



Improving WASH information for better service delivery

This summary is based on forthcoming RiPPLE Working Paper **Improving WASH information for better service delivery in Ethiopia: Scoping report of initiatives** available for download at: www.rippleethiopia.org

Research-inspired Policy and Practice Learning in Ethiopia and the Nile region (RiPPLE) is a DFID-funded Research Programme Consortium led by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in partnership with IRC, Addis Ababa University, WaterAid Ethiopia and Hareghe Catholic Secretariat

Accurate data on access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services within weredas are vital for planning, effective new investments and maintaining existing infrastructure. However, the numbers are hard to collect, and can also be contentious. There is pressure to report improvements in coverage towards ambitious goals like the Universal Action Plan and the Millennium Development Goals. At the same time, weredas showing improvements in coverage actually risk getting reduced block grants and that can lead to under reporting.

RiPPLE's sustainability case studies provided evidence that actual figures on scheme and water point functionality are inconsistent, and often far below the estimated figures used for regional and national level planning.

A number of efforts were launched at national and regional level, especially in SNNPR, to improve WASH sector information systems. To support efforts towards improving the use of wereda inventory systems, RiPPLE has included this sub-theme within its Access LARS. The focus is on

supporting government to collect reliable information on access to WASH and to use that information more effectively in planning and targeting new investments and maintaining existing services within weredas. The overall goal is to help sector



agencies to develop and use information management systems that lead to better planning, improved accountability and ultimately, better service delivery.

Wereda inventory study highlights

Data management

The water sector currently lags behind other sectors in maintaining a reliable, up-to-date and computerised information system. It is uncertain how the large volume of data collected through new wereda inventories (like in SNNPR) will be processed, stored, verified, and analysed. Recommendations include:

- Support for the establishment (and maintenance) of a computerised database to hold existing sector inventory data, and to facilitate the updating and use of data by partners (both government and NGOs)
- Development of analytical skills to produce reports that meet user requirements
- Agreement on standard procedures for data entry, processing and analysis
- Further refinement of standard and agreed indicators for use by all partners working in the sector
- Action research to verify wereda inventory results, and to test different ways to keep wereda inventories up to date within the capacities of government agencies and NGOs.

Putting wereda inventory data into use

There is a major need to develop capacities and promote the use of better information that is increasingly becoming available through wereda inventory surveys. Rather than only sending data up to zonal- and regional-level, the better management and use of this information at wereda- and kebele-level should lead to improved action plans and better local decision-making (e.g. on location of new sources, prioritising allocation of scarce resources for maintenance etc). Activities might include:

- Capacity building of wereda-level staff in data management and analysis
- Action research to test different reporting formats to share processed wereda inventory data with potential users e.g. report cards, maps etc.
- Action research to test methods and build capacities to produce better wereda and kebele action plans
- Understanding, documenting and advocating efforts to address capacity constraints at the local level, as well as demonstrating the outcomes of activities.
- Development of a distance learning module, combined with practical training, focused on WASH information and its use.

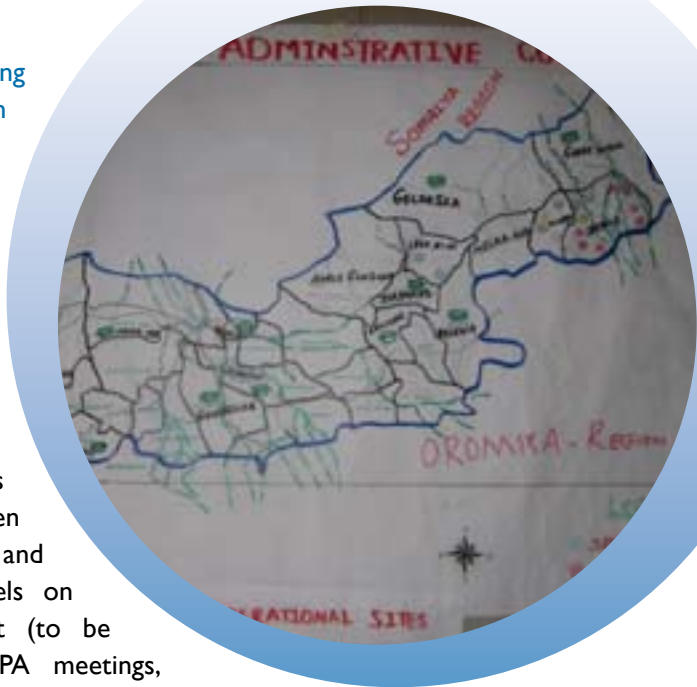
Coordinating and sharing best practice in information management

There are many efforts to monitor activities within the sector; however these currently suffer from being poorly harmonised and coordinated. Recommended actions include:

- Identifying mechanisms that serve to strengthen WASH coordination and collaboration at all levels on information management (to be discussed at RiPPLE LPA meetings, FLoWS and other platforms)
- Develop a linked information sharing system between sector partners, including government and NGOs, and linking water, education and health management information systems
- Better connecting national and regional inventory and information management initiatives. Undertaking an analysis of the differences between national and SNNPR wereda inventory systems is one starting point. Mechanisms are needed to develop dialogue (workshops, technical visits, briefing notes, etc.) that leads towards the adoption of more harmonised approaches.

Policy recommendations

The strength of monitoring systems is linked to internal incentives that encourage or discourage accurate reporting and informed decision making. For example in some countries like Uganda, Ministers closely monitor results of their investments because showing results enables them to lobby or funds from the Finance Ministry. In Ethiopia however, the reverse is true. If high progress is reported in WASH in a specific region or wereda, budget will be shifted to other sectors or regions/weredas. There are insufficient incentives to strengthen monitoring system and report progress accurately. Creating those incentives – financial or other forms – for improved performance and accurate reporting will be useful.



A number of paradoxes characterise the Ethiopian WASH sector:

- There is increased construction of schemes to meet the UAP and more fund flow, but also high rate of system break down.
- There is high commitment to the UAP but lack of basic data to monitor the commitment.
- There is high commitment to decentralisation, but poorly developed mechanism for downward accountability to citizens.
- There is recognition of the need for coordination, but limited platforms to make this happen.

Thus, the following areas need to be prioritised in government policy making and budget allocation:

- More attention to follow up breakdown of schemes
- To enable such follow up, more allocation of resources and priority to monitoring activities
- To make monitoring effective, systems need to be in place that allow users to hold service providers accountable and where institutions are judged by their ability to provide satisfactory service to users and poor service deliver is sanctioned.
- Creation of coordination platforms or revitalising exiting platforms to facilitate joint review by actors in service delivery, discussion on challenges and agreement on operation approaches and planning and budgeting towards common sector goals.
- Faster implementation of the planned M&E system will provide the needed baseline, definition of reporting roles for different actors and standard formats for recording and reporting.

Researchers

The team of researchers for this project comprised:-

John Butterworth;

Bethel Terefe;

Demissie Bubamo;

Eyasu Mamo;

Yeshumneh Terefe;

Martine Jeths;

Sobona Mtisi; and

Desta Dimtse.