Knowledge management and Communication strategy
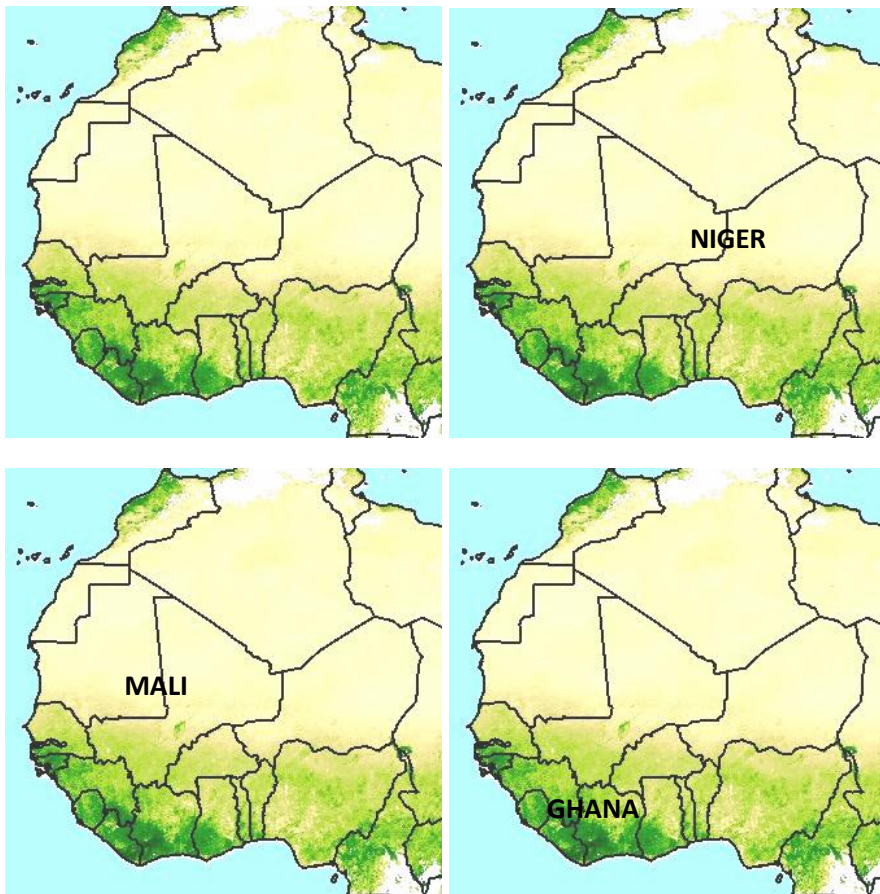
West Africa Water Initiative

Knowledge Management project

October 2010

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ABBREVIATIONS

ARD	Agricultural Research for Development
IRC	International Water and Sanitation Centre
USAid	United States Agency for International Development
WAWI	I/II West Africa Water Initiative I and II
TREND	Training, Research and Networking for the Development
CREPA	Centre Régional pour l'Eau Potable et l'Assainissement à faible coût
KM	Knowledge Management
PHAST	Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (French SARAR)
MUS	Multiple Use Systems
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WA-WASH	West Africa WASH
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
AMCOW	African Ministers' Council on Water
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
ECOWAS-WRCU	Economic Community Of West African States
WIN	Water Integrity Network
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ITU	International Telecommunication Union

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Looking back onto eight years of project implementation and a composite partnership under the West Africa Water Initiative (WAWI) banner brought to notice that the facilitating of a network from Accra to Zinder offers great opportunities but requires a solid communication and knowledge management approach.

In a fact-finding mission, subcontracted by ARD (WAWI grant manager for USAid) and organised by IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, a team visited and interviewed implementing partners on the ground in Ghana, Mali and Niger to document their experiences within WAWI.

The aim of these missions was literally to find facts, to collect documentation and figure out what lessons have been learned. There is no central WAWI documentation centre (any longer). It seemed logical and necessary to contact, visit and interview WAWI partners. A consultant from TREND (Accra, Ghana) visited Anglophone WAWI partners in Ghana and consultants from CREPA Siège and CREPA Burkina Faso (Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso) visited the Francophone WAWI partners in Mali and Niger. A number of documents were retrieved from the web and its archives.

These fact-finding missions have provided invaluable insights. They have been incorporated in this document which formulates a feasible and practical strategy on knowledge management and communication for WAWI and its successor projects in West Africa. The starting point is the local reality, the two languages French and English, the limited access to information and information technology and, crucially, the oral culture that prevails in the region and impacts processes of passing on knowledge.

At the heart of communication (and knowledge management) lie the development of information and the sharing of that information with others to add insights about it – turning information into knowledge. Knowledge management takes the matters further to a) ensure information is well organised and accessible (i.e. information management), b) optimise the frequency and richness of dialogues (through various channels) that take place to solve current / upcoming issues and come up with new solutions (i.e. social learning and innovation) and c) keep a learning attitude at various levels to ensure continuous improve these information and knowledge processes.

In West Africa, these basic assumptions are checked by a predominantly verbal culture which favours dialogues but hampers their passage to the written format, a necessary precondition to a wide dissemination that is time and place independent. Organising conversations, documenting these conversations and managing the information that derives from them in favour of specific groups are prerequisites to spreading WAWI experiences and helping WAWI become increasingly relevant in the region and in the global WASH arena.

The present knowledge management and communication strategy proposes a practical approach to address the challenges and opportunities missed in WAWI. It suggests a number of activities to capture and manage information, enrich it through conversations, increase the recognition of WAWI and ensure that its members are supporting it adequately. At the same time, the strategy proposes to support the WAWI network by lowering the threshold to share knowledge with one another and beyond WAWI itself.

Ultimately, the present strategy hopes to help WAWI create a community to connect people from various countries and communities, expressing that people are at the very heart if this strategy is to succeed.

I INTRODUCTION

ARD / USAid has invited IRC international water and sanitation centre to review the knowledge management and communication activities of the West Africa Water Initiative in a short project hereby referred to as the 'WAWI KM project'. The ultimate goal of this project is to provide WAWI with a practical knowledge management (KM) and communication strategy to disseminate and integrate the lessons learned from the West Africa Water Initiative since its inception in 2002. The present document is the KM and communication strategy.

This strategy is based on the fact-finding missions reports carried out in Ghana, Mali and Niger, on the inception report provided by Jaap Pels, on various interactions between particularly Jaap Pels, WAWI KM project manager for IRC, and ARD / USAid staff in charge of implementing this programme, particularly Sean Cantella, ARD Chief of party based in Mali and Hammond Murray-Rust, ARD chief engineer WASH and finally on ideas by the authors from own experience and readings as suggested in the final section.

The recommendations and activities highlighted in this report hopefully provide useful pointers for the ongoing WAWI II project as well as any possible subsequent programme building upon WAWI, WA-WASH[1] in particular.

The KM & communication strategy is structured as follows:

- The challenges and opportunities of setting up a KM programme in West Africa;
- The main WAWI audiences;
- WAWI KM and communication objectives;
- Activities proposed per objective;
- Epilogue.

