



May 14-18, 2012, Tamale, Ghana

# Executive summary of ARAP report

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The Triple-S annual review and planning meeting (May 14-18 2012) was organised at Gariba Lodge, Tamale, Ghana, by a team led by Vida Duti, IRC Country Director for Ghana, with: Audrey van Soest, Project officer, IRC (Triple-S learning workstream); Teddy Laryea, Project Administrator, Triple-S Ghana; and Jeremiah Atengdem, Triple-S regional learning facilitator for Northern Region, Ghana.



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## Executive summary

Triple-S Annual Review and Planning Meeting,  
Tamale, Ghana 13-19 May 2012

### Triple-S Annual review and planning meeting sets the agenda for a lasting legacy

The Triple-S Project is strengthening efforts to bring about fundamental changes in the way that rural water services are planned and delivered to bring about the delivery of water services that last. With more than two years still to run, the Triple-S project has laid plans to ensure a legacy of sustainability well beyond its closing date at the end of 2014.

Triple-S (Sustainable Services at Scale) is a six-year, multi-country learning initiative to improve water supply to the rural poor by adopting a service delivery approach. It is led by IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, based in The Hague, The Netherlands.

The Triple-S Annual Review and Planning meeting (ARAP) took place at Gariba Lodge, Tamale, Ghana from 13-19 May 2012. The objective of the meeting was to ensure that teams are clear about the project’s vision and theory of change, to see how this had shaped activities in output-based areas of work in Ghana and Uganda and internationally, and to plan for the coming year. This ARAP also marked the passing of the halfway point in the project and prepared for the Mid-Term Assessment (MTA) that was about to get under way.

Triple-S has focused on building momentum for change in the rural water sectors of Uganda and Ghana and on securing international support for a service delivery approach to deliver services that last. Triple-S is organised in three output-based ‘workstreams’, the Uganda workstream, the Ghana workstream and the international workstream. They support the delivery of sustainable rural water services in countries and influence the policies and funding practices of international development partners. In addition, three cross-cutting workstreams of research, learning and communications are focused on developing new evidence and sharing understandings inside and outside the countries. The ARAP meeting welcomed the latest addition to this process; the Burkina Faso workstream, under the USAID West Africa WASH programme, known as WAWASH.



### The principles framework

Through a series of plenary and groups sessions, ARAP participants developed fresh insights into the project mission and principles to provide a sound platform for activities in countries and internationally. The meeting challenged teams to re-assess what they are doing and to develop their understanding of why they are doing it. Ton Schouten, one of the project founders, reminded participants that there are two parts to the theory of change—a vision for the sector and the things Triple-S must do to ensure that the sector changes. The vision rests on three strategic pillars; the service delivery approach, harmonisation and alignment in the sector and a learning and adaptive sector. Triple-S has to be responsive to local partners and conditions, be relevant to what each country needs, create leverage amongst other organisations, and leave a lasting legacy. Triple-S works with a number of methodologies – advocacy to create a demand for change, ‘invocacy’ and engagement to support change processes and the development of evidence and new practices that inspire confidence and lead to real change in the way in which rural water services are planned and delivered.



There was strong support for the vision and basic principles of Triple-S, although participants were concerned about the level of detail in the principles framework. Emmanuel Gaze, technical director of the Community Water and Sanitation Agency and the focal point for Triple-S in Ghana, said that country-level understanding had improved despite some lack of clarity at the beginning. “Today I see ourselves propelling the process and taking control of it and running with it. Gradually we are finding solutions to a problem we have been grappling with since the beginning.” Jane Nabunnya, the Uganda Triple-S Country Coordinator, said that the crucial task was how to engage with those who could make a difference. “The project is about the way you have to change certain things to achieve sustainability and being able to explain that you are not going to do it for them, but they are going to do it. They need to recognise there is a problem and see where and how they can to do things differently.”

Harold Lockwood, leader of the international workstream, said that Triple-S was focused on achieving transformational change. “You have to change the way that people think as individuals and that begins to influence the way that an organisation behaves. That is a very long process and every organisation has its rules and methods of working... The best legacy after we have gone would be that organisations take it up, evolve it and keep it moving.”

