

Using knowledge for improving water, sanitation and hygiene services in West and Central Africa



Although most people acknowledge the importance of learning for improving performance in the WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) sector, in practice key information and knowledge are too often not (or only partly) used for the planning and implementation of interventions. The UNICEF-IRC partnership for Knowledge Management and Sector Learning (KMSL) aimed to raise awareness of the importance of learning in 11 West and Central African (WCAR) countries and the region and to explore possibilities for how these learning processes can be better supported. The main purpose of this paper is to underline the importance of learning for better performance in the WASH sector and to contribute to the discussion on how this can be achieved. Learning is in this paper used in the broad sense of creating, sharing and acquiring knowledge through experience. The basis of the findings is the interviews carried out by the UNICEF country offices with more than 100 professionals from government, civil society and academia in nine different countries. In addition, a survey was held among 30 professionals from regional platforms, networks and organizations, involved in learning activities in WASH in the WCAR and African region.

After the assessments of current learning and sharing practices in the WASH sector in nine countries, seven countries started to develop KMSL action plans, which focus broadly on one or more of the following themes: access to information; exchange of ideas and practices; capacity to create knowledge; and contribute to sector coordination and review. The latter reflects the common concern of how to make KMSL operational and directly contribute to sector performance. The regional survey showed that capacity to support knowledge development and learning in the region is available in both institutions and platforms, but is fragmented and often guided by a global (rather than regional) learning agenda. Anchoring learning in the region with African leadership can provide coordination and ensure that the agenda addresses more specific needs from the region.

UNICEF-IRC PARTNERSHIP FOR KMSL

Sometimes answers to common problems already exist, but are not widely known. Sometimes new knowledge is created, but the use is still fragmented. Obtaining the information and using experiences and lessons learned locally and internationally remains a major challenge globally and often even more in developing countries. The UNICEF-IRC partnership (2015 - 2016) aimed to support 11 WCAR countries to explore how their WASH sectors could be strengthened with the aim to build upon the best practices and lessons when working on the delivery of sustainable and equitable WASH services. A central role in the partnership is played by the UNICEF country offices, carrying out the surveys and discussing approaches and priorities. The UNICEF regional office and IRC played a supporting role, providing conceptual and methodological guidance.

The partnership also explored possibilities to strengthen the organizational capacity of in-country learning at regional level and to facilitate inter-country and regional knowledge and information exchange on WASH in the WCAR. The countries included in the partnership programme are Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic (CAR), Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Sierra Leone, Niger and Nigeria. The UNICEF-IRC for KMSL partnership is part of the

broader acceleration of the Sanitation and Water for All programme and is funded by DGIS, DfID, UNICEF and IRC.

IMPROVING IN-COUNTRY LEARNING

General approach

Because KMSL is a concept that aims to strengthen the enabling environment for WASH service delivery, it doesn't have a natural home like, for example, the service delivery itself, which has the government as primary owner. Based on earlier experiences¹ there are in principle three crucial elements for a successful KMSL process. The first important element of the approach is to nurture the ownership across the different types of stakeholders. When the main ownership is vested in the relevant ministries for the sub-sectors the chances of impact are better. Therefore all countries have started a dialogue with the relevant ministries or ministerial bodies to develop this ownership. For example in Nigeria endorsement is requested from the National Council for Water Resources, in Burkina Faso, the Ministry is chairing the core group that is leading the KMSL initiative.

A second element is that the process requires champions who advocate for KMSL and provide guidance to ("lead") the process of stakeholder buy-in and participation. In the case of this KMSL partnership, the UNICEF country offices in all 11 countries and the IRC offices in Ghana and Burkina Faso have volunteered to play this role of champions, and they have extended the core groups of champions by inviting professionals from other organizations to broaden the ownership in the sector.

The third element is collaboration: make sure that the process is inclusive and builds on the (different) capacities of as many different and relevant stakeholder groups as possible. For this purpose, the interviews in the countries were spread over different stakeholder groups and in the cases of DRC and Nigeria as larger countries also organizations located in the provinces or states were asked to participate.

Figure 1 represents the broad steps of how the country teams worked towards the country KMSL action plans.

