

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

March 2016

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.

In fragile states, and countries suffering from protracted crisis, humanitarian organisations have immediate short-term goals to save lives which are not always compatible with long-term capacity development. On the other hand development cooperation organisations that are not accustomed to high risk environments may not fully engage with the humanitarian community.

Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs) have become an increasingly common process for addressing these - and other - challenges. However, questions remain on their effectiveness, and whether there are lessons or common elements to JSRs that could be transferred countries with weak WASH sector performance.

What is a Joint Sector Review?

There is no standard definition of a Joint Sector Review. This Learning Note defines a JSR as a *“periodic process that brings different stakeholders in a particular sector together to engage in dialogue, review status, progress and performance and take decisions on priority actions.”*

As part of the review process, information or evidence in the form of data, studies, reports, field visits and/or independent reviews is consolidated and analysed. The process includes various formal and informal procedures that lead up to a biennial, annual or half-yearly gathering which is led by a sector ministry and has the participation of a wide range of stakeholders.

JSR processes can be undertaken at national, state or district level, depending on need and in-country governance setup.

The words in bold in the text below are particularly important:

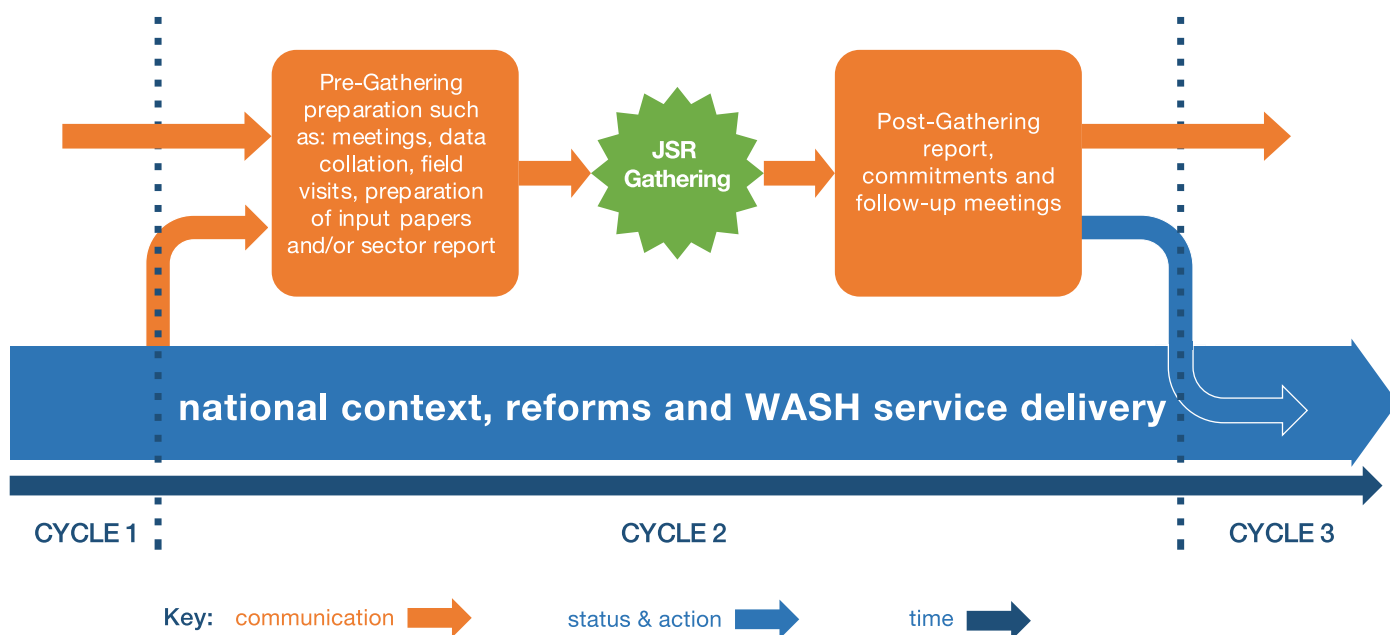
- A JSR is a **process** rather than a one-off event
- status and progress, in the form of evidence-based **information** is **reviewed**
- different **technical** and **political stakeholders** come together
- there is considerable **discussion** (including disagreement)
- a **gathering**, forum, meeting or conference takes place
- the process is **government led**
- **priority actions** are agreed
- priority actions **feed into** the national context including reforms and service delivery (Figure 1)
- the JSR process including priority actions is **documented**

Figure 1 illustrates the pre and post gathering activities, as well as the gathering itself. To become effective, a JSR process should not be one-off, but rather a cycle. The cycle can happen every two years, annually, or every six months. JSRs should be timed to align with government reporting and budgeting calendars.