### Building blocks

At the end of the Triple-S week in Tamale, there was a review of the building blocks that are considered essential in each country to achieve sustainable water services. The ten building blocks can be summarised as:

- Professional community management embedded in policy, legal, and regulatory frameworks
- Recognition and promotion of options beyond community management for service provision
- Monitoring service delivery and sustainability
- Harmonisation and coordination with national policies and systems by donors, NGOs and others
- Support to service providers
- Capacity support to service authorities
- Learning and adaptive management that can adapt based on experience
- Asset management
- Regulation of rural services and service providers at local level
- Financing life-cycle costs—especially for support, monitoring and capital maintenance

The consensus was that the principles framework was complex and detailed, but remains a valuable frame of reference, which should be revisited from time to time. However the emphasis is on engagement to promote practical and specific measures to achieve a service delivery approach and to fill the gap between policies and practice.

### Research

Project director, Patrick Moriarty said that action research was not only about developing new models for service delivery but about identifying gaps between theory and practice and catalysing change. A degree of uncertainty was inevitable as research is a step into the unknown. “If you do not feel discomfort you would not be doing your job properly. You cannot have innovation without frustration, but let’s turn it into something positive.”





Country research has focused on a baseline study of the functionality of rural water systems as part of the drive for sustainability. Uganda has been documenting the main service delivery models and innovations, using service delivery indicators to assess performance, and to identify what is missing from current models and the divide between policy and practice. Paul Nyeko, government focal point officer for Triple-S in Uganda, said they were using research to underpin change and fill gaps in the sector’s ‘Golden Indicators’. Results will be used to update rural water and sanitation related guidelines and manuals.

Ghana set out to identify strengths and gaps in the provision of water services at district level – particularly in terms of compliance with Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA) norms and standards. Local stakeholders conducted a baseline study to test indicators for monitoring sustainable service delivery and to test the effectiveness of using mobile phone technology. Preliminary analysis suggests that community service providers perform better with higher levels of support.

The research workstream listed a sizable research agenda to be completed, including:

- Finalising the baseline and joint analysis with stakeholders (by the end of July 2012)
- Adjusting the strategy to country contexts and communicating with strategic partners
- Using action research to explore and improve service delivery models, documenting how this was done
- Linking learning and research to provide evidence and to focus on progress in influencing policy and practice
- Producing briefing notes on professionalisation, regulation, monitoring and post-construction support
- Articulating links between the building blocks

The research group proposed holding a research seminar in September 2012 to share experiences and learn about analysis and definitions. The group agreed to help Ghana and Uganda draw up detailed country research strategies.

## Learning

Triple-S places emphasis on the need for sector learning. The results of learning activities inform outcomes and activities to take the project in the desired direction. Learning also provides processes and platforms to support project people to tell their story.

Some of the key questions were how to support the output based workstreams and how to reflect. A lot of effort has gone into implementing a tool such as SenseMaker and organising learning retreats. However, Deirdre Casella, head of the learning workstream, said that Triple-S needs to move beyond implementing tools, and to use learning cycles better to strengthen understanding and use of data from research and information flows. Focus will be given to supporting learning platforms to use relevant data and information to make informed decisions about suitable service delivery options and models.

The meeting took a detailed look at how learning platforms have been established and used. There are some strong examples in both Ghana and Uganda, but they are less well established at regional level in Ghana and at national level in Uganda. There were also





insufficient links between platforms to think of them as fully fledged “learning alliances”. Two questions that emerged from the discussion were whether learning was actually taking place in these bodies and whether they were able to influence policy. There was also a question mark over whether it was possible to sustain a formal learning alliance structure at international level, given the wide range of organisations that the project engages with and their geographic and institutional dispersal.

### Communications

The key message from the communications team was that “Communications is everyone’s business and the job of the communications team is to support that.”