¹ <http://www.ircwash.org/resources/wash-sector-learning-continuous-improvement-services-last>

FIGURE 1 PROCESS OF COUNTRY KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND SECTOR LEARNING ACTION PLANS



BUILDING A LEARNING SECTOR – A FEW CONCEPTS

Building a learning sector with the capacity to continuously innovate, evolve and adapt based on evidence is a must for delivering sustainable services and requires the capacity and willingness to do things together, better and differently.¹

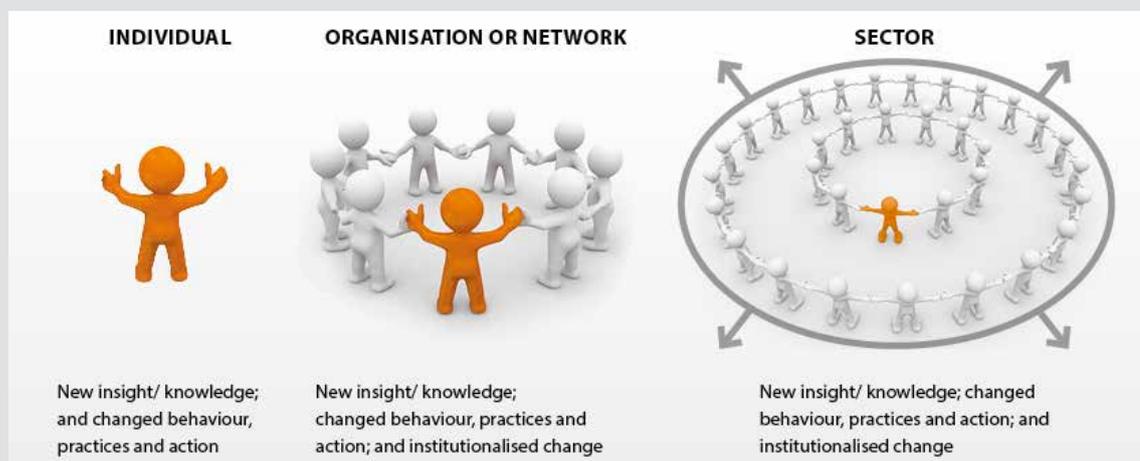


FIGURE 2 TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK FOR TRACKING SECTOR LEARNING. RMA WORKSHOP, APRIL 2011

Learning starts when individuals acquire new insights or knowledge and change their behaviour.

Knowledge Management refers to the facilitation and support of processes for creating, sustaining, sharing, and renewing of individual and organizational knowledge in order to generate social or economic wealth or to improve performance.

Sector learning goes beyond knowledge and action at the individual and the organizational level. It involves all stakeholders, and emerges from an integrated approach to information management, monitoring, analysis and reflection on the factors that determine success or failure.

The effects of learning at individual level translate into concerted action and institutional change.

The above concept of sector learning has been developed by IRC during 15 years of supporting KMSL in the WASH sector in about twenty countries worldwide in different projects² and has a number of implications:

- When learning starts at the individual level, it is crucial that the working environment of the professionals provides space to the individuals to learn, reflect, share experiences and create new knowledge. If programmes and organizations subscribe to the importance of learning as a strategy for improving performance, resources (in particular time) need to be dedicated to KMSL.
- Organizations, which include networks, play a crucial role in providing a structure and home for individuals to learn. But this doesn't happen automatically, it requires an organizational vision, strategy and practical systems that support both the learning of the professionals and the ability of the organization to evolve. It is important that the organizations provide not only space for professionals to put their new knowledge into use, but also open up to this new knowledge and adapt. Next to this internal objective of KM, for the sector to benefit from the individual and organizational learnings there needs to be an externally oriented approach to communicate and engage with the other stakeholders.
- Although exchange between individuals and organizations will happen spontaneously and naturally, it will become truly sector learning when it is connected to the vision and strategies of the sector. Change at sector level, for example, the sanitation policy or a harmonized Community-led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach, goes much smoother when all key stakeholders are engaged in an organized process of implementation and lessons learning. Ideally, sector learning is a key part of a (annual) joint review of the sector that is based on evidence, whether it is anecdotal (i.e. case studies) or based on solid data.

¹ <http://www.ircwash.org/resources/sector-learning-and-adaptive-management>

² <http://www.ircwash.org/resources/wash-sector-learning-continuous-improvement-services-last>

KMSL SURVEY AND VALIDATION OF RESULTS

Approach

For the KMSL survey, a generic questionnaire was designed, which the champions in the countries used for the interviews, either in person or by phone and in some cases by holding a meeting with different stakeholders present.

