



Monitoring the MDGs

Strategies for improved monitoring in water and sanitation

In September 2000, the United Nations Millennium Summit agreed eight time-bound and measurable Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aimed at combating rural and urban poverty, hunger, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. Many of the targets within the goals are set for 2015.

Monitoring progress towards these targets in an effective way is proving to be a challenge across many countries, as several of the inherent difficulties encountered are generic.

This briefing note offers an analysis of case studies from Ghana and Tamil Nadu, looking at both the potential and limitations of current monitoring processes. On the basis of this, tested strategies and tools are presented which enhance monitoring and its effectiveness.



Headline facts

- Many of the challenges of effective monitoring are generic, such as rationalising definitions of terms, ensuring reliability, validity and breadth of data collected, and the use of that data.
- Progress is captured more accurately if data indicators are disaggregated at national, provincial and district level and by socio-economic group.
- Bringing NGOs, CSOs and local government together to assist in monitoring improves the ease of collection and use of data.
- Strategic planning and allocation of finances are improved if they are informed of the results of monitoring by geographic area and poverty levels.
- Protocols that quantify participatory monitoring and provide flexible management tools are available.
- If the challenges of monitoring remain unresolved, infrastructure construction may increase without necessarily improving sustainable service delivery to the poor.



Disaggregation, Definitions and Gaps

Data and the indicators used need to be disaggregated at national, regional and district levels to be useful for planning.

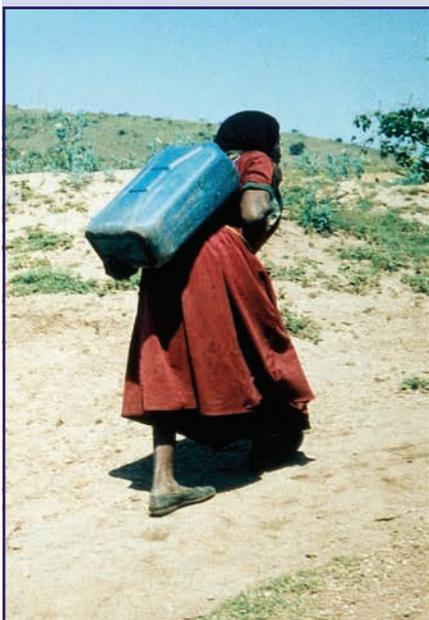
Accurate use of terms is also important, as using narrow definitions of access can make the validity of data questionable:

Although the Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS-nr. 4) estimated that 80% of all urban residents and 100% of those living in Accra had access to piped water... these are misleading statistics ... Underlying all these figures is the daily reality of interrupted availability, long lines, and high prices, because even when households have piped water, supply is not constant.

Activity Report 114 Ghana Urban Health Assessment. December 2002

Government statistics can also be at odds with other sources of data. For example, 78% of urban families in Accra in 1998-99 were said to have access, although the reality was long queues, high fee rates and unhygienic conditions. In rural Tamil Nadu, the official stated coverage of improved drinking water is 92% which is much higher than the 70% stated by MDG reports for rural India.

Overall, using data to improve planning and implementation is recognised as a continuing challenge.



Measuring and Using the MDGs in Ghana

The Government of Ghana has made a major commitment to the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the MDGs, utilising extensive data bases and many national and sub-national surveys. Although problems still exist associated with this, there are alternative models which may provide solutions.

Survey data

These large surveys each have their own objectives, definitions, sampling and methods of analysis, which lead to variations in the data produced. The Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) has identified a need to harmonise this data. For example, the MDG targets focus on *sustained access to safe drinking water and sanitation*, while the Ghanaian surveys measure *improved* water sources and sanitation, (which may be neither safe nor sustainable). Furthermore, access measured in terms of distance to the water point varies between surveys but is defined in MDG monitoring as 1.6km or one mile. Unfortunately, use of an improved water point at a further distance than this is not counted if there is a nearer un-improved one.

Alternative model: Rationalising the definitions

WELL has carried out work in Uganda to assist in the development of a more effective performance monitoring system. A series of 'golden' indicators have been developed, which are now being used where data currently exists, leading to much more focussed monitoring and trend analysis. For example, performance league tables show the average cost of new water points per beneficiary in each district, in order to identify where there is either potential for learning about good performance or scope for improving performance.

The institutional setting

The GSS has enhanced its capacity through World Bank support, but some challenges still remain:

- to obtain sufficient financial support;
- to increase capacity further; and
- to report on different indicators for parallel programmes.

Donors have emphasized the need for a central *Monitoring Unit*, envisaged as a one-stop centre for obtaining information on progress in the water and sanitation sector.

Involvement of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) is also supported by the National Planning Commission and the MDG multi-stakeholders, as having an important complementary role in the monitoring process.

Alternative model: Involving NGOs, CSOs and their networks

Many NGOs and CSOs, who work "hands-on", know first-hand about functionality, sustainability, community management, cost recovery, O&M, hygienic behaviours and hygiene promotion.

In Ghana, NGOs have organized themselves within the water and sanitation sector. Similarly, in Tamil Nadu many of the NGOs and CSOs are familiar with each other. Thus, committed NGOs/CSOs could be involved in monitoring in order to address some of the issues raised above.

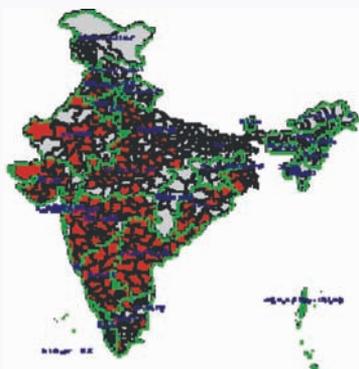
Monitoring MDGs in Tamil Nadu

Many of the challenges outlined in the Ghana case recur in different forms in Tamil Nadu, southern India, particularly given the scale, as local districts typically have populations of one to three million people.

