



## Topic: Islands of success- Policy to Practice

*A conference paper presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> Water Supply Network Forum 2011 in Uganda*

Authors:

**Vida Duti, County Team Leader, Triple-S, Ghana,  
Dr Patrick Moriarty, Country Director, IRC Ghana  
Emmanuel Tse Gaze, Director, Technical Services ,  
Community Water and Sanitation Agency, Ghana**

December 2011

**6th Rural Water Supply Network Forum 2011 Uganda**

**Rural Water Supply in the 21st Century: Myths of the Past, Visions for the Future**

**Topic:** *Islands of success- Policy to Practice*

**Long Paper**

**Title:** Establishing the building blocks for sustainable water service delivery in Ghana

**Authors:** Vida Duti, County Team Leader, IRC Triple-S, Ghana,

**Email:** [duti@ircghana.org](mailto:duti@ircghana.org); [vidaduti@gmail.com](mailto:vidaduti@gmail.com); Tel:+ 233543234276

Patrick Moriarty, Country Director, IRC Ghana

Emmanuel Tse Gaze, Director, Technical Services , Community Water  
and Sanitation Agency, Ghana.

**Abstract/Summary**

Lessons are presented from a change process being undertaken in Ghana's rural domestic water sector. The need for change has been triggered by the realisation that, as coverage in rural water increases, so too does the challenge of ensuring quality and sustainability of the water services being delivered. The change process is, therefore, aimed at facilitating the transition from a historic focus on building new infrastructure towards a new vision of providing sustainable domestic water services for all.

The Country Team The paper describes the steps by which the International Water and Sanitation Centre (IRC), in collaboration with Ghana's Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA) is working to increase awareness of the challenges faced in making rural water services sustainable, using this awareness as a basis for identifying areas for reform and innovation, and implementing these in pilots and at scale.

## INTRODUCTION

### *Rural water supply coverage in Ghana*

Ghana is generally on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goal target for water supply, although sanitation lags far behind, with rural coverage in improved facilities at only 7% in 2009 (JMP, 2011). Current estimates of rural water coverage range from 63.13% (CWSA, 2011) to 74% (JMP 2011) and reflect steady progress over the last years (see Figure 1). The gap between these figures is attributable primarily to differences in how access to services is measured.

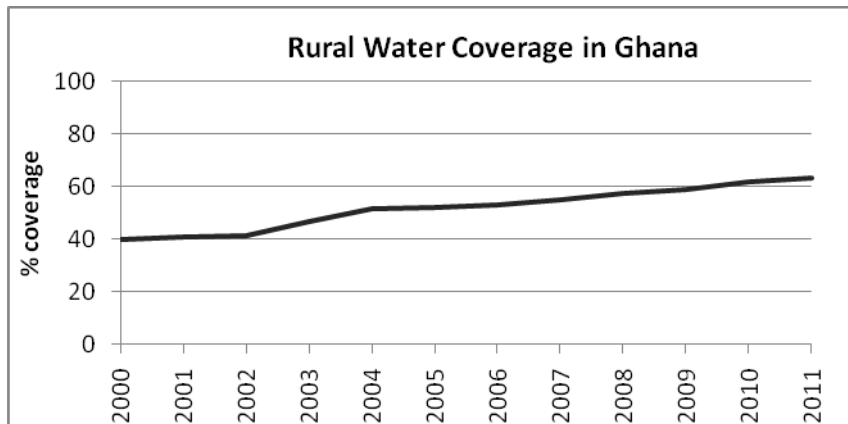


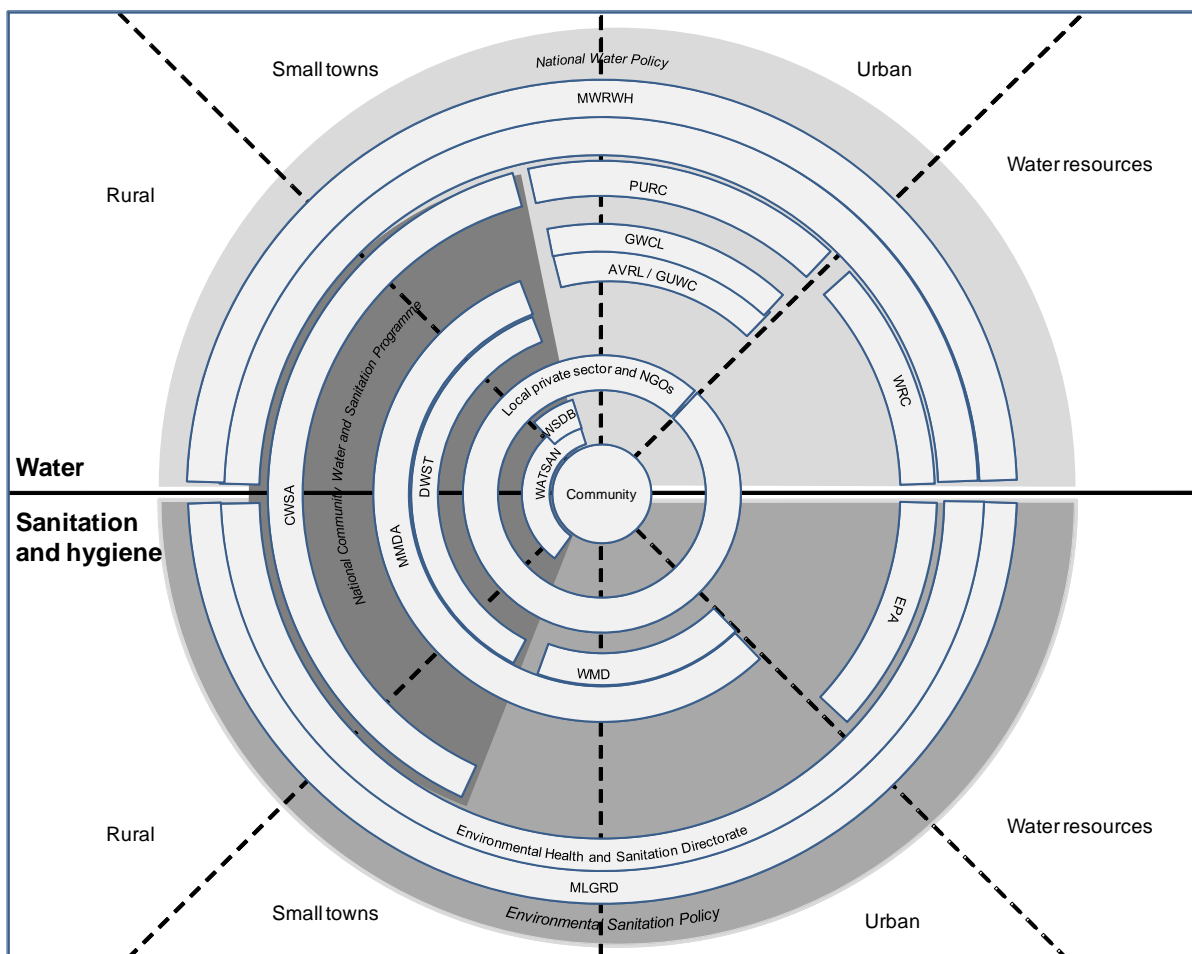
Figure 1: Rural water coverage 2000-2011 (adapted from CWSA, 2011a)