---

[1] WA-WASH is a multi-partner initiative on WASH services in West Africa, funded by USAid and managed by FIU (Florida International University) under the GLOWS programme. GLOWS is a consortium financed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) working to increase social, economic, and environmental benefits to people of the developing world through clean water, healthy aquatic ecosystems and sustainable water resources management (http://www.globalwaters.net).

II The challenges and opportunities of setting up a KM programme in West Africa

The West Africa Water Initiative was launched in 2002, with the objective of creating a strong partnership among various organisations in Ghana, Mali and Niger. The three-country consortium was set up to address the four WAWI over-arching objectives:

A) Increase access to sustainable and safe water and environmental sanitation services among the poor and vulnerable;
B) Decrease the prevalence of water-borne diseases including trachoma, Guinea worm, and diarrheal diseases;
C) Ensure ecologically and financially sustainable management of water quantity and quality; and
D) Foster a new model of partnership and institutional synergy to ensure technical excellence, programmatic innovation, and long-term financial, social, and environmental sustainability in water resources management that may be replicable in other parts of the world.

The last objective required shaping up sound communication among the multiple parties involved and developing a solid set of knowledge management activities. KM activities would help, among others, to share lessons from the experiences developed across the programme with a wider set of audiences.

Various documents (see list of references) produced by WAWI partners and the fact-finding mission reports[2] indicate that, in spite of some successes, the programme and partnership has faced many challenges in setting up knowledge management activities. Some of the challenges encountered relate to the specific set-up of the programme and others relate to some specific characteristics of communication in West Africa, as testified by the same reports. The present strategy investigates factors that have been hampering WAWI's KM efforts below.

Well managed, the challenges can be turned into opportunities.

Making the most of existing information

As part of its mandate, the WAWI partnership has collected a lot of very valuable information about the activities conducted by partners and subcontracted parties. However, this information has not been capitalised on, due to several challenges:

- Each individual partner organisation has **done little to disseminate programme information**, in spite of efforts to make KM work at regional level. Information sharing lines have followed reporting lines. In the absence of a strong central information repository information has remained ignored among WAWI partners, except for the national lead agency;
- Along with a weak documentation culture, there is an even **weaker information management culture**: information collected is often not stored, archived, made available to- and accessible by others. The fact-finding mission revealed that a lot of the WAWI files to be collected were either missing altogether (not documented indeed or untraceable), available in various duplicate versions in scattered locations or simply stored on personal drives and therefore difficult to reach.

Nonetheless, some **information collected from the WAWI project can be used** for the future such as lessons learnt by consortium partners about the project, findings from the work carried out with wider audiences in the region, guidelines developed etc. This could show the value of documentation / information management. A few interviewees praised the efforts of WAWI to offer a central internet-based information repository[3].

---

2 Rapport de mission Mali (August 2010), Rapport de mission Niger (August 2010), WAWI PD TREND research report Ghana (August 2010).
3 Mission report Mali, p.4

The difficult bridge from knowledge to information 'au pays des griots' (in the realm of storytellers)

West Africa has a long-standing story-telling tradition that is embodied by the tradition of *griots* (family story tellers), which takes root first in the historical Empire of Mali and spans many Francophone countries from Niger to Senegal. Even among West African ethnic groups where this tradition is not rooted, verbal communication prevails over other forms. Subsequently, in the three WAWI countries, stakeholders in the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector are mainly communicating face-to-face. A lot of knowledge is shared, but little is documented in print and made re-useable. Deriving information from knowledge is a bridge too far in many cases.

The implications of this challenge are manifold:

- Any KM or communication initiative should focus on tapping into and **amplifying conversations and stories**. Rather than work against the flow, WAWI should use the strong verbal culture to its advantage. Interviewing and recording those stories in audio and video format is a step forward. Simple text-based stories may go a long way. Large written reports, on the other hand, will be largely ignored;
- Although there is good reason to build up a reliable information repository for access to information about WAWI experiences, the success of WAWI depends on **organising events where people can meet face to face**. It is at those junctions that alliances are built, partnerships strengthened, commitments made[4];
- In a region where documentation (describing and rendering dialogues and activities into information) is not a habit, it may be difficult to force documentation upon partners. Instead, one may prefer **assigning documentation to a few individuals who will extract the stories and expand on them**. In turn, the outputs produced by these documenters may show the value of documenting work. Their recognition and the exclusivity of their work may entice others to join documentation efforts;
- In the WAWI work, the only regularly produced information belongs to formal reports. However, formal reports respond to specific terms of reference, usually a rigid framework. This may be necessary but **the richness of activities and interactions should be captured by means of light but regular process documentation**. Process documentation is a natural way to follow the storytelling culture (interviewing, capturing with pictures, audio and video rather than text[5]) while revealing interesting patterns of behaviours and results that can continually inform activities;
- **There is a case to make for documentation**, in order to trigger a behaviour change (which is mentioned in the Ghana report[6]), so as to show that it can help establish the relative impact of a project and to keep track of relevant information. Some WAWI partners are warming up to the idea that they could play a role in encouraging this behaviour change;
- **More emphasis could be put on learning from the failures too**. Respected KM authors have established the value of learning from failures (Abraham 2010, Dixon 2010). The first two phases of the project hold a lot of useful lessons from aspects that did not work well. Glorifying the documentation of relevant failures would be a bold but useful step forward to make use of WAWI work.

Managing a diverse partnership

The WAWI I and WAWI II projects were complex initiatives involving a wide partnership across three countries. The lead agency in charge of coordinating activities in each country seems to

---

4 Workshops usually garner strong enthusiasm from participants, as experienced by all participants at a recent POU workshop held by CREPA. Getting the results of a workshop documented and converted into an actionable document is more challenging, however.
5 The illiteracy rates in the Sahel region are among the highest worldwide, with Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso occupying the last three ranks on the literacy index, with about 26-28% literacy, UNDP report 2009 http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2009_EN_Complete.pdf.
6 WAWI PD TREND research report Ghana (August 2010), p. 20.

have played roles of project manager and of implementation partner at the same time. The partnership structure caused a few problems for the implementation of the programme, which has implications in terms of communication and knowledge management activities.

- **Too diverse a partnership**? One of the issues pointed at in the field work is the variety of the partnership. While this has been valued for the wealth of experience and broad coverage of issues addressed, it puts a strain on the coherence of the project. A few respondents mentioned that there were so many activities carried out by so many partner organisations that one would lose track of the overall WAWI work[7]. Another set of respondents mentioned they would have preferred to be clustered in groups of interest or similar expertise. Internal communication has been lagging behind and the set up of the partnership could have been improved to facilitate the sharing of relevant knowledge on activities of similar nature;
- **All under one banner**? As a result of the difficult coordination, some WAWI activities seem to have been undertaken under the identity of the partner organisation rather than under the WAWI banner[8]. This is both a symptom and a cause of the lack of recognition of WAWI as one structured partnership. Individual partner organisations have to recognise the value of the partnership and to support its branding in the region;
- **Judge and party**? Managing the WAWI partnership and ensuring a coherent and consistent approach has also been complicated by the role of the lead organisation overseeing activities in each country. Some interviewees referred to the equivocal position played by the coordinating organisation who also acted as implementing organisation[9]. Clarity of roles and a distinction between management and implementation would have increased the coherence of the partnership;
- **Facilitating a multi-stakeholder project**. The umbrella of all these challenges is the need for strong facilitation that leads to clearly established roles and responsibilities and that steers the activities of individual partners, using the best of their ability. The WAWI I and II projects perhaps did not emphasise enough the importance of facilitating such a complex multi-partner project.

