

USAID/E3 Water Communications and Knowledge Management (CKM) Project

GLOBAL WATERS RADIO

Emmanuel Odotei on WASH Innovations in Ghana

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Global Waters Radio: You are tuned in to Global Waters Radio, a podcast series produced by the Water Team at the U.S. Agency for International Development. The series offers listeners insights from USAID officials, development partners, thought leaders, and experts from across the water sector, as they discuss current USAID water programming and cutting edge research from around the world.

This week on the podcast, Emmanuel Odotei. Emmanuel is a veteran water, sanitation, and hygiene specialist, with more than 30 years of experience in the sector. He is the WASH Project Management Specialist for USAID/Ghana, and served as Activity Manager for the recently concluded Water Access Sanitation and Hygiene for the Urban Poor project. Also known as WASH-UP, that 7-year initiative was supported by both USAID/Ghana and USAID/West Africa, and used market-based approaches to improve WASH services and infrastructure in Ghana's urban slums. Today, Emmanuel is helping oversee the WASH for Health project, a 5-year initiative concluding in 2020 that aims to improve water supply and sanitation access in 30 districts in rural Ghana, using infrastructure improvements and behavior change campaigns in the community and the classroom.

Emmanuel, to set the stage, tell our listeners about Ghana's outlook in terms of reaching Target 6 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which seeks to achieve universal access to water and sanitation by 2030—how is Ghana doing so far?

Emmanuel Odotei: In terms of the Sustainable Development Goals, when it comes to water, Ghana is far ahead. We are over and above our target. Right now, Ghana is around 86 percent water supply. But when it comes to sanitation, Ghana is far way back; we are doing poorly because we are at 15 percent. The reason being that, not that there are no latrines in Ghana—there are latrines—but most of the latrines are shared latrines. And shared latrines, because of management issues, are not counted when it comes to the Sustainable Development Goals.

The main problem in Ghana is also that most of our homes, because of urbanization, most latrine compartments have been turned into sleeping rooms. So there are houses in Ghana where you don't have latrines at all. As a result of that, people use open spaces, and sometimes they even use bushes. And there is open defecation. But government has also

done very good with, by now coming out with sanitation policy and we are now looking at community development to sanitation approach, CLTS [community-led total sanitation], and now all organizations are using that in the rural areas to trigger and make sure that people have access to latrines. And we are now promoting household latrines. And in Ghana, you would be surprised that we have so many sanitation laws that have been propagated, but they are not being enforced.

That is one of our weakest links. So, the new government that just took over the reins of government will come out with the new ministry, calling it the Ministry of Water and Sanitation. It's going to be a standalone ministry looking at water and sanitation—we, as a Mission, we are now pushing the agenda that we should add social behavior change communication to that ministry, so that then it be a holistic ministry looking at water, sanitation, and then behavior change communication. Then at least we know that the three-pronged approach to water, sanitation, and hygiene are being addressed in that ministry. So, in a nutshell, this is what is going on in Ghana.

GWR: As you know, USAID has recently funded programming in Liberia that successfully promoted community-led total sanitation, and helped reduce the prevalence of open defecation in rural areas. Have the sanitation experiences of Ghana's West African neighbors influenced the design and implementation of sanitation programming in Ghana, and has there been any collaboration between countries?

EO: Yes, the Mission has really gone ahead to do that. We even invited Liberia Mission to share their experience with us, and we have even gone beyond that by looking at natural leaders and also looking at the private sector. So right now, we are leveraging resources with the private sector to make sure that we address the issue of CLTS in Ghana. We are also in sync with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and right now in northern Ghana we are researching into what works in CLTS, because you can't just pick everything wholesale from a country's perspective—cultures and other traditions are dynamic. So Ghana is looking at CLTS approaches based on the issues on the ground in Ghana.

GWR: What innovations for improving sanitation and water security in Ghana are you most excited about, and why?

EO: So, the innovations in WASH and Ghana which the Mission has done is about the STIP—Science, Technology, Innovations, and Partnerships.

For instance, in science, we have been able to liaise with a manufacturer that did the Biofil. The Biofil is a latrine that, worms are introduced into a digester, and this digester, irrespective of the land size, you are able to build a latrine for a community or a household. And the worms are introduced, and the worms feed on the feces, and people couldn't believe that worms could work on the feces very fast, and reduces the size of the material. And when the latrine is constructed, it can go for 10 to 15 years without evacuation. It's in situ, and the worms work on the feces.

Then also, another innovation project is the manual borehole drilling. The amount that we can use in a mechanized boreholes—we can use the same amount to do three manual-drilled

boreholes in areas where the water table is very high. And in the central region, we've done over 50 manual borehole drills in inaccessible areas where the mechanized machines can't go.

Another innovation is about the plastic latrine that we have come up with. This has reduced the cost of construction of a latrine from about \$1000 to roughly about \$70. And, interestingly, it is catching on very well, but we are now targeting the poorest of the poor and the marginalized in households and communities that we work in, so that then people who can't afford to construct latrines will now have the wherewithal to now do construction of their own latrines in their homes.

In a nutshell, these are some of the innovations that we have brought on board. And we have been able also to spread our tentacles to bring so many private sector [actors] into the WASH fold in Ghana, as a result of Global Communities spearheading our development approach in WASH.

GWR: Would you say you are optimistic about Ghana's chances of hitting its sanitation target for the Sustainable Development Goals?

EO: Yes. Right now, we are on board as the USAID Mission, we are tackling sanitation. UNICEF is doing the same, the World Bank, The Netherlands' Embassy, the Canadian Embassy, and then KOIKA [Korea International Cooperation Agency]. So, together with government, if government will also pump resources into the sanitation sector, at least in the next 10 years Ghana should be able to even exceed our target for Sustainable Development Goals on sanitation.

GWR: Emmanuel, thanks so much for taking the time to join us.

EO: Thank you very much.

GWR: For more information on the projects in Ghana mentioned on this podcast, please click on the links below, and as always, if you have a topic you would like to see covered in a future edition of the podcast, drop us a line at waterteam@usaid.gov.

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