Ghana's domestic water sector is divided between 'urban' and 'rural' sub-sectors, with urban referring to those cities and small towns where water is provided by the national utility (Ghana Water Company Ltd – GWCL). Rural refers to all other areas including sparsely populated rural communities as well as more than 400 small and medium sized towns (population 2,000 to about 50,000).

### *Sector governance*

Figure 2 shows the main actors involved in water supply, sanitation and water resource management in Ghana at institutional levels from national to community (for a full list of the acronyms used see list at the end of the paper). This paper focuses on change in rural and small town water supply, all of which fall under the 'National Community Water and Sanitation Programme'. The lead agency for this programme, and for rural water supply in general, is the Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA). At the national level the water sector is overseen by the Water Directorate of the Ministry of Water Resources, Works and Housing (MWRWH), while sanitation is dealt with by the Environmental Health and Sanitation Directorate (EHSD) of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD). The legal owner of rural water supply assets is local government in the form of Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs).

End responsibility for ensuring the quality of rural water services is poorly defined and lies somewhere between communities, local government and CWSA (see next section). However, there is an emerging consensus that as Ghana's decentralisation process intensifies the final responsibility should lie primarily with local government (MMDAs) – with CWSA playing a supporting and, eventually, regulatory role.



**Figure 2: Institutional structure of the WASH sector in Ghana (adapted from Adank 2009 quoted in IRC/AGUACONSULT (2011))**

*Service delivery models in rural Ghana: Community Ownership and Management (COM)*

The main management philosophy underlying Ghana’s rural water sector is Community Ownership and Management. Under this overarching philosophy, two main models exist for providing water services: point-systems (typically boreholes and covered wells) for low density rural settlements, and piped systems with standpipes and household connections for small towns

The level of service provided under these models is defined by norms set by CWSA. Point-systems and standpipes are designed to provide 20 litres per person per day (lpcd) of good quality water. In addition, the norms state that this should be within 500m of users homesteads and that no more than 300 people should have to share a single source. For household connections the norm for quantity is 60lpcd (Moriarty et al, 2010). Where they are provided, household connections typically cover about 20% of the population of the town.

Under COM, both point-systems and small-towns are expected to be managed and paid for by their users. Day to day management lies with community structures who exercise delegated responsibility on behalf of local government. For rural point-sources these structures are called water and sanitation committees (WATSANs) and for small-

towns Water and Sanitation Development Boards (WSDBs). The duties of WSDBs and WATSANs include collecting tariffs from users and using these for day to day operation and maintenance.

WATSANs and WSDBs are supposed to be supported in their management activities by local government agencies called District Water and Sanitation Teams (DWSTs) – who are in the process of being incorporated into new District Works Departments (DWDs) - with CWSA playing a backstopping and facilitating role. In addition, CWSA tends to play a dominant role in initial construction activities due to its concentration of specialist skills.

### *Sector financing*

The rural water sector is heavily reliant for capital investment on external financing through bi and multi-lateral donors who finance projects that are, frequently, managed by CWSA. While difficult to estimate accurately, it is generally accepted that more than 90% of capital investment in the rural sector comes from donors, primarily in the form of grants. In addition, a large number of NGOs are active in Ghana, particularly in the North of the country, although the overall importance of their efforts to the rural sector as a whole is difficult to gauge. Table 1 shows part of the annual budgets for and disbursements to the water sector through CWSA.

**Table 1: CWSA Budgeted & Actual Expenditure (2006-2010)**

<b>Description</b>	<b>2006(US\$)</b>	<b>2007(US\$)</b>	<b>2008(US\$)</b>	<b>2009(US\$)</b>	<b>2010(US\$)</b>
Government Approved Budget	1,351,240	2,076,198	5,078,969	21,716,186	37,227,909
Government Actual Releases	892,623	1,033,929	1,742,726	899,172	3,382,629
% Variation	-34%	-50%	-66%	-96%	-91%
CWSA Actual Expenditure	6,352,518	6,310,865	8,225,548	15,235,964	24,675,561
Donor releases	5,459,895	5,276,936	6,482,822	14,336,792	21,292,932

\* Note: There are other donor releases that are not captured here;

Adapted from CWSA (2011b). Converted from Ghana Cedis using 1GHS = 0.62USD.

Financing for recurrent expenditure is supposed to come from two main sources. Day to day operation and maintenance should be paid for by users, while Government (national and local) is supposed to finance direct support costs of regional CWSA offices and DWSTs/DWDs in districts.

