QUALITATIVE DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Review of International WASH Policy

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Supporting water sanitation
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This report sets out the results of an analysis of leading development partner policy documents at the international level in the Rural WASH Sector. Using a methodology called Qualitative Document Analysis, key documents were rated against criteria derived from the 10 building blocks of sustainable service delivery (Lockwood, Smits 2011) and findings compared with the 2011 study

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Abbreviations

AfDB	African Development Bank
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
DP	Development Partner
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
EWB	Engineers Without Boarders
GWS	Ghana Work-stream (Triple S)
IRC	International Water and Sanitation Centre
IWS	International Work-stream (Triple S)
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
QDA	Qualitative Document Analysis
Triple-S	Sustainable Services at Scale
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UWS	Uganda Work-stream (Triple S)
WASH	Water and Sanitation and Hygiene

Executive Summary

To assess the take-up of a service delivery approach in the rural water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector, we conducted two studies of international development partners' policy documents: an initial review of policies dated 2008 and before, undertaken in 2011, and a subsequent review of more recent documents, undertaken in 2014. The assessments used qualitative document analysis (QDA), a research method for rigorously and systematically analysing written materials. We then compared the extent to which the two sets of documents addressed the principles ('building blocks') of sustainable service delivery, as articulated by the Triple-S (Sustainable Services at Scale) programme.

The results show that development partners' more recent WASH policy documents performed better than those analysed in the 2011 review, especially in relation to professionalisation of community management, recognition of alternative service provider options and regulation of rural services and service providers. Details on asset management and financing to cover all life-cycle costs remain elusive, as in the earlier documents, but trends among the newer documents are promising.

Although documents alone can by no means give a complete picture of an organisation's approach and activity, they are strongly indicative of where efforts and aims are focussed. QDA as a research technique is therefore best used in conjunction with other methods to map and understand sector change. It is hoped that these findings can feed into productive discussions on sector improvement to help build sustainable rural water services.

1   Introduction

To understand trends and progress in the rural water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector and also to engage development partners in identifying areas for improvement that could move the sector closer to sustainable service delivery at scale, Triple-S conducted two analyses of selected international agencies' policies, using qualitative document analysis (QDA). The first effort, in 2011, analysed policy documents produced in or before 2008, the year the Triple-S initiative began. The second round, in 2014, analysed the available policy documents produced between 2008 and 2014 by the same development partners. This before-and-after approach was designed to show to what extent the content and areas of focus of policy documents had changed in the initiative's six years. This paper discusses the findings from the second analysis and compares them with those from the first. Analysis of the first round of documents can be found at: http://www.ircwash.org/resources/qualitative-document-analysis-policy-document-review

2   Methodology

QDA is a research method used in political science for rigorously and systematically analysing the contents of written documents. (Altheide, 1996; Wesley, 2011) In QDA, the meaning and implications of text are analysed, rather than simply the presence of key words. The focus on written documents distinguishes QDA from other forms of political science research that analyse spoken or written discourse. In our application of QDA, we assessed the extent to which documents aligned with the elements of sustainable service delivery, as articulated in the Triple-S building blocks of sustainable service delivery. The building blocks and the rationale for the selection of this framework are discussed in the next section.

The findings from such an analysis of policy documents can provide interesting insights into the priorities and approaches used by development partners. However, QDA findings should serve as only one source of information about policy: apparent trends should be triangulated with other sources. Nonetheless, such findings on a stand-alone basis can serve as a platform for discussion and further analysis (limitations are discussed in Section 2.4).

The QDA method has also been applied by Triple-S to international 'practice' documents and to policy documents in Ghana and Uganda. Findings from these analyses can be accessed via the IRC website.

The application of QDA by Triple-S in the review of international policy documents comprised the following stages:

(i)   determining a framework for analysis;
(ii)   selecting documents;
(iii)   assessing the documents for the elements of sustainable service delivery;
(iv)   validating the results; and
(v)   analysing the results.

These stages are discussed below.

2.1 Framework for analysis: Building blocks

The framework for analysis adopted for the research was the Triple-S building blocks, a set of factors or elements identified by the Triple-S team in a 13-country study (Lockwood and Smits, 2011) as being central to the shift towards sustainable service delivery at scale in the rural water sector. We recognise that this is only one of several frameworks that could be used to assess or guide sustainable service approaches. It was selected as appropriate for this type of research because of its conceptual nature (as opposed to frameworks used for project monitoring, such as the USAID-Rotary WASH Sustainability Index tool) and its applicability to any location or approach. Table 1 briefly describes the 10 building blocks; detailed descriptions can be accessed at: www.ircwash.org/buildingblockbriefings.

Table 1   Building blocks of sustainable service delivery

Building block	Brief description
Professionalisation of community management	Community management entities are supported to move away from voluntary arrangements towards more professional service provision that is embedded in local and national policy, legal, and regulatory frameworks.
Recognition and promotion of alternative service provider options	Range of management options beyond community management, such as self-supply and public-private partnerships, is formally recognised in sector policy and supported.
Monitoring service delivery and sustainability	Monitoring systems track indicators of infrastructure functionality, service provider performance, and levels of service delivered against nationally agreed norms and standards.
Harmonisation and coordination	Harmonisation and coordination are improved among donors and government, and all actors (both government and nongovernment) align with national policies and systems.
Support to service providers	Structured system of direct (post-construction) support is provided to back up and monitor community management entities and other service providers.
Capacity support to local government	On-going capacity support is provided to service authorities (typically local governments) to enable them to fulfil their role (planning, monitoring, regulation, etc.) in sustaining rural water services.
Learning and adaptive management	Learning and knowledge management are supported at national and decentralised levels to enable the sector to adapt based on experience.
Asset management	Systematic planning, inventory updates, and financial forecasting for assets are carried out, and asset ownership is clearly defined.
Regulation of rural services and service providers	Services delivered and service provider performance are regulated through mechanisms appropriate for small rural operators.
Financing to cover all life-cycle costs	Financial frameworks account for all life-cycle costs, especially major capital maintenance, support to service authorities and service providers, monitoring and regulation.

2.2 Selection of documents for review

The first round of QDA entailed an analysis of 11 development partners' policy and strategy documents published in and before 2008 (the year Triple-S began). The institutions and organisations considered for the review were those with which Triple-S was actively engaged. However, some organisations (e.g., the World Bank and USAID) did not have policy documents available at the time of the review and were therefore not included.

For the second round of QDA, the initial intention was to analyse policies from the same development partners as in the first round. However, some organisations whose documents were included in the first round did not have new policy documents at the time of our second review.

Table 2 lists the documents reviewed in both rounds and the organisations that produced them. For four of the organisations, a previous document was still in effect in 2014 (e.g., UNICEF's policy extends to 2015), but others had not released new policies even though the terms of their previous policies had ended. We therefore widened our criteria to consider organisations that had not been included in the first round and selected one additional organisation, USAID, which released its first WASH-related policy guidance in 2013.