Ideally, the JSR process improves from one cycle to the next, drawing in new stakeholders and better information with improved review mechanisms and setting more realistic, but ambitious priority actions.

In order to impact on sector policies, institutions, programme implementation and funding the JSR process needs to become an integral part of government, donor, NGO and CSO planning, monitoring and reporting. However this takes years to achieve.

Figure 1: JSR Process and its vital link to the national context and service delivery



KEY LEARNINGS

JSR Relevance and Impact

JSR processes are highly relevant for fragile states, countries suffering from protracted crisis or where multiple agencies are operating. They are highly appreciated by those involved as a platform for sharing and building relationships and may be the only time different government agencies come together, or that NGO/CSO and government representatives meet to discuss sector issues. They provide a meaningful platform for convening sector stakeholders and there is widespread belief in their potential to stimulate positive change.

Examples of JSR impact include:

- **Realisation or strengthening of synergies**, including better division of labour
- **Increased** or changes to sector investments
- Realisation or improvement of **national** programmes
- Changes to government **institutional** structures
- Improved **capacity** of government staff and ministries in data compilation, analysis and reporting as well as clearly articulating and discussing key policy issues
- Raised **profile** of WASH within the country: the “advocacy function” of the JSR

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.

Online JSR documentation was only available for 7 out of 19 countries where JSRs have taken place. While there are some very good examples, in general, the data, presentation and referencing of JSR reports needs to be much more rigorous. The study concludes that WASH JSR’s contribution to mutual accountability can be demonstrated in only a few countries, despite its potential. Although government needs to take the lead, donors need to take responsibility for JSRs to happen, must play an active role and through it, be held accountable for their results.

Priority actions are being set through JSR processes. However, there are challenges in both monitoring and implementing them. If JSRs are to have wider impact, they need to become an integral part of the national (or state or province) planning and reporting process rather than a separate process (or sideshow). Involvement of the finance and planning ministries alongside long-term donor partners who fund implementation as well as support analytical work is essential.

Fragility is not a critical factor in JSR uptake and success

This study found no correlation between how strong the JSR process is and the fragility of a country. Some non-fragile

states, such as Ghana and Zambia, have failed to establish JSR cycles, while states that have appeared on the OECD list, including Uganda, Niger and Burundi, have established them.

The terms “fragile” and “fragile and conflict affected” states refer to a very broad and diverse spectrum of contexts.

Definitions of fragility differ and are evolving. However, fragile states are often beset by complex, pressing challenges: for example chronic or acute humanitarian crises:

- create a proliferation of non-state WASH actors;
- create logistical and security difficulties that make meetings difficult to organise;
- and the urgency for short-term action can obscure longer term development objectives, and even undermine long-term sustainability.

Ownership of the JSR process can also be fraught with tensions - some donors and NGOs are concerned about working too closely with governments with poor records on human rights abuses, corruption or have that have low WASH sector capacity. In other contexts, where there is high dependence on external aid, government might have limited bargaining power and be unwilling to take a lead.

However, major events can create opportunities: the 2014/15 Ebola crisis in West Africa helped to reinforce the strategic importance of the WASH sector in Liberia helped reinforce the communication and cooperation between government ministries, international organisations and NGOs.

JSR experiences and typology

JSR experience can be grouped as follows:

1. **MATURE:** An established cycle, with more than a decade of regular JSR processes.
2. **INTERMEDIATE:** An establishing cycle, with five to ten years of JSR processes so far, taking place every year, or sometimes every second year.

JSRs BY OTHER NAMES

JSRs don’t have a standard structure, and often have different names:

- Annual Water Sector Review (Kenya)
- Joint Annual Review (Yemen)
- Multi-Stakeholder Forum (Ethiopia)
- WASH Conference (Sierra Leone)
- Coordination Meeting (South Sudan)
- Revue Annuelle Conjointe (Burundi, Niger, Senegal, Burkina Faso)

- 3. **BASIC:** Limited experience, with less than five JSR processes so far. Within this group, there are two types of countries:
 - 3a. Continuing: commitment and ability of government and its partners to the continuation of JSR processes in the future
 - 3b. Discontinued: JSR gathering discontinued after some time
- 4. **NO EXPERIENCE** of JSR processes.