An important shift in sector emphasis in recent years has seen a rapid increase in the number of small-town piped systems constructed, and almost all recent donor-financed projects have focussed on small-towns. Small-town systems bring with them generally higher and more reliable levels of service than point-systems, but with higher costs (Nyarko et al, 2011).

## The challenge of sustainability under COM

The story of rural water supply in Ghana is, therefore, generally positive, with steadily increasing access and, with small-town networks, levels of service. However, behind the positive headlines real challenges exist, which can be seen most clearly in high rates of breakdown and in service delivery that fails to meet norms..

IRC's WASHCost project (<http://www.washcost.info>) interviewed more than 1,000 rural water users in three of Ghana's regions, representing the main agro/eco zones of the country. In parallel, more than 80 point-systems and 4 small towns were surveyed for functionality at the same time. The aim of this research was to understand the levels of service being provided to rural water users, and the costs of doing so. (see Moriarty et al, 2011a).

Recent research by the WASHCost project found that 29% of rural point-systems were non-functional at the time of visit. The same research found that only 23% of people relying on rural point-systems were accessing the nationally defined minimum level of service described earlier, although in small towns this rose to 59% (Nyarko et al, 2011). While data on functionality is not generally available for small towns, there are widely acknowledged problems with their sustainability in some regions, and in general they are seen as being something of a "time-bomb" in that most have been constructed in the last 10 years or so and little is known about their ability to deal with shocks such as major repairs or rehabilitation.

A study carried out by IRC's Triple-S project in 2010, as part of the baseline activities for the work reported here, identified a number of important bottlenecks to sustainable rural services (see IRC/AGUACONSULT, 2011). Overall, it identified an important gap between how things should be (as set out in national policy, legislation and guidelines) and how they are in practice on the ground. This divergence between policy and practice makes systematic learning or adaptation difficult and undermines the impact of policy change. Behind this divergence lie a number of systemic weaknesses that, taken together, make it difficult for the sector to function effectively in delivering services.

Important among these are:

- A sector agenda that is dominated by development partners who work according to different models and approaches.
- A lack of strong central government leadership in setting the framework for sector development.
- Regional and district level actors whose roles and functions are not fully described, leading to lack of clarity as to who is responsible for what elements of service delivery. This relates particularly to the roles of and relations between CWSA, MMDAs and community structures (WATSANs and WSDBs).
- Lack of resources at decentralised levels (both regional and district) to enable agencies to fulfil their mandates. Disbursements from central government are typically sufficient to cover salaries only, leaving recurrent costs to be met by projects – when present.
- Lack of a functional system for monitoring the performance of rural water supply systems. This means that at present the only way to assess functionality or user satisfaction is through surveys.
- A spare parts delivery system (for rural point-systems) that is struggling to become financially viable. This relates both to the distribution of spare parts themselves,

and to the availability of area mechanics who are supposed to provide a link between spare-parts providers and WATSANs, but who in practice often find it difficult to make a living from the work and drift into other activities.

- A lack of clarity as to responsibility for major maintenance and rehabilitation. It is clear under COM that communities are responsible for day to day O&M of schemes. It is largely unclear as to who is responsible for capital maintenance of schemes.

These challenges reflect a systemic weakness in the sector. In other words, they are inherent to and emerge from the broad system (the interlocking web of individuals and organisations, decision-making, rules and relationships) by which domestic water is supplied to rural people. The weakness stems from the recent history of the sector which has been dominated by an understandable emphasis on creating new infrastructure to meet the needs of the unserved. As a result of this focus, the activities, investments and institutions required to ensure that new infrastructure is used as the basis for sustainable service delivery has been overlooked and starved of finance.

The government of Ghana and its agencies are aware of many of these shortcomings (see for example CWSA 2011a) and are taking steps to address at least some of them. For example, a new national Sector Strategic Development Plan (SSDP) is currently in an advanced state of preparation and explicitly addresses many of these issues.

## Description of the Case Study

### **Sustainable Services at Scale (Triple-S)**

Triple-S is a six year learning initiative, led by IRC and financed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Triple-S aims to work at the international level and in Ghana and Uganda to bring about systemic sector change that leads to more sustainable rural water services of better quality being provided to rural users. In Ghana, Triple-S is a key component of a family of projects and activities that address sustainable service delivery and sector knowledge development. Triple-S has been active in Ghana for approximately two years, with three remaining.

For more information see: <http://www.waterservicesthatlast.org/>

The analysis that guides IRC's work in rural water supply in Ghana is therefore that systemic challenges exist to providing sustainable and that these are linked to the historic focus on constructing new schemes during a period of rapid expansion of coverage. The challenge being addressed by CWSA, supported by IRC, is to shift the sector from this historical focus on delivering projects to a new one of providing sustainable services. It is therefore a challenge of organisational and institutional change. The remainder of this paper explains how this is being done, and what the initial results and outcomes have been.

At the time of writing, the process which has been ongoing for approximately 2 years and is at an important transition between national level analysis and action and more active testing of new approaches in the field over the next three years.

### **Service delivery and life-cycle costing**

IRC and partners advocate a Service Delivery Approach to rural water supply. Adopting a service delivery approach means focussing on access by users to the service delivered (rather than only on the construction of hardware). Access to a water service is understood in terms of a user's ability to *reliably and affordably* access a given *quantity* of water, of an acceptable *quality*, at a given *distance* from his or her home. An important element in adopting a service delivery approach is the need to finance all aspects of service delivery over and beyond the lifespan of the infrastructure needed to provide it. This requires a Life-Cycle Cost Approach under which efforts are made to explicitly identify and plan for all expenses related to providing sustained services including: initial capital expenditure, operational and minor maintenance expenditure, capital maintenance expenditure, and the costs of capital. In addition, life cycle costs also include the costs of providing direct support (technical backstopping, training etc.) and indirect support (policy development etc.). see <http://www.washcost.info>

Over the years, working with a large group of like minded organisations and individuals, IRC has helped to develop a comprehensive list of requirements (or building blocks) for a service delivery approach. Among the most important of these are:

- Professionalised community management
- Recognition and promotion of alternative service provider options – including local private operators
- Use of sustainability indicators and targets in monitoring
- Provision of post-construction support to service providers
- Capacity support to local government
- Support to learning and sharing of experiences
- Attention to, and planning for, asset management
- Financial planning frameworks to cover all life-cycle costs
- Regulation of rural services and service providers

(see <http://www.waterservicesthatlast.org/Resources/Building-blocks>)

This list has been used to develop an analytical and planning tool in the form of a principle framework which is being used to guide analysis, planning and reflection on how to bring about the change to providing sustainable water services (Lockwood & Smits, 2011). It was the application of this framework that led to the identification of the challenges to the sector discussed in the previous section, and that subsequently guided the identification of the main building blocks for sustainable services discussed later in the paper.

