triple-S

WATER SERVICES THAT LAST

LEARNING PRINCIPLES & PRACTICE

an initiative of IRC

This learning framework was produced for IRC's ***"Sustainable Services at Scale"*** (Triple-S) project [BMGF Grant number 50817] by:

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The development of a learning framework for Triple-S is challenging. Not only because of the ambition and complexity of the Triple-S initiative, but also because of the way such activities are often perceived and placed within projects. In Triple-S, learning is placed at the heart of the initiative, and is an integral part of achieving a paradigm shift away from once-off projects towards a Service Delivery Approach (SDA) for the rural water sector.

Central to Triple-S is the principles framework which contains all hypotheses for sustained rural water service delivery; it is the seed for this learning process. Tools such as SenseMaker™ and FLOW are used to learn whether progress towards sustainable service delivery is being made.

The second component of the learning in Triple-S is the reflection on the way Triple-S operates as an agent of change towards sustainable services; the methods it uses such as Learning Alliances and the values it applies. Do they enable the change towards sustainable water services?

Triple-S still has to complete its first cycle of learning: June 2010 to June 2011. This framework will be adapted on the basis of the experiences in the first cycle, in particular the specifics of processes and methods. However, the approach and basic principles for learning as described in this document and as shared with the BMGF in the tool kit for strategic planning of Triple-S will be the main drivers for learning in Triple-S. Learning that already has proven to be exciting and effective for creating impact.

2. INTRODUCTION

THE TRIPLE-S GLOBAL INITIATIVE

Over the past decades the rural water sector[1] has made little progress towards ensuring the sustainability of water services as the range of Service Delivery Models (SDMs) has focused primarily on the physical construction of new water systems. The sector has been hard-pressed to move from traditional (technical) approaches to find ways of enabling and ensuring the delivery of sustainable rural water services at scale.[2]

This document outlines the basis and operational elements of the learning framework in Sustainable Services at Scale (Triple-S) – a global learning initiative managed by IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre (IRC) in the Netherlands, and working in partnership with international, national and local partners[3] initially in two focus countries – Ghana and Uganda – and expanding to Burkina Faso in 2011.

The document targets firstly those directly or indirectly involved in Triple-S, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF). Secondly, it targets new or potential partners such as new countries or new areas in countries where Triple-S is already active.

It has been written to clarify the approach and the processes of learning in Triple-S in terms of engaging partners in learning; and it focuses on learning principles and practice emanating from Triple-S in its aim to achieve a paradigm shift from once-off projects to a Service Delivery Approach (SDA) for the rural water sector. Besides strengthening the models for sustainable service delivery in countries, the initiative aims also to improve sector harmonisation[4] and alignment, and contribute to a strong in-country learning sector able to adapt its policies and practice to changing demands and challenges.[5]

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1 The sector includes governments, development partners and donors, research institutions and practitioners in non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations (CBOs) and the private sector (including the spectrum from one-person pump attendants to large companies).

2 "For the term scaling up we follow the definition of Gundel, Hancock and Anderson, (2001) who distinguish between vertical and horizontal scaling up. Vertical scaling up refers to the institutionalisation of the functions and approaches that make sustainability possible; whereas horizontal scaling up refers to the application of these principles in a broader geographical area – what is also called "scaling out" by some authors, such as Harrington, et al. (2001). Both institutionalisation and geographic spread are important to guarantee increased coverage and sustainability. In reality, the two processes are often difficult to separate, since geographical spread cannot take place without institutionalisation. In this report we use the term scaling up for the combination of the two processes." (Gundel, Hancock and Anderson, 2001 and Garrington, et al, 2001 in Lockwood and Smits, 2011).

3 Current International partners include SNV Netherlands Development Organization, Aguaconsult in the United Kingdom, the Community Water and Sanitation Agency in Ghana, and the Directorate of Water Development, Ministry of Water and Environment in Uganda.

4 Where "harmonisation" is understood to mean the approach of sector stakeholders coming together to develop common arrangements, procedures and information sharing mechanisms for their sector support.

5 The Triple-S vision and principles are explained in more detail in Triple-S (2010); and additional information on the initiative can be found at www.irc.nl/page/45530.

THE LEARNING FRAMEWORK

From the start it was clear that monitoring and learning would be a challenge for many reasons, including the fact that the wide variety of principles, approaches and strategies used in Triple-S makes learning within Triple-S multi-faceted. From WASHCost[6] and other projects both within and outside of IRC we realised that keeping learning central to our activities is difficult in practice – generally because the benefits are often insufficiently appreciated, and monitoring is seen as an additional and time-consuming add-on instead of an integrated and useful part of project progress.

We were therefore determined to make learning central to Triple-S, and to use it to our benefit. We also wanted to focus learning in Triple-S on the improvement of the overall initiative, and apply the most suitable tools available to make it work. But, most of all, we wanted to convince Triple-S staff that learning was not only necessary but exciting to be involved in.

The complexity of the programme and the central place learning has been given in Triple-S makes this learning framework not a final product but a work in process, and an integral part of improving the Triple-S initiative. At the time of writing only two-thirds of the current learning cycle had been executed. The major proof of the approach will come after the first Annual Review and Planning (ARaP) meeting in May 2011 when this learning framework will have gone through its first full annual cycle.

Learning is central to Triple-S planning and activities; it is part of all its processes in a continuous feedback loop of "Plan – Implement – Reflect – Review – Improve – Plan", illustrated in more detail in Figure 1[7] below.

6 WASHCost is a 'sister' project to Triple-S, also managed by IRC. It carries out research into methods for collecting and collating information relating to the real disaggregated costs in the life-cycle of water, sanitation and hygiene service delivery to poor people in rural and peri-urban areas. For more information see: http://www.washcost.info/page/121.

7 Figure 1 has been significantly adapted from a figure entitled "The experiential learning cycle", University Associates. Available at: http://www.universityassociates.com/training.html [accessed 21 January 2001].

FIGURE 1. CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND IMPROVING FEEDBACK LOOP IN TRIPLE-S

Learning aims at **creating maximum impact and improving performance**.

