

Policy recommendations for establishing country-led monitoring systems for water, sanitation and hygiene in Western and Central Africa

A study from ten countries 2016-2018



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These recommendations were developed as a part of the DGIS-UNICEF Programme for Accelerating national and subnational WASH monitoring for improved asset management and service delivery (UNICEF, IRC, Akvo). A participatory assessment methodology was used in ten West And Central Africa Region (WCAR) countries and led to the development of costed action plans in each country for strengthening monitoring and improving the management of WASH assets.

The information required to make effective decisions, whether by government, development partners or civil society stakeholders, is fundamental for ensuring water and sanitation service delivery. Until now, programme-based approaches towards monitoring and evaluation have gained limited success in providing lasting insights. Recent experiences from ten countries in West and Central Africa demonstrate that Country-Led Monitoring offers a feasible alternative for building strong national WASH M&E systems that deliver to country needs.

Executive Summary

Water, sanitation and hygiene information systems in many countries do not fulfil the requirements of the broad range of government and non-government partners who depend on data for planning, financing, implementing and sustaining WASH services. Unmet information requirements have resulted in fragmented and an ad hoc approach to collecting and managing data, with one-off surveys and parallel systems offering limited useful insight and rarely lasting beyond project timeframes.

Building strong WASH monitoring and evaluation systems can be achieved through a participatory process with national and sub-national stakeholders: setting aspirations for the system, evaluating the existing components of the system and preparing costed actions for building systems that can deliver on the country's information needs. Policy recommendations are proposed for governments, development partners and civil society based on learning from a ten-country study in Western and Central Africa.

Fragmented monitoring

MEETING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The Sustainable Development Goals aim to transform our world ensuring no one is left behind. By using evidence on the real state of basic and safely managed services, progress towards SDG 6.1 and 6.2 can be accelerated. For this to happen, country WASH M&E systems need to provide information to a broad range of stakeholders who each play a critical role in functional water and sanitation service delivery. This includes national and sub-national government, development partners and civil society. At the country level, this requires strong institutions, effective collaboration and plans to ensure data is collected, verified and analyzed to generate insights, and ultimately that these insights are used to inform decision-making.

NATIONAL WASH MONITORING & EVALUATION

Monitoring for the WASH sector requires concerted action from multiple stakeholders and requires clear national leadership and alignment behind a common goal and desired set of results. Leadership for achieving service delivery results requires more than a mandate to govern— it depends on the availability

and production of clear evidence, standards for services, and capacity to respond to the needs of users. An integral *raison d'être* for monitoring is to allow and support effective accountability mechanisms between multiple stakeholders, governments, and civil society.

More than an agreed set of indicators, national monitoring requires coordination mechanisms, strong institutions and governance, analytical capacity, and effective regulatory and accountability mechanisms that put the data to use. Monitoring information must be available and packaged effectively as insights, which support planning and budgeting cycles and inform financial investments. Monitoring should *respond to and satisfy the needs of different stakeholders* and should support coherent accountability and sector performance management frameworks. The performance of the sector requires that all stakeholders agree and share common standards, evidence, and capacity to play their roles effectively and that these are agreed upon and validated through effective joint discussions and evidence-based planning on an annual basis.

FRAGMENTED MONITORING: THE CURRENT STATE OF NATIONAL WASH M&E

In Western and Central African countries, existing national monitoring systems have been established with the aim to track national targets. However, these systems rarely extend to the information and guidance needed by service providers, service authorities, civil society and development partners, and are not always adapted to changing priorities over time. Subsequently, water and sanitation stakeholders develop alternative, separate processes and systems for informing their specific needs.

WASH monitoring efforts are hampered by technical, governance and financial challenges. Existing formal systems remain unused, unreliable and fragmented and access to the data generated is not widely available. As a result, decisions are not systematically based on the performance of past activities, which limits accountability. Budgets are severely restricted and despite considerable effort there has been limited success in building and sustaining WASH monitoring and evaluation systems. There are few examples in the region which countries can model or replicate for their own needs and national development goals.

Strengthening country-led monitoring

Country-led monitoring is a vision for country coordination of WASH M&E whereby respected leadership of national government steers the country towards national development targets, development partners rely and build partnerships in coordination with national priorities, and where civil society plays a respected and critical role in ensuring accountability for end-users.

The purpose of country-led monitoring is to enable effective decision-making at all levels within a country using continuous, reliable and relevant data, which can be processed, analysed and used to inform decisions. Country-led monitoring has the potential to inform intervention tracking, inform corrective actions, inform planning and resource allocation, increase accountability of service providers and authorities towards citizens, and inform regulation of services and service providers. Ultimately, country-led monitoring can and should result in strengthening and sustainability of water and sanitation service delivery.

