



MOLE XXXVII CONFERENCE BACKGROUND PAPER

THEME:

Accelerating Climate-Resilient WASH Service Delivery for Last-Mile Communities: Options, Strategies and Actions

BACKGROUND

The MOLE conference series, first organised in 1989 by a group of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), has become the primary platform for discussing issues related to Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH). This feat has been attained due to the tenacity of purpose, commitment and dynamic leadership exhibited by the trailblazers and, subsequently, the Coalition of NGOs in Water and Sanitation (CONIWAS), and the effective collaboration with other key players, including central and local government institutions, development partners, academic and research institutions, and the private sector, among others.

The proposed theme, “Accelerating Climate-Resilient WASH Service Delivery for Last-Mile Communities: Options, Strategies and Actions”, is well-suited to Ghana’s quest to achieve SDG 6 – Water and Sanitation for All by 2030. The theme responds directly to Ghana’s growing exposure to floods, droughts, water pollution, sanitation emergencies and other climate-related risks. At the national and sub-national levels, discussions abound on the real impact of climate change on lives, livelihoods, and its potential to inhibit service delivery to last-mile¹ communities. The selected theme is timely, relevant and strongly aligned with CONIWAS’ mandate. It is a clear progression from the MOLE XXXVI theme because it shifts the conference from innovation, partnerships, evidence, and regulation toward climate-resilient delivery for communities that remain unreached or underserved. The critical challenge now facing the CSO fraternity and key WASH stakeholders in Ghana is to collectively forge a path forward to ensure that universal access remains a reality for all, including last-mile communities. This pressing question forms the impetus for the MOLE XXXVII Conference.

Consistent with CONIWAS’ mission of working with relevant stakeholders to influence policies, remove barriers and promote access to safe WASH services, especially for the poor and vulnerable, this year’s MOLE Conference will re-ignite national dialogue and collective action on accelerating climate-resilient WASH service delivery for last-mile communities. The conference will focus on practical options, strategies and actions needed to translate WASH commitments into results, particularly for underserved rural communities, small towns, peri-urban settlements, informal settlements, institutions and public spaces that continue to face service gaps. Discussions will examine how WASH can be elevated as a political priority through stronger leadership, governance and accountability; how sustainable and innovative financing can be mobilised to reach last-mile communities; how inclusive service delivery models, technologies and innovations can be scaled; and how climate-resilient WASH systems can be strengthened in schools, health facilities, markets and other public places.

The conference will also explore pathways for improved sector coordination, performance monitoring, public accountability and collaboration among government agencies, Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs), civil society organisations, development partners, academia, the private sector and communities to ensure that no one is left behind in Ghana’s pursuit of safe, sustainable and equitable WASH services.

¹. Communities and service points that remain unserved or underserved because of hard-to-reach locations, low population density, difficult hydrogeology, limited technology options, poverty or marginalisation. In this paper, the last mile includes deprived rural communities, small towns, peri-urban and informal settlements, and the institutions and public spaces that serve them.

CONTEXT

Ghana's WASH sector vision is to ***“improve access to safe, affordable, reliable and sustainable water, environmental sanitation and hygiene services for all by 2030.”*** The key target is to achieve at least universal basic WASH services by 2030, which in detailed terms means *“all people living in Ghana, irrespective of location, have access to adequate, safe, affordable and reliable basic water service, practise safe sanitation and hygiene, and that water resources are sustainably managed”*². This vision places strong emphasis on coordinated implementation, system strengthening, stakeholder participation, accountability, transparency, sustainable behaviour change, water resources management and inclusive service delivery.

Ghana's commitment to realising universal access to WASH, as captured under SDG 6 and the GWASHSDP, cannot be fully achieved without deliberate attention to last-mile communities. In many cases, such communities are remote, difficult to access, sparsely populated, poor, vulnerable, or located in areas where service delivery is technically challenging and financially unattractive to conventional providers. In the Ghanaian context, the “last mile” must also be understood to include deprived rural communities, small towns, peri-urban settlements, informal urban communities, schools, healthcare facilities, markets and other public places where safe and reliable WASH services remain inadequate.