West Africa 2.0?

Internet penetration has grown very quickly in West Africa, as on the rest of the continent. Between 2006 and 2010, Africa's international Internet backbone capacity has increased more than 14-fold[10]. The ITU found that 32 million sub-Saharan Africans, or 3 percent, had Internet access in 2008 although that number was growing at almost twice the world average rate.

In West Africa specifically, Nigeria is often cited as one of the leading examples of connected countries. However, with an access rate of 16%, internet penetration remains very modest in the region. ***Internet-based communications*** have a great potential but they ***are not yet part of daily practices***. And most likely ***capacities to use information and communication technology (ICT) are also limited***.

In addition, rather than using personal computers, many African Internet users turn to their mobile phones to access the web. A recent study from Safaricom shows that 98% of Internet use is accessed through mobile phones in Kenya. While West Africa is slightly behind, it is safe to expect a similar trend.

This means that ***WAWI cannot hope to rely on strong engagement in virtual networks and other desktop-based ICT solutions***. Nevertheless, it does not mean to say that WAWI should not encourage using virtual exchange platforms and social networks (so-called "web 2.0"

---

7 Interview with Boureiga Maiga, PSI Mali (video, in French).
8 Niger mission report, p. 5
9 Mali mission report, p.5
10 Source : Telegeography, September 2010,
   http://www.telegeography.com/cu/article.php?article_id=34443&email=html

applications[11]) as back channels. These novel applications should be made available for enthusiastic users[12] – otherwise no progress on that front is to be expected any time soon, but it would simply be counter-productive to force them upon WAWI audiences.

One region, two languages, how many bridges across?

A final challenge that plays in many initiatives in West Africa is the divide between Francophone and Anglophone countries in the region. The partnership consortiums in Ghana and Mali/Niger have carried out their WAWI activities in an isolated way, with the exception of the yearly project meetings involving all teams. Project reports have been produced either in English or in French – only final reports have been produced in both languages (or have been translated). These are not uncommon features for programmes evolving in Anglophone and Francophone West Africa.

What WAWI has been facing is characteristic of communication in the region: a) ***There is in effect very little exchange across languages*** *(nor between countries)* – whether face-to-face at events or virtually on discussion platforms; b) ***There seems to be little documentation translated in the other language*** (to be used from Ghana to Francophone countries or vice-versa).

What ensues from this language divide is that ***any project that considers regional exchange important has to consider developing a translation and interpreting policy***. To start with, this strategy should be translated in French and shared with Francophone WAWI partners.

Another implication could be that any initiative involving the two language communities may have to go beyond the activities undertaken (e.g. MUS in Ghana and Mali) and ***consider the broader legal, political, administrative and cultural context of the communities concerned***: what is the equivalent of a district in a Francophone country? Who regulates water operations in country X? While the differences between rural communities matter little, they become significant whenever dealing with local government or higher instances to work in those rural areas. Comparison maps of these issues can be derived from ongoing projects that are taking place in both Anglophone and Francophone countries. They may provide a good starting point to understand the differences and find adequate ways to communicate about concepts, approaches and structures.

The challenges highlighted above have been taken into account to develop this knowledge management and communication strategy. The strategy is further built around specific strategic audiences for the West Africa Water Initiative, as presented in the following section.

---

11 Web 2.0 applications facilitate interactive information sharing, encourage users to engage with one another and pull information (and progressively application functionalities) according to their own needs.

12 Younger generations are keener on using IT applications, including social networking sites such as Facebook (see http://allafrica.com/stories/201010040385.html). Younger generations have been dominating internet usage for a few years already (see World Development report 2007). This means that a new generation of workers is entering the market, creating more opportunities for the use of ICTs, including web 2.0 applications and particularly social networking sites – even with a professional focus.

III The WAWI target audiences

The West Africa Water Initiative operates at various levels: It engages with its audiences directly in three countries and in various localities in each country. As a regional initiative, it is, by definition, interested in (West) Africa-wide networks. Its ultimate outreach however is global[13]. Finally, for the programme to run well, it needs to address internal target audiences too.

The target audiences at these various levels are diverse and WAWI may put a varying degree of effort and cooperation to reach out to and engage with these audiences.

Table 1 WAWI target audiences

Level	Institutions and networks targeted	Suggested degree of effort / cooperation for WAWI
Global level	Key global WASH collaborative frameworks: • UN-Water; • Global Framework for Action (Sanitation and Water for All); • IASC WASH Cluster; • Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC); • Water Integrity Network (WIN); • Public-Private Partnership for Hand Washing with Soap (PPPHW); • WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP); • Rural Water Supply Network (RWSN).	Rather distant • Cooperation on and participation in events; • Dissemination of publications through each other's channels; • Cooperation on dissemination of research activities; • Awareness-raising activities for WAWI towards audiences.
Regional level	Africa-wide initiatives: • AMCOW; • NEPAD; • ECOWAS-WRCU. Regional knowledge networks: • Regional learning centres (WaterAid); • CREPA; • AWIS.	Close • Cooperation on and participation in events; • Dissemination of relevant news through each other's channels (with regional knowledge networks); • Active cooperation on issues of joint interest.
National level	• National resource centre networks (RCNs) and other national networks; • Relevant national ministries and departments.	Very close (strategic) • Active cooperation on issues of joint interest (with RCNs); • Dissemination of news and publications through each other's channels; • Support to communication activities of ministries and relevant WASH departments; • (Co-)Organisation of events to discuss issues of national relevance.
Sub-national level	Depending on the activities, ranging from local private sector representatives, local (municipal / district) government staff, local NGOs, community representatives and other community members.	Close • Organisation of events to discuss issues of local relevance; • Training and other capacity building activities relevant for success of WAWI field activities;

---

13 WAWI resorted under GDA (http://www.sdp.gov/documents/organization/64993.pdf assessed 2010-10-01), the Global Development Alliance.

			• Awareness-raising on behaviour-change issues and hygiene/ sanitation marketing (communities).
Internally	• Consortium partner organisations in each country; • Central KM team and process documenters.	Continual • Internal learning and sharing.	

