

Local Government Leadership for Sanitation and Hygiene in West Africa

Rapid Topic Review

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This Rapid Topic Review was authored by Issa WONE, Associate Professor of Public Health, University Assane Seck of Ziguinchor (Senegal); Senior Consultant of Public Health.

Rapid Topic Explorations are a time-bound but an otherwise flexible approach to finding out about a priority topic where knowledge has yet to be summarised in a particular context. Specific topics are generated in consultation with policy-makers and development partners.

Researchers are required to assess the current state of knowledge and to seek insights and innovations from the field. Explorations triangulate from different sources including academic and grey literature, key informant interviews, preliminary insights from on-going research on progress and when possible rapid and informal field investigations.

Conditions for these explorations are:

- (1) methods must be explained,
- (2) recommendations for practice and policy are provided, and
- (3) work is completed in a set number of days (usually 20).

Outputs are written by researchers conducting the explorations and reviewed by the Sanitation Learning Hub, although they are generally not peer reviewed. They are disseminated quickly to policy-makers and practitioners so immediate, relevant, and timely actions can be taken.

This methodology is a work-in-progress. Comments and suggestions to strengthen and develop the process and method, as well as the 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: slh@ids.ac.uk

Front cover image caption: Djenebou, Seydou and Alimatou, students and members of the hygiene club at the village school in Dio-Ba, standing with brooms next to a block of school latrines, Kati district, Koulikoro region, Mali. October 2019. Front cover image credit: WaterAid/Basile Ouedraogo

Executive summary

The sanitation and hygiene (S&H) situation in most of West Africa is considered to be a cause for concern, despite the efforts and the large campaign towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6.2.

This rapid desk-based study focused on local governments, given their increasing importance in ensuring improved access to S&H in West Africa, and across the world. It was conducted to identify local governments that could be considered champions in the West African region and that demonstrated strong leadership in S&H; to understand why they have prioritised S&H, the support they received, the stakeholders, the management of inequalities, and the gaps in sub-national governments' efforts regarding S&H prioritisation.

Following a literature review, a range of S&H stakeholders across the region were sent a detailed online questionnaire to complete. Responses were received from four French-speaking countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger) and three English-speaking ones (Ghana, Liberia, and Nigeria). These are featured in the study.

The study revealed that several local government authorities have developed interesting medium-term and long-term projects with external partners, which are jointly funded and managed: Parakou in *Benin*, Kozah 1 and Lac 1 in *Togo* are edifying examples. In some English-speaking countries, where decentralisation seems to be more mature, more local-government-run S&H projects have been reported (although often still with an external support component).

Several factors were found to drive local governments to prioritise S&H: awareness and advocacy from UN agencies and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), media action, availability of technical support (from decentralised¹ services of central government or other partners), political, will and the vision of local government authorities.

Central government technical services, UN agencies, NGOs, and Northern municipalities, are the main technical and financial supports of the local governments in their S&H initiatives.

A few local governments were identified as champions in tackling inequities in S&H access, for example by supporting the most vulnerable people after selection, support to poor households, and approaches to women's empowerment.

Local governments' S&H challenges are the same as at national level. Overall, further work is needed to strengthen the capacity of local governments to ensure improved S&H for all.

¹ In this report, decentralisation refers to a range of localised governance arrangements that transfer power from a central authority to lower hierarchical levels, while deconcentration consists of shifting responsibility or tasks but not decision-making power to geographically dispersed agents (Yuliani 2004).

1 Introduction

The West African region is composed of sixteen countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo), covering an area of about 6,140,000 square kilometres, and 381 million inhabitants, with a slight predominance of women (Pyramides des âges pour le monde entier de 1950 à 2100, n.d.).

Although all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are interconnected, two of them are at the heart of sanitation and hygiene concerns: Goal 3, which aims at 'health and well-being for all by 2030', and, more importantly, Goal 6, which promotes universal access to 'safe drinking water and sanitation'.

Despite a wealth of natural resources, West Africa is one of the poorest region on the planet; the economic growth rate was expected to be about 3.6 per cent in the West African region in 2019, slightly below the continental average of 4 per cent (Sahel and West Africa Club 2019).

It is, however, a zone that is undergoing rapid change, and, as a consequence is often characterised by unsuitable urbanisation (Sahel and West Africa Club/OECD 2006) and a certain instability, with social and even political-military movements that are frequent in many countries (Marc, Verjee, and Mogaka 2015).