The challenge of reaching the last mile is further compounded by difficult hydrogeological conditions in some rural areas, unreliable or seasonal water sources, increasing pollution of surface and groundwater resources – notably from illegal small-scale mining (galamsey), which is raising water treatment costs and threatening continuity of supply –, weak operation and maintenance arrangements, limited local-level capacity, and the high cost of extending services to small and dispersed populations. Some unserved and underserved communities continue to depend on unsafe water sources that may be contaminated and may dry up during the peak of the dry season. These conditions undermine public health, increase the burden of diarrhoeal and WASH-related diseases, and deepen inequalities for children, women, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

Despite progress made in WASH service delivery, particularly since 2015 (see Box 1), Ghana still faces significant challenges in scaling up inclusive service delivery models, mobilising sustainable and innovative financing, strengthening political leadership and accountability, and ensuring that climate-resilient WASH services reach last-mile communities. These challenges are particularly evident in rural and small-town water supply, household sanitation, institutional WASH (Health Care Facilities, Schools, Public Spaces), hygiene behaviour change, and the sustainability of post-construction operation and maintenance systems.

Box 1: State of WASH in Ghana at a glance				
Household services (% of population)	2015	2024	2024 Urban	2024 Rural
At least basic drinking water	81	90	99	76
Safely managed drinking water	31	43	60	17
At least basic sanitation	21	32	37	23
Safely managed sanitation	13	19	18	20
Basic hygiene (handwashing facility with soap and water)	40	45	55	31
▪ Sanitation is a binding constraint. At the 2015-2024 pace (about 1.2 percentage points a year), basic sanitation would reach only about 39% by 2030. In 2021, 17.7% of the population practised open defecation (rural 31.3%, urban 8.9%), and 74% of households lacked exclusive use of an improved toilet – 32.5% shared one and 23% used public toilets. ▪ The rural gap is wide. About one in four rural residents lack a basic water service, and only 17% have safely managed water; rural basic hygiene has fallen from 36% (2015) to 31% (2024). CWSA reports rural and small-town water coverage of 61.87% (CWSA, 2023).				

² Government of Ghana (2023): Ghana WASH Sector Development Programme (GWASHSDP) 2021–2030.



Box 1: State of WASH in Ghana at a glance

- **Health care facilities (2025):** 65% have basic water, 54% basic hygiene, 27% basic waste management and only 16% basic sanitation.
- **Data gaps to close:** no consolidated public figures yet on rural water-system functionality or on actual DACF water and sanitation releases against the 10%/10% allocations; no readily available data on WASH in Schools.

Sources: WHO/UNICEF JMP household estimates, 2025 update (data year 2024), via WHO Global Health Observatory; Ghana Statistical Service, 2021 Population and Housing Census (Water and Sanitation reports); CWSA Annual Report 2023; WHO/UNICEF JMP, Progress on WASH in Health Care Facilities 2015–2025 (2026).

Innovative financing options must therefore respond to the actual service delivery realities of last-mile communities. Public funding, climate finance, blended finance, private-sector participation, household financing, targeted subsidies and operation and maintenance financing must be aligned with appropriate technologies and inclusive delivery models. The role of the private sector, civil society, MMDAs, development partners, traditional authorities, academia and communities remain critical in providing and sustaining safe WASH services.

The conference also comes as Ghana moves to implement its National Adaptation Plan (2025), which treats water as a priority adaptation sector and costs water-sector adaptation actions at about US\$ 1.06 billion for 2025–2030, alongside the country's Nationally Determined Contribution commitments. Translating these climate commitments into WASH investments at MMDA level – supported by climate-risk tools such as Water Safety Plans, Sanitation Safety Planning and WASH FIT for health care facilities – will be central to reaching last-mile communities.

This year's MOLE Conference will therefore shine a light on the practical options, strategies and actions required to accelerate climate-resilient WASH service delivery for last-mile communities. Discussions will focus on WASH as a political priority through leadership, governance and accountability; sustainable and innovative financing for reaching last-mile communities; inclusive service delivery options and innovations; and climate-resilient WASH in institutions and public spaces. The conference will also explore the enabling environment required for regulation, coordination, evidence generation, performance monitoring, learning and collective action to ensure that no one is left behind in Ghana's pursuit of safe, sustainable, equitable and climate-resilient WASH services for all.