Workstream leader, Sarah Carriger said that communications should be built into



activities from the beginning. “It is the job of communications people to bring a strategic focus to activities and specialised skills to help develop effective products, but communication is a large part of what we all do every day to reach Triple-S objectives.” It was agreed that documenting is a joint responsibility but that packaging is the responsibility of the communications workstream. There was a call from countries for more support and guidance on producing good quality products. Priorities for the coming year include:

- Documenting changes/processes and evidence for country and international audiences
- Promoting and making better use of the products we have
- Work on refining and packaging messages
- Making communications everyone’s business—better support (templates, training, talking points, etc.)

The communications team also emphasised that Triple-S publications are not only intended for external audiences. By bringing together thinking, packaging messages, and laying out arguments, they can feed the knowledge and communications activities of Triple-S staff. In particular, the monthly eUpdate, which highlights new publications and provides an overview of activities in Ghana, Uganda and at the international level, was suggested as required reading for all associated with the project.





## The Triple-S legacy

Although Triple-S still had two and a half years to run, the meeting focused on what legacy the project will leave when it ends. Ton Schouten said: “As everyone who has been involved in a project knows, one day the doors are closed, the cars are handed over, the staff go on to the next project and there is a graveyard of websites on the internet – we want to leave more than that because it is frustrating.”

### Uganda workstream

Jane Nabunnya reported that in Uganda the aim is to bring about a shift to:

- Services with long-term sustainability and post construction support
- Services for whole populations in districts and regions
- Improved coordination and harmonisation, following the same rules and working towards the same goals

She said that effective innovation at district or sub-regional level rarely becomes known at national level and could only be scaled up if it was documented and marketed to help it become part of Government policy. Learning alliances—multi-stakeholder platforms at different levels that are linked together—are needed to spread innovation.

Triple-S is working through district, regional, national learning forums and is reviewing existing structures where people meet and exchange ideas, so that these platforms can review what is not working and come up with recommendations. The Uganda workstream has worked on improving the community based maintenance system, supporting innovations such as the Hand Pump Mechanics Association, and on reviewing policy and strategies and updating the district implementation manual (DIM) which is very good but hardly used. An updated DIM will be the main reference guide for implementing WASH in the districts.

They will leave behind a model for decentralised harmonisation and coordination so that district WASH agencies know who is working on what and where. IRC will continue to work on these issues in Uganda with collaborating agencies when the project is over.

### Ghana workstream

In Ghana, Triple-S is hosted by the CWSA, with partnership at national level and research to test approaches at district level. Triple-S aims to leave as its legacy:

- Official adoption of the service delivery approach and endorsement of operational documents by government and partners
- A water sector coordinated within a framework of nationally approved operational documents, guidelines and standards that clearly define strategies, guidelines and operational standards for the delivery of water services
- A community of practice to promote the service delivery approach in Ghana
- An institutional structure and learning culture within CWSA to continue the development and promotion of innovation for sustainable water services
- A monitoring and evaluation system (DIMES) with capacity across the country
- Tested and innovative options for post construction support and financing
- Results-based financing schemes for water which rewards sustainability
- A service delivery chain model for post-construction support
- A handbook promoting innovative options, best practice, strategies and procedures for adopting the service delivery approach

Ghana workstream leader, Vida Duti, said that the districts where Triple-S works will become centres of excellence for other districts to visit and learn from. An action research report will show the correlation between innovative elements of the service delivery



approach and service downtime. The service delivery approach has been endorsed at the highest political level and Ghana has approved a Legislative Instrument to enforce rural water operational guidelines. These operational documents represent a major step towards translating policy into practice and harmonising approaches for service delivery. The World Bank and European Investment Bank are proposing to extend baseline studies on functionality and service levels to most regions of Ghana.

### International workstream

The international legacy is being assured by embedding the service delivery approach in a wide range of development partners; national governments, implementing NGOs, bilateral donors and foundations and lending banks. Two distinct targets have been set:



- i. Scaling out: the uptake of concepts, ideas, language and terminology by development partners and the application (internalisation) of these into their own organisations through specific policies and strategies, using of tools and approaches to measure the success of their own rural water supply programming; and
- ii. Scaling up: the expansion of 'Triple-S like' programmes into new countries which seek to work with national stakeholders (governments, development partners, civil society etc.) in a structured process of reflection and learning to achieve fundamental change, switching their focus from a infrastructure-led approach to service-orientated sector development.

