



AFRICAN MINISTERS' COUNCIL ON WATER

CONSEIL DES MINISTRES AFRICAINS CHARGES DE L'EAU

Fluid Learning

A Knowledge Management Strategy for AMCOW
2017

ESA Lake Malawi Great Rift Valley 2010



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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFUR	African Forum for Utility Regulators
AfWA	African Water Association
AMCEN	African Ministerial Conference on the Environment
AMCOST	African Ministers' Council on Science and Technology
ANBO	African Network of Basin Organisations
ANEW	Africa Civil Society Network for Water
AU	African Union
AWF	African Water Facility
ECJRC	European Commission Joint Research Centre
CEMA	Conference of Energy Ministers of Africa
GWP	Global Water Partnership
ICPs	International Cooperating Partners
KM	Knowledge Management
MESA	Monitoring for Environment and Security in Africa
NEPAD Water WCoEs	New Partnership for African Development Water Centres of Excellence
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
SIWI ARC	Stockholm International Water Institute Africa Regional Centre
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
WALIS	USAID Water for Africa through Leadership and Institutional Support program
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Executive Summary

Knowledge is at the core of AMCOW's political leadership, policy direction, and advocacy work. Water and sanitation specialists across the continent look to AMCOW's ministerial authority to develop recognition and understanding of water and sanitation as priority cross-cutting issues for economic development, to promote uptake and application of research results to water and sanitation challenges, and to facilitate joint learning among water and sanitation researchers, planners, managers, and users. Meeting these needs requires a strengthened AMCOW structure that can deliver appropriate knowledge services to the right people, at the right time, and in the right location.

AMCOW can move to increase the impact of its knowledge services work in a variety of ways. To be recognised as a trusted and reliable source – a knowledge hub - requires that AMCOW's composition and Secretariat have a clear and mutually agreed upon self-image of AMCOW as a knowledge provider, and a service model that reflects that image.

People in AMCOW's Secretariat provide the platform and the drive for AMCOW's knowledge services work. Their capacity needs to be secured and reinforced with appropriate systems.

Given the breadth of its mandate, and the substantial challenges facing water and sanitation in Africa, AMCOW can be an effective advocate and promoter of water and sanitation knowledge by mobilising the efforts of a wide range of partner organisations. While AMCOW has influence, these partners have specialised knowledge, networks and connections. A good portion of AMCOW's knowledge management work is to publically acknowledge, encourage and reward the work of these partners. This is to move beyond a symbolic role that supports these organisations in obtaining funding and other resources for their work, to internalise AMCOW in the life of these organisations through active partnership that empowers and gives credit to all who contribute.

AMCOW can realise this by developing itself as a hub of many knowledge hubs that serve the water and sanitation sector across Africa. Adaptability and fluid learning are key in a constantly changing policy and technical landscape. AMCOW's knowledge management services strategy aims to amplify the work of others through stimulating and supporting the productive interactions that can positively shape Africa's water future.



Background

AMCOW's work

The African Ministers' Council on Water is Africa's principal advocate for the effective stewardship and use of water resources, including the management of water supply and sanitation. Just as water, by its nature, cuts across sectoral and political boundaries, as an instrument of the African Union, AMCOW uses the influence of the African continent's most senior decision makers to motivate and move its member states and ministries to talk to one another about water's importance in Africa's economic development.

AMCOW's work is guided by official, high level commitments: the *Africa Water Vision 2025*, the *Sustainable Development Goal 6*, the African Union's *Agenda 2063*, and the *AU African Water Resources Management Priority Action Programme 2016 – 2025*. Its stated mission is to "... provide political leadership; policy direction; and advocacy in the supply and management of water for sustainable social, economic, environmental development and the maintenance of Africa's ecosystems." Monitoring of achievements in meeting the targets and elements of these commitments is an important part of AMCOW's work.

AMCOW's formal governance framework is meant to ensure that its work promotes regional cooperation through consensus among decision-makers. It does this through a distributed organisation structure that cascades high level decisions and information, and provides legitimate and controlled channels for the movement of experience and knowledge both vertically and laterally among countries and regional bodies across the continent.

AMCOW contributes to knowledge and learning in the water sector through developing and nurturing multiple partnerships that support:

- Strengthening AMCOW's role of **coordination and synergy creation**
- **Facilitation of, and advocacy** for implementation of water and sanitation programs
- Facilitation of **capacity development**, especially for youth and gender
- Development of a **knowledge management and Information** hub on water and sanitation.

AMCOW's work is guided by priorities set by its member states, currently outlined in the *African Water Resources Management Priority Action Programme 2016 - 2025*.

Priority actions refer to improving the following focus areas:

- i. Ensuring **water security** and safe sanitation through water and sanitation infrastructure
- ii. Improving **environmental integrity** through wastewater and water quality management through encouraging water resources management and ecosystems protection

- iii. Strengthening **information systems** for water resources monitoring and assessment through increasing knowledge and information sharing, and capacity building
- iv. Enhancing **resilience to climate change** and water related **disaster** risks
- v. Enhancing sound water **governance** through coordination
- vi. Working towards sustainable **financing** through innovative financing instruments and resource (including human) mobilisation at all levels, with special attention to national level.

Political leadership, policy direction, and advocacy are the tools that AMCOW uses to raise the profile of water and sanitation in Africa. All three of these depend on harnessing and deploying knowledge.

The role of knowledge in supporting AMCOW's evolving priorities

Since AMCOW's function is to bring about change in African water and sanitation management, its priority work is based on exchange of knowledge that leads to collective, continual learning. While water and sanitation challenges vary among African regions and countries, innovations and best practices need to be shared across the continent, and applied in a process of adaptive management. This includes both technological solutions to supply and treat water, and those that make governance and financing processes better.

The water and sanitation sectors are huge, in the sheer number of agencies that are working to provide access to relevant knowledge products and to promote learning and exchange of knowledge both within and across sectors. Just as sanitation became important to AMCOW's priority thematic interests, over time, increasing understanding of the nexus of water, energy and food is bringing the need for AMCOW's work to be relevant to a broader range of economic activities. Successfully mobilising this complex and varied knowledge at the point of problem remains a challenge because implementation of knowledge-informed interventions depends on governance processes that drive localised action. The goal is to have the right information for planners and managers at the right time and location, while making reference to appropriate sectoral frameworks. This is the starting point for AMCOW's knowledge services work.