Each of the countries with no regular cycle has its own particular story. There are many unanswered questions, but it appears that the commitment by government or its partners to the reviews was not sufficient to continue with them.

The topics reviewed by JSRs vary; WASH in schools are not always included; some countries include water resources, water for agriculture and livestock and solid waste

management; some focus on project implementation; others concentrate on policies, strategies and coordination. The JSR scope depends on national structures and in-country

Where and when have WASH taken place?

Figure 2 lists the 25 countries selected for this study, and the years in which JSR gatherings were held. JSRs have taken place in 19 of these, of which 16 were listed as fragile by the OECD between 2007 and 2015.

From these countries,

- Uganda started first in 2001.
- Ten other counties (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Yemen and Zambia started JSR processes between 2006 and 2008.
- Laos is the most recent country from the sample to start JSR processes, with its first one in 2015.

Figure 2: Countries included in this JSR study

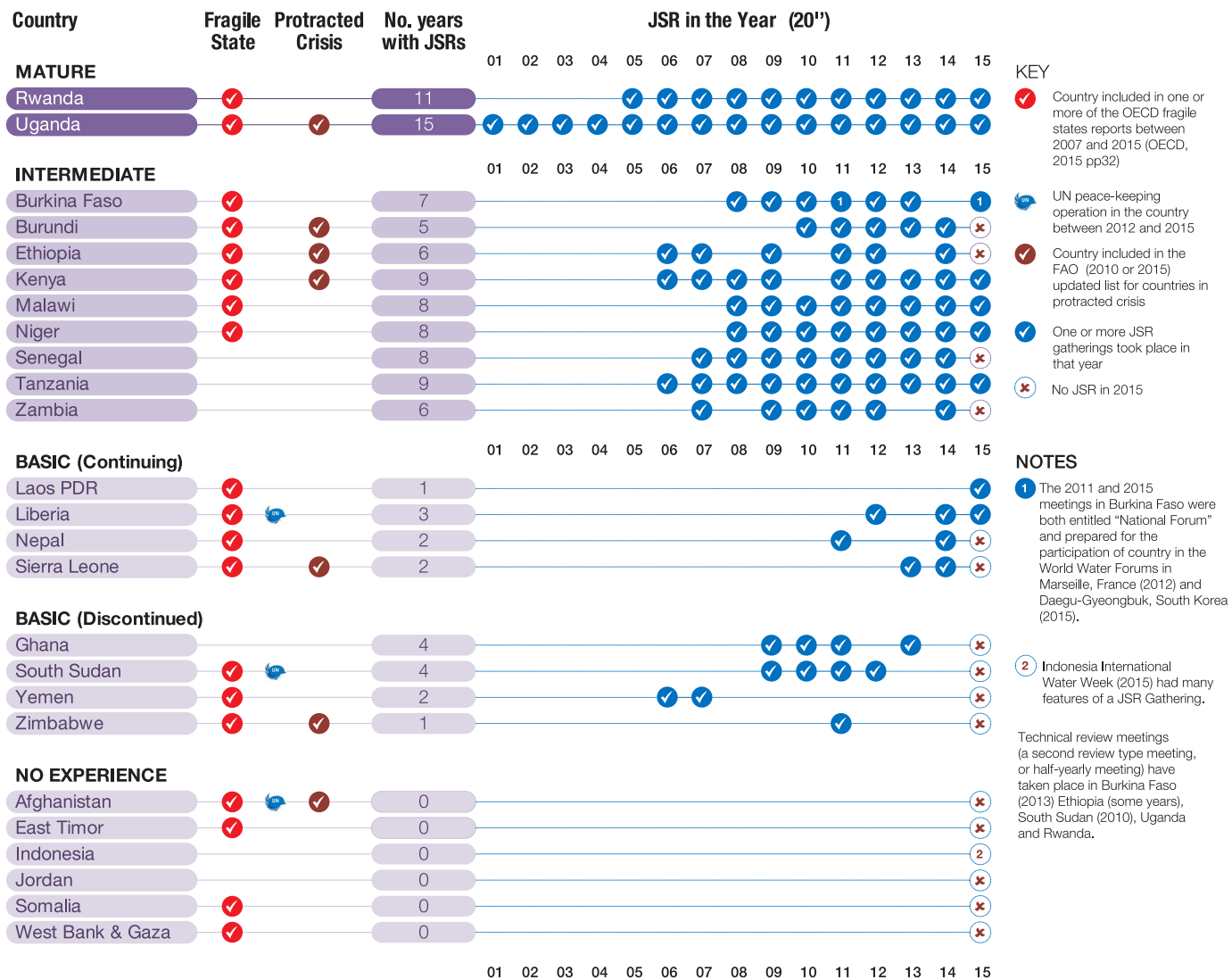
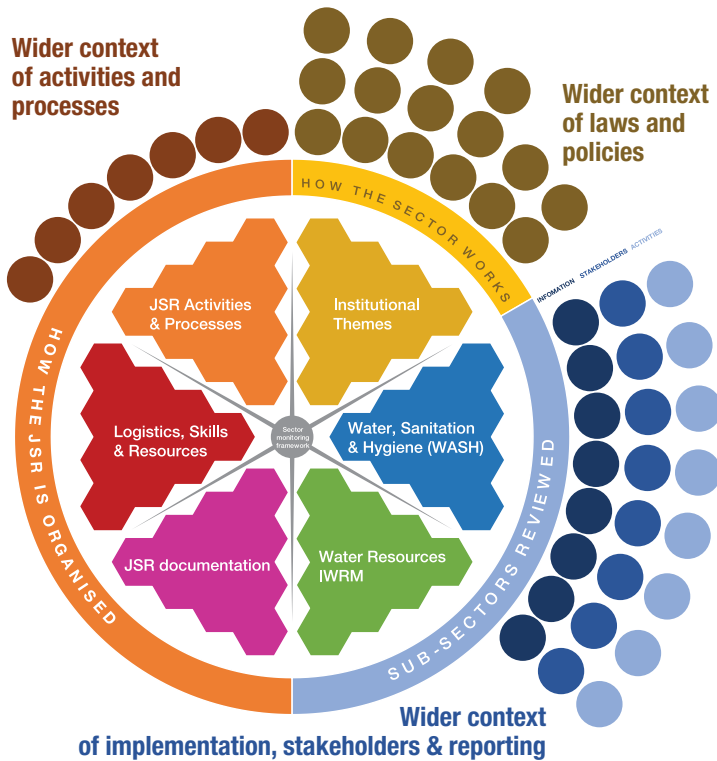