In more detail the purpose of learning activities in Triple-S is to:

1. Provide **joint learning**
   - How to achieve meaningful change towards sustainable water services for rural people.
   - Whether Triple-S is contributing to achieving sustainable rural water services at scale.
   - Whether the Triple-S strategies of
     - applying a service delivery approach,
     - strengthening the *learning and adaptive capacity* of the sector, and
     - improving harmonisation

     are achieving sustainable service delivery at scale.
2. Provide **evidence** of locally inspired and validated solutions for *service delivery*, a *learning sector* and *harmonisation*.
3. Provide **strategic guidance** for the outcomes-based work streams.[8]
4. Generate **a critical account** of the approach used in Triple-S to enable change.
5. Track **progress** towards achieving activities and producing outputs.
6. **Inform stakeholders** – the Learning Alliances and other stakeholders in countries; international stakeholders and partners of Triple-S – about Triple-S progress, adaptations in strategy or approach, etc.

The Triple-S learning approach has various components explained in more detail in the next sections. It is built around a **principles framework** which should be seen as the seed of any

8 Outcomes-based work streams are explained in Section 4 (Processes within Triple-S to ensure active learning).

rural water service delivery initiative. It contains the rural water **sector knowledge** in the form of **principles** requiring translation to a local context. The framework encourages a **systemic approach** by considering **different levels and different** strategies (as explained below). The process **encourages reflection** and enables **feedback loops** that allow for continuous and organic adaption to changing realities on the ground. Such an approach allows both for **continuous reflection** and also **immediate application of lessons learned** by strengthening what is going well and adjusting what seems not be working. It also distinguishes two different **areas of learning** (as explained in the next section).

3. AREAS OF LEARNING AS NARRATIVES

The Triple-S initiative distinguishes between two different areas of learning. These areas are referred to as **narratives** as they tell two different stories.

- **Narrative one** tells the story of the rural water sector. It relates to how the domains of change (i.e. the discourse, policies and practice, including models and capacity) are changing the ability to provide sustainable services at scale.
- **Narrative two** tells the story of Triple-S as a change agent. It relates to how the approaches and processes used in Triple-S are enabling change in the rural water sector towards sustainable services at scale.

Although both narratives are mutually dependent, the distinction is made to ensure attention to both:

- The sector specific changes for sustainable service delivery at scale.
- The specific approaches and methods used in Triple-S to enable change.

Both narratives require diverse approaches to learning as explained below.

NARRATIVE ONE: SUSTAINABLE RURAL WATER SERVICES AT SCALE

Narrative one acknowledges the complexity and multi-faceted nature of the sector. To ensure that the complexity is considered in rendering the sector sustainable, Triple-S has designed a **principles framework**. This principles framework and its systemic[9] view on the sector, is central to all the outcomes[10] in the Triple-S initiative. It translates the broad vision of sustainable services at scale into a collection of detailed principles. Together these principles describe an ideal functioning sector, able to deliver sustainable services at scale.

9 Triple-S is concerned with all aspects of rural water services delivery rather than with technical, managerial, economic, legal, institutional and social, or other aspects in isolation.
10 Outcomes are the end result of an activity based on one or more principles in the Triple-S principles framework. Applying the same principle in a similar context does not grantee it will translate in exactly the same desired outcome, although the outcome will always be relevant to the principle from which it is derived.

The Triple-S principles framework builds on other principles frameworks (IRC, 2005 and Van Koppen, et al., 2009), and on past experience documented in peer reviewed and other publications, as well as peer exchange. The full version of the principlesframework is contained in Triple-S, 2010.

TRIPLE-S PRINCIPLES FRAMEWORK	Levels of intervention			
	Water service provision	Intermediate	National	International
Service Delivery Approach				
Learning and adaptive capacity				
Harmonisation and alignment				

FIGURE 2. SYSTEMIC VIEW OF THE SECTOR AS PROVIDED BY THE PRINCIPLES FRAMEWORK

The principles framework indicates that for achieving the vision of sustainable services at scale three strategies need to be applied at the four levels of service provision i.e. water service provision, intermediate (usually one or more levels of local or provincial government), national (government) and international (development partners). These strategies are:

i. **Adopting a Service Delivery Approach (SDA)** rather than having a traditional project-based approach.

ii. **Strengthening the learning and adaptive capacity of the rural water sector** to create a sector which learns, innovates and adapts to changing circumstances.

iii. **Improving harmonisation and alignment for water service delivery** to create coherence in the sector.

In Triple-S work is divided into works streams as depicted in Figure 3 below. Work streams aiming to change the sector are referred to as outcomes-based works streams, and are the darker colored horizontal arrows in Figure 3 . In outcomes-based work streams the generic principles of the principles framework are translated into the local context as explained in the next section. It is in the outcomes-based work streams that the three strategies are being applied, and where the desired change is intended to take place. The cross-cutting work streams are support streams to the Triple-S initiative. From all cross-cutting work streams mentioned in Figure 3 only the learning work stream is directly relevant to the learning framework.

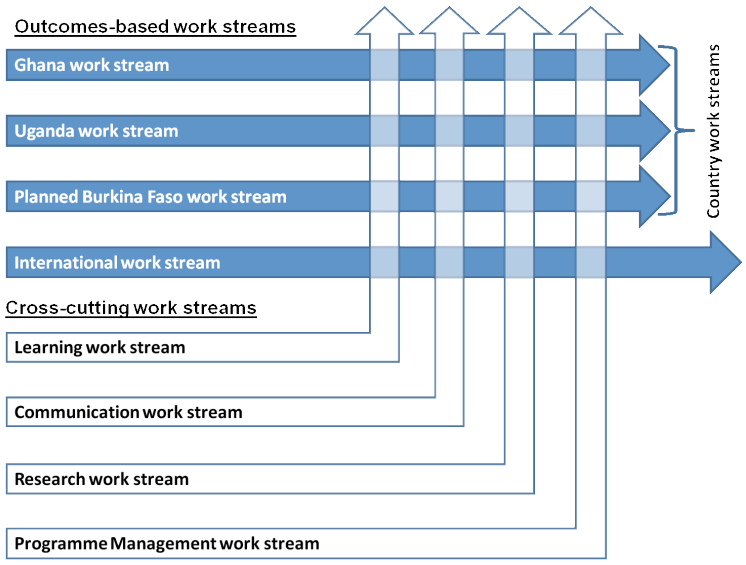


FIGURE 3. CURRENT AND PLANNED WORK STREAMS IN TRIPLE-S

Narrative one in the outcomes-based work stream seeks to:

- Establish whether the three strategies (adopting an SDA, creating a learning and adaptive sector, and improving harmonisation and alignment) are achieving the desired change towards sustainable services at scale.
- Verify whether there is a shift away from project-based interventions towards SDAs.
- Determine whether the water sector is strengthening its learning and adaptive capacity.
- Verify whether harmonisation and alignment are increasing.
- Identify bottlenecks and incentives for change towards the vision of sustainable services at scale.

