Bridging Project and Country WASH Monitoring and Evaluation

Authors

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Abstract

With scarce resources and an overwhelming agenda of development priorities, how can a multilateral development organisation such as the African Development Bank (AfDB) simultaneously:

1. Help African countries strengthen their WASH sector M&E capacities.
2. Ensure that it pursues the path towards a results-based organisation, accountable to Development Partners (DPs) and beneficiaries, focused on efficiency and effectiveness in its interventions and knowledge-based in its strategic orientation?

The new M&E strategy of the Department of Water and Sanitation (OWAS) of the African Development Bank (AfDB) is an attempt to respond pragmatically to this challenging task.

This paper introduces the strategy and describes the current status of implementation and its first results.

Introduction

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To address this issue, the AfDB's Water and Sanitation Department (OWAS) has developed a new M&E strategy for the sector that leverages synergies between government-led sector M&E, single project M&E and global sector M&E initiatives.

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[1] The strategy was developed in collaboration with Ernst Schaltegger, former consultant at OWAS and with inputs from many OWAS colleagues, amongst them Hikaru Shoji and Amha Metafaria.

This paper describes the strategy that is being tested by AfDB in Africa and presents its first ongoing experiences. The aim is to stimulate debate around the relationships between M&E at different levels by sharing the conceptual framework and soliciting inputs for its further implementation and scaling up.

After this introduction, Chapter 2 proposes a diagnostic of the current M&E situation in Africa, highlighting some of the tensions between government-led sector M&E and project M&E currently characterising the development scene. Chapter 3 presents the OWAS M&E strategy as an attempt to build on the synergic elements that link global, country and project M&E. The next steps in deploying the strategy are covered in Chapter 4, while Chapter 5 presents the first pilot experience in Republic of Central Africa and an ongoing project of the African Water Facility in Malawi. Some concluding remarks are then offered.

A diagnostic of the current situation

The monitoring landscape: crowded but not fully satisfactory

At first sight, the global monitoring landscape appears to be crowded[2]: the Joint Monitoring Program (JMP) led by UNICEF and WHO, the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water (GLAAS), AMCOW Country Status Overview (CSO), the International Benchmarking Network for Water and Sanitation Utilities (IBNET) etc.; national sector M&E and water point mapping systems, from Uganda, Tanzania to Senegal, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Liberia, to mention a few; and a myriad of M&E systems related to single projects or to individual organisations.

Data availability, evidence-based planning and management, accountability and transparency, however, continue to be quoted at all levels as problematic issues of paramount relevance to overcome the challenge of bringing safe water, sanitation facilities and proper hygiene behaviour to many developing countries. Furthermore, improving M&E remains one of the most frequently stated policy targets in international declarations and country strategy papers and a leitmotiv in donors' requests to recipient countries and executing agencies.

Considering the number of potential users at various geographical and institutional levels and their sometimes very specific informational needs (and capacities), the dimensions and levels to be monitored and evaluated rises exponentially. Furthermore, these needs often require information to be provided at different levels of aggregation – from project or programme to sector. Emerging issues such as the human right to water and sanitation, the post-2015 development agenda, climate change, green growth etc. put even more pressure on existing systems, countries and executing agencies for comprehensive, detailed, accurate, timely and comparable sector information.

Partly also because of the innate inclination by many M&E developers to "reinvent the wheel", these trends result in a proliferation of M&E systems, thereby making the

[2] See Brocklehurst (2012).

landscape even more fragmented and complicated. The lack of universally accepted standards fosters data incomparability and non-transparency and makes it harder to assess data reliability and accuracy. Thus, data credibility issues discourage final users. This, in turn, triggers a vicious cycle that moves them away from result-based decision-making and management.

Last but not least, limited coordination amongst DPs and with governments coupled with a lack of leadership in M&E by the latter complicates this picture further.

A situation of weak legs and a missing head

In this context, overarching initiatives are very important in introducing standard concepts, procedures and tools and setting in motion a process of alignment to some common standards. Such overarching initiatives include amongst others: AMCOW/AUC's African water sector monitoring and reporting process, JMP, GLAAS, and also international surveys such as the Demographic Health Survey (DHS) and Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS).

These top-down initiatives are necessary but not sufficient, especially in national institutional settings that are weak or still in their infancy. Country data collection processes are crucial components; ultimately it is only through them that information is created and made available for different purposes.

National statistical processes have to be anchored at a fine and disaggregated level and be comprehensive enough to satisfy the varied WASH information requirements discussed above. At the same time, they must make use of common concepts, definitions and categories and follow precise guidelines and sound statistical procedures. This is in order to support accurate comparisons across time, space (e.g. districts of one country) and characteristics (e.g. groups of the population, types of service), and to be aggregated across geographic and institutional levels, from local and project level up to the national and the sector/subsector levels.

All this, however, requires country capacity along with a strong commitment at the central government level and within corresponding institutions. Unfortunately, in many African countries, the National Statistical Office and M&E institutions are weak or even

non-existent, especially when it comes to the WASH sector[3]. This missing element represents one of the most critical barriers for the construction of country WASH M&E systems.

Moreover, this triggers counterproductive effects that hamper the virtuous cycle from better information and knowledge leading to improved planning, management and to higher transparency and accountability. Firstly, DPs are incentivised to persevere in "reinventing the wheel", in order to - at minimum - track achievements of their own interventions, thus contributing to the proliferation of systems and overburdening the holders of information. On the other hand, externally driven (and funded) M&E initiatives at the national or subnational level find a *raison d'être* that, however, unfortunately often creates systems that are not useful neither used, and are not sustainable in the long-term because they do not satisfactorily meet the country informational needs. Neither are they backed by the necessary country ownership and institutional capacity.

In fact, the need to strengthen national statistical and M&E systems and capacity is acknowledged but frequently left to others[4].

An attempt to find a viable solution: the new Bank strategy for WASH M&E

The M&E strategy of the Water and Sanitation Department of the AfDB is founded on a three-tier approach: improve the Bank's project M&E, support country M&E capacities and make the linkages with global M&E initiatives (see Figure 1).

The Bank involvement at the global level is instrumental in informing the other two levels. It helps ensure alignment with the basic principles and elements of WASH monitoring developed within the international arena.

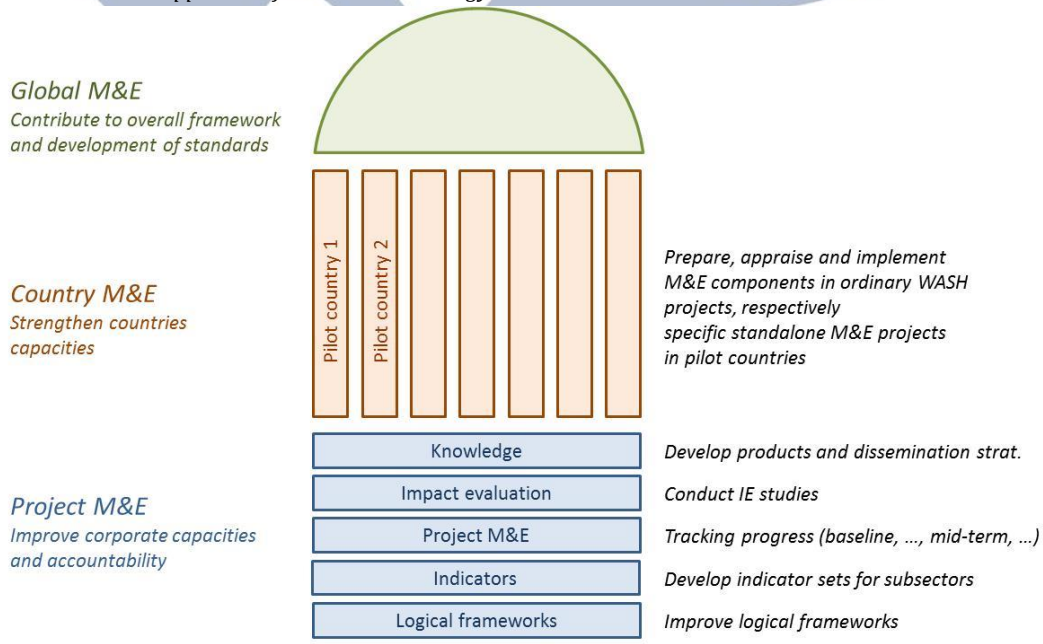
At the country level, OWAS, in partnership with its Regional Member Countries and other DPs, intends to help countries strengthen their capacities, collection processes and M&E systems and eventually improve information available in terms of quantity and quality.

