



**Project: Water Citizens: promoting participatory policy making and effective service delivery on water and sanitation**  
**DCI-NSAPVD2013/335-611**

## **Water Citizens National Forum**

**Deriving full benefits of Citizens Participation for improved WATSAN Services; confronting the unfinished business of decentralization**

### **Concept Note**

#### **1. Context & Background**

In 2014 COSPE and ISODEC began implementation of the Water Citizens Project in the three Nzema areas of the Western Region of Ghana, project co-found by the European Union.

The objective of the intervention centered around empowering CBOs and CSOs on water access rights to enable citizen groups to hold Local Government Officials responsible for access to quality water and sanitation service delivery. The project expended resources on capacity building, networking and advocacy in order to take advantage of the decentralization system and the local government regimes in Ghana to facilitate participation of citizen groups in WATSAN governance at the local level.

The project is being implemented in the Nzema East Municipal Assembly, the Jomoro District Assembly and the Ellembelle District Assembly. Lessons from the project are documented, used for national level advocacy for the improvement of project activities for the intended project goal.

***A key lesson learned in the three local government areas is the limitation of citizen groups to influence the actions of the WATSAN agencies through their respective local governments.***

Ghana, like many West African nations has since the 1990's been implementing a decentralization program with the aim of drawing governance closer to citizens. A lot has been achieved in this direction whilst there remains a lot which require action for ordinary people to be able to influence means through which key social services are made available in their districts. The local government system now, is inadequate because the chief essence and benefit of its establishment; i.e. control over local resources and service by local people at the local level is yet to be realized. At least, as we found in the implementation of the Water Citizens Project in the respective project districts, this has not been achieved for WATSAN services.

Most districts in Ghana have populations who rely on both urban and rural water service provision. It was this mixed reliance that existed in the two project districts. The urban parts of the districts rely on Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL) for services whilst the rural parts rely on the Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA). The Ghana Water Company Limited has district offices whilst the CWSA is not directly present in the districts but present at the regional level. Both agencies have centralized structures which obligate them to report to, and to receive directions from their respective head offices in the capital in Accra. The local governments therefore have little influence on the agencies existing within their jurisdiction. Except that even CSWA per their structure do not directly exist in the districts. Due to this situation, structures such as WATSAN Committees, Water Boards and DWSTs established in the districts hang mostly around the local governments and are without the resources or the required control and influence over the agencies which plan and hold the purse for the sector.

This is the situation that confronted the citizens multi stakeholder networks that emerged from the project; the inability of the local governments to provide guarantees for WATSAN demands made by the citizen groups and therefore the latter's inability to benefit much from the open governance dispensation available at the District Assemblies. Ordinary peoples' participation in WATSAN governance cannot be possible in a



centralized governance system existing far away from citizens. Participation by citizens is possible and accessible when there is close proximity between citizens and governance structure which the decentralization system is expected to have provided.

## 2. Forum theme and objective

Bringing WATSAN governance closer to the population and the means to achieve this will be the central issue and question for the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Water Citizens Forum. There is also the question of who can bring the desired decentralization about and also about what is possible and what is feasible to improve WATSAN governance at the district level. The forum will provide a focalized discussion of decentralization programme in Ghana vis-à-vis water and sanitation services delivery. The forum seeks to document and share ideas on possible means of realizing functional participation in WATSAN governance in view of the prevailing challenges. The forum will seek to create a network of sector actors who are motivated to become champions of this cause for post-forum follow ups.

## 3. Structure and format of forum

### a. 1st Presentation: History of WATSAN Decentralization; Vision and Current Reality

The first session provides the context and background for the forum subject-matter and objective. To understand and initiate actions that bring water governance to the door-step of the people, it is important to provide in general, the trajectory of developments in relation to Government's policy of decentralization and the particular processes, actions and results of decentralization within the water sector. Key questions important for discussions in this session include 1) How has the national decentralization policy been adapted to the water sector? 2) What have been the specific steps taken to introduce decentralization of water service delivery 3) What has been the results of efforts of decentralization in the sector, has it affected participation and what remains undone and why? The session will be led by a main speaker to be followed with inputs from a panel of three discussants and general discussions by all present respectively.

#### Presenter

Former Chief Director of MWRWH/Nkrumah (World Bank Water Policy Expert) > RESOURCE PERSON

#### Discussants

NEWSaP, mr Ayaovie

JSWSP, mr Gyeni

**CICMA** decentralization from the perspective of the Europe

### b. 2<sup>nd</sup> Presentation: Relationship gaps between Local Government and district WATSAN agencies and impact on citizen participation

This session seeks to understand the nature and extent of outstanding actions required to be taken in order to achieve participatory water Governance in the Ghana. What in specific terms is the nature of the gap between the District Assembly and the sector service agencies (GWCL and CWSA)? The session will address questions such as 1) What are the conditions that pose difficulties for service agencies to incorporate the needs of individual District Assemblies into their annual and medium term plans and budgets and through what means are they able to achieve this? 2) What are the factors making it difficult for coordination between the planning organs of both the District Assemblies and the service agencies?

#### Presenter



Wateraid program manager

**Discussants**

Former MD GWCL,  
a former DCE, (Ga west district assembly)  
Rep of Community Water and Sanitation Agency – mr Kuupuolo

**c. 3<sup>rd</sup> Presentation: Strengthening Local Government and District WATSAN agencies Ties for functional participation**

This session focuses on what is the ideal and what is possible in view of the foregoing. The fact that decentralization for the water service agencies have not gone far as is the case for other sectors is contested by none. Presently the effect of this in the water sector is the very limited influence that citizens at the local level have in affecting the priorities of the service agencies towards their needs. If at all they are able to influence their local governments how is their local government in turn also able to influence the service agencies such that infrastructural projects and services are relevant and responds proportionately to the needs of communities.

**Presenter**

Patrick Apoya, WATSAN consultant. Former executive secretary CONIWAS

**Discussants**

GWCL,  
Benjamin Arthur,  
**CICMA**

**Date:**

29<sup>th</sup> November, 2016

**Venue:**

UDS Conference Hall, osu Avenue extension, East Cant, Accra