

CONIWAS' POSITION ON THE PROVISION AND MANAGEMENT OF WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH) FACILITIES IN BASIC SCHOOLS IN GHANA

A position paper developed by the Coalition of NGOs in Water and Sanitation (CONIWAS), and presented to the Government of Ghana through the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development.

1. Overview

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.a requires countries to “**build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.**” Obviously, such schools cannot be said to meet this SDG requirement if they are without improved toilets, safe drinking water and proper hygiene. Ghana therefore stands the risk of missing the SDG 4a target when more than 9,000 basic schools in the country have no toilets and over 10,000 have no safe drinking water¹. Given the urgency required to ensure the safety of every Ghanaian child while in school, and to fulfill Ghana’s commitment to the SDGs by 2030, CONIWAS presents this paper to articulate its position on the provision and management of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities in basic schools in Ghana.

2. Snapshot of the existing stock of WASH facilities in basic schools

Available reports from EMIS (2018) indicate that 30% and 49% of all basic schools (public and private) in Ghana lack access to basic sanitation and water facilities respectively. Between 2013 and 2018, the proportion of public basic schools with access to improved toilet facilities increased from 60 to 65%. Within the same period, the proportion of private basic schools with access to improved toilet facilities reduced from 84 to 82%. This means that nationally, there was only one percent improvement in access to improved sanitation from 69 to 70%. With this rate of improvement, it is feared that it might take the country another 150 years to cover the remaining 30% of all schools without access to improved toilet facilities.

With regards to access to safe drinking water, there was a 6% reduction between 2013 and 2017 from 57% to 51%. While the proportion of public schools with access to improved drinking water facilities reduced from 44% to 42%, private basic schools rather witnessed a reduction from 78% to 74% within the same period. Nationally, therefore, there was a reduction in the proportion of basic schools with access to improved drinking water facilities by 6% between 2013 and 2017.

3. National efforts to improve the WASH in Schools situation

Inspired by the National Sanitation Policy (2010) and the National Water Policy (2007), the Ghana Education Service, with support from UNICEF, developed Minimum Standards and Implementation Model for WASH in schools in 2014. This comprehensive document provides

¹ Education Management Information System (EMIS) 2017

clear guidelines on all aspects (both hardware and software) of WASH in schools implementation. Based on these guidelines and model, several WASH in schools initiatives have been implemented across the country with varying outcomes. Development Partners and international NGOs like UNICEF, World Vision Ghana, PLAN Ghana, Safe Water Network Ghana, Global Communities, WaterAid Ghana and many more continue to support government efforts by providing WASH facilities to basic schools across the country. Likewise, the recent Greater Accra Metropolitan Area (GAMA) Sanitation and Water Project, which provided modern toilet facilities to about 260 schools within the metropolitan areas of the Region as at November 2018.

4. Summary issues and implications for the attainment of SDG 4a

Even though the Minimum Standards for WASH in Schools have been developed with the accompanying Implementation Model and a costed strategy, there is little effort in rolling them out in all schools. This could be attributed to the wide access gap translating to over 2.5 million school children being at risk of contracting preventable WASH-related diseases across the country. The consistent failure of all successive governments in releasing full budgetary allocations for various WASH interventions has made the situation worse. With such a grim picture, there is no guarantee that there would be the desired progress in ensuring that Ghana achieves the SDGs for WASH in Schools (SDG 4a).

5. CONIWAS Position Statements

a. Close the Access Gap Now

With 58% of basic schools without safe drinking water and 30% without basic toilet facilities, it is evident that the teaching and learning environment in basic schools in Ghana are largely not effective. Closing the access gap involves building and upgrading educational facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environment for all. The Ministry of Education therefore needs to develop a plan to close the access gap by the end of 2019, while the GoG through the Ministry of Finance ensures that adequate budgetary allocations are made and released to finance the plan.

b. Adhere to the minimum standards for WASH in School implementation

Various project reports by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) indicate that several school WASH facilities do not meet the minimum standards. By adhering to and deploying the Minimum Standards for WASH in Schools in all basic schools, its implementation would be standardized, speeding up the attainment of the SDG goal 4a.

c. Include a Budget for Operation and Maintenance for WASH in Schools

According to the Implementation Model for the Minimum Standards for WASH in Schools, the School Management Committee and PTA will facilitate the provision of soap, availability of water and desludging services in conjunction with the Environmental Health Officers, while the Head Teacher and the teacher responsible for hygiene education will have overall responsibility for the day-to-day management of the facilities. However, given current

restrictions in collection of fees from parents in public schools, the SMC and head teachers find it difficult to play these roles effectively. In some cases, they only resort to locking up the toilet facilities. School toilet and water facilities can only be maintained and operated effectively when there is adequate budgetary allocation for that purpose.

Even though the capitation grant is expected to cover maintenance of school facilities (including WASH facilities), the total grant of GHS 9.00 per pupil per year is woefully inadequate. According to an analysis done by the GAMA Sanitation and Water Project, it will require an estimated cost of GH45.00 per pupil per year to operate and maintain a six-seater Water Closet toilet used by between 300 and 350 pupils.

CONIWAS, an alliance of NGOs and CSOs working in the WASH sector, has a mission of working in partnership with sector players to influence policies, remove barriers and promote access to safe water, improved sanitation and hygiene for the poor and vulnerable. It has its national secretariat in Asylum Down – Accra, but operates nationally through its zonal coordination outfits in the Northern, Middle and Southern zones of the country