Successful formalisation of knowledge management (KM) services is well understood in the international development field (Dumitriu, 2016). It requires:

- A strategy aimed at defining, institutionalising and operationalising knowledge management
- Integration, alignment or programmatic connection of KM with AMCOW's operational plans

- Explicit attribution of specific knowledge management-related responsibilities and competences to Secretariat units, managers and staff members
- Policies aimed at enhancing the capacity for proactive engagement of Secretariat staff in knowledge management
- Ongoing evaluation of positive impact of KM on the effectiveness of AMCOW's operations.

This document aims to outline the necessary strategy, and has been developed with reference to AMCOW's operational planning processes and existing policies (Moedi wa Kitso & Morrison, 2017). It recommends formalisation of functions and responsibilities for KM at the Secretariat, and suggests indicators for evaluating the utility of AMCOW's KM work.

AMCOW's capacity to carry out knowledge management functions can be evaluated through the lens of the following categories, competencies needed to carry out knowledge management work identified as appropriate for AMCOW.

- Influence through diplomacy
- Learning through facilitation of knowledge exchange
- Innovation through knowledge creation
- Visibility through communication
- Preservation and deployment of knowledge assets

The first three of these competencies require engagement of AMCOW's wide network of partner organisations. The last two depend on an ongoing effort by AMCOW to focus and strengthen its organisational efforts.

Baseline

“Perhaps the most critical governance challenge facing AMCOW is the need for strengthening the ability of its sub-regional structures to become active, accountable, and meaningful participants in the implementation of AMCOW’s work.... Each sub-regional institution should work with the AMCOW Secretariat and relevant TAC members to identify and create formalized channels of communication between the sub-regions, their constituent member states and the AMCOW TAC Chair and Secretariat to ensure accountability and transparency in all decision-making and reporting and coherence in policymaking”
(Environmental Law Institute, 2011, p. 6).

An analysis of AMCOW’s strengths, and the opportunities most open to its work, shows that a knowledge management services strategy needs to take advantage of its three well-established competencies – knowledge diplomacy, knowledge exchange, and knowledge creation, and further develop two others – knowledge communication, and knowledge assets.

Strengths	KM Competencies
Political legitimacy and political influence on African Ministers responsible for water and sanitation	Knowledge Diplomacy
Pan-African reach, AUC endorsement and convening power	Knowledge Diplomacy
Direct response to Africa's water and sanitation priorities benefitting from attendant political clout	Knowledge Diplomacy
High demand for partnerships with AMCOW	Knowledge Exchange
Mandate for all aspects on water and sanitation by providing political leadership and policy direction	Knowledge Diplomacy
Demonstrated innovation through AfricaSan and Africa Water Week learning forums.	Knowledge Exchange, Knowledge Creation
Innovation in the web- based pan-African Monitoring and Reporting on progress in the water and sanitation programmes	Knowledge Creation, Knowledge Assets
A strong and experienced technocrat ES working with committed and experienced staff in water and sanitation programme management	Knowledge Diplomacy, Knowledge Creation, Knowledge Exchange
Capacity for interactive programmes development and dialogue to support potential beneficiaries	Knowledge Creation, Knowledge Exchange

Opportunities	Competencies
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Working across 54 countries and 7 themes, huge potential scope for impact	Knowledge Exchange
Africa Agenda 2063, Africa Water Vision 2025 and SDG 6 provide potential for accelerated focus on all aspects of water resource management and sanitation	Knowledge Diplomacy
African political commitment and declarations (e.g., N'gor, eThekwin, Sharm El Sheikh, Tunis, etc) and initiatives such as CAADP, PIDA, IPPF, etc.	Knowledge Diplomacy
Potential for strong linkage between project implementation and leveraging/scaling-up by convening the right partners	Knowledge Exchange
Direct influence on knowledge generation and application as part of programme development and management processes and application	Knowledge Creation

AMCOW enjoys the respect and goodwill of an impressive network of knowledge and experience-rich stakeholders and partners who can support its goals and directives. The organisation currently achieves a considerable amount of knowledge work with minimal resources. The energy of Secretariat staff is consumed by short-term adjustments to cope with uncertain and time-limited financial resources, and by the heavy demand for logistical arrangements associated with international travel and organising meetings. This leaves little room for discussion and essential follow-up. AMCOW Secretariat staff is both responsible and responsive, but needs capacity development in knowledge stewardship and mobilisation to make the best use of the organisation's knowledge assets.

Capacity building at Secretariat level, with a focus on knowledge communication and knowledge assets, is a basic requirement for building on AMCOW's strengths and comparative advantage in developing itself as a hub of knowledge sharing hubs for African water and sanitation. AMCOW needs to lead in fluid learning and adaptability from its own Secretariat.

Knowledge services for results

The overall results that AMCOW wants to see from its knowledge services work are:



Recognition and understanding of water and sanitation by African governments as priority cross-cutting issues for economic development



More **uptake and application of research results and application of captured knowledge** to water and sanitation challenges



More **joint learning** among water and sanitation researchers, planners, managers, and users

Specific conditions that AMCOW can achieve to support these results include:



Increased visibility of AMCOW beyond country level water ministries by investment in a vigorous communications programme that includes most-used technologies and channels



Consolidation of AMCOW's own codified knowledge assets by investing in preservation of, and access to, its own institutional learning



Strengthened capture of learning at AMCOW's own events (institutional meetings, AWW and AfricaSan) by investing in professional reporting, synthesis, and re-use



Strengthened partnerships with key actors in the African water sector to shape and add value to their KM work through participation in management boards and steering groups



Public acknowledgement of consistently positive performers within the sector, being sure to include research and private sector bodies



Identification of strategic points of access to regional and policy windows at country level through constant monitoring of water sector conditions and event calendars, and, at these points, customise interventions that also function as needs identification



Championing of successful country-level work to encourage and support focused achievement within governments;



Mobilisation of project resources for activities and programmes that are focused on KM objectives: creating and testing knowledge, facilitating learning, and developing appropriate advocacy.