The number of organizations interviewed per country varied between 8 (CAR) and 23 (DRC). Not surprisingly, in general, the more developed sectors of countries with larger populations had a larger number of respondents. An attempt was made to include staff that is specifically responsible for Knowledge Management. However, in none of the countries, specific KM officers were interviewed, mainly because very few organizations have such a position. The questionnaire was divided into four main parts addressing aspects of KMSL at the (1) personal; (2) organizational; (3) sector learning and; (4) sector demand levels. Based on the results of the questionnaires country assessment reference reports have been produced, presenting the responses from the interviews in diagrams and drawing conclusions.

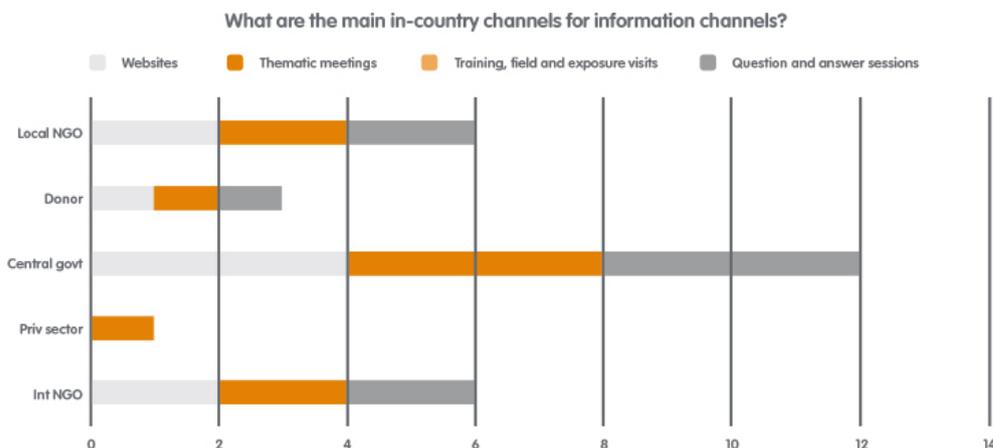
The surveys were not based on a representative sample. For the credibility of the results, it is important that the results of the survey were validated by the stakeholder groups in the country and are treated as indicative material to guide the dialogue on the way forward. Therefore the next step in the process has been to organize a validation meeting with sector stakeholders to (1) discuss the results and conclusions of the country assessment reference reports and to (2) discuss recommendations and priorities for the way forward. Most countries remarked that the sector would benefit from a survey that included more stakeholders. It was also noted that the results mainly reflected the situation at the national level and not

necessarily represented the situation at the decentralized level. At the same time, most countries appreciated the findings and found that the surveys provided sufficient basis for recommendations for the way forward.

The depth of the findings: in a few cases there was a need for clarification of the findings. For example, in Mali, they found that although the organizations mentioned websites as an important source of information, most of these sites are rarely updated and therefore not very useful. Although many organizations mentioned that they have a KM strategy, in most cases they lack qualified staff to make these strategies effective.

The country assessment is written up in a KMSL country briefing note, which summarizes the main findings of the country assessment reference report and the results of the validation meeting.

FIGURE 3 MAIN IN-COUNTRY INFORMATION SHARING CHANNELS PER STAKEHOLDER GROUP (MALI)



**USING KNOWLEDGE FOR IMPROVING WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE SERVICES
IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA**