Table 2   Documents reviewed

Development partner	First round (documents dated 2008 and before)	Second round (documents dated 2009–2014)
Africa Development Bank (AfDB)	Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Initiative: Framework for Implementation (2005)	Strategic Plan 2012–2015: Delivering Basic Water Supply and Sanitation to Rural Africa, Rural Water Supply & Sanitation Initiative (2013)
Australia Agency for International Development (AusAID)[1]	Making Every Drop Count: Water and Australian Aid (2003)	Saving Lives: Improving Public Health by Increasing Access to Safe Water and Sanitation (2011)
Denmark's Development Cooperation	Financing Mechanisms for Peri-Urban, Small Towns and Rural Water Supply: Good Practice Paper (2007)	No new document available
UK Department for International Development (DFID)	Water: An Increasingly Precious Resource; Sanitation: A Matter of Dignity (2002)	No new document available
Engineers without Borders, Canada	Malawi Water and Sanitation Program: Water Point Functionality and Distribution Strategy 2009–2012	No new document available
European Commission	Europeaid: Water Sector Development and Governance Complementarities and Synergies between Sector-Wide Approach and Integrated Water Resource Management (2009)	No new document available

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[1] After the first round of QDA, AusAID was restructured and incorporated into the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT); however, for consistency we continue to refer to the development partner as AusAID.

Development partner	First round (documents dated 2008 and before)	Second round (documents dated 2009–2014)
	European Commission: Programming Guide for Strategy Papers: Water and Sanitation (2008) European Union Water Initiative: Strategy for Development of the EUWI (2006)	
Inter American Development Bank	Water and Sanitation Initiative (2007)	Policy still active
Living Water International	Strategic Plan Summary 2011–2015 (2011)	Strategy still active
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	UNICEF Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Strategies for 2006–2015 (2006)	Strategy still active
US Agency for International Development (USAID)	No policy or strategy document available	Water and Development Strategy 2013–2018 (2013)
WaterAid	Wateraid's Strategy 2005–2010 (2005)	WaterAid's Global Strategy 2009–2015 (2009)
Water for People	Strategic Plan 2010–2014 (2010)	Strategy still active

2.3 Assessment, validation and overall analysis

Each document was analysed to determine the extent to which it aligned with the building blocks of a service delivery approach. The meaning and context of text (including the type of document being analysed) were considered to ensure a fair and impartial assessment. Following the methodology and guidance for transparency, all assessments of alignment were supported by explanations and quotations from the text to provide an auditable rationale for assessments.

The alignment with each building block was categorised as follows:

- **High alignment.** The policy strongly and clearly supports the implementation of a Triple-S building block approach. Score: 4.
- **Partial alignment.** The policy supports the implementation of a Triple-S building block, although less clearly and distinctly. Score: 3.
- **Limited alignment.** The document provides some detail, but evidence that it aligns with the building block or supported a particular approach is limited. Score: 2.
- **Unclear alignment.** The element is mentioned briefly, but details that would indicate alignment are lacking. Score: 1.
- **No alignment.** There is no evidence that the building block has been addressed or very little evidence to suggest that such an approach would be encouraged. Score: 0.

The analysis was undertaken by a primary reviewer and validated by a secondary reviewer. Any instances of disagreement in the categorisation of alignment were discussed by the two reviewers and a final decision about the categorisation was then jointly made. The scoring

results and raw analysis for both stages of assessment and validation for all reviewed documents are available on request[2].

Once the results of the document analysis were agreed upon, the researchers aggregated the results for the overall group of documents and the individual organisations, and also compared them against the first-round documents.

2.4 Limitations of QDA method

The QDA exercise provides information about the policy documents of development partners in relation to the 10 building blocks of the service delivery approach. However, written documents may not fully capture the approaches of an organisation. Other sources of information that could be used to triangulate and strengthen confidence in the findings of this desk-based QDA include on-the-ground assessments and stakeholder interviews. The QDA exercise should therefore be seen as just one way to better understand policies and practices in the water sector. With greater resources, the scope of the analysis could be widened.

Some additional clarifications and caveats are important to bear in mind when considering the findings:

Number of documents reviewed. Because QDA is labour intensive, only a limited number of documents were reviewed. That several development partners have not updated their formal policies should not be taken to mean that they have not altered their practices over the review period. A detailed assessment of a single development partner or a single programme would require analysing additional documents.

Type of documents reviewed. Each development partner invests a different level of time and effort in its policy documents, and the documents reviewed were different in type and style. Each has a different level of detail, scope and focus in line with the intended audience and purpose. Unlike more formal government policies, which often follow a prescribed format, policies developed by international NGOs tend to be less uniform and conform instead to each organisation's internal aims and mission. The findings do not therefore represent an overall picture of a development partner's activities; comparison between development partners is not intended.

Using averages and scoring. A document's alignment with each of the 10 building blocks was graded, and its 10 scores were then averaged to give an overall score. As with all averages, caution must be taken not to infer that these scores represent anything other than a general picture. For a detailed understanding of how each document was assessed and performed, it is necessary to look further into the individual scores and the documents themselves.

Language and functionality of policy. Policy as a political language is inherently difficult to accurately translate into a quantitative score. The averages used here to illustrate change are primarily indicative of trends and bigger-picture issues. The scoring of a policy document in relation to the building blocks does not therefore represent an evaluation of its intrinsic functionality as policy of the organisation.

Identification of trends. General comment is made only where the findings strongly indicate a significant trend across development partners and document types. Although this limits the

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[2] For the full assessment and validation notes and scoring, please contact Richard Ward at: r.ward@aguaconsult.co.uk.

number of findings, it reinforces their credibility and importance where such trends clearly can be identified.

3   Findings

The presentation of findings begins with a brief overview of each policy document and a comparison with its previous version. After this, more detailed findings are presented about each building block. Comparisons across the groups of documents identify broader trends.

3.1   WaterAid: Global Strategy 2009–2015

The overall aim of WaterAid's Global Strategy 2009–2015 is to realise the ambition 'that by 2015 a further 25 million people will have access to safe water, improved hygiene and sanitation as a direct result of our work; and that by influencing the policies and practices of governments and service providers we will have reached a further 100 million people'. To achieve this, they will 'look at the wider context affecting water and sanitation services including the marginalisation of communities, rapid urbanisation, increasingly stressed water resources, a changing and unpredictable climate and economic and political instability'.

