CHAPTER 7

Small steps towards building national—regional—global coherence in monitoring WASH

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The global system of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) monitoring lacks coherence. There are large numbers of monitoring initiatives, yet there are major gaps in data collection, analysis, and reporting. Despite the enormity of the challenge, there is reason for optimism. Some countries have taken the initiative to promote a convergence of user and provider data. Regional monitoring instruments are under development in Africa and South Asia reporting on regional political commitments; they should seek consistency with national and global systems. Global instruments such as the Joint Monitoring Programme and UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) have made significant advances and are well positioned to adapt to the post-millennium development goal environment; they should align with global accountability frameworks, such as the political accountability being built into Sanitation and Water for All (SWA).

Keywords: Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP), Global Assessment and Analysis of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS), sector review, provider data, fit for purpose

Introduction

The water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) sector is experiencing strong demand for better data and good analysis. This desire is fuelled by: a focus on measurable results from aid; the competition for resources (requiring detailed evidence of inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impacts); the increasing complexity of WASH issues; the multiplicity of and growth in sector agencies; growing links with other sectors (such as climate change, human rights, water resource management, and health); a desire to achieve better value for money from WASH investments; and better information and communication technology (ICT), which provides easier data collection and new opportunities to use data. This chapter will provide an overview of the state of global, regional,

and country sector monitoring. It will explore key challenges, presenting main advances, lessons learned, and key innovations. Against a backdrop of haphazard monitoring initiatives, the storyline of this chapter focuses on the small steps made and new ideas emerging to improve the coherence and overall architecture of WASH monitoring.

The global monitoring landscape

The number of monitoring initiatives has grown significantly in recent years and many of the established ones are evolving. The landscape is both crowded and fragmented. Duplication occurs both horizontally (across inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes) and vertically (local, national, regional, and global). The demand for sector information has increased (frequently driven by donor needs) and, when a gap is perceived, new and often parallel systems are added. Coordination is weak, so parallel systems go unchallenged. Looking towards the future, the WASH monitoring landscape is going to get even more complex with new issues, new data monitoring initiatives, and new collection methods that will generate large volumes of data.

Key monitoring initiatives at the global level include the UNICEF/World WHO) Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP), which measures outputs, and the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS), which measures inputs. These are discussed in more detail below. Another important global database that collects data from water utilities, but is not fully integrated into the global monitoring framework, is the International Benchmarking Network for Water and Sanitation (IBNET) managed by the World Bank.

At a regional level, regional sanitation meetings (AfricaSan for Africa, LatinoSan for Latin America, EASAN for East Asia, and the South Asian Conference on Sanitation (SACOSAN)), which were initiated with the first AfricaSan meeting in 2002, are evolving in different ways and at different paces into regional advocacy and monitoring processes to track the implementation of action plans and commitments (such as the eThekwini commitments[1]). Regional political bodies such as the African Union (AU), the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) and, in South Asia, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) have also initiated regional monitoring activities in the water and sanitation sector.

Most countries undertake national monitoring, but its effectiveness varies considerably. A key problem in national sector data is that service provider data often differs from user data (from household surveys). This hinders the understanding of the state of the sector and, as a result, the design of effective policies and interventions. A number of agencies have developed analytical tools for the WASH sector but generic approaches have not been agreed.

Cross and Brocklehurst (2013) argue that the current landscape has evolved as a result of a lack of alignment of global and national monitoring. Much

of the emphasis has been on creating regional and global products, rather than on supporting national-level monitoring as the bedrock on which to build national processes, and providing results upwards to global monitoring platforms. A further weakness is that, even when the data generated for global reports includes information of relevance at national level, this is seldom fed back into country-level planning. Lack of feedback loops is a generic problem that limits incentives to provide quality information at all levels.

The challenge is to provide a supportive framework that ensures that this information is consistent, relevant, and reliable and that it leads to action. The poor response to global and regional monitoring from national level is because there is little incentive to share information. The case for why global monitoring is necessary is not clearly made nor appreciated at national levels (and frequently sub-national to national levels). Overburdened monitoring officers often receive extensive requests from a myriad of agencies for data at national level. No resources are made available to support the costs of extracting the required information.

Similarly, the incentives to share information between agencies are slim. Global and national agencies are discouraged from sharing information, since they often compete for resources by demonstrating their exclusive access to information. The global information system is unregulated, and there is little attempt to assess what is a reasonable burden for national agencies to bear in providing data for regional and global monitoring systems. What are their obligations? What can they expect in return? What might this additional data collection reasonably cost and who should pay?

Advances in communications and information management technology introduce a new era of possibilities for sector monitoring. Water point mapping using geographic information systems (GIS), database set-up and management, mobile-to-web data transfers, and new modes of information dissemination have all transformed concepts of what is now possible, compared with the early days of sector monitoring.

The amount of WASH data collected and the number of reports written in the WASH sector have increased exponentially. Luyendijk and Bostoen (2013) show the increase in the number of indicators and the frequency of JMP reports in recent decades. Rachel Norman's research (Norman and Franceys, 2013) identified 45 study types generating WASH data sets. We are awash with WASH data, but use little of it.

A problem also exists in that the timing of data collection is not coordinated; for instance, household surveys that provide data for the JMP are carried out every three to five years, while the JMP is issued every two years. Sector analytical tools, such as the country status overviews (CSOs) and the WASH Bottleneck Analysis Tool (BAT), are not carried out consistently and are not linked to the biennial GLAAS report, for which such analysis is very useful (and there is no future commitment to continue CSOs). Moreover, there are few benchmarks as to what monitoring should cost and what would be optimal to spend on monitoring.

Country-level issues and trends

Are existing country WASH monitoring systems fit for purpose?

Rachel Norman (Norman and Franceys, 2013) describes the enormity of the task of bringing order to country WASH monitoring. Norman's research in Uganda and Kenya – countries generally regarded as having better than average monitoring systems – shows the large number of sector databases available. Only 8 per cent of 293 sector data records identified for Uganda are used in analysis. Only 9 per cent of 166 sector data records in Kenya have any cost information. Not only is there a large number of databases, but the volume of entries is also increasing. Norman's research shows that less than half the data gathered has a clear purpose, very little data is gathered on water and sanitation system functionality, and little data refers to costs. While there is an increasing number of indicators being reported against, there is an indication that only a small proportion of the data being collected is being analysed or reported. While there are attempts to reduce the numbers of key indicators used in joint sector reviews, in both Uganda (which has 10 'golden' indicators) and Kenya (which has nine), some of these super-indicators are ratios or composite indicators and are made up of more than one type of data point. Norman shows that there is a plethora of international and national agencies collecting sector data, but it is unclear the extent to which these various forms of data are captured in national records. Combining the data extracted from the documents and data records, Norman shows that in Kenya 60 per cent of 1,404 indicators were reported against once (i.e. were unique, showing a very wide spread of indicators in Kenya), and in Uganda 18 per cent of the 5,644 indicators were reported against once (which shows a substantially improved focus). Figure 7.1 shows the increase in data collected and reported in these two countries over time.
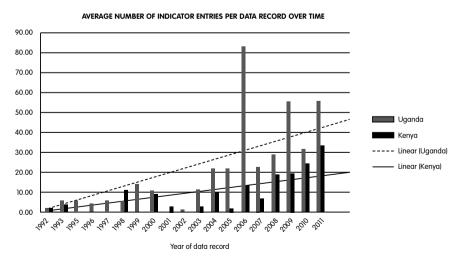

Figure 7.1 Average number of indicators identified across all data sources in Uganda and Kenya

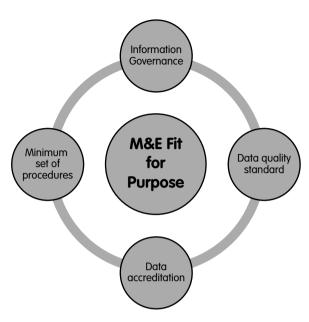*Source:* Norman and Franceys, 2013: 6.

Figure 7.2 Key factors influencing monitoring systems
Source: Norman and Franceys, 2013: 19.

