



# **WATER AND SANITATION MONITORING PLATFORMS**

**Lessons Learned From Implementation**

Frank Odhiambo

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Water, Engineering and Development Centre  
The John Pickford Building  
Loughborough University  
Leicestershire  
LE11 3TU UK

t: +44 (0) 1509 222885  
f: +44 (0) 1509 211079  
e: [wedc@lboro.ac.uk](mailto:wedc@lboro.ac.uk)  
w: <http://wedc.lboro.ac.uk>

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# **PART I – BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

## **Introduction**

### **1 Lesson Learning**

Many projects are implemented annually in the water for development sector with mixed results. Of these projects, few do systematic lesson learning within their projects even though managers of new projects coming on stream would find lessons learned from the implementation of past projects useful for their own planning and implementation. A significant amount of experience is lost to the sector by not recording lessons from projects that have been implemented.

#### **1.1 Why Learn Lessons?**

When projects are implemented, lessons are invariably available to be learnt. Lessons within projects can come from two sources: successes and failures. Both types of lessons are important as they can help future implementers to adopt good practice and avoid pitfalls. Development partners too are interested that lessons should be learned from the projects they fund. Lesson learning is just as important as monitoring and evaluation is to the project cycle.

Lesson learning does not happen automatically. Projects need to plan for lesson learning and take the time to identify relevant lessons. What has worked well in the project? Why has it worked well? To do this requires an understanding of the project context. Lessons can arise from a number of perspectives. They may arise from an analysis of the project assumptions. Were these assumptions correct? Lessons may arise from the management of the project. Were risks correctly identified and appropriate mitigation measures put in place?

In an ideal situation, projects should reflect on practice during implementation and identify and record lessons as the project progresses. This implies that projects need to have excellent monitoring procedures in place to facilitate lesson learning. Once identified, these lessons should be framed in an easy to understand way so that others can benefit from them. There also needs to be a plan to communicate the lessons to relevant stakeholders and potential implementers of similar projects.

### **2 Significance of the Lessons Learned**

This document communicates the lessons learned from an ACP-EU water facility funded project, Involving Civil Society in Strengthening inter-sectoral Monitoring of Developments in the Provision of Water Supply and Sanitation Service. The project implemented in Ghana, Mozambique and Nigeria, was proposed by the WHO

/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) and implemented under the supervision of UNICEF. The project adopted a working title of Water and Sanitation Monitoring Platform (WSMP).

The project piloted an untested approach to undertaking national level monitoring. Given the importance of good monitoring, and that this project was a pilot, it was felt important that the project's lessons should be captured and shared with interested stakeholders. There are a number of reasons why lesson learning was felt to be important. These were:

- The project adopted a novel approach to national level monitoring which did not rely upon government structures. This approach if successful would demonstrate that significant progress can be made using limited resources and the lessons from the project would therefore be of interest to a wide audience;
- Second, if successful, the project approach would have potential for up-scaling in several countries. Capturing the lessons learned from the pilot would greatly assist the up-scaling process by reducing the learning curve;
- Capturing lessons would allow other people implementing projects in the water sector to learn from the experience of this project, even where projects are not exactly similar. There is always a core of generic lessons that can be learned from project implementation;
- Capturing these lessons would raise the profile of the project and highlight good practice, and the project's successes and achievements as well as failures. This could lead to other projects making contact to take advice from the WSMP team; and
- Through the lessons, stakeholders should be able to identify potential areas of collaboration and cooperation.

The audience of this book is UNICEF and WHO staff at head and country offices; civil society in the water sector and any other person or organisation with an interest in national level monitoring in the water sector.

### **3 Methodology**

The need to capture lessons was written into the project design. This was done realising that the project was piloting an approach to monitoring which was different to anything that had been done before and that it is important therefore that the success or otherwise of the pilot should be recorded. In this respect all parties to the project were aware of the requirement for lesson learning right from the outset.

The lesson learning aspects of the projects were to be sub-contracted under the wider provision of knowledge management services to the project. The knowledge management contract was to be awarded following an open tendering procedure. The Water, Engineering and Development Centre (WEDC) of Loughborough University in the UK won the tender and designed the method for lesson learning.

As part of the lesson learning, all three platforms and UNICEF country offices were alerted to keep a record of significant milestones in the implementation of the project and other events to assist in the lesson gathering process. This ongoing capturing of lessons was to be supplemented by visits to the platforms in the second and third years of operation. Following this, the lesson obtained would be synthesised and published as a short book. The lesson gathering plan was interrupted when the European Commission (EC) turned down a request for a no-cost extension of the project. The request was necessitated by significant delays in project inception while UNICEF negotiated implementation modalities with its country offices and the national governments in the implementing countries. This delay in inception meant that though the project has been technically active for 36 months, actual implementation has only been going on for about 19 months.

For this reason, only one visit could be made to the platforms for lesson learning as the project came to an unexpected end. It is important to highlight here that because the actual implementation period of the project was reduced, the lessons are likely to be skewed towards problems that arose during the early stages of the project. This is natural. Successes and positive lessons in projects usually only start to emerge as the projects enter their mature stage, an opportunity which this project has not had.

In terms of the approach to collecting the lessons, the platforms and UNICEF country offices had been notified to keep track of potential lessons as mentioned above. Further, the author held interviews with the three platforms and their respective UNICEF country offices. The interviews were held one to one with each platform member and a focus group of each platform was undertaken too. Interviews were also held with other stakeholders suggested by the platforms. The directors of the water directorates in both Ghana and Mozambique were also interviewed. It was not possible to do the same in Nigeria. Interviews were wide ranging and involved reflection on the implementation process and interviewees were all asked the same questions. These were based on the project activities as listed in the project document. Essentially the aim was to understand in relation to each of the activities:

- What went well?
- Why did it go well?
- What went badly?
- Why did it go wrong?
- What could be improved?
- How could it be improved?

It was made clear that this exercise was not a vendetta. The point of collecting lessons was to facilitate learning. This required interviewees to be honest and fair in their assessments, whether positive or negative. Care was taken not to apportion blame but to correctly attribute cause and effect in a neutral way. Care was also taken to as much as possible triangulate data particularly where the data or

information collected was contentious. This was done by getting several peoples' perspective on the issue in question to test whether the same answers were being received. On the whole, this was the case and satisfied the author that the views expressed could be relied upon and were not necessarily eccentric.

## **4 Outline**

The book takes the following form. It is in two parts. The first part presents background information about lesson learning and describes the methods adopted to collect the lessons. This is followed by a discussion of monitoring. Next, the project purpose is reviewed and the project activities as listed in the project document are presented. There then follows a discussion of the implementation phase to date in each of the project countries.

The second part of the book relates to lesson learning. In this part, the project methodology is reviewed from a technical and management perspective. The sections ends with a presentation of the lessons that have been learned from the project. These are divided into generic lessons, (which apply to the project as a whole), and specific lessons which are relevant to each of the three implementing countries.

## **5 What is Monitoring?**

This project is about monitoring in the water sector. Monitoring is an activity which seeks to measure progress in service delivery against national and global targets. National monitoring data is important for a number of reasons:

- It identifies gaps in provision and therefore can be used in support of national planning
- It can reveal the specific challenges that the sector faces
- It can often reveal what works in the sector and what does not work so well
- It can be used to argue the case for a financial sector budgetary allocation of a given level.
- It can lead to better understanding about the reasons people do not have access to water
- It can allow us to make regional, national and even global comparisons within certain limits
- It can help officials make informed decisions about targeting resources in the most equitable way based on need and gaps identified

In spite of this, monitoring within the water sector is not prioritised sufficiently and is weak in many countries. If done properly, monitoring requires a human resource structure on a national scale. However, the perception is that such a structure does not contribute directly in ramping up service delivery. For these reasons, monitoring is rarely effective and few countries have a functioning monitoring unit. Monitoring

deserves to be prioritised and national frameworks created to facilitate monitoring where there are none.

## 6 The Project Purpose

This project was funded under the ACP – EU Water Facility. The ACP – EU Water Facility was set up in 2004 with the principal objective of providing water and basic sanitation to the poor in the ACP countries. It was approved by the EU Council with a budget of €247m in the first phase and €250m in 2005 for the second phase. It is funded through the 9<sup>th</sup> European Development Fund. Most of the funds were allocated via two calls-for-proposals.

The bulk of the initial €247m set aside under the water facility went towards a call for proposals to do projects as indicated below:

- Call for Proposals (€ 180m)
- Contribution to African Water Facility (€ 20m)
- Contribution to Nile Basin Initiative (€ 18m)
- Geographical imbalances and post-conflict/disaster rehabilitation (€ 15m)
- Monitoring, evaluation, audit, contingencies and evaluations of proposals (€ 17m)

[http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/acp/regional-cooperation/water/in\\_detail/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/acp/regional-cooperation/water/in_detail/index_en.htm) Accessed: 28th October, 2009.

The call for proposals covered three components and was oversubscribed:

- Improving water management and governance
- Water and Sanitation Infrastructure
- Civil society initiatives

This project was funded under the third component – Civil society initiatives hence the emphasis in the official project title.

