

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Capacity Development for Urban Water Senior Staff Members, Stakeholders and Influencers in Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) and Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly (STMA) in Ghana

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## Abstract:

It is expected that adequate quantity and quality of service delivery is one of the preconditions that contributes to safe water and sanitation delivery. Yet the human resource gap in WATSAN sector is relatively unknown (S. Cavill & D. Saywell, 2009). This paper outlines a piece of research that was conducted to provide a reliable skill gap assessment and building solution in Ghana to national water utility provider staff members, stakeholders and influencers.

The Purpose of the Research is to undertake Training Needs Analysis that will be followed up with Capacity Gap Assessment and Enhancement in urban water management and service delivery in Accra and Sekondi- Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly, Ghana.

The research found significant relationship between staff, stakeholders and influences service quality delivery and customer satisfaction. Therefore, the study was followed up with staff, stakeholders and influencer’s capacity building initiatives and motivation techniques, communication skills, cost reduction strategies, assets maintenance, billing cycles, monitoring and evaluation as panacea to quality service delivery. Furthermore, the study recommended that the management, influencers and stakeholders should reexamine and reprogram the organization’s conceptual framework, vision, mission and operations such as their customer data base system to capture their customer’s profiles and needs so as to deliver customer focused services.

Keywords: WATSAN, Utility, Influencers, Service Delivery, Customer, Staff, Stakeholders, Capacity, Ghana

## Introduction

The rapid rate of urbanization in Ghana has brought into focus the urgent need for planned action to manage water supply systems effectively. With increasing populations coupled with existing challenges inherent to conventional urban water distribution, it is becoming difficult to provide reliable water. In order to meet these challenges, there is the need for further capacity building in urban water distribution systems. Furthermore, effective policies are key ingredients that facilitate access to water and environmental sanitation services. Weak appreciation of policies that seeks to address the needs of all segments of the population and provide for strategies and plans that target poor segments of urban areas hinders scaling up of services. The aforesaid challenges required adequate human capital development for the WATSAN sector in Ghana. These have long been recognized as priority issue.

## Problem statement

The on-going water sector reforms in Ghana to promote good governance and improve sector performance have created huge capacity demands in urban centres and slums. Decentralization and devolution of roles/responsibilities from central to local government and other intermediate level bodies has created new administrative structures with new increased roles and responsibilities which require new capacities in terms of financial resource mobilization and management, negotiation and managerial skills, gender mainstreaming, knowledge sharing and development of methodologies and tools. The main purpose of these efforts is to ensure the achievement of target for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and hygienic sanitation. Capacity building support is required to ensure efficiency and efficacy of these new institutions. The challenge here is to achieve the required balance between investments on water and sanitation infrastructure and capacity building initiative that is conducive for policy and regulatory frameworks and multi-stakeholder partnership building at all levels. A combination of poor planning and design, inefficient operations and inadequate maintenance means that the services that do exist are often of poor quality. Local sanitation problems are often solved at the expense of the wider environment as discharged untreated wastes pollute ground water and surface waters bodies. Compounding the problem is the reality of the limited skilled human and infrastructural resources within the local authorities of these centres and towns to address their impending water and sanitation concerns.

Till date, little systematic attention has been paid to actually quantifying whether there are sufficient human resources to meet the MDGs in the WATSAN sector in Ghana (S. Cavill & D. Saywell, 2009).

Currently, different stakeholders and influencers in Ghana has varying opinions and perceptions of the extent of capacity of WATSAN gap, moreover, the different methodologies, approaches and tools employed to produce these

estimations is more problematic. This was the reason of the study so that the approaches and recommendations can be used to address the aforesaid challenges.

