

Toward a more integrated national WASH data system

**Methodology to assess opportunities and
bottlenecks to move toward a more integrated
national WASH data system**

Methodology document for UNICEF
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Introduction

There is a broad consensus amongst WASH sector stakeholders (and beyond) that data is a crucial element in improving public service delivery. The World Bank report ‘Data for Better Lives’, describes in detail how important it is to create a healthy data ecosystem in low income countries, with a ‘social contract’ at its core that determines that data will lead to no harm and that value created by data will be shared equally among stakeholders; government, private sector, and civil society. The UNICEF WCARO and ESARO programs offer an opportunity to take the first step towards a more integrated approach on data in the WASH sector.

Within the UNICEF WCARO programme, Akvo has been tasked to support setting up a system to enhance monitoring and reporting of the ASWA program. The ideal situation would be an integrated platform for SDG, ASWA and national WASH monitoring and reporting to avoid duplication and optimize resources. Appreciating the complexity of WASH monitoring, which is executed at different geographical levels by a variety of stakeholders and is embedded in a range of local policies and legislations, Akvo suggests a systems approach towards integrated WASH monitoring. We believe that a sustainable solution for integrated WASH monitoring is a multi-stakeholder effort that builds upon existing infrastructure and practices, as long as there is room for further strengthening coordination, harmonisation and integration between these systems.

Akvo has a longstanding history in working together with UNICEF and IRC towards a more integrated approach on WASH monitoring. Based on this experience, we have come to the conclusion that an effective assessment should aim to be inclusive, participatory and complete, but should also be lean and useful, with concrete recommendations on how to prioritize improvements to the system, to make the final product actionable.

This rapid assessment builds upon the theoretical framework for assessing national WASH M&E systems developed by IRC and Akvo in 2017. In order to identify key stakeholders within the current WASH monitoring system and critical bottlenecks and opportunities in establishing a more integrated system together in a participatory and lean way, Akvo felt the need to simplify the assessment framework to make it more user-friendly. Based on the assessment, Akvo will make recommendations for developing a more efficient and integrated program monitoring system.

Given the different country contexts, including policies and regulations, IT infrastructure and capacities, a one-size-fits all approach is not recommended. Instead, together with key-stakeholders, the biggest bottle necks and opportunities for improvement will be identified and based on this Akvo will provide recommendations on prioritization of key activities. These recommendations will be translated into a national WASH monitoring (improvement) plan, including a budget, that will inform a roadmap for the government to coordinate and implement an inclusive, well-functioning and sustainable WASH monitoring programme.

Objectives

The objective of the assessment of the national WASH M&E system is to prioritise actions for improvement of national WASH M&E systems from two (interconnected) angles :

- the operational effectiveness of the system; prioritising actions to make it more effective (in terms of quality and usefulness of data)
- the degree of integration of the system; prioritising actions to make it more integrated/efficient (data access, data sharing, alignment, coordination, integration of databases etc)

Proposed approach:

Two key characteristics of our proposed approach are a **systems approach** and a **participatory approach**. The reason for using a systems approach (first zooming out, before defining the way forward) is to identify root problems and opportunities, before zooming in to solutions. Secondly, our approach is participatory, making use of existing knowledge and creating shared ownership of the improvement plan by different stakeholders. The approach is a stepwise process.

1. Key questions for setting priorities for improving the operational effectiveness of the M&E system:

1.1 Key actors (table 1)

- a) Who are the key actors in the national WASH M&E system?
- b) Prioritize actors to involve: Which actors should be engaged in improving the effectiveness of the system?

1.2 Key factors within the system that influence the effectiveness of current National WASH routine monitoring systems and databases (table 2)

- c) What are the factors (bottlenecks and opportunities) within the current system for producing and using data in the national monitoring system? (e.g. Human resources, financial resources, technical (ICT) resources)
- d) Prioritize critical factors to address: What factors do we need to address to improve the operational effectiveness of the national WASH M&E system?