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">

Box 1: Conferences and events relevant for WAWI

Global events:
- World Water Week (Stockholm, August-September)
- World Water Forum VI (Marseille, 2012)

Regional events:
- African Water Week (November)
- NEPAD / AMCOW-organised events (ad hoc)

National events:
- SIDEAU (Mali)
- MOLE conference and annual sector review (Ghana)
- Annual sector review (Burkina Faso)
</td></tr>
</table>

WAWI is interested in working with these target audiences for a number of reasons, briefly sketched in table 1 and mentioned in more detail under 'activities' (section 5) below. In the set of activities suggested, conferences and events play an important role – as major face-to-face moments to reach more than one strategic audience. Some prominent events have been listed in box 1.

Some of the target audiences may also act as channels to convey information (e.g. resource centre networks) or to generate it (individual partner institutions).

IV Knowledge management and communication objectives

In WAWI, knowledge management and communication are integrated as they reinforce each other. The Triple A model (see fig. 1 below), presented in the interim report for the WAWI KM project, shows the relation between the two:

Communication deals with:

- Organising dialogues (two-way)[14];
- Disseminating information to various arenas (one-way) about both the experiences from WAWI and the partnership initiative itself (flagging WAWI's specific agenda).

Knowledge management deals with:

- Generating (and managing) information and versioning it for dialogues related to specific agendas, alliances or arenas;
- Process document the activity or knowledge exchange into information;
- Improving the capacity of WAWI teams to learn and improve KM processes.

KM processes are situated near and at the *arrows* in figure 1, while communication activities are focused on the dialogues and information *boxes*. In this KM/communication strategy, they are however integrated and addressed together, as objectives.

---

14 From knowledge management practice stem tools and methods for facilitating groups on learning.
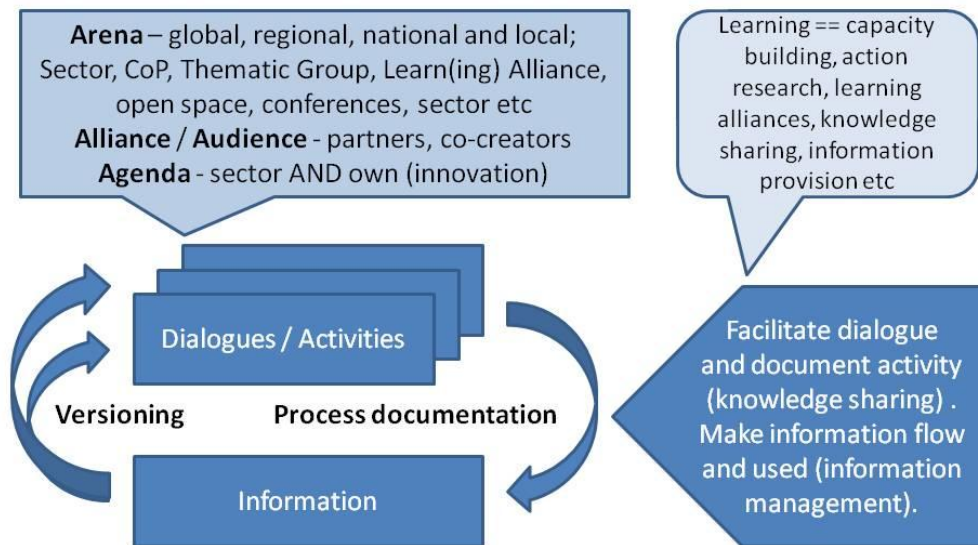
Triple A: dialogue and information

Figure 1: The Triple A model - Dialogue and information

The West Africa Water Initiative should focus on the following *agenda* or objectives and sub-objectives:

1. **Generate and manage information**
   a. Document (create information from) ongoing WAWI experiences to make these visible and usable, preferably as stories to align with local context / culture;
   b. Manage information to offer an ever-accessible information repository;
   c. Version information to tailor it to specific audiences.
2. **Share and aggregate information**
   a. Share information with selected audiences, face to face and virtually;
   b. 'Process document' these dialogues;
   c. Aggregate and synthesise issues of interest for WAWI (from own and other sources) into an information base (feeding back into objective 1).
3. **Raise the visibility of the WAWI agenda**
   a. Explain what the initiative is about;
   b. Rally support for WAWI: explain what others can benefit from joining.
4. **Support internal WAWI learning processes (about knowledge management and communication) – continually**
   a. Learn: identify gaps, amplify good practices, deal with obstacles;
   b. Develop the capacities of WAWI staff in network / partnership management and facilitation;
   c. Describe the value of the work and areas for improvement through effective monitoring and evaluation.

Objective 1 (generate and manage information) aims at turning WAWI experiences into artefacts that can be shared and can be accessed or retrieved more easily than they are now. This objective is thus concerned with ensuring that the experiences are documented, available in one place and that different types of information products and services have been developed on that basis, to respond to the needs of various *audiences* from local to international level. The expected outcome of this objective is that relevant information from WAWI – disseminated

through various means and channels – is recognised and used by a variety of sector actors and – ultimately that they change their plans, activities or behaviour according to the evidence that this information provides.

Objective 2 (knowledge sharing and process documentation) takes the information collected (through objective one) and uses it at the central stage of conversations (dialogues), thus hoping to feed and amplify it. The dialogues can happen during organised events or on virtual discussion platforms, as multiple streams running in parallel and from local to international level. The point is to document these dialogues, the patterns of stories that come from it, the informal interactions between the stakeholders around these stories and the rich experiences from other stakeholders on similar issues. The expected outcome of this objective is thus that the WAWI issues are being discussed in relevant **arenas** and are being continually tested and documented to enrich the information base.

Objective 3 (public relations) is the least prominent objective at this stage and in this KM and communication strategy[15]. WAWI is fairly well known and does not require a strong investment in partnership building. This objective is a measure to lightly keep spreading the WAWI word and improving the partnership. In addition to current WAWI partners, other organisations and networks may be keen on contributing to WAWI's objectives. They may act as fellow implementers, advocates / amplifiers or as donors, either at national, regional or international level. The expected outcome of this objective is therefore to identify additional (**alliance**) partners to implement WAWI activities, communicate WAWI messages or identify additional funding opportunities for WAWI.

Objective 4 (learning and improvement) aims at stimulating a dynamic environment for knowledge management and communication within the WAWI consortium and particularly the central KM team (see 'Assumptions about coordination of activities' in section 5 below). This entails: organising structured learning moments to identify gaps in the KM and communication activities, encouraging the people and organisations that show the most interest in these activities, developing the competencies of WAWI consortium staff in facilitating and working as networks and, finally, developing good ways to describe the value of knowledge management and communication, and the areas that need to be improved. The expected outcome of this objective is a continually improved self-assessment of KM and communication capacities and activities and an improved partnership as testified by its members.

A final objective should be added here: advocacy / policy engagement. This objective is not part of the present strategy because a) it is not in the suggested scope and b) it requires a strict audience-specific focus and a dynamic review to keep it up-to-date. However, a dedicated advocacy strategy usually helps move from information and knowledge to behaviour change. Nevertheless, the present strategy does introduce some activities hinting at advocacy and policy engagement (e.g. organising specific sector events, development of briefing notes etc.).