WaterAid has made clear improvements in policy regarding professionalisation of community management and recognition of alternative service providers, as well as Harmonisation and Coordination, compared with the 2011 document. There is a slight change in asset management and regulation: limited mention where there was none or very little before. Continued high scores were awarded for the document's treatment of support to service providers, capacity support to service authorities and learning and adaptive management. Overall, the average score rises from 1.25 in 2011 to 2.2 in 2014. In no areas did WaterAid's policy score lower than in the first round.
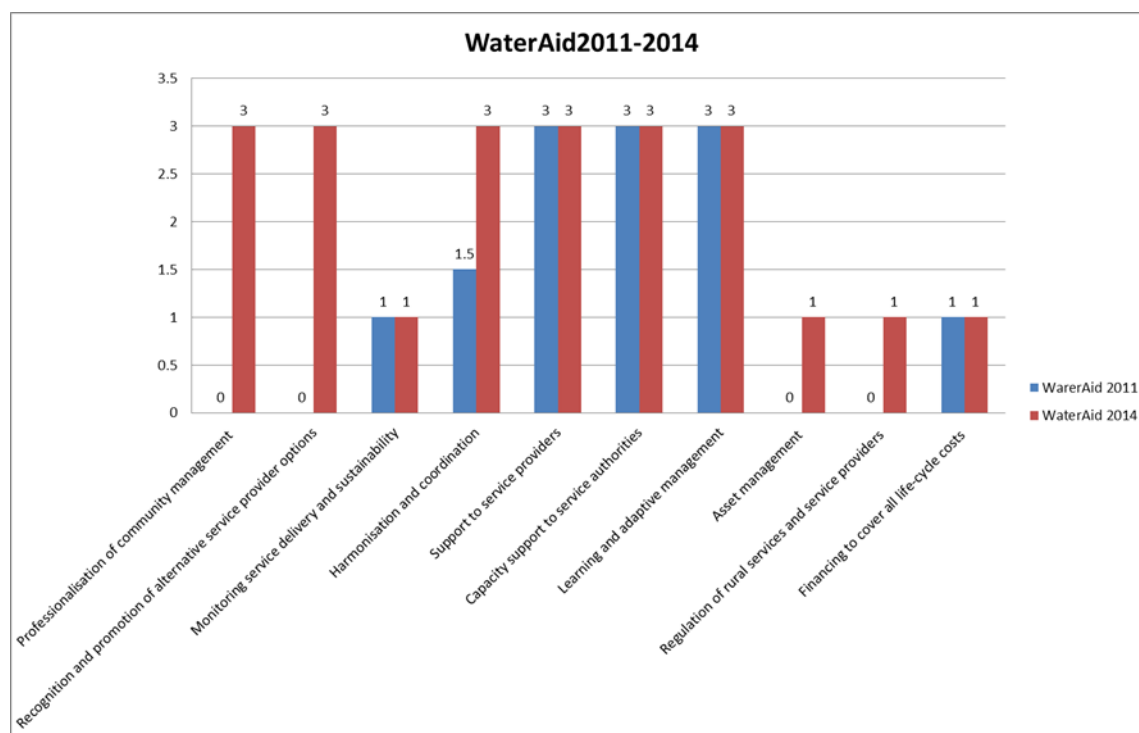

Figure 1   WaterAid 2011 and 2014 scores, by building block

Both reviewers felt the policy was highly aligned with the aim of professionalisation of community management. The problem of longevity and capacity at community levels is highlighted, as is the need to formalise ownership and responsibilities with regard to other sector actors, including an articulation of rights for service delivery. The score, 3, is a significant improvement over the 2011 document, which scored 0 for this building block.

The link between improved capacity at the local level and long-term sustainability is clearly made, and this is also reflected in the assessment of the document's recognition and promotion of alternative service provider options. The limited ability of communities to manage and maintain services without adequate support is well articulated, and alignment was considered high. This is another significant improvement: the 2011 policy document did not directly indicate alignment with this building block.

The document scores the same, 1, for monitoring service delivery and sustainability as in the 2011 review. WaterAid recognise a 'lack of performance monitoring of progress against plans' (p.15) and say that 'Poor monitoring of water and sanitation facilities and a lack of credible data undermines efforts to improve the equity and effectiveness of investments' (p.16). However, the document fails to distinguish clearly amongst programme monitoring, infrastructure mapping and levels of service delivery.

References to Harmonisation and Coordination have improved, raising the score from 1.3 to 3. Under the heading 'Challenges and opportunities' the problem of Harmonisation and Coordination is clearly articulated: 'at the national level there is often poor coordination between the various actors engaged in sanitation and water' (p.15). WaterAid has pledged to 'hold institutions to account and demand action through initiatives such as the Global Framework for Action on Water and Sanitation which calls for water and sanitation plans to be coordinated at all levels' (p.19).

The WaterAid strategy was also assessed as highly aligned with support to service providers, as it was in the 2011 review. This alignment is illustrated, for example, by WaterAid's commitment to 'Support and strengthen the capacity of organisations to effectively participate in decision-making processes and the delivery of water, hygiene and sanitation (p.12) and to 'strive for sustainability in all areas of work by promoting appropriate and affordable technology and developing the management capacities needed to maintain these services' (p.16).

As in 2011, the strategy was also found highly aligned with capacity support to local government, its second overarching aim is to support governments and service providers in developing their capacity to deliver safe water, improved hygiene and sanitation (p.15). WaterAid has also committed to support and strengthen the capacity of organisations to effectively participate in decision-making processes and the delivery of water, hygiene and sanitation (p.12).

Another building block with consistent high alignment between 2011 and 2014 is learning and adaptive management. To be a learning organisation is one of WaterAid's values: 'At WaterAid learning is central to our work. We continually review, refine and adapt our methods and our thinking to make sure that our work is sustainable, innovative, relevant and effective' (p.14), and 'We work with local organisations and learn from global advances to ensure we promote the most appropriate solutions. We share our knowledge to maximise our impact.' Although detail is scant, learning and adaptation are identified as a core value.

The 2011 policy review scored 0 for <u>asset management,</u> and the 2014 review shows some limited improvement. Although the more recent document highlights monitoring financial flows as necessary for more effective targeting and notes a lack of data to track progress, it makes little specific mention of ongoing management of assets, beyond what could perhaps be associated with general monitoring. The document was therefore rated as having limited alignment.

References to <u>regulation of rural services and service providers</u> also marginally improved, from 0 to limited (1). A section on challenges and opportunities in sector governance mentions problems with national regulation: 'At the national level there is often poor coordination between the various actors engaged in sanitation and water, inadequate regulation and a lack of performance monitoring of progress against plans' (p.15). Significant detail on regulatory mechanisms suitable to a rural context is lacking, however.

For <u>financing to cover all life-cycle costs,</u> the document was graded as limited alignment, as it was in the 2011 review. Lack of sufficient funding is clearly articulated as a problem: 'Finance for water and sanitation lags way behind that of other areas of human development such as health and education. We will continue to advocate for more money to be invested in water, hygiene and sanitation—from both national governments and international donors' (p.19). However, there is insufficient detail on the specifics of financing to cover life-cycle costs.

3.2 African Development Bank Strategic Plan 2012–2015

The AfDB Strategic Plan 2012–2015 has five components: Component 1, Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (RWSS) Initiative and RWSSI-TF Governance; Component 2, RWSS Subsector Governance and Enabling Environment; Component 3, RWSS Investments; Component 4, Sustainability of RWSS Systems; and Component 5, Increased Knowledge Management and Communication (which covers subsector monitoring and evaluation). Each is tracked via performance indicators, structured around an impact-outcome results chain of 'objectively verifiable indicators' with a baseline, future targets and corresponding means of verification, along with risks and mitigation measures.