MOLE XXXVII CONFERENCE

MOLE XXXVII Conference will focus on Accelerating Climate-Resilient WASH Service Delivery for Last-Mile Communities: Options, Strategies and Actions. The Conference is intended to create a common space where policymakers, practitioners and researchers can gather to give an account of the state of the WASH sector's quest to accelerate progress of climate-resilient WASH services to last-mile communities, assess options, review strategies and renew actions to address the WASH service delivery gaps. The conference will also explore how WASH delivery strategies, sector coordination actions, and current service delivery models will impact Ghana's quest to accelerate service delivery towards achieving WASH for all by 2030. The 37th edition of the MOLE Conference will be held at Aqua Safari Resort, Ada Foah, Greater Accra Region, from the 1st to the 6th of November 2026.

OBJECTIVES

The conference aims to advance climate-resilient service delivery options, strategies, and actions for last-mile communities to achieve universal access to sustainable WASH services in Ghana. It will focus on examining options, strategies, and actions for WASH service delivery, while addressing challenges and identifying pathways to establish equity-focused strategies that ensure



safe, sustainable, and equitable WASH services for last-mile communities. The specific objectives include the following:

1. Assess Ghana's WASH sector climate-resilient service delivery options, strategies, and actions in advancing national and SDG 6 targets.
2. Evaluate progress and options for climate-resilient service delivery, focusing on equity, innovative financing, and showcasing innovative solutions in schools, healthcare facilities, markets and other public spaces to deliver affordable, inclusive WASH services.
3. Examine strategies to enhance political prioritisation and sector governance to ensure safe, sustainable WASH services for underserved communities, addressing climate and health challenges.
4. Analyse inclusive and sustainable financing models for WASH, and identify appropriate technologies and innovations that ensure equitable, gender-responsive, and disability-inclusive WASH services.
5. Formulate actionable recommendations to overcome challenges, accelerate access to climate-resilient sustainable WASH services, and establish strong Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) monitoring metrics.
6. Review progress on the commitments made at MOLE XXXVI and agree on a tracking framework, with timelines and indicators, for the commitments at MOLE XXXVII.

THEMATIC SCOPE

The theme for the conference is ***“Accelerating Climate-Resilient WASH Service Delivery for Last-Mile Communities: Options, Strategies and Actions”***. The four sub-themes to be discussed in detail are the following:

Sub-theme 1: WASH as a Political Priority – Leadership, Governance and Accountability

Ghana's WASH challenges require high-level political leadership and prioritisation, predictable financing, policy enforcement and accountability. Recent developments with the District Assembly Common Fund allocations of 10% to water and 10% to sanitation delivery at the district level reinforce the importance of translating national and international commitments into funded actions on WASH. This sub-theme will examine how political leadership, governance systems and accountability mechanisms can accelerate climate-resilient WASH service delivery for last-mile communities in Ghana. The discussions will focus on how national commitments, including SDG 6 and Ghana's WASH sector priorities, can be better reflected in public financing, MMDA planning, local-level implementation, regulation and performance reporting. It will also explore the roles of central government, Parliament, MMDAs, regulators, civil society, development partners, traditional authorities, communities and the private sector in strengthening coordination and ensuring that resources reach underserved and vulnerable communities. The sub-theme will further examine practical pathways for improving inter-ministerial coordination, MMDA leadership, local governance, regulatory enforcement, citizen participation and public accountability. Attention will be given to how WASH investments can be monitored, how service-delivery performance can be reported, and how government and non-state actors can collectively ensure that last-mile communities are not left behind.