Overall, the learning in this narrative assesses whether there is movement towards the principles highlighted in the principles framework. This is done by looking at changes in three different **domains of change**:

- Changes in **discourse**: is the language used in sector discussions and documents (for example, in speeches, articles, reports and minutes of meetings) shifting towards the principles in the framework?
- Changing **policies**: are the policies of governments and development partners shifting to achieve more sustainable services at scale i.e. towards the principles in the framework?
- Changing **practice**: is government and development partner practice in implementation, operations, funding, tendering, procurement, etc., shifting to enable more effective delivery of sustainable services at scale?

Assessing progress towards the principles in the principles framework runs in parallel with assessing these principles themselves, and their validity for the expected sustained rural service delivery at scale. Therefore, the principles framework will undergo an iterative process to refine it, as necessary, and after every Triple-S ARaP (Annual Review and Planning), as discussed in the next section.

NARRATIVE TWO: ENABLING CHANGE TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE SERVICES AT SCALE

Narrative two seeks to illustrate the way in which Triple-S has approached and enabled changes in narrative one (i.e. changes in discourse, policies and practice). Have the Triple-S approaches and processes to enable change been effective? Specific to the Triple-S way of enabling change are its **values**:

- **Relevance:** Triple-S is nationally led; it is demand-based; it is embedded in local context; it has a thorough understanding of sector development and is a well-respected partner for sector change towards sustainable service delivery.
- **Responsiveness**: Triple-S is able to recognise and respond to strategic opportunities for sector change; it is flexible and able to operate effectively in a very uncertain and complex sector environment.
- **Leaving a legacy:** Triple-S is able to learn the lessons jointly with sector actors, and it enables the uptake of the lessons learned in sector systems (policies, capacities, manuals, institutions, etc.); it empowers sector stakeholders and strengthens their capacities to analyse, learn and work towards sector improvements; it commits to sector change for the full duration of the initiative and aims to find ways for sector stakeholders to pursue that commitment beyond the scope of Triple-S.
- **Creating leverage:** Triple-S works through and with existing initiatives and platforms e.g. through sector coordination mechanisms and sector learning initiatives; it uses existing systems and organisations for sharing lessons e.g. sector websites, publications and networks.

Specific to the Triple-S way of enabling change are also the **methods** it applies. The most important ones are:

- **Local hosting** of the country work streams to ensure local sector ownership and embedding in the local context.
- **Outcomes-based management** in which the principles framework is translated into context-specific outcomes to ensure relevant interventions.
- **Learning alliances** which bring together sector stakeholders such as NGOs, CBOs, government, research institutions and international organisations in a collaborative process of action learning on how to achieve sustainable services at scale.

Narrative two seeks to learn whether Triple-S applies these values and methods effectively, and whether these values and methods enable change towards sustainable services at scale.

By way of reminder, narrative one tells the story of the rural water sector, while narrative two is the story of Triple-S as a change agent.

4. PROCESSES WITHIN TRIPLE-S TO ENSURE ACTIVE LEARNING

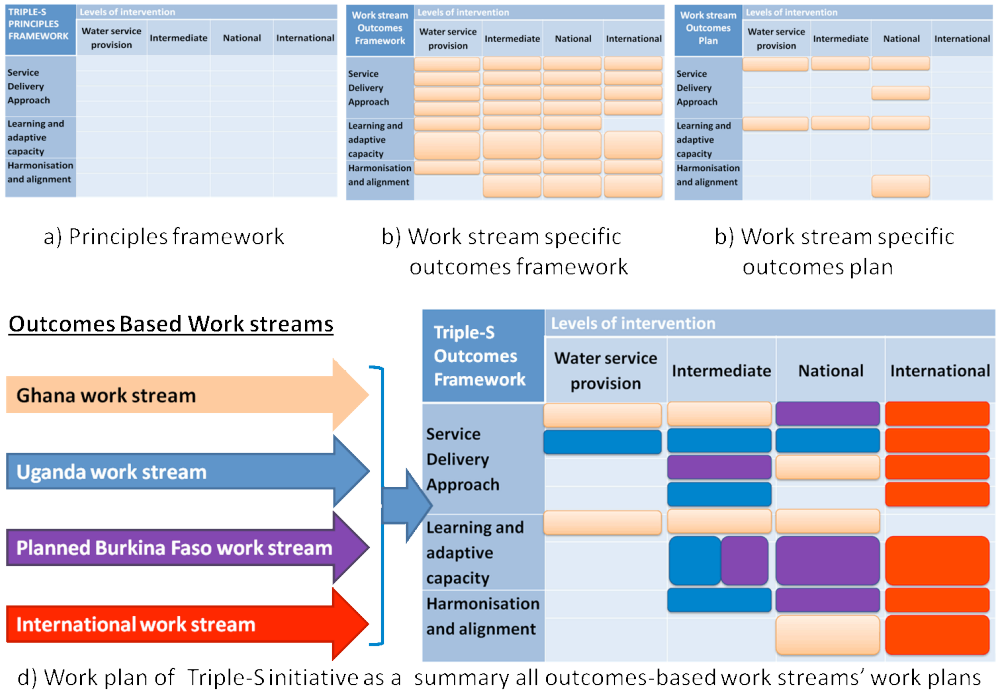
Learning processes are illustrated and discussed in this section. They are intended as guidance, based on certain basic principles for outcomes-based work streams. The details of the processes required to achieve change are work stream dependant, and have to be defined by each work stream.