1.3 Key factors in the Enabling environment that influence the operational effectiveness of the current WASH M&E system (table 3)

- e) What are the factors (bottlenecks and opportunities) in the enabling environment for effective functioning of the system (Organisational structures, coordination, communication, existence of a national WASH M&E framework & a national WASH M&E costed workplan)

- f) Prioritize critical factors to address: What factors do we need to address to improve the enabling environment of the national wash M&E system?

1.4 Defining a roadmap & monitoring progress

- How can the key actors address the priority factors to improve the system? What concrete actions and behavioral changes (i.e. who needs to change, what needs to change) are needed that address the key bottlenecks and make use of opportunities, to improve the operational effectiveness and enabling environment?
- How can we achieve these changes? What are viable strategies? Which key actors will contribute to which outcomes? What actions will they take [action plan]?
- What are key milestones/indicators/ progress markers for success?

2. Key questions for setting priorities for building a more integrated WASH M&E system:

2.1 Key actors: (table 1)

- Who are the key actors that have an interest in (or influence over) establishing a more integrated WASH M&E system?
- Prioritize: Which (ASWA and other WASH) stakeholders should be engaged in establishing a more integrated WASH monitoring system?

2.2 Key factors influencing building a more integrated system

- What are the factors (bottlenecks and opportunities) within the current system for sharing data in the national monitoring system? (e.g. Human resources, financial resources, technical (ICT) resources)
- Prioritize critical factors: What factors should be addressed to build a more integrated WASH M&E system?

2.3 Key factors in the Enabling environment for a more integrated system (table 3)

- What are the factors (bottlenecks and opportunities) in the enabling environment for a more integrated system (Organisational structures, coordination, communication, existence of a national WASH M&E framework & a national WASH M&E costed workplan)
- To what extent are key stakeholders willing to share data (trust, incentives, data demand/culture)
- Prioritize critical factors to address: What factors in the enabling environment should be addressed to build a more integrated WASH M&E system?

2.4 Defining a roadmap & monitoring progress

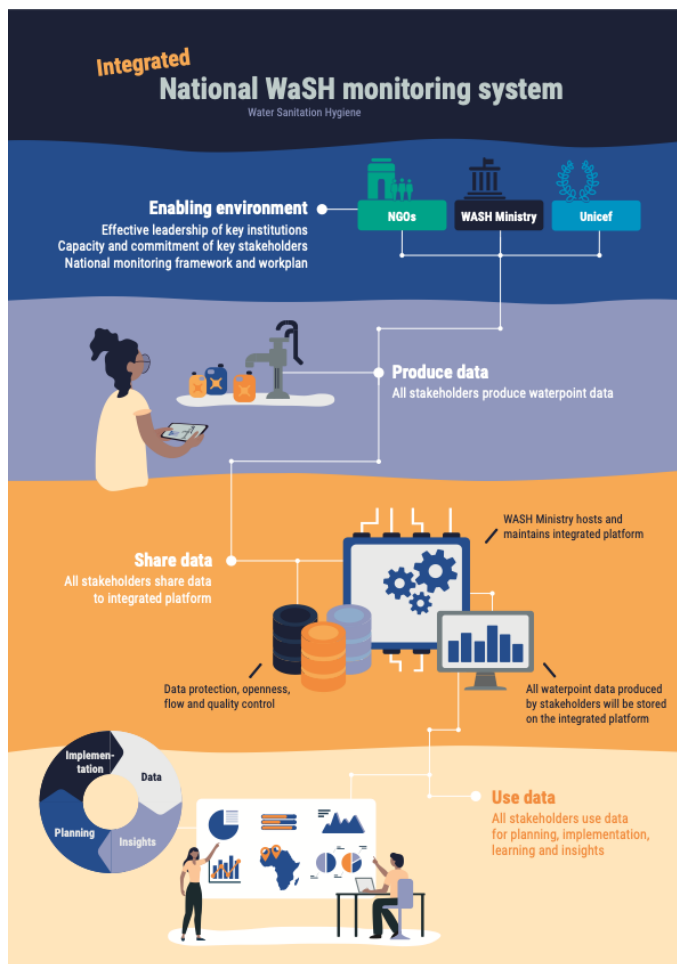
- How can actors address the bottlenecks and opportunities to further integrate the system? What actions need to be taken by key actors (i.e. who needs to change, what needs to change) to address the key bottlenecks and make use of opportunities to build a more integrated system?