## Objectives of the capacity development

The objectives of the assignment were:

- Undertake training needs assessments and present inception reports.
- Conduct training sessions on WATSAN management, quality and distribution networks, policies and bye-laws to deepen staff knowledge and other stakeholders on existing water and sanitation policies and bye-laws in Accra and Sekondi Takoradi.
- Enhance and reevaluate the capacity of relevant staff and stakeholders to improve the quality and distribution of urban water, WATSAN policies and bye-laws to deliver organisational development (OD) change

## Conceptual framework

### *Emerging themes to effect changes to the research of capacity development*

A careful reflection of the assignment points out to OD's cycle of change that UND (2008) describes as effective sequencing of organisational interventions aimed at developing capacity. This cycle of change is necessarily schematic and risks oversimplifying processes and shown below:

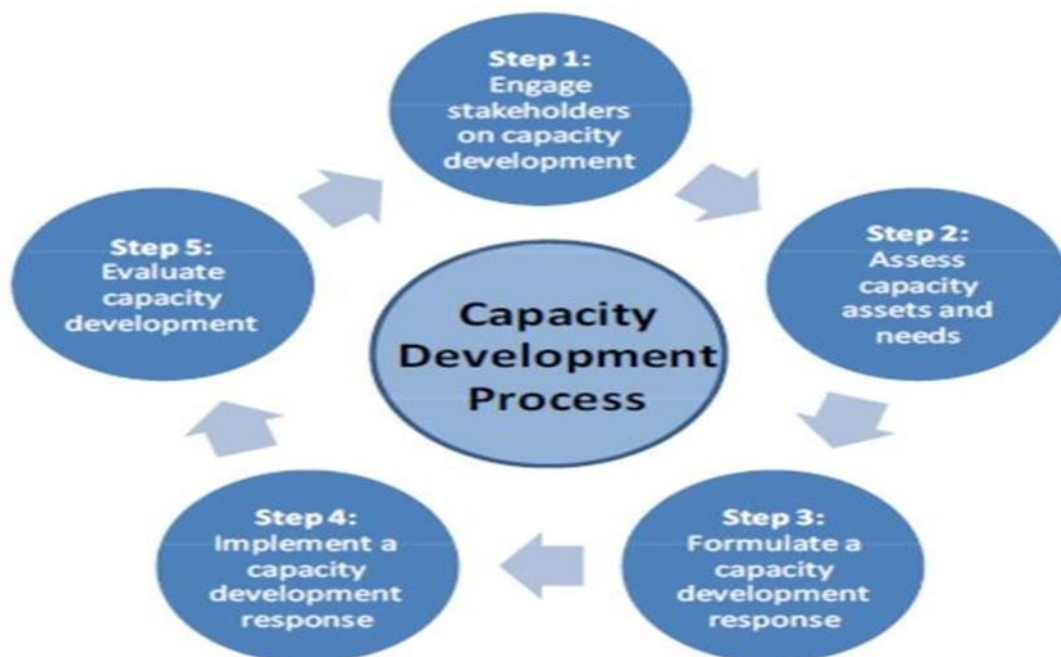


Figure 1: The Capacity Development (CD) Process (UNDP, 2008)

To make the CD intervention to deliver OD change, we put into use the following measures:

- Understanding the institutional and organisational context of power differentials, cultural constraints and individual motivations.
- Instituting change that will be inclusive. That is , all stakeholders and influencers supporting the change
- Creating sense of urgency amongst support for all leaders of change
- Crafting and implementing room for divergent views and tolerant for different ideas so as to instill mass commitment for the change process.
- Recognitions of obstacles and proposing solutions to those obstacles by target staff members , stakeholders and influencers
- Creating room for personal and organisational dynamics such as guidance and counseling. Mentoring, coaching and celebrating
- Conveying guiding principles of coalition to steer, nurse and drive the change
- Placing value on assessment and measurement system

The assignment was executed by observing the model throughout the exercise.

