

THE TRIPLE-S THEORY OF CHANGE



Ton Schouten and Patrick Moriarty

IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre

January 2013

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
ABOUT TRIPLE-S.....	6
1 THE NEED FOR CHANGE IN THE WATER SECTOR	7
1.1 THE CAUSE OF FAILURE.....	7
1.2 THE SYSTEMIC PROBLEM	8
2 THE BASIS FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE	8
2.1 PILLARS OF CHANGE.....	9
2.1.1 A service delivery approach.....	9
2.1.2 Harmonisation and alignment.....	10
2.1.3 A learning and adaptive sector.....	10
2.2 PRINCIPLES	11
2.3 VALUES.....	11
2.3.1 Relevance.....	11
2.3.2 Responsiveness	13
2.3.3 Leverage	13
2.3.4 Legacy.....	13
3 THE PROCESS OF CHANGE.....	13
3.1 INTERVENTIONS	13
3.1.1 Advocacy and campaigning	14
3.1.2 'Invocacy' and engagement	14
3.1.3 Evidence and new practice	15
3.2 PHASES OF CHANGE.....	16
EPILOGUE.....	17
REFERENCES	17

TABLES

TABLE 1:	TRIPLE-S PRINCIPLES FRAMEWORK	12
TABLE 2:	BUILDING BLOCKS FOR SUSTAINABLE SERVICE DELIVERY	15

FIGURES

FIGURE 1:	THEORY OF CHANGE.....	5
FIGURE 2:	FOCUS ON INFRASTRUCTURE (LEFT) VERSUS SERVICE DELIVERY.....	9
FIGURE 3:	UNCOORDINATED SECTOR (LEFT) VERSUS SECTOR THAT ALIGNS WITH GOVERNMENT PLANS (RIGHT).....	10
FIGURE 4:	VALUES, INTERVENTIONS AND MODALITIES FOR CHANGE	14
FIGURE 5:	INTERVENTION STRATEGIES OVER TIME	16

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document sets out, in broad strokes, the theory of change that guides IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre's Sustainable Services at Scale (Triple-S) project. The document explains and justifies the course of action set by the project in achieving its goal of contributing to provision to all people of sustainable water services.

Triple-S (Sustainable Services at Scale) promotes sustainable water services at scale by helping to catalyse change in the rural water sector. Triple-S is guided by an understanding that current, de-facto, practice is overly focused on the provision of new infrastructure and as a result contributes to a failure to provide sustainable water services.

Triple-S brings to this work a package of knowledge, strategies and tools that we believe can support the required change towards a more appropriate paradigm – one that we refer to as a service delivery approach.

At the heart of our approach to change is a vision of how the rural water sector needs to function if sustainable water services are to be provided; and a set of guiding messages intended to inspire stakeholders to start creating change in their own context. This approach is informed by our understanding of the water sector as a complex adaptive system, consisting of multiple actors and relationships, all of which need to work together effectively for services to be delivered. While the vision of sustainable and appropriate rural services provided to all is universal, the paths by which each country will achieve these are entirely context dependent.

Among the assumptions that inform our theory of change, which is illustrated on the next page (Figure 1), are:

1. Assumptions related to the connections between the problem and the underlying causes
 - Current political-economy of rural water leads to a de-facto/emergent paradigm that is focused on hardware delivery and ignores services
 - As a result, non-construction related elements are ignored/under-budgeted/insufficiently developed
 - Models for post-construction elements are only partially worked out
2. Assumptions about links between activities and outcomes
 - Using information about the poor current state of services – including (but not limited to) non-functionality, which can be used to trigger a desire for change
 - Working in learning alliances/partnerships will make the innovations relating to post-construction more relevant, more scalable
 - Creating indigenous capacity for learning and adaptive management will leave in place the capacity to continue the locally owned change process
3. Assumptions about the context/environment
 - The political-economy is sufficiently amenable to advocacy – to some extent there is a genuine interest among actors – especially government – to improve service delivery

FIGURE 1: THEORY OF CHANGE



ABOUT TRIPLE-S

Triple-S (Sustainable Services at Scale) is a six-year (2009–2015), multi-country learning initiative to improve water supply to the rural poor. It is led by IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre (IRC) and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The initiative is currently operating in Ghana, Uganda, and as of 2012, Mozambique. A related activity has started in Burkina Faso with support from the USAID funded WA-WASH programme. IRC and partners are actively pursuing options with partners to start similar initiatives in other countries.