LEARNING PROCESS RELATED TO NARRATIVE ONE

The learning process in narrative one starts with the principles framework. The principles framework (Figure 4a) is generic and serves all outcomes-based work streams. It is the basis for any intervention, and requires translation to the local context of each outcomes-based work stream (country work streams and international work stream). The principles framework is not only the departure but also an integral part of the cycle when learning in various contexts is fed back to improve the principles that make up the framework. In the specific context of any work stream the principles framework is used to ensure a systemic approach to sector change.

- Selecting a series of principles of one of the three strategies which are rows in Figure 2, e.g. principles for harmonisation and alignment across levels.
- Selecting a series of principles of one of the four levels of intervention which are columns in Figure 2, e.g. water service provision across strategies (noting that the international work stream only looks at the international level of the principles framework).
- A single principle or outcome selected across the framework (e.g. as crossing of SDA as strategy horizontally and a level of intervention like the national level vertically).

This flexibility enables responsiveness and relevance of Triple-S in a specific context.



FIGURES 4A-D. FROM PRINCIPLE TO OUTCOME

The prioritisation results in an **outcomes plan** (4c). Both the development of the country-specific outcomes framework and outcomes plan are done with the involvement of sector stakeholders. The prioritised outcomes in the plan are the focus for planning for detailed activities and learning.

Not all work streams will have an outcomes-plan which looks at the same issues. This means that the combined outcomes plan of all outcomes-based work streams which forms the outcome plan of the overall Triple-S initiatives will cover a wider variety of issues within the framework. This is illustrated in 4d.

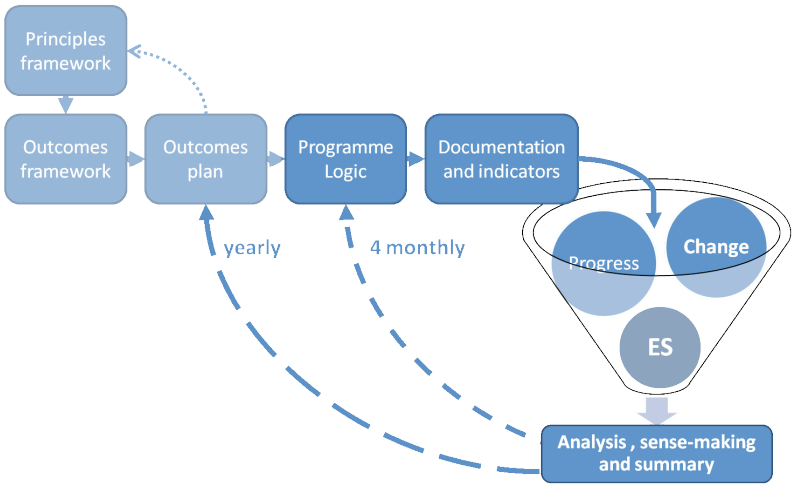


FIGURE 5. TRIPLE-S LEARNING PROCESS CYCLE PER OUTCOMES-BASED WORK STREAM

Figure 5 shows the planning cycle from the principles framework, outcomes framework to the outcomes plan in the context of the entire learning cycle. Additional elements and feedback loops to the process in each outcomes-based work stream are added.

The changes desired in the outcomes plan are tested through the application of Programme Logic (a tool developed to map a complex set of activities and outcomes in Outcomes-Based Management)[11].

Programme Logic is also used to define intermediate outcomes which result in the ultimately desired outcomes as documented in the outcomes plan. Intermediate outcomes are needed for process planning and for monitoring the process of change.

Outcomes in the outcomes plan are long-term objectives. The intermediate outcomes in the Programme Logic are the shorter-term (intermediate) objectives which allow for monitoring of progress towards the outcomes plan.

For example: the generic principle in the principles framework for the strategy of a 'Service Delivery Approach' at 'intermediate' level is: *Clear roles, responsibilities and authority at decentralised levels in place to ensure the delivery and oversight of water services through most relevant management arrangements, for system construction, operation and maintenance and long-term replacement.*

This principle translated into an outcome for the Uganda work stream is: *The district level stakeholders in Uganda and, in particular, the District Water Offices of the Government of Uganda and the implementing NGOs in the districts, effectively implement the existing decentralised framework for the water and sanitation sector in Uganda.*

The intermediate outcomes are:

11 For more information on Programme Logic and how it is translated in Triple-S, see IRC, 2011.

- *The dialogue on harmonised planning and implementation of rural water services at district level in Uganda is strengthened and led by the District Water Office.*
- *The existing District Implementation Manual is assessed and strengthened for making water services more sustainable.*
- *The use of the improved District Implementation Manual by the District Water Officers is stimulated and increased.*

Learning and monitoring is done through three types of indicators.

- **Progress indicators** demonstrate progress at the level of the intermediate outcomes and activities. These indicate progress towards the ultimate outcome.
- **Change indicators** demonstrate change in the ultimate outcomes. As mentioned in section 4 above, the three domains of change are identified as changes in discourse, policies and practice.
- **Enduring statistics** are quantitative data used in Triple-S as reference e.g. national statistics and international monitoring data, in particular, for the sustainability of water services. Regardless of their value or accuracy they cannot be ignored as they are part of sector information.

There is another separate set of indicators which are part and parcel of the Triple-S grant agreement with the BMGF. In the grant agreement they are called "impact milestones" and serve to measure Triple-S impact. The information for these "impact milestones" is captured within the above indicators.

METHODS TO CAPTURE CHANGE IN NARRATIVE ONE

Through the principles framework and the outcomes plans Triple-S touches on a wide variety of issues within the rural water sector. Triple-S uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to measure and understand changes.

The text below articulates two methods currently used to capture change in Triple-S.

SenseMaker™

Sensemaker™ is designed by Cognitive Edge. Insofar as the Triple-S principles framework is a framework of hypothesis towards sustainable services at scale (acting simultaneously on many issues), SenseMaker™ enables the monitoring of trends and patterns in a complex environment (SenseMaker™ Suite, 2011) and on a variety of issues.

It is based on stories of people about a problem, a solution, and an experience around the sustainability of rural water services. Storytelling is one of the oldest ways of conveying knowledge; and is deeply embedded in the traditions and cultures of countries in which Triple-S is active.