### **Approach: catalysing and supporting a shift to sustainable service delivery**

As mentioned in the previous section, the different challenges identified are all part of one larger systemic challenge to the sector. At risk of oversimplifying, this challenge can be stated *as the need to bring about a system wide change in the rural water sector from delivering projects to managing services*. Without this change, there is a real risk

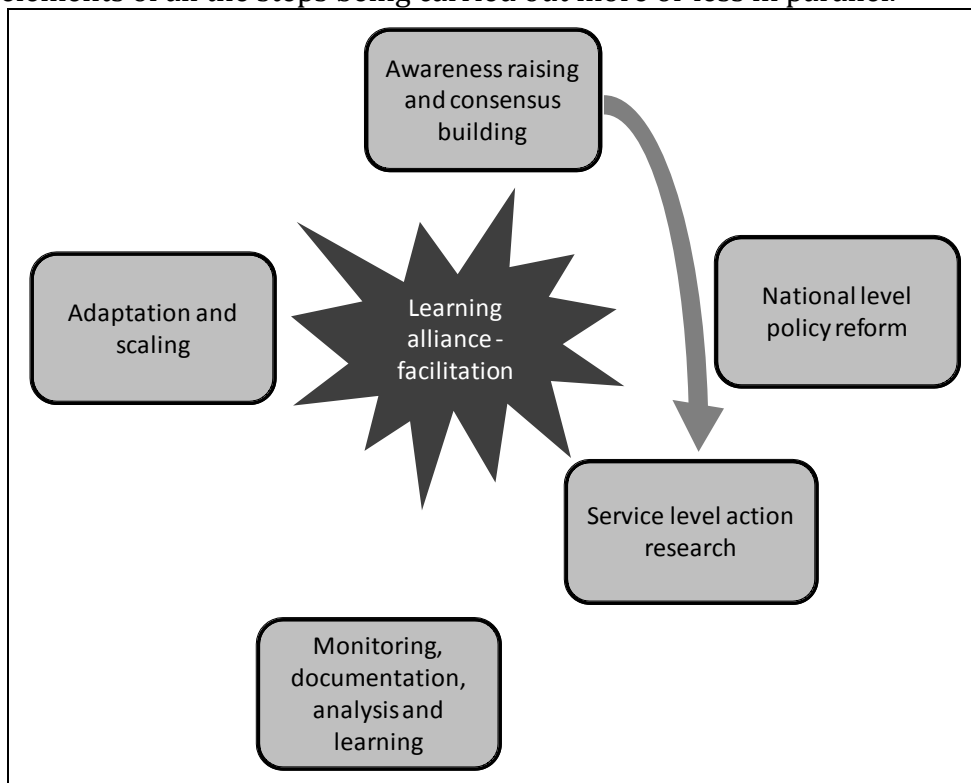


that even as more hardware is built, functionality and service delivery will stagnate – existing services will fail as quickly as new hardware is built.

To address this challenge, CWSA and IRC are facilitating and leading a sector wide change process. This process is shown conceptually in figure 3 and contains the following principal steps:

- 1) **Awareness raising and consensus building.** Studies are used to identify the challenge (for example studies of functionality and service delivery), and a process of dialogue is supported to begin developing a consensus on the need for, and direction of, change.
- 2) **National level policy reform.** Where necessary, weaknesses or ambiguity in policies are identified and remedial actions undertaken.
- 3) **Service level action research.** In parallel to policy reform action research is undertaken at the institutional levels at which service delivery takes place to pilot interventions and to measure their impact.
- 4) **Monitoring, documentation, analysis and learning.** In practice, monitoring and documentation take place throughout the process, however it is during and after action research interventions and policy reform that the lessons learned are analysed and used to further refine the approach.
- 5) **Adaptation and scaling.** Based on the lessons learned the approaches developed are adapted and scaled or replicated elsewhere.

While shown as a series of sequential steps, the reality is of course messier, with elements of all the steps being carried out more or less in parallel.



**Figure 3: Steps in the sector change process**

Through the first steps of this process, Triple-S and CWSA have identified four key building blocks for adopting a service delivery approach. These are:

- Use of a learning alliance approach to guide and embed change
- Use of action research to catalyse desire for change
- Use of hosting and partnering with key sector agencies to generate buy-in
- Use of a flexible outcome based approach to project management

#### *A change focussed learning alliance*

Because providing sustainable water services involves many different actors working at different institutional levels, and because bringing about systemic change means changing ALL of these actors, their behaviours and interactions, IRC and CWSA have adopted a learning alliance approach to guide and support the change process.

This approach brings the different actors together at their respective institutional levels (in Ghana at national, regional, district, scheme and community level) where, aided by facilitators, they analyse both challenges and potential solutions to their part of the service delivery system. At the same time, communication between the different institutional levels is ensured by the facilitators.