Lessons learned from action research with broad coalitions in countries leads to evidence-based change in the countries where we work, as well as feeding up to the international level, where Triple-S is promoting a reappraisal of how development assistance to the rural water supply sector is designed and implemented.

Triple-S seeks to achieve water services for rural people that meet appropriate levels and are sustained over time. The nature of the water sector in a specific country determines how, by whom and through which partnerships the change required to achieve this vision will occur, and what kind of innovations, training, research and information are needed.

Although context has a determining role, Triple-S informs and guides the change process in two ways:

1. With a strong vision of what a rural water sector capable of delivering sustainable services looks like (concepts and principles).
2. With a set of tools and approaches to catalyse and support a national search for solutions that work.

1 THE NEED FOR CHANGE IN THE WATER SECTOR

More than 600 million of the estimated 700 million people who lack access to improved water services live in rural areas. The past several decades have seen success in providing new rural water *infrastructure* – the physical systems – driving increased coverage levels. Nevertheless, water *services* remains both sub-standard and largely unsustainable because the infrastructure is not fully functional or has failed completely. In the early 1990s, at any given moment, an estimated 30% to 40% of rural water supply systems in developing countries were not working (Evans, 1992). A study by WaterAid in Tanzania indicated that only two years following installation, 25% of systems were already non-functional (Taylor, 2009). Failures on this scale represent significant levels of wasted investment – hundreds of millions of dollars – over the past 20 years.

Between 1990 and 2006, the absolute number of unserved people across 19 sub-Saharan African countries increased from 29 million to 272 million (RWSN, 2009) – a rise due partly to population growth. Even many of the people counted as ‘served’ have inadequate or broken systems.

1.1 THE CAUSE OF FAILURE

In broad terms, the rural water sector’s failure to sustain services has multiple causes that are relatively well known¹.

- Some national governments ignore the rural water supply sector, particularly in Africa, where 90% of the capital investment in rural water supply is currently funded by donors.
- Interventions by donors (bilateral, multilateral and NGO) are largely uncoordinated and take the form of stand-alone ‘projects’, each with its own design, hardware type, policies and financing approach – precluding efficiencies and coordination of rural water services in a district.
- The usual approach to providing rural water supply services – variously called village-level operations and maintenance, demand-response approach and community management – implicitly (although erroneously) assumes that users will be able to sustain service delivery without external support.
- National water sectors often lack vision, strategy and capacity to sustain water services beyond the scale of a short-term, externally funded project.
- A lack of planning for rural service delivery beyond short project timeframes results in irregular and unreliable supply.
- Financial models for sustainable service delivery, including the capacity to replace infrastructure, are missing, leading to ad hoc provision of services.
- Systems consistently fail before the planned design lifetime, wasting capital; sometimes multiple reinvestments have been made in the same communities.

¹ A full analysis of the causes of sector failure to deliver sustainable water services can be found in the multi-country synthesis report of Triple-S: Lockwood, H. and Smits, S. 2011. *Supporting Rural Water Supply; Moving Towards a Service Delivery Approach*. [pdf] Rugby, UK: Practical Action Publishing. Available through: Water services that last website <http://www.waterservicesthatlast.org/Resources/Multi-country-synthesis> [Accessed August 2012].

IRC is not alone in this diagnosis, nor in actively seeking for answers. More and more national governments and development partners are beginning to recognise the scale of the problems associated with poor quality service delivery and lack of sustainability and see the real threat this presents to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. This has created a fertile environment for change in sector institutions both in countries and at international level.

1.2 THE SYSTEMIC PROBLEM

IRC's understanding of rural water supply as being a complex adaptive system, also leads to an understanding of the causes of the unsustainability and poor quality of rural water services as arising from not one clearly defined problem, but rather from the failure of the entire system of actors who must work effectively together to provide services. This is, therefore, a systemic problem – a failure of the whole system of service delivery – unlikely to be solved by fixing only one part. The systemic problem is underlain and exemplified by the de-facto² focus on infrastructure – created in part by the desire of governments and development partners to show value for money to their constituencies, voters and charitable donors; new pumps enumerated in election speeches and new taps pictured in glossy annual reports communicate more value for money than enhanced capacity to sustain those pumps and taps.