The project purpose was to establish operational ‘platforms’ in four countries (Ghana, Mozambique, Niger and Nigeria) whose purpose would be to assemble, analyse, repackage and disseminate available national and sub-national WASH sector data to appropriate audiences. The project had two objectives. Namely:

- The convergence of existing national and sub-national information streams and data relevant to the WASH sector; and
- Increased accessibility by different stakeholders to relevant national and sub-national water and sanitation information and data.

## 7 Project Plan

The methodology adopted in this project is unique in monitoring terms in that it did not rely on a government structure to deliver the project. Rather, the project idea was to establish platforms composed of just four staff in each of the implementing countries – Ghana, Mozambique and Nigeria. Niger though named in the proposal did not take part in the pilot. The platforms were to be established with the following complement:

- A team leader, to provide strategic guidance to the platform. The team leader was also responsible for coordinating the platform's work and is the main liaison with the platform's stakeholders. It was specified that the team leader should be a drinking water supply and sanitation sector professional. He or she should be quick to spot opportunities and areas where there is a need for information. He or she should also be familiar with the needs for and availability of information within the sector.
- A researcher/data analyst. The person specification for this position called for a drinking water supply and sanitation professional, or a demographer /sociologist with proven experience in data analysis. The ability to popularize good quality research findings and translate these into short and useful bits of information that can readily be absorbed by a lay audience was seen as important for this post.
- A Journalist/communication specialist. This role required good desktop publishing skills, and the ability to write clear and succinct articles and reports. He or she would be responsible for repackaging information supplied by the data analyst into a range of targeted products aimed at a wide range of stakeholders
- A business (operations) manager: He or she would be responsible for the administration of the platform, manage the IT network, organise workshops and seminars and generally be responsible for the day to day logistics and administrative operation of the platform.

An important underlying feature of the project design was a preoccupation with quality assurance. This was based on the recognition that stakeholders' support of the platforms would be predicated upon the platforms' ability to deliver information products that were accurate and reliable. This concern for data quality and integrity influenced the human resource make-up of the platforms and the methodology employed as will be seen below where the platforms' activities are discussed. The project's implementation activities were in three broad areas:

- establishment of the platforms;
- convergence of existing national and sub-national information streams and data relevant to the WASH sector; and
- increased accessibility by different stakeholders to relevant water and sanitation information and data from national and sub-national level.

The first activity area related to preparatory work to establish the platforms while the remaining two relate to the platforms' monitoring activities. Each of the activities is described below.

### **7.1 Establishment of Platforms**

Written into the methodology was the idea of a project mentor group to work alongside UNICEF and WHO to guide the platforms in project implementation. The composition of the mentor group was UNICEF WES officers from each participating country office, the project officers at UNICEF, New York, and a specially recruited country mentor for each platform. The country mentor was recruited by the respective UNICEF country offices. Once in place, an inception meeting of the mentor group was to be organised. At this meeting a generic terms of reference (ToR) for the platforms was to be agreed, as well as the job descriptions of individual platform members, quality assurance procedures and a planning and monitoring framework. The inception meeting would also consider the identification of possible organisations to host the platforms and identify the main stakeholders in each country.

Following the inception meeting, the project mentor group would conduct an inception visit in each country and hold a round table meeting with the major stakeholders. The purpose would be to assist in identifying possible platform host organisations. At the round table the concept note, the role of the platform and expected outputs will be presented and discussed. An important part of the round table will deal with the role of the stakeholders as active supporters and clients of the platform.

After the stakeholder meeting an in-principle agreement will be made between UNICEF.WHO and the institution, which is to host the platform. A memorandum of understanding will be prepared between UNICEF, WHO and the host organisation, outlining the responsibilities of all three partners. The generic platform's TORs and job descriptions will be shared with the host organization and the procedures for recruiting platform members will be discussed. A major risk was the potential failure to identify a suitable platform host. In such an event, the plan was that UNICEF and WHO would move the project to another country.

The next major step was the recruitment of platform staff by the host organisation to comprise a team leader, data analyst, communications officer and office manager as already described. The host organisation was provided with a budget to recruit the staff. Recruitment was guided by the Terms of Reference for which specific criteria were developed by the project mentor group. Selection and recruitment was done following the UNICEF or WHO procedures for recruitment of local project staff. Office equipment, like office furniture, a small office network of five computers and two printers would be purchased through the procurement unit of the local UNICEF office following its procurement procedures. Telephone and internet connections were provided to the platforms by the project. The risk of delay in recruitment of suitable platform staff would be mitigated by the preparation of detailed job descriptions,

candidate profiles for each of the four platform positions as well as a candidate assessment forms to compare candidate's competencies with the terms of reference.

Following the establishment of the platforms, the following activities would be implemented:

- There would be a five-days intensive induction training for platform staff;
- A participatory stakeholder meeting would be held to introduce the platform, get stakeholder buy-in, agree scope of work, products/services, stakeholder participation, and agree milestones, a detailed work plan and draft communication strategy;
- Regional training of platform staff on JMP methodology and preparation of JMP country summary sheets would be undertaken;
- The project mentor group would be on hand to support the operation of the platform through for example, one-to-one mentoring; quarterly reporting to the mentor group; peer review and quality assurance of products and so on.
- Over time, the platforms would aim to obtain commissioned work from sector stakeholders;
- A yearly evaluation of the functioning of the platform would be held with stakeholders;
- A mid-term in-country review meeting would be planned and held;
- An evaluation of the effectiveness of the project mentor group would be held after one year of operation of the platforms;
- The platforms and project mentor group would organise a one-day meeting early in the third project year for possible donors/hosts and major stakeholders to discuss the need and possibilities to sustain the platform's operations after then end-of-project; and
- The project would consolidate and disseminate lessons learned from the platforms through international forums.

## **7.2 Convergence of Existing Data Streams**

The convergence of existing national and sub-national information streams and data relevant to the WASH sector would be the first strand of monitoring activity undertaken by the platforms. This would include:

- Tracking data and information streams relevant to the WASH sector;
- Collecting and analysing existing demographic and health data, including data on access to drinking water and sanitation and poverty at national and sub-national level;

- Compiling (or updating) a who-is-who, who-works-where and who-does-what in the rural, urban and peri-urban WASH sector at both national and sub-national level;
- Compiling information on sector investments disaggregated by sub-national level, water supply, sanitation and hygiene and original source of funding; and
- The compilation of other country specific and demand-responsive products as requested by stakeholders.

### **7.3 Increased Accessibility to Relevant Data**

The increased accessibility by different stakeholders to relevant water and sanitation information and data from both the national and sub-national levels would be the second strand of monitoring activities to be implemented by the platforms. This would be achieved through:

- Drafting and implement a strategic communication plan to service stakeholders;
- Establishing a monthly media-meet to ensure a steady stream of water, sanitation, hygiene articles in newspapers and magazines;
- The regular publication and dissemination of relevant findings and reports;
- Holding bi-monthly informal discussion forums with professional sector associations on relevant topics related to the water supply and sanitation sector; and
- Conducting one workshop and one seminar annually on a relevant WASH sector topic for stakeholders in the sector. The specifics of the workshops would be determined locally.

## **Project Implementation**

This project was implemented in three countries: Ghana, Mozambique and Nigeria. Like in any multi-country project, there has been mixed results in project performance between platforms. In this section, we look at the background to the project as bid for by UNICEF New York, and review the implementation of the project, country by country. The project has a complex history. It was bid for by UNICEF New York, with the proposal itself written mainly by a UNICEF JMP consultant and incoming new staff member who had not yet taken up post officially. After submitting the proposal its developers had nothing more to do with the project.

On winning the project, UNICEF named its Senior WASH Adviser in New York as project coordinator and a WASH specialist also in New York to manage the project contractually on a day-to-day basis. Alongside this, the platforms were established by UNICEF offices in-country (Ghana, Mozambique and Nigeria) who were also members of the project mentor group and in addition, also acted as managing agents in-country. In this role, the UNICEF country offices provided services such as disbursement of funds to the platform hosts' (the three national governments in this case); undertaking financial reporting to UNICEF head office; providing a procurement channel for purchase of items such as furniture, computers and consumables; arranging for printing services and so on. It is worth emphasising that none of these parties mentioned had any knowledge of the background to the project and neither were they involved in preparing the proposal. This of course meant that their understanding of the proposal did not always align with the proposer's ideas. This is most evident in activities in the first phase of the project, (establishment of the platforms) which were in some cases implemented differently to the plan in the project document.

## **8 New York Office – Project Coordinator**

### **8.1 Bidding for the Project**

The decision to bid for this project was a last minute one. Given the size of the African Water Facility call for proposals, many UNICEF country offices were putting in bids. UNICEF New York saw it as its role to support and coordinate this bidding process from its country offices. This job was given to a UNICEF consultant working on the UN World Health Organisation (WHO) /UNICEF JMP Programme. Near to the close of the call, this UNICEF consultant was in Brussels working with country offices to finish off bids. It was while in Brussels that he had a conversation with an EC bureaucrat who signalled that the EC would expect the WHO /UNICEF JMP to put in a proposal. This was too good an opportunity to miss and set off a train of events that would lead to the proposal for this project being submitted.