### *Pyramid of seven essential elements in capacity development*

McKinsey & Company (2009) model of capacity in nonprofit organisations as comprising pyramid of seven essential elements including three foundational elements: systems and infrastructure, human resources and organisational structure, and culture element which set to connect others. They assert that coordinated CB across all seven elements will help organisations achieve the greatest impact. The above assertions are shown figure 2 below:

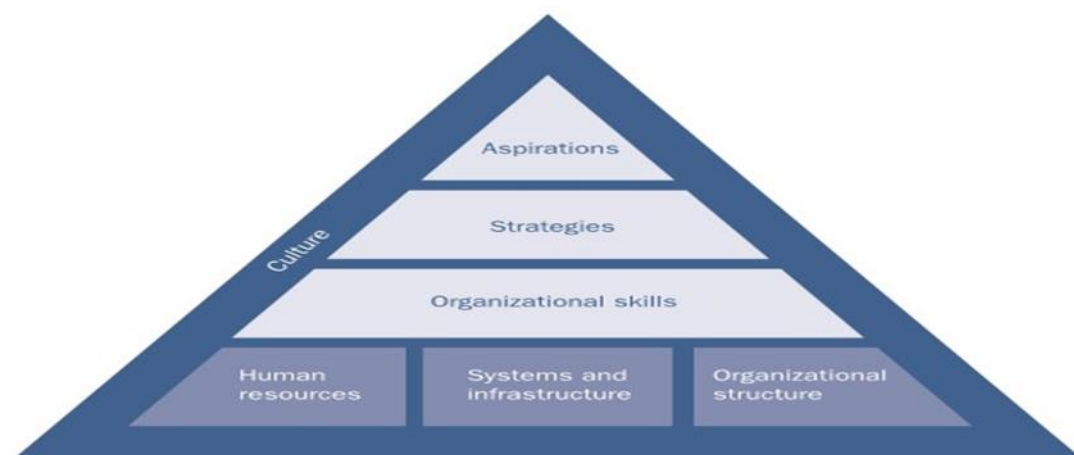


Figure 1: Capacity Framework (McKinsey for Venture Philanthropy Partners, 2009)

Several literature on CD looks at it in different perspectives but Glass (1979) takes on approach that:

- Provides CD to make sense of the ‘ verbal synopsis of studies that are strung out in drizzling lists’
- Locates knowhow about CD as specific application of OD knowledge

This Literature review draws on CD from development, social policy and philanthropic domains and on OD literature in order to cater for pro poor element to cater for the assignment.

### *Operational and adaptive capacity development domains (institutional arrangement, leadership, knowledge and Accountability)*

Earl et al. (2001) distinguish between operational and adaptive capacities. UNDP supported this assertion by expanding it to embrace sectors and levels of capacity where ‘the bulk of changes in capacity take place’, they went further by stating that every assessment of capacity building (CB) should consider all four domains (institutional arrangement, leadership, knowledge and accountability) as definition of scope of an intervention

Honadle (1981) defines CB not as not as one entity but as set of capacities to:

- Anticipate and influence change
- Make informed and intelligent decisions on policy
- Develop programmes to implement policy
- Attract/absorb resources
- Manage resources
- Evaluate to guide future action

Honadle proposes that CB framework is the one that addresses each of the above aspects of capacity: it provides way of diagnosing and addressing organisational weaknesses and strengths. Consultant use the above model to emphasise strategic planning, facility management plans and monitoring and evaluation sessions.

### *Pyramid of Effective Capacity Building*

Potter and Brough (2004, p.340) also propose the idea of pyramid of capacities, although they relate this primarily to field level interventions in a development context. They suggested that for this to benefit development, it has to be considered in logical order. The authors further suggest that as one moves down the hierarchy, change in capacity becomes difficult and takes longer to implement.