The de-facto focus on engineering and supply-driven approaches, the big financial interests in capital expenditure and the reluctance of national governments to empower local authorities are other factors that tie the water sector to a system based on infrastructure delivery, aid dependency and 'state capability traps'³. The emergent result is inadequate investment in sustaining water service and, particularly in aid-dependent countries, an inability to provide a continuous flow of water to users.

2 THE BASIS FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Put simply, we believe that because the water sector's problem is systemic, the change towards sustainable water services must also be systemic: the whole sector needs to change, including its actors and institutions and the links between them. A sector largely dependent on aid must become a more independent sector. A sector that builds water infrastructure must become a sector that delivers water services. A sector that is uncoordinated and ineffective must become one that effectively delivers an agreed level of services using an agreed set of management and business models. Triple-S works by engaging with the sector in the countries where it works as well as internationally to catalyse and then support this process of change.

² We emphasise that the focus on hardware is a de-facto (or emergent) property of the rural water supply sector. Many people and organisations are aware of the sustainability challenge. Most projects will have sections in their documentation dealing with sustainability. However, the reality of political-economic pressures on actors is that when we follow the money, we find it concentrating primarily around the 'simple' area of new hardware construction

³ The concept of the 'state capability trap' originates from a publication of Lant Pritchett and others. It can be summarised as follows: Most development aid projects provide standard solutions to public sector problems and assume the adoption of the forms of functional states. This creates a mismatch between development expectations and the actual capability of the state to implement. With more aid being imported, the mismatch or disconnect between policy and institutional recommendations for the public sector and the actual capacity to implement increases. For a discussion, see: Pritchett, L., Woolcock, M. and Andrews, M., 2010. *Capability Traps? The Mechanisms of Persistent Implementation Failure*. (CGD Working Paper 234) [pdf] Washington, D.C.: Center for Global Development. Available at: <<http://www.cgdev.org/content/publications/detail/1424651>> [Accessed February 2013].

2.1 PILLARS OF CHANGE

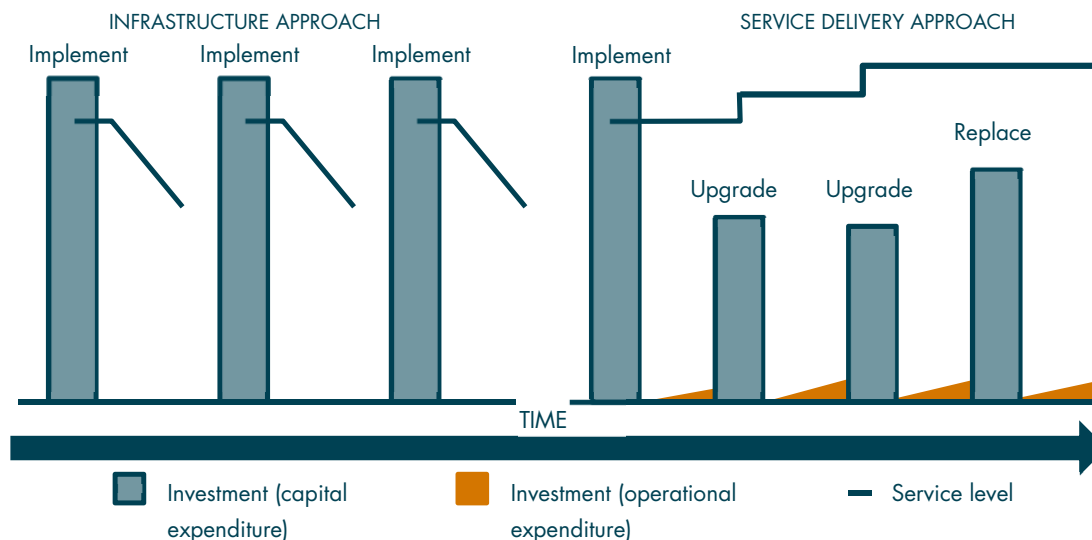
The Triple-S theory of systemic change in the water sector is built on three pillars. These three pillars provide a vision of a water sector capable of delivering sustainable services.

2.1.1 A service delivery approach

In our vision, the entire water sector in a country must be focused unambiguously on the provision of a given (and defined) level of sustained water services, to all people. By an agreed level of service we mean a service assessed 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 the home. This vision of a water service consists therefore of not just the hardware (the infrastructure) but also the 'software' (the knowledge and behaviours) necessary to achieve this objective. Whereas an infrastructure-driven approach provides hardware; a water service delivery approach provides water.

