

## Introduction

The Water and Sanitation Monitoring Platform (WSMP)-Ghana, assembles analyses, re-packages and disseminates available WASH sector data to appropriate audiences. The above is to be realized through two main objectives:

1. Convergence of existing national and sub-national information streams and data relevant to the WASH sector;
2. Increased accessibility by different stakeholders to relevant water and sanitation information and data from national and sub-national level.

The WSMP is a project whose establishment was facilitated by UNICEF with funding from the European Union Water Facility. The project came about as a result of lack of effective dissemination of WASH sector data, sometimes resulting in waste of resources and less informed decision-making. It was during the first year of operations that the Platform observed some of the lapses concerning data generation and use in Ghana.

## Role of WSMP

The Water and Sanitation Sector Monitoring Platform currently plays a central dissemination role of all available WASH sector data in order to help make them more useful for planning and decision-making. The Platform also helps to rationalize each data set after critically analyzing the objectives and methodologies applied in generating each set of data. Another core function of WSMP is to facilitate the harmonization of sector definitions with the aim of working towards minimizing data disparities both nationally and internationally. In addition to disseminating sector data, the Platform also helps raise the profile of pertinent issues deduced from available sector data and raises both sector stakeholder and public awareness of such issues for redress.

# The Data Puzzle in Ghana's Water and Sanitation Sector

## Causes and suggestions

### Background

Some perceive Ghana's water and sanitation (WASH) sector to be growing but to others, things are rather getting static or even worse. While some reports indicate that Ghana is on track to meeting the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG) for improved water coverage, others believe the country is off-track. While international reports indicate that Ghana's progress towards the MDG for improved sanitation is off-track; others believe the country is on-track. While user surveys on improved drinking water indicate high coverage figures, service provider data indicates otherwise. While some international reports on sanitation place Ghana among the lowest countries in Africa in terms of improved sanitation coverage, some national reports rather put Ghana quite high.

The mention of any statistical figure for the WASH sector in Ghana indeed puzzles many. There have been instances where different figures have been quoted on the same platform to represent the WASH sector of Ghana for the same period.

A basic fact about this situation is that, different institutions in the country generate different types of WASH data and every data collection exercise is guided by its own specific objectives and methodologies. For instance when the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) removed shared toilet facilities from the definition of 'improved' sanitation facilities, Ghana's coverage figure for use of improved sanitation facilities dropped from 61% to 10% in 2006. It should therefore not surprise stakeholders and the public when different WASH figures are presented by different institutions. Ideally, data users should rather understand the background of any data they use in order to avoid using otherwise accurate data at the wrong time or at the wrong forum.

This brief analyses some of the causes of these seeming 'disparities' in WASH data and suggests ways to rationalize the use of different types of data to achieve maximum impacts.

### Types of data currently circulating in the sector

The Platform has observed two main types of data generated by different institutions and being used in the sector. These are user-based data and provider-based or administrative data.

## 1. User-based data

User-based data is generated from statistical information obtained through representative household surveys or censuses. These surveys are usually conducted by national institutes of statistics, carried out by trained national staff who collect information on a wide range of health and living conditions through face-to-face interviews. The surveys gather information on the types of water and sanitation facilities that householders are using at the time of the survey. The facilities are usually categorized under *improved* or *unimproved* facilities. User-based survey reports therefore present the proportion of the population that uses improved or unimproved water and sanitation facilities at a given period.

Examples of user-based survey reports are the Ghana Demographic and Health Surveys (GDHS), Core Welfare Indicator Questionnaire (CWIQ), Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), Census, and Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS). In Ghana all these surveys are conducted by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) at regular intervals or upon special request. Since almost all UN countries use common indicators and definitions for the generation of user-based data, it is the type that is used for UN MDG target setting, analyses and reporting.

## 2. Provider-based or administrative data

Provider-based or administrative data refers to WASH data generated by service providers. In Ghana the service providers include the Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL), which generates data on urban drinking water supply and the Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA), which generates data on rural and small town drinking water supply and related sanitation. It may also include data generated by other organizations involved in the provision of water and sanitation services. With provider-based data, emphasis is placed on the type of facility supplied and the estimated number of people that these facilities can adequately serve; it thus measures people's access to facilities and estimated coverage for certain geographical locations as against actual use of such facilities. Unfortunately, provider-based data have sometimes been used to estimate Ghana's United Nations MDG targets and status, whereas this type of data is not the globally accepted one for MDG reporting.

**Table 1. Advantages, shortcomings and suggested uses for user-based data**

Advantages	Shortcomings	Suggested use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It gives information on the overall <b>outcome</b> of interventions since it gives users the chance to tell whether they actually use a facility or not</li> <li>• Facility users are directly involved in the provision of information</li> <li>• It indirectly provides information on functionality since a facility can be used only when it can function.</li> <li>• It is the only type of data that can be used for international comparison since almost all nations under the UN apply similar questionnaire and definitions</li> <li>• It captures information on services consumed by the population irrespective of the provider/supplier</li> <li>• It provides information on the actual capacity of facilities rather than capacities based on assumptions or standard criteria</li> <li>• It captures information on both drinking water and basic sanitation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is a representative survey and does not provide community-specific information. It is generated through sampling and may therefore not be ideal for community-level planning and investment</li> <li>• It does not capture information on whether a facility generates all year-round yield</li> <li>• Current user-based surveys are generated for other purposes and may not reflect all the information needs of the WASH sector</li> <li>• Most user-based reports do not provide information on quantity/quality of service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• User-based data is the only data type used for MDG analyses, targeting and progress monitoring</li> <li>• It is also the only data type that can support international comparison since all nations use the same indicators and questionnaire</li> <li>• It may be used for measuring outcomes of interventions since it measures actual use of facilities/services</li> </ul>

In addition to the two main types of data discussed above, some sector stakeholders in Ghana, notably WaterAid and its local NGO partners and some Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies apply the **Water and Sanitation (Watsan) Mapping Method**.<sup>1</sup>

Data generated through this method (sometimes) contains both provider-based and user-based information. Depending on which institution is conducting the mapping and the objectives, it can be a very comprehensive method that combines both qualitative and quantitative strategies to generate water and sanitation data. In Ghana the Afram Plains Development Organisation is believed to have first applied this method around 2003. It has since spread to about 13 districts through the WaterAid Ghana Partners Network.