The alignment of AfDB's plan with the Triple-S building blocks for sustainable service delivery improved in six categories. Asset management achieved a score of partial alignment, up from a score of zero (no alignment) in 2011. Professionalisation of community management, recognition and support for alternative service providers and financing to cover life-cycle costs all highly aligned, which is very encouraging. Overall, the average score improved from 1.7 to 2.5.
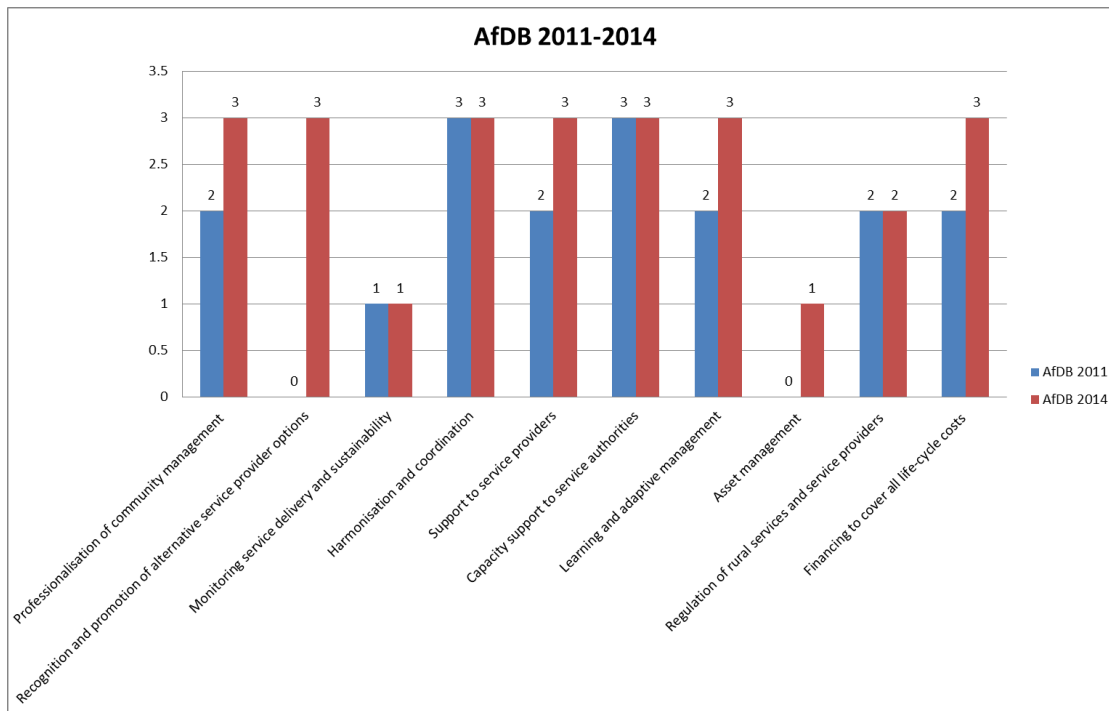
Figure 2   African Development Bank 2011 and 2014 scores, by building block

Multiple strands of AfDB's new component strategies appear to support the professionalisation of community management, often via participatory approaches. This includes a continuation of several 'framework for implementation' approaches, in operation since 2004. The rating therefore improved from partial to high alignment.

The new document addresses recognition and promotion of alternative service provider options in numerous ways and was rated highly aligned, up from a rating of 0 in the 2011 review. For example, AfDB has pledged to 'support an increased number of small community and private water operators' (p.11), and via their existing framework for implementation approaches, they also 'support and promote targeted policy reforms ... enhanced private sector participation' (p.33). The close association of regulation to private sector alternative supply methods is one detail that led the reviewers to rate this element of AfDBs policy as highly aligned.

AfDB's strategies to promote monitoring service delivery and sustainability showed no improvement and were scored as having limited alignment. Although monitoring is identified as a weakness and an area of challenge, there is little detail on what form monitoring and evaluation should take. Emphasis on sustainability in general has not translated into an explicit emphasis on monitoring for service delivery. The broad commitment to monitoring is commendable, but detail is limited.

Overall, AfDB appear to be committed to Harmonisation and Coordination as was the case in 2011, and the strategic plan was rated as highly aligned with this building block. Sector-wide approaches, as per the Paris Declaration, form a cornerstone of the strategy. Component 2 specifically refers to enhanced sector dialogue and coordination. AfDB also reference the Marseille Declaration on Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Initiative and the African Water Facility (March 2012), and in line with their position in the sector, they emphasise donor collaboration.

Alignment with support to service providers improved from partial to highly aligned. For example, Component 2 reads, 'support an increased number of small community and private water operators, appropriate and independent regulation of RWSS services and service providers, ensure affordability of services, develop/establish supply chains, and advocate for improved [operation and maintenance] budgeting and training for service providers'.

Capacity support to local government also demonstrated high alignment. For example, two outputs for Component 4 are 'Pro-sustainability institutional systems established and strengthened', and 'Sustainability of RWSS infrastructure enhanced'. The related issues of ongoing decentralisation, coupled with the need to ensure that those systems and organisations have the ability and resources to undertake their roles, are well thought out and addressed via lessons and challenge sections. This detail reinforces the 2011 strategy, which was also rated high for capacity support.

The document's embrace of learning and adaptive management was rated high, improving from partial alignment in 2011. The strategy itself is an example of learning and adaptation: assessments, learning and key recommendations sections and Component 5, Increased Knowledge Management and Communication (which covers monitoring and evaluation), all aim "at strengthening the generation, dissemination and utilisation of the rural subsector's knowledge at the bank and in RMCs(Regional Member Countries) for impact." (p 11)

Asset management is not specifically mentioned; however, multiple aspects of its constituents are clearly indicated, and therefore alignment was judged to be limited. This is an improvement on the score for 2011, when no evidence of this building block was found.

For regulation of rural services and service providers, AfDB will 'support an increased number of small community and private water operators, appropriate and independent regulation of RWSS services and service providers' (p.11). Component 2 highlights the need for increased transparency and reporting and the 'realisation of the human right to water and sanitation and gender mainstreaming.' These are components of any regulatory environment, however. As in 2011, there is insufficient detail to justify a rating better than partial.

For financing to cover all life-cycle costs, the document was judged to be highly aligned, improving from partial alignment in 2011. Component 4, Sustainability of RWSS Systems, directly addresses life-cycle costing: 'Service Providers will adopt a more integrated approach encompassing the water resources endowment and watersheds as well as beneficiary livelihoods to better assess, plan, design and manage for RWSS infrastructure sustainability and the systems that enhance it. Greater emphasis will be put on lifecycle costs and sustainability considerations in designing the RWSSI programmes'. (p 24)

3.3 AusAID: Saving Lives: Improving Public Health by Increasing Access to Safe Water and Sanitation

The policy of AusAID (previously an independent agency, now part of the Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade) is neatly summarised in the introduction to the document:

Increasing access to safe water and sanitation is one of the ten development objectives of the Australian aid program. Access to safe water and basic sanitation combined with good hygiene behaviours (WASH) underpins Australia's ability to deliver public health outcomes and significant economic benefits for developing countries. Australia's approach will centre on three pillars: 1.