Norman goes on to argue that the country monitoring systems she studied were not necessarily fit for purpose. The sector will be able to improve its performance only if it has a much more credible monitoring system with verifiable results. As illustrated in Figure 7.2, key factors that need to be considered to make monitoring systems fit for purpose are: information governance (clear roles and responsibilities), data quality standards, data accreditation, and an established minimum set of monitoring procedures (so the focus is on essentials for decision making rather than what is nice to know).
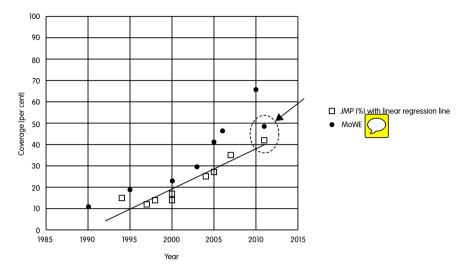
Examples of coherence and convergence in national-level monitoring

Many developing countries are faced with apparently contradictory data on levels of access to water and sanitation. These can often be explained by different data sources or different definitions. Household surveys measuring actual usage often give higher coverage figures (because they do not take into account walking distance and other qualifiers attached to national definitions of service access). The JMP also reflects linear regression (a trend line) from recent surveys and not the results from a specific survey. On the other hand, data from service providers (measuring water points or taps) often relies on service coverage assumptions (e.g. 250 persons per borehole) or does not take into account facilities that are dysfunctional.

Multi-stakeholder dialogue and national leadership can help bring more convergence to national-level data. Several countries have taken this

Figure 7.3 Convergence in Ethiopia's rural water coverage figures

Source: Butterworth, 2013: 4.

initiative, Ethiopia being among the most impressive (Butterworth, 2013). Two key national data sets – Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy (MoWIE) provider data and JMP data, based on a trend analysis of household surveys undertaken by the Central Statistical Agency – showed rural water coverage figures that differed by up to 30 per cent in 2010. From 2012, Ethiopia's lead agency undertook a national WASH inventory (NWI) that collected provider and user data and applied service standard norms (such as what in Ethiopia is regarded as an acceptable distance to walk to collect water). A concerted national dialogue between stakeholders in Ethiopia resulted in improvements in household survey data and, as a result, the latest JMP recorded a higher figure (39 per cent for 2011) while the NWI led to a downward revision of MoWIE results (to 49 per cent), leaving just a 10 per cent access figure difference (see Figure 7.3). The closer convergence of these figures and a better understanding of what each figure is measuring have given policy makers and Ethiopia's leadership clarity on the scale of the challenge the country faces to achieve the national target of universal access.

A key dialogue in building national convergence in monitoring data is the one between the lead sector agencies and national statistical organizations. Agreement between national provider and user data will automatically reflect a closer coherence between global, regional, and country data.

Deepening country WASH analyses

Many countries have undertaken sector assessments and a number of global agencies have developed methodologies and deepened approaches to country sector analyses. These include CSOs (and their derivatives in Asia and Latin

America) introduced by the Water and Sanitation Program (WSP) of the World Bank and the WASH BAT developed by UNICEF. National sector analyses can: pinpoint bottlenecks or areas of weaker performance; identify strategic areas where focus is needed to resolve problems; track progress against agreed strategies and plans; and mobilize partner support for key areas. Their impact is sector-wide and not only focused on analysis of a specific project. Quality sector reviews give decision makers insights into whether policies are working and sector reforms are on course, what is needed to sustain services, and what is the financing gap. Sector analyses can feed into sector reviews, such as joint sector review meetings, and regularly take stock of sector progress or assist in budget submissions.

CSOs, SDAs and MAPAS. CSOs benchmark service delivery pathways and identify issues that might be inhibiting progress. Applied to each sub-sector of a country, they score progress in three areas: enabling service delivery; developing services; and sustaining services (AMCOW, 2011). The methodology has evolved since WSP Africa first applied CSOs in 2006, and, in collaboration with AMCOW and other partners, plans are in place to have CSOs completed in all 54 countries in Africa by 2016. The methodology has also been extended by WSP to Latin America (where it is called Monitoreo de los Avances del País en Agua Potable y Saneamiento (MAPAS) or Monitoring of Country Progress in Drinking Water and Sanitation), and South Asia and South East Asia (as sector development analyses or SDAs).

Dominick De Waal (2013) shows how CSOs have evolved in response to these different regional priorities. In Latin America, the infrastructure built in the 1970s and 1980s is reaching the end of its lifespan, so sector investment requirements for replacement of capital stock are more than 50 per cent of the total requirements in all countries. A key issue emerging from MAPAS is that countries have no reserve mechanisms in place, putting at risk the progress in coverage achieved during the past two decades. The costing model has been adapted to show the relative effects of new service development versus replacement of existing capital stock. The concept of the 'medium-term scenario' has been introduced; this compares the current situation with a second scorecard showing the expected results, recognizing existing efforts to improve sector performance.