TABLE 1 SUMMARY COUNTRY ASSESSMENTS

	Individuals		Organizations			Networks	
	Demand for type of information	Common channels for obtaining information and knowledge	Knowledge exchange between organizations	Organizational commitment to KM	Capacity development requirements	Degree of participation in networks for information sharing	KM to help formulating a sector agenda
Benin	Sector data and training materials are available; news is less available; guidelines are little used.	Websites, thematic F2F meetings and email. Webinars are little used.	INGOs, Ministries and communities most active; service providers and politicians least.	75% has a KM strategy with 60% also a budget; 40% has no dedicated staff for KM.	KM, language and internet/computer skills.	About 75% of organizations participate actively in network activities.	60% is not aware of joint sector review.
Burkina Faso	Case studies are hardly available.	(1) F2F; (2) website; (3) email. Internet is seen as a major opportunity for learning.	Positive across the stakeholder groups.	Most have a KM strategy, up to 70% has a budget, but organizations don't have dedicated staff for KM.	Internet connection; learning culture.	All do participate and acknowledge the importance; however, effectiveness is questioned.	Yes, 50% contributes to the annual review; 70% of the professionals indicate that the review impacts their work directly.
CAR	Videos and pictures least available; policies and guidelines easily accessible; News is in high demand.	Thematic F2F meetings and to lesser extent websites; in general internet based channels are little used; CoPs are mentioned.	Service providers and politicians least; Government and CSOs frequent; Universities have other audiences.	75% KM strategy; less than 30% with budget; most don't have dedicated staff.	KM skills; documentation and presentation; computer skills.	2/3 is not aware of any platform.	75% is aware of the sector review and most indicate that their work is influenced, in particular for prioritising.
Cote d'Ivoire	Research and news are hardly available; Guidelines are not popular.	Thematic F2F meetings; websites; Social media are mentioned.	NGOs and communities most active; Ministry and politicians least; Universities are not involved.	62% have KM strategy, 40% with budget. Most don't have specific KM staff.	Research, KM and language skills.	30% participates in networks; 60% participates in field visits.	80% is not aware of structured sector review.
DRC	Monitoring and training materials sufficiently available; News most looked for.	Thematic meetings and websites; Social media are becoming more popular.	National NGOs and CSOs are more isolated.	85% KM strategy, 60% with budget; less than 25% dedicated staff.	Internet connectivity; KM skills; Time allocation for KMSL.	Around 50% participates in network activities.	Less than 35% participates in the annual review; less than 30% states that their work is influenced by the review.
Mali	Case studies and training material are least available; policies and guidelines are easily accessible	Thematic F2F meetings; websites; social media and CoPs are becoming more frequently used	Exchange frequent, but mostly bilateral and often with the same stakeholder group.	70% has a KM strategy with 50% a dedicated budget; most have no dedicated staff.	Research; KM and language skills.	70% participates in network activities.	90% is aware of joint sector review; NGOs and INGOs don't participate; 60% claims that their work contributes.
Mauritania	Contacts and guidelines easily available.	Meetings and websites; email and phone calls.	Mainly between development partners and NGOs and Ministry; Quality of the processes is assessed as low.	Less than 50% has a communication and/or KM strategy; less than 40% a budget or dedicated staff	KM skills low in general.	Less than 25% participates in network activities.	50% is aware of annual review, but only 7% thinks their work has any influence.
Niger	Videos, pictures and news hardly available; guidelines and monitoring information good accessible.	Thematic meetings; email and phone calls for bilateral; social media are becoming more popular.	Active private sector (consultants); Low by academics; key ministries.	2/3 of organizations have communication strategy and 50% with dedicated budget; They also have a staff position for KM.	Language, communication skills and internet connection.	60% participates in network activities.	Majority of organizations participates in annual review and 75% states that their work is influenced by the outcomes.
Nigeria	News and contacts most looked for.	Thematic meetings (1), training and field visits (2) Telephone and email remain most popular channels.	Interactions most intensive within own group; consultants are put high.	2/3 of organizations do have communication and information strategies with budgets; few have specific staff for KM.	ICT and writing skills.	About 40% is not participating in network activities.	80% participates in joint sector review and same percentage states that their work is influenced by the outcomes.

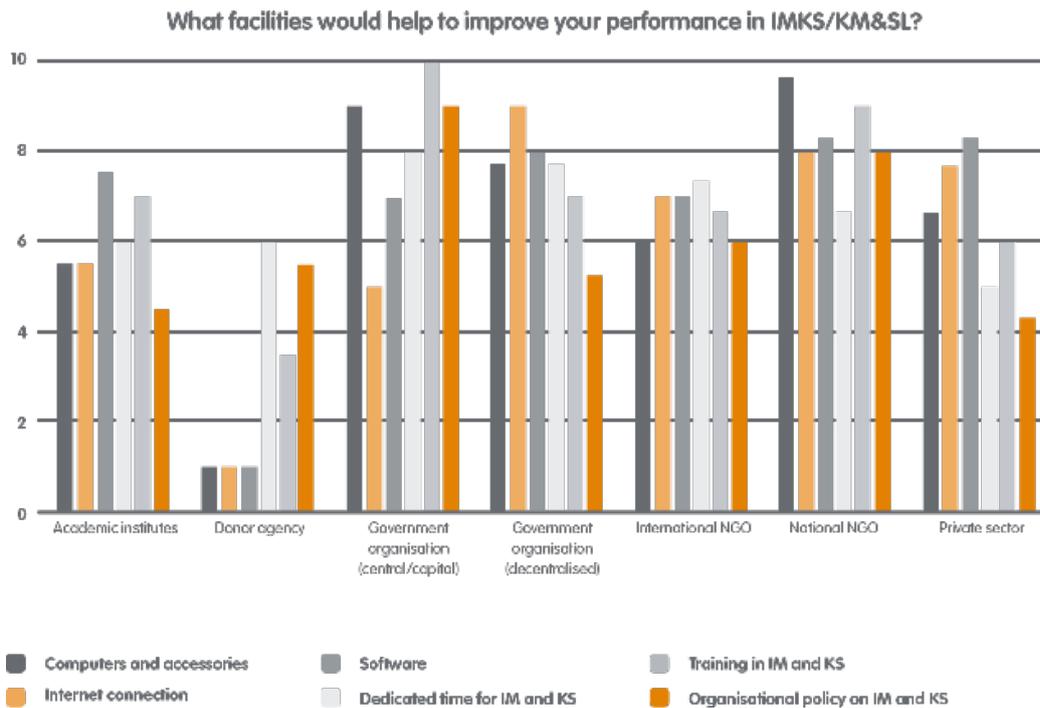
Organisational level:

- Politicians, academia and service providers do not tend to exchange information with other stakeholder groups. Most organizations exchange primarily within their own stakeholder group.
- Between 50 and 75% of the organizations are committed to Knowledge Management but less than 50% have also committed a budget. Only a few organizations have dedicated staff positions

for KM.

- Language and computer skills and internet connectivity are still experienced as an important stumbling block for effective communication and learning.
- Research, documenting and presenting are mentioned as capacity gaps among professionals.

FIGURE 4 FACILITIES THAT WOULD IMPROVE YOUR KM CAPACITIES (NIGERIA)

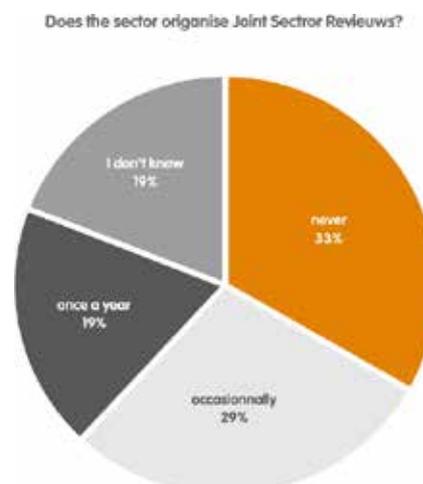


Networks:

- Academia and private sector hardly participate and contribute to the existing WASH networks in the countries.
- With a few exceptions in all countries 60% of the organizations state that (their staff) participate in networks and platforms.

- In the majority of the countries most organizations are not aware of an (annual) joint sector review or they do not participate. The majority of those who are aware state that their work is influenced by the outcomes of such reviews

FIGURE 5 KNOWLEDGE OF JOINT SECTOR REVIEWS (DRC)



During the validation meetings, the participants discussed and amended the results of the survey – for example in DRC and Niger. And the opportunity was used to agree on a time path for developing an action plan (Niger, Cote D’Ivoire). Also thematic areas for learning were identified. For example in Mali, the meeting agreed that understanding costs and finances in the sector should get priority, as well as more knowledge on professionalizing service delivery and the actual sustainability of the services.

KMSL COUNTRY ACTION PLANS

Approach

For strengthening sector ownership and collaboration between stakeholders, the champions were asked to form a core group of those that had shown a high interest in KMSL for WASH, possibly from different stakeholder groups. When a country wanted to develop a KMSL country action plan, the core group was asked to submit an Expression of Interest (EoI) wherein the countries were asked to formally submit their request and commitment to move forward with KMSL at country level.

A particular challenge that a number of countries face is the formal buy-in and support from the sector ministries. The process is delayed by changes in

leadership (for example Nigeria and Burkina Faso). In the case of Nigeria, the KMSL strategy was submitted to the National Council on Water Resources with the expectation that once formal approval was received, the process would move smoothly. However, the Council did not prioritise the KMSL strategy and as a consequence the process was halted.

KMSL country action plans

The seven countries that have submitted an Expression of Interest have prioritized activities in the areas that are shown in Table 2. The other four countries that haven't submitted an EoI have stated that they also want to continue to work on KMSL, but that they couldn't give it priority at this moment in time.

	Access to information	Exchange of ideas and practices	Capacity to create knowledge	Contribute to sector coordination and review
Burkina Faso				Link with sector monitoring and move issues forward
CAR			Make available emergency tools	Support coordination
DRC	Website with regional pages	Create effective platform		
Ghana		Inclusion of decentralised actors	Strengthen documentation	Link with data sets
Niger	Increase access to information	Increase exchange moments for stakeholders		
Nigeria	Repository and lessons learned	Create platform and learning events	Build documentation capacity	Inform sector leadership for review and planning
Sierra Leone				Link with and use of sector monitoring data

What comes out strongest (5 out of 7) is the concept that learning should contribute or be part of the process of sector review, planning and coordination.

