



REPUBLIC OF GHANA

ACCELERATING SAFE WATER SERVICES IN LOW-INCOME, HIGH POPULATION DENSITY URBAN AREAS IN GHANA

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INTRODUCTION

Context and Background:

- Ghana Water Limited (GWL): Leads urban water provision.



- Low-income Customer Support Department (LICSD): Tailored solutions for low-income urban communities.
- Objective: Understand challenges and drive household connections in high-density urban areas.



Key Findings:

- Limited access in unplanned areas.
- High financial costs deter connections.
- Proactive community engagement is key.

Action:

WASH project 2020 - Turning insights into solutions during COVID-19.

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THE PROBLEM

- Urban Surge: Ghana's rapid urbanization outpaces planning.



- Water Access Drops: Piped water connections fell from 41% (1990) to 32% (2015).



- Affordability: Many, especially in lower wealth brackets, struggle to afford household connections.



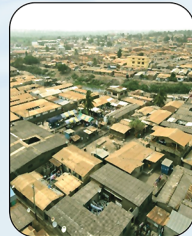
- Feedback Gap: Unclear complaint-reporting mechanisms for residents in low-income urban communities.



- Sachet Surge: Spike in sachet water consumption, despite being costlier than GWL's supply.



Typical view of a low-income urban community in Ghana



RESULTS

- Target Exceeded: Aimed for 50,000 beneficiaries; reached 67,291. Specifically: - 45,019 people benefitted from the flexible connection scheme, as a form of financial enablement/support



- 4,000 people benefitted from the provision of the water ATM standpipes (as an appropriate level of service for enhanced affordability)

- Over subscription of water connections due to the subsidies provided (i.e. from 1350 to 1504)



- Community meetings with the customers in the LICUs have increased considerably.



- WUAs now have established relationships with GWL. Any service-related issues that arise are quickly handled and resolved.

- Overall, quality of service has improved.

- Innovations' Impact: Strategies introduced led to the surpassing of project goals.



FUTURE DIRECTIONS

1. Scaling: Increase subsidized connections via new funding sources.
2. Community Ties: Strengthen ongoing community involvement.
3. Capacity Building: Enhance water ATM standpipes operations.
4. Safety Education: Amplify water safety awareness with WUAs.
5. Feedback Loop: Position WUAs as primary contact for service feedback.
6. Publication: Share findings in a detailed article.

APPROACH/STRATEGY

1. Research: Study of water supply to Low-income, High-Density Urban Areas
2. Infrastructure: Extend distribution pipelines.
3. Affordability: Offer subsidized connection fees, reduced cost of water services through the introduction of water ATM standpipes and indirect financial support through the flexible payment for connections.
4. Efficiency: Streamline the service application process.
5. Engagement: Amplify community outreach and promotion.
6. Feedback: Establish Water Users' Associations (WUAs) for direct feedback.
7. Accessibility: Introduce mobile offices
8. Innovation: Launch water ATM standpipes.
9. Follow-ups: Operational studies with the support of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology

LESSONS LEARNED

1. Subsidy Impact: Subsidies in LICUs boost pipe connections.
2. Engagement: Early community ties & land acquisitions are project accelerators.
3. Collaboration: Partnerships ensure knowledge transfer & financial stability
4. Education: Beyond infrastructure, water safety education is pivotal.
5. Utility Role: With specialized departments focusing on low-income service delivery, there is potential for scaling impact.
6. Homogeneity: African water utilities do not have homogenous domestic customers.

KEY PARTNERSHIPS

1. Policy: Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources.
2. Implementation: Ghana Water Limited.
3. Technical: UNICEF
4. Funding: Danish Embassy.
5. Research: Maple Consult and Kumasi Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST)

SUCCESS STORIES



1. ANNABEL
Annabel is an 11-year-old girl living at Kokrobite, a low-income community in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. She is a primary 5 pupil of Spring Garden International School. Until a year ago, she had to walk to a stream every morning to fetch water for the family before going to school, a distance that took about 30 minutes to cover. She often fell on her way and even broke her buckets occasionally. As a result, she was always late for school and often got punished for that. She and other children were also often pursued and physically assaulted by a supposed caretaker of the stream who sometimes prevented them from collecting water. Her mornings have been very different since the intervention of Ghana Water Limited, with support from UNICEF and the Embassy of the Kingdom of Denmark.

"Through the subsidized water connection, my mother could afford to get water connected to our home. Now when I wake up, I no longer have to walk a long distance to fetch water. I only have to do my house chores, fetch water from our home to bath and go to school. I am able to get to school on time feeling less tired. I no longer get punished for coming to school late and I perform better in school now."

According to Annabel's mother, they spend much less on water these days. The family used to spend Ten Ghana Cedis (GHS 10, which is approximately USD 0.9) a day on water for the household. Now they spend less than Fifty Ghana Cedis (GHS 50, which is approximately USD 4.5) a month, an average of One Ghana Cedi and Seventy Ghana Pesewas (GHS 1.7, which is approximately USD 0.2) daily. Annabel's mother is excited that she can now invest more in her children's education from the extra savings made.



2. CONSTANCE
Madam Constance Denu smokes fish, which she sells within and outside Kokrobite. Water is essential to her business, yet access was a huge challenge. Previously, she and her household had to depend on water from the river and private vendors in the community for use in her business and household. The closest of these water sources was about 5 minutes away from her home. Children in her household were responsible for fetching water for the preparation of the fish, a task which they sometimes had to do at night, putting them at risk, especially, at the river front. Despite these hurdles and her constant need for water, she could not afford to have her home connected to water from the Ghana Water Limited due to the high connection fee. The subsidy provided by this intervention was, therefore, an important lifeline. She used to pay One Ghana Cedi (GHS 1, which is approximately USD 0.1) for a bucket of water. Consistently with her occupation, she could use about 20 buckets or more a day (approximately USD 2.0 per day). As a result of this, she only bought a few buckets a day and supplemented it with water from the river.

"At my age, I can't go out to fetch water all the time. When the children are in school, I have to beg young ladies within my neighbourhood to fetch water for me to work with. So, in addition to paying so much to buy water from vendors in the community, I had to be paying these young ladies as well for fetching water for me. I was spending too much on water. Now that we have water in our home, even when fish is brought in at night, we have enough water to work without going out to get some. When I initially enquired about water connection, due to the distance of my house, I was given an estimate of about Three thousand Five hundred Ghana Cedis (GHS 3,500, which is approximately USD 318.20), which I could not afford. Due to the programme, however, we got our connection done for One thousand Ghana Cedis (GHS 1,000, which is approximately USD 90.9), and were even told we could pay in 3 installments," she said, with evident relief and gratitude.



3. ANGELA
Angela Anum is a seamstress and a member of the Water Users' Association (WUA) at Kokrobite, a low-income community in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. She does not yet have water connection and must collect water from a public stand-post and store it at home. For that reason, water safety matters a lot to her. She is glad, therefore, that as a member of the WUA she sensitizes her community on the safe storage and efficient use of water. She is also happy to serve as an interface between GWL and the community, helping the community channel their concerns to the company, clamping down on illegal connections and encouraging connected households to pay their bills promptly. She feels her work has yielded positive results so far.

Due to the intervention, Angela now has access to an automated water vending point (referred to as "water ATM" due to its resemblance with a cash-machine), near her home. Before the introduction of the water ATM, she got water from vendors within the community, which were both expensive and distant from her home and shop. Angela could spend up to 15 minutes waiting for her turn to fetch water from vendors. She had to make between 5 to 8 round trips daily, depending on the household's water needs. She visited standpipes early in the morning to ensure vendors had water, and occasionally in the afternoon after sending her children off to school. A bucket of water cost her One Ghana Cedi (GHS 1, which is approximately USD 0.1), and she could spend close to Ten Ghana Cedis (GHS 10, which is approximately USD 1) a day on water.

With the introduction of the water ATM, Angela no longer joins long queues for water. Since the water point is closer to her house, she now spends just about a minute to get it, and for the same amount she used to spend per day, she is able to load her "token" (access card) and collect up to 50 buckets of water, enough to last almost a week. She can even load the token from her phone without having to visit the GWL office.

"I am particularly excited about this standpipe because I don't waste much time queuing for water, at the expense of my work. This has also reduced the burden of walking long distances for water. I don't have to worry about rushing here very early in the morning because anytime I get here, I'm sure to get water. I no longer have to worry about spending the bulk of the income from my business on water because this is much more affordable and convenient. The Water ATM serves me well and I can trust the safety of the water that I now use at home."