

# UNICEF – IRC partnership 'Knowledge Management and Sector Learning in West and Central African Countries'

Knowledge is our most important  
resource



**Generating, capturing, using, leveraging and sharing of organisational water and sanitation knowledge is pivotal to improve the quality, equity and sustainability of water, sanitation and hygiene services. Achieving universal water and sanitation coverage depends on the ability of governments and other water and sanitation actors to ensure that their decisions and actions are based on the best information available and deliver the best possible outcomes, as efficiently and effectively as possible.**

Sometimes answers to common problems already exist, but are not widely known. Sometimes new knowledge is created but the information is fragmented. Finding and then using experiences and lessons learned locally and internationally is a major challenge in developing countries in general and also in the water and sanitation sector of West and Central African countries.

***Knowledge management refers to the facilitation and support of processes for creating, sustaining, sharing, and renewing of organizational knowledge in order to generate social or economic wealth or to improve performance.***

Most problems in providing water and sanitation services cannot be solved unilaterally because they involve diverse stakeholders. To provide universal, sustainable and equitable water and sanitation services, all sector actors (i.e. governments, (I)NGOs, donors, CSOs and the private sector), need to jointly monitor current practices and policies, analyse their own experiences and that of other interventions, reflect on successes and failures and design and implement adaptations that improve the delivery of water and sanitation services. In other words, **'sector learning' is key for achieving universal water and sanitation coverage.**

## **SUPPORTING SECTOR LEARNING IN 11 WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICAN COUNTRIES AND AT REGIONAL LEVEL**

The UNICEF - IRC partnership (2015 - 2017) aims to support 11 West and Central African countries in their knowledge management and sector learning ambitions to ensure that the best lessons are shared and built upon for the delivery of sustainable and equitable water and sanitation services.

The partnership also intends to strengthen the organizational capacity at regional level in support of and to facilitate inter-country and regional knowledge and information exchange on water, sanitation and hygiene in the West and Central African region.

Countries included in the partnership programme are Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Sierra Leone, Niger and Nigeria.

***Knowledge is information in use***

## MAPPING OF EXISTING SECTOR LEARNING CAPACITY; PLANNING FOR SUPPORT

The UNICEF - IRC partnership will start between July and September 2015 with a mapping of the sector learning capacity and potential for sector learning in 11 West and Central African countries.

The mapping will identify existing actors, budgets, structures, mechanisms and themes for knowledge management and learning in each of the countries.

Based on the mapping, concrete plans for strengthening sector learning capacity will be formulated, including knowledge products to be developed.

In parallel to the mapping, a Call for Expressions of Interest will be released through which interested UNICEF country offices in the West and Central African region can ask for support for sector learning and knowledge management.

Support activities can entail the development of capacities for process documentation, reflection and lesson learning of UNICEF staff and sector stakeholders. It can also include activities to create the enabling conditions for sector learning and knowledge management such as the formulation and institutionalisation of a country specific sector learning framework for the water and sanitation sector, including the establishment of learning platforms.

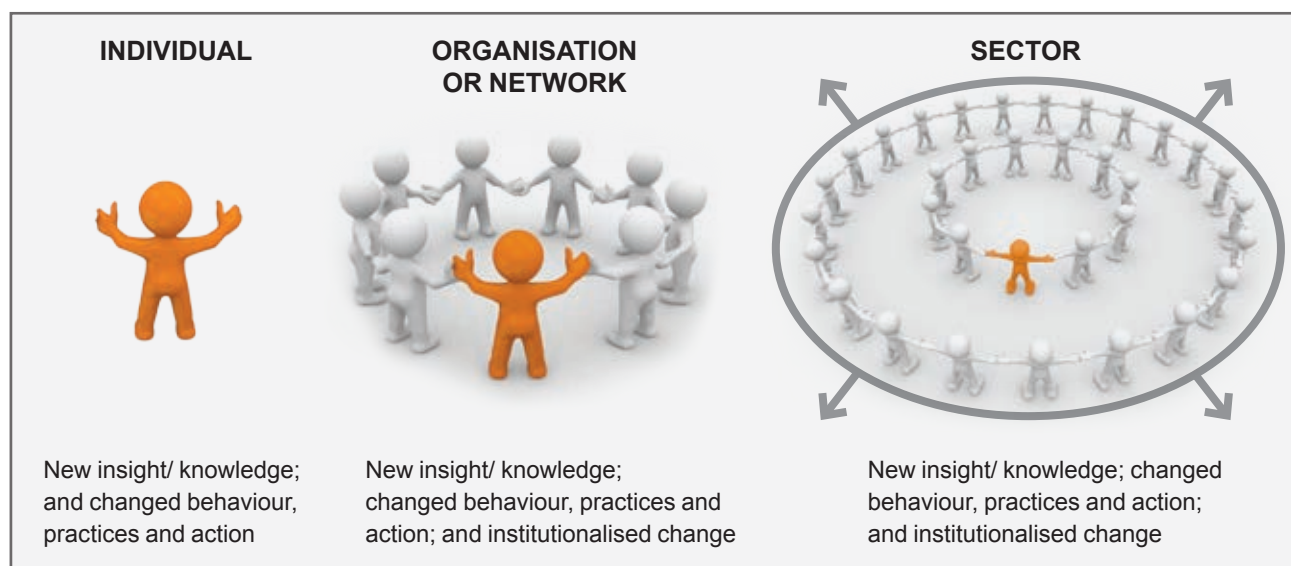
The country assessments will be complemented by a regional mapping exercise. Better understanding the capacity of existing platforms and demand for Knowledge Management & Sector Learning will help enhance south-south collaboration as a strategy for building a stronger WASH sector across the region.

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## SECTOR LEARNING DEFINED

Learning starts when individuals acquire new insights or knowledge and change their behavior. Sector learning goes beyond knowledge and action at the individual and or organizational level. It involves all stakeholders, and emerges from an integrated approach to information

management, monitoring, analysis and reflection on the factors that determine success or failure. The effects of learning at individual level translate into concerted action and institutional change.



Towards a framework for tracking sector learning. RMA Workshop, April 2011

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### RESOURCES

Soest, A. van, Carriger, S., Casella, D., Da Silva Wells, C., 2015. Sector learning and adaptive management. Briefing Note. IRC. The Hague, The Netherlands. Available at:  
[www.ircwash.org/resources/sector-learning-and-adaptive-management](http://www.ircwash.org/resources/sector-learning-and-adaptive-management)

Da Silva Wells, C., Lieshout, R., Uytewaal, E., 2012. WASH sector learning: continuous improvement for services that last. [online] The Hague: IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre. Available at: [www.ircwash.org/resources/wash-sector-learning-continuous-improvement-services-last](http://www.ircwash.org/resources/wash-sector-learning-continuous-improvement-services-last)

### ABOUT THIS BRIEF

This brief has been produced by IRC (2015) for the UNICEF – IRC partnership Knowledge Management and Sector Learning in West and Central Africa Countries.