At the level of projects, i.e. WASH projects funded by the Bank in its Regional Member Countries, the goal is to improve OWAS capacities to monitor and evaluate the interventions as a results-based organisation that is accountable towards donors and beneficiaries, effective and efficient in its interventions, and knowledge-based in its strategic orientation.

[3] Statistical capacity index of the World Bank ranks the majority of African countries in the medium to weak categories for statistical capacity (see http://bbsc.worldbank.org/bbsc/). With regard to the calibre of their M&E systems, most African countries are considered to fall into the weak category, some into the intermediate and just a few into the strong one (see AMCOW 2010).

[4] Fortunately, there are notable exceptions, such as the work done by WSP in a number of countries.

Figure 1: The three-tier approach of OWAS M&E strategy.



The contribution at the global level

At global scale, OWAS is contributing to two ongoing wide-ranging initiatives[5]. The Bank considers that these initiatives will have a crucial role in the medium and long-term in mainstreaming and strengthening the WASH sector's M&E in African countries and in setting standards and harmonising procedures. These comprise of:

1. The process led by AMCOW and the African Union Commission to establish an African water sector monitoring and reporting process to support tracking of the achievements on the Sharm El Sheikh commitments[6].
2. The global process led by JMP of formulating post-2015 WASH targets and corresponding indicators in the context of the post-Rio+20 processes on Post-2015 Development goals and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)[7].

The work on WASH concepts, indicators, targets and on procedures and collection processes that is being undertaken by the technical working groups of these two initiatives constitutes the underlying conceptual framework for the activities that will be developed to strengthen RMCs' M&E capacities and to improve M&E of Bank-funded projects.

[5] The Bank is also conducting two wide ranging initiatives not restricted to WASH: the African Infrastructure Knowledge Programme (AIKP) www.infrastructureafrica.org; and the Program to strengthen statistical capacity in African countries within the context of the International Comparison Program for Africa (ICP-Africa).

[6] See AMCOW (2012).

[7] See http://www.wssinfo.org/post-2015-monitoring/overview.

Strengthening country M&E

To strengthen national M&E capacity, OWAS will cooperate with countries through direct interventions in the area of M&E. This will take two forms: firstly, that of a specific M&E component in ordinary Bank-funded WASH projects, and secondly that of specific standalone M&E projects in cooperation with other DPs. The Malawi project presented in Section 5.1 is an example of the latter, whilst the Project for Bangui and the rural areas of four districts in Central Africa (Section 5.2) is an example of an M&E subcomponent in an ordinary Bank-funded project.

In both cases, the process will be demand-driven starting with an assessment of the national needs and the current M&E situation in the country. Preparation and appraisal will be conducted with direct involvement of the National Statistical Office and existing institutions in charge of WASH M&E. The implementation of the strategy will first be piloted in a representative sample of African countries. The pilots should provide the necessary feedback to derive useful guidelines, approaches, tools and cost estimates for the subsequent rolling out to other countries.

Improving project M&E

In relation to the above-mentioned emerging information needs, the commitment to improve results-based planning and management of the WASH projects funded by the Bank crystallises into a process consisting of four steps[8]:

1. Moving beyond the measurement of outputs to consistently track outcomes and, on a selective basis, impacts. The priority becomes one of assessing outcomes, but Impact Evaluation is also considered a crucial element of the framework because it generates fundamental evidence on what works in WASH[9];
2. Expanding the set of development objectives by allowing consideration of equity and non-discrimination, sustainability, quality, etc. This means adopting appropriate goals, targets and indicators and processes for the collection of disaggregated data by geographical levels, social groups, time, etc.;
3. Ensuring consistent and regular M&E throughout the project cycle and even beyond project completion, starting with robust and comprehensive baseline data collection and analysis, through to regular monitoring, mid-term and end evaluation to post-evaluation; and
4. Producing knowledge out of projects (good and bad practices, technical solutions, evidence from evaluations and impact evaluations etc.), systematically and adequately disseminating and consolidating it. This refers to the development of sound knowledge management practices and products able to trigger and constantly feed the learning processes within both the Bank and the country sector.

