

Joint Sector Reviews for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

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INTRODUCTION

Improving Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in low- and middle-income states, especially fragile ones, or those suffering from protracted crisis is major challenge.

Over the last decade, Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs) have emerged as a way of coordinating stakeholders, joint learning, data gathering, decision-making and for building consensus, partnerships and mandates for action. JSRs offer hope for strengthening governance and increasing impact.

In countries where multiple donors are financing WASH and are not providing general budget support, JSRs are one of the few mechanisms that can bring about mutual accountability at country level.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In many countries, responsibilities for leadership, policy, delivery and regulation of WASH services are fragmented. Even where there is a single strong Ministry, lack of internal communication and trust can lead to waste and failure.

In fragile states, these challenges are often compounded by very weak institutions, low staff skills and motivation, high risk of disruption and an inadequate and unreliable supply of financial resources. Successful delivery of any policy or services depends on good information and effective coordination between responsible individuals and organisations.

Mutual accountability, monitoring and reporting is systematically weak in many WASH implementation and funding organisations. There are plenty of documents and reports on how things could be or should be done. However, very few reports are released into the public domain that clearly present what has actually be done, whether that intervention has delivered any meaningful benefits to citizens and overall trends. The complexities around why WASH services fail and whether successes can be attributed to any one project or intervention means that individuals and organisations are not incentivised to be open and honest. This may harm future career prospects or funding.

KEY FINDINGS

There is a widespread problem with poor reporting and little accountability in the WASH sector. This makes it unattractive for financial ministries and donors. JSRs are a way to address this but so far the majority have not fulfilled their potential. JSR reports need to be published online by their governments and/or key development partners - currently very few are available.

There is no common standard or definition of what a Joint Sector Review (JSR) is or does. In practice, they often provide an annual platform for discussion, reviewing progress and setting priorities - sometimes binding commitments - for the coming year.

External actors can play a helpful facilitating role, but JSRs only work if the government, and key people in a range of government organisations, want to make it work. Development partners can strengthen JSR processes and help to build capacity.

JSRs do not automatically remove barriers, tensions and conflicts between individuals or between organisations. However, JSRs should not be a cosy process - open dialogue and constructive criticism is essential.

JSRs can improve incrementally over time, but only where the majority of stakeholders deliver on their commitments.

This study has shown no strong relationship between fragility of a state and continuity of JSRs.



Caption:

Description:

