

5. Improving and agreeing on definitions is generally not an easy task. Statistical offices holding a “monopoly” on “official data” do often not communicate with relevant sector institutions or do not receive the necessary professional input from their line ministries. Therefore, official data also widely used by international institutions to monitor MDGs, does not, in many cases, reflect the situation on the ground.

Reliable documentation of progress needs solid reference points. The quality of sector objectives and the successful monitoring of progress in turn depend on the quality of the base line data.

6. Fixing objectives based on reference years for which sufficient base line data is not available is inappropriate. Establishing monitoring systems to measure progress towards these objectives without reliable base line data could be misleading. Therefore, reliable monitoring needs reliable solid base lines with well-defined data especially for the settlements of the poor. A clearer picture of the situation on the ground allows for increasingly ambitious target setting and better results.

Choosing the right indicators, which cover all key parameters and are easy to calculate, is crucial to make monitoring and reporting function.

7. A crucial step to capture all key parameters, to facilitate calculation and to provide standards, is the selection of indicators for monitoring and performance. Indicators, which are difficult to measure and almost impossible to calculate, such as a walking distance or waiting time at water outlets, should not be used for monitoring. Equally, an indicator for walking distance can be appropriate in a crowded area but makes installations economically unviable and unsustainable in a less densely populated area. The right indicators chosen with scrutiny can greatly benefit access.

Reliable information is crucial to enhance transparency, accountability and ultimately internal and external resource mobilisation to the sector.

8. Provision of funds increasingly depends on the capacity of institutions to convincingly document their use and impact, particularly on the poor. Politicians, donors and the public have a need and the right to receive reliable data and a comprehensive country-wide picture. Therefore, reporting must be seen as a contribution to transparency, accountability, and performance enhancement and to increase value for money and must be based on solid and sustainable information systems. Sector reforms offer an opportunity to improve such systems and anchor them for sustainability and professional management into institutions.

Sector reforms need to improve information and monitoring systems and the reporting to decision makers and the public to achieve their objectives.

9. Sector reforms can only be successful if information and reporting is able to show to politicians and the public that progress is made towards the objectives. The public will only accept the costs inflicted by sector reforms if the benefit of the reform on the ground is evident. Increased transparency, cost coverage, access of the poor and good governance -all key principles of reforms- can only be convincingly documented on the basis of improved sector information. Consequently, it is crucial that the driving forces of reform processes are aware of the vital importance of definitions and improved information / reporting systems in the sector.

Imprint: This issue paper was prepared by a collaborative effort of the convenors of the East Africa Regional Conference on Accelerating Water Supply and Sanitation for the Urban Poor: the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), the Water and Sanitation Program (WSP), the Kenyan Ministry for Water and Irrigation (MWI) and the GTZ/MWI Water Sector Reform Program. This material may be copied for research, education or scholarly purpose only. All materials are subject to revision. The views and interpretations of this document are those of the individual authors and/or trainers and do not necessarily reflect the views of WSP, GTZ or the Kenyan Ministry.