

# Akvo Really Simple Reporting (Akvo RSR)

First draft, 14 October 2007, Thomas Bjelkeman-Pettersson

*During the last couple of months after discussions with NGOs, banks, funds and development organisations in the water and sanitation sector working with meeting Millenium Development Goals, it has become clear that sophisticated project prospecting, project reporting and monitoring tools are needed to be able to effectively scale up implementation efforts to handle many thousands of projects in parallel.*

*Akvo will be developing these tools as Open Source software tools and will also be running an online service which anyone can use, without having to install and maintain these tools on their own servers.*

The following are two cases which attempt to describe how the Akvo RSR system can be used to support the project communications between field operations. The first case is a description of how the Akvo system would be used with the complete project prospecting, reporting, monitoring and project data-mining tools.

The second case is a simpler situation where an NGO and the local government already have identified projects which they are working with, in this case 6000 schools where rainwater harvesting facilities are being installed. But to improve and make the process more effective the Akvo reporting system is used in particular for its SMS reporting capabilities.

## Case 1: Complete project prospecting, reporting, monitoring and project data mining

The following is a narrative of how the complete Akvo project prospecting, reporting, monitoring and data-mining system will function.

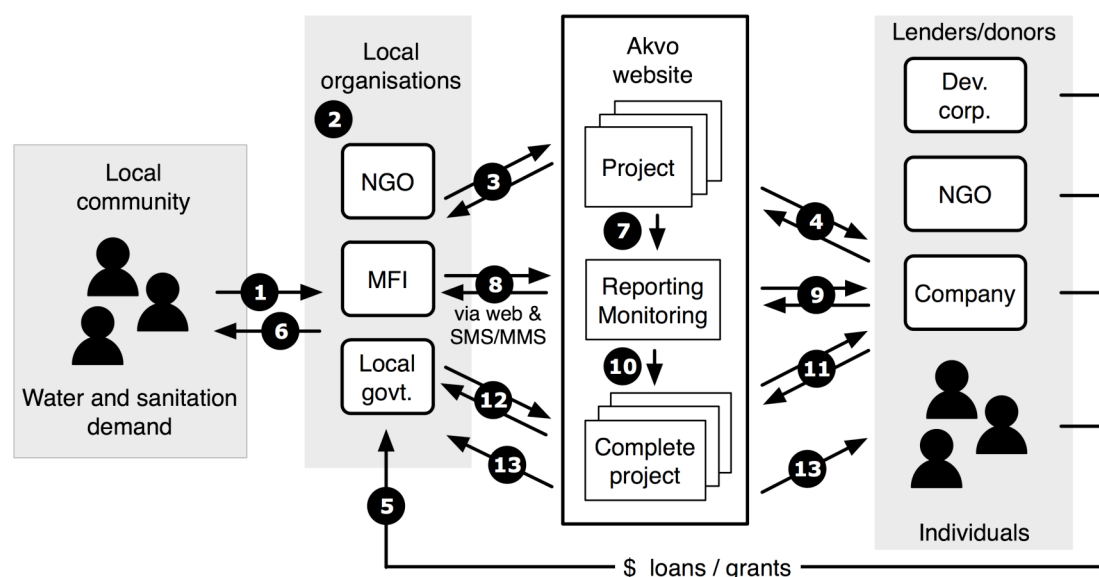


Figure 1: Akvo for project prospecting, reporting, monitoring and project data mining.

1. People in the local community working together with a local trusted<sup>1</sup> NGO, MFI or the local government (possibly two or all three working together) identify the need for a water and sanitation project.
2. The NGO, MFI or local government (called the “local organisation”) define the scope, cost and parties involved with implementing the project together with the local community.
3. The local organisation creates a project proposal on the Akvo web site.
4. The project proposal is immediately available on the web site for anyone to view<sup>2</sup>, including to development corporations, NGOs, companies and individuals (donors/lenders) who are funding such projects. Some donors/lenders may have set up subscriptions to new projects based on certain criteria and will receive a notification automatically via email or RSS.

Donors/lenders may pose questions to the local organisation, clarifying the project proposal.

5. Donors/lenders decide to fund a particular project, or set of projects. Their projects are marked as “funded” in the Akvo web site, by whom and how much. The donors/lenders arrange for the funds transfer to the local organisation through traditional means. (For individuals, we expect to partner with someone who sets up micro-finance facilities similar to Kiva.org’s.)
6. The local organisation arranges for funds to be available for the local community for the project and initiates the project.
7. A project proposal goes from being a proposal to an active project.
8. For an active project several different reporting tools are available: web based tools for text, picture and video reporting, phone based tools for SMS and MMS reporting.

For example a field office may use mobile phone SMS to send in status reports to the Akvo web site. Example: “maintenance training completed. 20 people attended”. The sent SMS is identified to come from a particular phone, thereby only allowing certain people to add information to specific projects. MMS messages containing photographs may be sent as well.

9. The donors/lenders can monitor the progress of a particular project via the Akvo web site. Questions about the progress of the project can be communicated from the web site to a particular project owner via the web site, email or via SMS. The questions and answers can be retained in the Akvo reporting and monitoring system.
10. When a project is completed and both the lenders/donors and the local organisations are satisfied with the completion of the project it goes from an active project to a completed project.
11. The donors/lenders can rate the project, based on success factors and provide information such as lessons learned. The donors/lenders can also rate the involved local organisations based on criteria such as: responsiveness, knowledge, implementation skills, flexibility etc.