The knowledge services that AMCOW commits to providing its stakeholders support creation of these conditions:

- **Diplomacy** that builds awareness and influences stakeholders to make use of the best available knowledge to secure water and a healthy environment
- Facilitation of **knowledge exchange** that creates learning
- Facilitation of **knowledge creation** that supports innovation
- **Communication** that creates visibility and awareness
- **Preservation and deployment** of knowledge assets to ensure a trusted and legitimate knowledge base.

Anticipating results

AMCOW's Knowledge Hub of Hubs

AMCOW's strategy for becoming a hub of other knowledge hubs is based on a lean, highly professional Secretariat that focuses on collecting and managing its own core essential unique knowledge assets, while acting a broker to encourage and support partners to engage in learning and knowledge creation. It constantly receives information and puts people and organisations in touch with each other wherever knowledge is most needed. This approach works as a system to connect other knowledge hubs further, and coordinate learning and knowledge exchange among its stakeholders. It works closely with partners to build external knowledge assets.

Extended learning for innovation is central to AMCOW's knowledge services work. It puts substantial energy into its events such as Africa Water Week, and its partnerships with organisations that are already functioning as knowledge hubs in their own specialised areas. While all Secretariat staff members participate in AMCOW's knowledge work, those responsible for specific knowledge hub functions combine communications expertise and a strong knowledge of the water and sanitation sector. Advocacy and communications work are backed up by internal systems that ensure accurate and relevant reporting, strong meeting support, and preservation and active use of knowledge assets. The main service functions of AMCOW's hub are:

- Tracking of stakeholders through their networks
- Facilitation of exchange and peer / joint sector review
- Supporting co-creation of knowledge
- Re-dissemination of codified knowledge
- Facilitation of learning events
- Supporting targeted collaborative problem solving.

The following tools and methods will support the functioning of AMCOW's hub of hubs:

- Federated search system that brings together diverse, relevant information from various trusted sources
- Robust, open access web-based tool
- Telecomms and virtual meeting spaces
- Stakeholder tracking as a service
- Convening
- Accreditation system for knowledge partners
- Social media used as a connector.

Ongoing development of AMCOW's hub of hubs is focused on strengthening two competencies: management and deployment of AMCOW's own knowledge assets, and communications.

Institutional memory: AMCOW's own knowledge assets

Record keeping is both a mandate of AMCOW's Secretariat as the servant of the institution, and the means of ensuring institutional memory for ongoing work. Good records are essential to avoid loss of time and knowledge when staff members change. Records also contain the building blocks of many useful information systems, such as contact and partner databases. AMCOW's knowledge hub of hubs is based on systems that ensure that both evidential and informational values of AMCOW's records are preserved through standardised methods and dedicated staff responsibility.

Clear reporting of discussions, decisions and actions - an essential part of the record keeping process - contributes to understanding and uptake of learning. Far from a passive process, creation and sharing of this knowledge leads to a higher degree engagement among AMCOW's composition and partners.

A plan for building the records management capacity of AMCOW's Secretariat is outlined in Annex B.

Communications: more than a backbone for advocacy

Guided by AMCOW's strategic communications plan (African Ministers' Council on Water, 2016), AMCOW's Secretariat will upgrade its communications to enhance its visibility and transparency, and improve its outreach.

Declarations of intent and recommendations based on the best science available can help achieve water security and improved livelihoods only through the application of strong and directed organisation, and communications. AMCOW can achieve more if it is visible beyond African country water ministries, and its aims and objectives are seen to address the highly relevant issues represented by the nexus of energy, food and water. This requires that AMCOW is present, physically or virtually, and involved, where these issues are discussed, and that it takes advantage of current events to bring attention to best practices.

Information technology tools are part of the solution. AMCOW Secretariat can adopt an enterprise social networking tool that integrates communications with data, and with existing tools such as email, to support its KM work, including building capacity of Secretariat staff. This tool will make it easier for the Secretariat to sustain productive interactions with AMCOW's composition, and with partners. An important factor in selecting such a tool is multilingual capability, to meet AMCOW's need to serve its French, English, and Portuguese speaking stakeholders.

AMCOW's existing online presence will be strengthened through making its web content more attractive and accessible, and its social media much more active. AMCOW needs to be seen to be supporting its partners, and engagement with them through social media channels helps to link AMCOW's hub of hubs to others. AMCOW's web site should be seen as an information support system to Secretariat staff's constant, ongoing communication with AMCOW's composition and partners. Kept up to date as a dynamic resource, the site will be the visible representation of AMCOW's hub of hubs: a portal that connects country level, regional and broader networks and provides an access point for sharing proven best practices, and a source of trusted African knowledge in water and sanitation.

Collaborating for results

AMCOW's role as a hub of knowledge hubs is based on collaboration at multiple levels: the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture Rural Development, Water and Environment, the Secretariat, and AMCOW's and extended composition that includes the AMCOW Technical Advisory Committee, the Regional Economic Communities, country focal points, and a distributed network of partner NGOs and international bodies.

AMCOW has established formal partnerships with many of these organisations: for example, non-project-specific Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) have been signed with the IRC for cooperation in sector learning, knowledge management, M&E, and capacity development; (African Ministers' Council on Water & International Water and Sanitation Centre, 2015) with the International Water Association (IWA) for education, knowledge and capacity development (African Ministers' Council on Water & International Water Association, 2016); the International Water Association (IWA) for knowledge and capacity development, and joint planning for international congresses and exhibitions (WaterAid Pan Africa Programme & African Ministers' Council on Water, 2016); and with Water and Sanitation for Africa (WSA) for strengthening the African Sanitation Think Tank, M&E, and research (African Ministers' Council on Water & International Water and Sanitation Centre, 2015).

Key Partners in Governance

African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture Rural Development, Water and Environment (ARDWE)

AMCOW represents the Working Group on Water and Sanitation of the Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment (ARDWE) under the African Union Commission (AUC). This is an advantage, as this committee is a powerful connector to the water-energy-food nexus community of practice that represents sectors profoundly dependent on water. AMCOW needs to use its mandate and status to be present and well-heard through ARDWE, providing strong arguments for a balanced approach to water use and management at continent level. AMCOW can do this through well-researched briefs, presentations and meetings at key policy entry points identified by ARDWE, framed in the context of the urgent and high-profile development needs of energy and agriculture.