High morbidity and mortality rates in West Africa – particularly for children under five – are still predominantly due to communicable diseases, contributed to by poor sanitation and hygiene (Sanyang 2019). Seven of the 16 countries in West Africa have either more than 5 million people – more than 50 per cent of their population – practising open defecation (UNICEF 2018). According to JMP data, open defecation is most prevalent among the poorest populations, with rates of open defecation among the poorest quintile as high as 92 per cent in Benin, 86 per cent in Niger, 84 per cent in Togo and 75 per cent in Burkina Faso (JMP 2017). Open defecation is also more prevalent in rural areas than urban areas; for example, in Gambia, 79.1 per cent of people practise open defecation in rural areas compared to 33.3 per cent in urban areas. This is mirrored in other countries, including Togo (85.3 per cent vs. 38.2 per cent) and Niger (87.3 per cent vs. 37.5 per cent) (JMP 2017).

As a result of economic crises in the 1970s and 1980s, with the subsequent structural adjustment plans, the role of local governments in public programme management increased, whereas the capacities of the central powers weakened. This phenomenon spread across West African countries (Ezenwe 1997), where '[...] new policies are being defined, which shift the role of public investment from infrastructure to sanitation promotion, and give the responsibility of service delivery to local government' (Jiménez, Mtango, and Cairncross 2014). As such, local governments in West Africa are obliged, periodically, to issue local development plans that typically cover sanitation and hygiene (S&H).

There is therefore a need for local governments to take the lead in hygiene and sanitation. In order to progress from scattered open defecation free (ODF) villages to safely managed sanitation in high-burden countries at scale, local (and national) governments must take the lead, display political leadership and match commitments with the necessary human and financial resources (World Bank Group et al., 2019). The challenge is immense – in order to reach SDG 6.2 we need to drastically pick-up the pace. Currently, of the 62 countries with over 5 per cent open defecation, only 18 are on track to be open defecation free. However, we are seeing an increase in ODF sub-national declarations and commitments towards achieving total sanitation in a number of countries across the world. These include but are not limited to districts, local government areas, communes, woredas and counties where key administrative functions for delivering sanitation services sit.

This explains this rapid desk-based scoping study on sub-national systems strengthening for S&H programming in West Africa, which aims to capture essential information on:

1. **Identifying sub-national governments that have:**
 - Increased their prioritisation of and allocation of resources to S&H
 - Demonstrated strong leadership in S&H programming
2. **Understanding why local governments have prioritised S&H and what has driven these changes.**
3. **Understanding who the key stakeholders (e.g. development partners, private sectors, civil society) supporting these sub-national areas in S&H programming are and what their roles are.**
4. **Examples of identified sub-national governments taking steps to leave no-one-behind in their S&H programmes and move towards addressing inequalities including how hard-to-reach communities are being supported.**
5. **The gaps or areas where very limited progress has been made on sub-national government prioritisation of S&H in the region.**

2 Method and limitations of the study

To reach our study objectives, we conducted a rapid transversal qualitative study, combining literature review, online questionnaire, and an in-depth interview (an outline of key informants is provided in the annex). Investigations were conducted in English and French.

The literature review was conducted to confirm and substantiate our data, with international academic and policy databases searched using specialised databases (for example, JMP), and more widely using Google Scholar. The full texts of the documents referenced were accessed in each case.

The online questionnaire was designed to be an online ‘debriefing’ survey and was shared with key informants to identify specific sub-national government areas to collect more data on. We purposively approached people working on S&H issues in West Africa, including local governments and NGO officials, S&H officers, and locally elected people. The initial net was cast wide and then narrowed down based on respondents and information found to be useful. Respondents were selected in three ways:

- A list of 13 key informants was selected from the SLH contacts database. These were officers from NGOs and UN agencies across West African countries.
- A list of 10 focal persons for S&H in West Africa taken from a previous study (WaterAid 2021) were included. The focal persons were selected from among S&H officers working at national levels.
- Three locally elected people/local government staff were selected using a ‘snowball’ approach, identified through the initial respondents of the online questionnaire. They were contacted through telephone, WhatsApp, and email but did not reply. One expressed some reluctance to participate in the study.

The questionnaire was sent to around 30 people, of whom 11 completed it (eight filled it out online and three delivered detailed responses using a MS Word document). An in-depth interview was also conducted via Zoom with one respondent from the WaterAid study.

In summary,

Type of data source	Number
Online questionnaire	11
In-depth interview	1

This resulted in primary data being collected from seven countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria, Togo, Liberia, and Ghana.

We transcribed all the audio materials before proceeding to content analysis. An external assistant was hired to support this, who also participated in the interviews. She transcribed using her own notes and the Zoom records. From the transcriptions, we proceeded to content analysis.

The quotes included in this report come from both the online questionnaire responses and the interview.

The study was constrained/limited by the low rate of responses received from the targeted key informants, given the short time allocated to it. Key informants were not available for a scheduled focus group discussion, which was ultimately cancelled. Despite relaunches (by email, WhatsApp, and direct phone call with a local government authority in Benin), the majority of targeted key informants did not reply. This situation may have been due to multiple end-of-year tasks.