Increased access to safe water and basic sanitation: Facilitate increased access to safe water and basic sanitation that results in the provision of universally accessible facilities 2. Improved hygiene behaviour: Support the development of increased capacity to ensure hygiene promotion services bring about sustainable behaviour change 3. Creating sustainable services: Support policies and strategies to keep services operating through effective governance and partnerships with multilateral agencies, civil society and business. (p 2)

Significant change between the 2011 and 2014 documents is apparent in recognition and promotion of alternative service provider options, regulation of rural services and service providers, and harmonisation and coordination. The low score for learning and adaptive management is out of line with the document as a whole, as well as other documents in the study. The average score rose from 1.45 to 2.3.
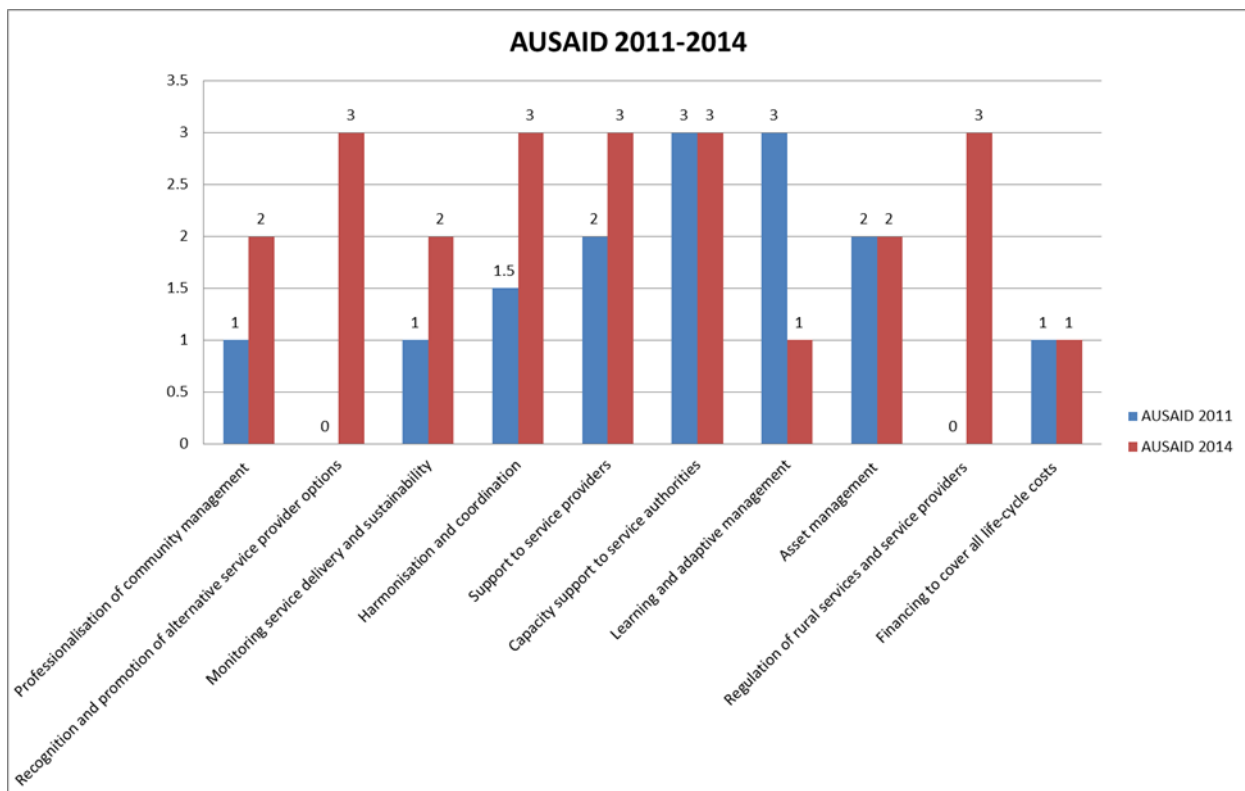
Figure 3   AUSAid 2011 and 2014 scores, by building block

The policy's support for <u>professionalisation of community management</u> improved from limited in 2011 to partial alignment in 2014. The most relevant section is Pillar 3, Creating Sustainable Services. Although professionalisation is not explicitly mentioned, the document makes multiple references to public-private partnerships, regulation and capacity building. Nevertheless, the primary policy focus appears to still be voluntary management.

The document was scored as highly aligned for <u>recognition and promotion of alternative service provider options</u>. The strategy repeatedly mentions collaboration with the private sector and civil society partners for service delivery. No similar evidence was found in the 2011 review, and this therefore represents a significant area of change.

<u>Monitoring service delivery and sustainability</u> is not covered in a great level of detail under Pillar 3. However, the number of additional water and sanitation service providers monitored

independently is listed as an outcome indicator. This aspect of the policy was therefore rated as partial alignment, a slight improvement over the score of limited in the 2011 review.

The reviewers saw a high level of support for harmonisation and coordination in the emphasis on government-led intervention and fee structures. AusAID recognise that 'In many cases the resources allocated for WASH infrastructure need to be used more efficiently and align with investments by partner governments, private sector and other donors to deliver real results' (p.8).

The document's mention of support to service providers was also assessed as highly aligned, improving from partial in 2011. Both challenges and strategies are focussed on supporting sustainable service providers. 'Gains made in increasing coverage are at risk due to low sustainability. In many cases services are of poor quality and not reliable. The Australian Government will therefore help developing country governments promote reforms that support long-term service delivery' (p.7).

As in 2011, the document was rated as highly aligned for capacity support to local government. AusAID has pledged to 'include improving governance and strengthening the ability of organisations to deliver WASH services, recover costs, improve investment planning and private sector development' Furthermore, as part of Pillar 3, 'Australia will support activities that help introduce and develop appropriate management models and improve the skills of service providers, both management and staff. There will be a focus on building capacity, cost recovery and water safety planning at local government levels, recognising the trend of national governments to decentralise service delivery' (p.7).

For learning and adaptive management, the document was rated as being of limited alignment. There was no mention of internal learning processes or adaptive management. Some focus on knowledge sharing was apparent, however: 'Investment support for WASH infrastructure will be complemented by global engagement on policy, knowledge management, research and capacity building work to improve effectiveness and sustainability through co-financing projects with the Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank and World Bank' (p.9). The score is lower than for the 2011 document, which had greater specific emphasis on online learning, training courses and research funding.

The document's treatment of asset management was rated partial alignment, the same as in the 2011 review. According to AusAID, 'Sustainable water and sanitation services need to be well managed with assets well maintained. This requires spare parts supply chains and establishing ways for citizens to engage with service providers. Australia will support activities that help introduce and develop appropriate management models and improve the skills of service providers, both management and staff'−an apparent reference to asset management.