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

AMCOW's TAC members are clearly a rich source of country-level knowledge, with the capacity to inform and influence the water and sanitation agenda at several levels. A strategic information sharing mindset and activities at AMCOW's Secretariat can stimulate this key group to become more active.

Collaboration with and within the TAC membership ensures a proactive mindset that encourages productive interactions above and beyond the stimulation produced by a directive or a meeting. These interactions begin within the TAC itself and move to AMCOW's Secretariat and AMCOW's other constituent members. The Secretariat can function as both initiator and multiplier of this activity, encouraging a constant conversation, and ensuring that new TAC members are quickly brought up to speed on their roles in AMCOW's work so they can join the conversation. This does not have to be seen as extra work: most of what needs to be communicated is what the TAC members are already learning and doing at country level.

The Secretariat's commitment to the TAC includes timely sharing of information, including summarisation and translation of complex documents, that the TAC needs to consider. Carried out effectively, this sharing of information from the Secretariat can stimulate much needed response and further knowledge exchange on the part of TAC members.

Regional Economic Communities (RECs)

Africa's eight Regional Economic Communities ([AMU](#), [CEN-SAD](#), [COMESA](#), [EAC](#), [ECCAS](#), [ECOWAS](#), [IGAD](#) and [SADC](#)), recognised by the African Union as driving forces for economic development in north, east, central, southern and west Africa, are important partners in AMCOW's work. Their membership has the potential to localise and extend AMCOW's shared political commitment and vision for action. This is especially because both surface and groundwater resources in Africa cross national boundaries, becoming regional resources. Based on this understanding of need for transboundary water

management, AMCOW can work through the river and lake organisation (L/RBO) members of its key partner, the African Network of Basin Organisations (ANBO), to learn from, inform, and influence the water and sanitation related work of the RECs.

AMCOW's launch of the *African Water Sector Monitoring and Evaluation System* in 2017 is a major achievement in response to the many calls for support to African states in tracking their water and sanitation progress. The web-based system allows country level submission of data according to a set of indicators, with management, quality control and training carried out at AMCOW's Secretariat. The RECs are a key partner for AMCOW in ensuring that capacity for generating the needed data is built at country and region levels.

Key Partners in Thematic Work

Water Security and Management: Global Water Partnership (GWP)

The Global Water Partnership (GWP) network was established in 2002 to promote integrated water resources management through “facilitating change, and the systematic creation, accumulation, and dissemination of knowledge to support the process of change” (Global Water Partnership & African Ministers’ Council on Water, 2007).

With an emphasis on water security, the GWP has developed 86 accredited Country Water Partnerships (CWPs) and 13 Regional Water Partnerships (RWPs), including Central, Eastern, Southern, and West African regional partnerships. Knowledge management has been central in the GWP's work, resulting in production of a range of knowledge products and activities, including a comprehensive IWRM Toolbox (Global Water Partnership, n.d.). Production of products based on expert knowledge, such as policy briefs, has been managed through the GWP Technical Committee (TEC), made up of internationally recognised water professionals.

The GWP is shifting the emphasis of its work from production of knowledge products, to influence, emphasising the importance of strategic partnerships with collaborators expert in identifying emerging challenges, competent in production of empirical studies, large-scale surveys, modelling, and scenario-driven activities, and dissemination and uptake of knowledge beyond the water sector (Global Water Partnership, 2017).

AMCOW's established relationship with the GWP makes it one of its strongest partners in the production and multi-directional exchange of knowledge that can benefit implementation of water security and sanitation policies at country level. AMCOW can combine the GWP's Country Water Partnerships network, and its strength and experience in creating knowledge products with its own capacity for influence, to build potential impact at region and country levels.

Water Finance: African Water Facility (AWF)

The African Water Facility (AWF) was established by AMCOW in 2006 to assist African countries to mobilise and apply resources for the water and sanitation sector to help to successfully implement the Africa Water Vision and meet the Millennium Development

Goals. The AWF funding includes development and implementation of water information systems for better informed management of water resources and improved decision-making at national, regional and transboundary levels. The AWF records and disseminates lessons and best practices from successful projects, and supports strategic foresight analysis and studies of institutional arrangements, financing mechanisms, and tools that enhance development of sustainable water infrastructure.

The AWF works to build capacity among the recipients of its funding to become better at understanding project planning. It has committed to generation and dissemination of knowledge products, establishing internal and external networks to develop and share new knowledge, and to strengthening the capacities of managers and implementation partners. The AWF's network of International Cooperating Partners (ICPs) is a useful resource as it works with AMCOW build the capacity of recipients of its funding to better create, manage and deploy their knowledge so as to have a lasting impact beyond the term of internationally funded projects, and to help AMCOW work through Ministries to encourage bankable projects that attract country level investment.

Water Supply and Sanitation: African Water Association (AfWA)

Created in 1980, the African Water Association (AfWA) brings together more than 116 drinking water supply and sanitation service operators, and African water and sanitation sector policy makers and regulators, for the purpose of knowledge and best practices sharing.

AfWA's plans for strengthening advocacy with African institutions and governments to address WASH issues in public policy and resource allocation include increasing cooperation with AMCOW (Usher, 2017). AfWA looks to AMCOW for guidance as to the priorities of countries, and offers AMCOW a window into the practical world of African water supply and sanitation. It is an advantage that AfWA's Secretariat is in the same geographic region as AMCOW's Secretariat.

Transboundary Water: African Network of Basin Organisations (ANBO)

The African Network of Basin Organizations (ANBO) was established in 2006 to support and coordinate development of lake and river basin organisations across Africa. ANBO is meant to function as the technical arm of AMCOW for matters related to transboundary water management. It is intended to both provide advice on transboundary water matters, and to support implementation of AMCOW policy through promotion, facilitation and technical support to relevant role-players, specifically Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Lake or River Basin Organizations (L/RBOs). Since effective water management is increasingly viewed by watershed or basin, rather than by political boundaries, the usefulness of ANBO as a pan-African resource with the potential to engage actively at a sub-regional level, is clear.