3 Findings

3.1 Local governments identified as prioritising sanitation and hygiene

Several governments were identified as champions in S&H; the table below summarises their commitments made.

Benin

Local government	Rural/urban (if known)	Commitment made	Partners
Parakou	Urban	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Situation analysis • Basic S&H project developed and implemented • Large partnership with various stakeholders • Sensitisation of population • Latrine building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipality of Orleans (France) • Civil society • NGOs • National water company of Benin

Ghana

Local government	Rural/urban (if known)	Commitment made	Partners
Kpandai district		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of motorbikes to enable field facilitators to move to the communities • Provision of mobile phones for S&H data collection • Sanitation projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNICEF • Regional Interagency Coordinating Committee on Sanitation (RICCS) • WaterAid

Togo

Local government	Rural/urban (if known)	Commitment made	Partners
Kozah 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of the first sewage treatment plant in Togo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SIAAP (a French utility company in charge of wastewater, rainwater and industrial water in Paris, www.siaap.fr)
Lac 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sanitation installations in households Total subsidy for the poorest Instalment payment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipality of Les Yvelines (France)

Mali

Local government	Rural/urban (if known)	Commitment made	Partners
Commune VI	Urban	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeting the elderly 'Citizenship jury' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jigi RECOTRADE WaterAid

Burkina Faso

Local government	Rural/urban (if known)	Commitment made	Partners
Dori	Urban	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment of S&H staff Strategic planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WaterAid EEA (a pan-African agency for water & sanitation) National Water and Sanitation Office (ONEA)

Nigeria

Local government	Rural/urban (if known)	Commitment made	Partners
Ado		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Erection of WASH departments in LGAs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural Agency for Water Supply and Sanitation (RUWASSA) LGA Task Group on Sanitation
Logo			
Kwande			
Gwer West			
Kanke			
Pankshin			
Langtang			

3.2 General lessons learnt

3.2.1 S&H priorities and gaps

A combination of factors, including the serious situation of S&H in the majority of cities and villages and the economic crisis, among others, led to a shift in S&H policies; indeed, the paradigm shifted from infrastructure development to public health policies in S&H promotion (Jiménez, Mtango, and Cairncross 2014). This shift was induced and supported by international agendas (the Millennium Development Goals and subsequent SDGs).

In this study, respondents were asked to rate (from 0 to 5) progress made by local governments across six areas of S&H. Weighted average scores for each area are shown as a satisfaction index in Figure 1. Higher scores suggest perceptions of greater progress, although none of the areas scored highly.