### **The Ghana Statistical Service<sup>2</sup> and WASH Sector data**

The Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) is the Government agency that generates data on all sectors. Currently, only the GSS generates nationally representative user-based data on drinking water and basic sanitation. The GSS, however, does not currently conduct any survey specifically for the WASH sector though most of the surveys contain some WASH related information. Though the available information contained in some GSS surveys may be enough for MDG tracking, it does not provide all the data that the sector needs for effective planning and investment especially at the community level. Most of the surveys do not provide local level (district, Area Councils and community) data, while the data generation intervals, (usually five years and ten years for censuses) are also perceived to be too long.

For global monitoring towards the UN MDGs, however, only data from the Ghana Statistical Service are accepted and recognized since it uses standard global definitions, questionnaire and indicators for the WASH sector.

<sup>1</sup> For more information on WATSAN mapping activities in Ghana, contact WaterAid Ghana on [Info@wateraidghana.org](mailto:Info@wateraidghana.org) or 021-760440

<sup>2</sup> For access to Ghana Statistical Service data, visit [www.statsghana.gov.gh](http://www.statsghana.gov.gh)

**Table 2. Advantages, shortcomings and suggested uses for provider-based or administrative data**

<b>Advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It captures information at the community level</li> <li>• It facilitates investment planning even at the lowest level since it is not based on sampling</li> <li>• It is usually available annually</li> <li>• It helps in setting high standards (from the provider point of view) for service provision</li> </ul>
<b>Shortcomings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is almost impossible to compare provider-based data between countries since each country sets its own standard criteria for facilities</li> <li>• It may not capture information on dysfunctional systems</li> <li>• Information from communities not yet served by the major service providers (eg. CWSA and GWCL) may be ignored even though 'others' ( self supplied systems) including individuals may have supplied some facilities in such communities</li> <li>• It does not support MDG targeting, analysis and progress measurement</li> </ul>
<b>Suggested use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provider-based data is good for local level planning and investment</li> <li>• It can be used for input and output monitoring</li> <li>• It is the only type of data for administrative purposes</li> </ul>

### Data on sanitation

WASH data users should note that the term **sanitation** as mentioned in GSS, CWSA and other global reports, and as mentioned in this document, refers to provision and/or use of toilet facilities and does not include other components such as solid waste, clinical waste, storm drainage, industrial waste, electronic waste etc. Currently, no institution generates nationally representative provider-based data on sanitation. The CWSA generates sanitation data only within its operational areas (i.e. within the rural and small towns). The only nationally representative data available is user-based data generated by the GSS through the various representative surveys. The Environmental Health and Sanitation Directorate of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development has recently (in 2008) compiled a comprehensive nationwide data on sanitation. The report is however, yet to be published.

### 2010 Census and WASH data

Many WASH sector practitioners had hopes that the 2010 population and housing census would generate data that would help the WASH sector with access to more accurate statistics for various uses. Unfortunately the GSS has ruled out the possibility of capturing data on distance from homes to facilities and quantity of water used. Two major reasons have been assigned; (1) the census questionnaire would be overloaded and (2) there is limited funding for the whole exercise.

### The case for WASH specific surveys

Due to the fact that WASH sector stakeholders do not always get all their data needs from various surveys in the country, there is a suggestion that there should be a separate survey for the WASH sector at shorter intervals. The only inhibiting factor for this exercise is funding. Once there is funding for it, according to some experts in statistics and research, it would be possible to conduct WASH sector specific surveys that would capture more relevant information for the sector. But there are other WASH sector professionals who are of the view that it might not be necessary to do any WASH specific surveys since it would cost

**Table 3. Advantages, shortcomings and suggested uses for the Water and Sanitation (Watsan) Mapping Method**

<b>Advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It generates information on both availability and functionality of facilities</li> <li>• It is able to present even the geographical location of facilities within a particular district or community</li> <li>• It captures information on all facilities irrespective of who supplied them</li> <li>• Community members are usually directly involved in gathering the data</li> </ul>
<b>Shortcomings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is very expensive and this makes it difficult to generate data annually on a wider scale</li> <li>• So far Water and Sanitation Mapping data is available in very few districts only and cannot be used to present a national picture</li> </ul>
<b>Suggested use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watsan Mapping data is good for local level planning and investment</li> <li>• It can be used for monitoring at all levels: inputs, outputs, outcome and impact</li> <li>• It is also suitable for studies on functionality of facilities</li> </ul>

the sector too much. Their suggestion is that there should rather be more financial support for the GSS to incorporate the few more questions that that the sector needs in existing surveys.

### MDGs, Global Monitoring and the JMP

The United Nations have mandated the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to:

1. Monitor trends and progress towards the water and sanitation target of the MDGs
2. Inform policy-makers and civil society on the status of the WASH sector
3. To build national capacity for monitoring

To monitor MDG trends therefore the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) is concerned with the MDG target to halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. The progress indicators<sup>3</sup> towards this target are:

<sup>3</sup> Official MDG list 2008

