

Monitoring the N'gor Declaration building on lessons from eThekwini

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Background

The African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) was formed in 2002 to provide political leadership, policy direction and advocacy on water and sanitation in Africa. Its ultimate aim is to promote cooperation, security, social and economic development and poverty eradication among member states through improved management of the continent's water resources and provision of water supply and sanitation services.

The eThekwini commitments (a key outcome of AfricaSan 2 in 2008) aimed to realise the sanitation-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and were included in those endorsed at by the African Union in Sharm-el-Sheik. The eThekwini Declaration in 2008 was followed by the development of the AfricaSan Action Plan. One of the priority actions set out was for African countries to establish effective sanitation and hygiene monitoring systems.

In 2015, the MDGs were superseded by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at global level. In keeping with the post-2015 SDGs, the N'gor commitments were endorsed at AfricaSan 4 and replaced the eThekwini commitments. Overall, performance on the eThekwini commitments left much to be desired with only nine countries having met the MDGs for sanitation.

In order to give effect to the N'gor commitments [1], new monitoring systems and processes are needed. The overall approach to informing the evolution from eThekwini to N'gor is to build on the best of eThekwini monitoring, address past limitations and position N'gor monitoring for best operability in the post-2015 context.

AMCOW contracted IRC to set out options for these systems and processes informed by lessons from monitoring eThekwini, which are distilled below from a literature review and informant interviews [2] with WHO / UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP), UNICEF Senegal and Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO), Water and Sanitation Program (WSP), Sanitation and Water for All (SWA), WaterAid, Global Public-Private Partnership for Handwashing (GPPPHW) and members of the International AfricaSan Task Force.

Lessons from eThekwini monitoring (2008-2015)

Strengths

Learning and dialogue was a key strength of the eThekwini monitoring. That qualitative, process-oriented, peer-reviewed monitoring information was used to strengthen country learning and action planning is important to retain going forward.

The design and facilitation of country support and sub-regional learning exchanges strengthened self-reflection on the part of participating countries, although quantitative inter-country comparison remains contentious. The process of reaching consensus on assessment scores was important.

Countries that engaged in AfricaSan processes and made clear commitments and actions demonstrated better progress in sanitation and hygiene. Whether their improved performance should be attributed to the eThekwini monitoring process itself or to their institutional strengths is not clear nor perhaps germane.

Closing the loop from evidence to learning, dialogue, action planning and mobilising political will and accountability is widely held to be a significant strength to be taken forward in the design of N'gor monitoring.

The quality of WSP's Technical Assistance support to participating countries (including guidance materials and processes) and to operationalise progress monitoring against the eThekwini commitments was key to the success of an established process with momentum and growing traction.

The reformulation of indicators to improve alignment with the commitments, better track implementation and improve harmonisation with existing monitoring processes was important to the ultimate efficacy of eThekwini monitoring, and flexibility for revision based on findings from testing the N'gor monitoring system in countries, will be important.

eThekwini monitoring indicators were few and carefully selected and a long and complex political declaration was filtered into a few clear questions.

The active contribution of agencies and partners at country, sub-regional and international levels contributed immeasurably and should be nurtured with a clear definition of roles and functions and strong coordination and leadership.

A strong working alliance with SWA was highlighted, and it was noted that where countries linked up monitoring systems (e.g. SWA and the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS)), there was more meaningful action planning and improvements.

Regional politically-driven processes were felt to have greater immediacy and proximity than global processes, and could potentially strengthen country leadership.

Momentum and systems are in place for regular, systematic review; governments are increasingly taking a lead role; the technical content of AfricaSan is stronger each time and the

gap between political and technical streams appears to be narrowing as country teams engage more in the technical content of the event.

The eThekwini commitments raised awareness and political willingness to better prioritise sanitation, of the need for sector finance, institutional leadership and country monitoring. Like the N'gor commitments, they were aimed at strengthening the enabling environment for sanitation, and so addressed a crucial gap in regional and global monitoring systems at the time.

Limitations

It is challenging to formulate monitoring indicators against political commitments. Until the indicator revision process in 2012, indicators were felt to be vague and subjective. That there was a revision made it difficult to analyse trends over time. It is also difficult to reflect on the impact of the monitoring itself.

Although opinions were divided with respect to the emphasis on the process of reaching consensus for scoring and reflecting on progress, overall the need for stronger evidence and accountability for performance against the N'gor commitments is important.

With respect to scoring and comparability, although the traffic light system is familiar and has traction, it can over simplify and give an incorrect impression of comparability between countries. "Green in South Sudan might mean something very different from green in South Africa". There was a suggestion to cluster countries according to specific criteria such as governance structures and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and to set progressive scales with intermediate milestones against the SDGs.

The eThekwini process was facilitation-heavy. Assisting countries to understand the drivers and bottlenecks of their own progress and performance is important and needs to be sufficiently resourced. Because the process was participation-heavy, countries that were stronger institutionally benefitted most.

The role of civil society organisations (CSOs) and civil society in holding government to account in this process wasn't apparent to people from the outside, this could be due to focus on government support and the need for stronger communication efforts to be built in from the beginning.

Although leadership improved with the link to the Sharm el-Sheikh commitments, there is a need for AMCOW's Technical Advisory Committee to take a more direct leadership role.

A lack of data harmonisation in many countries was a hindrance; N'gor needs to be made part of existing country monitoring systems.

There is a case for specific focus on countries with less progress and that were not included or active in the eThekwini monitoring and support processes.

Overall it seems apparent that harder accountability and greater objectivity may be needed to step up performance and meet sanitation and hygiene targets and goals.

Read more in the inception report [3].