Figure 3: Overview of JSR elements



determining what the JSR can and cannot do. For example, binding commitments cannot be set that go against the laws of the country - or if they do then it will entail a lengthy political process for changes.

Finance plays a critical role in determining what JSR recommendations can be done. In Rwanda, the JSR is a mechanism for sectors to report and set priorities with the Ministry of Finance. In Liberia, and elsewhere, a challenge is that direct investments through NGOs and private sector are not reported to the Ministry of Finance.

SUB-SECTORS REVIEWED

The thematic scope of a JSR is crucial and often wider than WASH. With so many potential sub-sectors to review, a decision should be taken on whether all of them should be covered in every JSR cycle or if there is scope to rotate the emphasis so that discussion and analysis can go deeper.

Elements of a Joint Sector Review

Despite the diversity in JSRs - found in various countries, there are many common elements. The figure (right) structures these elements into three broad categories:

- (1) How the sector works
- (2) Which sub-sectors are reviewed
- (3) How the JSR is organised.

At the centre is a sector monitoring framework, which is important so that the aims of the JSR are understood. This section explains these elements in more detail. Every country has a different starting point and there is nowhere that includes all the elements described below. Furthermore, the relative importance of each element varies between countries and changes over time.

The one common element is a **gathering** that brings stakeholders together to share progress and discuss the future. **However the whole process must be designed to meet the objectives - the gathering alone cannot do this.**

HOW THE SECTOR WORKS

(A) Institutional themes

JSRs do not exist in isolation. They are part of a wider mechanism of government - some of which will be pulled into the JSR explicitly or indirectly. This context is important in

Figure 4: Segment A (How the Sector Works)



Figure 5: Segments B & C (Sub-Sectors Reviewed)



(C) Water Resources - IWRM

WASH is a component of the wider water sector. This is generally driven by how water is organised across government. Equally, some sub-sectors may be brought into the JSR at the request of non-state actors, particularly donors who are providing funding with a specific focus, such as climate change or biodiversity protection.