- How can we achieve these changes? What are viable strategies? Which key actors will contribute to which outcomes? What actions will they take [action plan]?
- What are key milestones/indicators/ progress markers for success?

Use

The outcome of the assessment will be used to prioritize actions and provide recommendations about priority actions towards a more efficient (integrated), well-functioning, and sustainable national WASH monitoring system in WCARO countries that builds upon existing processes and systems and provides useful information for

- 1) Monitoring and decision making at national and regional levels.
- 2) ASWA reporting



Methodology

The approach and methodology used for the assessment is based on:

- Akvo's Data Journey approach
- Akvo and IRC's framework for assessing national WASH M&E systems (adapted from UNAIDS), following ITAD's simplified structure
- World Development Report 2021: Data for Better Lives (World Bank)¹
- Data ecosystem mapping tool by the ODI² (Open Data Institute),
- SDG6+5 review of monitoring systems across Eastern and Southern Africa (UNICEF)

Based on **Akvo's data Journey approach**, we take a systems approach and start with a stakeholder analysis. In line with the World Bank recommendations, the scope of the stakeholder analysis extends beyond government actors only. Instead we attempt a more comprehensive mapping of WASH stakeholders and data streams, including large NGOs and private sector (where relevant) too. This is the only way to reach more alignment in WASH service monitoring between the wide range of stakeholders that do so.

When we have a comprehensive overview of the stakeholders in the WASH sector, we plot them on an influence/interest matrix. This will identify the key stakeholders to partner/closely engage with (high interest/high influence). It also allows for recommendations about other key stakeholders to get on board (low interest/high influence) and about other stakeholders to keep informed and invite to discussions (high interest/low influence).

We use the **Data ecosystem mapping tool** by the Open Data Institute, to map out and visualize current data streams.

In line with ITAD's approach, we used a simplified version of the **12 components of IRC's framework**, structuring the information in 3 areas (enabling environment, routine monitoring systems and data use). However, under data use, we look deeper into the potential for the integration of systems. By doing this, we are incorporating the recommendations from the **WorldBank report** (part 3: "Moving toward an integrated national data system"). According to the World Bank report, an integrated system should provide a framework for the trustworthy, equitable production, flow, and use of data. The World Bank adds important preconditions for a more integrated system such as policies, laws and regulations for data protection, incentives for data sharing and trust. An integrated national data system incorporates various participants from government, civil society, and the private sector.

¹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2021>

² <https://theodi.org/article/data-ecosystem-mapping-tool/>

1. Key elements of the assessment (assessment framework)

During each step, we use a framework of **key elements** to assess during the assessment, to ensure we do not overlook any elements and reduce bias in terms of priority setting.

- For the assessment of the operational effectiveness, we will address these key elements:
- For the assessment of the efficiency/system integration, we will address these key elements:

TO DO: differentiate between elements for an effective (useful) system and elements for a more integrated system, and organize them in two of such tables:

Table 1: Elements of the enabling environment

	Indicator
Institutional arrangements	What are the institutional arrangements for WASH and monitoring in-country?
Sector policy and strategy	Is there a national WASH monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework? Is this included in WASH policies?
Sector financing	Are M&E activities costed and budgeted for? Are there sufficient resources to meet the budget?
JSR process	Is there are regular JSR process in the country? Is this process informed by available data, and do the results feed into resource allocation processes?
Sector reporting	Is there an annual sector performance report (or similar)? How comprehensive is this report?
Localization	Has the country established national targets for SDG6? Are these targets aligned with the JMP indicators?