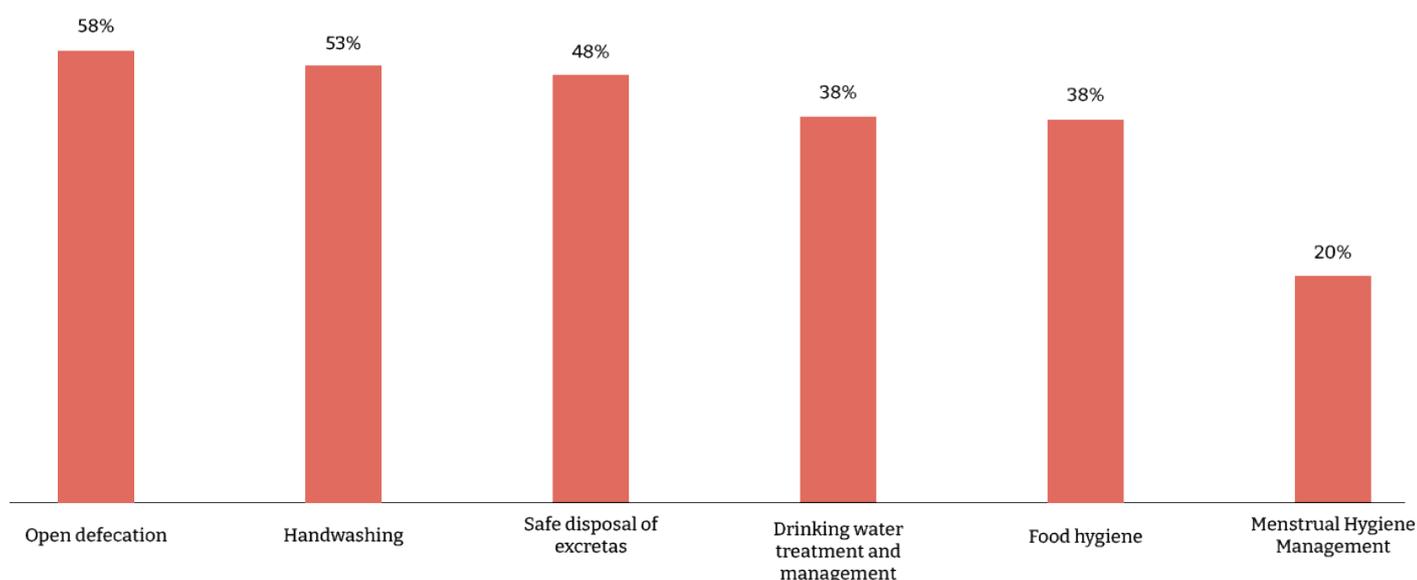


Figure 1: Satisfaction index² of respondents' prioritisation of S&H

Although based on a small sample, these responses suggest that the problem of open defecation is still insufficiently prioritised by local governments, particularly considering that most respondents were identified based on the understanding that the local governments they work with had made some progress in improving S&H. Even where significant achievements have been made, there is still a need to continue efforts. This is highlighted in the following quotes:

'The approach in Liberia is the CLTS [community-led total sanitation] and with this after almost ten years of CLTS implementation the rate of open defecation is 42 per cent. Slippage of ODF communities are high and there is limited private sector investment in sanitation. Local government is reacting rather than being proactive'. **WASH specialist, Liberia**

'Despite the efforts made, some areas where open defecation is still practised exist in the peripheral localities of the city of Parakou'. **WASH senior advisor, Benin**

² The stakeholders' appreciation of the different themes under review were measured on a Lickert scale from 0 (not satisfactory at all) to 5 (fully satisfactory). The satisfaction index for each category was calculated by multiplying each score (0 to 5) by the number of responses giving that score. These were then added together and divided by the total responses multiplied by 5.

3.3 Decentralisation and decision making

With the renewed interest in decentralisation in West African countries since the 1980s (Hagberg 2010), responsibility for S&H has increasingly fallen under local government authorities. However, some countries still remain centralised, specifically Liberia, which experienced a long political and military crisis in the 1990s:

‘In Liberia, resources are centralised to national government institutions. Local government or counties receive funding from the central revenue source and these local governments are not allowed by law to collect revenue’. **WASH specialist, Liberia**

Where decision making has been truly decentralised, political will towards S&H is seen at sub-national levels through political and strategic plans. The local planning process is the main opportunity to introduce S&H into sub-governmental priorities, and the effectiveness of prioritising S&H at the sub-national level depends on the planning practices. In West Africa, with the development of the decentralisation policies, sub-national governments regularly elaborate local plans (namely Local Development Plans in most of the countries).

Depending on the profile of the country (considering, for example, history and policies), local plans may be linked to national ones, often for funding reasons. For example:

‘Planning is done mostly at national levels... Since the implementation of S&H is reliant on central government financing, not much can be done at subnational levels. Decisions are made from national levels’. **WASH specialist, Liberia.**

This modality can be considered to be deconcentrated rather than decentralised.³

However, planning does not guarantee adequate implementation. Indeed, in West Africa, political and strategical planning often suffer from a lack of implementation (Wone 2018). Big challenges remain to align sub-national agendas to national ones, especially regarding open defecation in West Africa. Decisive progress in eliminating open defecation can only be achieved by combining the efforts of the central level with those of local governments.

Based on interview responses, the following factors are considered crucial for the emergence of S&H champions at the local government level:

- **A strong partnership with international organisations or municipalities.**
- **Advocacy and influencing from UN agencies (e.g. UNICEF) or NGOs (e.g. WaterAid, United Purpose), ultimately linked to the SDGs.**
- **Media engagement, which helps in information and advocacy. Local government authorities are actually very sensitive to public messages, in particular when they are conveyed by representative entities from civil society.**
- **Local political will and vision, embodied by the engagement of the mayor and of the councillors and sub-national government officers.**
- **The availability of technical support, through the commitment of the deconcentrated services of the national government. Indeed, the competencies currently devolved to the municipalities were assumed by central state services (i.e. deconcentrated services).**
- **High level advocacy to key policy makers (e.g. the executive governors of states in Nigeria).**

These factors can be seen in the modalities adopted by local governments in West Africa to prioritise S&H, detailed in the following section.

³ Decentralisation refers to a range of localised governance arrangements which transfer power from a central authority to lower hierarchical levels, while deconcentration consists of shifting responsibility or tasks, but not decision-making power, to geographically dispersed agents (Yuliani 2004).

3.4 Local government modalities for prioritising S&H

Two scenarios arise, regarding local government involvement in S&H:

1. Local government-led initiatives
2. Externally supported local government initiatives

1) Local government-led initiatives

Interesting, locally developed and funded S&H projects are emerging in West African countries. Programming and funding of these are typically shared between federal/central and local governments.