ANBO's operational plans include an emphasis on development and maintenance of knowledge infrastructure – meta-databases – and capacity building that would inform

decision-making, in particular related to transboundary groundwater resources (African Network of Basin Organizations, 2015). With adequate support, ANBO can provide an effective channel for knowledge exchange among AMCOW, RECs and L/RBOs.

Water Research: NEPAD Water Centres of Excellence (NEPAD WCoE)

AMCOW and its sister agency, AMCOST, established the African Union's New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) Networks of Water Centres of Excellence (WCoE) in 2006, to assist governments in establishing sound scientifically researched policy and to strengthen national and regional capacities in integrated water resources management. The programme brings together selected research institutions to work on issues defined as African water and sanitation priorities in the five AU regions (North-, East-, West-, Central- and North Africa). In 2017, twenty universities and research institutions were members of Networks of WCoE in Southern-, Western- and Central/Eastern Africa, aligned with regional water and science structures in the different Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and coordinated through a secretariat in each REC. The objective of the programme is to eventually identify, through government nomination and endorsement, at least one university or research institution per African country.

NEPAD WCoEs are AMCOW's partners in mobilizing scientific knowledge that supports development and application of African water and sanitation solutions. Based in Africa, the universities and research institutes that make up the NEPAD WCoE can produce highly relevant knowledge, and educate and train the new generations of water managers and practitioners the continent needs. The NEPAD Networks of WCoE programme can work with AMCOW to clarify research priorities, assist with production and quality assurance of country-level monitoring data for inclusion in AMCOW's consolidated reporting, guide production of science-informed knowledge products for decision-makers, and evaluate the performance of interventions to allow for adaptive management. The NEPAD WCoE are well positioned to ensure that AMCOW's programmatic partnerships with international institutions include African researchers, and result in ongoing access to research findings. Through this partnership, AMCOW can also play a convening role to enable scanning of the environment to bring useful research to the attention of policymakers.

Key Partners in Knowledge Services Work

Many institutions, and international and non-governmental organisations, support the essence of AMCOW's policy agenda that is set out in its high level declarations through programmes, projects, and research, both on and outside the African continent. Most of these engage in active knowledge sharing, often through online publishing and electronically enabled communities (Segerström, Glaumann, & Cortobius, 2013). These activities are supported by a range of ICPs. The result is a rich source of expertise and practical experience that AMCOW can both use and further disseminate to support AMCOW's Africa-wide water and sanitation agenda.

These organisations can work with AMCOW on the very practical effort of delivering knowledge services through knowledge infrastructure and resources that facilitate knowledge sharing.

Access to External Knowledge Assets

It is a paradox that, while it has never been easier to produce, capture and share codified knowledge in the form of project reports, scholarly studies, news and multi-media resources, it is increasingly difficult to find relevant information from the enormous body of materials available through the Internet. This is especially true of the grey literature produced through projects – which generate many knowledge products - and by governments.

While some of this literature is technically accessible, it is often not practically discoverable by potential users. Long term preservation is also an issue, with changes in web sites and broken links an ongoing challenge. Opportunities for learning through what has been achieved in the past are missed, even though these achievements have been documented.

AMCOW needs to partner with memory institutions to support continuing access to, and use of, these knowledge assets. Trustworthy, high quality sources of such materials require substantial investment. Institutional repositories and libraries that have a commitment to the long term, with quality control procedures such as standardised metadata, and clearly stated collection and preservation policies, are good partners.

At the international level, multi-stakeholder water platforms, often related to programmes and projects, share practical tools and learning materials in online systems. A list of some of these can be found on the [UN Water Activity Information System](#) site. General online permanent repositories with a focus on Africa include [Africa Portal](#), and the [UN Economic Commission for Africa Knowledge Repository](#), while reliable repositories specific to the water sector include the [South Africa Water Research Commission Knowledge Hub](#), [UNESCO IHE Library](#), [IRC Resources](#), [UN Water Publications](#), the [World Bank Water and Sanitation Program Library](#), and many water-related research institutions such as [Loughborough University's Water, Engineering and Development Centre](#) library collection.

While AMCOW's Secretariat is still developing its capacity to maintain its own separate online library, it can negotiate with a stable institutional repository, such as the Africa-based UNECA, to have a special collection which it can brand and make generally available, and which is also accessible from AMCOW's own web site. An alternative is to invest in a federated search or harvesting system that would pull together selected records from a wide range of knowledge partner repositories for access from AMCOW's own web site, as the UNCCD has been doing for its [knowledge hub](#).

Knowledge Exchange

While education and training are essential to improve water and sanitation management in Africa, learning best takes place when people work together at the point of problem. Opportunities for productive interactions among scientific experts,

practitioners, and local communities need to be identified and facilitated to produce joint experience and new knowledge that leads to solving problems and finding more effective ways of using, and conserving, water resources.

AMCOW's successful flagship knowledge exchange events, *Africa Water Week* and *AfricaSan* are recognized political and technical learning platforms. All AMCOW's partners in thematic work, including those that represent academia, will be actively engaged in planning of these events so that this process becomes in itself a joint learning experience that builds and strengthens relationships. The events will be an opportunity for display and presentation of AMCOW's and its partner's knowledge products. It is important that the wealth of experience shared in discussions at these events is captured and further disseminated. Specific roles and deadlines for participation will be suggested and negotiated. Broader sharing all outputs of AWW and AfricaSan through the partner networks will enable the potential impact of the events to extend beyond a limited period and audiences.

National Joint Sector Reviews, when coupled with good documentation, can be an effective tool for bringing country government planners and managers together with private sector, NGOs and civil society to discuss water and sanitation issues. AMCOW's steady scanning of the environment, and sensitivity to local conditions gained through the TAC, the RECs, and the Global Water Partnership's Country Partnerships, will identify opportunities for judicious use of Joint Sector Reviews, and broker sponsorship of this work.

There are many online platforms available for exchange of water related knowledge in the form of new, directories, and knowledge products. AMCOW will participate and contribute to those operated by its most reliable partners. AMCOW will introduce an accreditation programme for reliable sources of information, as the GWP does for its Country Partnerships. An AMCOW "seal of approval" displayed on these resources will increase AMCOW's visibility, reinforce its role as a trusted knowledge broker, and support the partners' knowledge exchange efforts.