SenseMaker™ is designed to augment decision making. It enables unforeseen and un-biased encounters with data[12] enabling the monitoring of both intended and unintended changes in the

12 In as much as the sampling strategy for collecting the data can be considered representative.

sector. It is a particularly powerful tool in taking cognisance of "outliers" (rare events which may be relevant and important in explaining particular issues within the water sector).

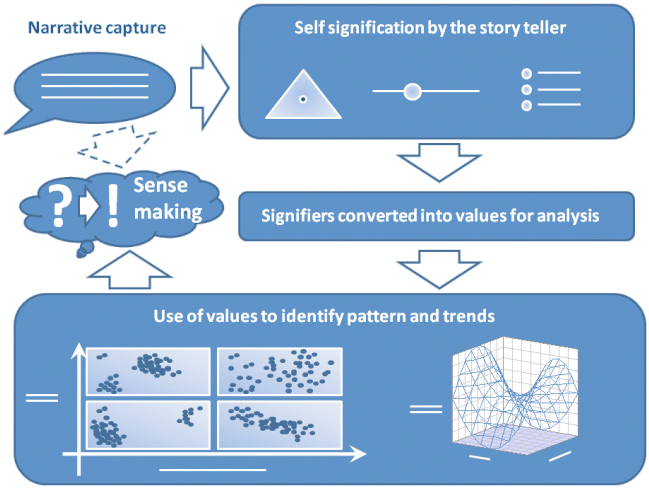


FIGURE 6. BASIC PROCESS OF SENSE-MAKING IN SENSEMAKER™

The simplified process in SenseMaker™ is illustrated in Figure 6. A prompting question is asked in which all possible aspects of Triple-S as captured in the principles framework can be covered. There are two different prompting questions used for sharing a story in Triple-S:

- **Among the people working in the sector** the prompting question is as follows:

  "You meet an old colleague with whom you used to work in the water sector but haven't seen for a while. You give him/her an update on the progress towards sustainable rural water services for everyone. Which event or situation that makes you feel particularly hopeful or discouraged would you describe?"

- For **rural water users** the prompting question is as follows:

  "You meet some family members who live in another village and start talking about water. Which story would you tell about a moment or event when you felt either hopeful or discouraged about rural water supply?"

After sharing the story the story teller is asked to **self signify** the story by categorising the story and by quantifying some questions. These questions and categories form the **Signification Framework** as it is referred to in SenseMaker™. In Triple-S this framework is designed around the vision, strategies and principles in the Triple-S principles framework. The SenseMaker™ capture and analytical software will convert the information into quantitative data to allow the identifications of patterns and trends, as well as "outliers". The visualisation tools in SenseMaker™ permit users to sense complex patterns and anomalies that would not be visible to conventional analysis. At any time the individual stories together making the patterns can be consulted.

"Field Level Operations Watch" (FLOW)

While the narratives collected by SenseMaker™ allow for the assessing of patterns and trends based on narrative, they do not allow for collecting statistically representative and geo-referenced information on functionality of rural water services. Such complementary data requires traditional

data methods which are supported and enhanced technologically with tools such as Field Level Operations Watch (FLOW) as a data collection and analysis platform (WfP, 2011).

FLOW by Water For People (WfP) was designed to facilitate the collection, management and analysis of data around for water points. "*It allows authorities and other sector stakeholders to get a clear view of what's working, what's on the verge of disrepair, and what's broken*" (WfP, 2011).

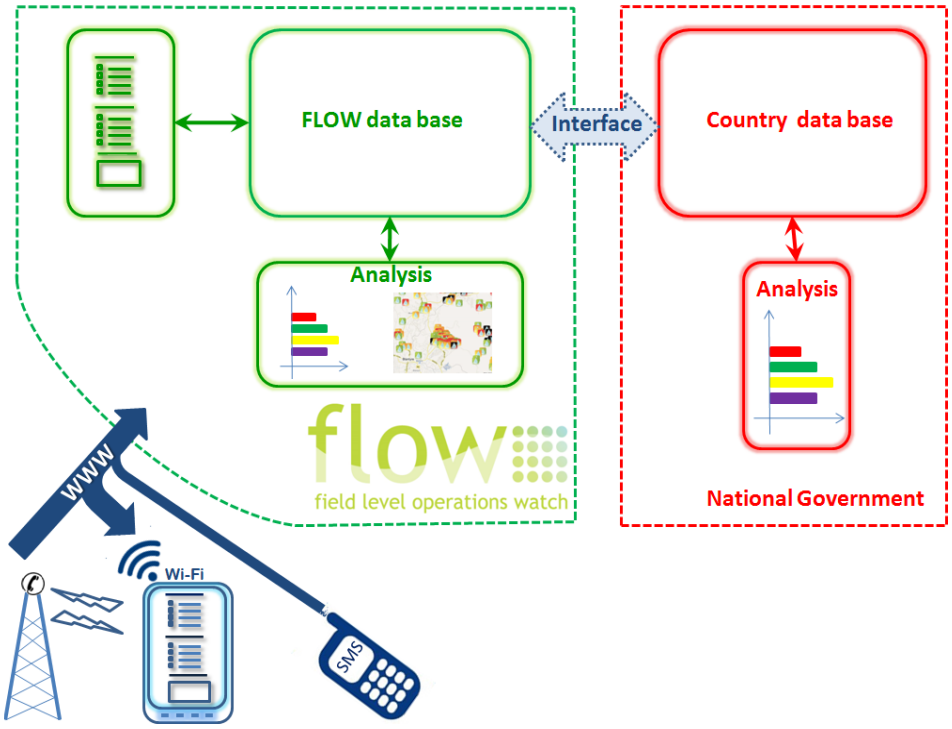


FIGURE 7. PRINCIPLES AND INTERACTIONS REGARDING FLOW

The most important component of FLOW is a web-based data management tool shown in green in Figure 7. Questions are designed on the web and assigned to Android[13] smart phones shown in blue in Figure 7. The information collected on the phone with a particular survey is sent by WiFi or telephone data channels to the flow "web server". The data received in the web server is stored and can be analysed. The advantage of FLOW is that it collects and enables the use of basic data for service provision.

