

CASE STUDY

Challenges of inter-sectoral monitoring of developments in the provision of water and sanitation services in Nigeria

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Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, faces major challenges in reaching the Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs) water and sanitation targets of halving the proportion of unserved people. These are challenges that will not go away overnight, and meeting them will require concerted efforts by government and civil society. A key part of these efforts is improving knowledge management in the sector: not just monitoring progress, but using the data to explore how new projects are improving coverage of improved drinking water supply and sanitation services and evaluating the impact on households.

Local capacity to generate and use information will be a vital part of the effort to monitor the achievements of water and sanitation targets in Nigeria. At national and sub-national levels, government monitoring systems are inadequate to properly inform decisions on national sector investments, sub-sector resource allocation, accountability of funds and project outcomes/impacts. Also, data streams are not harmonized and sector data literacy is poor. The statistics on sector coverage are irregular and conflicting due to divergent definitions, indicators and methodologies applied by different agencies. Sector monitoring and accountability mechanisms are poor. Civil society participation can be a critical catalyst but currently civil society participation in the sector is very limited in Nigeria and the few non-governmental organisations engaged in the sector are of limited capacity. Challenges to inter-sectoral monitoring of developments in the water and sanitation sector in Nigeria include: weak/inadequate government monitoring systems which cannot properly inform decisions on national sector investments, sub-sector resource allocation, accountability of funds and project outcomes/impacts; effective sensitization and building the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) on sector needs and advocating support for government projects; sensitization/mobilization of legislative arms of government to support prioritization of effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework for water and sanitation in Nigeria.

The establishment of the Water and Sanitation Monitoring Platform (WSMP) represents one effort to address these issues. WSMP Nigeria is a pilot project of European Union Water Facility (EUWF) under the umbrella of World Health Organisation/UN Children's Fund (WHO/UNICEF) Joint Monitoring Programme that has created an independent sector monitoring platform. WSMP has begun to establish a strong presence within the Nigerian water and sanitation sector through national and zonal workshops, active participation in sector meetings aimed at harmonization of household survey protocols for reliable and comparable data and

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through initiatives to engage decision/policy makers including national and state legislators on the urgent need for an effective and viable M&E system in the water and sanitation sector in Nigeria.

Background

Nigeria is a federation comprising 36 states and a federal capital territory governed by three tiers of government (federal, state and local government areas). Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with population of over 140 million.

The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources (FMAWR) is responsible for coordinating national efforts in the provision of water supply and sanitation services. In order to enhance sector efficiency and effectiveness, the Ministry is implementing a major Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Reform Programme (WSSSRP). This is an integrated programme which focuses on water sector reform at national and sub-national levels, in conjunction with institutional reforms and improvement of water and service delivery in urban, small towns and rural areas. The WSSSRP is supported by the World Bank (WB), the European Union (EU) and UNICEF among others in six focal states. The reforms in the water and sanitation sector aim at ensuring that services are provided and managed with increased performance and cost effectiveness, while maintaining federal commitment to equitable and sustainable provision of these services to all citizens of Nigeria. Implementation of the reform processes over the last decade has resulted in the development of the National Water Policy, drafting of the Water Resources Bill and elaboration of a water resources strategy and the review of the institutional framework for the provision of water and sanitation services in the six focal states.

Despite the gains made in sectoral governance, M&E systems at national and sub-national levels still need strengthening: the capacity and infrastructure to deliver effective M&E services are weak. Other agencies and NGOs working in the water and sanitation sector collect data but collation and coordination of efforts are inadequate. To remedy the situation, and as part of the reform process, the Federal Ministry of Water Resources (FMWR) is in the process of developing a water resources sector information management system (SIMS).

Status and impact of water and sanitation delivery in Nigeria

Access to safe drinking water and improved sanitation facilities is a major problem for most Nigerians. The 2008 WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water and sanitation (JMP) report stated that improved water supply coverage is actually declining (from 50% in 1990 to 47% in 2006) with only a marginal increase in access to improved sanitation over the same period (from 26% to 30%). Other monitoring tools such as the UN Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) report in 2007 somewhat different coverage figures and trends, but in all cases coverage is still unacceptably low.

The Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs) 2015 targets for Nigeria are 75% and 63% respectively for drinking water and sanitation. Currently, Nigeria is clearly not on track to meet these targets. One of the major reasons thought to be contributing to decline of access to improved sources is the high rate of non-functionality of water supply facilities mainly due to a poor operation and maintenance (O&M) culture in Nigeria which is attributed to lack of community participation and ownership of facilities. In Nigeria, 50% of drinking water facilities are estimated to be non-functional.

Some of the direct consequences of these low levels of coverage are high infant and under-five mortality rates. Apart from malaria, diarrhoea diseases account for the highest

mortality and morbidity rates among under-five children. According to the Federal Ministry of Health report on diarrhoea survey, it is estimated that over 200,000 deaths occur annually among children due to diarrhoea in Nigeria (Agberemi and Onabolu 2009).

Sector reform, monitoring and evaluation

Until recently, water supply and sanitation services used to be provided by various agencies without harmonized policies, approaches, and effective coordination. There was little or no community participation. Duplication of services, promotion of different approaches was rampant and serious O&M challenges impacted negatively on water and sanitation service delivery to the people. In addition, sanitation and hygiene components lacked priority and attention. This development scenario may be largely responsible for the current poor sector performance status. However, in the last decade, as a result of the WSSSRP Nigeria witnessed a paradigm shift, beginning with the formulation of the National Water and Sanitation Policy in year 2000 (NWP 2000). Service delivery in the sector is being streamlined into decentralized institutions. For instance, the Department of Water Supply, Quality Control and Inspectorate (WSQC&I) is the lead agency for planning and policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation of implementation at the federal level while the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agencies (RUWASSAs) are responsible for water and sanitation in rural areas in their respective states and local government areas in the federation.

The NWP 2000 expressed concerns about the importance of availability and quality of valid water and sanitation data, the reliability of data collection and processing methods and participation of local government and community members in the process. The policy also proposed, among other things, to monitor the performance of the sector.

The sector reform aims to unify the different water supply and sanitation M&E systems by bringing the different flows of data together in one system, transmitting data from local/community level to state and federal levels respectively. It is hoped that collation and analyses will advise good planning and budgeting at all levels of government.

Presently, at national and sub-national level, government monitoring and evaluation systems are inadequate to properly inform decisions on national sector investments, sub-sector resource allocation, accountability of funds and project outcomes/impacts. Sector data literacy is poor. The statistics on sector coverage are irregular and conflicting due to divergent definitions, indicators and methodologies applied by different agencies. Sector monitoring and accountability are poor. Civil society participation can be a critical catalyst but presently, civil society participation in the sector is very limited in Nigeria, the few NGOs in the sector also have limited capacity.

The water and sanitation information management is further complicated by the lack of inter-sectoral collaboration and lack of information flow from the local to the state and federal level and vice-versa. The scenario often results in conflicting figures and questionable statistics which make it difficult to reliably assess progress. Without a system to monitor progress in an integrated manner, the country will not be able to reliably report progress against nationally set targets or the MDGs.

Most of the sector players, particularly the donors' supported projects, have some forms of monitoring. For example, monitoring is a vital part of Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN)/UNICEF/Department for International Development (DFID), particularly the 'Output to Purpose Reviews' (OPR) of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) projects in states supported by the DFID. In 2006 the World Bank supported a Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources (FMA&WR) National Baseline survey on functionality of the water points, sanitation facilities and hygiene practices in 2006. Community and process

indicators and financial monitoring would also be useful. WaterAid and UNICEF also have different M&E mechanisms that are yet to be harmonized. Several other monitoring systems exist in the states and Local Government Areas (LGA) and villages under different project names operated by allied sectors, health, environment and education ministries depending on projects and funding partners. For health related projects, Partnership for Transforming Health Systems (PATHS) have developed a health management information system (HMIS) collating data from clinics for use in formulating state strategic health plans. The FMA&WR needs to institutionalize the water and sanitation sector M&E systems which other partners and sector players can feed into. The National Bureau of Statistics should be carried along for data harmonization.

There is thus a need to support most states with the development of a Water and Sanitation Management Information (MIS) system for the urban and rural sub-sectors.

However, there are signs of better days ahead. The NWP 2000 expressed concerns about the importance of availability and quality of valid water and sanitation data, the reliability of data collection and processing methods and participation of local government and community members in the process. The policy also proposed, among other things, to monitor the performance of the sector using the following strategies:

- Institutionalize monitoring and evaluation (M&E) nationwide, at federal, state and local government levels
- Promote community participation in M&E
- Maintain a National Water Supply and Sanitation Database
- Ensure feedback of information to ensure proper planning and policy adjustment

A few other positive changes can be cited.