Though the EC had indicated its support, it was equally clear that it could not support JMP as the JMP has no operating budget. Meanwhile, the JMP had produced the first country summary sheets prompting WHO and UNICEF to decide that because the call had a component supporting civil society, UNICEF should put in a JMP-type bid on its own. However, WHO was clear from the outset that the implementation countries would need to be ACP countries, and that at least one Francophone and

Lusophone country in addition to Anglophone should be included in the bid. It was with this in mind that Mozambique and Niger were chosen for the bid.

In planning the project activities the UNICEF consultant used the JMP country summary sheets as a aide to brainstorm what countries could do with existing data. WHO officials were also involved in this activity. Both UNICEF and WHO decided that a workable idea was to propose establishing platforms to collect secondary data which would then be analysed, interpreted, repackaged and disseminated with civil society as the principal audience. Engaging civil society, it was hoped, would in turn feed public debate thus raising the profile of water and sanitation. But of course, the component under which this project was funded was the Civil Society Initiatives one.

Though WHO was involved in the brainstorming, some of its officials worried that the approach outlined above would cast the UN in the role of activists which of course the UN is not. This concern was answered by the defence that the platforms would be constituted as independent, would not be acting on behalf of the UN and therefore would not be compromising the role of the UN.

The following guidelines were established as a matter of principle:

- JMP and UNICEF would in reality be no more than a managing agent;
- The platforms should not put out a document of more than 4 pages; and
- For the platforms to succeed they would need to have credibility locally and for that to happen they would need to have high quality outputs.

These considerations led to the birth of the mentoring idea.

Returning to the proposal writing, in practical terms, the Water Facility had very strict deadlines. This left UNICEF with just five weeks to consult WHO, work up an idea and write the proposal. Given the short lead time to develop the proposal, UNICEF simply did not have the time to consult the proposed implementing countries. But also, the proposer confesses that they felt that there was little hope of winning the proposal given the hurried way in which it was prepared. UNICEF now concedes that with hindsight this was a big mistake. They adopted a top-down approach where bottom-up processes should have been preferred. Worse still, when it went to the second round, UNICEF still did not solicit inputs from the proposed implementing UNICEF country offices and their respective national governments. New York makes the point that in the methodology, the country offices were not expected to have significant inputs and it did not seem that important at the time to do consultations given the limited time available.

On this point, UNICEF New York points out that head office would not normally do a multi-country proposal for which it is accountable. This project was most unusual in this respect and was justified only in the sense that had UNICEF New York not submitted the proposal, it is very unlikely that the project would ever have come about given that country offices would not bid for such a project. Further, UNICEF

felt compelled to submit a 'JMP' given the expectations of the EC which was clearly that a proposal should be put in.

## **8.2 Deviation from Project Design**

Country offices first knew about the project after the proposal was won. At this point, New York offered to do workshops with the country offices to bring them up to speed, but this never happened for reasons that are not clear. Notwithstanding the point made above about minimal inputs by UNICEF country offices, the reality of the implementation was that country offices took a much more active role than originally intended in establishing the platforms.

In the methodology, the mentor group was to be constituted first (including the hiring of country mentors) before the platforms were established. The rationale was that the mentors were to help in training the up the platforms. However, New York took the view that as country offices were now taking the lead in establishing platforms, they should be given the role of identifying and recruiting country mentors. This was further justified on the basis that UNICEF country offices are independent, and besides, JMP only exists at head office and does not have resources to do capacity development at national level.

## **8.3 New York Office – Project Management**

The project management team in New York was only put in place in April 2007 yet the project should have started in October 2006. There was thus a six month delay in project inception. The reason for the delay was the long process of buy-in by UNICEF country offices and by national governments. The lack of consultation during the bidding stage no doubt complicated the buy-in process. In the event, the first visit by UNICEF New York to the project countries was in July 2007. The result of this was that the platform in Nigeriawas established a year after the project start date, and the Ghana platform 18 months after the start date.

As a general point, the buy-in of all three governments concerned (Ghana, Mozambique and Nigeria) was difficult to obtain. This is hardly surprising given the sensitive nature of monitoring and the total absence of consultation in the proposal development phase. It took a lot of persuasion for the governments to understand that the agenda and motivation of the project was benign. In most developing countries, sector funding is donor driven and this adds to the sensitivity of monitoring as many governments believe that monitoring data (which can be interpreted as score on the attainment of the MDGs), can and will affect funding streams either positively or negatively.

## 9 Ghana Platform

### 9.1 Background

The Ghanaian platform inception was delayed by one and a half years. This came about for two reasons. First, it took some time for the Ghana UNICEF office to understand the project and accept to take it on board because as has been discussed, they were not aware of the project until funds appeared in the internal 'Proms' system. Further, once the country office was on board, it fell to them to then sell the project to stakeholders and the government. Immediate issues to address concerned the budget that was put forward in the bid which did not align with the reality on the ground. So for example, the costs for renting office space were not realistic. This meant that the budget had to be amended which was challenging given the EC's rules.

UNICEF's original idea was to get CONIWAS (the NGO umbrella grouping) to take on the platform as host. However, it took almost a full year to persuade stakeholders to embrace the idea of a monitoring platform. The Ministry of Water Resources, Housing and Works was also not too keen initially and put the matter on hold wanting to be briefed of the exact role the platform would play. Eventually the government acquiesced but on the proviso that it would host the platform given its sensitive nature. The agreement was that the project would become a government project and the platform would in a sense be a group of consultants acting for government. The government was involved in recruitment of the platform and approved the platform's outputs. This arrangement was seen as ideal; the platform and its products were technically endorsed by government, lending it credibility while at the same time it was perceived by stakeholders as not being under the control of the government and therefore could be trusted. This arm's length relationship with government served the platform very well.

Due to the delay in establishing the platform the team leader was only recruited in March 2008, 18 months after the project should have started and the communications specialist in the following month, April. The recruitment process itself was not difficult. Nevertheless, platform members only learned that their employment would be for 18 months during their training though they had applied on the basis of the advert which said 36 months. This however does not seem to have deterred them from delivering their mandate.

### 9.2 UNICEF Ghana's Perspective

UNICEF's perspective is that the monitoring platform has been a real boon to the sector. They maintain that they should have been consulted before the bid was submitted especially given the sensitive nature of the platform being proposed. Fortunately, the government of Ghana had already woken up to the need for some sort of monitoring mechanism and the platform was seen to be a step in the right direction once assurances had been given around the scope of the project.

UNICEF stressed that the platform has been received as an initiative that has made significant contribution to the sector. As an example, definitions, sector indicators

and modalities for reporting figures had not been agreed. Given that the platform was intended to be a mechanism for ensuring convergence of existing data streams within the country, this remit fits exactly with the gap that was felt in the sector. It is UNICEF's assessment that the platform has begun to provide the sector with well synthesised data and information for all stakeholders and also ensuring access to this information and data for everybody. This is especially significant in a culture where information and knowledge is not always readily available. The platform has helped to bring sector data into the public domain and improve understanding of sector initiatives. The platform has achieved this both through stakeholder engagement and the documents that it publishes.

The platform is also seen as providing a much needed interface with the national agency dealing with Ghana's statistics (GSS) as well as the agency that coordinates developmental planning for the entire country the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC)-Ghana. As the project draws to an end, the legal status of the platform post project needs clarification. It is clear from discussions that the government prefers to retain control of the platform. This is in part due to the sensitive nature of the platform's core work and also due to it extending the capacity of the Water Directorate.

The Ghana platform's success is due to its appropriate skills mix, and the team leader's excellent capacity for management. Indeed, he has been described as "highly motivated, always calm and has drive". The monthly engagement with UNICEF New York and sister platforms provides a platform for discussing progress and this too has been very useful. UNICEF Ghana has taken a back seat by not joining the monthly conference calls partly because it does not want to be seen as involved in directing platform affairs in a dominant way. As such, UNICEF Ghana took a deliberate approach not to micro-manage the platform which has largely succeeded in discharging its mandate unsupervised. UNICEF reported that the EC Delegation (the project sponsors) in Ghana is pleased with the progress that has been made.

### **9.3 Outputs**

The platform has published a "Who's Who" directory that lists actors in the sector. Though there have been previous attempts in the past to do this, none have come to fruition. Stakeholder demand for such a directory was high perhaps because previous attempts at producing one had failed but also because as compiled, it is a useful document. Many organisations were inevitably left out of the directory but a solution was found to this. The solution was to publish the directory on the WSMP Ghana website with a mechanism to allow organisations to add their details if they were not in it. These would need to be verified before being uploaded. Meanwhile, the print directory would be published every two years. The platform used the directory to publicise itself by inserting a description of the platform and its activities in the preliminary pages.

A second output was to be a sector investment almanac disaggregated by sub-national level, water supply, sanitation and hygiene and indicating the original source

of funding. This was seen to be a task beyond the scope of the platform given its lean stature. WaterAid had attempted a similar exercise in the past without much success. The platform team leader held consultations with WaterAid to understand where the challenges lay and received some useful ideas for how it might be successfully done this time around. Following consultation with the platform advisory board, the platform decided to hire a consulting firm to do the exercise. The hiring was done in accordance with government procurement regulations. Four firms applied. Following appointment of the consulting firm, it was agreed that the principal sources of information would be the Local Assemblies (Local government), the Community Water Supply and Sanitation Agency (which provides rural water and sanitation), and the Ghana Water Company (which provides urban water services). At the time of going to print, there was no information about the status of this activity.

