

WASH AND NUTRITION POLICY REVIEW IN GHANA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Globally, 795 million people do not have enough food to lead a healthy life. The vast majority of the world's hungry people live in developing countries, where 12.9% of the population is undernourished. In Sub-Saharan Africa, 25% of the population do not have adequate food. Poor nutrition causes 45% of deaths in children under five (3.1 million children) in the world annually. In the long term, malnourished children, upon survival, are at an increased risk of reduced productivity and reproductive capacity particularly for girls. In addition, malnutrition in children increases the risk of chronic diseases, including obesity and related non-communicable diseases in adulthood. Ghana is classified among the 47 countries with the highest levels of malnutrition in the world. It is estimated that in Ghana 25% of the children of less than five years of age are stunted and about 6% are acutely malnourished.

The 2013 Joint Monitoring Program (JMP) estimates that, on average, 86% of the households in Ghana have access to improved sources of water. In reference to sanitation, only 13% of the households have access to improved sanitation facilities. The JMP also estimates that 18% of the households in the country practice open-defecation with higher percentages in the three Northern regions. Poor water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) conditions are associated with increased incidence of diseases such as diarrhea, malaria, and intestinal worms. The diseases are compounded by malnutrition, resulting in increased mortality rates, higher frequency of disease complications, and disability that has greater negative effects than the disease or malnutrition alone. This situation creates the link between nutrition and WASH, and thus, necessitates adequate policy framework to guide institutional coordination and collaboration for WASH and nutrition interventions.

The primary goal of the USAID West Africa Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene (USAID WA-WASH) Program is to increase sustainable access to safe water and sanitation and improve hygiene in West Africa. The Program conducted a desk study to review WASH and nutrition policies in Ghana. The policy review was conducted in line with the USAID WA-WASH Program objective of strengthening the national and regional environment for integrated WASH. The review aims to assess the level of integration between WASH and nutrition in the policies and to identify policy gaps for action. The desk study reviewed sixteen policy documents including the national strategic framework documents, WASH sector policies, and food and nutrition security policies.

The national institutional framework includes four key documents, namely: (1) the Ghana vision 2020; (2) the 1996 Medium Term Coordinated Program of Economic and Social Development policies (CPESDP); (3) the 2006 Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS); and (4) the 2010 Ghana Shared Growth and development Agenda (GSGDA). The WASH policies include: (1) the 2007 National Water Policy; (2) the 2010 Environmental Sanitation Policy; (3) the Small Communities and Water Sanitation Policy; (4) the 2010 National Environment and Sanitation Strategy; and (5) the 2007 National Health Policy. The policy documents on food and nutrition security include: (1) the 2010 Savannah Accelerated Development Authority; (2) the 1995 National Plan of Action on food and Nutrition; (3) the 2004 Draft Policy on Nutrition; and (4) the 2011 Medium Term Agriculture Investment Plan.

The Program analyzed these policy documents in terms of the main objectives, WASH and nutrition activities, and the integration of the draft national nutrition policy into WASH. The policy documents within the national institutional framework such as the Ghana Vision 2020, the GPRS, and the GSGDA highlight activities that aim to improve nutrition and WASH in the country. However, the level of integration between nutrition and WASH plans in the documents is not adequate. Similarly, the existing policies and plans in the WASH sector focus on the provision of potable water and adequate sanitation services without any reference to nutrition objectives.

In addition to the desk study, the Program interviewed key informants from WASH and nutrition sectors to obtain their inputs on the nutrition programs, WASH interventions and the link between the policies in the two sectors in Ghana. The key informant interviews with the staff from the WASH agencies presented mixed opinions on the link between WASH and nutrition. While some of the key informants in the WASH sector contended that promotion of clean water and sanitation are directly linked to nutrition, others argued that the core function of WASH sector agencies is to provide clean water and sanitation. This could indicate inadequate awareness within the WASH sector of its potential to contribute to reduce malnutrition. The food and nutrition security policies, particularly the 2004 draft nutrition policy, attempt to incorporate WASH objectives. These include promoting hand washing with soap, scaling up community-led total sanitation, equitable access to clean water, and ensuring proper hygiene and sanitation in all schools. The implementation of the policies is, however, slow and uncoordinated.

At the national level, nutrition and WASH programs are not strongly integrated, although there may be cross-sectoral planning. At the local level, each sector plans and implements its programs with little or no coordination. In addition, monitoring the policy implementation and performance in the WASH and nutrition sectors is a challenge. Part of this challenge stems from inadequate harmonization of the indicators used by the different stakeholders to monitor and evaluate performance of WASH programs. The major stakeholders include: civil society, service providers such as the Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL), Water Resources Commission (WRC), and Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA). Another challenge is that different surveys that report WASH data do not often use similar indicators. Further, the surveys do not collect comprehensive data to adequately describe performance in the WASH sector. Often, the data is collected from a user perspective that is not consistent with the perspective of the service providers.

Based on the findings of the policy review, the Program recommends raising awareness within the WASH sector about malnutrition. Further, the findings of the review emphasize integrating nutrition interventions into WASH programs to address the identified policy gaps. This could be initiated and implemented with the support of the Ministry of Health. In addition, the findings of the policy review recommends sensitizing the WASH sector agencies to mainstream nutrition into their sector policies and action plans. The nutrition cross-sectoral planning group (CSPG), set-up by the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), should be tasked to mainstream nutrition into existing WASH sector policies and strategies. Strengthening the coordination across nutrition, WASH, and agriculture sectors towards stronger integration of activities, especially at the local level is also recommended. Finally, to support the integration of nutrition and WASH into the programs of the key ministries, the findings emphasize building the capacity, particularly in terms of training, and provision of relevant inputs within the key ministries.

The full report is available (in English) upon request via our website. For more details about our program activities and other reports please visit <http://wawash.fiu.edu/>.

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