V Suggested activities

Under each of the aforementioned objectives, a set of activities aims at achieving the outcomes described above. The activities suggested below try to address the WAWI objectives and challenges sketched. Among the set of potential activities introduced below, this strategy particularly recommends some strategic activities, displayed in **bold italics**.

The initial sub-section below points to structures assumed to coordinate and carry out activities. Sections one to four correspond to the objectives mentioned in part IV above.

---

15 Since WAWI is approaching the end, this is more a matter of informing its successor, WA-WASH.

Assumptions about coordination of activities

The main assumption is that a central knowledge management / communication team (referred to in this plan as the 'central KM team') is coordinating the activities. That team should be rather light, perhaps one full-time person working with a couple of part-timers to update websites, version information for various audiences, etc. The central KM team should not be part of the management structure of WAWI (or WA-WASH) and should be travelling to the various partner institutions to assist documentation and learning activities on a regular basis. It should have a varying degree of authority on the work: direct control of the versioning process of information for instance, but only some influence on the work of some WAWI country consortium partners and much interest but little influence if any on external audiences.

Next to the central team, in each country a process documentation specialist is assumed to be in place and roam about to document the process (and results) of each main WAWI activity or event where WAWI is present and / or has a stake. These process documentation specialists are in-country counterparts of the central KM team.
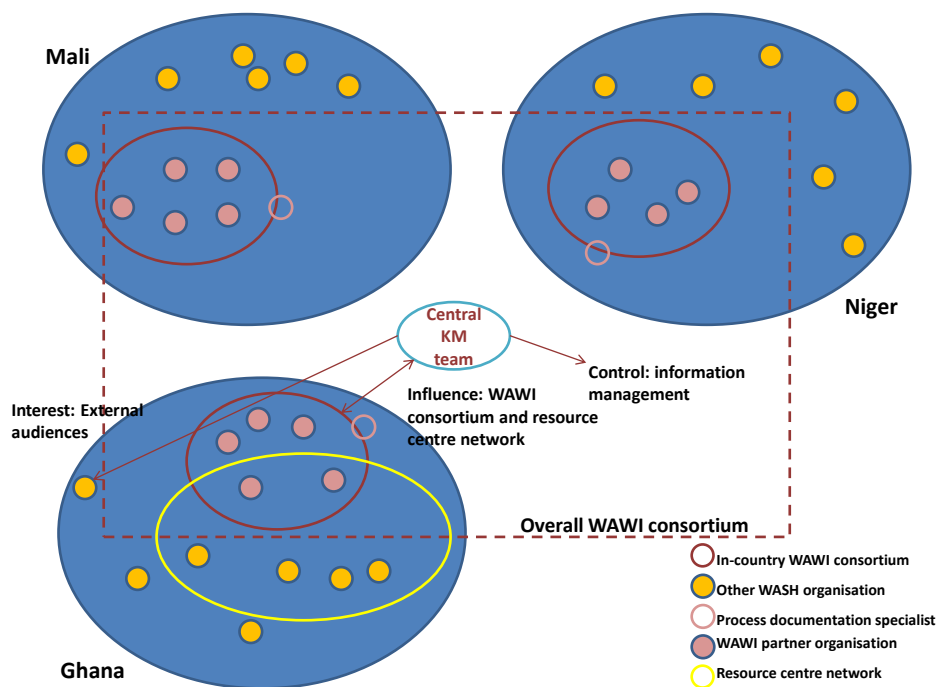

Figure 2: The organisation of the KM work in WAWI

It is assumed that each partner organisation of the WAWI consortium has a communication or KM person in place who can act as liaison to organise the activities that involve their institution, particularly to participate in specific events and do this partly under the WAWI banner too..

A crucial assumption is that WAWI / WA-WASH works in support of the national WASH agenda, as captured in a strategy and/or set of policies and led by relevant Ministries. If such a legitimate national WASH agenda is not yet in place, not implemented or weak/inadequate (missing relevant information to promote sustainable WASH services), WAWI will contribute to establish, promote or strengthen this agenda, together with other actors.

Another important assumption is that WAWI works hand in hand with strong national information relays: the resource centre networks or learning alliances in the project countries, certainly in Ghana (National Level Learning Alliance Platform - NLLAP) and in Burkina

Faso (Réseau National des Centres de Ressources) as these networks represent the WASH sector and are meant to go beyond individual alliances.

Finally, it is assumed that, although a number of activities will be planned and organised, there will also be room for flexibility and spontaneity as opportunities arise that WAWI should seize. Planning is a worthwhile exercise. Flexible planning is a vital exercise.

1.   Generate and manage information

1.1.   *Document information from ongoing WAWI experiences to make these visible and usable, preferably as stories*

Under this heading, the WAWI central KM team will use the reports and outputs from existing WAWI work to turn them into simple (synthetic) stories, guidelines or tool sheets. If a piece of WAWI work has led to tested / approved results and a concrete methodology that can be used by other stakeholders, it will be synthesised as a tool sheet, which will be part of a broader WAWI toolkit. These tool sheets will be as visual and simple as possible. They could encompass: Drilling boreholes, rehabilitating different types of pumps, MUS (multiple use systems), groundwater mapping, manual drilling, etc.

If the work has led to useful and well-documented findings but has not been tested enough, it may lead to an information sheet about the WAWI experience including general guidelines, e.g. capacity assessment for small-scale independent water providers. Finally, if the work has only brushed a topic e.g. advocacy, networked fundraising etc., it **may be summarised as a story that describes the WAWI experience on this front, why it was implemented and with what result**. Wherever possible, **interesting stories should be videotaped as short films that can be shared easily.** The toolkit, guidelines and video/written stories would then be published on various events and through diverse channels (see box 1).

1.2.   *Manage information to offer an ever-accessible information repository*

This second sub-objective would be served by:

a) Developing a simple information management plan covering data back-up, security, privacy and copyright issues – to be coordinated by the central KM team;

b) **Setting up a wiki space on http://MyWASH.net and developing user instructions / guidelines to use it as internal information-sharing mechanism among WAWI partners and information repository** (two central users will be managing it and will be guided by a wiki expert). This platform could be the selling point for other WAWI partners to engage with web 2.0 applications;

c) Identifying local WASH information portals (see box 2 below, under objective 2) and organising an information-sharing protocol with the teams maintaining these portals, to publish WAWI information on those platforms and offer reciprocated information sharing on WAWI channels (http://MyWASH.org).

1.3.   *Version information to tailor it to specific audiences*

Some of WAWI focus issues such as borehole drilling experiences are targeted at implementing agencies. Others such as sector reviews should inform policy-makers. WAWI could **developshort briefing notes on the relevant areas of WAWI work to influence national policy** on e.g. implications of using MUS, technological options, involvement of governmental agencies in the WAWI consortium for the best results, financial management of water services, effective treatments and approaches against water-borne diseases, etc.