Public Reporting

Managing the entire cycle of AMCOW's complex reporting processes, from meeting monitoring, to writing summaries, to distribution, and follow-up, is challenging, specialised, labour-intensive, work. While it is an appropriate task for a well-resourced Secretariat, and it is clear that certain types of reporting need to be limited to AMCOW's composition, AMCOW will look at carrying out a cost-benefit analysis of working in partnership with a professional reporting firm such as IISD, which covered several AMCOW events under the successful pilot African Regional Coverage Project in the early 2000s, and is the official knowledge manager for the UN SDG monitoring process (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2007). Such a service would provide both public reporting and dissemination services, freeing up Secretariat staff to carry out the essential follow-up that promotes uptake of ideas and decisions.

Any such partnership should result in both high quality reporting and gradual building of capacity within AMCOW for information literacy and professionalized reporting to be

carried out by young African professionals, helping to meet the objectives of AMCOW's *Policy and Strategy for Youth in the Water and Sanitation Sector* (African Ministers' Council on Water, 2014).

Knowledge Product Creation

While learning at the point of problem is key in producing and ensuring the uptake of new knowledge and the innovative tools and technologies that promise to resolve water supply and sanitation challenges, producing knowledge products is important to ensure preservation of learning, and dissemination that reaches beyond the originators. AMCOW will extend the reach of existing important knowledge products produced by its partners by initiating and encouraging discussion of their content among its member states, and work in cooperation with them to bring new knowledge to light.

The *Africa Water Atlas* (United Nations Environment Programme & African Ministers' Council on Water, 2010), produced in collaboration with UNEP and other partners in 2010, is an example of an AMCOW knowledge product intended to make scientific knowledge more accessible to potential users. Such products can make use of ever-improving graphics and data visualisations produced by AMCOW's knowledge partners, with collaborative, component-based publishing making it possible to recombine information to target different audiences with appropriate content and media.

A first step in producing credible and relevant knowledge products for water and sanitation is to engage African universities and research institutes in discussing and determining both research priorities and the need for information about existing research findings among practitioners, policy makers and other potential users. AMCOW's partnership with NEPAD WCoE will provide channels for this collaborative work.

Analysis of earth observation data has the potential to pull together information about environmental conditions and land use across political and administrative boundaries: it is a tool for continental level natural resources monitoring. Data from such systems also have the potential to support implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through supporting cross-cutting themes and work across sectors (Anderson, Ryan, Sonntag, Kavvada, & Friedl, 2017).

Programmes such as TIGER, SERVIR, and UNITAR's UNOSAT are developing capacity for use of earth observation data in many African countries, and mustering support for national spatial data infrastructure (SDI). Similarly, models based on both spatial and economic data can guide awareness and planning, especially in the context of the expansion of human habitat and climate change. AMCOW will increasingly use and promote the reliable evidence they can provide, strengthening existing alliances with earth observation programmes and suppliers, and help to break down the knowledge silos created by the multitude of spatial data programmes and projects, and to make African priorities clear in this process (Lance, 2012).

For example AMCOW could, through the *Policy Dialogue* of the African Union's Monitoring for Environment and Security in Africa (MESA) programme, provide the programme with knowledge about the needs of policy makers and planners at country

and regional levels so it can support development of relevant datasets, products and training. AMCOW should also develop new alliances with institutions that work on modelling at the regional and continent levels to develop effective summary and visualisation products that are accessible and understandable to a broad range of decision-makers. This will help to set monitoring data in context and embed geographic literacy in the policy process.

Complex knowledge products will almost always be the result of collaborative effort, often with more than one AMCOW partner. International bodies with specialised knowledge and tools, such as the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), can be called upon to combine efforts with AMCOW and its African partners.

The implementation challenge

Financial Resources

Knowledge work, whether it is expressed in the form of making research results and data understandable, joint learning, or increasing findability of useful information through categorisation, requires resources. Inadequate funding to AMCOW from country contributions and donor funds, specifically to the AMCOW Secretariat, can be a threat to the achievement of its role as a knowledge hub.

AMCOW's work is cross-cutting, and effective mainly through the joint efforts of multiple funding and implementing partners. For this reason, mobilisation of resources for AMCOW's work needs to take place confidently at a level sufficient to create impact across all the thematic and sectoral areas it needs to influence. AMCOW needs to work with its key partners to develop well-informed estimates that build strong, trustworthy, and legitimised funding proposals to support Africa's most needed water and sanitation work. Such proposals will, through collaboration among the partners, have avoided unnecessary duplication, and will have anticipated the challenges of cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral work. They should have clearly reflected AMCOW's knowledge management agenda by focusing on joint work at the point of problem, ensuring that learning has been built into programme processes.

AMCOW's well recognized learning and knowledge exchange events, *Africa Water Week* and *AfricaSan*, can operate on a cost recovery basis. Developing a business model to achieve this, in itself requires some resources, and should be considered a priority to maintain the momentum of the events' impact.

Resources to support necessary interventions and programmes include support for diplomatic work by AMCOW's Executive Secretary and senior representatives. These resources need to be available to take advantage of key policy windows or access points across a range of sectoral activities, sometimes at short notice. The budget of the Secretariat needs to be flexible enough to allow for good use of these opportunities.

Scope of Work Programmes

Shortage of resources can create pressure to create a broad scope of work programmes with lack of clarity in the results framework. This can weaken the impact of AMCOW's knowledge service work. Any project and programme involvement by AMCOW needs to be based on its areas of strength, and oriented to KM objectives: creating, preserving, and testing knowledge, facilitating learning, and developing appropriate advocacy.

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Annexes




Annex A Results Framework





This indicative results framework can be considered a starting point for discussion between AMCOW and its knowledge partners.