[8] The Bank is strongly committed to a programmatic approach (and sector wide approaches, SWAp) in RMCs where support is provided through a comprehensive sector investment programme designed to meet the country development goals and targets. Nonetheless, in many countries project level interventions will continue for some times to characterise the sector.

[9] See Perrin (2012) for an interesting note on the relationship between routine M&E and impact evaluation.

Improving the M&E of WASH projects is also intended to complement and reinforce the interventions specifically designed to strengthen country M&E capacities (Section 3.2). In fact, we argue that when conducted in partnership with National Statistical Offices and country WASH M&E institutions, the processes of assessing data availability and needs for the project M&E and of designing and implementing corresponding data collection processes could become a powerful learning process and pilot exercise for the development of permanent data collection processes at country level.

Figure 2: Main activities of Work Plan 2012-2014.

Basic activities	
1	**M&E task forces (TF)** • Set up OWAS M&E task force • Set up an interdepartmental M&E task force • Define TORs and budgets
2	**Pilot countries** • Select (rural and urban) pilot countries • Set up agenda of missions
3	**Objectives and indicators for WASH M&E** • Define standard objectives and indicators for RWSS, UWSS and WRM • Run consultation on defined standards and refine • Test on pilot OWAS projects and finalise • Share and adopt in new OWAS projects
OWAS M&E	
4	**Bank-funded projects' logical frameworks** • Design prototype logical frameworks • Test and finalise • Share and adopt in new projects (through training)
5	**Information system for Bank-funded projects' M&E** • Customise IPR/RRS to OWAS needs • Run preliminary tests and assess them • Implement and test on pilot projects and refine • Share and adopt in new projects (through training)
6	**Impact evaluation studies** • Define Concept note, discuss and finalise • Select 2 projects as case studies • Conduct IE studies • Disseminate results
7	**Project M&E outputs** • Design standard knowledge products (dashboard, reports, presentations, etc.) • Implement on pilot projects and refine

	• Share and adopt in new projects (through training)
8	**OWAS capacity building/sensitisation** • Define modes of sharing experiences and results • Implement
Country M&Es	
9	**M&E components in Bank-funded projects** • Develop M&E components in pilot projects • Derive standard procedures and guidelines • Adopt in new projects
10	**Strengthening M&E capacities in RMCs through specific standalone projects** • Set up the cooperation platform • Assess current state in M&E in each country • Develop guidelines, templates and training for weak M&E countries • Fund supporting activities for medium and strong M&E countries • Develop projects for strengthening M&E capacities

Implementation process and next steps

The OWAS M&E strategy covers the period 2012-2020 and will be implemented in three phases. In the first phase, covering 2012-2014 (see Figure 2), standards will be defined and piloting of various components will take place in selected countries. Phases 2 and 3 will take stock of lessons from the first phase and progressively roll out the programme to other countries while expanding this to all WASH/water subsectors[10]. Internally, the initiative will be progressively scaled up to other water-related departments in the Bank.

Current activities comprise, amongst others, the selection of pilot countries[11] and the search for potential partners for the intervention at country level; the review of existing sets of WASH sector objectives and indicators (in relation to the two international initiatives described under Section 3.1); the design/customisation of the Bank's tools and training modules for improved project M&E (logical frameworks, implementation progress reporting tools etc.); and technical consultations within the two cited global initiatives. Furthermore, OWAS and the Human Development Department (OSHD) of AfDB are conducting two impact evaluation studies on WASH projects.

[10] The testing and implementation will begin with projects in rural WASH, then urban and eventually water resources management.

[11] Activities have already started in Malawi and Central African Republic and will probably soon begin in Swaziland. Three more countries in 2013 and two in 2014 will be selected in order to get a richer and possibly representative sample of case studies.

First country applications: Malawi and Central African Republic

Malawi water sector M&E Project[12]

The Joint Country Program Review (JCPR) held in December 2008 in Malawi assessed sector performance and identified an overarching concern over the lack of an information system that could provide vital data and information for programme/project planning and implementation. This is because the water sector in Malawi is characterised by rudimentary data generation and collection system resulting in poor sector performance tracking and management. Systematic collection of water supply, sanitation data and irrigation data is virtually non-existent. In addition, institutional capacity and funding to manage an efficient Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system is deficient.