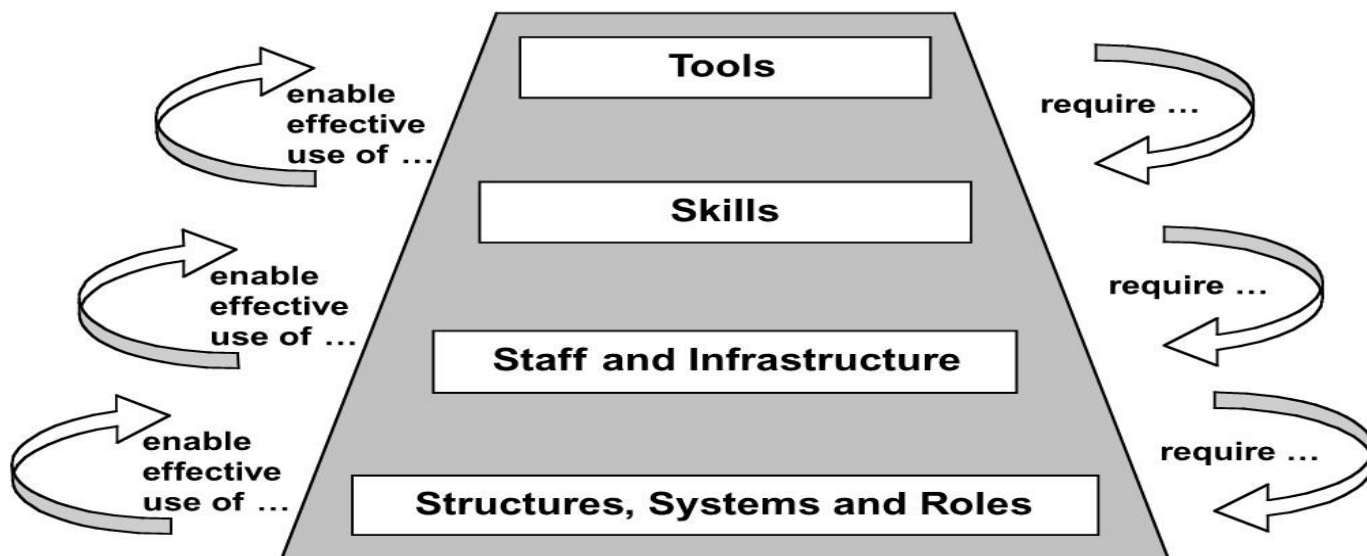


Figure 2: Pyramid of Effective Capacity Building (Potter & Brough, 2004)

The same authors describe evidence informed model developed by the EC technical team that dilated on differentiating nine separate but interdependent components of CB and its effectiveness when organized in logical hierarchy. They stressed that CB is more likely to be iterative rather than a sequence of process.