In a similar fashion, there are areas of work within WAWI that concern community members more particularly. For this group, plasticised SARAR / PHAST (Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation) materials (from the toolkit mentioned above), **posters or photo-collages could be developed, emphasising visual materials.** In a future phase WAWI could also propose or liaise with a regional radio programme in French (and English in Ghana) to encourage measures that help fight water-borne diseases, with call-in options and perhaps examples from other WAWI countries or from interventions in those countries.

Finally, the stories mentioned above are another means to version WAWI information and make it more useable for various audiences in West Africa.

Every year, the WAWI central KM team will collect most materials developed and package them as a CD-Rom that can be handed out at events, through personal networking (leaving copies with each WAWI partner institution) or as the central KM team roams around.

2.   Share and aggregate information

2.1   *Share information generated with selected audiences, face to face and virtually*

This is one of the most crucial sub-objectives and it entails a large set of activities:

Offline, WAWI may:
- Organise national thematic discussions on the broad or specific topics of interest to WAWI (e.g. CLTS, sanitation marketing, Guinea Worm disease prevention, etc.). Perhaps once every two years WAWI could organise a regional conference on a specific topic to take stock of existing experiences across WAWI countries – and to collect other insights. There need not be more frequent regional events, as the benefits of such meetings are usually outweighed by the costs. On the other hand, national events will be of utmost importance to promote the WAWI/WA-WASH thematic agenda.
- For national meetings, WAWI/WA-WASH should use existing platforms (e.g. resource centre network meetings in Burkina Faso, NLLAP meetings in Ghana) wherever possible to table and address issues of relevance to WAWI together with other national sector actors;
- **Support the organisation of, or simply attend large sector events such as the Mole conference** and sector review in Ghana, **SIDEAU in Mali**, the **Africa Water Week**, World

Box 2: Websites and newsletters to publish WAWI information and documentation
Websites: - African Water Information System - EauDoc (in French) - MyWash.org (WAWI group) - Resource CentreNetwork Ghana - WaterAid country pages and other national partner webpages (Relief International, WaterAid, WinRock etc.) **Newsletters and bulletins**: - Global Waters - Source - Sources Nouvelles (in French)

Water Week in Stockholm, American Water Week, the Sixth World Water Forum (see box 1 under section III above). At these events, WAWI could setup an information booth to present publications, videos, and organise sessions on themes of interest, in support of individual member organisations or together with complementary initiatives (these could be: UN-Water, Global Framework for Action / Sanitation and Water for All, IASC WASH cluster, etc.).

Online, *WAWI will be using the platform http://MyWash.org to start dialogues on WAWI issues and engage with other networks, organisations and individuals.* Bearing in mind the challenge of starting Africa 2.0, this is likely to act as a backchannel but it should help to quickly identify the virtual champions in the WAWI constellation. In addition, it will help engage with international audiences on the WAWI topics.

If other relevant social network platforms have been set up (by e.g. discussion groups from resource centre networks or WaterAid's regional learning centres), the WAWI central KM team will make use of these and involve the 'MyWash champions'. One such (Google E-mail) group is the WASH sector learning discussion group (http://groups.google.com/group/washsectorlearning).

WAWI will also disseminate its briefing notes, tool sheets and all other publications on the websites, network platforms and newsletters mentioned above. It will also publish videos and/or articles on the website of various relevant institutions and networks, such as the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council, the Public-Private Partnership for Hand Washing with Soap, the Rural Water Supply Network, the Water Integrity Network, etc.

This one-way sharing of information is not considered the most crucial and is certainly less powerful than dialogue. On the other hand, it helps increase visibility for the conversations that WAWI wishes to stimulate and for the information products it has created.

2.2   'Process document' these dialogues

In order to extract relevant information from ongoing WAWI experiences, *a local process documenter (in each country) will be trained by a process documentation expert on the theory and the practical application of process documentation through audio, video and print channels. His/her mandate will be to document and capture the conversations (again, ideally as stories) at physical events and on online platforms*: S/he will document the relations and interactions between participants, the results of dialogues, the environment in which they take place, the issues that seem or are at stake and the patterns of discussion that come out of those interactions. S/he will interview relevant (vocal, knowledgeable or influential) speakers at the events or in the online forums to develop richer stories and provide a deeper background about the issues mentioned. In addition to the stories, they will *provide short but regular (bi-weekly or at least monthly) updates on their process documentation activities to discuss the patterns that come out of these activities and the hot topics* that could be used for dialogues or to synthesise further information. They will share these short reports with the central KM team.

2.3   Aggregate and synthesise issues of interest for WAWI (from own and other sources) into the information base (feeding back into objective 1)

Following face-to-face events or online dialogues, the central KM team may publish short summaries of the discussions held and *update the relevant page on the wiki with the latest information on the topics addressed*. These updated wiki pages will form a growing body of information and evidence that can be used at any time to update WAWI publications with the latest information coming from these dialogues.

To the extent possible, WAWI staff may be occasionally conducting additional research or complementary work to aggregate information from other sources about a particular topic that WAWI follows or finds strategic to engage with, e.g. supporting the compilation of data for the JMP (joint monitoring programme).

3.   Raise the visibility of the WAWI agenda

3.1 Explain what the initiative is about

At physical conferences and events organised in (West) Africa, WAWI will be present, ideally with an information booth, the information products mentioned above, the flyer mentioned below, a list of WAWI people and noteworthy URL's, the MyWash on-line community and the CD-Rom that comes from this KM project. These events will be ideal to engage with international and regional networks and initiatives such as AMCOW, NEPAD, ECOWAS-WRCU, WIN and CREPA, etc. to explain what work WAWI undertakes, who is part of it, where it operates, etc. This is the preamble of the second activity below.

The flyer should also be distributed among WAWI partners so that their staff can act as ambassadors of the initiative when they meet other sector stakeholders that could potentially support WAWI.

3.2 Rally support for WAWI: explain the benefit of joining / supporting

In order to rally more technical, political and financial support for the initiative, three distinct products may be developed:

- **A flyer explaining what WAWI is all about and particularly the benefit from joining it, and what specific expertise or capacity is sought in the partnership;**
- **An elevator-pitch explaining the rationale to fund WAWI and the expected benefits from the current and forthcoming work;**
- **A simple A5 sheet explaining what WAWI offers to do with information that others may provide (how WAWI can amplify their work) and what kind of platforms and channels it is looking for in return,** to further spread the dissemination of WAWI findings and issues.

4. Support internal WAWI learning processes (about KM and communication)

4.1 Learn: identify gaps, amplify good practices, deal with obstacles

A sound learning practice is to assess the current situation and envision the desired situation. In order to do so, the WAWI central KM team may undertake a light knowledge management reality check; an assessment consisting of a set of questions sent to partner organisation staff in charge of WAWI work. This KM assessment would take stock of WAWI I work, would identify current practices around information and knowledge management and leave space to describe areas of success and of improvement. Such an assessment would also invite respondents to describe the situation they would like to reach and what state they can realistically reach. The synthesis report from the overall assessment should give a clearer picture of priority areas for KM work and of areas where an example might be set (good practices), told as relative success stories.