In *Nigeria*, local initiatives to prioritise S&H involved the creation of adequate structures: WASH departments with staffed units were set up in the local government authorities (LGAs). National data on the S&H situation (disaggregated by sub-national governments) was shared with sub-national governments, and motivated LGAs to act. Also, in Nigeria, several other actions drove local authorities to take S&H actions:

- the State Agency (RUWASSA/Rural Agency for Water Supply and Sanitation) put in place a mechanism to encourage local government chairmen to improve S&H in their LGAs.
- an LGA-level Task Group on Sanitation was set up to verify the ODF status of communities.
- programmes are actively recruiting local leaders to be champions, increasing visibility and enthusiasm for the programmes within LGAs.
- S&H programming is LGA-wide rather than only involving a few communities.

For example:

The following examples are from Nigeria: Ado, Logo, Kwande, Gboko and Gwer West LGAs of Benue state. Kanke, Pankshin and Langtang North LGAs of Plateau state.

Logo, Ado and Kwande, based on an initiative from the LGA, had financial resources allocated for sanitation. Ado, Gboko and Gwer East had support from the governor.

Kanke, Pankshin and Langtang had an arrangement whereby money is taken from the joint account held by the LGAs and the state for WASH activities, including school sanitation facilities and CLTS implementation. **Sanitation project manager, Nigeria**

However, despite this progress, one respondent reported: 'Efforts being made at the national levels are yet to trickle to the subnational levels and this is necessary in a federalism, otherwise the impact will be minimal'. **WASH Specialist, Nigeria**

In *Ghana*, local government support has included the provision of equipment to S&H staff:

Kpandai District Assembly in the northern region of Ghana has supported Sanitation and Hygiene programming by providing motorbikes to enable field facilitators to move to the communities in hard-to-reach areas without much difficulty. The assembly also provided mobile phones to support the collection of sanitation and hygiene data upload onto the nation's Basic Sanitation Information System (BaSIS). District authorities release funds on a timely basis for field level activities. **WASH officer, Ghana**

In *Benin*, S&H has been prioritised during the communal development planning process, with the support of technical and financial partners and of consultants recruited especially, in a long and participative process.

In *Mali*, the implementation of CLTS and post-ODF activities provided the opportunity, more widely, to develop action plans for S&H.

2) Externally supported local government initiatives

For newly created local governments, decentralisation very often means strong support from the central state and its deconcentrated services. They bring technical, material, and financial means. Joint ventures involving a large partnership with municipalities, the private sector, public services, and civil society organisations, along with public–public and public–private partnerships, are expected to bring more efficiency and transparency (Egly and Zürcher 2007) to decentralised S&H projects. However, the medium- and long-term outcomes of this type of project need to be assessed to understand not only their value added but also their sustainability, considering that decentralisation in West Africa was supposed to reinforce ownership.

For example, to strengthen the consideration of S&H in local policies, WaterAid supported the development of separate S&H plans, integrated with marketing plans, in the countries where it operates in West Africa (Sierra Leone, Niger, Ghana, Nigeria, Mali, and Burkina Faso). In these countries, at the sub-national levels, WaterAid initiated a planning process with local governments centred on S&H issues. Through several workshops, they first assessed the needs in terms of facilities for each village located in their area of intervention. After that, investment plans were issued. However, funding is still reliant on external sources. Ownership and funding were the main issues faced in these projects: elected people, after issuing local S&H plans, were inclined to turn to partners (including WaterAid) for funding, instead of relying on local resources. This can be observed in several West African countries, particularly in *Togo*, *Nigeria*, and *Ghana*:

‘Commune of Kozah 1: Thanks to the cooperation with SIAAP [the greater Paris sanitation authority] in France, the commune has created the first sewage treatment plant in Togo.

Commune of Lacs 1: Decentralised cooperation with Les Yvelines [a town in France] for the implementation of sanitation projects’. **Freelance consultant in S&H, Togo.**

Given the weak resource allocation to S&H, local governments often have no alternative than to rely on decentralised cooperation to fund and implement their S&H projects. From this perspective, the experience of Parakou (an urban local government in Benin) offers an edifying example, in the box below. (Nouatin and Bachabi 2010; Bénin: Une démarche de certification de la qualité selon les normes ISO - Services d’eau et d’assainissement, n.d.)

Benin initiated a decentralisation policy in 2003. Parakou, one of the main cities in the country, benefits from a special status, due to:

- its population (greater than 100,000 inhabitants)
- its size (more than 10 kilometers)
- its relative ‘wealth’, enabling it to meet operating and investment expenses

This special status gives municipalities increased responsibilities, especially in terms of investment, and forces them to imagine innovative strategies to increase their operational capacities.