HOW THE JSR IS ORGANISED

There are many elements that are needed to make a JSR successful, from clear processes to getting small details right around logistics and documentation.

(D) JSR Documentation

A central role for JSR is clear reporting and accountability. This needs good documentation throughout the process. In nearly all countries looked at the quality and availability of documents was poor. Relatively few countries provide a comprehensive JSR report that can be understood as a stand-alone document. If other documents are essential to understand the JSR report, then they should be publically available online as well. These documents include pre-event papers, strategies and plans that are being reported on.

Figure 6: Segment D (How the JSR is organised - Documentation)

A successful JSR needs the following:

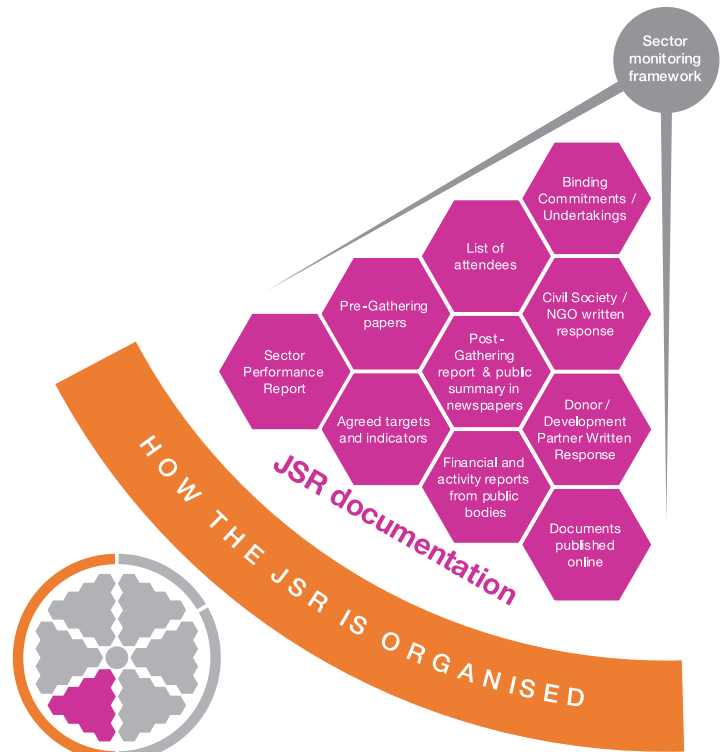
Information and data to feed it. Sometimes, ministry staff are not aware about what is held by outside organisations, including research institutions, donors, private sector, NGOs or even other parts of the public sector.

Stakeholders: JSRs are an important way of bringing the different parts of the WASH sector together to find common solutions, however there can be barriers - particularly in the different technical terms, and conflicting or overlapping organisational mandates and priorities.

Activities: It is important to know and understand what activities are happening, or have happened, and how the JSR can influence in the future.

(B) Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH)

The scope of WASH is highly variable. Urban and rural water supply is ubiquitous but other sub-sectors in the figure often depend on government departmental mandates and on donor-driven activities.



Recommendations, targets, binding commitments and undertakings need to be properly documented and made available - not least to those with responsibility for doing them. Despite, websites being the most straight-forward to share reports, very few countries have their JSR documentation online.

A list of attendees is important for showing who was - and who wasn't present. Sometimes it can show that key ministries or organisations were missing from discussions that relate to their interests.

(E) Logistics, Skills and Resources

The quality of a JSR is strongly affected by the funding, timing and skills available. In many countries, this is where international organisations play an active role. This brings its own risks of undermining government ownership of the process and creating dependency. This is exposed in fragile states where a sudden conflict or political upheaval leads to development partner suspending their operations. This has been the case in Burundi in 2015.

As well as the management and logistics skills for organising the process and a major stakeholder event, the participants also need support.

Staff time, transport and communications costs for both the JSR event and pre- and post-event activities needs to be included and handled transparently to reduce the risk of misused funds.