In order to assess progress on the KM assessment and on the other activities sketched here, a number of activities may structure the learning:

- Weekly updates / reflections on the wiki and on the social network to stimulate discussion about the key stories and discussions – if any. In practice this discipline is very difficult but a bi-weekly update would be a desired minimum;
- ***A monthly discussion between the central KM team and the process documentation specialists, to identify key dialogues and priorities to review and update information*** (based on the short bi-weekly or monthly process documentation overview reports). This discussion could take place through a Skype text-chat;
- A quarterly (online) meeting with country KM/communication liaisons among partner institutions to take stock of process documentation activities;
- ***A yearly meeting with all partners where the main stories will be discussed and reviewed collectively to inform the plans of the following year;***

- *A (face-to-face) retreat every 1.5 years to discuss the outcomes, main stories, capacity gaps and areas to emphasise, leading to the development of an outline for working papers.* These working papers will take stock of the thinking, discourse and practices around knowledge management, communication, monitoring and evaluation across the consortium. If possible, these retreats will be organised partly as *writeshops*[16] and prepared with the help of dedicated coaches to prepare the writing of various experiences, cases and thought pieces.

4.2 *Develop the capacities of WAWI staff in network / partnership management and facilitation*

The team in charge of steering the partnership within WAWI – and the coordinators at country level – may **attend a specific training course on facilitating and managing networks / partnerships to better understand the dynamics of a network and to provide support as required**. This activity is essential to help steer networks effectively and increase buy-in rather than adversity.

As part of the retreats mentioned above, **a dedicated retreat could be organised to discuss partnership and network facilitation issues among all partners involved in WAWI, leading to the development of a working paper on the WAWI consortium**. This retreat would allow all parties to express their vision of the partnership and their expectations about assumed roles and responsibilities. It would emphasise the rationale of acting as a network rather than as an individual organisation, the potential that it offers and the responsibilities that come with it, both for the coordinating body as for other network members.

4.3 *Describe the value of the work and areas for improvement through effective M&E*

Demonstrating the value of knowledge management is notoriously difficult and counter-productive if the end result sought is a normative assessment. However, there is value in describing the processes and results of KM activities to derive encouraging results (success areas) and to point at areas for improvement. In order to describe WAWI KM work best, a mixture of indicators and monitoring approaches is recommended: quantitative indicators will hint on the outputs produced; qualitative information – by means of interviews, stories of change and other outputs from process documentation work – will provide a story behind the numbers.

A first activity under this heading will therefore be to develop a mixed monitoring framework with a rather light set of indicators: five to seven at output level (e.g. how many publications, articles etc. were developed, how many channels were they disseminated on, how many events did WAWI organise a presence for and how many participants came to it, how many registered users of the WAWI group on the social network there are and what is their yearly progression rate etc.) and two to three at outcome level (e.g. how was WAWI information used, what possible changes did it bring to the behaviour of key stakeholders, what stakeholders liked from the WAWI approach; what are possibly policy changes or changes in the implementation practices of NGOs and governmental agencies in the countries?).

Figure 3 below explains how the articulation of activities, outputs and outcomes provides a richer picture of what WAWI is hoping to achieve.

---

16 A writeshop is a participatory workshop focused on the production of information materials. As such it steps away from more traditional workshops which end up as talk-shops. In a writeshop the emphasis is on co-creating materials by writing it, reviewing it and improving it time and again – thereby also stimulating reflection but with a final written output. For more information see: http://www.mamud.com/writeshop.htm
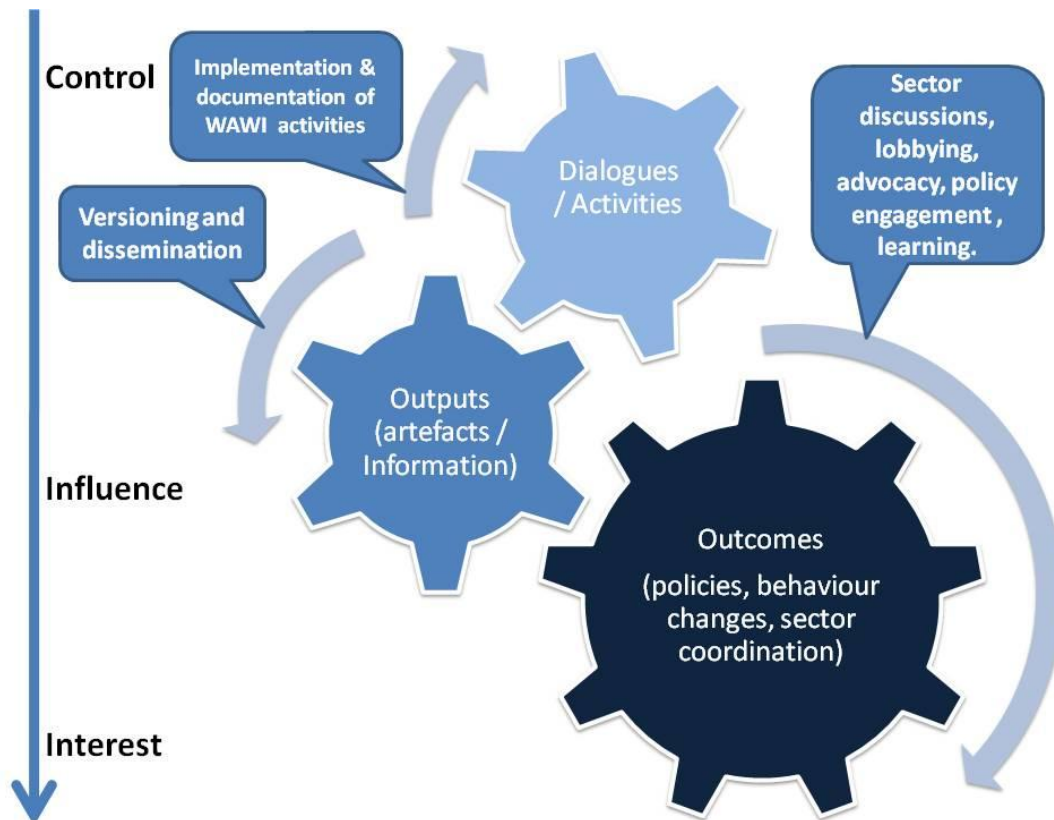
Figure 3: The monitoring logic of WAWI work

The WAWI consortium controls the activities it undertakes and the production of outputs, and to some extent it influences certain audiences (as shown in figure 2). Ultimately and most importantly it is highly interested in the outcomes but those are difficult to attribute to the specific inputs of WAWI as they depend not only on WAWI's activities and outputs but on other factors in the context.

The monitoring activities suggested here are geared towards describing these outcomes rather than measuring and normatively assessing them. The importance of describing processes and outcomes lies in the higher relevance that comes from flexible, adaptive planning: describing outcomes and other processes on a regular basis offers a view of the reality. That reality may clash with the plans but plans tend to follow a linear cause-effect relation which does not hold true to a complex reality. The descriptive approach suggested here helps explain why there have been deviations on the plan (to take into account in the next phase) and what the consequences are (positive or negative). This approach therefore also points to successful but not necessarily anticipated outcomes.