The difference between these two approaches is illustrated in Figure 2. In the standard infrastructure-focused approach (left), following construction of a new system (blue rectangle), users receive a given level of service (blue line). The new system initially functions well, but without support and asset management, it quickly deteriorates until it collapses completely; service is eventually revived by the construction of a new system, typically by another agency or donor. The right side shows a service delivery approach: once a water system has been constructed, the service is maintained indefinitely through a planned process of low-intensity administration and management (orange field), with occasional capital-intensive projects for upgrading and eventual replacement.

FIGURE 2: FOCUS ON INFRASTRUCTURE (LEFT) VERSUS SERVICE DELIVERY APPROACH (RIGHT)



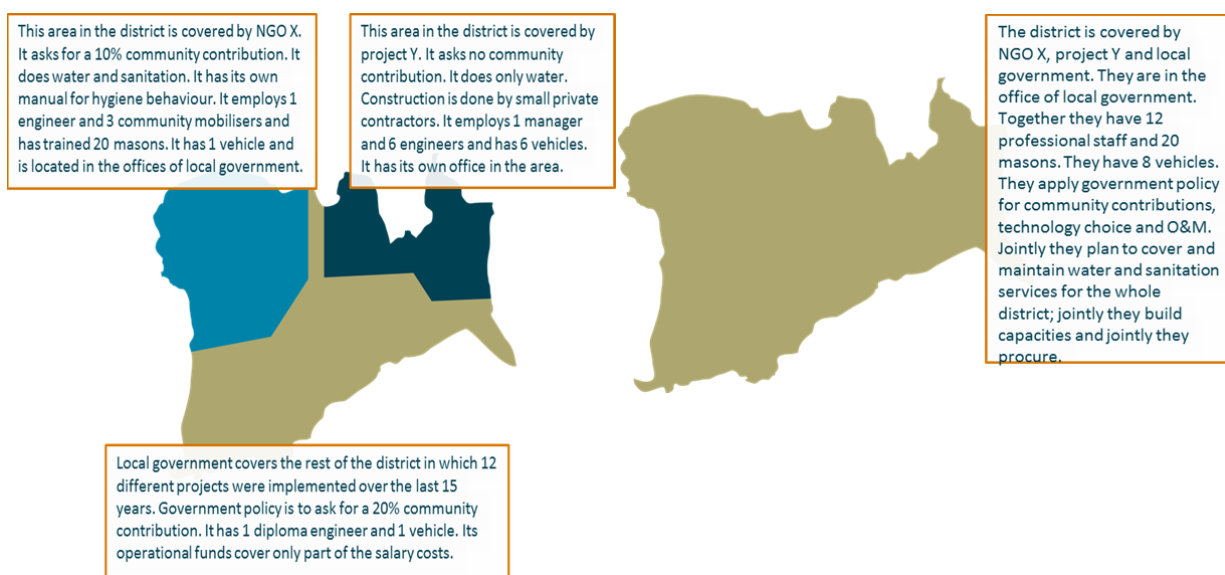
Source: Triple-S, 2011a.

2.1.2 Harmonisation and alignment

In our vision, the framework for development of the rural water sector in a country should be set by an empowered and informed government, as a legitimate representative of citizens. Harmonisation among actors in the rural water sector (development partners, governments, NGOs) means aligning with nationally agreed and government-owned strategies, policies and practices. Currently, while some development partners channel their financing through government systems such as SWAPs and basket funding, most international NGOs work outside government plans and often implement projects directly, using their own approaches and methods.

However, no water service can be sustainable and no service delivery approach effective if approaches, hardware, and processes are not harmonised and aligned with national plans and priorities. How this works out at the district level is shown in the diagram below (Figure 3). The left side of the diagram shows current practice at the level of the district. The right side shows an idealised vision of how it could be and what it could do. Political will is crucial here. Only when the national water sector has a coherent vision and a commitment to its achievement can development partners align their work with the government's and shift from investing in short-term, short-lived projects to helping the sector become independent.

FIGURE 3: UNCOORDINATED SECTOR (LEFT) VERSUS SECTOR THAT ALIGNS WITH GOVERNMENT PLANS (RIGHT)



2.1.3 A learning and adaptive sector

In our vision, a country's rural water sector has strong learning and adaptive capacity, enabling it to adapt to a rapidly changing operational and physical environment. A country's water sector must be able to learn and adapt its strategies and plans for delivering sustainable services. It needs the technical capacity to deliver services and the policies, guidelines and resources to achieve its goals. Strengthening sector capacity is the sine qua non that shapes Triple-S values and intervention strategies. Triple-S itself is a short-term project. Without investment in sector capacity, the Triple-S legacy will quickly fade and will need to be replaced by another project.