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<sup>1</sup> A “trusted” NGO, MFI or local government has passed a vetting procedure, reaching a particular level of sophistication with regards to proven knowledge on how to work with water and sanitation issues and ability to handle funds.

<sup>2</sup> If the users feel it is important to only have a limited view of the projects to the public they can become an *Akvo Supporter*, which, among other things offer limited public access to project reporting information and project data. See Special Features for *Akvo Supporters*, below.

12. The local organisation can rate the project, based on success factors and provide information such as lessons learned. The local organisation can also rate the involved donors/lenders based on criteria such as: active involvement, flexibility, responsiveness, help provided, etc.
13. Organisations can use the Akvo repository of completed projects to compare projects and project approaches to answer questions such as: What works and what doesn't? Why are certain types of projects successful in some areas and not others? What types of projects have been implemented in a particular area?

## Case 2: Project reporting and monitoring

The following is a narrative on how the Akvo system would work where an NGO and the local government already have identified projects which they are working with, in this case 6000 schools where rainwater harvesting facilities are being installed.

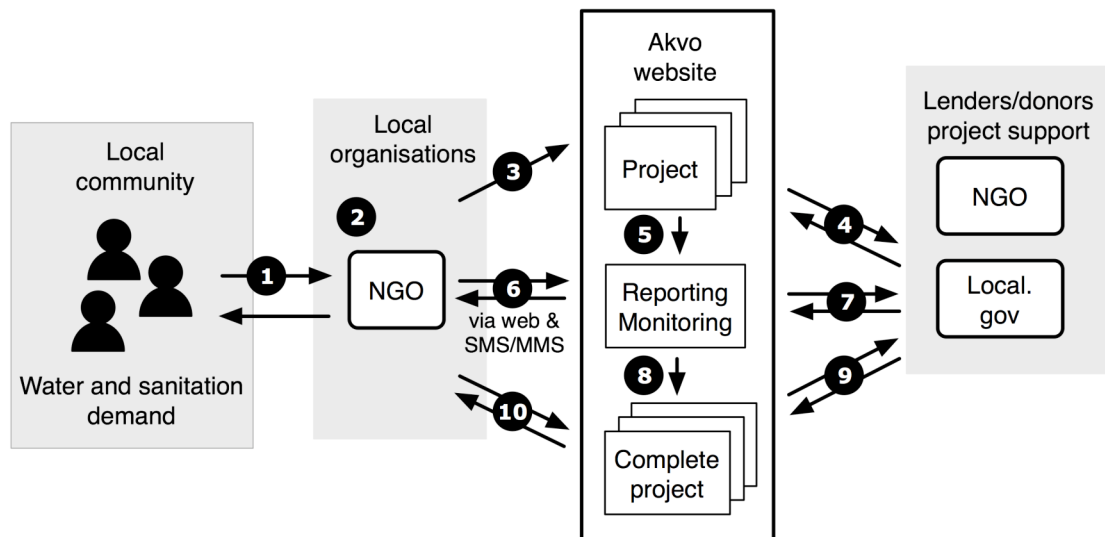


Figure 2: Akvo Really Simple Reporting (RSR) and monitoring.

1. People in the local community working together with a local field office NGO identify the need for a water and sanitation project.
2. The NGO defines the scope, cost and parties involved with implementing the project together with the local community.
3. The local organisation creates a project description on the Akvo web site.
4. The project proposal is immediately available on the web site for the funding/supporting NGO and the local government to view and to add information to. (A limited set of information is available to the public to view, see Special features for Akvo Supporters below.)
5. The project is set to be an active project.
6. For an active project several different reporting tools are available: web based tools for text, picture and video reporting, phone based tools for SMS and MMS reporting.

For example a field office may use mobile phone SMS to send in status reports to the Akvo web site. Example: "maintenance training completed. 20 people attended". The sent SMS is identified to come from a particular phone, thereby only allowing certain people to add information

to specific projects. MMS messages containing photographs may be sent as well.

7. The donors/lenders and project supporters can monitor the progress of a particular project via the Akvo web site. Questions about the progress of the project can be communicated from the web site to a particular project owner via the web site, email or via SMS. The questions and answers can be retained in the Akvo reporting and monitoring system.
8. When a project is completed and both the lenders/donors and the local organisations are satisfied with the completion of the project it goes from an active project to a completed project.
9. The donors/lenders and project supporters can rate the project, based on success factors and provide information such as lessons learned.
10. The local organisation can rate the project, based on success factors and provide information such as lessons learned.

### **Special features for Akvo Supporters:**

The Akvo system will be open for anyone to use for free, although we will be encouraging users to pay a limited *Akvo Supporter* fee, based on ability, to ensure the long term viability of Akvo's services. Certain functions will only be available to *Akvo Supporters*, these functions will be:

- Limited public access to project reporting information and project data
- *Akvo Supporter* logo

Other functions which we are considering limiting to *Akvo Supporters*:

- Data-mining access to project database
- Preview of queue of new projects

### *Document terminology explained*

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NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation  
MFI: Micro-Finance Institution  
SMS: Short Messaging Services  
MMS: Multimedia Messaging Service  
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