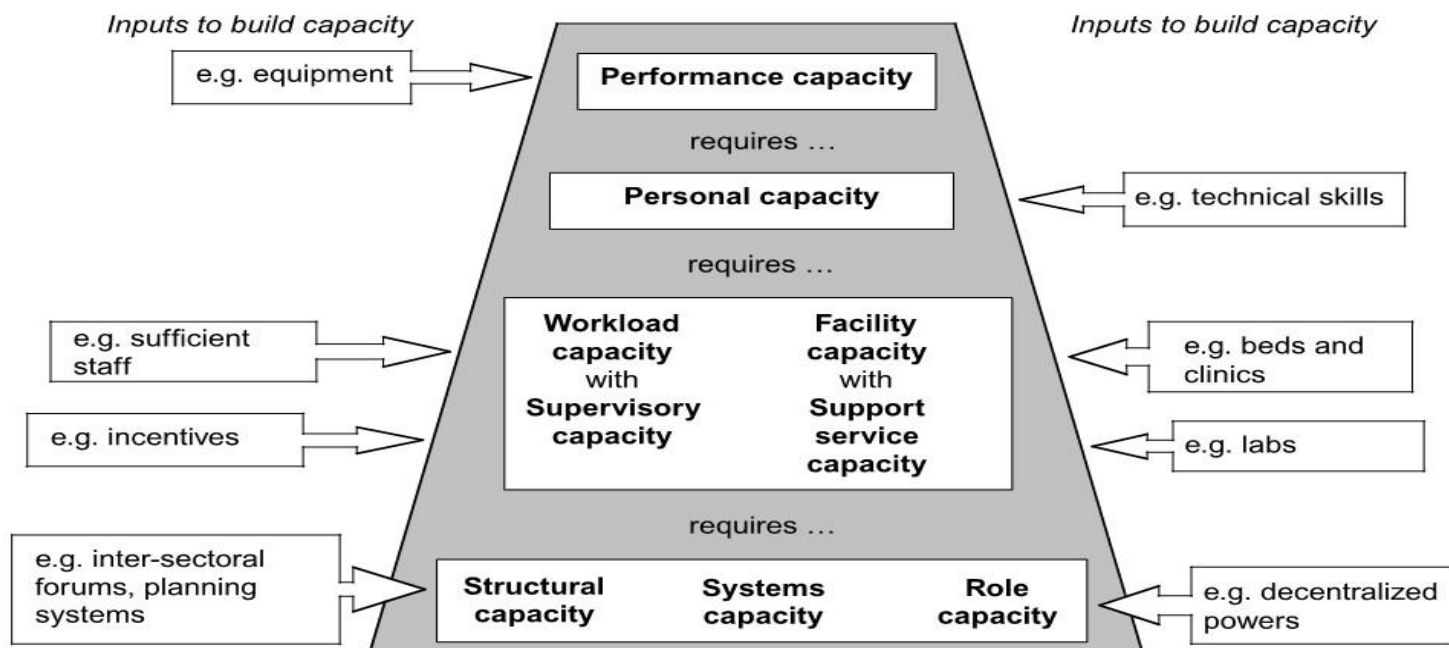


Figure 3: Components of Capacity Building (Potter & Brough, 2004)

The authors again argue that the model should be used as an analytical tool which will help to identify areas of interventions and can leverage impact. They concluded that: Potter and Brough further argue that using the model as an analytical tool helps to identify where support interventions are needed and can

leverage most impact. This model enabled consultants to focus on capacity gaps identified and capacity building initiative shown in findings of this study.

Interdependent elements at organisational level that are essential to organisational capacity

Kaplan (2000) also proposes series of interdependent elements at organisational level that are essential to organisational capacity. He suggests that these form a hierarchy which some are important than others. They are:

- A conceptual framework: a competent understanding of the organization's world, without which it will be incapacitated regardless of other skills and competencies.
- Organisational 'attitude': confidence to act in and on the world in a way that the organisation believes can have an impact.
- Vision and strategy: sense of purpose
- Organisational structure: clear roles, functions, lines of communication, decision making process
- Skills: individual skills and competencies (but the organisational capacity has to be harnessed sufficiently to harness training)

Matters arising from this assertion brought about 'paradigm shift' in thinking about CD – moving the focus from work on more tangible elements at the base of the hierarchy to intangible elements. Kaplan argues that critical elements at the 'top' of the hierarchy are invisible and more impervious to conventional approaches to CB. These interdependent elements at organisational level that are essential to organisational capacity assisted consultants to execute the assignment accordingly.

## Methodology and technical approach

The assessment tools employed included review of personnel appraisal records, job descriptions, interviews, administration of questioners and focus group discussions so as to ascertain the true reflection of the capacity gaps in the following WATSAN conceptual, technical and human relational areas:

Urban water and sanitation management operation and maintenance (O&M)

Modules	Topics/ Issues to Consider
Water Transport and Distribution Systems	Water Supply System and Processes Piping, Storage, Pumping, types of Distribution Systems and Network Configurations
Design of Water Transport and Distribution Systems	Hydraulic and Non-hydraulic design systems
Network Construction	Site Preparation, Excavation, Trench Dewatering, Pipe Laying, Jointing, Backfilling, Testing and Disinfestations
Operations and maintenance	Network operation Reactive and preventive maintenance Pipe cleaning, repairs and animal infestations

## Urban water and sanitation policies and by-laws

Modules	Topics/Issues to Consider
Water and Sanitation Policies and bye-laws	Strategic management National Constitution and decentralized governance Institutional roles of government, central and decentralized agencies Policies and laws of relevance to the subsector e.g National Water Policy, Urban Water Policy etc. Technical guidelines for the water and sanitation sub-sector and applicable enforcement regulations

## Findings and emerging issues

The findings were intended to support and sustain conceptual, technical and human capital development and investments in the WATSAN sector for water access and safety for the urban residents in Ghana.