Taken together, the following three pillars describe a vision of a rural water sector that is able to achieve sustainable services at scale. All three pillars are essential. A service delivery approach will not work if NGOs and bilateral and multilateral agencies do not coordinate their work with the government's plans.

Harmonisation and alignment of donor efforts will not work if the sector does not develop sufficient capacity. And the necessary flexibility and innovation to develop locally relevant solutions can only come from a sector that can learn and adapt based on evidence.

The three pillars support individual countries' water stakeholders as they find their own way towards a service delivery approach, harmonisation and alignment, and learning and adaptation. Context will determine the path to change and the specific interventions.

Each of the water sector's many stakeholders will play a different role in creating change. Because the levels in the system – water users, local service providers, regional service authorities, national governments, international development partners – are linked, it is crucial to understand how each contributes to the current problems and how they could contribute to sustainable services at scale.

Based on its sector analysis and conception of the sector as a system of interrelated actors and factors, Triple-S has developed a principles framework for achieving sustainable services at scale.

2.2 PRINCIPLES

In the Triple-S principles framework, the three pillars for change – a service delivery approach, harmonisation and alignment and a learning and adaptive sector – support each level so that the entire system can deliver sustainable services at scale. The principles framework already has been used in evaluations, advocacy and planning. For Triple-S, the principles framework is the starting point for planning change in a specific context. The principles give further definition to the vision encapsulated in the three pillars. Table 1 (on next page) summarises the principles and their application. A more detailed version of the principles framework, including details at the main institutional levels, is available on the Triple-S website: <<http://www.waterservicesthatlast.org/principlesforsustainableservices>>.

2.3 VALUES

The principles framework defines Triple-S' overall vision. By using the framework to guide a process of sector analysis, it can serve as the basis for the identification of actions and outcomes required to achieve the vision. The selection of strategies by which Triple-S can support the achievement of these outcomes is guided by our values, which express how we seek to operate and engage with sector stakeholders. The following four values have largely determined both how Triple-S operates internally and how it engages with the sector in countries and at the international level.

2.3.1 Relevance

Triple-S interventions should fit the context. Strategies and plans must accommodate the dynamics and needs of the specific contexts in which we work—the water sectors in Ghana and Uganda and the water or WASH departments of international development partners. There is no one-size-fits-all Triple-S method for research, advocacy, knowledge management or training. The focus is on what change is required and how best to achieve it. The intervention strategy, large or small, has to be owned by stakeholders. Relevance also means respecting what has already been achieved and being realistic about what a six-year initiative like Triple-S can contribute.



TABLE 1: TRIPLE-S PRINCIPLES FRAMEWORK

PILLARS	PRINCIPLES	APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLES
Service delivery approach	Policy, legislation and institutional roles are clarified for commonly agreed on service delivery models	Service delivery models (involving both infrastructure and management arrangements) and expected service levels for point source and networks are clear Institutional roles and responsibilities are established and authority to act is granted, including asset ownership
	Financing for full life-cycle costs are effectively covered through an agreed upon combination of tariffs, taxes and transfers	Full life-cycle costs should be understood at all levels Full life-cycle costs of service delivery reflected through a combination of tariffs, taxes and transfers An improved balance between capital investment and all other recurrent and capital maintenance costs
	Planning aims for full coverage and accounts for the different stages of the life cycle of the service and is based on participatory processes	Transparent and inclusive planning, involving consumers at different stages in the life cycle of the service (including technology selection) Planning based on life cycles and involve asset management; where possible seeking to maximise economies of scale Planning always with the aim of full coverage and to be directed by clear national policy and prioritisation
	Transparency and accountability mechanisms are in place between consumers, service providers and independent oversight bodies over the quality and sustainability of services provided	Accountability mechanisms should be in place for stakeholders, including customers having access to information and being able to hold service providers to account Monitoring and regulatory instruments should be in place to ensure accountability against an agreed set of indicators; indicators should focus on outcomes rather than outputs.
Learning and self-sustaining capacity	Capacity (awareness, skills, resources and access to support) exists within the sector for stakeholders to fulfil their functions, as defined in the service delivery model	Consumers should be aware of their roles, rights and obligations Skills, resources (including supply chains) and information should be available for good water governance, including long-term support to service providers and service authorities Capacity should be strengthened at all levels Leadership should be provided at a national level
	The sector has the ability to learn and innovate on the basis of knowledge sharing, reflection and analysis	Mechanisms should be in place for learning from performance monitoring and sharing with peers. There should be a learning culture and adequate resources made available for monitoring, information gathering, research and innovation (including technology and management arrangements)
Harmonisation and alignment	Sector investment and support is harmonised and aligned with national priorities and policies	All stakeholders should operate within commonly agreed national guidelines and service delivery models Development partners should harmonise approaches and align with national priorities and frameworks
	Actions of stakeholders are coordinated at different levels with commonly recognised platforms and fora	Coordination should be done for information sharing, effective planning and creating economies of scale Funding flows and policies in the sector should be coordinated at national and international level