Water and sanitation data

Tamil Nadu has little data at state level about reliability, functionality, operation and maintenance, or access by the poor to water. However, some information is disaggregated by district, such as water quality.

Figure 1: Groundwater depletion



The blocks shown in red are areas where, due to extraction of groundwater, especially for irrigation, the groundwater levels have fallen by more than 4 metres (@ > 20cm/year) during 1981 - 2000.

Source: CGWB.

The sustainability of water resources is also usefully disaggregated by district. Tamil Nadu relies heavily on its limited stocks of ground water, which are over exploited in 26% of Tamil Nadu blocks.

Demand for sanitation is low, with only 14% of rural households having access to home toilets. Coverage data is available by district, with questionable validity.

Alternative model: Mapping by geography and poverty levels

In the 1990s SEUF produced maps for householders and community members, with houses shown by economic level. Using these, selective extensions were designed for the piped water system increasing coverage by more than 40 per cent, at an additional cost of less than 4% of the original estimates.

More recently, WaterAid has developed geographically extensive assessments by mapping in Tanzania, Zambia and Malawi. These combine data from aerial Geographic Information Systems, household visits and surveys, which include information about functionality and use of water sources and sanitation, leading to improved targeting of resources.

Possible actions

A consultative meeting of stakeholders from 15 State institutions suggested possible actions to develop a system of indicators and monitoring that is particularly relevant to the situation in Tamil Nadu. These can then aggregate upwards into the development of national level profiles for water and sanitation.

Action 1: *Improve relevance of monitoring by including indicators that ensure sustained, safe water sources*

Action 2: *Make State-specific data and indicators*

For Tamil Nadu, these are, for example, use of water resources, hygiene behaviours, the existence of local management groups/NGOs/CBOs for sanitation and affordability.

Action 3: *Involve NGOs, CSOs, local government and their networks to improve the collection and use of data*

Many of these groups know a great deal about effectiveness and sustainability issues and could work together, producing a concept note to address some of the issues relating to monitoring.

Action 4: *Ensure participation in monitoring and use of information*

The Tamil Water and Drainage Board (TWAD) has launched a change management group to democratise water management, piloted in 470 villages. The principles of this innovative programme are participation, community management, equity and decentralization.

Alternative model: MPA/QIA quantified participatory monitoring

The Methodology for Participatory Assessment (MPA) comprises sets of protocols that quantify participatory monitoring and provide a flexible set of management tools for community monitoring, including information about functionality, costs, use, management and transparency. This is usually missing in MDG monitoring. Stakeholders (children, community members and implementers) are involved in collecting, validating, analysing and using monitoring information, both for one off and continuous monitoring.

Tamil Nadu's Chief Minister, Ms. Jayalalitha has identified specific priorities to achieve the MDGs, including higher female literacy, 100% school enrolment, reduced infant mortality, poverty and child malnutrition, and access to water (Hindu newspaper 14/08/04).

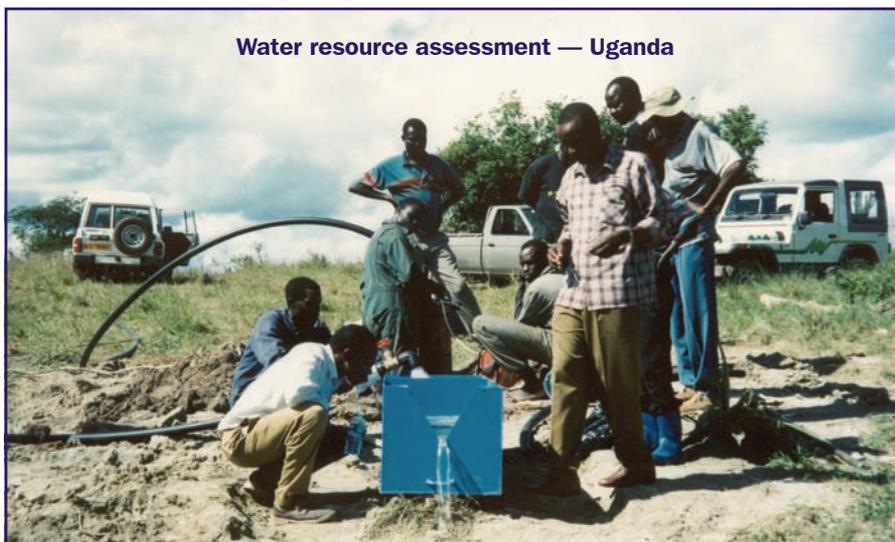
High quality statistical information is needed to measure this and to ensure adequate and transparent implementation.

Alternative Management Models

The following recommendations are based on strategies that are proven to be effective.

- **Rationalising the definitions** within each nation/state improves the reliability of data collection for such variables as access and sustainability.
- **Involving NGOs, CSOs and their networks** improves the collection and use of data.
- **Monitoring by geographic area and poverty levels** improves planning, optimizes strategies and assists in the determination of funding allocation for achieving improved access and sustained water and sanitation facilities.
- **Methodology for Participatory Assessment (MPA)** uses a set of protocols that quantify participatory monitoring and provide a flexible set of management tools for community monitoring.

Water resource assessment — Uganda



This briefing note reviews MDG monitoring experience in Ghana and Tamil Nadu and offers realistic strategies and tools for its improvement at sub-national and national level.

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Briefing Note source material by Kathy Shordt (IRC) and Bernard Akanbang (TREND). The full report is available at: www.Lboro.ac.uk/well

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