The following table summarizes some of the emerging categories of staff capacity gaps, activities appropriate to address the above challenges, time frame, required resources and expected outcomes.



No	Category	Capacity Gaps Identified	Capacity Building Activities Required	Resources Necessary to Carry Out the Tasks	Expected Outcomes
1	Strategic Planning and Management;  i Head of HRM  ii Head of PR	<p>Unfamiliarity with the provision of the following national documents;</p> <p>Constitution of the republic of Ghana:</p> <p>National environmental sanitation policy:</p> <p>Technical guidelines for water and sanitation sub-sector:</p> <p>Identify dedicated Communications Focal Point – at local government level</p> <p>Establish Local Campaign Steering Committees – multi stakeholder</p> <p>Non Existence of Extension Unit,</p> <p>Insufficient Communications / Media Networking Skills</p> <p>Lack of Operation Skills for Audio / Visual</p>	<p>Review and develop various corporate plans (strategic, business, investment, financial management, human resource management and development Plans)</p> <p>Training in Communication / GIS / Media, Central and Decentralisation policies in WATSAN, Sensitize and educate steering committees on WATSAN, Organizing refresher courses for Staff in Extension services (Community Empowerment )</p> <p>Community participation in Management, gender mainstreaming and inclusion of the vulnerable in decision making process, central role of the district assembly in supporting community management, increasing degradation in water quality resulting in high</p>	<p>Institutions working in Media, Advocacy, IEC in the 3 Region</p> <p>Collaboration with Local authorities, CBO's, NGOs INGOs, FBOs, local business communities, local schools etc</p> <p>Identify local agencies /institutions, ministries of local governments/NGOs , Capacity Building Consultant</p>	<p>Management ability to be Involved in crafting/ formulation and implementing utility strategic planning, Train utility staff on corporate governance, technical operations and maintenance, monitoring for sustainability, output based performance, accountability at all levels, reorientation to strategic / business thinking, corporate report writing, WATSAN Arrangement &amp; Structuring, Governance, Conduct of Needs/Gap Assessment, Capacity Building initiatives, Facilitates support coordination of stakeholders and utility staff in integration of environmental / NRM issues into project activities, especially potential impacts on sensitive environmental receptors. Identifying and mitigating environmental and socio-economic impacts from Infrastructure projects catchment communities. Development of project level approach to managing risks from potential environmental and social impacts. Social and environmental safeguarding follow up and monitoring in Sustainable Livelihoods project. Leads stakeholder's involvement in water service delivery.</p>

		equip.	treatment costs, demand driven approach to water management, training Workshops, modular training for key project participants		
2	Commercial and Customer Care Managers	Lack of sensitivity to customer concerns; method/capacity to catalogue information about customer complaints; system of getting feedback about customer perception of services; Inability to ensure the preparation of operational and O&M / Capital budget, institute measures that will increase the customer base through aggressive marketing, that will maximize the billing and collection efficiencies ensure proper maintenance of the billing system and carry out timely billing for connected customers.	<p>Training of customer care officers on handling customer complaints, customer surveys and feedback tracking mechanisms</p> <p>Orientation in PPM, customer satisfaction and retention</p> <p>Build capacity to be responsible for overseeing computerize financial management systems, customer services and billing, cash collections and management of accounts, stores and IT sections</p> <p>Build customer service team to deal with customer complaints and enquiries relating to water connections, disconnections and reconnections</p>	<p>Training of customer care and revenue officers on handling and keeping data on customer concerns, customer interface, customer analysis and loyalty.</p> <p>Sensitization of the Team and Front Desk Officers on pro poor provision in Urban Water Policy</p> <p>IT , Sales, Customer Relationships and Financial Soft wares</p>	<p>Coordinates with top management to develop business development plans, build teams to develop new products and customer relations target markets. Develops and implements strategic business development plans to achieve regional and district goals and sets key performance indices accordingly for technical sales team. Prepares periodic business opportunity and performance reports showing opportunity pipeline stage volume, project indices, and areas of proposed client base expansion that will lead to increase in revenue, customer satisfaction and retention. Recognize progress towards high quality pro poor service delivery. Designed and strengthen system incentives and trigger institutional reforms to overcome system barriers</p>