Parakou municipality considered S&H to be a top priority. Through cooperation with Orleans (a city in France), in 2010 the municipality initiated a sanitation project that aimed to facilitate universal access to basic S&H services. To implement the project, the town hall adopted a concerted and participatory method with a working committee that brought together, under the guidance of the municipality of Parakou, representatives of:

- the departmental water services (a deconcentrated service),
- the departmental coordination of basic S&H (also a deconcentrated service),
- the multi-year support programme for water and sanitation (PPEA),

- the municipal technical services,
- the national water company of Benin (Soneb), and
- civil society (including NGOs involved in S&H).

The committee met once a week with the aim of establishing, for each ISO standard, a diagnosis of the situation in Parakou, to identify the problems of the municipality and the improvement objectives, and to establish a programme of necessary actions.

This project was financially supported by municipalities of Parakou and Orleans, the regional council of the centre (part of Benin) and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The budget planned for the period 2010–2015 was € 63,750 (€ 39,750 for 2010–2012 and € 24,000 for 2013–2015).

Among the short-term priority actions, several were carried out, including:

- implementation of the municipal hygiene and sanitation plan, to ensure a better sanitation and management system for liquid waste generated by households with, in particular, the establishment of a reference document;
- rehabilitation of public latrines;
- sensitisation of the populations living around the Okpara dam on the need to safeguard its current capacity;
- organisation of the informal water sales channel (accounting for service providers, sanitary control of the quality of the water sold, etc.);
- creation of perimeters of protection for sources of water supply, with measures to respect them and to secure them.

The *Ghanaian* process to promote S&H at the local level is explained in the box below:

‘An RBF scheme was rolled out in 2018 to make donor support for S&H competitive. UNICEF moved away from supporting traditional district assemblies and opened the support up for all district assemblies. The change was communicated strongly with workshops at national, regional, and district levels. Then an expression of interest was advertised for interested districts to apply. An assessment was carried out by a selected team to identify qualifying assemblies. To strengthen the scoring, the candidates went through a second level of assessment. The teams comprised the regional level staff as well the Regional Interagency Coordinating Committee on Sanitation, the highest level coordinating mechanism for sanitation in each region. Qualified districts subsequently went through negotiation of rates for financial support. Not only did this give the qualified districts the opportunity to come up with desired rates but also provided some transparency and blocked out all opportunities for excuses not to deliver on sanitation and hygiene results. As part of the negotiations, UNICEF was also able to advocate for districts’ support as duty bearers to drive the achievement of results. A rating system for districts, the district ODF league table, was also instituted at the regional level, which challenged district leadership to strive for achievement of results in order to have a good placement on the league table’. **WASH officer (S&H), Ghana**

4.5 Stakeholders and support

Beyond local authorities, several categories of actor support S&H at the sub-national level in West Africa: national/central institutions, local governments branches, UNICEF, NGOs, civil society organisations, chiefs, and traditional rulers.

At the central/national level, in each of the West African countries, there are supervisory and assistance bodies, dedicated to support S&H programmes. They are generally branches inside ministries of local governments: sanitation, water resources, public health, environment, or other departments with such responsibilities.

Governmental entities give technical and logistical support, including capacity building.

In **Nigeria**, the Environmental Health and Sanitation Directorate (EHSD) has the mandate to oversee the S&H activities in the country and they are the key department for CLTS implementation in the country. The Department of Community Development is responsible for social mobilisation, and therefore teams up with EHSD to bring people and communities together for the sanitation and hygiene programme.

In **Benin**, the departmental coordination of S&H (CDC-HAB) is a deconcentrated service of the central state, and works closely with NGOs to support S&H programmes at the sub-national level.

NGOs are also central to S&H in West Africa, in particular in remote rural areas. Many are involved in capacity building, advocacy, funding, training, and technical assistance. Their funds came from international donations, and are subject to the supervision of central governments. This is particularly true in francophone countries such as Burkina Faso, where the central government exercises an “a priori” control of management acts, controlling administrative processes particularly prior to implementation (GIZ 2019).

In **Liberia**, according to the 2017 Water Sanitation and Hygiene Sector Performance Report, over 95 per cent of financing for H&S came from donor organisations. Donors have preferred to fund S&H through INGOs/NGOs. Plans or design for S&H implementation are mostly donor driven. National government inputs on most INGO/NGO workplans are limited, although UNICEF is one institution in Liberia that allows government inputs and sign-off on its annual work plan. Afram Plains Development Organisation (an NGO working on S&H) also provided district resource persons to support capacity strengthening of the government staff and monitoring of implementation at lower levels in Liberia.

NGOs in West Africa have also tried to promote the private sector through S&H projects. They promote local entrepreneurship for latrine building and maintenance, and recycling of sludge. On the technical aspects, NGO Eau Vive (in **Togo**) provided support to the control of local infrastructure, giving a good example of what an NGO could do. A full-time assistant technician has been recruited to provide technical support to the mayorality of Kozah. Several other NGOs working on the S&H are also cited, including: WaterAid, DECAM-Bethesda, Country Woman Association of Nigeria (COWAN), Jigi, and RECOTRADE (Mali).

