The Mole Conference Series: A Rallying Point for Civil Society Advocacy in Ghana

Coalition of NGOs in Water and Sanitation (CONIWAS)

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Ghana Coalition of NGOs in the Water and Sanitation Sector

Freshwater Action Network
1. No democratic governance

2. Till mid 90s, Ghana Water and Sewerage Corporation (GWSC), sole mandate for water and sanitation services

3. Sector collapsing

4. Social & public health crisis
   - guinea worm
   - cholera
   - trachoma
   - Excessive burden on women
THE PROBLEM

1. Failure of national water supply system – public health crisis (GW)

2. Ineffective and uncoordinated non-state actors focused on stop-gap charity services for poor communities

3. Absence of convergence of all essential stakeholders
   - Professionals, academia, engineers, politicians, citizens, private sector, traditional authorities, local government

4. Absence of dialogue among them
1989, a group of local stakeholders converged in Mole to discuss solutions.

In Mole-I CSOs took initiative to facilitate Multi-stakeholder dialogues annually – Mole Series

Proposals for drastic water sector reforms in subsequent Moles – II-IV.

Hard lobbying of key political powers
ACHIEVEMENTS

- Water sector reforms initiated in mid-90s, removing mandate of GWSC to supply rural water – CWSA

- Investment in rural water sector increased – coverage from <8% in 1994, to 40% in 4 years, now 52%

- Sustained platform for multi-stakeholder negotiations – agreements reached, compromises & commitments made,

- **Vibrant Civil society, impacting on national and international processes**

- Concept of 5% upfront cash capital cost contribution challenged: nationwide study, GW communities

- Participation by East Africans in Mole Series and technical assistance by Mole secretariat in promoting Mole-type platforms.

- The mole series has created the conditions for nationwide convergence on the RIGHT TO WATER
OBSTACLES & OPPORTUNITIES

Main Obstacles
1. Parts of policy not palatable: 5% capital cost upfront contribution
2. Capacity of grassroots CSOs
3. Frequent changes in sector Ministers – 4 different ministers in 6 years

Main Opportunities
1. Trust & confidence between CSOs and government actors restored
2. Presence of permanent secretariat – facilitates continuous consultation and follow ups
3. High interest and participation of stakeholders (150 in Mole XVI)
4. Donor support and interest very high: 12 bilateral & multilateral donors participate consistently
REASONS FOR SUCCESS
AND KEY LESSONS

- Highly motivated local CSOs providing leadership
- Donor support in terms of capacity building + funding
- Openness and willingness to dialogue
- Transparent and inclusive processes
Key Messages and Recommendations

- Tolerance and compromises necessary for healthy Citizens-government dialogue
- External resources necessary, but must be supportive of dialogue and local ownership
- Necessary to maintain CSO independence at all times
- Representation and accountability to citizens must be practical