An interface with existing country sector data systems is required to avoid creating parallel systems. Introducing and integrating FLOW in country data systems is important for Triple-S because it considers data collection and use as a key component of sustainable service delivery.

Triple-S will support the implementation of FLOW in close collaboration with national governments as an example of how information about sustainable service delivery can be kept up to date, managed, documented, analysed and used. The focus in such implementation is on both the information the government needs and the more specific information Triple-S might require for tracking changes towards the vision of sustainable services at scale.

13 Android is an "open source" smart-phone operating system by Google.

Other methods may be used by the outcomes-based work streams to inform the learning in narrative one. For example, the international work stream is considering an audit of development partner policies.

LEARNING PROCESS RELATED TO NARRATIVE TWO

The changes documented in narrative two do not relate to changes in the rural water sector but to the **processes enabling these changes** as explained above: Triple-S as an agent of change. In general Triple-S will see if it applies its guiding values of **relevance, responsiveness, leaving a legacy** and **creating leverage** (as mentioned above) and whether these indeed enable the change towards sustainable services at scale. Specific methods are used to apply these values such as Learning Alliances, outcomes based management and local hosting and narrative two verifies whether these methods indeed bring about the desired change. Narrative two will deliver a story about what works and what does not work to make change happen in the water sector.

Because the Triple-S staff, like most development project staff, are often passionately involved in daily operations to create change towards sustainable water services, they may find it hard to step out of daily work and have an unbiased and open minded view on how they implement Triple-S, how they apply the values and methods, and whether or not they are effective. To enable critical reflection and improve their way of delivering the sector change an External Learning Facilitator (ELF) is used in each of the outcomes-based work streams (Uganda, Ghana, international work stream). The ELF will assist in telling this second narrative and improving the way Triple-S aims to bring about change. The ELF is an external Individual or organisation contracted to stimulate critical reflection by the Triple-S teams and their networks.

ELFs are selected on their experience in change processes. For example, the ELF of the international work stream is the Sussex-based Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in the United Kingdom which has a rich experience and documented knowledge about triggers for change in development. This experience and knowledge are tools in supporting the teams to be more effective.

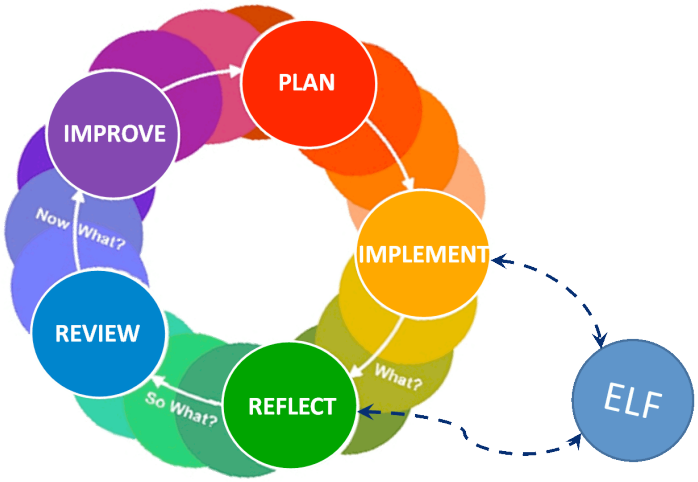


FIGURE 8. POSITION OF THE ELF IN THE LEARNING PROCESS IN EACH OUTCOMES-BASED WORK STREAM

The specific methods used by the ELF are proposed by the ELF but decided in consultation with the Triple-S team. Enquiring whether an effective and enabling environment for change is being created by Triple-S can be done by consulting with direct stakeholders and in different ways such as focus group discussions of a panel of maximum of 10 sector people in each outcomes-based work stream. The panel members are selected on their ability to have an overview of the national rural water sector, and a clear view on the Triple-S enabling activities within the sector.

The ELF will be given the opportunity in four-monthly learning retreats (see section 5) to share and discuss information regarding narrative two, and reflect on it in relation to narrative one (which is also discussed in these retreats).

5. THE LEARNING CYCLE

The learning cycle is shown as a theoretical process in Figure 1 and as practical process in Figure 5. The most important feature of the learning process in Triple-S are the **learning moments** (Figure 5 right bottom) in which the analysis, sense making and synthesis are consolidated, together with partners, and fed back into the planning. Over the annual process cycle there are three different types of learning moments as shown in the project timeline in Figure 9 (where **m** = **months**, and the smaller circles represent four-monthly work stream meetings/learning moments, with the ARaP[Annual Review and Planning] meeting at the end of the 12 month cycle).

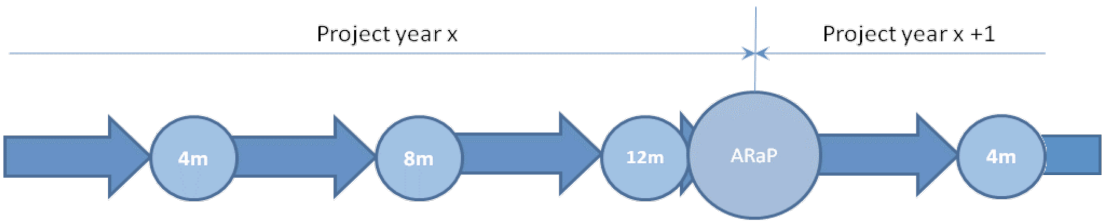


FIGURE 9: PROJECT TIMELINE IN TRIPLE-S

The difference between the various meetings is the extent, purpose and period, and each represents a learning moment.

The first two of the four-monthly work stream learning meetings (**4m** and **8m**) per outcomes-based work stream examines, together with the partners, what is happening in relation to both narratives within the work stream. The learning meetings are typically two-day retreats facilitated by the ELF. These retreats examine how the experiences over the past months influence the next four-month period by undertaking the Programme Logic exercise. These meeting serve explicitly to close the learning loop as illustrated in Figure 1.

The third of these four-monthly work stream learning meetings (**12m**) reviews the past year per outcomes-based work stream, and plans the year ahead. The focus in this meeting is not only on improving the Programme Logic but also to adapt the work stream's outcomes plan, if required. The outputs from this retreat are taken forward to the ARaP.