- (1) International Household Survey Network (IHSN), through Accelerated Data Programme (ADP) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has collaborated with National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in activities aimed at the harmonization of household survey protocols for reliable and comparable data for Nigeria. During January to April 2009, the NBS jointly with the Accelerated Data Programme, the WSMP, the National Population Commission (NPopC), the FMA&WR and allied partners organized water and sanitation data harmonization workshop on harmonized survey protocols and methodologies for reliable and comparable standard data in conformity with JMP procedures and core questionnaires for water and sanitation target progress tracking. The workshop examined the quality, gaps and weaknesses in survey data to improve quality. The workshop also examined reconciliation of national estimates in the water and sanitation sector. The involvement of representations from NBS, NPopC, WaterAid and UNICEF, among others, provided a broadly based representation for developing consensus. The outcome of the workshop is helping to improve data streams harmonization and sector data literacy.
- (2) The issue on poor sector data literacy is gradually being addressed. WSMP has been making a difference on sector monitoring since inception in July 2007. Actively working with data generating houses (NBS, NPopC, FMAWR, and UNICEF) and other key sector partners on data harmonization, WSMP is addressing the above challenges through publications and presentations at national and zonal workshops, active participation in sector meetings and through initiatives to engage decision/policy makers including national and state legislators on the

urgent need for effective and viable M&E system in the water and sanitation sector in Nigeria. Since the establishment of WSMP Nigeria, there is increasing awareness and interest on the need for strengthening inter-sectoral monitoring and building capacity of government and civil society partners. The European Union Water Facility (EUWF) funding for the pilot JMP water and sanitation monitoring platform (WSMP) project ended 11 October 2009; no funding extension.

- (3) A National Baseline Survey in 2006 to provide water and sanitation and hygiene related health baseline data for Nigeria. The federal department (WSQC&I) received funding support from the World Bank under the reform (WSSSRP) programme to carry out a National Baseline Survey in 2006. The Baseline Survey data will form the platform for tracking/monitoring and reporting the progress that the country is making towards achieving the MDGs for water supply and sanitation.
- (4) Also, the WSSSRP has managed to put in place a workable mechanism for cost sharing under counterpart funding, in six states. The strong community participation under the scheme, including cash contribution by communities to capital cost, when operationalized, will enhance ownership and sustainability of services as well as O&M of the facilities. O&M in the sector has been a major issue in Nigeria where about half of the improved water sources are estimated to be non-functional due to weak O&M culture. It is envisaged that the outcome of the reform programme ongoing in 6 out of the 36 states of the federation will, in the longer-term up-scale to the entire country. The benefit will include sustainable functional services where they are provided.

Challenges to inter-sectoral monitoring in water and sanitation sector in Nigeria

Data in Nigeria is often obtained from different sources with different definitions and indicators from organizations with varying mandates. The scenario often results in conflicting figures and questionable statistics which make it difficult to reliably assess progress.

Many agencies are involved in data production and there is insufficient collaboration or coordination among them, resulting in replication of statistical production activities. Autonomy, independence and protection of mandate characterize most data production agencies in the country. These multiplicities have consequently led to problems of differences and inconsistencies in statistical products (NBS/UNICEF 2006).

At national and sub-national level, government-monitoring systems are inadequate to properly inform decisions on national sector investments, sub-sector resource allocation, accountability of funds and project outcomes/impacts. The statistics on sector coverage are irregular and conflicting due to divergent definitions, indicators and methodologies applied by different agencies. Sector monitoring and accountability are poor. Civil society participation can make a difference, but so far, civil society participation in the sector is very limited in Nigeria, the few NGOs in the sector are also of limited capacity. There is thus a need to support in the development of a water and sanitation M&E system at all levels for both the urban and rural sub-sectors.

The mutual concern of both the NBS and UNICEF prompted the two agencies to cooperate/undertake the study to identify gaps and differences in concepts, definitions, measurements and methodology in production and dissemination of WASH statistics. The study was participatory; and the reports and findings were made available to major stakeholders. The follow-up to this study, in the sector, is the recent data harmonization workshop organized by NBS which brought together sector partners involved in data generation/usage (NBS/UNICEF 2006).