**Learning Alliance Approach:** The Learning Alliance Approach is the principal methodology that IRC uses in its change focussed work. The idea behind the learning alliance approach is that in order to solve systemic problems it is necessary to make a systemic intervention. Learning alliances do this by bringing together a wide range of different stakeholders who have a shared interest in an issue (or group of issues), and facilitating through a process of identifying solutions that work. By bringing together practitioners, policy makers and researchers at different institutional levels the approach helps to bridge the gaps between policy and practical implementation. For more detail see: <http://www.irc.nl/page/14957>

As far as possible, existing and recognised groups are used in the learning alliance. Some groups will be generic sector wide groups, while some will be problem or project specific. Some of the groups involved in the work in Ghana include:

- **High Level Retreats:** Under the tutelage of the sector minister, government of Ghana supported by IRC undertakes (approximately) quarterly retreats at which heads of all main sector agencies are present.
- **Sector Working Group:** The Government of Ghana and Development Partners sector working group is an already existing platform for sector coordination and harmonisation.
- **National Learning Alliance Platform:** The Ghana Resource Centre Network (RCN) holds a monthly meeting in Accra, that is open to all and where those actively engaged in the sector are encouraged to share results and engage in discussions. The results are written up and shared (see <http://www.washghana.net/page/1152>)
- **Regional Learning Alliance Platforms:** These have not yet been started, but will shortly do so in three regions. The vision is eventually to have a platform in each of Ghana's ten regions. They will also be guided by RCN.
- **District Level Learning Alliance Platforms:** As the work progresses, district level platforms will be supported in pilot districts where innovation is being carried out.

These will ensure that the district, scheme and user level groups involved in service provision have a platform to share ideas and assess performance of interventions.

- **Project advisory committees:** High level committees drawn from within and beyond the water sector have been established to guide the work. They provide an important platform for engaging with potential champions.
- **Technical committees:** Various technical committees and working groups have been created to deal with specific actions related to the broader work of sector change.
- **Ad-hoc groups and key individuals:** Finally, learning alliances are composed of individuals as well as organisations, and change processes are typically highly reliant on key individuals and champions.

The learning alliance is thus a fluid set of individuals and groups, some more formally constituted some less so; some specific to sustainable rural service delivery some with a broader mandate. The art of applying a learning alliance approach lies in effectively working with all of these various groups, sometimes together in large set-piece events such as workshops, sometimes in informal meetings. The objective is to guide the entire alliance through the steps of the process shown in figure 3 leading to sustainable change.

#### *Action Research*

Both conventional and action research are essential to guide the change process. Conventional research helps to provide a sound basis of data and evidence to guide the work, for example by clearly identifying levels of functionality of boreholes. However, it is action research that is essential to a successful change process. Action research is essentially 'learning by doing'. In an action research approach, stakeholders are actively involved in defining challenges, identifying possible solutions, applying these solutions and assessing the results. Since 2008 IRC and national partners working in a number of different projects and activities have been developing a broad range of evidence as to how the rural water sector is currently functioning. Much of this research has been presented to various sector platforms over the last two years (see for example <http://www.washghana.net/page/1152>, IRC/AGUACONSULT (2011), Adank et al (2012)).

This shared research has provided a firm basis for moving forward, notably by enabling the development of a broadly agreed framework for analysing life-cycle costs for different levels of rural service delivery as well as a set of sustainability and functionality indicators for future monitoring. Building on the list of bottlenecks identified earlier, it has further detailed these to come to a set of concrete remedial activities based on the shared analysis. These activities are discussed in the next section in the context of developing a set of critical building blocks for sustainable service delivery.

As the focus of the work shifts from national to service provision level, action research will be undertaken in three districts where these building blocks will be further tested and refined.

### **Data on functionality helps to open space to discuss solutions**

Findings from the WASHCost project relating to high levels of non-functionality and low levels of service provided by rural point-systems generated understandable resistance from some stakeholders – often in the form of questioning of the approach and representativeness of the data. However, over time, the broader relations of trust developed through working together in the learning alliance have allowed for a more useful discussion about ‘what is meant by a service?’, ‘how can we better measure functionality?’, and ‘how can we improve sustainability?’ to start to develop. From resistance to an unpalatable message there is now movement to a shared search for solutions.

#### *Hosting and partnering*

An important element of implementing the change programme supported by the learning alliance approach is hosting of projects with national partners. The Triple-S initiative is hosted by CWSA in Ghana. Hosting is important in establishing credibility and trust with the agency and ensuring buy-in to the work and is particularly important, given CWSA’s role as lead sector agency. By influencing from within, it has been possible to break through the organizational boundary and to get staff to start to gradually share their innermost challenges, and from there to identifying potential solutions. The hosting relationship has ensured ownership of the process by CWSA and motivated the agency to lead the sector in assessing, naming and framing the issues. The trust and confidence established has allowed the Triple-S team to challenge assumptions and to provoke action. In this way, we have been able to bring about a gradual shift from simply naming and describing the situation to taking concrete steps to implementing solutions.

#### *Outcomes based management*

The final noteworthy aspect of the approach being adopted in the Triple-S project is a flexible and outcome focussed approach to planning and implementing of activities. Guided by learning alliance partners, and particularly the different steering committees for the main activities, it has been possible to take a step by step approach in which only broad outcomes (for example, that rates of breakdown are reduced) are identified at the start of the project, and in which detailed activity based planning takes place on a short horizon (one year or less) based on perceived success (or lack) in implementation of previous steps. Supporting this approach, regular four monthly periods of reflection allow for further adjustment of annual plans to be made.

This approach to project management allows for a highly adaptive, and in the author’s experience effective, manner of project implementation in which dead-ends can be quickly identified and cut off, and high potential new activities taken up.

### **Main results: identification of building blocks for a sustainable rural water sector**

After two years of activity the main result of the Triple-S project is an acknowledgement (at the national level at least) of the need for change. At the same time, a greatly deepened understanding of the main challenges that need to be addressed has been developed, while key activities to address the challenges have been identified and are being carried out.

Clearly much still needs to be done, however the importance of these initial steps should not be downplayed. No change process involving multiple actors can hope for success without broadly based understanding by stakeholders of both the challenges being faced and the outline of potential solutions.