Key Pathways:

- a. *Translating national and international commitments into funded actions.*
- b. *Sector Coordination, data systems, performance monitoring and reporting.*
- c. *Regulation, enforcement and standards for safe and inclusive WASH.*
- d. *Citizen participation, social accountability and public tracking of sector commitments.*



Sub-theme 2: Sustainable and Innovative Financing for reaching Last-Mile Communities

Achieving Ghana's WASH targets requires substantial, predictable and sustained financial investment for infrastructure, maintenance, regulation, behaviour change, monitoring and institutional strengthening. The Ghana WASH Sector Development Programme estimates that about US\$1.7 billion is needed annually to achieve national WASH targets by 2030, underscoring the scale of the financing challenge facing the sector. Traditional public funding and donor support remain important, but they are insufficient on their own to deliver safe, inclusive and climate-resilient WASH services to last-mile communities. This sub-theme will examine sustainable and innovative financing options for expanding WASH services to poor, vulnerable, underserved and hard-to-reach populations. Discussions will focus on how public financing, District Assembly-level allocations, climate finance, private-sector participation, blended finance, results-based financing, revolving funds, microfinance, impact investment and enterprise financing can be better structured to reach last-mile communities. It will also focus on best practices in the application of WASH subsidies, ensuring they effectively target the poor and vulnerable, and explore other private sector financing options, including impact investment and green bonds or climate financing, which can deliver cost-effective WASH solutions with increased private sector participation. This sub-theme will also delve into sustainable models for financing post-construction Operation and Maintenance (O&M) of WASH infrastructure, which is crucial for long-term functionality. The discussions will further consider how Ghana can develop bankable WASH investment pipelines, strengthen MMDA capacity to plan and manage WASH financing, and align public, private, household, and donor resources toward safe and equitable WASH service delivery.

Key Pathways:

- a. *Predictable Public financing and budgeting for WASH service delivery.*
- b. *Climate finance, vertical funds and bankable WASH investment pipelines.*
- c. *PPPs, blended finance, impact investment and enterprise financing.*
- d. *Sustainable financing of post-construction operation, maintenance and capital maintenance.*

Sub-theme 3: Inclusive Service Delivery Options & Innovations for Last-mile communities

Inclusive and innovative service delivery options are essential for reaching communities that remain unserved or underserved by conventional WASH systems. This sub-theme will focus on the practical options, strategies and actions required to deliver safe, affordable, inclusive and climate-resilient WASH services to last-mile communities, including deprived rural communities, small towns, peri-urban settlements, informal urban settlements and other vulnerable populations. The sub-theme will examine service delivery models that respond to the realities of last-mile communities, including difficult terrain, scattered settlements, low ability to pay, weak operation and maintenance systems, limited local capacity, water-quality risks, climate vulnerability and inadequate infrastructure. It will also explore how appropriate technologies, professionalised rural water services, sanitation marketing, faecal sludge management, hygiene behaviour change, digital tools and community-based management systems can be adapted and scaled to improve sustainable access. Discussions will further highlight the role of MMDAs, CWSA, GWCL, private service providers, NGOs, community structures, traditional authorities and local entrepreneurs in designing, financing, managing and sustaining inclusive WASH services. This sub-theme will also delve into models that are gender-responsive, disability-inclusive, poverty-sensitive and capable of reaching last-mile communities.



Key Pathways:

- a. *Climate-resilient WASH models and appropriate technologies*
- b. *Professionalising rural water services and community management systems*
- c. *Gender-responsive, disability-inclusive and pro-poor WASH Services*
- d. *Sanitation, faecal sludge management and sustained hygiene behaviour change.*

Sub-theme 4: Climate-Resilient WASH in Institutions and Public Spaces

The climate crisis is increasingly a WASH crisis, with direct implications for water availability, water quality, sanitation systems, hygiene practices, public health and service continuity. Flooding, droughts, heatwaves and other extreme weather events are placing growing pressure on surface water and groundwater resources, while also increasing the risk of contamination, infrastructure damage, poor sanitation, waste-management challenges and disease outbreaks. Recent cholera outbreaks in Ghana have shown how quickly WASH gaps in communities, markets and institutions can escalate into public-health emergencies. Also, institutions and public spaces, including healthcare facilities, schools, markets, lorry parks, transport terminals and other high-use public places, continue to face serious WASH deficits. These gaps undermine infection prevention and control, learner wellbeing, menstrual hygiene, food safety, dignity, environmental cleanliness and the health and safety of patients, pupils, traders, transport users, workers and surrounding communities. Climate-resilient WASH services are therefore essential for building the resilience of institutional and public-space infrastructure, ensuring continuity of services during climate shocks, and protecting public health. This sub-theme will examine practical options, strategies and actions for strengthening WASH services, waste management, facility management, operation and maintenance, emergency preparedness and inclusive access in institutions and public spaces serving last-mile communities. Discussions will also explore how MMDAs, Ghana Health Service, Ghana Education Service, facility managers, traditional authorities, private operators, civil society and communities can work together to plan, finance, manage and monitor WASH services in institutions and public spaces.