Third, monthly media meetings were held before the Ghanaian general election of 2008. A spin off of these meetings was the catapulting of sanitation into the national consciousness. Sanitation became an explosive issue on the back of information on Ghana's sanitation coverage put out by the platform. This information was picked up by CONIWAS, (the NGO umbrella organisation) and soon became an issue of national debate. As a consequence, presidential aspirants held a televised debate to put forward their manifestos on sanitation. Further, following the election, the new administration increased the sector allocation to 30m Ghana Cedis (about 21 million US Dollars) which was an unprecedented allocation. The platform has also held more two-monthly informal discussions with sector professionals than was planned for in the project document. This happened because the platform took arranged them whenever an opportunity occurred rather than follow a strict bi-monthly timetable. These informal discussion events have been used to disseminate forthcoming platform material to an audience of potential objectors thus smoothing the way for the main launch of the documents.

Fourth, they produced an output on sanitation triggered by a serendipitous finding of routine analysis of data the platform had collected. This analysis revealed that open defecation is widespread in the three northern regions of Ghana as well as in the Volta region. These regions are drained by the Volta and other rivers. The implications of open defecation for public health in river basins were clear. It is also significant that cultural traditions in these regions mean that shared facilities are unacceptable thereby encouraging open defecation. In response, the platform produced a publication on sanitation that was intended as an evidence base aimed at assisting those doing advocacy on sanitation in these regions.

The fifth output was a country summary sheet. In producing the country summary sheet, it quickly became apparent to the platform that there is a significant amount of user-based data available though not in a form that can be readily used. The platform spent a considerable amount of time working with the Ghana Statistical Service to unearth the data and disaggregate so as to trend various statistics over time. In the process, they established a good working relationship with the service which now trusts the platform as a reliable partner and ally. The platform cites involving the statistical service in its work from the outset as a shrewd move that helped to establish trust out of which a positive working relationship grew. It is worth

noting that the platform's first data analyst came from the statistical service which facilitated the engagement process. A key lesson for the platform drawn from this experience is the importance of adequate and sustained stakeholder engagement.

Finally, it was envisaged that with time, as the platform grows and wins credibility, it would begin to accept commissions from stakeholders and other organisations to do consulting jobs. This would supplement the platform's income. However the delay in establishing the platforms has meant that the platform has not yet sufficiently established itself to begin offering such services and was not yet doing so at the time the author was compiling these lessons.

Two reasons are given for this success in producing outputs. The first reason they gave is the importance of working as a team. The professional members of the team work together to analyse and understand the implications of the raw data reaching a common position about what the data means. Each team member provides expert advice to the platform on issues within their expertise and the platform often consults the producers of the raw data for further information and explanation. A secondary benefit of working this way has been that all members of the platform can competently speak to the platform's products, which they feel is important. For example, the communication specialist should be able to defend with some competence, statements and interpretations of data made within platform products.

A second reason they give for the success in producing outputs was the existence of the mentoring team which gave them confidence that they were on track particularly because JMP staff at UNICEF head office were on the mentoring team. It also helped that the mentoring team was composed of more than one person as this increased the chance of anomalies in data, presentation and so on, being spotted.

#### **9.4 Government of Ghana**

The government of Ghana readily admits that it had reservations at the outset about the project. This was mainly because it was not consulted during project design but was presented with a *fait accompli*. However, on reflection the government has become increasingly excited about the possibilities open to it and the things that the platform can deliver. Monitoring is an area which it recognises is very important and which it needs to develop. The government position is that having a semi-autonomous unit providing data and information to both the sector and to the government and its agencies is very beneficial. The hope is that with the fullness of time, the platform will grow and expand to do a full range of monitoring activities including financial monitoring. Indicators were identified by the government as an important area to be harmonised. The government position is that all the platform's products are produced in the government's name.

#### **9.5 The Platform's Perspective**

It very soon became apparent to the platform that they had to win hearts and minds if they were to be successful. In this regard, the team leader decided to arrange visits to as many development partners, large civil society players in CONIWAS and INGOs such as WaterAid, World Vision International and so on. His previous work

experience in the CWSA helped facilitate these visits. The idea was to explain the project to them and even share the logical framework so that they could get a good understanding of the project and more important, assure them that the platform was there to work with them, not against them. These visits helped and the sector lead at the time the UK Department for International Development (DFID), endorsed the platform.

In terms of the platform's activities, they see their most important role as educating stakeholders on the reasons for the differences in data. They believe the project idea to be very relevant to Ghana but would not have prepared the project document as it is. Their main contention with the design is around outputs. Monthly press briefings are quite unnecessary. They felt that there was too great an emphasis on the media. They also pointed out that the platforms were not expected to collect primary data and yet quite often, they had a need for current data which secondary sources could not yield. If the project was to be designed again, they would take this into consideration.

Of the outputs, the Who's Who directory and Country Summary Sheet received most acclaim. Feedback has shown that these two outputs have been widely used by sector stakeholders. At the last stakeholder annual MOLE Conference (2009), many representatives of organisations came up to platform members to say how useful they had found it and that they would like their details to be included in the next edition.

The implementation of the project has proceeded smoothly. Access to data has been obtained with relative ease in part due to the good relations platform members have with the various agencies holding the data such as the Ghana Statistical Service, CWSA, GWCL and so on. The communication specialist has similarly worked in the field for many years and has several contacts within the media. The only area that has caused concern is the financial arrangements. Initially, the platform was to have its own independent account. However, this changed and funding is channelled through the government which is most times cumbersome.

The platform operations manager also alluded to the problem created by the platform's legal status. The platform does not have a bank account of its own as it exists as a project. For this reason, UNICEF transfers funds for the platform's operations to the government on a quarterly basis. The government in turn processes all payments for the platform. Each cheque issued by the platform is countersigned not by the team leader but by two signatories from the government, both of whom are senior officials. They are often out of the office resulting in payments being held up on occasion

## 10 Mozambique Platform

### 10.1 UNICEF Mozambique's Perspective

Like UNICEF Ghana, UNICEF Mozambique only knew about the project when funds first appeared in the Proms system. Coincidentally, the Mozambique office had just been through its five year planning phase and released its new plan only for this project to arrive completely unexpected and with a detailed monitoring framework attached to it. This was seen as unacceptable to the country office especially as they had spent the previous year working hard to ensure that they align project interventions against the national development plan. It is very clear that the project was only accepted under sufferance and this was not modulated with the passage of time.

### 10.2 The Platform

At the time the project came in the government of Mozambique through the Water Directorate, Direccao Nacional de Aguas (DNA) had plans to develop a national information system for water and sanitation – SINAS. The World Bank Water and Sanitation Program (WSP) had started this initiative at the request of DNA. They hired consultants who developed the SINAS document. Other development partners came in at this stage including UNICEF, the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), and the Netherlands Directorate General of Development Cooperation (DGIS). When UNICEF announced that it had won funding to undertake a similar project, WSP saw the chance to use this UNICEF project to develop the capacity of SINAS as well as furnishing it with office equipment to get it off the ground. This was seen as particularly opportune because WSP had no funds for providing such. Simultaneously, UNICEF Mozambique was confronted with the problem of having to implement what amounted to a parallel initiative to that of the government of Mozambique. To resolve this contradiction, UNICEF held initial discussions with New York and the Mozambique UN World Health Organization (WHO) office. WHO took the view that the project as proposed did not fit the way the UN system works - that is building government capacity and complementing what government has developed i.e., SINAS. The EU delegation in Mozambique took the view that the project should be aligned with and absorbed by SINAS. Meanwhile, obtaining buy-in from the Mozambique government for the WSMP project was difficult. The government maintained that it had a plan to launch SINAS and took the view that if UNICEF wanted to assist, they should use the project funds to assist SINAS get off the ground by purchasing vehicles or providing capacity development.

After prolonged consultation and negotiation, a compromise was reached to merge the project into SINAS which was already embedded in the government structure and to use the title SINAS Implementation Unit in preference to 'Platform'. By the time this agreement was reached, the government's perspective had changed as it had become aware of how the project could add value in terms of establishing SINAS within the directorate and developing its capacity to do monitoring even as it becomes integrated within government's structure. It was with this in mind that UNICEF Mozambique requested New York to extend the training to be provided to the SINAS Implementation Unit to include government technical assistants who had

been assigned to the implementation unit. Further, the government of Mozambique was by now keen to see action to establish SINAS get underway as the country prepared to adopt a sector wide approach (SWAP) funding modality which would see the development of a common fund for rural water and sanitation. The government and the sector as a whole recognised that a common fund could be more easily put in place if there was an effective system of monitoring in place that would assure donors of the integrity of the common fund.