At the time of writing this briefing note, CAR, Burkina Faso and Ghana have completed the KMSL country action plan. The CAR plan focuses on developing information and sharing mechanisms to support learning and coordination. In Ghana, the focus is on taking sector learning to a next level: that learning actually influences policy-making and decision-making. The Burkina Faso plan focuses on thematic learning for improved sector performance: thematic learning supports the solving of water services delivery and sanitation problems by creating joint solutions with a large number of interested parties. The issue is, however, that as long as the different stakeholders do not have the same level of information and knowledge, solutions often remain frag-

mented. Structured or organised learning is then key in acquiring this jointly owned knowledge and to put it in use.

REGIONAL MAPPING STUDY

Approach

The Africa Joint WASH Learning Initiative¹ has been the anchor for the regional KMSL mapping study. They put forward names of institutions and individuals to be included in the study and gave feedback on the draft reports. The main findings of the study were validated in a meeting with members of the initiative, whose feedback was included in the final

¹ The Africa Joint WASH Learning initiative involves a group of organizations including AMCOW, IRC, ps-Eau, Rural Water Supply Network (RWSN), Sanitation and Water for All (SWA), Sustainable Sanitation Alliance (SuSanA), and the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) committed to coordinate efforts in support to the implementation of an Africa "owned" learning agenda in the WASH sector

The mapping study that looked at the KMSL capacities of regional organizations is complementary to the assessment of the national KMSL sector capacities in 11 countries of the WCAR. The mapping study included the elaboration of an inventory of all the relevant players (many of them with a global base) with a support function in the region; a Survey Monkey among 40 individual organizations and 20 networks/partnerships active in the region and a desk review on the KMSL practices of a limited number (14) of key regional organizations for WASH in the region.

The regional mapping study was organised around three main questions: i) What is the existing capacity for supporting KMSL in WCAR Countries? ii) What are the strengths and weaknesses in the practices of the regional organizations and networks, alliances or partnerships in support of enhanced KMSL in the countries of the region? And, iii) What is the potential for strengthening the regional support capacity for KMSL?

Findings regional learning

While the study doesn't pretend to be an academic research piece, the findings of the Survey Monkey do provide a number of insights into the status of learning for WASH in the WCAR and potential for support to the countries. Some of the regionally rooted organizations which are known to have WASH specific capacity, like ECCAS, ECOWAS and WSA, have not responded or responded only partly to the survey, and any follow-up action should take these institutions on board.

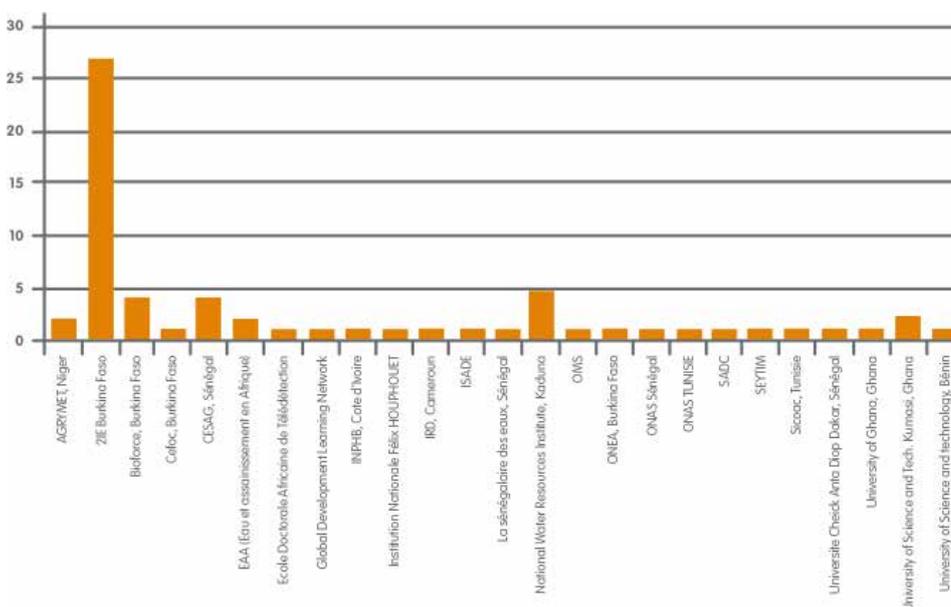
Available but fragmented capacity for KMSL

The overall conclusion regarding the existing capacity for KMSL is that a broad range of organizations has a commitment to supporting the development of KMSL in the WASH sector in WCAR countries. Most of these are global institutions, which have a minimum capacity for KMSL activities. There are many positive experiences with KMSL practices implemented by a substantive group of regional (and global) sector players, however, those practices appear to be fragmented and not consistently implemented.