Principles of N'gor monitoring

Building on these lessons, the following was agreed with the Monitoring Sub-Group of the International AfricaSan Task Force in May 20016.

Purpose

N'gor monitoring aims to improve enabling environments for sanitation, including institutional leadership, accountability, adaptive learning, political commitments and resource allocation for sanitation and hygiene and to strengthen sanitation and hygiene performance towards universal access and ending open defecation.

The N'gor monitoring process will create reflective dialogue processes at country and sub-regional levels and strengthen mechanisms for accountability to citizens and political leaders informed by evidence.

Leadership and coordination

- AMCOW leads the operationalisation of N'gor monitoring, i.e.: convenes; coordinates; communicates; advocates with Member States at Head of State and Ministerial level, builds and manages partnerships, and acquires and allocates the necessary human and financial resources.
- AMCOW will define the roles of different supporting partners in keeping with their niche and the needs of the N'gor monitoring, which include among others capacity building, facilitation support in counties and sub regionally, communication, alignment, technical assistance, and knowledge management.
- Promote national monitoring platforms with membership of all key persons including SWA, GLAAS, N'gor, and other global and local monitoring initiatives and processes. Country focal persons of different monitoring systems to align, work together and communicate regularly, and will have a strengthened mandate.
- An N'gor Taskforce will be established with a clear Terms of Reference and the AMCOW Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will create a sanitation subcommittee.

Key principles

- Alignment with existing country monitoring processes and milestone events should minimise duplication and burden on countries and maximise impact.
- Member States will be the main beneficiaries of improved data to better inform decisions and plans.
- Member States are expected to set their own national targets and establish a core set of indicators in national plans and strategies feeding into regional and global processes.
- Political leaders from Member States and members of civil society need to own the monitoring data, be familiar with it, accountable to it and understand what it means; relevant evidence needs to be available and accessible; versioned knowledge products and improved knowledge management and sector learning is needed.
- To ensure the sustainability of monitoring systems and processes, a greater focus on targeted and coordinated capacity development is necessary.
- Support for low performing or previously uninvolved countries will help the entire region accelerate access to sanitation.
- The eThekweni emphasis on peer reviewed scoring, reflection, dialogue, action planning and accountability will be retained.
- Civil society engagement, communication and accountability will be strengthened.
- The monitoring framework needs to be relevant to countries at different stages of progress.
- Alignment of indicators (and methods, standards, definitions) and data sources with existing global and country monitoring.
- Monitoring and reporting cycle to be regular enough to maintain momentum while not burdening country review processes, and so will align with country and African Union (AU) reporting cycles
- Country action plans will be part of the process and will be aligned with national planning cycles.
- Multi stakeholder sector reviews are key entry points (to locate and reflect on existing relevant data, to incorporate N'gor monitoring into annual planning, etc.).
- Global, regional and sub-regional events anchor events (SWA, AU, AMCOW sub-regional meetings, etc.) provide milestones and convergence points along parallel political, technical, and advocacy tracks.
- Monitoring system and tools to be pre-tested with the TAC and in a few countries before sub-regional consultation, thereafter political endorsement will be sought and thereafter piloting and capacity building will commence.

These principles were incorporated into the key messages taken by AMCOW to the Meeting of Ministers of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (SWA SMM) in Addis Ababa in March 2016 [4].

Ensuring alignment

Data sources to monitor the N'gor commitments were aligned with CSO, SWA, GLAAS and other regional and global monitoring and evaluation processes.

Core regional indicators and scoring criteria

Core regional indicators were developed for monitoring the N'gor Declaration vision and each commitment. There are several core indicators for each commitment and each part of the vision.

In keeping with the Regional Action Plan developed, the indicators and scoring criteria have been reviewed through a series of sub-regional consultations led by AMCOW in Nairobi, Dakar and Johannesburg in May and June 2016.

The core regional indicators and scoring matrix should be used by countries to develop a data collection form which aligns with the GLAAS questionnaire, SWA indicators and other regional and global monitoring tools. The regional core indicators are calculated by the percentage of countries meeting all criteria and therefore scored green.

Read more in the Annex on Core indicators and scoring criteria [5].

References

- [1] AMCOW, 2015. The N’gor Declaration on Sanitation and Hygiene : adopted by the African Ministers responsible for sanitation and hygiene on 27 May 2015 at AfricaSan4Abuja, Nigeria : African Ministers’ Council on Water (AMCOW). Available at: www.ircwash.org/resources/ngor-declaration
- [2] Key Informant Interviews conducted with Ann Thomas (UNICEF ESARO); Apollos Nwafor (WaterAid Nigeria); Benjamin Murkomen (Chief Public Health Officer, Ministry of Health Kenya); Fiona Gore (UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water, GLAAS); Fiorella Polo (Sanitation and Water for All, SWA); Gaelle Fohr (UNICEF Senegal); Hanna Woodburn (Global Public-Private Partnership for Hand Washing); Piers Cross (Senior consultant); Sophie Hickling (Senior consultant); Tom Slaymaker (WHO UNICEF JMP), and Yolande Coombes (Senior consultant).
- [3] Potter, A., Dickinson, N., and Radin, M., 2016. Monitoring high level sanitation commitments in Africa : from eThekwini to N’gor, lessons and implications. The Hague, The Netherlands: IRC and AMCOW. (unpublished inception report)
- [4] Terpstra, J., 2016. IRC in SWA Ministers meeting on implementation Global Goals. Available at: www.ircwash.org/news/irc-joins-swa-ministers-meeting-ethiopia-discuss-implementation-sdgs
- [5] Annex 3: Core indicators and scoring criteria
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