For regulation of rural service providers, two sections under Pillar 3 led to a score of high alignment: 'Fair and transparent regulation encourages investors to invest in the sector, service providers to operate good quality services and consumers to pay for those services', and 'Australia will support developing country governments to create fee structures that are equitable, affordable and sustainable, including for the poorest people' (p.7). This is a significant improvement over 2011, when the policy made no mention of regulation of rural service providers.

Regarding <u>financing to cover all life-cycle costs,</u> although sustainable fee structures are mentioned—for example, 'Australia will support developing country governments to create fee structures that are equitable, affordable and sustainable, including for the poorest people' (p.7)— there are few specifics on life-cycle costing. The score, limited alignment, is unchanged from the 2011 score.

3.4 USAID Water and Development Strategy 2013–2018

USAID has described their first WASH programming strategy as follows:

A balanced WASH program has three interdependent pillars: (1) hardware (e.g., water and sanitation infrastructure); (2) the promotion of behavior change; and (3) support to an enabling policy and institutional environment. USAID support will generally include interventions within all three pillars of the framework, with different levels of emphasis in each area as determined by the development context. Three categories, transformative, leveraged, and strategic priority, will be used to review budget priorities and to determine expected impacts from WASH programs during the development of a CDCS (Country Development Cooperation Strategy).

Because a previous USAID document is lacking, USAID's new policy was compared with the other three documents assessed in 2014. It was rated slightly lower for professionalisation of community management, recognition of alternative service provider options and regulation and support for service providers than the average for the other three, but it firmly supports the broad principle of providing more sustainable services. The average score is 1.9.
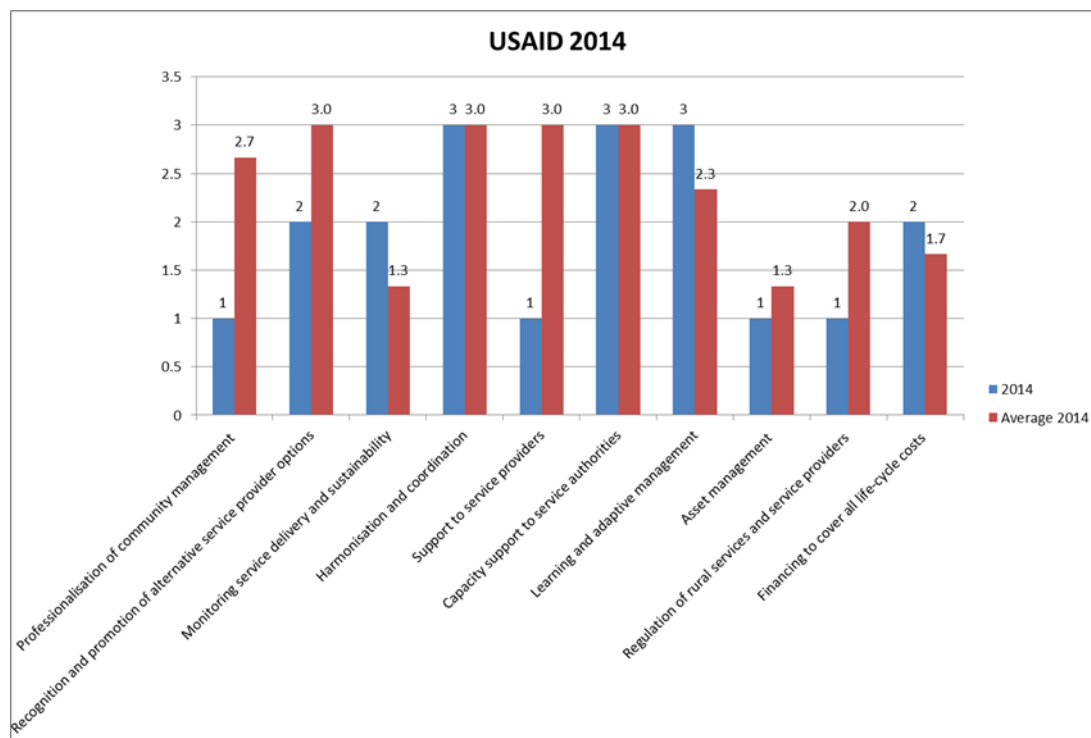
Figure 4   USAID 2014 scores and other documents' 2014 averages, by building block

The alignment of the USAID policy with <u>professionalisation of community management</u> was rated as unclear. However, given the high-level view of the document and its strategic purpose

in setting out the basics of USAID's overall response to WASH programming, it is not necessarily expected that this aspect of service delivery would be explicitly discussed.

A score of partial alignment was awarded for the document in <u>recognition and promotion of alternative service provider options</u>. The private sector is mentioned in relation to service delivery: 'Increased support to small scale, private water suppliers will also increase service access, particularly in smaller towns, peri urban neighborhoods, and rural communities relying on non networked, decentralized systems' (p.11). Furthermore, 'Private sector partnerships should focus on promoting market based models of service delivery to mobilize local entrepreneurs to provide water related products and services along the entire value chain' (p.19). However, options beyond the private sector are not highlighted.

Regarding <u>monitoring service delivery and sustainability,</u> USAID propose to 'seek investments in longer term monitoring and evaluation of its water activities in order to assess sustainability beyond the typical USAID Program Cycle and to enable reasonable support to issues that arise subsequent to post completion of project implementation' (p.2). Lack of specific reference to service provider monitoring against nationally agreed norms warrants a score of partial alignment.

USAID's approach to <u>harmonisation and coordination</u> was rated as highly aligned. For example, 'Collaborative relationships with other multilateral and bilateral donors, with local and international banks, and with financing institutions to increase attention to small and medium scale financing should be strengthened' (p.12). Specific coordination between donors is also highlighted: 'The Strategy supports a more concerted effort to encourage strategic relationships with bilateral and multilateral donors. Achieving the Strategy's goals will require concerted effort to leverage support through multilateral development banks and credit authority mechanisms ...' (p.19).

Although <u>support to service providers</u> is mentioned and the Foreign Assistance Act is referenced for 'Encouraging capacity building to strengthen the ability of host countries to develop, manage and implement water programs and practice watershed management' (p.6), detail is lacking with respect to follow-up support to community management (or other service providers) to maintain services, perhaps reflecting the high-level orientation of the document. A score of limited alignment was awarded.

The policy offers greater detail about <u>capacity support to local government </u>however, and this element of the policy was rated as highly aligned: 'To accelerate access to water, USAID should support, when adequate resources are available, decentralization of responsibilities. This requires capacity building of local governments to engage communities, mobilization of financing for both system expansion and operations and maintenance, and oversight of public and private sector service providers' (p.11). The rationale for doing so is to encourage long-term sustainability: 'By focusing on capacity building and leveraging local partners, programs can minimize overreliance on donors and bolster lasting sustainability. Supporting governance structures, regulations and policies to expand access to safe water and sanitation services' (p.12).