Most of the organizations and networks/ alliances active in WCAR countries have a global or Africa-continental agenda. Only few have a dedicated agenda for supporting KMSL in countries in the WCAR- even a smaller group of those are exclusively focused on WASH. What we do not know is to what extent the agenda of the global and Pan-Africa support agencies responds to the specific learning priorities of actors in the countries of West and Central Africa.

The study results bring out the clear potential for strengthening KMSL activities and the impact in the WASH sector in the WCAR: a good number of institutions committed to KMSL with successful products particularly from training institutes. By building on and further mobilizing the existing capacities and by ensuring a better coordination and more streamlined efforts, there is sufficient scope to strengthen the collective impact of the KMSL activities in the WASH sector in West and Central Africa.

FIGURE 6 PREFERRED TRAINING INSTITUTIONS LIST



The results of the study point (Figure 6) to an important role for one training institution (2IE in Burkina Faso) with a strong regional outreach that can address the training needs of organizations and sector professionals, particularly in the more technical WASH related areas. However, the potential role of institutions, such as 2IE and for example Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Ghana, needs to be further assessed.

Gaps for successful regional KMSL

Next to the potential the study has also identified a number of gaps for successful KMSL in WCAR:

- The absence of a regular and dedicated event for sharing and learning makes it difficult to agree on a regional learning agenda.
- The absence of a natural leader that functions as regional anchor and reference point for accessing WASH information and knowledge relevant for the region makes that KMSL products and experiences are not easily accessible for users.
- Monitoring the use and impact of the KMSL activities is not a common practice by the KMSL providers, active in the region. There is no feedback loop between the “supply” of KM products and dissemination by the support organizations in the survey and the “demand and uptake” by the users.
- There is a gap between the (WASH) development sector and two important actors in knowledge generation and capacity development, the academia and the private sector. The latter groups may need to be specifically targeted in a further assessment of their potential for strengthening the KMSL activities for WASH in the WCAR.

There is an expressed need for methodological support in developing national capacities for KMSL. Regionally rooted institutions such as WSA (Water and Sanitation for Africa), ECCA (Economics of Climate Change Adaptation) and ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) have been identified as potential regional leads for filling a gap in leadership and coordination, but they are not yet recognised for their KMSL activities in WASH. There is no clear ownership for possible key regional KM activities, such as evidence-based research and learning and state-of-the-art and demand responsive capacity building. Among the global institutions identified to potentially take up a leading role in KMSL for the region, only a very limited number has a dedicated programme and/ or a (KMSL) strategy for West and Central Africa.

REFLECTIONS FOR THE WAY FORWARD

The basic question of this paper – how can knowledge management improve the performance of the WASH sector in West and Central Africa? – is posed in the context of an environment of new challenges and growing complexity. Population growth, economic development, urbanization and climate change ask for new solutions that provide a higher level of services and more security. Achieving the SDG targets will require innovation and using the best and proven methods and approaches. Professionals and policy makers need to know what has to be done differently and how. Learning from best practices AND failures, access to information, methods and tools will be crucial. The surveys in the countries and mapping of regional capacity show that there is general agreement on the importance of creating, sharing and acquiring knowledge by experience, but the awareness on how KMSL can contribute to improved sector performance is actually weak.

In the eyes of many internet provides an opportunity for KM and learning, but webinars, for example, are still not very popular. In-country validation meetings found that social media like Facebook are basically only for private and not for professional use. In addition it was flagged that most websites are not updated regularly and are therefore not an optimal source of information. Internet at the moment is mainly used as a passive channel, not dynamic. Noticeable also is that in almost all countries, the respondents mentioned that access to news from the sector was hard to obtain. And finally, professionals in the countries stated frequently that language was often still a barrier because of the limited availability of francophone materials.

The KMSL networks of the future should reach out more to academia and private sector to make them structural partners. Additional in-depth study is needed to better understand the potential of the training institutions and academia in KMSL, and the unlocked knowledge and learning resources in the private sector, particularly experiences from the utilities and the private providers in the supply chain of drinking water and sanitation services.