Many countries in South East Asia are experiencing a major shift in rural water service delivery levels: from point source wells to piped network systems. SDAs in South East Asia have been adapted to focus on decision options in this transition. There has been considerable focus in SDAs in the region on the core challenge of addressing open defecation, and indicators have been added to address equity, city-wide faecal sludge management, and key water resource issues.

WASH BATs. Multiple constraints in the WASH sector make it difficult to assess the causes of problems. WASH BATs (Hutton et al., 2013) have been developed by UNICEF as a facilitated process and software application, to

identify not only priority problems but also how to solve them. WASH BATs are arguably quicker and easier to use than CSOs. CSOs are developed over several months, commonly use external agents for verification, and incorporate a multi-stakeholder analysis, all measures that arguably lead to a more accurate and comprehensive sector analysis.

Like CSOs, WASH BATs provide a rational, evidence-based approach for formulating a financing strategy and understanding impacts of choices. But they can also track progress in bottleneck removal over time. WASH BATs have developed a modular approach, so lead agencies can select modules in which they want to apply a WASH BAT. There is a module for each of the following sub-sectors: national, sub-national, service provider, community, or household; and/or urban water, rural water, urban sanitation, or rural sanitation.

In each sub-sector, WASH BATs score the enabling factors, identify bottlenecks (their causes and activities to remove them), evaluate costs and the costs of solutions, prioritize activities, and assess the impact on sector coverage. WASH BATs do not benchmark service performance and do not estimate the funding gap to reach targets. Having gone through pilot implementation, based on country demand and UNICEF and partner capacity, WASH BATs are now poised for an extensive roll-out as a flexible instrument that national agencies can use to analyse and indicate solutions to sector problems.

Sustainability analysis. A third country-level analytical tool focuses specifically on the sustainability of rural water services (Harvey, 2013). Sustainability of rural water systems is a key challenge and this tool, developed with UNICEF support, sets out to provide a tool for government-sector agencies to identify sustainability issues and provide the basis for rural water service sustainability improvement plans. The tool is flexible and can be reviewed and adapted to the local context.

The tool analyses and scores many sustainability factors, including: policy-level factors (programmatic approach, service delivery approach); management (community management, local government management, private sector management options); finance (sustainable financing, realistic cost recovery); community (operation and maintenance, equity); technology choices (whether the desired service levels are provided); and supply chains (procurement, integration). The approach is based on a user-friendly, issue-specific tool rather than a sector-wide tool.

Alignment of different country analytic tools. These different tools raise two alignment questions:

- Do we need all these different approaches, or could we standardized them in one tool?
- Should a clear connection be made with GLAAS country monitoring?

On the first question, agencies' vested interests in developing these analytic tools discourage collaboration. On the other hand, competition between agencies is a stimulus to improve analytic tools. Each of the tools discussed above has different merits. The choice of tool matters less than the fact that countries are seeking to deepen their own analysis of the state of the sector and solve problems. All tools increase national capacity to manage large-scale programmes seeking to achieve sustainable service delivery.

On the second question, full harmonization between in-depth national analyses and gathering country-level GLAAS information is probably not realistic, but there is scope for improvement:

- WSP, UNICEF, and other agencies supporting country-level capacity development should increase their collaboration and should advise countries on the applicability of different analytical options and not duplicate country applications. Through better collaboration, a larger number of countries could benefit by having stronger country sector analysis.
- These agencies should increase collaboration between themselves and with GLAAS to standardize parameters so that the data is consistent between the different approaches.
- All countries should be encouraged to apply at least one of the available tools to deepen their understanding of the national state of the sector every two to three years and to gain more insight into the factors shaping or limiting progress.
- GLAAS could focus its limited country support in countries where no recent country-level sector analysis has been undertaken.

Regional issues and trends

Aligning regional monitoring

Some regions are developing monitoring systems to track progress against regional political commitments.

In **Africa**, Vodounhessi and Mbaziira (2013) describe progress in the development of a pan-African AMCOW-led monitoring process to report on progress against the Sharm el-Sheikh commitments in the water sector made by African heads of state. An ambitious monitoring system has been planned, addressing seven areas of commitment to water development on the continent. The system plans to aggregate national government and regional water data. The AU issued its first continental African water report in 2012 summarizing this monitoring information. The data in the first report is limited and reflects only a 41 per cent response rate, but plans are in place to develop a monitoring process as a source of evidence for sector advocacy. The AU is conscious of alignment issues and has created a strong multi-stakeholder task force to support development of this regional monitoring system.

South Asian countries attending SACOSAN committed in 2006 that an inter-country working group would be responsible for harmonized monitoring of country progress towards agreed targets in sanitation and hygiene. SACOSAN monitoring has focused on access, but also functionality, equity, health, education, and financial allocations. In April 2012, health ministers in the SAARC agreed that a common monitoring framework should include access to safe sanitation and drinking water.

Archana Patkar (2013) in her work on regional sanitation and hygiene monitoring, presenting snapshots of the eight countries in the sub-region, points to the huge variability in issues and capacity across the region. Afghanistan, for example, has less focus on sanitation and hygiene and faces a tremendous challenge with respect to capacity and monitoring. Bhutan has ambitious targets of universal access. India, with a population of over 1.2 billion people, is making massive sector investments and has a distinctly different set of sector challenges from other countries in the region. By contrast, the Maldives, with a population of 200,000, faces the acute environmental challenges of a small island. Patkar argues that while South Asian regional data and targets are broadly aligned with global and national figures (there is a common SACOSAN focus on universality of access, reduction in disparities, participation, and social audits), countries have distinct challenges and the programme and monitoring focus will continue to differ between the countries of the region.

Divergent contexts, divergent theories of change

Complementing this, De Waal (2013) links the evolution of country and regional sector analyses to their contexts, arguing that divergent methods reflect both different regional contexts and different theories of change. De Waal argues that each region has a core sector problem on which decision makers focus and which should also be the core for analysis. He depicts the theory of change at the core of regions as follows:

- *Africa*. Accelerating improved access requires donors to work with and through country systems (budget support, public sector financial management, decentralized delivery).
- *East Asia*. Better health and faster economic growth require piped water supply.
- *Latin America*. Reaching sustainable universal access is threatened by water resource constraints and climate change.
- *South Asia*. Better health is contingent on 100 per cent of faecal sludge produced being collected, transported, and treated.

This implies that not all regions, nor necessarily all countries within regions, are interested in analysing or monitoring the same range of issues, and that much of the data on institutional processes is not really suited to global aggregation.

Global monitoring

Aligning global monitoring

The UNICEF/WHO JMP has been the sector's path-breaking global monitoring initiative. Launched in 1990 to measure sector performance, following the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade, it has become the UN-mandated tool for measuring progress towards the water and sanitation millennium development goals (MDGs). The JMP, now based on data from nationally representative household surveys, measures WASH access, i.e. sector outputs. Rolf Luyendijk and Didier Allély-Fermé (2013) and Rolf Luyendijk and Kristof Bostoen (2013) reflect on what has been learned and what remains to be done to strengthen the global architecture of global WASH monitoring.

The JMP has evolved into an impressive global monitoring instrument. The decision to rely on household surveys undertaken by national statistics organizations has meant that JMP data reflects household views and derives its data from nationally accredited sources. Piggy-backing off these surveys makes the JMP highly cost-effective. The JMP's strengths are: its accuracy and quality controls; the fact that its data is independently verifiable; that it analyses country data; the transparency of its analysis; its focus on a limited set of data points on service access data; and its clear primary audience of country sector leaders and agencies interested in MDG achievement.

In recent years, the JMP has significantly improved its communications and ability to mine its data. The JMP now can provide thematic analysis, regional analyses, and in-depth country analysis for different WASH sub-sectors. Increasingly there is a focus on using JMP analyses as a trigger to regional and national action. The JMP has improved the frequency and user-friendliness of its reporting and gives a clearer explanation of why its data and trend analysis are likely to differ from national provider data and what can be done to improve convergence of these data points. Use of household surveys for monitoring access might enable measurement against locally defined human rights issues. Water quality remains a key output item not yet captured in global monitoring.

UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water

An important new entrant to the WASH monitoring scene has been GLAAS, implemented by WHO, which issued its first full report in 2010 (Swann, 2013). A further GLAAS report was issued in 2012 (WHO, 2012) and the 2014 report is in preparation. As opposed to the JMP, GLAAS measures 'inputs' to sector performance, including governance, implementation and institutional arrangements, monitoring, human resources, and finance. GLAAS's origins lie in the UNDP *Human Development Report* (2006), which analysed the political and policy weaknesses in the sector and led to the British government's proposal to streamline global support to the water sector through 'five ones' (one global report to monitor progress; one high-level global meeting to decide

on action; each country to have one national water and sanitation plan; one water and sanitation coordination group; and one lead UN body for water and sanitation at the national level).

So GLAAS (measuring inputs) and the JMP (measuring outputs) have become the critical components of the WASH global monitoring framework. GLAAS's vision is to produce a regular global report summarizing trends in the key factors that determine sector performance, enabling comparison between countries and catalysing in-country monitoring. GLAAS is designed as a key source of information for the biennial Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) high-level meeting (HLM).

In contrast to the JMP, which uses the data from household surveys, GLAAS relies on data that needs to be collected and collated at country level by sector agencies. The response rate to the early GLAAS reports has been low and the quality of some of the data questionable and difficult to verify. But the number of countries engaging with GLAAS is growing and the data collection process for GLAAS 2014 is making a conscious effort to learn from earlier reports. GLAAS measures some critical drivers for success in the sector that are not captured elsewhere, including finance and human resources.

Approaches to future global monitoring

Looking to the future, the JMP and GLAAS are developing a focus and complementarity that have the makings of a far more structured and strategic global monitoring framework. If WHO and UNICEF, running GLAAS and the JMP, can retain focus on a small set of comparable data points over time and across countries, they appear well positioned to adapt to post-2015 monitoring in support of global targets. These targets appear likely to address universal access, improved school and health coverage, elimination of open defecation, improved faecal sludge management, and reduced inequities in service access. A key challenge will be the selection of a few key useful indicators in these areas.

A fundamental sharpening in global monitoring design would include the formalization of a clear accountability framework and global monitoring that would enable global decision making. The strength of country and sub-national (service provider or local government) monitoring is that the accountable authorities are responsible for monitoring and reporting on sector progress. Global agencies leading sector monitoring have no similar accountability. The emergence of SWA and regular HLMs as a forum for global commitments and to provide a framework for global stewardship of the sector offers the beginning of a global accountability framework. To realize this framework, the SWA partnership needs to further broaden its membership, and, where possible, high-level commitments and monitoring of these commitments should be aligned with the sector's main global monitoring instruments.

Global agencies should redouble their efforts to facilitate dialogue at regional and national levels in order to improve understanding of what

different instruments measure and to encourage convergence of data points. These processes should seek to triangulate household survey data, service provider data, and 'third source' data, including citizen reporting, social audits, and regulator and consumer data.

The focus on improving the WASH evidence base has led to the growth of global research studies. Generous research grants have deepened global understanding of many WASH topics, including health impact, climate change, lifecycle costs, sustainability, community-led total sanitation, sanitation marketing, hygiene behaviour change, and many other topics. The essential findings of these studies need to be given more prominence in global learning exchanges and greater effort is needed to make this knowledge available in a form in which it can be understood and used by local decision makers.

Trade-offs in global monitoring architecture

De Waal (2013) points to several trade-offs that need to be made in moving to a more effective global monitoring system. Firstly, he makes a distinction between '**light political tracking versus in-depth analytical**'. More sophisticated methodologies are increasing the complexity of monitoring. The global monitoring system might be reformed by applying in-depth analytical tools only in specific contexts led by country demand. On the other hand, global monitoring should be simplified so that it has a 'light touch', collecting comparable data in a few easily monitored areas, preferably 'harvested' from country-led processes.

A second and related distinction is between '**global consistency versus country relevance**'. A useful distinction to make is that global and regional data should remain comparable across countries and regions and through time to indicate trends. On the other hand, country monitoring should focus on the critical concerns and issues in that context. So, for example, monitoring donor coordination is not relevant in a country where there are no donors. This distinction implies that country analysis need not be standardized across countries, whereas global monitoring needs strict standardization. Global consistency is irrelevant if the data items are of no interest to countries.

A third trade-off is that between '**participatory processes versus audits**'. Participatory approaches such as CSOs can leverage a variety of perspectives and create more country interest. On the other hand, where governments have shown limited willingness to work with development partners, country analytical tools may have a lesser catalytic effect. In these situations, harder tools such as audits may have more impact.