The other partners involved in developing and supporting the original SINAS idea, (WSP, and SDC) were also supportive of the UNICEF project because as mentioned, this was seen as a way to fast track the launch of SINAS. Thus, in addition to the 'platform' as proposed in the project document, the SINAS Implementation Unit (SIU) also had a technical assistant seconded on a part-time basis from each of the water directorate's divisions – rural, sanitation, urban, water resource management, human resources and finance.

The SIU team leader came from the rural water affairs department. By August 2009, the positions of communication specialist and data analyst were vacant and it had been decided that when filled, the incumbents would be recruited into the government's technical assistant grade. The idea was that these two posts would be integrated into the civil service within a period of two years and certainly by the end of the project. In the interim, other partners would fund SINAS continuation. Because the SIU is integrated within the civil service, there was no need to recruit an operations manager. The SIU relies on the directorate's establishment to provide administrative function. Finally, the mentoring group played insignificant much reduced role in the SIU because it did not operate as a platform.

### **10.3 Outputs**

The detailed output list was a challenge to live up to especially because the project implementation was quite different to the project design. SINAS and UNICEF tried as much as possible to align the outputs of the project to fit the needs of the media for example. As such, the media meeting described in the proposal was actually convened as a workshop to agree how the media can work with the sector to communicate information. It was agreed that basic sector policy and strategy would be shared with the media. But reaching this was time consuming. As a result the local media is helping to disseminate the country summary sheet. The dissemination of the country summary sheet has already acted as a catalyst for discussion within the sector. They will also use the media to disseminate other information. As an example, the SINAS implementation unit will go through the 2007 census and 2008 MICs once released to pull out information to be communicated to the media. SINAS has enlisted the help of the WASHCost communication specialist to develop its communication strategy. UNICEF Mozambique is at pains to point out that it is not UNICEF doing so it is the government of Mozambique as SINAS is embedded in government.

When assessed from the perspective of outputs to be produced under the project, SINAS has done very little. The team leader attributes this to a lack of staffing to

undertake 'platform' activities as opposed to SINAS activities. It has already been mentioned that there is no communication specialist or data analyst in SINAS yet as they are still to be recruited. They are currently using those of WASHCost to support SINAS where these skills are needed.

#### **10.4 Constraints**

The main constraints identified by UNICEF were that:

- Due to the lack of consultation in the project proposal stage, UNICEF spent disproportionate resources in persuading the government of Mozambique to accept the project, even as amended. It was not easy selling the project to the government.
- The level of 'micro-management' from UNICEF New York was perceived as being too heavy. An example was New York's expectation that the SIU would participate in a monthly telephone call. Whereas UNICEF Mozambique understands that New York should want to monitor the project, they argue that New York should have known that such an arrangement would not sit well with country offices.

#### **10.5 Outcomes**

It is useful to consider what outcome the SIU has had given the project idea has been implemented differently in Mozambique. For a long time, the government's national water policy has highlighted access figures only. The formula for estimating coverage is one water point benefits 100 families which is assumed to be 500 people. However, when this was compared with the results from the household survey of 2005, the assumption of 500 people was found to be unrealistic. NGOs doing their surveys also confirmed this. Further, during the SIU training, this was highlighted as a potential problem. Through the engagement of the SIU, knowledge and awareness of access figures has increased to the point that stakeholders are now concerned to know whether infrastructure is being used. The indication is that the data from the soon to be released 2009 census and MICs will confirm that the actual access figure is in fact lower than 500 people served by a point. So there may be a need to find out why these water points are not being used bearing in mind that development is about people, not infrastructure.

The WASH sector in Mozambique holds an annual joint review as a key ingredient in its planning process. The annual joint review analyses the achievement from the previous year and the lessons learnt from this contribute to the making of the next plan. During the annual joint review in March 2009 it was agreed that the access indicator be kept, but also that there is a need to review the figure of 500 people served per water point. It was also agreed that two new indicators for use of water supply and use of sanitation facilities should be developed and assessed. It was further agreed that the information to judge this should in future be based on the household survey. UNICEF is confident that this dialogue would not have happened if The SIU was not in place, if the country summary sheet had not been published and if the SIU had not undergone the training that it did.

In this respect, the WSMP project idea to improve the monitoring process at country level was a very good one and is supported by UNICEF Mozambique. Further, the idea aligned neatly with Mozambique's national priorities. The only caveat is that there should have been adequate consultation with the country office. A second observation is that the national discourse around indicators is now being discussed from a technical perspective because the SIU has been established. It is noted too that the staffing complement envisaged in government's original plan for SINAS was almost similar to that proposed in the project. It is for this reason that it was possible to use the project to facilitate the establishment of SINAS. A third observation is that the training that the SIU received in conjunction with the technicians, had an empowering effect and got a dialogue going which as we have seen, has led to significant decisions being taken in the sector. Ultimately, the project has been instrumental in getting off the ground, the government's desire to see a monitoring unit established. In this regard, the project has had significant outcomes.

### **10.6 Sustainability**

The WASHCost project will continue to fund the SIU after the WSMP project comes to an end. The rationale here is that the SIU is the natural repository of the data emerging from WASHCost which will be very important for planning purposes. The SIU's future is therefore assured. It is also planned that the SIU's salaries will be paid from within the civil service in the next two years. So a gradual absorption of the SIU into government structures is planned.

## 11 Nigeria Platform

### 11.1 Background

It has been mentioned that differing contexts in the three participating countries meant that project implementation varied between them and that the platforms have different stories to tell.

The Nigerian platform has been characterised by changes in personnel. At the time the platform was established, there were two people from the quality control department of the Nigerian Ministry of Water in the platform. They were joined by the current team leader and one other person. Both were from the National Water Resources Institute (NWRI) in Kaduna. The current team leader was head hunted from NWRI by the chief of water, environmental health and sanitation at UNICEF at the time. In spite of UNICEF requesting NWRI to release the team leader for a period of three years on secondment, UNICEF's request was declined. This compelled the team leader to resign his position at NWRI in order to join the platform.

The difficulties with getting release from the NWRI meant that the second member of the platform resigned his position in the platform to resume work at NWRI. This was to set a trend of instability in the staffing of the platform. The ministry staff left soon after leaving just the team leader in post. He worked with UNICEF to recruit more staff to the vacant positions which resulted in a data analyst and communication specialist joining in December 2007. At this point the platform was considered fully established as UNICEF had taken the decision that they would provide office support to the platform rather than recruit an operations manager. In effect, the platform would have been better off recruiting an operations manager as it soon became plain that the platform's work came second to UNICEF in the list of priorities of the two UNICEF staff assigned to support the platform.

Returning to the staffing problem, the newly constituted platform worked as a team until April 2008 when the data analyst left leaving just the team leader and the communication specialist in post. In June of that year, a new data analyst joined the platform but left at the end of December 2008 though in effect, he rendered only a skeletal service between September and December 2008. His reason for leaving was a lack of job security after learning the contract with the platform was not permanent, and that he was not in fact employed by UNICEF as he had thought at the time of accepting the offer.

Meanwhile, the communication specialist left in mid October 2008 citing professional reasons. The team leader notes that as communication specialist he was responsible for producing much of the platform's output but also that he found it difficult receiving constructive comment to the point that it led to a breakdown in the working relationship. Given that his job centred on the production of documents, and that there was a quality assurance system in place via the mentoring group, carrying on in the position quickly became intolerable for him. In the end, UNICEF had to let him go. He was not replaced until end of March 2009. Following this episode, the fourth data analyst was recruited and started at the platform on 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2009.

Recruitment and retention was a difficult issue for the Nigerian platform. Good applicants (many of whom were in full-time jobs), were put off by the platform's positions being 'temporary' and were not prepared to leave their permanent jobs. These were often exactly the sort of people the platform wanted to recruit: experienced people with good qualifications. And just as there was little interest from those best qualified, there was a lot of interest from young people who did not have any experience.

The project terms of service were a clear factor in complicating the recruitment process. Most applicants initially thought that the platform was a JMP project and that their employer would be UNICEF. They only realised after their induction meeting that it was not a UNICEF project. This was a big disincentive. Further, the platform did not have a project vehicle to use during field trips. The lack of a project vehicle was seen as a significant lowering of prestige as successive platform members had been in the government or government agencies where they had use of an office vehicle. The upshot of this was that platform staff relied on public transport when collecting data for the country summary sheet for example. UNICEF eventually realised that the lack of transport was a real problem and purchased a vehicle to be used by the platform. For reasons which are not clear, this vehicle would be handed over to the NWRI on completion of the WSMP project. This meant that NWRI was responsible for insuring the vehicle once purchased. There were two immediate problems. First, NWRI did not have sufficient funds to insure the vehicle, rendering it unusable. Second, there was no budget line in the project document for a driver and fuel further limiting the possibility that it would ever be used by platform.

Changes of personnel at both the ministry (director of water) and UNICEF (chief of water, environmental health and sanitation) did not help. The new staff in these positions did not take full ownership and run with the platform as a project thereby alienating the platform staff who felt that they did not have a real home especially given that the platform was legally a project and not a body corporate.

