementation of the water and sanitation projects in the Gushegu district.

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