The policy scored partial alignment for <u>learning and adaptive management</u> because of references to general learning activities: 'This learning agenda will identify and disseminate lessons learned and best practices, including developing quantitative indicators and models related to the two SO (Strategic Objectives). This should include collaborative research on the most effective integrated projects that combine water programs with other Agency program areas, such as

global health, food security, conflict, education, and climate change' (p.21). Paucity of detail likely reflects the high-level nature of the document.

The lack of specific references to asset management explains why the policy scored unclear for this building block, although asset management would not be discouraged under any of USAID's policies, either. Regulation of rural services and service providers is only briefly mentioned, under the Foreign Assistance Act—'Supporting governance structures, regulations and policies to expand access to safe water and sanitation services' (p.66)—and therefore the document was rated unclear for this building block as well.

The document offers little detail on financing to cover all life-cycle costs, even though longer-term financing is highlighted as necessary: 'To accelerate access to water, USAID should support, when adequate resources are available, decentralization of responsibilities. This requires capacity building of local governments to engage communities, mobilization of financing for both system expansion and operations and maintenance, and oversight of public and private sector service providers' (p.11). Without further detail, the policy was deemed to have limited alignment with this building block.

4   Comparison of 2011 and 2014 policies

The average scores of the documents for each building block were compared in three ways: a before-and-after comparison for the three sets of paired documents (i.e., both old and new versions); a comparison of the four new documents with all the documents analysed in 2011; and a comparison of all 2014 and 2011 documents, including those older policies that were still in effect in 2014.

4.1   Comparison of paired (old and new) documents

Figure 5 shows the progress made in take-up of the concepts of a service delivery approach, as evidenced by the better scores of the more recent iterations of AusAID, AfDB and WaterAid policies.

Averages (L4L) Comparison
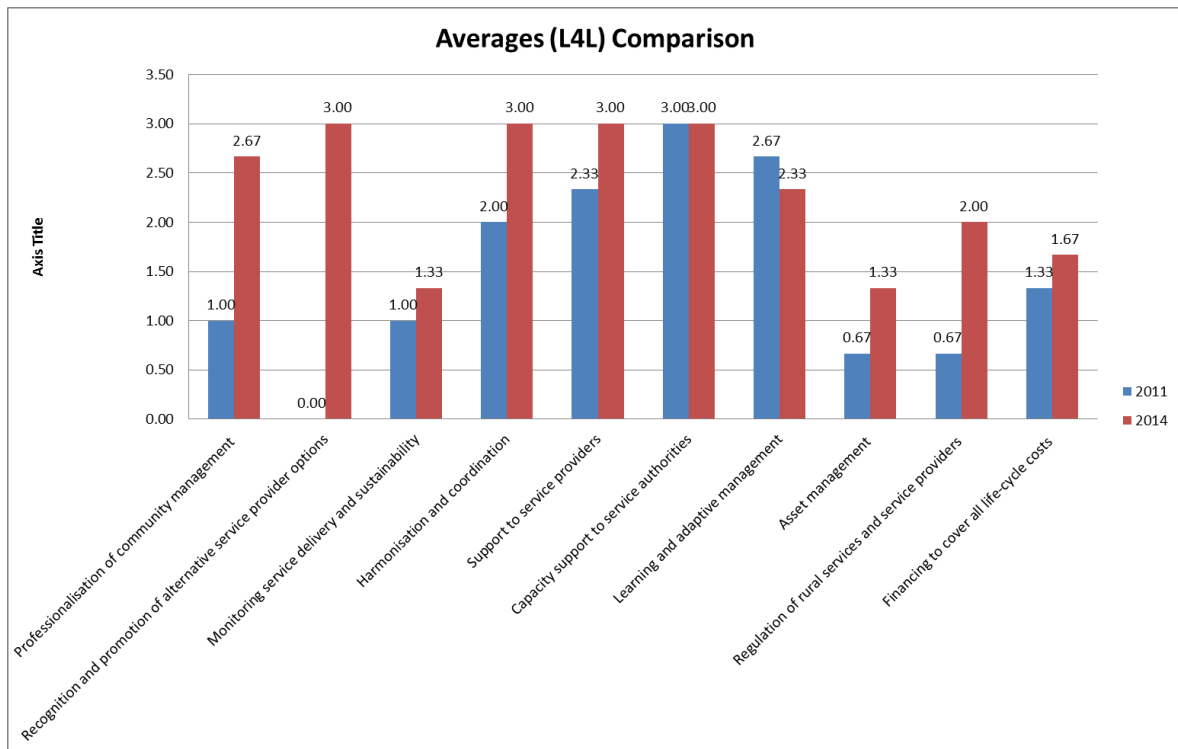
Figure 5   Average scores for paired documents, by building block

The most significant improvements are in professionalisation of community management, recognition of alternative service provider options, and regulation of rural services and service providers. These three building blocks are closely inter-related by virtue of their 'proximity' to the service provider and the water user. It can be inferred with a fair degree of confidence that improving and regulating service provision (often accomplished in conjunction with small-scale private sector operators) have achieved prominence and even become an accepted policy aim in the sector. Other scores remain similar, and in the case of asset management, monitoring service delivery and sustainability and financing to cover all life-cycle costs, the averages remain low, indicating that collectively speaking the sector finds these areas challenging to address in detail.

4.2 Comparison of 2011 and 2014 documents

When the new documents are compared with all documents from the 2011 analysis, similar trends emerge (Figure 6).

Averages: 'New' versus 2011
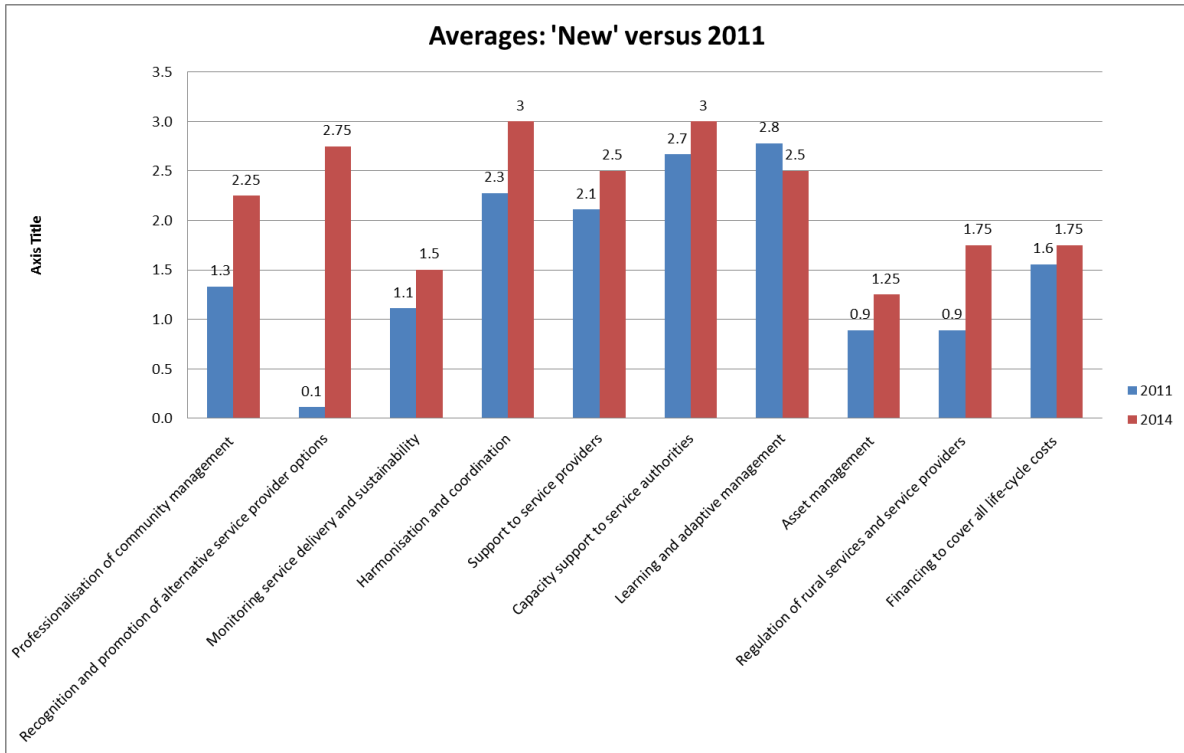
Figure 6   Average scores for 2011 and new 2014 documents, by building block