Key Pathways:

- a. *IPC-WASH and waste management in health facilities*
- b. *School WASH, menstrual hygiene, and learner wellbeing*
- c. *WASH in markets, transport terminals and high-use public spaces*
- d. *Climate-risk preparedness, emergency WASH and continuity of services during shocks.*

FORMAT

The conference will aim to balance plenary and panel discussions with interactive parallel sessions and opportunities for maximising interaction among participants. Apart from the main conference venue, two virtual conference centres with an online link will also be established to enable participation from persons who will be unable to travel to the main conference venue. A conference reception, capacity-building workshops, learning field trips to WASH facilities and interesting tourist sites around Aqua Safari, and a special dinner and awards night at Marlin Beach Resort will also form part of the conference. The conference format, including interactive parallel sessions, is designed to foster in-depth discussions on practical options, strategies and actions for accelerating climate-resilient WASH service delivery to last-mile communities.

The following will constitute the various components of the conference:



Plenary and Expert Panel Discussions:

The plenary sessions will feature presentations delivered by carefully selected experts who possess extensive knowledge and experience in the relevant thematic areas. These presentations are designed to provide in-depth insights, highlight current trends, and set the stage for further exploration of the sub-themes and key topics within the sector. Following the presentations, expert panel discussions will be conducted to facilitate the exchange of ideas, elicit diverse expert opinions and generate critical dialogue among participants. These sessions will deepen the understanding of the thematic issues and topics presented at the conference.

Group discussions:

Key issues emanating from presentations will be discussed in smaller, facilitated groups, each tasked with generating concrete outputs directly advancing a specific sub-theme. Outcomes will be captured and shared in plenary, forming critical inputs for the Conference Communiqué.

Verbal and Poster Presentations:

A variety of selected papers will be presented and discussed at parallel sessions. Papers may share successes and failures of approaches and field experiences. Poster presentations will focus on emerging research within the sector or as a front for the quick dissemination and display of relevant knowledge materials during the conference.

Side events:

Side Events are dedicated parallel sessions where innovators (*start-ups, researchers, community groups, organisations*) can present their working prototypes, successful pilot projects, or innovative solutions in a dynamic, interactive format. The Side events will be in the form of collaborative learning experiences focused on new and emerging practices, approaches or products. This session will facilitate direct engagement between innovators, researchers, potential collaborators, and implementing partners.

Media events & Exhibitions:

The Mole XXXVII conference will receive high-level media coverage and reportage as part of the planned objectives of the conference. *Organisations*, resource centres, service providers and manufacturers will have the opportunity to exhibit their products and engage participants during the conference.

Accountability Session – MOLE XXXVI Commitments Scorecard:

A dedicated session will present a scorecard on the implementation of the MOLE XXXVI Communiqué recommendations and stakeholder commitments, highlighting what was delivered, what stalled and why. This will ground the MOLE XXXVII discussions in accountability and inform the tracking framework for this year's commitments.

PARTICIPANTS

The conference will attract the participation of diverse stakeholders and actors. This diverse representation is crucial to ensure a holistic dialogue that encompasses policy, technical, financial, and community-level perspectives, fostering inclusive and sustainable solutions for Ghana's WASH sector.