Source: Triple-S, 2011b.

2.3.2 Responsiveness

Responsiveness means understanding and working within sector realities, including the institutional relationships, political agendas, informal networks, and incentives and disincentives for change. Understanding the dynamics in each context is essential for increasing the sustainability of service delivery. Triple-S' flexible framework encourages different pathways to change, and it allows for monitoring, critical reflection, learning and adaptation along the way⁴.

2.3.3 Leverage

To achieve big results, a small player like Triple-S needs to link and engage with organisations that have credibility in the rural water sector and can amplify the Triple-S message and approach. Triple-S thus leverages its investment by working in partnership and becoming part of other initiatives. Through its vision and its values, it helps sector organisations develop their own pathways to achieving sustainable services at scale and explore the possibilities for change in policies, conditions for loan agreements and incentives for staff. The partners adopt the Triple-S vision and process but own the change; Triple-S maintains a modest profile. Having trustful and respectful relationships with other organisations is a prerequisite for effective cooperation. Triple-S has coined the term *invocacy* to indicate this way of working.

2.3.4 Legacy

As a project with a limited lifespan, Triple-S is mindful of its legacy. Working with existing sector networks and communication channels, such as the Rural Water Supply Network, the Global Water Challenge, the Resource Centre Network in Ghana and IRC, its home organisation, Triple-S seeks to embed its vision, pillars and principles in ways that fit the other organisations' contexts and requirements. In every partnership, Triple-S considers how to ensure that its approaches will endure beyond December 2014: in development partners' procedures, in tendering and procurement rules, in conditions for loans and grants, in remuneration and incentives for staff, in the amounts and allocation of donor funding. Influencing such 'rules of the game' for the better would indeed be a lasting legacy.

3 THE PROCESS OF CHANGE

The actual strategies to achieve sustainable services at scale vary with context. Triple-S works within two types of primary contexts: a country sector (e.g., Ghana, Uganda) and an international sector (e.g., the headquarters of a development partner). Using learning alliances⁵, stakeholders analyse the current situation and identify priorities, plans and opportunities, proceeding by stages and learning as they go.

3.1 INTERVENTIONS

The Triple-S analysis of rural water sector problems and its vision of sustainable services at scale have attracted international recognition and support. Our advocacy on the need for a service delivery approach in particular has generated interest in change among stakeholders. Once the desire for change exists,

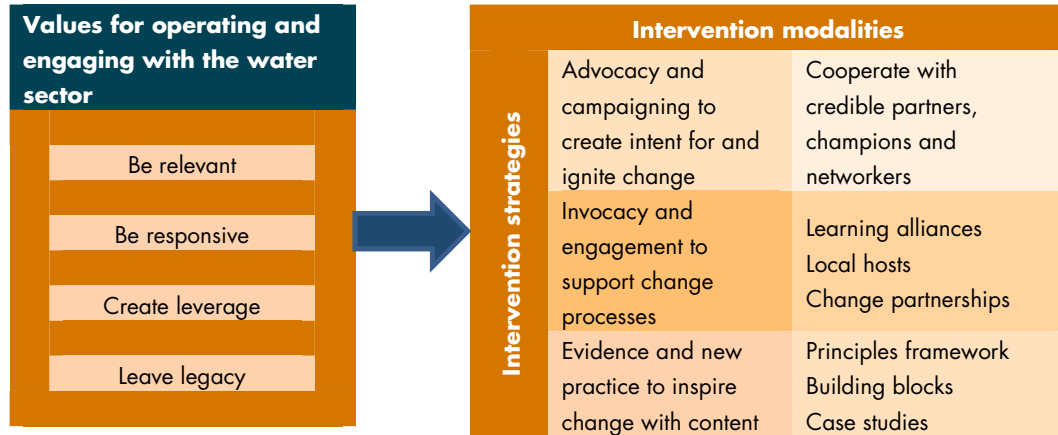
⁴ More information on the Triple-S learning framework is available at: <http://www.waterservicesthatlast.org/About-Triple-S/Triple-S-learning>.