Country learning for WASH

At country level there is a lack of awareness of the importance of learning. This is confirmed by the amount of effort the countries involved in the partnership need to put in to get the process to develop a KMSL plan going that is owned by a minimum number of stakeholders, going and to keep it alive. The experience of this partnership is that

making KMSL operationally successful is still rather difficult.

An important step to overcome this would be to develop a joint vision on what actually can be achieved for the WASH sector in WCAR with improved KMSL. One of the drawbacks is that the direct benefits of KMSL for the actual service provision are mostly long-term and not immediately visible. A longer term perspective needs leadership and ownership in the country. Encouraging is that both in Ghana and Burkina Faso the KMSL initiatives try to make a concrete link between KMSL and service delivery.

An excellent opportunity to make direct use of knowledge and learning for sector performance are Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs). The main purpose of these reviews is that all stakeholders of the sector jointly review (annually) the status of the sector and prioritize the focus for the coming period. Information and knowledge are crucial inputs for successful and meaningful reviews. The Danert (2016) study recommends that a JSR focuses each time on a selection of possible sub-themes and/or subsectors. Organised learning processes can provide an important contribution by gathering information and evidence, facilitation of inclusive discussions and documentation around particular themes.

JOINT SECTOR REVIEW

A JSR process refers to a periodic assessment of performance within a specific sector (for example: education, agriculture, water supply, and sanitation) by government, development partners, and civil society. The reviews are ideally an integral part of the country's planning and reporting cycle. A JSR process includes a half-yearly, annual or biennial gathering, meeting or forum which is led by a sector ministry and has the participation of a wide range of stakeholders. The process usually consolidates evidence through analysis of data, studies, and reports in the run-up to the actual gathering. It may include field visits. This study defines a 'Joint Sector Review' as a periodic process that brings different stakeholders in a particular sector together to engage in dialogue, review status, progress and performance and take decisions on priority actions.

Source: Danert, K., 2016. Effective Joint Sector Reviews for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), A Study and Guidance.

Leadership for learning in the region

The role of global institutions in WASH learning at regional level is still big. If professionals from the region go to WASH sector events or meetings, it is often to global events (insert link to regional mapping study). Also global institutions have a significant role in WCAR meetings or conferences. The risk of this strong global presence in the WCAR learning processes is that the agenda is less focussed on WCAR specific issues and that capacity from the region is less used and/or developed. The high level of "global" representation in events and platforms in the surveys may point to a need for stronger African ownership of KMSL.

The primary focus of KMSL should also be on the processes in-country and its stakeholders. However, at the regional level the platforms like the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW), AfricaSan and the Africa Water Week have potential for developing a learning agenda. Training institutes like 2IE in Burkina Faso and KNUST in Ghana can provide support as a regional clearinghouse for information and state-of-the-art capacity building.

Building and strengthening regional and national capacities for more Africa-centred knowledge

development and learning will require explicit commitment and dedicated resources from national governments, donors and all other development partners. This can best be achieved by a mix of institutional and programmatic arrangements.

For effective uptake and development of concepts, methods, tools and standards for the WASH sector in Africa, the processes need to be led by African (Africa-based) actors and institutions. Leadership by a regionally rooted Africa based organisation, like AMCOW, is needed to set the Africa Agenda for Learning - owned by African governments and other sector stakeholders in the countries of the region.

Clear leadership will help the WASH sector in West and Central African countries in overcoming fragmentation and can streamline the various KMSL activities to achieve more impact in the development of the WASH sector in the countries of the region. In this light a strategic partnership between international institutions, with a strong international track-record and global recognition, and regionally rooted institutions that can provide a sustainable anchor for KMSL across the region, will need further exploration.

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An excellent opportunity to make direct use of knowledge and learning for sector performance are Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs). The main purpose of these reviews is that all stakeholders of the sector jointly review (annually) the status of the sector and prioritize the focus for the coming period. Information and knowledge are crucial inputs for successful and meaningful reviews. The Danert (2016) study recommends that a JSR focuses each time on a selection of possible sub-themes and/or subsectors. Organised learning processes can provide an important contribution by gathering information and evidence, facilitation of inclusive discussions and documentation around particular themes.

About this synthesis paper

This paper has been developed as part of the UNICEF – IRC partnership Knowledge Management and Sector Learning in West and Central Africa Countries.

All reports and publications related to the UNICEF – IRC partnership Knowledge Management and Sector Learning in West and Central Africa Countries KMSL are available at: <http://www.ircwash.org/projects/knowledge-management-and-sector-learning-west-and-central-africa-countries>

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