	Expected Results	Functional Competency	Baseline	Activity	Proposed Partner	Mechanism	Secretariat	One Year Objective	Three Year Objective
1	Internal knowledge assets, including official records, at Secretariat preserved, organised and accessible through finding aids for re-use of knowledge 	Making the most of knowledge assets	Internal knowledge assets scattered and often not findable	Record inventory and management systems development	USAID WALIS	Funding support for: 1. Training of AMCOW staff member 2. Consultant for inventory and system development 3. Records infrastructure (electronic and hard copy), including contact management system	Designation of responsible staff member; Development of in-house contact management system	Responsibilities for records and information management clear and capacity in place, including staff sustainability plan for records and contact management system	Institutional memory secure and sustainable through identifiable and accessible assets and robust in-house management capacity

	Expected Results	Functional Competency	Baseline	Activity	Proposed Partner	Mechanism	Secretariat	One Year Objective	Three Year Objective
2	 External knowledge resources (publications, grey literature) relevant to AMCOW's work identified and widely accessible	Making the most of knowledge assets; Learning through facilitation of knowledge exchange	No existing resources, system, or capacity with AMCOW's input, brand or ownership	Cataloguing and online sharing of relevant documents	UNECA Library	MOU	Set up and maintenance of feed to AMCOW website	AMCOW Collection established as part of UNECA Institutional Repository; feed to AMCOW web site working	AMCOW Collection recognised as a major source of codified water and sanitation knowledge
3	 Narrative reporting procedures and channels streamlined and documented to inform all relevant stakeholders	Making the most of knowledge assets ; Learning through facilitation of knowledge exchange	Narrative reporting procedures complex and not always followed	1. Outsourcing of meeting reporting with built-in capacity building for AMCOW Secretariat. 2. Development of in-house tracking and follow-up system for action items, linked to contact database	IISD	Joint funding proposal for ongoing services	1.Designation of internal reporter for capacity development; 2Designation of Secretariat staff member for action follow-up	Meeting reporting standardized and shared; Secretariat follow-up system in place	Reporting capacity localised; All action items followed up and reported consistently: 75 per cent fulfilment action items

		Expected Results	Functional Competency	Baseline	Activity	Proposed Partner	Mechanism	Secretariat	One Year Objective	Three Year Objective
4		Increased recognition of AMCOW's role by energy, agriculture and health sectors	Influence through diplomacy; Visibility through communication	AMCOW's reputation restricted to the water sector	Engagement with existing networks through social media, steering committee membership, using SDG work as connector	ARDWE	Inclusion of AMCOW at key partner entry points	Maintenance of strong reporting flow	AMCOW supported to participate in broader fora	AMCOW routinely asked to contribute to meetings and consultations
5		Continuous productive interactions among Secretariat and AMCOW's composition	Learning through facilitation of knowledge exchange; Innovation through knowledge creation	Limited interactions tied to meetings	Stimulation of communications through ongoing action follow-up, and brokering communications with regional and country partners	GWP (country partnerships)	In-house tracking and follow-up system for action items, social enterprise app for inclusive and multidirectional communications	Designation of Secretariat staff member for action follow-up; Implementation of social enterprise app	Contacts system and all action items up to date; Regular multi-way communications with TAC and EXCO members	Contacts system and all action items maintained; Steady flow of communication and requests for AMCOW engagement
6		Reliable and timely continent-wide monitoring data for water supply and sanitation available and	Learning through facilitation of knowledge exchange	System established at Secretariat with temporary staff	Further mobilisation at REC and country level to strengthen national systems	WHO , UNICEF, GWP (regional and country partnerships)	Resources for training, follow-up	Designation of responsible staff member for liaison with GWP	Responsibilities for funding of monitoring clear, and capacity in place; 60 per cent	90 per cent participation by member states; Steadily increasing capacity for delivering

		Expected Results	Functional Competency	Baseline	Activity	Proposed Partner	Mechanism	Secretariat	One Year Objective	Three Year Objective
		disseminated, based on strengthened national monitoring systems							participation by member states	disaggregated data
7		Sound, timely policy advice provided	Innovation through knowledge creation	No stable and consistent mechanism for producing and delivering advice	Development of timely, targeted policy briefs and position papers	GWP (TEC process), AWF, and others	Joint identification of issues at the point of problem and development of products	Brokering of planning and partnerships	At least one policy product created jointly and disseminated to target audience	Timely joint creation of relevant products
8		Increased visibility beyond country level water ministries	Visibility through communication	Increased use of social media begun	Increased social media engagement Transformation of web site to support knowledge hub work		Action-oriented, strategic communications, use of social media and other web tools	Application of communications strategy	100 per cent increase in social media conversations and current web site content	AMCOW and active and recognised social media user and broker of relevant content
9		Directory of AMCOW composition and partners	Making the most of knowledge assets	Existing records incomplete or out of date	Creation of contact databases	WALIS	Funding support for short term project	Updating and maintenance of system	Directory complete	Directory up to date

	Expected Results	Functional Competency	Baseline	Activity	Proposed Partner	Mechanism	Secretariat	One Year Objective	Three Year Objective
	available and shared								
10	 Productive interactions from trips and meetings documented and shared	Making the most of knowledge assets; Learning through facilitation of knowledge exchange	Little documentation	Time allotted to staff for reporting	WALIS	Documentation of interactions included in individual work plans, performance reviews	HR recognition of KM need	60 per cent of interactions documented and shared	90 per cent of interactions documented and shared
11	 A platform for encouraging engagement of youth in water and sanitation	Learning through facilitation of knowledge exchange	AMCOW policy in place	Creation of an online resource, including job market information and directory of graduates	NEPAD WCoE	Web portal development	Coordination and maintenance	Portal designed	Portal in use
12	 Agreement about research priorities or water and sanitation across the continent	Innovation through knowledge creation	No system for eliciting or setting research priorities in place	Setting and comparison of priorities in countries across the continent	NEPAD WCoE, SA-WRC	Joint development of system	Organisation of synthesis work	Consultations about system completed	System in place and in use
13	 Better understanding of what works in knowledge	Learning through facilitation of	Many knowledge products available but no overall	Development / adaptation of a guide to best practices in African water	World Bank	Funding support for adaptation of World Bank guide (World	Coordination of work	Draft underway	Guide completed and in use