⁵ In a learning alliance approach, actors in the water sector come from different backgrounds and work at different levels.

Triple-S seeks to create change partnerships and support evidence-based change processes. Evidence of improved practice—from Uganda and Ghana, where Triple-S has worked, and also from other countries and other organisations—inspires and guides the specific changes, which then proceed according to their own context.

Triple-S uses three basic types of intervention strategy, each of which has different modalities. Figure 4 shows how the four values inspire the interventions and their modalities.

FIGURE 4: VALUES, INTERVENTIONS AND MODALITIES FOR CHANGE



3.1.1 Advocacy and campaigning

Advocacy and campaigning create intent to change in sector organisations. Evidence-based advocacy shows the problems in the rural water sector: the non-functionality of infrastructure, the poor quality of services delivered, the struggle of communities to operate and maintain their water services, the wastefulness of parallel project implementation, the lack of capacity at the decentralised level, the lack of vision and strategy at national level. Once they recognise and own the problems, stakeholders become receptive to new concepts, and most importantly to the need for a service delivery approach. Because advocacy and campaigning must be credible, Triple-S uses the best evidence available to illustrate the challenges faced by the sector. Triple-S also campaigns jointly with well-known organisations. IRC and our staff and partners' credibility in the sector has likewise enabled Triple-S to advance our problem analysis and concepts.

3.1.2 'Invocacy' and engagement

Once intent for change has been created, or where it exists already, Triple-S becomes a partner and facilitator, capitalising on the energy and intent of sector organisations to own and create change. As a result of these campaigning efforts, the US-based sector created the WASH Sustainability Charter. The Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA) in Ghana also now promotes its own process of change towards a service delivery approach with Triple-S as the facilitator and researcher on new practices, while the Ministry of Water and Environment in Uganda embraces the concept of learning, calling on Triple-S for support.

Learning alliances and partnership agreements with local organisations, such as CWSA, provide a platform for the sector to support and guide the change. Facilitating change processes that are owned by the sector demands an understanding of sector dynamics, local politics (the political-economy of the local rural water sector), and relationships between government and development partners. Triple-S must strive to maintain a

neutral yet engaged stance, and provide mediation while facilitating the sharing of information about how things can be done differently. This role puts high demands on the Triple-S teams in terms of both sector knowledge and process facilitation.

3.1.3 Evidence and new practice

Evidence and examples of new policy and practice inspire stakeholders to develop context-specific alternatives to current policy and practice. As part of our background work, Triple-S has identified a set of ten building blocks – empirically identified areas of change and improvement being undertaken in different countries around the world that together support sustainable service delivery (see Table 2). These building blocks are the emergent areas of focus for change in the rural water sector. The building blocks provide a practical counterpoint to the principal framework – they indicate concrete areas for action to achieve the vision provided by the framework.