Water and sanitation issues cut across several sectors. Responsibility for monitoring is often spread across different ministries. There are decentralized governments, and decisions also taken differently both at federal, state and local levels, rather than federal level alone. The lack of integrated M&E systems and weak capacity at all levels to monitor developments in sector service delivery systems result in national priorities failing to translate to effective and efficient sector service delivery at local level; there is often duplication of efforts and waste of resources so that huge money is spent but only marginal progress is achieved.

It is crucial that parliamentarians and civil society are adequately briefed on the benefits/ lack of benefits of data for planning and decision-making particularly on cross-sectoral issues like water supply and sanitation. Effective and efficient resources allocation at all levels and plans for intervention in the WASH sector requires up to date, reliable data on the current situation, in order to plan and monitor progress.

The lack of institutional, organizational and individual capacity at national and local level is more serious in the water and sanitation sector in Nigeria than lack of finance, particularly within decentralized governments where responsibility for WASH lies at the municipal, regional and district level.

The importance of vigorous civil society involvement in monitoring for advocacy and accountability cannot be overemphasized. They help to build a broad base of capable advocates and also be able to engage governments on informed discussions which will enhance service delivery in the sector. Civil society organizations and other citizen groups should be strengthened to support these efforts.

However, the lack of technical capacity and institutional framework for sustainable M&E system remains the most important challenge to effective service delivery in the WASH sector in Nigeria.

Recommendations

There is a need to coordinate and institutionalize M&E initiatives into a national government system. Strategies should be devised for linking M&E into the federal and state planning systems, in order that the demands for WASH service delivery come from the system, not from projects. The FMAWR needs to take the lead in the development of the national M&E framework, and the operationalization of this framework at state and LGA levels.

A multi-sectoral approach to water and sanitation monitoring is very critical in programme implementation for an effective, efficient and sustainable water and sanitation service delivery. It is important that the sustainable monitoring system is established as a matter of national priority which should also recognize the multi-sectoral dimension of water and sanitation in achieving developmental targets. The system should accommodate data or be compatible with as many new monitoring systems and existing databases as possible, including the health, planning, education and poverty databases. The system will be comprehensive but user-friendly if it is designed as an LGA and state MIS tool. Community level information on hygiene improvements, processes and financial/in-kind contributions will be required for planners and policy makers and (hopefully) for the communities themselves, and therefore should be accommodated.

The M&E system programme should assemble and process all data gathered from participatory community assessments in order to create a comprehensive database. The community assessment process should be harmonized to yield the same basic Water and Environmental Sanitation (WES) parameters in all states. A regular updating mechanism is required so that information is sufficiently current to remain useful.

Serious efforts will be required in order to coordinate horizontally and vertically to ensure that this system is established in the optimum manner. The WSMP pilot has made progress in this area. With an extension in its mandate, and/or the establishment of similar initiatives, the participatory monitoring mechanisms – and collaborative learning – can be extended for the good of the sector.

Conclusion

Improved water and sanitation is one of the greatest felt needs in many communities in Nigeria, and is consequently of great interest to politicians and leaders. It also has the potential to be a driver for improvements in governance and accountability. The policy makers, programme planners, donors and other sector stakeholders need reliable up-to-date data and information for more effective delivery of drinking water and sanitation services and for measuring national progress towards achieving the MDG targets for water and sanitation. It is important to keep track of what is happening in the WASH sector, monitor progress, explore how new projects are impacting on access to improved drinking water supply and sanitation services, and evaluate the extent to which programmes and projects impact on households/population.

The lack of integrated M&E systems and weak capacity at all levels to monitor developments in sector service delivery systems is a serious challenge which results in national priorities failing to translate to effective and efficient sector service delivery at all levels. However, with a strong transparent, collaborative inter-sectoral monitoring systems, duplication of efforts and waste of resources will be minimized if not completely eliminated.

Notes on contributor

The author, Abraham Onugba, worked in National Water Resources Institute, Kaduna (Nigeria) for over 15 years. At the time of the current publication he was a Consultant and Team Leader on the Water and Sanitation Monitoring Platform (WSMP) Nigeria, a pilot project funded by the European Union Water Facility (EUWF) under the umbrella of the WHO/UNICEF joint monitoring programme (JMP) from July 2007–October 2009.

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