These may include:



- + *Ministries, Departments, Agencies, and Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies*
- + *Traditional Authorities and National/Local Political Leaders*
- + *Development partners*
- + *Academia*
- + *Research institutions*
- + *Non-Governmental Organisations/ CBOs/ FBOs*
- + *Civil Society Organisations*
- + *Private sector*
- + *Media Houses*
- + *Water Resources Commission*
- + *Public Utilities Regulatory Commission)*
- + *National Development Planning Commission (NDPC)*
- + *Relevant Parliamentary Select Committees*
- + *Ghana Health Service*
- + *Ghana Education Service*
- + *Environmental Protection Authority*
- + *National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO)*
- + *Ghana Meteorological Agency*
- + *Ghana Hydrological Authority*
- + *Organisations of Persons with Disabilities, women's groups and youth groups*
- + *Informal WASH Service Providers*
- + *Community Representatives / Consumer Associations*
- + *Financial Institutions and Funders*

BENEFITS OF THE MOLE XXXVII CONFERENCE

The participants will be offered a rare opportunity to experience the following benefits:

- + **Knowledge Exchange and Peer Learning:** Participants will benefit from an open forum showcasing Ghana's WASH innovations, partnerships, and practical experiences and encouraging cross-learning.
- + **Networking and Strategic Partnerships:** The conference connects stakeholders from NGOs, the private sector, government, academia, and development partners, building trust and fostering channels for Partnerships and integration.
- + **Policy Influence and Accountability:** Participants will engage in evidence-informed policy discussions with regulators and sector leaders and participate in institutional reflection to align Ghana's National WASH strategies.
- + **Platform for Innovation & Technology:** Participants will explore emerging technologies and scalable, last-mile solutions for underserved communities, including market-based and pro-poor models for WASH infrastructure.
- + **Climate and Equity Lens:** The conference will discuss climate-resilient and equitable WASH service models, and draw attention to gender, disability, and geographic disparities in access.

OUTPUTS AND DELIVERABLES

1. Conference Communiqué

A key output of the conference will be a presentation of the Conference Communiqué at a press conference, which will highlight the key decisions made during the conference proceedings. The communiqué will also serve as a strategic declaration capturing sector priorities, commitments, and recommendations to accelerate Ghana's progress toward SDG 6.



2. Evidence, Learning Products and Actionable Recommendations

A collection of case studies, innovative WASH service models, and highlights from expert panels and technical sessions will be compiled to support wider sharing, while actionable strategies from breakout discussions will help shape the next steps. Some of the outputs from the Conference will include:

- + *A prioritised list of scalable, climate-resilient last-mile service delivery options and innovations, with identified policy, regulatory and financing needs. Documented case studies and best practices in WASH innovations and service models.*
- + *A curated catalogue of promising WASH innovations, approaches or products presented at this year's MOLE conference, with contact information for potential partners/investors, and a summary of key challenges and opportunities for scaling.*
- + *A set of actionable recommendations for innovative financing strategies, including potential funding sources and implementation mechanisms*
- + *Discussions will focus on identifying critical partnership gaps and proposing concrete collaboration frameworks.*
- + *Discussions will identify key policy and regulatory gaps affecting climate-resilient WASH services for last-mile communities and propose specific recommendations to close them.*
- + *A GEDSI-responsive monitoring framework, with indicators, owners and timelines, for tracking implementation of the Conference commitments through to MOLE XXXVIII.*

3. Stakeholder Commitments, Sector Networks and Collaborations

Effective WASH service delivery hinges on shared ownership, unified action, and long-term commitments from diverse stakeholders. This includes government agencies, donors, civil society organisations (CSOs), traditional institutions, local communities, and the private sector. Key outputs from the conference concerning this will include:

- + *Renewed stakeholder commitment and collaborations at national, sub-national and local levels to drive Ghana's WASH agenda and align with global frameworks.*
- + *Tangible follow-ups and tracking of the implementation of the actionable recommendations to government, NGOs, and private actors regarding inclusive service delivery.*
- + *Consensus on pathways for institutional reforms and data/knowledge-sharing mechanisms that were agreed on at the Conference.*
- + *Renewed activities of the Sector Working Group and other related networks and platforms across the WASH ecosystem to facilitate knowledge exchange, technical support, and joint initiatives and intersectoral collaboration.*



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