



**Issue 169 | Nov 26, 2014 | Focus on Monitoring, Evaluation, Resolution, and Learning (MERL)**

WASH Advocates, Improve International, and others promote the MERL approach. According to WASH Advocates, monitoring and evaluation is a common phrase used across development, but the traditional process is insufficient. An appropriate approach would also include resolution of issues identified during monitoring and evaluation, and learning to improve development practice, using a comprehensive framework. This issue contains recent reports on the topic.

**MERL RESOURCES**

**Guidelines for Resolution of Problems with Water Systems**, 2014. S Davis, Improve International. [Link](#)

Resolution is the process of addressing problems identified during monitoring or evaluation after a project is completed. Resolution reflects the concept that when organizations are made aware that water systems or toilets they constructed aren't working, they are responsible for doing something. There is resounding agreement in the water development sector that rural communities in developing countries need some sort of support after installation of water points.

**Monitoring, Evaluation, Resolution, and Learning (MERL) Overview**, 2014. WASH Advocates. [Link](#)

This document serves as an introduction to each of the components of MERL. Supplemental documents include application guidelines; a MERL assessment chart; and key questions and checklists for donors, implementers, governments, and communities.

**WaSH MEL Center**. [Link](#)

The WaSH MEL project is an initiative sponsored by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and led by the Water Institute at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. WaSH MEL brings together diverse partners in a global community of practice around monitoring, evaluating, and improving sustainable access to water, sanitation, and hygiene among the poorest of the poor.

**Exploring What Happens after Monitoring & Evaluation: Resolution Workshop Report**, 2014. Desert Research Institute. [Link](#)

For many organizations in the WASH sector, short-term monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

during the program cycle are accepted practices. However, given the persistent challenges to sustainable services, a more comprehensive and forward-looking approach to M&E is needed. This approach should include regular post-implementation M&E, resolution of issues identified during follow up, and learning to improve development practice.

**WASH Advocates: Monitoring, Evaluation, Resolution, and Learning (MERL).** [Link](#)

The components of MERL are defined as follows: M – Monitoring uses indicators to measure effectiveness over time, including during the life of a program and post-implementation. Post-implementation monitoring occurs after installation of the WASH service or program. E – Evaluation is the long-term systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, program, or policy, and its design, implementation, and results. Evaluations should be performed by an external third party. R – Resolution is the process of addressing problems identified through monitoring and evaluation results. L – Learning is the process of incorporating lessons learned into ongoing practices to increase effectiveness and sustainability over time. Learning includes sharing best practices and lessons learned both internally and externally.

**The State of Hand Pump Water Services in Ghana: Findings from Three Districts, 2014.** T Kumasi. [Link](#)

Dr. Kumasi's presentation was based on findings of water service monitoring in three districts in Ghana using the national water service monitoring framework, which was developed by the Community Water and Sanitation Agency in collaboration with the IRC-led Triple-S project. Rural water supply monitoring in many countries mainly focuses on coverage and provides inadequate information for planning, resource allocation, and remedial action. The service monitoring framework starts from the national norms and standards for rural water supply in Ghana. It was noted that while Ghana has attained increased coverage over the decades, inadequate attention has been paid to service levels, the functionality of systems, and the sustainability of services.

**OTHER RECENT REPORTS/RESOURCES**

**UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) 2014: Investing in Water and Sanitation: Increasing Access, Reducing Inequalities,** 2014. WHO; UN Water. [Link](#)

This third biennial GLASS report presents data from 94 countries, covering all Millennium Development Goal regions. It also includes data from 23 external support agencies, representing over 90 percent of official development assistance for sanitation and drinking water.

**Towards Systemic Change in Urban Sanitation,** 2014. G Galli, IRC. [Link](#)

This working paper outlines a whole-system approach to urban sanitation by shifting the focus from building infrastructure or a project-driven implementation approach to providing and maintaining equitable and environmentally friendly services, championed and supported by the government, and with sufficient resources allocated to ensure sustainability. This working paper proposes a step-by-step approach to unravel and tackle the very complex circumstances surrounding the need to provide sanitation in urban areas, particularly in densely populated areas, and to the less affluent sectors of society.

**Assessment of the Water Source Committee Service Delivery Model for Rural Water Services in Uganda,** 2014. V Bey, IRC. [Link](#)

In 2012 IRC's Triple-S project assessed the performance of Water Source Committees as the Service Delivery Model (SDM) for rural point water sources—the most widespread model for rural water supply in Uganda. This study aimed at understanding how the SDM is performing, based on the norms and standards set in national policies and guidelines. The study showed that water users usually access substandard water services; most water committees do not perform adequately; and some structural weaknesses at district and subcounty levels limit the influence of local government's activities on the performance of these committees. This policy briefing presents key findings from the assessment and offers recommendations for strengthening the Water Source Committee model.

**Modelling and Simulation Tools Provide a Powerful Means of Generating Insights in the Working of Complex Water Services Delivery Systems**, 2014. D Casella. [Link](#)

IRC, together with TU Delft, has developed two agent-based models for exploration of policy and implementation issues related to the delivery of sustainable rural water services. Both models represent rural water service delivery areas, one in the context of Uganda and the other a generic rural setting.

**Participatory Monitoring, Evaluation, Reflection and Learning for Community-Based Adaptation**, 2014. CARE. [Link](#)

This revised manual provides guidance on conducting Participatory Monitoring, Evaluation, Reflection, and Learning in community-based adaptation initiatives. It is based on the PMERL manual that CARE developed in 2012 in association with the International Institute for Environment and Development (among other organizations). CARE published the PMERL manual to help practitioners focus on community perspectives, needs, and priorities when defining and tracking community-based adaptation goals.

**Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning**. Overseas Development Institute. [Link](#)

Monitoring and evaluation are essential to judge effectiveness in policy engagement. However, in the complex work of policy influence, monitoring and evaluation can be highly challenging. ODI's Research and Policy in Development program is working at the sharp edge of ODI's own monitoring and evaluation systems to help overcome these challenges.

-----  
WASHplus Weeklies highlight topics such as Urban WASH, Household Air Pollution, Innovation, Household Water Treatment and Storage, Hand Washing, Integration, and more. If you would like to feature your organization's materials in upcoming issues, please send them to Dan Campbell, WASHplus Knowledge Resources Specialist, at [dacampbell@fhi360.org](mailto:dacampbell@fhi360.org).



---

**About WASHplus** - WASHplus, a five-year project funded through USAID's Bureau for Global Health, supports healthy households and communities by creating and delivering interventions that lead to improvements in access, practice and health outcomes related to water, sanitation, hygiene (WASH) and household air pollution (HAP). WASHplus uses at-scale, targeted as well as integrated approaches to reduce diarrheal diseases and acute respiratory infections, the two top killers of children under five years of age globally. For information, visit [www.washplus.org](http://www.washplus.org) or email: [contact@washplus.org](mailto:contact@washplus.org).