## **11.2 Outputs**

A number of factors have conspired to reduce the effectiveness of the platform in producing outputs:

- The frequent turn-over of platform staff meant there was a lack of continuity in platform activities. Only the team leader has been in post continuously since 2007. In March 2008, there was a formal induction training held in Abuja which was attended by JMP staff from New York, the Ghana platform (which had a full team by then), and a UNICEF staffer representing the Mozambique platform which had not yet been constituted. This was important training which did not benefit the Nigerian platform because staff changed several times after the training;
- Office support from the UNICEF office has been less than effective because the platform has been physically dislocated from the two UNICEF staff providing office support. This has meant platform staff making journeys to UNICEF offices to transact business

- The Internet connection has been unstable and often drops out. This has affected the ability to do research, and to communicate effectively with stakeholders.
- The electricity supply has been unstable further compromising the platform's ability to deliver. The building has a generator which has helped but this is switched off at 6pm meaning the platform members could not work late;
- Media meetings and the launch of platform products did not work well because the prevailing culture in Nigeria is that during such events, the host organisation should pay allowances to delegates to compensate them for travel and time. The platform did not have a budget line for this which compromised media attendance at these events;
- The arrangement for printing of platform products was not streamlined. The procurement process was long drawn out which delayed the printing of key documents such as the country summary sheet by up to a year.
- Given the size of the country and population, the budget line for arranging meetings and printing publications was insufficient, particularly for the dissemination of these documents;
- The platform was not provided with a landline telephone. This meant that platform staff used their personal cell phones to transact platform business and were not compensated for this expense.
- Travel costs were not reimbursed, affecting the ability of platform staff to travel to collect data.

Finally, the office machines purchased for the platform such as printers, photocopier and so on, lay idle in their packaging because there was not sufficient office room available to install them. It was in August 2009 when the platform moved to bigger premises that the machines were being installed. This was just two months before the close of the project. In spite of these difficulties, the platform did produce outputs as follows:

- The data analyst who joined in June 2008 picked up on work his predecessor had begun, and completed the country summary sheet which was ready to go to print in early November 2008.
- The sector investment study was completed in April 2009;
- Informal discussions with sector professionals in the form of workshops have been organised in each of the six geo-political areas.

The production of the country summary sheet marked a milestone in the sector in Nigeria. It was the first sector document to present analysis of existing data in a way that allows the reader to see at a glance where the sector is in development terms. The civil society network has been supportive of the analysis that the platform has done saying it has empowered its members. It is true to say that platform products have added to the stock of knowledge within the sector in Nigeria. Civil society has

also been appreciative of the data provided by the platform, especially that disaggregated by state.

The platform was established at the time when the ministry of water was conducting a national baseline survey. The platform soon noticed the difference in definitions and indicators that were being used and saw a need for harmonisation at the national level. The platform suggested this to the ministry and the national bureau of statistics. This culminated in a successful data harmonisation workshop. It is now recognised by stakeholders that the platform was in effect doing sector coordination by bringing together all organisations using and generating data to discuss harmonisation of indicators.

Though civil servants and civil society have been supportive of the platform, the platform believes this support could have been even greater if their products had been printed early.

### **11.3 Sustainability**

The sustainability of the platform beyond the project phase has been discussed but no plans have resulted. The platform prepared a position paper which was discussed by the platform's advisory board. The action was that UNICEF would lobby other stakeholders and donors to attend a meeting to discuss future funding of the platform. Meanwhile, the platform was to prepare a business plan to facilitate this discussion. The meeting should have been held on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August 2009 with donors, civil society and local authorities to discuss continuity but this was called off as the budget to host meetings has been overspent.

The platform believes that the sustainability plan set out in the proposal was all right in principle and was only compromised by the delays in getting the platform established and other issues referred to already which made it difficult to produce outputs in a timely fashion. This also impacted the ability of the platform to quickly establish itself as a viable and worthy sector organisation. The platform suggests that a project period of perhaps 48 to 60 months would have been sufficient to assure sustainability. It is the platform's view that a platform as conceived in the project document has never been established in a true sense and therefore effective visibility was always going to be a challenge.

### **11.4 Government of Nigeria**

The platform is hosted by the government of Nigeria. Though the platform's offices are provided by the government, there has been only minimal engagement with government. It is only in 2009 for example that the government began to send a representative to platform meetings. This engagement is growing and the government has offered the platform accommodation in a ministry building in Abuja.



# **PART II – LESSONS LEARNED**

## **Project Assessment**

### **12 Background**

This project is not typical. It was to run over 36 months between September 2006 and October 2009. However, severe delays in getting the project off the ground resulted in about 18 months of project time being lost. In this sense, the project has only really been implemented over 18 months. As mentioned before, the effect of this is that the lessons to be learned are likely to be lessons emanating from things that went badly. This is because in a typical project cycle, the lessons from things that went well tend to come closer to the time the project has bedded down and is in its mature phase. It is important to acknowledge this bias which though not problematic in itself, it means that lessons which could have been learned from successful implementation of the project will not be known.

The real problem with this project in terms of lessons learned is the lack of consultation during the bidding process. This lapse affected so many aspects of the project that it is difficult to draw lessons from the project which do not in some way relate to a lack of consultation. We discuss below how this lapse affected the project.

### **13 Project Methodology – Management**

It has been stated before that the original UNICEF team who prepared the project bid had moved on by the time the project was won and therefore were not responsible for managing the project once won. The team of two who were handed the project and managed it from New York had a difficult job to do. The WASH specialist who had responsibility for the day to day management of the project took it over from April 2007, seven months after project inception during which time nothing had been done to progress the project. The first task was to obtain buy-in from the country offices followed by buy-in of the respective national governments which took several months to bring about. This was not a simple task. UNICEF head office would not normally reach out to country offices directly but rather through UNICEF regional offices. But at the time, only two of seven regional offices had a WASH adviser, which complicated things further.

Given the total lack of consultation of the two most important parties to the project during bidding, it is a testament to the project management skills of these two staffers that the project went ahead at all. It took a lot of persuasion to win over these two groups to accept the project.

Subsequent tasks were getting the platforms established and providing training on the JMP methodology. The training was delivered in a workshop held in Abuja in March 2008. The Ghana and Nigeria platforms and a representative of UNICEF

Mozambique attended. This went very well and gave an opportunity for the platforms to interact, discuss the project and gain a better understanding of what they were supposed to do. It helped them obtain a clearer vision of the relevance of the project.

Once the platforms were established and undertaking their activities, the role of management in New York became one of monitoring progress on activities. This was assisted by the very detailed output framework which had been written into the project description of work. This detailed list was something the platforms and UNICEF country offices thought quite unnecessary. However, from a management perspective, the detailed list restricted the role of management to monitoring rather than to negotiating and agreeing a work plan and activities which would then also need monitoring. So the management role was assisted by this detailed list as it was very clear what the project outputs were and what each party needed to deliver. But equally, this very detailed output list accentuated the need for monitoring bordering on micro-management.

The project budget had only limited funds for face-to-face meetings which are an important management tool. In place of such meetings, New York put in place a system of monthly calls with the platforms held every first Thursday of the month. This was an effective way of both monitoring and establishing frequent contact between the platforms. In this way, each platform was aware of the direction, difficulties and achievements of sister platforms.

The project design also included a knowledge management element and a series of evaluations. It was recognised that the platforms once established would have their hands full with the activities outlined above. However, it was also recognised that the platforms would require knowledge management support. This was to come through an independent contractor recruited through a tendering process. The role of the knowledge management contractor was to:

- Provide a corporate design for the project encompassing all three platforms;
- Establish a project website with links to independent platform websites;
- Provide an intranet for secure communication and archiving of project documents
- Design and implement visibility actions for the platform at the global level
- Provide design and layout services for all platform documents to ensure documents' consistency with the corporate look and between platforms
- Track and compile the lessons learned from implementing the project for UNICEF and other interested parties; and
- Ensure dissemination to a wider audience through publication of journal articles.

These were all achieved. In addition, the platform was represented at the WEDC conference in Addis in May 2009 and at the World Water Week in Stockholm in August 2009.

Equally, the evaluator was to be independent and recruited through a tendering process. This too was managed by New York and an independent evaluator appointed. The evaluator carried out a mid-term evaluation in July 2009 followed almost immediately by a final evaluation in September 2009 as the project had to be wound up by October 2009 which was the original project end date. The EC declined to accept pleas for a no-cost extension on the basis that the project had lost 18 months during inception.

In conclusion, the project begun with difficulties leading to an exceptionally long and drawn out inception period, but the respective UNICEF offices rallied together and worked to ensure that the project went ahead in accordance with the project design in Ghana and Nigeria, and with a modified design in Mozambique.

## **14 Project Methodology – Technical**

The project approach was without a doubt innovative. The idea to constitute a platform of just four people (three technical and one administrative) to identify relevant secondary data, perform analyses, interpret the data, and finally repackage it for the sector in language and terms that are easy to understand and grasp was inspired. This approach was economical on resources and most of all it has been shown to be effective in terms of:

- raising awareness and the profile of monitoring;
- motivating dialogue in the respective national sectors to address the issue of harmonisation and indicators; and
- providing these sectors with relevant and timely documents that can assist stakeholders with decision making.