	Expected Results	Functional Competency	Baseline	Activity	Proposed Partner	Mechanism	Secretariat	One Year Objective	Three Year Objective
	sharing in African water and sanitation	knowledge exchange	guidance for best practices in Africa	and sanitation knowledge sharing		Bank Group, 2016)			
14	 Good practice in knowledge exchange recognised and rewarded	Learning through facilitation of knowledge exchange; Visibility through communication	No current activity	A certification / accreditation process for water and sanitation knowledge providers	GWP	Branding and recognition at events	Coordination of a peer review/expert panel and award process	System established	All partners accredited using AMCOW seal of approval on their knowledge products
15	 AWW and AfricaSan events recognised throughout the year through capture and dissemination of content	Learning through facilitation of knowledge exchange	Held regularly but activity confined to calendar period, and proceedings/learning not well captured	Introduction of a joint planning and follow-up process to continuously engage stakeholders	All key partners	Joint planning team, knowledge product output process, cost recovery mechanism	Dedicated staff responsibility for coordination of team	Team members identified	Events a regularly planned jointly
16	 Continent level awareness of country level conditions and national activities	Visibility through communication; Learning through facilitation of	Knowledge patchy and mostly not collected and shared with those who could use it	Scanning, and improved communications with TACS, GWP Country Water Partnerships to follow country level	TAC, GWP	Feedback from partners, news products / hub targeted to specific audiences, including international	Development and deployment of sharing mechanism	Agreement among TAC members and GWP as to roles and responsibilities	Regular and reliable flow of information to and from AMCOW

Expected Results	Functional Competency	Baseline	Activity	Proposed Partner	Mechanism	Secretariat	One Year Objective	Three Year Objective
	knowledge exchange		conditions and activities		cooperating partners			

Annex B Implementation of Records Management at AMCOW Secretariat

AMCOW can be a leader in knowledge management when its Secretariat has control of, and confidence in, its own codified knowledge. Systems to achieve these need to be put in place.

The first step in developing these conditions is a records inventory to identify and become aware of what documentation it already has, its locations, and essential records in both hard copy and electronic formats. This should include email records.

Essential records can include the following types of documentation, for example:

- Constitutional and incorporation documents
- Contracts for work carried out
- Decisions
- Declarations
- Formal endorsements.
- Meeting minutes and reports
- MOUs with partners
- Policy documents
- Strategies.

The inventory should be followed by development of a file plan and records disposition schedule to guide the Secretariat's future management of its records. This work can be led by a contracted professional records manager, but should engage designated Secretariat staff who will be responsible for ongoing maintenance of these knowledge assets.

Every effort should be made during this work to develop finding aids, such as indexes, to the content of AMCOW's substantive documents, such as decisions. These finding aids can serve a double duty as mechanisms to support follow-up actions.

The recent creation in the Secretariat of a Local Area Network and central server storage should benefit from establishment of records management procedures through alignment of records policies with information and data management policies and practices.

Procedures and responsibilities for formal reporting and disposition of official documents in the Secretariat's care should be established and documented to ensure that both evidential and informational values of AMCOW's records are preserved through standardised systems.

Creation and continuous updating of a comprehensive database of both internal and external stakeholders to be used in organising meetings and consultations, and clarification of internal reporting to ensure accountability, are part of the record-keeping process.

While knowledge management is part of every staff member's work, aligning specific knowledge management and mobilisation responsibilities with any proposed new organisational structure of the Secretariat should be discussed at an early stage. Establishing a core collaborative knowledge management team with strong leadership, and encompassing the functions of records management, information management, data administration, reporting, and communications work, should be considered. Evaluation, recognition, and reward processes for these should be clearly defined, as should a system for recognising good knowledge sharing practice across all Secretariat job categories.

A culture of collective stewardship of information, and knowledge sharing, should be built into the Secretariat's work through senior management leadership, awareness creation, and training. This should include exposure to, and adoption of, tools that support this culture.

New recruitment processes should combine personal dispositional attributes with requirements for experience and skills. A positive attitude towards knowledge sharing and demonstrated experience with knowledge sharing processes should be essential qualifications for work at the Secretariat.

Investments in the Secretariat's housing and facilities should take into consideration the need for a) secure storage and access to current and non-current hard copy records, b) strong telecommunications infrastructure to support rapid and far-reaching external communications, and c) open workspaces that work against isolation and promote creative collaboration.

The most important findings of this work relates to staff members' perceived need for capacity development in the context of knowledge management. The staff member assigned the responsibility for maintaining records in the Secretariat should participate in a short-term training programme, and then work with a contracted professional records manager to set up systems in the Secretariat. At the end of this process, the records manager should be able to confidently familiarise other members of staff with the system. Opportunities for training in records and information management should also be identified and included in Secretariat staff development plans.

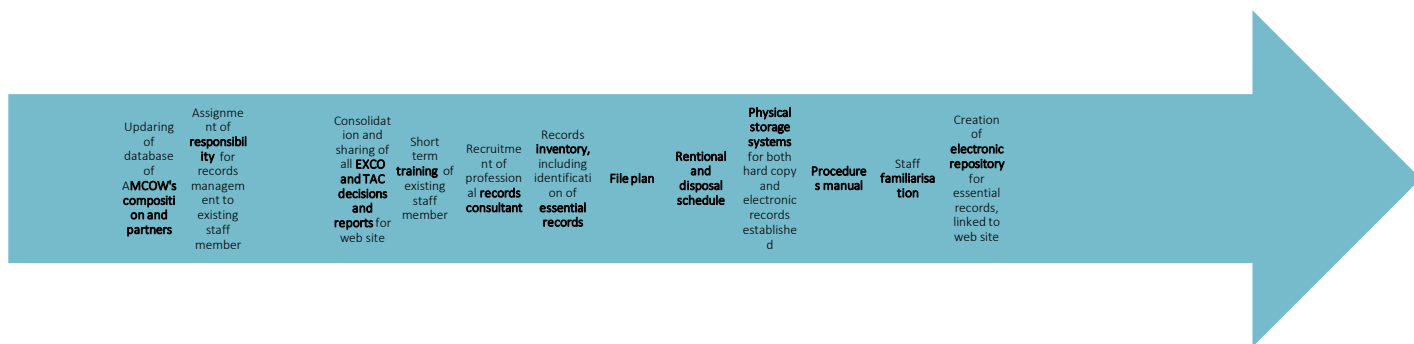


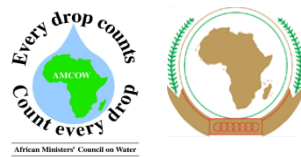
Figure 1 Steps for implementing Secretariat records management system

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