3	Meter Readers , Patrol Team / Plumber	Lack of appropriate meter data collection skills and equipment (hand-held computer), data management, communi-cation , Inadequate number of meters, irregular servicing of meters	Carrying out effective and accurate meter readings for metered customers for equity in billing. Carrying out of timely distribution of bills to enable customers promptly pay their bills. Carry out field investi- gations to unearth irregularities such as illegal connections, meter by-pass, illegal reconnect- tions and report to the officers	More meters should be procured and installed. Meters should be serviced. Training in should be offered in data management, Provision of Hand held computers should be offered.	Customer satisfaction, accurate data fed into the system. Improvement in the metering ratio, reduction in unaccounted for water and improvement in the revenue Leads to strategic metering of bulk supply areas to enhance overall accountability for the water distributed. Facilitate the purchase of customer meters to enhance the utilities' revenue base and reduce wastage
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## Implication of findings and conclusions (synthesis of issues arising from capacity assessment and development study)

Analysis of the study shows that skills required by WATSAN employees have both the numbers (quantity) and as well as ensuring that staff are well trained (quality) to meet the SDG target 6: deficiencies in one aspect cannot be remedied by substituting improvements in another i.e. overstaffing with under qualified people to try and increase access to safe water and improved sanitation (S. Cavill & D. Saywell, 2009). These skills and competences were given special attention during training sessions and followed ups to staff work places were also made to verify impacts the training had on their performances.

Motivating staff members on the SDG 6 could provide the incentives for installing new facilities to improve and increase access to the unserved pro poor areas rather than the operation and maintenance of existing facilities to ensure that access is maintained for those already connected. Facility Management P and Monitoring and Evaluation Plans were developed during the training so as to enhance skills and competencies of the participants.

Linking the review and development of various corporate plans (strategic, business, investment, financial management, human resource management and development plans) with national water environmental sanitation policy, technical guidelines for water and sanitation sub-sector that is not done well by senior staff members is a huge recipe for lack of direction for senior management in strategic planning and implementation. This may also contribute to policy disconnect in the sector and sessions on the above topics were incorporated into the training to build the capacity of the staff. Sample corporate plans were developed by individual participants.

Training in customer care by handling and keeping data on customer concerns, interface, analysis and loyalty by the customer care unit and front desk officers will enable company maintain their customers thereby leading to higher revenue. Since this is not well done now and does not happen by accident, it is recommended that periodic refresher courses be offered to the staff members and customer care soft wares were also to propose to track performances.

Urban Pro poor areas should not be disadvantaged in terms of provision of service and personnel quality. The primary purpose of the capacity building strategy is to enhance the skills of non-engineering employees that are responsible for serving customers. However, lack of capacity in the field of engineering staff and private sector spare parts suppliers, latrine artisans, pump mechanics, suppliers of equipment such as pipes and fittings and so on to provide materials, equipment, works and services to communities will also be a bottleneck to achieving the SDGs. Informal or alternative providers could also be considered since collectively they have a big share of the water and sanitation markets in many countries. Sessions were devoted to the aforesaid topics during the capacity development initiative. Further recommendations were made for continual capacity development study and enhancement so as to instil sustainability.

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