TABLE 2: BUILDING BLOCKS FOR SUSTAINABLE SERVICE DELIVERY

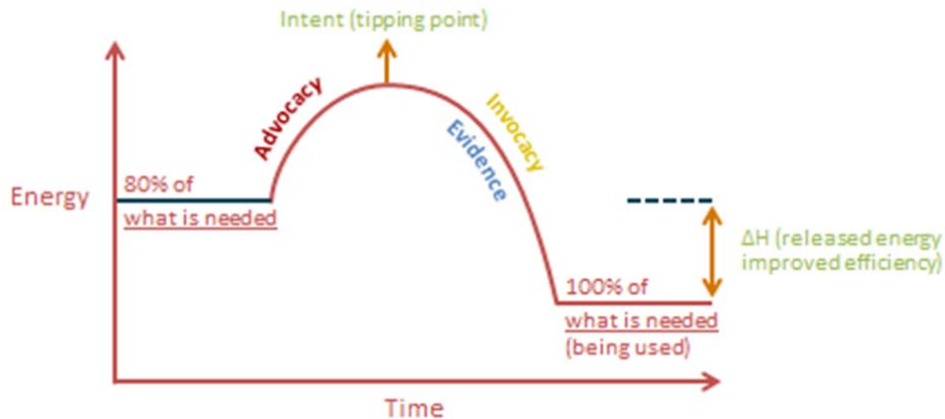
Professionalisation of community management	Community management entities supported to move away from voluntary arrangements towards more professional service provision that is embedded in local and national policy, legal, and regulatory frameworks.
Recognition and promotion of alternative service provider options	A range of management options beyond community management, such as self-supply and public-private partnerships , 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	Improved harmonisation and coordination among donors and government, and alignment of all actors (both government and nongovernment) with national policies and systems.
Support to service providers	Structured system of direct (post-construction) support provided to back up and monitor community management entities and other service providers.
Capacity support to service authorities	On-going capacity support 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 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 carried out, and asset ownership clearly defined.
Regulation of rural services and service providers	Regulation of the service delivered and service provider performance 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.



3.2 PHASES OF CHANGE

Figure 5 shows how we envisage the development of the change process by using the metaphor of the energy balance in an exothermic (heat-producing) chemical reaction. In exothermic reactions, a group of chemical elements are stable in one form. After an initial input of energy, a self-sustaining reaction takes place that transforms them to another (also stable) equilibrium, in the process liberating more energy than was initially applied.

FIGURE 5: INTERVENTION STRATEGIES OVER TIME



In our theory of change, advocacy for sustainable services at scale, and in particular for the service delivery approach, and campaigning about the reasons for service failure are analogous to the energy inputs. The reagents are the sector organisations and institutions, existing in a more or less stable equilibrium – one that is failing to a greater or lesser extent to provide sustainable services.

The initial input of campaigning energy brings about intent to change. Once this tipping point is reached – when the heat energy created by the reacting chemicals or the human energy to drive change is sufficient – the role of Triple-S changes from advocating to ‘invocating’, from being the leader to being the back stopper, and from providing vision to supporting the process. When Triple-S exits in December 2014⁶, these change processes will have their own strength and momentum.

⁶ It is important to underline that, while Triple-S as a project will end in 2014, IRC’s work to promote sustainable services at scale in Ghana, Uganda and globally will not. We are not naïve about the timelines required for bringing about changes which we envisage as necessary. We believe that ten + years is a more realistic timeframe than the current six years of Triple-S. However, Triple-S plays a critical role in both creating the initial energy for change and in catalysing the early stages of the process—more prosaically, in supporting both initial proof-of concept and the creating supporting materials.

EPILOGUE

The theory of change presented in this document emerged over time and was influenced by IRC, by an international thematic group on scaling up community management and, more generally, by complexity theory and systems theory. But the biggest impetus came from our personal experience in water sector projects: our disappointment in seeing services deteriorate after workers had moved on to the next project, and seeing our research gather dust because it didn't address the real problems. We thought hard about how Triple-S could achieve lasting change.

Change is complex, problems are systemic and solutions are shaped through hard work. What prompts a jump to the next stage of evolution is difficult to predict. Mindful of Triple-S' six short years, we started to do things differently, informed by experience and theory. Our theory of change encourages us to be bold in our vision, but to be open, understanding, modest in our role and realistic.

REFERENCES

Evans, P. 1992. *Paying the Piper: an overview of community financing of water and sanitation*. Delft: IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre.

RWSN, 2009. *Myths of the Rural Water Supply Sector*, Perspectives No. 4, RWSN Executive Steering Committee, July 2009. St Gallen: Rural Water Supply Network.

Taylor, B. 2009. *Addressing the Sustainability Crisis: Lessons from Research on Managing Rural Water Projects*. Dar es Salaam: WaterAid.

Triple-S – Sustainable Services at Scale, 2011a. *Service delivery approach*. [online] Available at: <<http://libweb.anglia.ac.uk/referencing/harvard.htm>> [Accessed 16 December 2012].

Triple-S – Sustainable Services at Scale, 2011b. *Principles for sustainable services – a conceptual tool for improving sustainability*. [online] Available at: <<http://waterservicesthatlast.org/index.php/Resources/Concepts-tools/Principles-for-sustainable-services-a-conceptual-tool-for-improving-sustainability>> [Accessed 16 December 2012].