The ARaP aims to bring all work streams together once a year. The outcomes-based work streams share lessons and experiences regarding both narratives over the past year. This allows for the review of the vision, philosophy, outcomes and activities in the Triple-S initiative, and also to improve the principles framework which is central to this initiative.

The learning from all work streams is immediately used to adapt the annual plan for the next annual cycle.

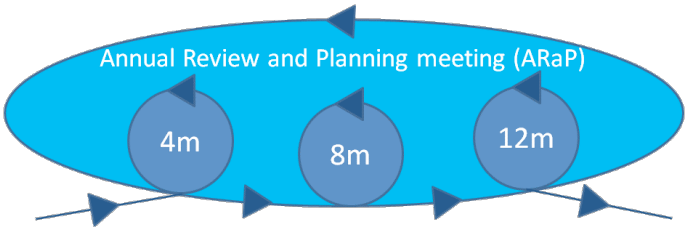


FIGURE 10: CLOSED LEARNING CYCLES OVER A ONE-YEAR PERIOD

The learning process of closed learning cycles in Triple-S as shown in Figure 10 does not mean that learning only takes place in these learning moments. Learning takes places at any time and is unlikely to follow the dedicated steps as shown in Figure 1. However, the above process ensures that learning is made explicit, shared, validated and used for adaptation of outcomes and plans not only within work streams but also across all work streams.

6. REPORTING ON LEARNING IN TRIPLE-S

Reporting is done to inform, document and share the learning in the two narratives within and across the outcomes-based work streams. In Triple-S reporting for learning and reporting for management and planning are aligned: there is one reporting template to serve both purposes.

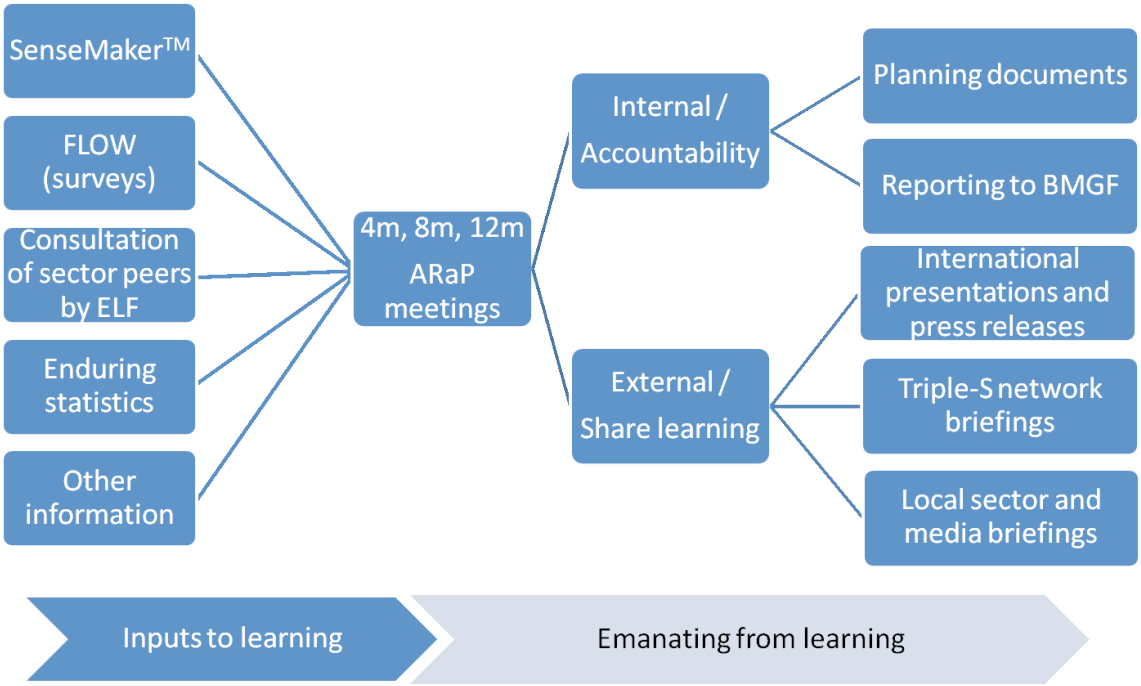


FIGURE 11: REPORTING FLOW IN TRIPLE-S

INPUTS INFORMING THE LEARNING

Narrative one

An annual report based on SenseMaker™ information will be written by Cognitive Edge and discussed in the ARaP meeting as shown in Figure 11. The analysis in the report will be guided by learning questions of Triple-S, in particular of the outcomes-based work streams (Ghana, Uganda and the International work stream) to be able to use the Cognitive Edge analysis for adaptation of outcomes and/or strategy of Triple-S. The fact that Cognitive Edge independently writes the report increases the objectivity and credibility of the analysis. This report will inform progress made in the Triple-S impact indicators.[14]

14 The impact indicators are a separate set of indicators which are part and parcel of the Triple-S grant agreement with the BMGF. In the Grant Agreement they are called "impact milestones".

An annual report with an analysis of FLOW survey data will be written by the Triple-S teams in Uganda and Ghana, together with the in-country stakeholders. This will strengthen monitoring and planning at the intermediate level in Ghana and Uganda for the delivery of sustainable water services. As with the analysis of SenseMaker™ data, the FLOW report will inform progress made in the Triple-S "impact milestones".

Narrative two

An annual report by the ELFs, based on feedback from sector peers in the form of expert panels and stakeholder consultation, will inform the learning around narrative two in the learning retreats.

The outcomes-based work streams and the ELFs may decide to use other inputs for reflection on the values and methods of Triple-S, as and when appropriate.

REPORTS EMANATING FROM THE LEARNING

Internal accountability

The above reports to inform the 4m, 8m and 12m learning moments will be an obvious first step in documenting the learning, and are Triple-S internal documents.

The 4m and 8m learning moments will be documented in Triple-S 4M and 8M narrative reports and in Appendix AA.15

The 12m learning moment will be informed by the SenseMaker™ analysis and the FLOW data using Enduring Statistics as reference data. This annual review (12M) will be written up in a synthesis report for each outcomes-based work stream, documenting signs of change towards sustainable service delivery at scale.