This legacy has been emerging in the new policy and programming of major donors such as AusAID, USAID, DGIS (the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs), the Inter-American Development Bank, and the Hilton Foundation. These and others are incorporating critical aspects of service delivery into their donor programmes. A larger group of international NGOs and smaller charities and foundations are incorporating service delivery into their language, documentation and practice. One significant milestone in this process has been the embedding of the service delivery approach in the business plan of IRC, the host organisation for Triple-S, a move that will ensure its legacy.

In terms of geographical scaling up, Triple-S has secured funding for a programme in Burkina Faso under the USAID West Africa WASH programme (WAWASH) and there are ongoing discussions regarding working on the service delivery approach in Mozambique and in India.

Harold Lockwood, leader of the international workstream, said: "Post-2014, we expect the thinking behind service delivery to be taken up and replicated across the entire rural water sector, and hopefully beyond, to encompass other sub-sectors such as sanitation. We are currently working with like-minded groups to generate a 'big idea' that can move beyond small incremental steps to start a movement for change, in much the same way that truly global campaigns such as the 'roll back malaria partnership' or 'global polio eradication initiative' work."

One promising vehicle for post-2014 success is the Everyone Forever initiative started by Water For People. Harold Lockwood said: "We feel this encapsulates what we are trying to achieve with sustainable services at scale or Triple-S."



## Priorities

The Uganda, Ghana and international workstreams set their priorities for the year ahead.

### Uganda

The Uganda workstream agreed to prioritise the following:

#### Learning

- Focus on supporting learning in the broader workstream, with less time spent on testing particular tools
- Assess learning platforms to determine which are working well and which are not, fast tracking a mapping study on learning platforms
- Develop a detailed learning cycle for activities, learning retreats and meetings at district, regional and national levels
- Use learning platforms to share and validate research findings and to develop recommendations for advocacy

#### Research

- Explore ways of working more closely with the Appropriate Technology Centre
- Relate research outputs to learning and communications, so that research outputs inform topics suitable for learning
- Make specific plans for each identified research area and prioritise accordingly
- Produce research concept notes that outline the methodologies, products, timelines, planning and budgets
- Assess the support needed from within the workstream and from IRC internationally

#### Communications

- Develop a communications strategy and messages for each target audience
- Integrate communications, research and learning, so that products match sector needs
- Provide for clearer communication linkages between the Uganda and international workstreams
- Promote documentation that demonstrates change in the sector and illustrates Triple-S impact
- Integrate Triple-S approaches into the IRC mainstream at country level and contribute to the IRC vision and brand
- Enhance skills and knowledge, including the use of new media, such as blogging, tweeting, etc.
- Support the Ministry of Water (MWE) to address its communication challenges and to use Triple-S experiences to improve on its own communication and dissemination strategies

#### Triple-S Legacy:

- Develop a strategy for scaling up beyond the end of Triple-S in Uganda in 2014, and clearly outline what needs to be in place for scaling up to take place
- Position Triple-S in the sector through the IRC Uganda country programme and demonstrate the added value of Triple-S
- Identify and recommend what should be replicated to ensure that MWE and the District Water Officers (DWOs) can replicate Triple-S in all districts
- Plan the process of handing over the Triple-S approach to the DWOs
- Involve Chief Administrative Officers in the districts and encourage them to embrace innovations and recommendations
- Target the Technical Support Units, Water and Sanitations Development Facilities and the Water Management Zones

## Ghana

Ghana called for a clearer focus on how research and learning can better drive changes to achieve a service delivery approach. It was agreed that the country learning team would set up and facilitate reflection meetings with outside support, and would be responsible for determining what should be documented, calling on the communications team for support. Research priorities should focus on service delivery and post-construction support, including the life-cycle costs approach. National level priorities are to:

- Scale up functionality and service monitoring
- Ensure the sector is aware of and uses the improved operational documentation
- Support CWSA over performance based grants
- Identify how to finance capital maintenance (CapManEx) and asset management
- Promote innovative options for post-construction support
- Showcase what has been done to support uptake of the service delivery approach, publicising this especially through the National Level Learning Alliance Platform
- Track how the learning cycle in the sector is progressing

District levels priorities are for:

- Functionality tracking and service monitoring
- Capacity support to district assemblies and service providers on issues such as the life-cycle costs approach for planning and budgeting, asset management, and aligning district strategy plans to the service delivery approach
- Strengthening technology and the supply chain with a pilot to test mobile phone technology, working with spare parts dealers, area mechanics and service providers

The meeting agreed how each of these activities will be supported. The communications workstream will support regions and districts to establish learning alliance platforms, support citizen engagement and support documentation of the changes and how they are being brought about. It will also establish partnerships with the media.

## International

The international workstream has spent two years raising awareness about sustainability, advocating for service delivery and building coalitions, partnerships and champions with a range of development partners. As well as continuing to promote service delivery concepts, Triple-S will shift its strategy towards 'how to do' service delivery. The need for such a shift has been reaffirmed by multiple requests from a range of development partners and demand for such inputs will grow as the service delivery approach filters into operational practice. Specific demands have been made for:

- i. **Tools:** the practical ways in which service delivery concepts can be applied; sustainability check tools for monitoring or sector assessment; aid contracting mechanisms such as the 'sustainability clause'; the life-cycle costs calculator and asset management frameworks
- ii. **Training:** extending current training from the half and one-day events as already delivered in Washington, London, The Hague and Brisbane, to week-long training sessions to detail how service delivery concepts can be applied
- iii. **Technical advice:** on the design of large-scale programmes and evaluations.

Triple-S will shift the balance of engagements towards national governments and national sector programmes, in part with the aim of establishing new, large-scale 'Triple-S like' programmes in other countries as part of the scaling up strategy. Harold Lockwood said that it was possible that Triple-S could become a kind of franchise which would be amended to suit local conditions in new countries.

## Mid-term assessment

The meeting prepared for the mid-term assessment (MTA) that was due to begin in June 2012, with a final report to be delivered by the end of October 2012. The MTA Team Leader, Ben Ramalingam, conducted a question and answer session with ARAP participants over the Internet during which the proposed MTA study design and timeline were discussed. Detailed feedback was provided by ARAP meeting participants including Jan Willem Rosenboom, the grant manager at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and ARAP meeting guest.

## Visit to East Gonja

Triple-S spent a day in East Gonja to see a district where Triple-S is working with the CWSA to test innovations for the service delivery approach for water services, and to talk to the people who deliver services. East Gonja is a rural area in the Northern Region, with a population of 127,000. Less than half the population had access to water at the end of 2011 according to the CWSA, and Bashiru Shahadu, leader of the East Gonja District Water and Sanitation Team (DWST), said that Triple-S research had shown that fewer than half the facilities (42%) were fully operational. More than a third were either broken or non-functional.



District Chief Executive, the Hon. Alhassan Mumuni, said that the Triple-S work was important to identify where the district assembly needed to put its efforts. "I am very grateful to the CWSA and to Triple-S. The challenge has been realised." Triple-S was able to visit the Salaga small town system and Adamukpe village which relies on borewells and handpumps. One issue raised by District Chief Planning Officer Alidu Abukari was the failure of some NGOs and other agencies to consult the district assembly before installing water systems, resulting in a failure of long-term support.



## A time to focus and to work for long-term benefits

The meeting was hailed as a success and participants went back with a clear sense of direction and focus. The project management team encouraged Triple-S team members to look to the long-term benefits. Patrick Moriarty said; "The changes we are talking about delivering are going to take a long time. Sustainable services at scale are not going to happen in two and half years." The critical task ahead is to spread the Triple-S work within focus countries and to other countries. ■