The African Water Facility is financing a water sector M&E project with the purpose of ensuring the availability of reliable data and information in the water sector to track the achievement of development targets, policies, programmes and projects and to facilitate decision making in planning and managing the sector. The project aims to strengthen institutional capacity for water sector data and information generation, collection, storage and analysis. A major activity in the project is capacity building in M&E development and management.

The main outcomes of the project include (1) Strengthened water sector institutions and personnel in M&E; (2) Robust, reliable and sustained sector M&E systems; and (3) Effective use of M&E data and information for the development of rational District, Regional and National sector strategic investment plans and reports for annual Joint Sector and Technical Reviews.

The Ministry of Water Development and Irrigation is executing the project with the Departments of Water Resources, Water Supply Services, Sanitation Services, Irrigation and Planning acting as sub-project nodes to undertake the project relatively independently in building their separate M&E systems and databases.

Central African Republic

In Central African Republic there is no proper WASH M&E system. The Government (*Direction Générale de l'Hydraulique*) has a database of the existing water points but this is neither comprehensive nor updated. Development partners in many cases do not inform government about the infrastructure they are providing, and information on functionality of existing drinking water infrastructure is not collected. With regard to sanitation, the situation is even worse; there is practically no data about existing facilities or levels of service.

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[12] The implementation of OWAS strategy builds on a long history of specific M&E projects of the African Water Facility (AWF). The Malawi water sector M&E project is just an example. For more information see: www.africanwaterfacility.org.
This section was prepared by Peter Akari (AfDB).

The Bank with two distinct projects is contributing to strengthen country M&E capacities. The AWF project *Central Africa - Institutional Support to the Water Sector* will provide amongst others things a new GIS tool for data on water resources, demand for drinking water and existing water points.

The WASH project for Bangui and the rural areas of four districts in Central Africa[13] due to begin this year encompasses a component for supporting the Agency for WSS in the rural area ANEA and its decentralised organisation (district focal points, local water point and sanitation committees, artisans, etc.). Through support to this decentralised system and specific training it will be possible in the four districts to carry out a stocktaking of existing rural water infrastructure, update the data by collection for new works, major rehabilitation and the infrastructure that is broken down or awaiting repair (non-functional). In this way it will be possible to achieve a comprehensive and constantly updated rural water point database.

Annual water yearbooks at district level are prospected; they are intended to foster other districts and other donors to geographically expand the exercise.

Concluding remarks

The tension existing between the pressing request for data for corporate result-measurement (mainly project level data) and the process to strengthen countries sector M&E capacities and leadership features and challenges not only the overall M&E landscape (see Chapter 2) but also the African Development Bank as one of the leading actors in the African WASH sector.

Coordination and governance within the Bank, with countries, DPs and global initiatives appear to be crucial factors for the Bank to successfully implement its strategy and, eventually, to contribute in overcoming the challenge of bringing safe water, sanitation facilities and proper hygiene behaviour to African peoples.

Within the three-tier approach the coordination challenge is tackled firstly by ensuring that the country and project level activities will be developed under the umbrella of the two previously mentioned global initiatives: AMCOW/AUC's African water sector monitoring and reporting process and JMP-led process of formulating post-2015 WASH targets and corresponding indicators. This will ensure a strong alignment to the global standards that are being developed at the global level.

Some tensions will, however, emerge between what is mainstreamed at global level and what is desired and/or feasible at country level. Harmonisation/standardisation to global standards and international comparability, on the one side, and satisfaction of national needs and ownership, on the other, will have to be reasonably compromised.

[13] See AfDB (2012).

Secondly, the Bank's interventions for strengthening country M&E capacities will be thoroughly demand-driven and developed within a participative process involving all the relevant national stakeholders and DPs. Existing national coordination platforms will be used and where they do not exist will be fostered. Possibly, the proposed M&E solutions will be institutionally embedded to ensure their sustainability over time.

This is also true for Bank-funded WASH projects. Furthermore, for them the aim is that of, on the one hand, aligning as much as possible the project M&E to the country endowment, and, on the other, cooperating with the National Statistical Office and country WASH M&E institutions on the activities aimed at assessing, designing and implementing the necessary data collection processes. Those are eventually supposed to serve as pilot exercises for the development of permanent data collection processes at country level.

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