UN agencies, in particular UNICEF, convey and support the international S&H agenda at the country level, including in local governments. They act under the authority and the supervision of the government, through high level advocacy, establishment of standards and guidelines, and technical advice.

4.6 Tackling inequalities and inequities

Several sub-national mitigation mechanisms have been set up to improve access to S&H for potentially disadvantaged people. Most policies address issues of inequality or inequity. These policies require that issues for women, girls, and disadvantaged groups are considered during planning, design, and implementation. Sub-national/local governments are obliged to monitor and evaluate implementation of S&H through the lens of these policies.

Examples from across the region include:

In **Nigeria**, ‘a community selection process led to identification of most vulnerable communities for intervention. Community wealth ranking helped to identify the poorest households for support’.

Sanitation project manager, Nigeria

In the old centre of the city of Parakou (**Benin**) where many poor families live who cannot individually build their own household latrines, the mayorality built public latrines to provide access to S&H services and put an end to open defecation, according to a WASH senior advisor. The mayorality delegated the management of the public latrines to small private businesses chosen from among the recipient communities. The vulnerable populations use the latrines (and annex facilities) at an affordable price, fixed by the mayorality. The private small company ensures the upkeep of the latrines and pays a monthly fee to the mayorality.

In **Togo**, a system facilitating access to infrastructure for people who are vulnerable has been defined and takes two forms: (1) total subsidy for the more vulnerable households, and (2) for the others, authorisation of payments in instalments. In **Mali**, older people are specially targeted for access to latrines. Another example from **Mali** is the ‘citizenship jury’, in Commune VI of Bamako, which offers an example of locally initiated action to increase community participation and democratise access to S&H services, supported by an NGO:

Commune VI is one of the six communes in the district of Bamako. It is subdivided into ten large quarters. Before the citizen jury initiative, the representation of marginalised and vulnerable groups of the population, especially women and young people, was low in civil society organisations and other local sanitation management institutions. This is partly explained by the limited participation of citizens in the implementation of projects and especially of women in structures and decision-making bodies. The ‘citizen jury’ initiative in Commune VI is part of the ‘Equitable and sustainable access to WASH services’ project, which aims to improve the conditions of poor communities living in peri-urban areas, and to reduce inequalities through human rights-based approach.

This initiative aims to:

- strengthen citizen participation in sanitation management,
- promote awareness, and
- improve governance for sanitation.

The project encouraged the participation of all social categories in the search for sustainable solutions to sanitation problems in the municipality.

Following recommendations of the citizen juries, watch committees and the ‘Citizen Me’ campaign were established, and people were mobilised around other project activities, especially women and young people (for example, in the citizen campaign and in sanitation days in neighbourhoods supported by the watch committees). The fact that watch committees participated in the budget process and in the restitution of the administrative account are proof of increased citizenship awareness on sanitation issues.

Communities are now more empowered and able to claim their rights from authorities: during the process, most juries were empowered and gained skills to make decisions about sanitation management. Jury members actively participate in public debates on sanitation. During the sessions, participants repeatedly call out the authorities regarding the violation of sanitation rights (for example, COGEVAD, the Waste Management and Recovery Committee in Commune VI and the coordination of sanitation Economic Interest Groupings).

The project contributed to an increase in the budget allocated to sanitation, and succeeded in transforming the system of governance by strengthening the responsiveness and accountability of local authorities. As of 2019, the budget allocated to sanitation amounted to 250,000,000 FCFA, an increase of more than 50 per cent through the participation of monitoring committees in the debate.

In **Nigeria**, field facilitators ensured that willing women were included in the natural leaders who manage triggered communities.

In **Ghana**, the piloting of financing options under the District Sanitation Fund to support the construction of improved latrines was opened to both male- and female-headed households to address the gender gaps. A social support fund has also been established under the scheme, which provides funding to vulnerable households and resulted in the construction of 126 improved latrines.

In communities in the Kpandai district (Ghana), women have been fully involved in construction of latrines and management of the ODF communities. Donors who have made field visits to some of these communities have been impressed and this has made the Kpandai district exemplary in terms of CLTS implementation.

So far, all 126 household latrines planned for the vulnerable have been constructed. This has largely been through the support of latrine artisans trained in each district to ensure the availability of manpower to deliver the required latrines.

Still in Ghana, the District Interagency Coordination Committee on Sanitation (DICCS), which is the main coordinating structure at the district level and which draws key interdepartmental representatives together, has helped the district to achieve results. The DICCS is particularly strong in Kpandai and has enjoyed management support in rolling out the results-based financing scheme.

4.7 Challenges

West African S&H projects face several challenges that slow down the achievement of the objectives.