*“CWSA is making a paradigm shift in its operations from focusing on projects to services, the Triple-S initiative is assisting CWSA to take this giant step”.*  
Mr. R.K.D Van-Ess former director of technical services of CWSA

As part of the process of analysis four main building blocks for a sustainable rural sector have been identified, and actions are underway to create or strengthen each of these. It is important to underline that Triple-S is not inventing new models for rural water services in Ghana. Initial analysis has determined that, through the National Community Water and Sanitation Programme and the development of COM management models, the main elements of service delivery for rural communities and small-towns are already in place. Triple-S is, therefore, working with stakeholders to improve, strengthen, consolidate and adapt these existing models: specifically, to make them more effective at delivering services over the long term.

The four building blocks for sustainable rural water service delivery are:

- Overall harmonization and coordination of approaches to the delivery of rural water services in Ghana
- Strengthening District Assemblies (DAs) role as the focal point for delivery of water services within Ghana’s decentralized governance system
- Institutionalizing a well-defined participatory monitoring and evaluation system for rural water services: one that measures both functionality and actual service delivered
- Strengthening the capacity of the sector to flexibly adapt to future challenges by enhancing the link between research and development and by contributing to the generation, sharing and utilization of relevant sector knowledge.

Each of these is explained in more detail in the following sections.

#### *A harmonized and coordinated approach to the delivery of rural water services*

Triple-S Ghana is supporting the rural water sector to establish a harmonized and coordinated approach to delivering water services within the framework of the National Community Water and Sanitation Program. The specific objective is to ensure that there is broad agreement about the post construction arrangements required to guarantee sustainable service and cover full-life cycle costs: specifically, who is responsible for providing post construction support and how it should be financed.

Actions undertaken under this building block seek to address the current situation where various providers of rural water service use different, fragmented and uncoordinated approaches, resulting in post construction management problems that compromise the sustainability of rural water services. To this end, CWSA supported by Triple-S:

- Documenting performance of existing service delivery models and approaches to inform future adaptation
- Reviewing the current cycle of project implementation and post construction to identify what is working and what could be improved
- Engaging in a national dialogue to review, revise and consolidate existing operational documents and to strengthen those parts dealing with post-construction elements of service delivery.
- Supporting a national working group in the development of a national mechanism for financing major rehabilitation as part of a life-cycle costs approach to service delivery.

At the Ministerial, level support measures to promote the adoption of a common and coordinated approach include support to the formulation of a Sector Strategic Development Plan and a Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) as mechanisms for effective harmonization and coordination. It is encouraging that, for the first time ever, the current draft SSDP explicitly deals with post-construction elements of service delivery<sup>1</sup>.

*A framework for local government accountability and oversight within Community Operation and Management (COM)*

A crucial aspect of the change process is the need to strengthen District Assemblies' (DAs) role as the focal point for the delivery of water services. Local government is the legal owner of rural water assets, and is intended to play the role of service authority: overseeing and supporting community management and providing occasional technical back-stopping. Yet this role has never been properly spelt out nor thoroughly tested or costed.

Currently Triple-S, with CWSA, is facilitating a national dialogue to clarify and strengthen the framework for local government accountability and oversight of rural water service delivery. This is referred to as the District Ownership and Management (DOM) concept. Specific activities being undertaken under this dialogue include:

- Support to a national group working on a detailed cost model of the resources needed for post-construction support at regional and district level, as a first step to advocating with government and donors for these costs to be covered
- Support to a national working group developing a DOM 'manual' that will spell out the roles and responsibilities of District Assemblies in rural water service provision

The new DOM framework will be tested and evaluated in three principal pilot districts in Ghana under a concept note developed with CWSA and endorsed by the ministry. In parallel, elements of the approach will be implemented at scale within a major CWSA/World-Bank rural water and sanitation programme, being implemented in 66 districts over the next five years.

---

<sup>1</sup> In the most recent draft of the SSDP, the total financing required for the entire water sector between 2011 and 2025 is approximately 7.5 billion US\$ of which 5.25 is identified as recurrent.

### *A reliable functionality and service delivery tracking system*

Triple-S is supporting the rural water sector to address the underlying causes of low functionality by assisting CWSA to establish a well-defined and participatory monitoring and evaluation system that adequately measures and reports on parameters/indicators for water service delivery in terms of sustainability, functionality and user satisfaction.

Specifically, Triple-S is supporting the development of functionality indicators for inclusion in CWSA's existing monitoring system, as well as testing Sense Maker<sup>2</sup>, an innovative new tool for assessing user-satisfaction of water services. These activities are contributing to a number of other ongoing initiatives by both government and donors all aimed at creating an affordable and usable monitoring system that can serve as the basis for improved accountability and effectiveness in service delivery.

### *A learning-focused sector with the ability to adapt policy and practice on the basis of evidence and lessons learned*

Triple-S is promoting the generation, sharing and utilization of knowledge relevant to the water sector by engaging in sector dialogue and networking activities that support the creation of effective partnerships among sector stakeholders. As well as supporting Ghana's national Resource Centre Network, Triple-S is an active participant in sector events such as the National Water Forum; Coalition of NGOs in Water and Sanitation (CONIWAS) annual Mole conference; the Government of Ghana and Development Partners' sector working group; and the Government of Ghana's high level platform for decision making and sector coordination. Triple-S is promoting the coordination and dissemination of research findings to stakeholders in the sub sector through participation in the RCN's National Level Learning Alliance Platform and will support the establishment of regional and district level learning alliances platforms in its focus areas.

All of these activities are aimed at developing the capacity of sector organisations to take part in learning activities including action research, and to be able to use the outcomes of such activities in the development of policy and modification of practice.

## **Lessons learned**

A number of lessons have been learned in the process of implementing the sector change process described above. These are presented in the following pages, divided between what has worked best, and what has been more challenging.

