

# Government role / implication in access to hygiene and sanitation for all

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## The hunter-gathering approach

Hunter-gathering is a process of rapidly collecting and collating information, experiences and contributions. In a workshop setting, hunter-gatherers self-select a topic they are most interested in championing and work together in groups to produce a short report (2-6 pages) by the end of the workshop – groups and topics will be decided upon on the first day. Each day, dedicated time is given for people to collect relevant information from one another. Over the course of the session the groups self-organise collecting contributions and feeding into other topics. Participants are asked to collect information informally through breaks and meals. They may also like to use the opportunity in plenary sessions to take notes on their particular topic and ask questions to presenters that could help them with their reports. Outputs are action-orientated, with groups asked to reflect on what should be done moving forward and recommendations for policy and practice.

The notes produced are not meant to be polished or exhaustive, and they are not peer reviewed. They are rapid explorations into priority topics, which are written and disseminated quickly in the hope that they will trigger further conversations, debate and interest. As such, they are not for citation.

***This methodology is very much a work-in-progress. Comments and suggestions to strengthen and develop the hunter-gatherer process and method, as well as content and structure of the notes would be very welcome. Or if you wish to do a rapid exploration into a topic that interests you, please contact us: [clts@ids.ac.uk](mailto:clts@ids.ac.uk)***

## 1. Introduction

Water, hygiene and sanitation are issues of concern at global level. That is why these three sub-sectors have been selected in the millennium goals and also are the main pillars of the sustainable development goals. At the African level, countries south of the Sahara have given much more attention to drinking water management and access, pushing into the background the concerns related to hygiene and sanitation.

In the face of the increase in hydro-faecal danger-related diseases, the recurrence of epidemics provoked by the lack of hygiene, the generation of many foregone conclusions on the effects or impacts of sanitation on health, education (in particular of the girls), malnutrition and economic development, the partners involved in the development and the governments are more and more interested in the promotion of sanitation.



However, whether it be at a central level or at a devolved/decentralised level, hygiene and sanitation still don't figure prominently in development priorities. Over the last decade, several sanitation programmes and projects have been implemented in almost every country in West and Central Africa, with the support of partners for development. Although the results of these projects are recognised and appreciated by all stakeholders, in particular governmental actors, it is clear that the role played by governments in the implementation of interventions and the sustainability of the achievements of these projects/programmes still needs more attention.

## 2. Role of the government in the development of the sanitation sector

The government plays a lead role in the development of the sanitation sector with a view to improving living conditions for the population. To this end, the main intervention areas are, for example:

- The definition of sector-based policies and strategies (guidance documents, definition of the legal and regulatory framework etc.);
- The implementation of sector-based policies and strategies (regulation and coordination of the sector, resource mobilisation, provision of services etc.).

## 3. Challenges/problems

**Institutional positioning and coordination in the sector:** In most countries within the region, the activities of the sanitation sector are divided between several ministries. Issues relating to basic sanitation generally fall within the responsibility of Ministries of Health and Drinking water, which, unfortunately, are respectively more interested in matters relating to curative care and access to drinking water. In several countries, the institutional level of the structures in charge of sanitation issues has been upgraded and these now at least have at their disposal a sanitation department, even if it is not a Directorate General or a Sanitation Agency. Yet, this sub-sector lacks presence and visibility. This may be due to the fact that (i) competencies are split between several ministries and that (ii) the coordination between ministries responsible for issues relating to sanitation is generally poor, and at times nonexistent.

**Development of guidance documents:** Several countries now have policies, plans and strategies for the training, programming and implementation of activities for bringing access to sanitation for all. New approaches with proven effectiveness, such as CLTS, have been successfully tried out, which allows us to hope for quick and sustainable results. Unfortunately, implementation activities receive no support, due to an inadequate institutional positioning (in some countries) and insufficient funding.

**Human resources:** In most countries of the region, there is a lack of human resources, as well as an inequitable distribution of these resources. WASH experts are absent from several departments/municipalities.

**Provision of services:** Governments fund and mobilise external financing in preparation for the construction of facilities in public places (schools, health facilities, markets, bus stations, etc.) However, the needs remain huge. The construction of latrines at the household level is the responsibility of individuals, with support from NGOs and other development partners. The CLTS approach has led to an improvement in the level of access rate to basic sanitation, but the precariousness of the ground gained (in terms of behaviour change and works durability) remains a concern. In addition to this there is a clear need for universal provision of basic sanitation.

**Sector financing:** In general, the financing of the sector by public funds is still marginal, and this constitutes the main obstacle to greater involvement from governments and their ownership of sanitation projects and programmes. In most countries of the sub-region, the budget allocated to the sub-sector is less than 5% of the budget of the ministry in charge and is around 0.3% of the national budget, contrary to the international commitment made by states (eThekweni 2008).

Up to 75%, or even 95% of funding is provided by development partners who do not always follow the national guidelines.

**Prioritisation of the sanitation sector:** Despite being included in policy and strategy documents, hygiene and sanitation are not truly considered a national priority in African countries. Attention and resources are directed towards sectors with greater demonstrative and economic potential (infrastructure, education, health, etc.) . For this reason amongst others, public authorities have not taken responsibility for the regulation, inspection and facilitation of spaces for consultation.

## 4. Emerging issues

- How can we ensure the alignment of partners' interventions with national strategies while the States don't have available resources at their disposal to support themselves?

- Beyond advocacy, what can be done to ensure that states honour commitments made during international and regional forums to advance sanitation?

## 5. Recommendations / ways forward

### **For TFPs**

- Introduce in WASH programmes a conditionality on sanitation interventions' financing by the government.

### **For Government**

- Increase political will by constantly including sanitation issues in the political agenda;
- Insist that local authorities prioritise sanitation projects in their planning and budgeting;
- Strengthen the staffing and capacity of the sanitation sector, including through mobilising resources;
- Increase own financial resources dedicated to sanitation (through provision in the general budget and integrated development plans of significant allocations to support various sanitation initiatives, with a focus on the expansion and consolidation of CLTS. For example, in Ghana the recent allocation of a portion of oil revenue directed to support and improve projects dedicated to universal access to sanitation).

### **For NGOs and sanitation projects implementation partners**

- Plead with local authorities to give priority to sanitation projects in their planning and budgetisation.