1. **Funding** is reported as the main challenge encountered in S&H projects at the sub-national level. Funds came mainly from NGOs and families. West African local government financial capacities are, in general, very weak. There are no strong and sustainable funding mechanisms to maintain and strengthen the gains in S&H.
2. **Ownership**: respondents reported that LGAs, and more widely beneficiary populations, are not aware enough of S&H as sub-national priorities. Actions are considered as 'external' contributions, and not as crucial inputs for local socioeconomic development. Attempts to develop an S&H value chain has not yet demonstrated efficiency.
3. **Dialogue between national and sub-national governments**: it seems that the relations between national and sub-national governments are typically 'top-down'. Local governments receive policies, guidelines and technical inputs from central governments. Decentralised cooperation is often orientated to promising projects, but not enough lessons are learnt from these projects in term of sustainability.

5 Conclusion

The rapid study on sub-national strengthening systems for S&H in West Africa programming was conducted using information from seven countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria, Togo, Liberia, and Ghana.

Across West Africa, decentralisation is a relatively a new process. Countries have gradually installed governance systems that give, to varying degrees, new responsibilities to local governments. S&H are among those responsibilities that are regularly transferred to local governments, in all the countries studied.

As these responsibilities are taken on, some interesting initiatives can be seen. Supported by UN agencies and NGOs, local government authorities seem to be aware of S&H issues. Municipalities have developed interesting medium-term and long-term projects with external partners, jointly funded and managed, for example in Parakou, Benin, and Kozah 1 and Lac 1 in Togo.

Although real, the local government leadership in these cases is somewhat masked by the financial and technical power of the partners, who are often wealthy northern municipalities. In some English-speaking countries, where decentralisation seems to be more established, locally centred S&H projects (albeit with components of external support) are reported.

Several factors drive local governments to prioritise S&H: awareness and advocacy from UN agencies and NGOs, media action, availability of technical support (from deconcentrated services of central government or other partners), political will, and vision of local government authorities. Central government technical services, UN agencies, NGOs, and municipalities from high-income countries, are the main technical and financial supports for local governments in their S&H initiatives.

A few local governments have been identified in our study as champions in tackling inequities in S&H access: supporting the most vulnerable people, providing subsidies to poor households, and supporting women's empowerment are some of the mitigation mechanisms implemented by local governments in West Africa to promote equity in S&H services access. However, the majority of these efforts are supported by external donors.

The gaps in local governments' S&H efforts are the same as those seen at national levels. Overall, further work is needed to strengthen the capacity of local governments to ensure improved S&H for all.

6 Recommendations for next steps

Several short-, medium-, and long-term recommendations can be drawn from our study, addressed to researchers, NGOs, and local government authorities. They are summarised in the table below.

	Short term	Medium term	Long term
Researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct an in-depth qualitative study targeting LGAs to better understand the obstacles to the development of strong leadership in the field of S&H in West Africa, particularly in francophone countries. 		
LGA		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop sub-national capacities (financial, technical, and human) for the development and implementation of S&H projects, locally. Allocate substantial budgets to S&H projects. Learn from attempts to leverage the local private sector in S&H projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include systematic ownership plans in S&H projects.
NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pursue advocacy targeting LGAs to enhance awareness and accountability regarding S&H priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the development of funding mechanisms for S&H projects, based on matched funds. Organise visits to LGAs with successful S&H projects. 	

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Annex

People interviewed		
Position	Country	Activity
WASH Specialist	Liberia	Online questionnaire + In-depth interview via Zoom
Senior Regional Technical Adviser	Mali	In-depth interview via Zoom
Sanitation Project Manager	Nigeria	Online questionnaire
Freelance Consultant in S&H	Togo	Online questionnaire
WASH Senior Advisor	Benin	Online questionnaire
WASH Specialist	Mali	Online questionnaire
WASH Specialist	Nigeria	Online questionnaire
Programme Manager	Nigeria	Online questionnaire
WASH Officer (Sanitation & Hygiene)	Ghana	Online questionnaire
Head of Capacity Building and Learning	Mali	Written responses and sent by email.
Manager of Human Rights to Water and Sanitation	Burkina Faso	Written responses and sent by email.
Head of Programmes	Burkina Faso	Written responses and sent by email.

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We believe that achieving safely managed sanitation and hygiene for all by 2030 requires timely, relevant and actionable learning. The speed of implementation and change needed means that rapidly learning about what is needed, what works and what does not, filling gaps in knowledge, and finding answers that provide practical ideas for policy and practice can have exceptionally widespread impact.

Our mission is to enable the S&H sector to innovate, adapt and collaborate in a rapidly evolving landscape, feeding learning into policies and practice. Our vision is that everyone is able to realise their right to safely managed sanitation and hygiene, making sure no one is left behind in the drive to end open defecation for good.



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