Process documentation will play a central role here as it continually records, captures and makes sense of the work carried out, offering essential information for monitoring reports and changing plans. Process documentation specialists (mentioned in the first part of section V) are at the forefront of this work but they may be supported by regular wiki updates and traces of discussions on social networks (MyWash.org and discussion groups).

Epilogue

In order to succeed, this strategy strongly relies on centrally keeping track of relevant dialogues and activities. This WAWI-wide agenda requires the availability and cooperation of local contact persons, administrative support to organise visits and documentation activities and multiple ways to get in touch with these local contact persons. It is crucial to know on the spot **what** is happening **when** and **where,** supported by **who**. Relying on a strong local informant network is all the more necessary as changes may happen overnight and may be known only through the local grapevine – reaching formal and virtual arenas only much later.

WAWI has to emphasise internal communication. Over the last eight years, many WAWI people interviewed felt that WAWI missed opportunities and left gaps at that very junction. It is advised to organise internal information into a tracking system to make it available at any time and from any place. Crucial information should not reside in personal archives. Rich knowledge should not rest in the heads of individuals who might lose interest, forget things in the rush or move on to other pastures. The WAWI dialogues and activities have to be fed back as quickly as possible. This knowledge management and communication strategy tries to sketch out how to address the **why** and **how** of those dialogues and activities, **who** to communicate about it and along the way support monitoring and evaluation.

Knowledge management, communication and monitoring / evaluation are context and content dependent. The strategy outlined above tries to address this dynamics in generic ways where possible, specific ways where needed and overall supported by ICT as backchannels. Most crucial for the strategy will be for 'WAWI KM staff' to be at the right time at the right place, not only to spread the 'WAWI-word' but also to capture how that 'WAWI-word' is conveyed or received and at least collect stories to extract that WAWI-word from. This cannot be done from distance and / or in hindsight, as reconfirmed and illustrated by the fact-finding missions and desk research. The crucial distances to cross are in the WAWI countries themselves. For WAWI lessons to travel far, local capacities in KM, communication and M&E need time and space to move around from Niamey to Zinder and from Accra to Paga. A great endeavour for staff in and close to the central KM team as mentioned in section five lies ahead.

Appendix: List of references and suggested reading
List of references

The following list is not exhaustive but considers some of the most useful resources collected during the fact-finding mission (or generated afterwards such as the mission reports)

- Allen J., N. (2008) WAWI a preliminary assessment.
- Sow, J. and Tiendrébéogo (2010) *Rapport de mission Mali*– mission report Mali;
- Sow, J. and Tiendrébéogo (2010) *Rapport de mission Niger* – mission report Niger;
- Steward, A. (2008) Partnerships for water and sanitation in Africa. A report for the 16th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.
- USAid (2009) HIP support WAWII: Final report.
- WAWI Secretariat (2008) WAWI final evaluation report
- Wellington, N. (2010) WAWI process documentation TREND research report – mission report Ghana.

Suggested reading

- ECDPM (2008) Linking knowledge and communication: ECDPM strategy on knowledge management and communication. ECDPM: Maastricht, 20p. http://www.ecdpm.org/Web_ECDPM/Web/Content/Download.nsf/0/623DEC382EB4FF3DC125751200389485/$FILE/KM%20&%20C%20Strategy_Final.pdf.
- Ferguson, J.E. Mchombu, K. and Cummings, S. (2008) Management of knowledge for development: meta-review and scoping study. *IKM Working Paper* No. 1. Information and Knowledge Management Emergent Research Programme, European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes: Bonn. http://wiki.ikmemergent.net/index.php/File:80310_IKM_Working_Paper_No._1_Meta-review_and_scoping_study.pdf
- Jenkins, J. (2010) Things can be other than they are. Understanding the limitations of current management thinking and knowledge practice for work in the development sector *IKM Working Paper* No. 10. Information and Knowledge Management Emergent Research Programme, European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes: Bonn. http://wiki.ikmemergent.net/files/Working_Paper-10-Julian_Jenkins-July2010-final.pdf
- Ramalingam, B. (2005) Implementing knowledge strategies: lessons from international development agencies. *ODI Working Paper* 244, Overseas Development Institute (ODI): London, 73pp. http://www.odi.org.uk/rapid/publications/Documents/WP244.pdf.
- Snowden, D.J. and Boone M. (2007) A leader's framework for decision making*. Harvard Business Review* November: 69-76.
- Steinlin, M. And Jenkins, C.W. (2010) Knowledge Sharing for Change, Designing and Facilitating Learning processes with a Transformational Impact; Facilitation handbook. http://www.i-p-k.co.za/wordpress/2010/10/06/new-facilitation-handbook-available.
- Tsoukas, H. (2005) Do we really understand tacit knowledge? In: Easterby-Smith, M. and M. Lyles, M. (Editors) Blackwell handbook of organizational learning and knowledge management. Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 410-27.
- Wenger, E. (1999) Communities of Practice: Learning, meaning and identity, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.

Suggested blog posts:

- Abraham, V. Mary. 2010. How failure leads to epiphany. Above and beyond KM [blog] 7 January, Available at: http://aboveandbeyondkm.com/2010/01/how-failure-leads-to-epiphany.html> [Accessed 10 January 2010].
- Dixon, N. 2010. Learning from failures, it's possible. Conversation matters [blog] 7 March, Available at: < http://www.nancydixonblog.com/2010/03/learning-from-failure-its-possible-.html> [Accessed 28 March 2010].
- Dixon, N. 2010. The complexity of transferring lessons learned from projects. Conversation matters [blog] 10 May, Available at: <http://www.nancydixonblog.com/2010/05/the-complexity-of-transferring-lessons-learned-from-projects.html> [Accessed 18 August 2010].
- Hagel Ill, J., Seely Brown, J. 2010. A better way to manage knowledge. Harvard Business Review blog, [blog] 19 January, Available at: <http://blogs.hbr.org/bigshift/2010/01/a-better-way-to-manage-knowled.html> [Accessed 18 August 2010].
- Snowden, D. 2009. Fighting the last war. Coginitive Edge [blog] 5 July, Available at: <http://www.cognitive-edge.com/blogs/dave/2009/07/fighting_the_last_war.php> [Accessed 9 september 2010].
- Snowden, D. 2010. KSS2: organising principles. Cognitive Edge [blog] 14 January, Available at: <http://www.cognitive-edge.com/blogs/dave/2010/01/knowledge_sharing_across_silos.php> [Accessed 14 January 2010].
- Wieringa, T. 2010. Knowledge management explained in five disciplines. Green Chameleon [blog] 10 February, Available at: <http://www.greenchameleon.com/gc/blog_detail/knowledge_management_explained_in_five_disciplines/> [Accessed 13 February 2010].