2. Assessment process

The assessment process includes the following steps:

1. Kick-off meeting with Unicef
2. Document review & Key informant interviews
3. Participatory Actor analysis & Mapping data streams
4. Factor analysis
5. Drafting a roadmap with key stakeholders
6. Setting up a monitoring framework
7. Validation of the roadmap & key actors commitment to actions

Step 1: kick-off meeting with UNicef

1. Who are the key actors? What are the key documents to review?

Step 2 Document review & Key informant interviews

2. What are the current processes and systems for producing, sharing and using data for national level WASH monitoring?
3. To what extent does the current enabling Environment support a more integrated monitoring system?
4. To what extent are systems aligned and integrated?

Collect key documentation on the national WASH M&E system when it exists. Collect outdated versions where there is no newer revision:

1) Any existing assessments, evaluations or research on the national M&E system
2) Relevant national (WASH) policies and development plans
3) National M&E frameworks, guidelines, plans (& budget) and data collection tools;
4) Sub-national M&E plans and data collection tools: formats and examples
5) Guidelines for routine monitoring including reporting templates and data collection forms.
6) List of databases and software in use
7) Contracts with IT service providers
8) An inventory of WASH-related surveys, e.g. DHS, MICS, etc.
9) Guidelines for supportive supervision to support M&E at sub-national level
10) HR documentation: a list of employees related to M&E and their official job descriptions
11) If there is a national M&E working group, the terms of reference for the national M&E working group, meeting reports and/or minutes
12) Minutes / report from the JSR or other national multi-stakeholder review platform
13) M&E information product examples (reports); examples of existing WASH datasets
14) Reports, M&E frameworks and data collection tools from NGO's, private sector etc
15) WASH Evaluation & Research reports
16) Datasets and access to database and dashboard tools (where possible) ; open data

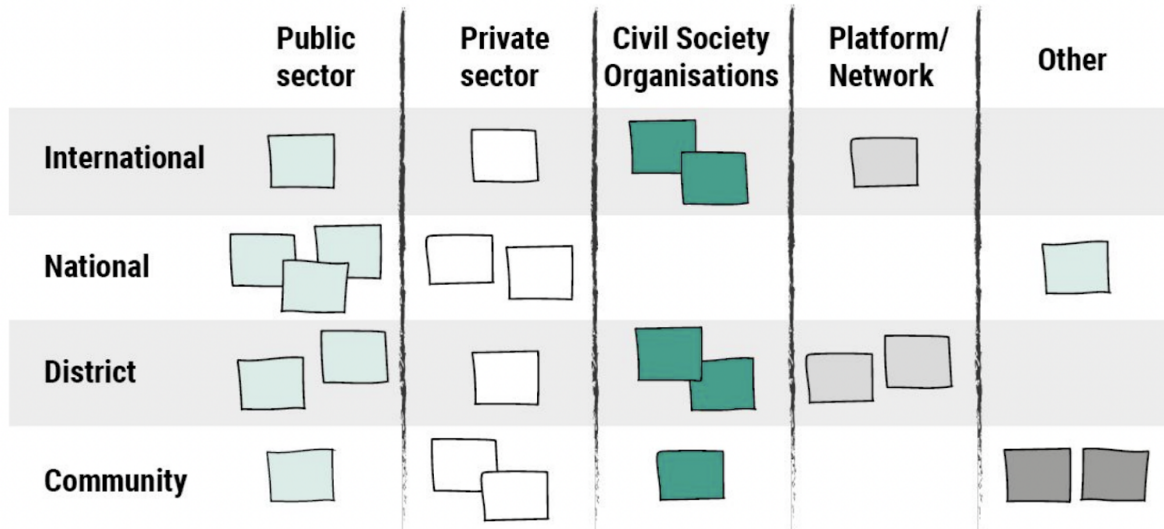
Step 3: Participatory Actor analysis

Identify the key stakeholders at national and sub-national level who are involved in the national M&E system or are collecting relevant WASH M&E data. Include those involved in routine data collection and those who use the data at sub-national level. All stakeholder groups below should be included:

1. International organisations (e.g. Unicef, FAO)
2. Government organisations (WASH regulators, planning/finances, implementers) e.g. Ministry of water, sanitation or health, other WASH related ministries, national & subnational level
3. WASH civil society (e.g. community based service providers)
4. Academic institutions; Research & learning institutions
5. Private sector (e.g. private sector service providers)

Questions to be answered for each stakeholder:

- Function(s) in the WASH M&E system
- Capacities (Human, technological & financial resources) for WASH M&E
- Type of data being collected



stakeholder mapping and visualizing data flows

In a participatory exercise, map stakeholders in an influence/interest matrix (MURAL template):

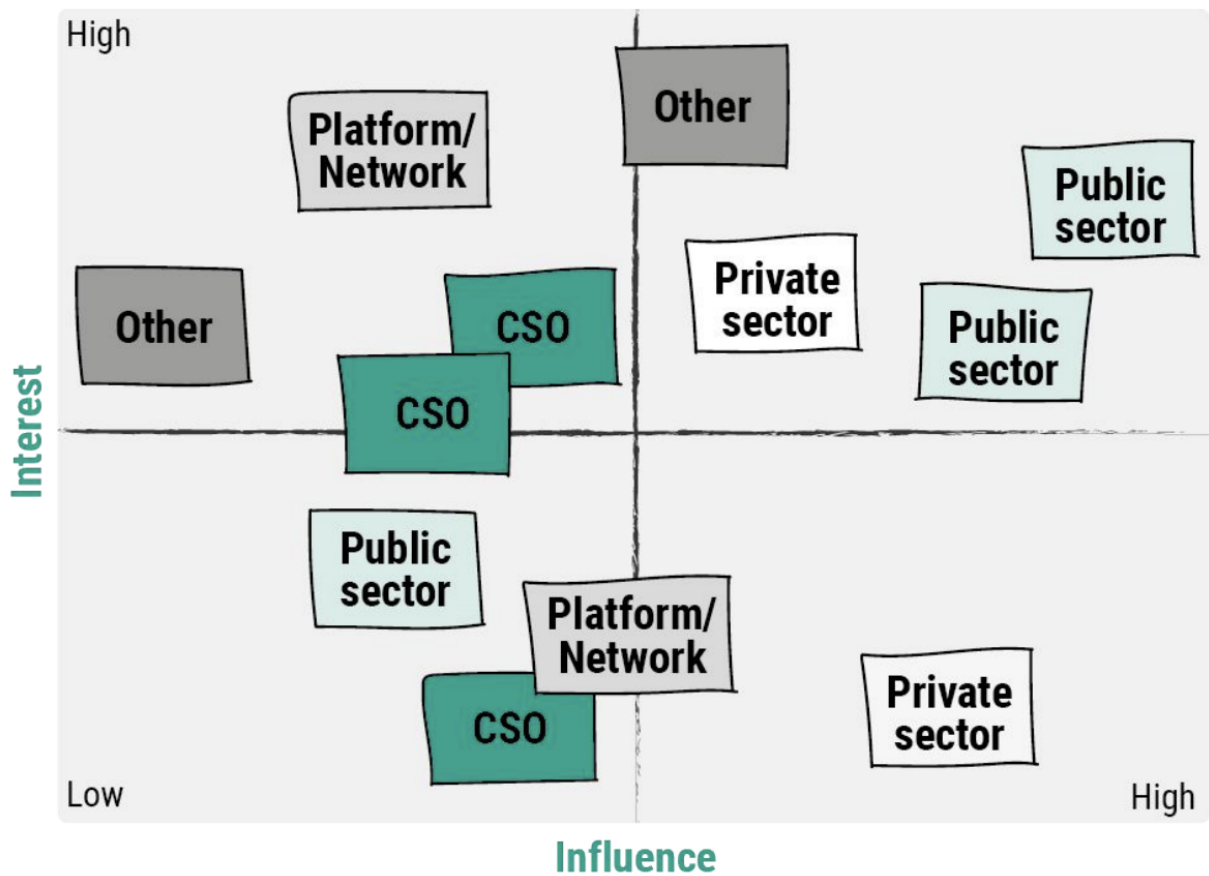
1. Which stakeholders have a high interest in a more integrated WASH monitoring system?
2. Which stakeholders have the most influence on the system?