### *What has worked*

In broad terms what has been found to work has been the **learning alliance approach**, including the use of action research, the hosting of activities by lead sector agencies, and the use of flexible outcome based project management. Some specific areas that have contributed to success include:

- Making lead partner agencies the champions while the project becomes the engine of change has allowed what started as a set of project activities, initiated by an external agent (IRC), to become closer to a national movement.

---

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.sensemaker-suite.com/>

- Taking the time to understand and become part of ongoing processes of change, both within and outside the sector has been important in maintaining relevance and generating buy in. It has allowed Triple-S to act as ‘oil in the machine’ to the broader sector, complementing and linking the efforts of larger actors.
- Devoting time to preparing the ground for change and adaptation, not least by ensuring the flexibility to ‘slow down to gain speed’. Allowing time: to pause and reflect to confirm understanding and achievements; to adapt to the pace of others (for example the project cycle of governments and donors); and to jointly set future priorities.
- Using (action) research as a mechanism for catalysing change by bringing evidence to the table to challenge ingrained perceptions. In the future action research is also expected to serve as a mechanism for testing, confirming and adapting solutions
- A well financed project to support change. Triple-S has significant financing dedicated to facilitating the change process. This financing covers essential aspects such as communications, facilitation, research, planning and monitoring. Triple-S has a team in Ghana of 6 full time professionals including: planning, monitoring and learning; communications; research (currently being recruited); three regional facilitators; and a country team leader. In addition it benefits from considerable resources for technical support from IRC and elsewhere. Triple-S activities in Ghana cost approximately 350,000 Euros in 2010 – and will be maintained at approximately this level for the next three years.

#### **What has worked less well – and other lessons:**

Many of the elements that can be identified as not having worked so well are largely predictable and arguably unavoidable. Trying to bring about change in a large and intricate system such as the rural water sector in Ghana is unavoidably complex. Things will never go ‘as planned’ and planning itself should be treated with a light touch. Many of the most pressing challenges have related to the creating of a project team, as well as working under the outcomes based project management system which, while flexible, can also be challenging to people used to a more formally structured environment.

A real challenge is the need to work to the pace of the sector, which is dominated by the planning cycles of a number of large projects and programmes. This can lead to progress that is frustratingly slow at times, as the time between conceptual agreement and actually seeing ‘practical activities on the ground’ can be long and drawn out.

An early lesson learned was to avoid over identifying with a specific project (e.g. Triple-S) at the expense of the underlying message (service delivery approach). This has an alienating effect on organisations and individuals who are not ‘part of the project’.

Another important lesson has been the need to invest sufficient time in ‘training’ people, especially potential champions, in the underlying concepts of the project (service delivery approach, service delivery models, life-cycle costs, learning alliances etc.). Change makes people uncomfortable and for them to willingly follow a leader into a shared process of learning it is important that they have confidence in the leader. For that confidence to be maintained, it is essential that the leader has a deep understanding of the underlying principles and concepts involved.



Related to this, a mistake that was made in the early stages of the work was to be insufficiently clear with stakeholders as to when a concept or approach was 'fundamental' and when it was 'tentative'. Experience is that many stakeholders are very happy to engage in the uncertainty inherent in undertaking action research, but that they become frustrated when the difference between core concepts that are broadly accepted and more tentative hypotheses is not made clearly and upfront.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After approximately two years of activity, IRC and CWSA working with a broad learning alliance of stakeholders in Ghana's rural water sector, have succeeded in changing the national discourse on rural water services from project to service delivery. They have carried out initial identification of challenges and bottlenecks to achieving sustainability; identified a number of critical building blocks for sustainable service delivery; started to address several of these at the national level, and prepared the ground for testing innovative approaches at district and regional level.

Within the context of Ghana's existing Community Ownership and Management Model the learning alliance has identified four critical building blocks to sustainable service delivery:

- Overall harmonization and coordination of approaches to the delivery of rural water services in Ghana
- Strengthening District Assemblies (DAs) role as the focal point for delivery of water services
- Institutionalizing a well-defined participatory monitoring and evaluation system for rural water services that measures both functionality and actual service delivered
- Strengthening the capacity of the sector to adapt flexibly to future challenges by enhancing the link between research and development and by contributing to the generation, sharing and utilization of relevant sector knowledge.

In addition to the acceptance at national level of the need to shift from project to service delivery, specific successes achieved during this period include:

- Identification, for the first time, of the need for high levels of recurrent expenditure in the draft Water Sector Strategic Development Plan (WSSDP)<sup>3</sup>.
- Establishment of a sector working group on financing capital maintenance
- Establishment of a sector working group on direct support costs
- Establishment of a sector working group on District Ownership and Management (DOM)
- Revising of key sector documents to support service delivery (post-construction activities)

In terms of the approach adopted by Triple-S to bringing about sector change, the learning alliance approach has shown real potential in preparing the ground for a challenging action research led change process. Key concepts of the learning alliance approach, particularly the need for active facilitation between multiple individuals and platforms have been reaffirmed. Specific lessons related to the use of the learning alliance approach include:

- Success in influencing major sector actors/stakeholders to adopt a new approach, strategy and financing regime for rural water supply rests on an ability to change the understanding of personnel in the sector, as well as the operating culture and performance criteria of organizations in the sector. Adequate time and resources are required for the partnering and relationship building processes in order to achieve local ownership and sustained change.

---

<sup>3</sup> In the most recent draft of the SSDP, the total financing required for the entire water sector between 2011 and 2025 is approximately 7.5 billion US\$ of which 5.25 is identified as recurrent.

- Adopting an action research approach within a broad, government led, learning alliance has allowed sector actors to agree on a number of critical gaps and challenges to achieving sustainable service delivery.
- There is good reason to believe that in the coming years the continued use of an action research approach can facilitate the emergence of durable and context specific institutions to deliver rural water services sustainable and equitably.
- Commitment and leadership by Government, particularly CWSA, has been the bedrock for initiating and sustaining systemic reform in the water sector. A critical step towards enhancing government's role of coordination and harmonization is to enhance government leadership in the sector.

