



Mass Media as a tool of Solving WASH Challenges of the Urban and Rural poor

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World Water Forum 2012
12 – 17 March 2012
Time for Solutions

The problem

- According to the WHO / UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation, an estimated 300 million people in West Africa (about 2/3rds of the population), lack access to Improved drinking water supply and safe basic sanitation services.
- Majority of these people lacking access are poor, and belong to vulnerable and marginalized groups.
- Their WASH voices are never heard, their WASH challenges seldom discussed, and solutions to their WASH problems rarely comes to the agenda of by WASH policy makers, regulators and public and private service providers.

The methodology

- Formed in 2010, the WASH-JN comprises WASH journalists in 14 West African countries- Ghana, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Mali, Benin, Togo, Cote D'Ivoire, Cameroon, Gambia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Niger, Guinea Bissau and Liberia.
- WASH-JN members '**advocate**' for the WASH rights of the poor, '**voice**' out their challenges, '**highlight**' their WASH needs, '**x-ray**' governance, transparency and accountability issues that limit access, and '**amplify**' solutions to their lack of access.
- We have about 300 members working for major Newspapers, Television stations and Radio stations in 14 W/A countries.
- We have emails of up to 274 WASH Journalists in W/A, highest recorded page views on our [Blog](#) is 98 on Feb. 19, [Facebook page](#).
- The regional body coordinates the activities of the National platforms and encourages them through initiatives such as the 'WASH Story Competition' to publish compelling and investigative stories.
- It also shares information for Joint advocacy, learning and sharing.

Challenges

- Low remuneration of Journalists.
- Poor conditions of service-Poor motivation to report investigative stories.
- Risks in reporting Corruption stories.
- Transparency and Lack of reporting equipments
- Poor sector knowledge of members
- Unfamiliarity of Journalists with New media tools.
- Low reportage skills in writing investigate and compelling stories.
- Limited funding to support members in country
- Language barriers- French, English, Portuguese among members
- Coordination of WASH-JN's activities
- Activities mainly donor driven

Integrity/transparency impact

> **Transparency**

- WASH-JN members publish stories on call for proposals, bidding processes, and contract awards ensuring openness, competitiveness, and strict observance of rules.
- WASH –JN members publish analytical articles on Budgetary allocations and expenditure to National, State and Local governments to ensure people follow the money.

> **Accountability**

- WASH-JN members publish stories on past budgetary allocations to the WASH sector that has not yielded tangible results to increase access.
- Through features and articles, we raise public awareness on the cost and impact of corruption in the sector.
- Some of our members organized Training workshops for Journalists on WASH Budget tracking and monitoring to enable them follow WASH funds.
- Through the WASH story competition, our members are being encouraged to investigate and report WASH stories on transparency and accountability.

> **Participation**

We facilitated dialogues on WASH issues for Political/parties and aspirants to mainstream WASH issues into political campaigns.

We partnered with local and international civil society networks to source for information on corruption in the water sector, and expose such.

Increase public awareness of their Right to Water, through our monthly Dialogues on Right to Water and sanitation

Key issues and recommendations

- **Capacity Building:** WASH Journalists require training on sector issues including Transparency and Accountability.
- **Replication:** Formation of WASH media networks in other regions
- **Funding:** Increase funding for national platforms to implement activities
- **Strategic partnership:** Between Media and other stakeholders in the sector-CSOs and Donors.



Hanging toilet in West point, an Urban slum in Monrovia, Liberia
Photo credit: **Mustapha Sesay**