However, when the scores for still-current older policies are added to the 2014 averages, the improvements are less distinctive (Figure 7), and the overall impression is of marginal change.

Averages (All) Comparison
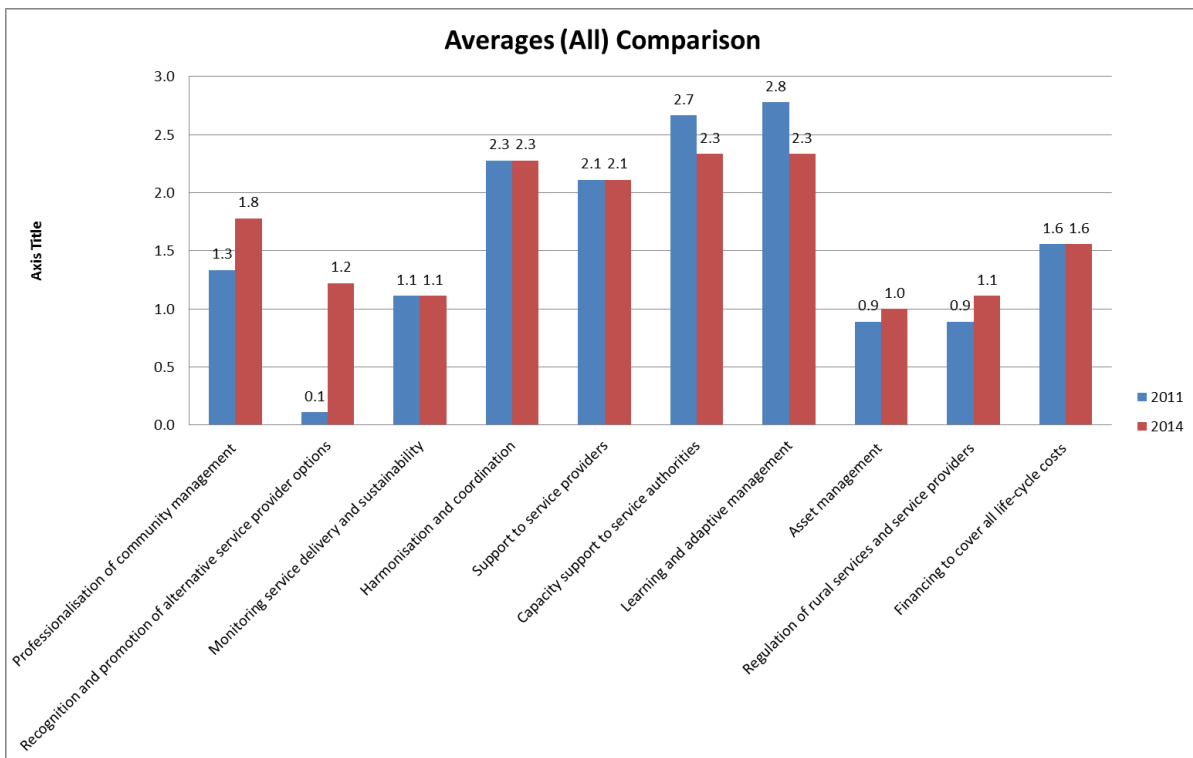
Figure 7   Average scores for 2011 and 2014 documents, including older policies still in effect, by building block

Asset management in particular remains a neglected area of policy. Regulation of rural services and service providers and financing to cover all life-cycle costs are also neglected. Professionalisation of community management likewise appears weaker when the average scores include older policies still in effect.

4.3 Caveats

Lack of detail in the policy documents, while difficult to score in a QDA methodology and frustrating for those seeking detailed guidance, does not necessarily signify 'bad policy'. Most policies admit multiple interpretations by design, in order to maintain consensus among competing interests. Therefore, even if a policy is not highly aligned with a building block, those who are governed by the policy may still be able to work toward sustainable services and a service delivery approach.

Several development partners, including WaterAid and UNICEF, are in the process of revising their policies. Water for People and Living Water International are also coming to the end of their current programmatic cycles but had not released new documents in time for inclusion in this study. This reduces our confidence level in interpreting the results as an up-to-date picture of the sector, but the study has highlighted areas for development partners to address in hastening the shift towards a service delivery approach.

The political landscape of overseas aid is changing. DFID's public presentation of their policies has now been brought into line with those of other UK government departments under the UK.GOV mega-site, which has altered its distinctive tone and language. AusAID is now under the wing of the Australian government's Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade and this move may similarly affect the articulation of AusAID policies.

5 Conclusions

This study has looked at what organisations say they will do. In practice, a sector policy is expressed through numerous documents with differing levels of detail, depending on their audience and function. A 'successful' policy document often leaves the practical details to other documents, as has been shown in the country-level QDA studies undertaken in Ghana and Uganda, although high-level policies nonetheless set out the broad lines and direction for the application of aid in a sector, and therefore they remain valid as a source of evidence for analysis. Although changes in language and emphasis can be useful in indicating intentions, practical change often necessitates a wholesale revolution in both the approach and the structural organisation of institutions. This is harder to achieve and further emphasises the gap between what organisations say they will do and what they actually accomplish.

Overall, the recently released policy documents performed better than their predecessors, especially in three important aspects: professionalisation of community management, recognition of alternative service provider options and regulation of rural services and service providers. This trend indicates that these elements of a service delivery approach are being articulated in greater detail at higher levels of policy. Details on asset management and financing to cover all life-cycle costs remain elusive in the 2014 policy documents, although trends are promising. Incremental improvements towards asset management may be more achievable than reliable financing to cover life-cycle costs, although the use of various tools and methodologies for financial forecasting is an emerging trend. No building block would be actively discouraged

by any development partner's policies. Without a full set of updated documents from all development partners, however, any comparison of old and new documents is incomplete and awaits the release of the new policies scheduled for 2015.

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