

WASH CAREER DAYS ORGANIZED BY THE USAID WA-WASH PROGRAM IN BURKINA FASO AND IN GHANA**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Shortage in the skills and number of local WASH sector staff undermines the success and sustainability of WASH interventions and stands in the way of universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation, according to a USAID WA-WASH study to assess the human resources needs to provide water supply and sanitation services in Burkina Faso and Ghana. The primary goal of the USAID WA-WASH program is to improve access to water and sanitation in Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Niger. The program aims to create an enabling environment at the national and regional levels for the sustainability of the WASH sector interventions. This is achieved through, among other things, the capacity building component of the program. The Program's capacity building efforts include the scholarship program to support students pursuing courses in the WASH sector, internships at the regional office and with the Program implementing partners, trainings, and study tours to WASH institutions outside the country and the WASH career days.

The Program organized 'WASH career day' forums for career development targeting university students in each intervention country. The forums were organized annually to raise awareness on the WASH sector human resource capacity gaps and the available career opportunities in the sector. The USAID WA-WASH Program organized the WASH career days at the University for Development Studies (UDS) in Tamale, Ghana on March 25, and at the University of Aube Nouvelle in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, on April 25, 2015. Over 400 students from UDS, the Tamale School of Hygiene, Aube Nouvelle, 2iE, and the University of Ouagadougou participated in the events. The WASH career day aims to encourage students to undertake WASH related degrees, to learn about employment opportunities in WASH, and to participate in efforts to improve access to water, sanitation, and hygiene in their respective countries and in the region at large. These events served as a platform for students to meet accomplished WASH professionals and to learn from their experience.

In Ghana, the wash career day was the first of its kind at UDS. Thirty-four professionals participated in the event and made various presentations related to the WASH sector in the country. The first presentation consisted of a panel on the role of various stakeholders in the WASH sector including academic institutions, the government, and NGOs. Prof. Seidu Al-Hassan, Director of the Institute of Continuing Education and Interdisciplinary Research at UDS laid the ground for the session by defining a career and how to make a career choice. He presented the role of academic institutions in the WASH sector which includes teaching and learning, capacity building, policy design, and action research. In addition, Mrs. Martha Tia-Adjei, an environmental health analyst from the Environmental Health and Sanitation Department of Northern Ghana, made a presentation on the role of the government through the Ministry in charge of Water and Sanitation. She discussed the organizational structure of the Ministry and its different branches and the role played by each of its departments. Mr. Eric Chimsi presented the role of NGOs and the part that future graduates can play in non-governmental organizations.

The second session aimed to share the experiences of the model WASH career professionals and was titled "Why choose a career in the WASH sector?" This panel was particularly empowering and encouraging for students who could easily relate to the experiences shared by these professionals. Ms. Beata Akanyani, Program Director with Afram Plains Development Organization (APDO), one of the USAID WA-WASH local partners in Ghana shared her experience. As a UDS graduate, Ms. Akanyani was able to gain field experience and network with WASH professionals through the university's Third Trimester Field Practical Program (TTFPP), allowing her to quickly ascend to a managerial position with her current employer. The initiator of the TTFPP, Mr. Mustafa Issahaku shared how he transitioned from teaching physical education to an international speaker and expert on health and community development through his MSc in public health promotion.

In Burkina Faso, the WASH career was organized into three panels that were facilitated by Karim Sanou, Hadiza Seriba, and Edwige Tia, respectively. The first person to take the floor during the first panel, Dr. Lakhdar Boukerrou, USAID WA-WASH Regional Director, urged the students to define objectives for their professional career through taking part in career forums and internships. The second panelist, Karim Traore highlighted that the national water office in Burkina Faso has only 500 000 water users due to inadequate capacity to meet the water needs of the population of Burkina Faso and therefore urged students to take up careers in the WASH sector and develop ideas to ensure that the water office covers the needs of the whole population. In addition, Dr. Yacouba Konate from the Institute of Water and Environmental Engineering (2iE) introduced the institutions curricula and emphasized the WASH humanitarian program which prepares students for crises management.

The second panel was facilitated by Mrs. Hadiza Seriba, USAID WA-WASH Coordinator, and a professional in the area of water, sanitation, and hygiene. Juste Nanci, the IRC Country Director encouraged the students to reinforce their language skills and to get familiar with the needs and activities of the NGOs. Dr. Sita Zougouri saluted the efforts made by the USAID WA-WASH in gender integration in the WASH sector. The session was an opportunity for the WASH professionals to share career experience in the sector with the students.

The third and final panel was facilitated by Mrs. Edwige Tia on the role of the youth in the WASH sector. During the Panel, WASH programs implemented by students/young professionals and youth networks in Burkina Faso presented their work to the forum participants. These included the Projection network, the Young International Chamber and the World Youth Parliament for Water.

The career days allowed the students to explore career goals in the field of water and sanitation. The students were encouraged to lead a discussion on their own challenges and seek solutions from the experienced professionals on how to improve their own employability. The main issues raised by students were unemployment, the lack of opportunities, especially in the government sector, and the inadequacy between academic preparation, the courses available, and professional needs. In order to overcome these difficulties, the WASH professionals encouraged students to network and seek internships and mentors, but also join extracurricular groups and consider WASH sector entrepreneurship. The WASH career days in Ghana and Burkina Faso were a success because they gave the students the opportunity to interact with a number of WASH sector professional from various organizations.

This is an executive summary of a report dated April 2015. 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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