What is country-led monitoring?

Country-led monitoring refers to the multi-stakeholder mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation and learning that are led by a country government rather than a third party.¹ Segone² defines country-led monitoring as where the country leads and owns the monitoring cycle by determining the questions to be asked, the methods applied, the analytical approach, the communications and how the information is used.

The term 'country-led' instead of 'government-led' is used to reflect the shared civil society, private sector and government leadership roles in the process. Country-led monitoring encompasses an entire country or state and includes rural, small-town and urban areas and both quantitative and qualitative data about services. Country-led monitoring entails a dedicated government institution has the lead with clear involvement of civil society organisations, local government and donors³. The government coordinates regular updating, ensures availability and encourages use of the data.

Building strong water and sanitation monitoring and evaluation systems can be coordinated within the paradigm of country-led monitoring. Through a participatory process with national and sub-national stakeholders setting aspirations for the system, then evaluating the existing system to determine an approach and costed actions for building systems which deliver on the country's information needs.

Policy recommendations

Building on the participatory government-led UNICEF WCAR M&E programme in ten countries (section 5) the following policy recommendations can be made.

Why can country-led monitoring work?

National government	Governments are seeing practical ways forward and have identified and approved practical steps that can be taken immediately. Recommendations have come with full sector backing and are understood by partners. Plans have broken up steps into concrete activities which are costed and fundable.
Development partners	Shared M&E practices that reflect the roles and responsibilities of different institutions create a more consistent environment for WASH programming and aid effectiveness. Ultimately, more resilient monitoring and evaluation systems are needed to ensure the sustainability of outcomes and accountable investments.
Civil society	Clarifying the reporting and monitoring mandates of institutions, explicit sector goals, and service standards provide the basis for

¹ This is an adaptation of the definition given by Danert, K. 2015. Messy, varied and growing: country-led monitoring of rural water supplies, in T. Schouten and S. Smits (eds), From Infrastructure to Services: Trends in Monitoring Sustainable Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Services. Rugby: Practical Action Publishing.

² Segone, M. 2009. Country-led Monitoring and Evaluation Systems: Better Evidence, Better Policies, Better Development Results, Evaluation Working Paper Series, Geneva: UNICEF Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS).

³ Ssozi and Danert. 2012. National Monitoring of Rural Water Supplies: How the Government of Uganda did it and lessons for other countries. RWSN-IFAD Rural Water Supply Series - Volume 5.

	more reliable information on the performance of services and the ability to act and advocate for people. In country-led monitoring systems, civil society has a role in monitoring and ensuring users are receiving services that are up to sector standards and that these standards are appropriate. Access to official sources of information can provide additional formal mechanisms for engagement with government to improve water and sanitation services.
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Priority steps for establishing country-led monitoring	
National government	Approach recent and current development partners to elaborate and communicate support needed for strengthening the national WASH M&E system: based on a participatory country-led monitoring approach with costed action plan developed.
Development partners	Invest in-line with country-led monitoring, be responsive to government requirements and support costed national plans for country-led monitoring, including strengthening the enabling environment, ensuring routine monitoring and evaluation and the use of insights in sector reviews.
Civil society	Call for transparent information on the performance of services and performance of institutions accountable to constituents, users and civil society.

Evidence from Western and Central Africa

In Benin, Central African Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Sierra Leone national government institutions, most often the Ministry for Water and/or Sanitation, led a participatory process of assessing the state of national WASH M&E systems together with a wide variety of national and sub-national stakeholders. They identified the strengths and weaknesses of national WASH M&E systems in each country showcasing an active understanding of complex relationships in the sector.

Recommendations addressed organisational, financial and technical capacity gaps as well as actions required to improve sector coordination, guidance documentation, and align the different priorities across key sector institutions. Working across a number of institutions, under different mandates, planning timeframes and at different levels, allows for a more realistic and robust view to a national WASH M&E system, which generates genuinely useful insights for these different decision makers: a country-led system that all stakeholders can support.

Browse and use the [toolbox](#) for strengthening country-led monitoring (IRC, UNICEF, and Akvo 2018):

IRC, UNICEF, and Akvo. 2018. "Toolbox for Strengthening Country-Led Monitoring." The Hague, The Netherlands: IRC. <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/nosyhlumal6mah5/AADrCQGcglifOF-GDGTPiiUMa?dl=0>.