Figure 7: Segments E (How the JSR is organised - Skills & Resources)

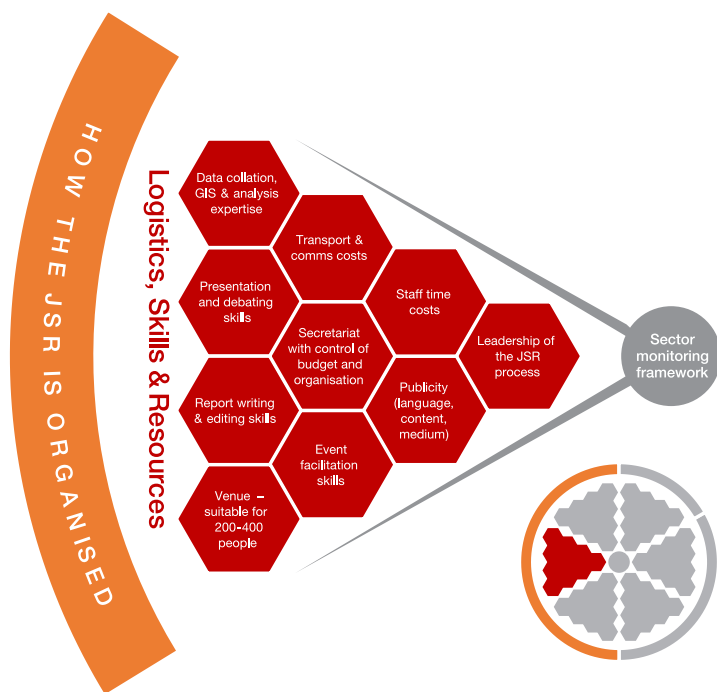


Figure 8: Segment F (How the JSR is organised - Activities)



In fragile states and those suffering from protracted conflict, travel and online communications can be difficult. Considerable time and effort is required to involve stakeholders who may not always be online, particularly those beyond the capital city.

Skills and behaviours of participants are also important. Good reports deserve a good, clear oral presentation. Presenters also need to be comfortable taking questions without feeling personally attacked or insulted. These can both be tackled through running a closed rehearsal in safe environment.

(F) JSR Activities and Processes

The JSR process needs to be well defined and clearly communicated to all the stakeholders involved so that everyone involved is clear about what is expected of them, when and how.

Trust in the process is critical. Open clear communication and mutual accountability is part of this, particularly on the costs and funding for the process and events. While corruption is not limited to fragile states, levels of inter-personal trust can often be lower and this often leads to delays and unnecessary barriers to action.

An observation from JSRs in fragile states is that WASH Clusters are often absent. Humanitarian agencies need to become part of the process.

WHAT ELSE DO WE NEED TO KNOW?

The research report that accompanies this learning note makes the following 16 recommendations in more detail:

The JSR process

1. Government needs to lead the JSR process.
2. Donors must play an active role. This includes transparent reporting and being accountable.
3. JSRs should evolve over time. Start small and build up.
4. Finance and planning ministries need to be involved.
5. Broad inclusion of WASH stakeholders within and outside government.
6. Set a limited number of priority actions that are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound).

RELATED READING

DANERT, K, FUREY, S, MECHTA, M and GUPTA, S (2016) Effective Joint Sector Reviews for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH): A Study & Guidance 2016, World Bank Group: Water, Washington D.C. USA

FUREY, S, DANERT, K, MECHTA, M and GUPTA, S (2016) Effective Joint Sector Reviews for Water: A Poster, World Bank Group: Water, Washington D.C. USA

SSOZI, D. and DANERT, K. (2012) National Monitoring of Rural Water Supplies. How the Government of Uganda did it and lessons for other countries, RWSN, St Gallen, Switzerland.

WSP is a multi-donor partnership created in 1978 and administered by the World Bank to support poor people in obtaining affordable, safe, and sustainable access to water and sanitation services. WSP's donors include Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, and the World Bank.

The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed herein are entirely those of the author and should not be attributed to the World Bank or its affiliated organizations, or to members of the Board of Executive Directors of the World Bank or the governments they represent.

7. Better JSR documentation and dissemination is needed.
8. The JSR needs to be embedded in how WASH actors work.
9. Regularly review the JSR.

The WASH Sector

10. Every country should develop a realistic WASH sector investment plan.
11. Every country should have a monitoring & evaluation framework
12. Develop capacity to make the M&E framework effective.
13. Long term donor commitment to the sector and the country.
14. NGOs, CSOs and donor agencies need to adhere to national reporting systems.
15. International technical assistance, mentoring and mediation can be instrumental in providing support to the JSR processes.
16. Nine actions at a global level were identified.

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