This mapping exercise will help to identify the key stakeholders to engage in a more integrated system and to identify key stakeholders to include in the assessment (key informant interviews)

Answer the following questions (in excel template #2) :

- Who collects WASH related data and how often?
- What (standard) methods and tools are used?
- Where is data stored and with whom is it shared?
- How does data travel across different levels and across different types of organisations?

Visualize the data flows/ data ecosystem in the MURAL template.

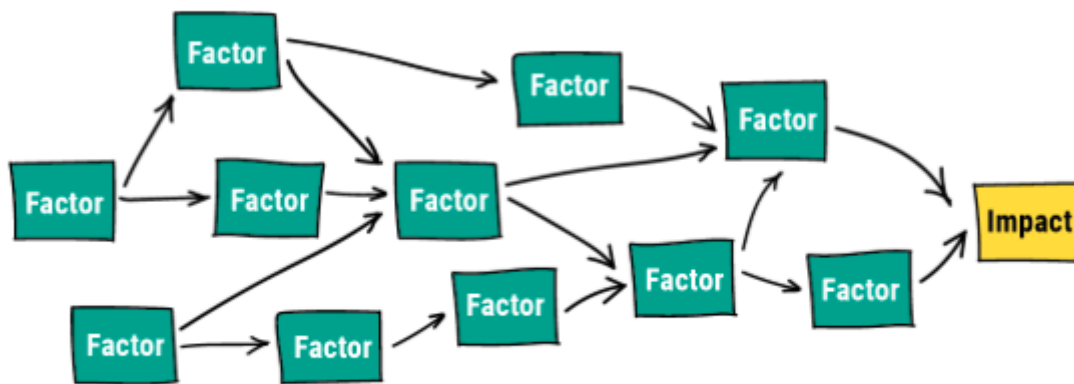


4. Factor analysis

- 1) Brainstorm: Together with the key stakeholders identified in the actor mapping, conduct a participatory factor analysis. Map the limiting and enabling factors (problems and opportunities) in a 'conceptual model', to show which interconnected factors hamper the achievement of 1) a more effective or 2) more integrated system. These questions should be addressed separately.

This helps to identify which factors (root causes) need to be addressed with the local partners, to arrive at a more effective or efficient (integrated) system. Keep the list of key elements at hand, to ensure all key elements are addressed.

- 2) Prioritize: Together with the key stakeholders identified in the actor mapping, prioritize which problems should be addressed and which opportunities should be explored, and which actors should be involved.



Step 5: Draft a Roadmap for the prioritised elements to address

Together with the key stakeholders make a road map for addressing the prioritized factors. Set clear goals/ definition of success (what will the improved system look like, what observable changes do you expect to see) and milestones. Together with the key actors, identify actions to be taken.

- How can actors address the bottlenecks and opportunities to further integrate the system? What actions need to be taken by key actors (i.e. who needs to change, what needs to change) to address the key bottlenecks and make use of opportunities to build a more integrated system?
- How can we achieve these changes? What are viable strategies? Which key actors will contribute to which outcomes? What actions will they take [action plan]?
- What are key milestones/indicators/ progress markers for success?

Step 6 (optional): setting up a monitoring framework

Step 7: Validation of the roadmap: actors commit to take action

Together with the key actors, make a work plan; agree who will take the actions and by when.



Limitations

Describe challenges and limitations of the assessment, such as availability and access to information, socially expected answers, bias...To what extent can findings be generalised?