Finally, there is a distinction between **micro (fast) learning versus macro (slow) learning**. The learning process from global tools such as the JMP takes several years, allowing course corrections only every few years. On the other hand, country analytic learning can have an immediate impact, can strengthen country processes, and can be timed, for example to influence specific budget and other policy decisions.

COUNTRY   **VS**   **GLOBAL / REGIONAL**

| 1. Develop theory of change for sub-sectors | | 1. Develop and test methods and platforms |

| | 2. Simplify monitoring system to fit theory of change | | 2. Technical assistance to country monitoring |

| | 3. Action! Deliver services and monitor the theory of change | | 3. Analysis of what countries are monitoring (theories of change) |

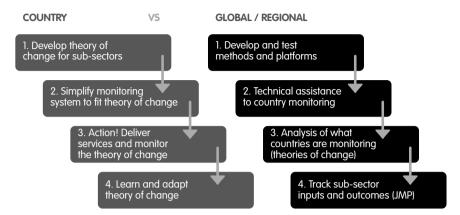| | 4. Learn and adapt theory of change | | 4. Track sub-sector inputs and outcomes (JMP) |

Figure 7.4 Roles in WASH monitoring

Source: De Waal, 2013: 10.

These trade-offs led De Waal to suggest that the global monitoring system might work towards discrete roles and different monitoring strategies at country and global or regional levels, as illustrated in Figure 7.4. De Waal argues that it is difficult for an approach to undertake both these columns of activities.

Developing a shared monitoring framework through Sanitation and Water for All

The emergence of SWA provides a timely platform to better align global, regional, and national monitoring. The sector is well positioned to develop a shared global monitoring framework as described in Brocklehurst (2012). Brocklehurst describes the components of such a shared framework to be:

- 'a shared vision of the **goals and principles** of monitoring;
- an inventory of the **key monitoring initiatives** that make up the framework;
- a menu of the **types of monitoring** (water resources, infrastructure, financial flows, human resources, functionality, equity outcomes, impacts etc.) which avoids gaps and optimizes complementarities;
- a **range of methods** used for data collection and analysis, including new methods supported by mobile technology, and joint efforts to scale up innovation;
- a set of agreed, **common standards** for monitoring information;
- **shared use of monitoring information** to improve transparency, strengthen accountability for results achieved and advocate for the sector, both within countries and globally' (Brocklehurst, 2012).

SWA has created a task team on the global monitoring framework to increase its support to harmonizing global monitoring and improving global, regional, and national alignment. As a partnership, SWA is seeking to:

- facilitate consensus on a shared global monitoring framework across the entire sector, and increase coordination of monitoring between development stakeholders that are SWA partners;
- support efforts to find new and improved ways to monitor challenging aspects, such as measuring hygiene, or tracking financing from all sources;
- support efforts to strengthen national and sub-national monitoring and analysis of sector bottlenecks;
- facilitate the development of a shared set of standards for monitoring data;
- support countries to use the results of monitoring to strengthen sector processes, particularly planning;
- encourage donor partners to use credible financial flow and disaggregated access data to better target assistance and assess investment effectiveness;
- use monitoring information to raise the profile and political prioritization of the sector, and advocate for WASH in global monitoring initiatives, in particular in post-2015 monitoring.

A greater level of cohesion and collaboration could ultimately lead to agreement within the sector on one global agency to undertake sector monitoring and one agency to take on a regulatory function in global monitoring. This function could include encouraging monitoring according to agreed standards, benchmarking and reporting on the quality of monitoring, facilitating coordination across agencies, tracking the burden put on national agencies by global and regional initiatives, and balancing the costs and benefits of data sharing. While ambitious, this step would ensure that the concept of a shared monitoring framework became an operational reality.

Conclusions

Monitoring in the WASH sector is crowded and poorly coordinated and there is little consistency or quality control of sector data. Much valuable data is collected but not used fully, and there is considerable duplication of effort. Lack of alignment between global, regional, and national monitoring is a significant challenge.

What are the challenges at the different levels and what are the promising ways forward to tackle them?

Country level

Strengthening national and sub-national monitoring will undoubtedly give the greatest and most direct return to improving sector data and monitoring systems. Effective national-level monitoring is imperative, as it is the basis for sub-national, national, and global decision making.