This conclusion is reached on the basis that all three platforms in some degree:

- tracked data and information streams relevant to the WASH sector;
- collected and analysed existing demographic and health data, including data on access to drinking water and sanitation and poverty at national and sub-national level;
- compiled a who-is-who, directory of the rural, urban and peri-urban WASH sector at both national and sub-national level;
- compiled information on sector investments disaggregated by sub-national level, water supply, sanitation and hygiene and original source of funding; and
- established monthly media-meetings to ensure a steady stream of water, sanitation, hygiene articles in newspapers and magazines;
- regularly published and disseminated relevant findings and reports;
- held informal discussion forums with professional sector associations on relevant topics related to the water supply and sanitation sector; and

- Conducted at least one workshop on a relevant WASH sector topic for stakeholders in the sector.

The performance of the platforms in doing these activities varied quite substantially, but in essence, the platforms demonstrated that the approach that was being piloted can deliver effective results.

## Lessons Learned

### 15 Generic Lessons – What Worked

#### 15.1 The Pilot

In spite of the problems that the project has experienced, it is clear that the approach is viable. It is possible for a team of four people to deliver results that can have demonstrable outcomes on an entire sector. Monitoring is weak in many countries usually because it is underfunded in preference for investment in infrastructure. This also means that capacity to do effective monitoring is weak. This project has shown that it is possible to do a level of monitoring with a slim unit and still produce results. A platform-like structure is never going to be the answer for full sector monitoring, but it can complement other efforts. Further, the approach is easily scaleable and interested countries can quite quickly implement the approach with modest resources.

#### 15.2 Mentoring Approach

The project adopted a mentoring approach whereby each platform recruited an international mentor to provide the platform with advice and keep an overview of the platform's work and progress. The mentor was expected to work closely with the platforms giving advice on a range of issues not only to do with monitoring and quality assurance but also communication, positioning of the platform as an organisation, engaging with stakeholders and so on. This worked very well because the mentor was by definition foreign and therefore disinterested and could take a dispassionate view of things. But the mentor also needed to be someone with experience of the country and the sector. The platform was also supported by a wider mentoring group which consisted of UNICEF Wash staff in the country office and the JMP staff in New York. This proved invaluable and was a big source of comfort to the platforms knowing that in a sense, the information that they were putting out had been reviewed and endorsed by the 'JMP'. The lesson here is that having a mentoring arrangement in a project is a relatively inexpensive and effective way of assuring quality and maintaining oversight.

#### 15.3 Knowledge Management

The project had a knowledge management component as described above. The lesson here is that an independent consultant doing knowledge management is an effective way of guaranteeing that the knowledge-related aspects of the project are not overlooked, while building the capacity of the project team to be able to plan for and implement a knowledge management strategy in the future.

### 16 Generic Lessons – What Did Not Work So Well

#### 16.1 Consultation

An overarching problem with this project was the lack of consultation with the two main parties to the project – UNICEF country offices and national governments. The effect of this lack of consultation dogged the project from beginning to end and manifested itself in all sorts of ways. It meant ownership was difficult to obtain. It meant that the project while relevant for all three countries did not align with national

plans. It goes without saying that the main actors in any project being bid should be consulted well in advance of the bid. The ideal situation would be for joint development of the bid document (proposal) to include choice of problem or action to be addressed, the approach to be adopted, duration of the project, financial resources required and other key decisions. If this had been done, the project would have had the requisite 36 months to deliver outcomes and on the basis of results achieved so far, one can surmise that it would have been a successful project. In this particular case, the damage caused was not enough to derail the project but it could easily have gone this way.

## **16.2 Country Office Programming**

Allied to the above is a lesson which relates to UNICEF in particular. The head office knows very well that country offices work to a five year plan and go through a planning process for the next five years which is influenced by programme results, the findings of a mid-term review and of course, the host government's own plans. It should have been known that UNICEF Mozambique in particular had just been through the process and would have taken pains to align their plans with government priorities. To then simply announce €700,000 of additional funding complete with a project document and very detailed outputs and monitoring framework was always going to be a very big ask and one that was avoidable. Due consideration of where the implementing organisations are in their planning cycles is necessary. Having said this, if consultation had been done, this issue would have been resolved.

## **16.3 Alignment with National Plans**

Development projects with a national outlook or potential national outcomes should be aligned with national plans and priorities. This did not happen because of the lack of consultation but it is worth highlighting as a lesson in its own right. Alignment is even more important when the project is targeting an area as sensitive as monitoring. Also important is that alignment could help improve the chances of sustainability into the future. A different aspect of alignment is that of aligning the project with the reality of the socio-political and geo-political features of the implementing countries. One could argue that the project expectations were unrealistic in a federal state such as Nigeria in terms of covering the whole country. The lesson here is that during project design, time should be taken to align the project idea with national priorities after due consideration of the demands likely to be met in implementing the project.

## **16.4 Duration of Employment /Project**

It seems odd that this should be a lesson. However, it is clear that in two of the countries, platform staff were not immediately aware of whom their employer really was. This was not a problem in Ghana but it did cause two platform staff to resign their positions in Nigeria when it became clear that they were not employed by UNICEF. Though an odd situation, it is possible to understand how this might happen. An advert is put out for certain positions to be filled in a UNICEF project. Applicants naturally assume that UNICEF would be their employer. However, it would not have been difficult to have made it clear from the outset that employment would not be with UNICEF. Whereas at face value this might seem a minor issue, it

is quite a serious matter as employment and terms of service can have a dramatic effect on people's motivation and therefore productivity.

### **16.5 Face-to-Face Interaction**

Travel is expensive but in some cases unavoidable. This project did not make enough provision for participants to meet regularly as a group. This is especially important in the early stages of a project. Nevertheless, the monthly conference call filled this gap nicely. There was however adequate provision for mentors to meet with their respective platforms. An important lesson is that a project should make provision for the entire project team to meet in person at least twice yearly. This helps to forge a sense of belonging to a project and facilitates relationship building. It also facilitates a collective interpretation of the project document to reach consensus and understanding of the project's aims and how best to deliver it. It also offers an opportunity to share experience which is often best achieved through face-to-face interaction. Where possible, technologies such as Skype or Adobe Meeting should be used in between meetings to keep project participants in contact. When used in conjunction with webcams, these technologies can serve as a very good proxy for face-to-face meetings. This notwithstanding, where people are involved, face-to-face meetings remain invaluable.

### **16.6 Financial Arrangements**

The EC has strict financial regulations which apply to its projects. It is important that careful thought goes into the preparation of the financial proposal before submission because once the project is won, the financial allocations cannot be changed. For example, it is not possible to reduce one budget line in a project in order to increase the amount in another. This caused difficulties with this project as some of the budgets were arbitrary and not based on real costs on the ground. For example, the costs of employing platform staff varied between the three implementing countries yet there was a uniform amount in the proposal document for each country. The lesson is that careful attention needs to be paid to preparation of the financial proposal. Realistic costs should be estimated to line items such as salaries taking into account cost of living in different cities and providing for increments in subsequent years. Transport costs are also important. If a project will require local travel thought should be given to purchase of a vehicle. The costs of consumables also need to be budgeted for accurately as do a provision for maintenance of equipment.

### **16.7 Make-Up of the Team**

The success or otherwise of a project such as this one will be influenced to a large degree by the team that is set up to implement the project. In this case, the platform team members. A cursory glance of the platform membership and successes can reveal how *ceteris paribus*, the platforms' achievements in part reflect the make-up of the team.

Platform	Team Make-Up	Successes
Ghana	<p><b>Team leader</b> – water professional with many years experience</p> <p><b>Communications specialist</b> – background in journalism with 8 years experience in the sector</p> <p><b>Data analyst</b> – background in private sector</p>	Delivered a range of outputs in line with the project document and facilitated sector dialogue on a range of topics
Mozambique	<b>Platform team</b> – civil service	Vision of national monitoring unit including collecting primary data
Nigeria	<p><b>Team leader</b> – academic</p> <p><b>Data analyst</b> – academic research</p>	Quickly obtained sectoral consensus on harmonisation.

The lesson here is that unsurprisingly, people will play to their strengths and will prefer activities that are within their comfort zones while giving lower priority to activities that are not. The project design should therefore take account of the person specification necessary to deliver the project.

## 16.8 Platforms' Legal Status

It was expected that the platforms would by the end of the project have established themselves within the sector structures sufficiently enough to either fund raise or attract funding beyond the project duration. However, the project design did not take into account the need for the platforms to have a legal identity. The lesson is that projects which are intended to continue beyond the project duration should be established with the legal status necessary for the project's smooth continuation. It is easier to do this at the outset than to change identity mid-stream.

## 16.9 Project Management

We have seen that UNICEF operates a decentralised management with country offices enjoying operational independence. We have also seen that head office would not normally bid for a project which it would then be expected to implement through country offices. This project was funded by the EC and therefore the project coordinator, (UNICEF New York), was accountable to the EC in Brussels for the proper implementation of the project. However, the project was implemented through UNICEF offices in Ghana, Mozambique and Nigeria which operate independently. This was not an ideal arrangement because it put the project management in New York in a difficult position whereby they were accountable for the project but had no administrative levers to draw on. Instead, they were reliant on the goodwill of UNICEF offices to deliver the project. There were too many layers of management within the project escalating the potential for disagreements over where the responsibility for the management of the project lay. The lesson is that project design should take account of management arrangements to be sure that the project's coordinator has managerial authority over implementers. Further, project managerial arrangements should not conflict with established line management arrangements within implementing organisations. Rather, the project should be designed to work through existing managerial structures. Ideally, UNICEF New York should never

have been in a position where it was accountable to Brussels for a project implemented through country offices.