In conclusion, while completing the shift from projects to services in the rural water sector will require several more years of experimentation and learning as well as sustained interest, political will and leadership, the first steps have been taken and commitment to the need for change.

Nevertheless it is important to sound a note of caution. One reason for the relatively smooth progress to date is that a great many people in the water sector in Ghana already realised the need for a shift towards service delivery and the over reliance on project finance. Indeed, many CWSA staff were not so much resistant to the message as sceptical as to its reception by other organs of government and by donors. Many of them had tried in the past to make the point about the need for more attention to 'post construction' issues of service delivery. For this reason, the Triple-S project and its underlying message was warmly received by many CWSA staff at national and regional level. The challenges to service delivery come not so much from the sector agencies (or indeed from local government) as from the broader political economy of aid to the WASH sector. The fact that both government (at the political level) and donors have a strong desire to be 'seen to be doing something' – a desire that is most easily met by being seen to **construct** something – is and remains a central challenge facing IRC and CWSA's work in Ghana.

## Glossary

AVRL/GUWC	Aqua Vitens Rand Limited / Ghana Urban Water Company
COM	Community Ownership and Management
CWSA	Community Water and Sanitation Agency
DWST	District Water and Sanitation Team
DWD	District Works Department
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
GoG	Government of Ghana?
GWCL	Ghana Water Company Ltd
KNUST	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
IRC	International Water and Sanitation Centre
lpcd	Litres per person per day
MLGRD	Environmental Health and Sanitation Directorate of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
MMDA	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies
MWRWH	Water Directorate of the Ministry of Water Resources, Works and Housing
O&M	Operations and Maintenance
RCN	Ghana Resource Centre Network
PURC	Public Utilities Regulatory Commission
Triple-S	IRC's Sustainable Services at Scale project
SDA	Service Delivery Approach
SSDP	Sector Strategic Development Plan
SWAp	Sector Wide Approach
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WASHCost	IRC's WASHCost project
WATSAN	Water and Sanitation Committee
WMD	Waste Management Department
WRC	Water Resources Commission
WSSDP	Water Sector Strategic Development Plan
WSDB	Water and Sanitation Development Board

## References

Adank, M., Tuffuor, B., (forthcoming 2012) *Management models for the Delivery of Water Supply Services to the Urban Poor in Ghana*, TPP/RCN, Accra, Ghana

CWSA (2011a) Status of rural water and sanitation in Ghana, presentation at 3<sup>rd</sup> Ghana Water Forum - 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> September 2011. Online available:

<http://ghanawaterforum.files.wordpress.com/2011/09/status-of-rural-water-supply-and-sanitation-in-ghana1.pdf> (accessed September 2011)

CWSA (2011b) *Annual Report*, Community Water and Sanitation Agency, Accra, Ghana

CWSA (2010) *Annual Report*, Community Water and Sanitation Agency, Accra, Ghana

IRC/AGUACONSULT (2011) *Ghana: Lessons for Rural Water Supply. Assessing progress towards sustainable service delivery*. The Hague: IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, and Wivenhoe: Aguaconsult; Online available:

<http://www.waterservicesthatlast.org/Countries/Ghana-Triple-S-initiative/Overview-Country-Report> (accessed September 2011)

JMP (2011) WHO / UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation country data Online available: <http://www.wssinfo.org/data-estimates/table/> (accessed July 2011)

Moriarty, P., Nyarko, K.B., Dwumfour-Asare, B., Appiah-Effah, E., and Obuobisa-Darko, A. (2011a) *Life-cycle costs in Ghana Briefing Note 1: Background and Methodology*, IRC, The Hague, The Netherlands. Available at: <http://www.washcost.info/page/1440> (accessed September 2011)

Moriarty, P., Nyarko, K.B., Dwumfour-Asare, B., Appiah-Effah, E., and Obuobisa-Darko, A. (2011b) *Life-cycle costs in Ghana Briefing Note 4: Access to water services in rural areas and small towns*. IRC, The Hague, The Netherlands. Available at: <http://www.washcost.info/page/1443> (accessed September 2011)

Nyarko, K.B., Dwumfour-Asare, B., Appiah-Effah, E., Moriarty, P., and Obuobisa-Darko, A. (2011) *Life-cycle costs in Ghana Briefing Note 2: Post-construction costs of water point-systems*. IRC, The Hague, The Netherlands, Available at: <http://www.washcost.info/page/1441> (accessed September 2011)

Lockwood, H. and Smits, S. (2011), *Lessons for Rural Water Supply: Moving towards a Service Delivery Approach*, ITDG Publishing, London, UK

Moriarty, P., et al (2010) *Ladders for assessing and costing water service delivery*, IRC, The Hague, The Netherlands. Online available: <http://www.washcost.info/redir/content/download/764/4811/file/Working%20Paper%202%20->

[%20Ladders%20for%20assessing%20and%20costing%20water%20service%20delive  
ry.pdf](#) (accessed September 2011)

RCN (2010) *GHANA WASH News. (Special Mole edition) Fourth Edition* Available at:  
<http://www.washghana.net/page/1003>

RCN (2011a) *GHANA WASH News Fifth Edition* Available at:  
<http://www.washghana.net/page/1123>

RCN (2011b) Triple-S develops sustainability indicators for water service delivery  
<http://www.washghana.net/page/1022>

<b>Contact Details</b> Name of Lead Author: Mrs Vida Duti Email: <a href="mailto:duti@ircghana.org">duti@ircghana.org</a> ; <a href="mailto:vidaduti@gmail.com">vidaduti@gmail.com</a>	Name of Second Author: Patrick Moriarty Email: <a href="mailto:moriarty@Irc.nl">moriarty@Irc.nl</a> Name of Third Author: Emmanuel Tse Gaze Email: <a href="mailto:emmatsegaze@gmail.com">emmatsegaze@gmail.com</a>
--	---