Countries have highly diverse sector problems. Country monitoring systems should be designed to respond to country-specific theories of change and problem frames and be encouraged to focus resources on a few local objectives. In order to make monitoring 'fit for purpose', WASH monitoring at country level (and at all other levels) needs a set of minimum procedures to avoid monitoring systems capturing everything just because they can thanks to advances in ICT. Instead, country sector monitoring should focus on a much shorter list of what is 'sufficient to know', as opposed to what would be 'nice to know'.

Countries should be encouraged to build coherent national monitoring systems with the following characteristics: strong information governance with clear roles and responsibilities and with its foundations in national legislation and regulation; standard processes; a standard set of definitions and parameters (measuring the same things in the same way); and a system to validate data and accredit data collectors.

Systems should have incentives consciously built into their design so that data collection is directly linked to decisions. Feedback mechanisms need to be a standard component of all monitoring processes.

There are encouraging examples of countries taking the initiative to promote convergence of data points from different sources through multi-stakeholder dialogue and political will.
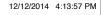
The sector has several tested country sector and thematic analytical tools that can deepen country sector analysis. Stronger collaboration is needed between the agencies that have developed these tools, and they should agree to try not to duplicate country applications but to seek the widest country support, so that a larger number of countries benefit by having stronger country sector analysis. All countries should be encouraged to apply at least one of the available tools to deepen their understanding of the national state of the sector, to identify and address key bottlenecks, and to gain more insight into the factors shaping or limiting progress.

Regional level

Regional monitoring instruments are under development in Africa and South Asia to report on regional political commitments. This is a welcome addition to better inform regional leaders, but carries risks of introducing further incongruities and spending additional resources on monitoring with limited impact.

Regions are diverse, have different theories of change, and need different priorities in monitoring. Regional monitoring systems should have a 'light touch' and build on country priorities without imposing monitoring on a range of indicators of little importance at country level. Regional monitoring systems need to reach out to both national and global systems to retain the integrity of the whole global monitoring system.

Global level

The WASH sector's key global instruments – the JMP for access data and GLAAS for information on inputs – have made significant advances in their focus and strategy. They monitor complementary issues. Arguably both processes might be housed in a single, well-resourced entity, but their contents and approach are necessarily different. Both the JMP and GLAAS are preparing major reports in 2014 and are well positioned to adapt to the post-MDG environment.

The range of global data collected needs to be highly selective, to be comparable spatially and over time, and to minimize the burden it places on national agencies. The JMP has already effectively achieved this through its use of household surveys and 'harmonization' through the introduction of standardized questions. GLAAS is at an earlier stage of development, but the signs are encouraging that its scope and number of indicators are being streamlined.

GLAAS should continue dialogue with agencies supporting country-level analytic processes, such as CSOs and WASH BATs, and encourage them to include a GLAAS common core data set. However, it should not attempt full alignment between country data sets of country sector analyses. GLAAS should remain 'light touch' and focused. GLAAS could focus its limited country support in countries where no recent country-level sector analysis has been undertaken, and, in other countries, it could harvest data from data sets created by existing analyses.

The global monitoring system should align with a global accountability framework. SWA represents an important and growing grouping of JMP and GLAAS clients. Without burdening the JMP and GLAAS with further bureaucratic management, they should be encouraged to be accountable to a global platform, such as SWA, which represents all sector stakeholders and interacts with the sector's global leadership in the HLM.

The emergence of SWA provides a timely platform to better align global, regional, and national monitoring. The sector is well positioned to develop a shared global monitoring framework: SWA has created a task force on the global monitoring framework with a mandate to work towards a shared WASH monitoring framework.

A greater level of cohesion and collaboration could ultimately lead to agreement within the sector on one global agency to undertake sector monitoring and one agency to take on a regulatory function in global monitoring.

Endnotes

1. Ministers at the 2008 AfricaSan meeting committed to 11 key commitments to improve sanitation investment and performance in their countries.
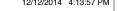
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About the author

Piers Cross, a South African, is a leading international spokesperson and strategist in water supply and sanitation. Piers Cross worked for over 20 years with the World Bank, including as global manager of the Water and Sanitation Program. He supports several agencies on advisory, policy, and evaluation assignments. Piers Cross was recently inducted into the World Toilet Organization's Hall of Fame for his dedicated services to global sanitation and he is a member of IRC's supervisory board.