## Country Lessons

### 17 Ghana Lessons

- There is a great deal more user data relevant to WASH available from agencies such as the Ghana Statistical Service than was first thought. However, the bulk of the data has not been disaggregated for the water sector. An analysis of this data has also revealed greater disparities between regions than had been previously thought. This implies that when implementing a project of this type, it is important to consult widely to learn what data and information sector agencies and other agencies already hold. This can save a lot of time reinventing the wheel. One can also benefit from the expertise of people in the agencies who work with data on a daily basis. Their expertise in data analysis and interpretation can offer useful insights.
- It also became apparent that there is insufficient data to make links between interventions in water and results in other sectors. Such data would add to the effectiveness of the platform's key messages.
- The Who's Who directory was very well received. Feedback shows that it would have been even more useful if it was comprehensive and if it had been published in A5 format which sector participants suggested would have been a portable format. There are two lessons to be learned here. The first relates to the compilation of any sort of directory. The chances of a project compiling a comprehensive directory are slim. There is a way around this potential problem of alienating those left out. Have the directory available online with a mechanism whereby people can leave their details for inclusion in the directory if they are not already in it. This way, the directory is likely to be kept up-to-date without expending effort. The second lesson is that any 'reference' material that is published in hard format should be published in a format that is readily portable.
- There was the feeling that some of the outputs expected of the platforms were too rigid and could not easily be delivered. An example of this was the requirement to hold monthly media meetings. The platform argued that at times they had no information to put out that would be regarded as newsworthy by the media. Other times they had a glut. So for example, in the six months before the 2008 Ghanaian general election, there was great interest in sanitation in Ghana and the platform had no trouble getting the media to engage. Notwithstanding the platform's success in arranging eight media meetings, the team argued that they would not put a number on an activity such as this which is outside the control of the platform to deliver. They emphasised that such an approach could lead to the platform producing poor quality outputs in a bid to meet stringent project requirements. This could then do damage to the platform's reputation as an autonomous, disinterested producer of sector information and data.
- Monitoring data can be sensitive. The platform realised early on that it is a useful tactic to disseminate data and information to the main stakeholders on a given topic before going public. This helps the stakeholders to understand ahead of time, the basis on which the data was collected and interpreted and virtually eliminates a 'sector' backlash when the announcements are made. A good

example of this is a workshop that was held to sensitise the sector to the contents of the country summary sheet which the platform was aware would differ in some areas with the perception of sector stakeholders. The lesson here is that effective engagement and management of stakeholders is important. An important aspect of this is giving stakeholders advance notice of any messages and publications being put out.

- The platform is subject to government regulations including those on procurement because it is hosted by the government. The government bureaucracy turns slowly and this has impacted the platform's responsiveness negatively. The lesson here is that a project organ needs to be responsive to be perceived as efficient. The nature of the platform's work in ramping up the profile of monitoring and delivering timely information products also demands that it be responsive. Mechanisms to assure fleet footedness should have been devised and put in place and this should apply to all projects of a similar design.

## **18 Mozambique Lessons**

The following lessons can be learned from the implementation of the project in Mozambique.

- A lesson to be learned from the Mozambique case is that regrettable as the lack of consultation was, it is possible to retrieve a workable compromise as happened in Mozambique. SINAS was adopted as the platform and though this meant that many of the specific outputs in the project document were not delivered, it also meant that the Mozambique 'platform' turned out to be the most sustainable within the project.
- Mainstreaming the platform into SINAS was sufficient to win government's ownership of the project and has facilitated a sector dialogue which has had useful results. For example, there is broad agreement that usage data from household surveys should be taken into account to give a fuller picture of the position regarding water and sanitation in Mozambique. There is also broad agreement that the indicators used for coverage probably misrepresent the reality on the ground and these have now been reviewed and new indicators agreed and adopted for use.
- The country summary sheet would not have been produced but for the project. It has been widely disseminated at the national and sub-national level and made it possible to get a dialogue on harmonisation of indicators underway. Project publications have contributed to establishing the trust of sector stakeholders in SINAS.
- Thus, though Mozambique is the country where the project came closest to being a complete disaster and possibly not even implemented, in a curious sense it is also the country where the long term foundations of an effective monitoring unit have been put in place largely due to the current project. In this regard, the project has been very successful in Mozambique even without having delivered the outputs that were expected under the project. If one adopts a results oriented

approach pegged on development outcomes, then one could argue that the project has been most successful in Mozambique.

- The lesson here is that even where things have gone wrong, success can be obtained through dialogue and aligning one's project to support government agenda.

## 19 Nigeria Lessons

- The project design did not take into account the different socio-political and geographic features of participating countries. Ghana has a decentralised system of government, Nigeria is a federal state with 36 states and 774 local authorities, and Mozambique is a republic. The lesson here is that in the case of Nigeria particularly, due attention should be paid to what is feasible to deliver given its federal nature. It may be practical to aim to work at state level incorporating anywhere from one to a handful of states only. Bounding a project's scope in this way increases the chances of it being successful in delivering outputs.
- When designing such a project, it is a good idea to take the time to understand local culture and reasonable expectations being employed on a project implemented by UNICEF. In Nigeria, status is important and access to an office vehicle is the norm amongst personnel at the level of platform staff. The lesson here is to research and understand the likely expectations of national staff and plan for an employment package that will meet these expectations and which is competitive. Otherwise the project suffers for being unable to hire staff of the right calibre.
- Similar to the above are issues around office support which are also important. In many cultures it is still the norm to have a greater level of administrative support than is perhaps the case in the west. In this regard, the absence of an operations manager was frustrating as was the absence of telephones. These were perceived not just as demoralising factors but also factors which had a direct impact on the efficiency of the platform and its ability to deliver its mandate. The lesson here is that working arrangements are always going to be culturally diverse and research should be done early on in the project bidding stage to ensure that the project document proposes a working environment that is conducive within the local culture and meets expectations.
- Similarly, other issues impacting on terms of service such as duration of contract and the lack of pensions was an issue. It should have been made clear too that the employment was not with UNICEF as this had a great impact on the attraction of the job to potential applicants.
- Due account should be taken of prevailing salary levels. The base salary paid to the Nigerian platform though competitive in civil service terms, was deemed low by many applicants when compared with the opportunities for making additional income in civil service posts through allowances for example. Therefore, any project to be set up in Nigeria should take into account this
- The terms of service should be clear and unambiguous. A recurring problem was lack of clarity about the exact terms of service and the employer's identity. The

ambiguity came about because the platform was advertised as a UNICEF project and recruitment done through an agency, Delloite Touche. As such, applicants believed that the job was with UNICEF and they would enjoy similar terms of service to national staff.

## Conclusions

As noted before, this project was initially intended to run from October 2006 to October 2009. However, delays in contract negotiation and with the establishment of platforms meant that the project inception only occurred in March 2008 – 18 months after the project commenced. Thus, the project began when there were just 18 months left of the contract. This had a significant effect on the course of the project but also meant that many important lessons which would have been captured in the project's mature phase have gone unreported. Even so, there are some useful lessons documented here.

Lessons are important because if documented, we can use them to learn from the past. Learning from the past should lead to fewer mistakes being made. It should also lead to people making right choices leading to greater chances of achieving successful project outcomes. A key characteristic of lessons learnt from project implementation is that they are rarely ground-shaking. Rather, lessons are usually about ordinary day to day common sense things which were neglected to be done, or done in spite of them appearing to be unimportant. It is this characteristic of lessons that causes lack of learning. People often neglect to do lesson learning precisely because they think the lessons are so obvious, they do not need to be documented or taken account of.

The lessons that have been identified in this book are real lessons and should be taken account of. This is especially so because implementing the lessons learned here in a project setting would not take much effort. These lessons could make a real difference to many future projects.

In spite of the shortened project period from 36 to 18 months, it has been shown that the novel project approach can work and that it is possible to make significant progress in producing relevant and timely information for sector stakeholders that they can use to either support their planning activities or challenge those of others and sector allocation. It can also be seen that there is clear potential for scaling up the approach in other countries. This document has collected lessons which highlight the pitfalls in the process and also the areas that made the project work well.

Further, the learning from many of the lessons documented here can be applied in a whole range of projects. To cite but one example, the need to consult exhaustively with all project stakeholders at an early stage and preferably before the bid document is prepared. Another lesson which can have wide application in the development sector is that it is good practice to as much as possible align the core objectives of the project being proposed with the priorities of the national governments in implementing countries.

Finally, in drawing the lessons together, it is clear that when designing and implementing a multinational project, it is important that the project details relating to each country are carefully worked out to take account of national variations. A single design while easy to draw up, is unlikely to fit any of the countries adequately. Thus problems emerge which could have been avoided by simple design tweaks.