External sharing

Dissemination of learning from the learning retreats is towards the learning in the three outcomes-based work streams regarding sustainable services at scale (narrative one) and will be synthesised annually. This learning on what works and what does't will feed into Triple-S publications and other communications products, for example, seminars during Stockholm World Water Week (SWWW).

The IDS will write the Triple-S theory of change documenting the lessons learned in Triple-S about how to generate and stimulate change.

The lessons learned in the 4m, 8m and 12m reports will be shared through the Triple-S website, the quarterly eUpdates, existing water channels (including partner newsletters and websites), and meetings and conferences.

15 Appendix AA is a format used for reporting to the BMGF and is part of the Grant Agreement. It enables reporting on the progress made in Triple-S.

7. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES FOR LEARNING

Triple-S has a Learning work stream that cuts across the outcomes-based work streams (see Figure 3), the leader of which is responsible for the overall learning within Triple-S as shown in Figure 12. However all outcomes-based leaders are responsible for their own learning.

Each work stream has its own autonomy in terms of filling the various roles and responsibilities according local needs and capacities. The outcomes-based work streams, together with stakeholders in Learning Alliances, are responsible for learning about progress made in their local context, and assessing how this might influence the overall Triple-S initiative. They are also responsible to adapt their outcomes plans and strategies to make them more effective.

The other key roles and responsibilities are determined by the design of the learning process described above. Learning facilitators (LF in Figure 12) are part of the work stream. To keep an external view, each outcomes-based work stream (Figure 3) has hired an independent ELF who focuses mainly on narrative two. As mentioned in section 5, the ELF also facilitates the four-monthly learning meetings, and may be involved in some information collecting activities which do not conflict with its primary function.

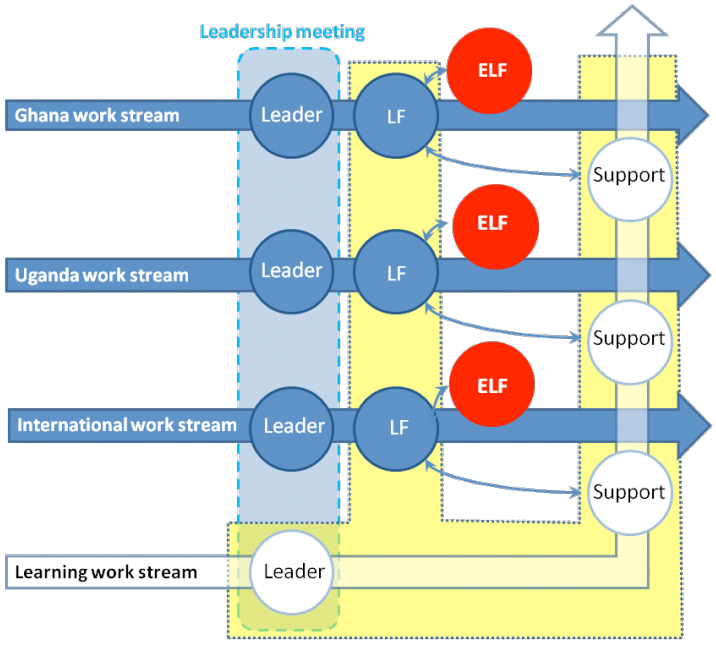


FIGURE 12: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR LEARNING WITHIN TRIPLE-S

The learning team in Triple-S supports the learning in the outcomes based work streams. Led by the Learning work stream leader, it is responsible to design and implement the learning processes and methods in Triple-S, and correct and adapt the design, as necessary. Other

structures such as the leadership meeting[16](shown in blue background in Figure 12) allow for sharing of learning on a regular basis across work streams.

There are opportunities for all those engaged with and in Triple-S to contribute to learning – whether staff[17], members of the International Advisory Group (IAG),[18] or those organizations forming the "learning network" in Figure 13 below.

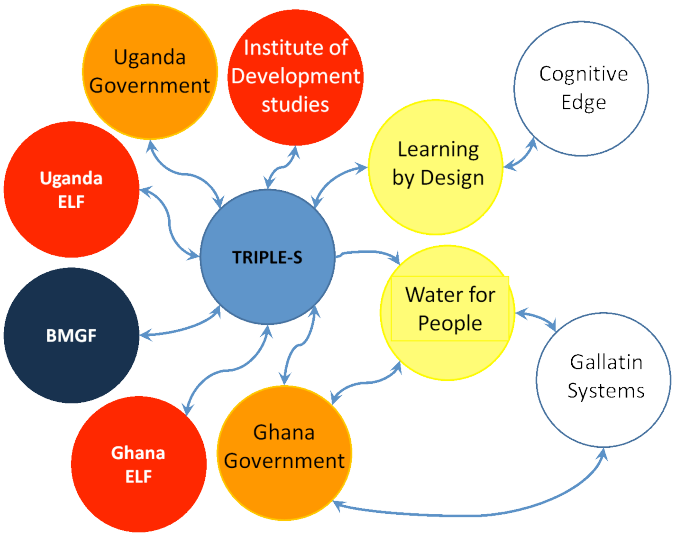


FIGURE 13: LEARNING NETWORK IN TRIPLE-S

The red circles in Figure 13 are the ELFs responsible for holding up a mirror to the different outcomes-based work streams. The IDS is the ELF for the International work stream.

Learning by Design (Irene Guijt) is responsible for supporting the application of SenseMaker™ in Triple-S. She is currently leading the analysis of the SenseMaker™ data, and is ensuring this capacity is built within Triple-S. She is the link with **Cognitive Edge** who manages the SenseMaker™ tools.

Triple-S has working agreement with **WfP** for the implementation of FLOW in Triple-S. They are the link with **Gallatin Systems** who designed and manage the system. There is also a direct link between WfP/Gallatin Systems and the government of Ghana for the possible nationwide roll-out of FLOW, as initiated by Triple-S. And, finally, there is the **BMGF** who also provides feedback on learning in Triple-S, and is responsible for organising the external assessment of the Triple-S initiative.

16 The Leadership Meeting is the highest hierarchical management and planning structure in Triple-S. It meets monthly and is comprised of the eight work stream leaders.
17 Triple-S has a staff complement of 34 people as of 29 March 2011.
18 The IAG is a group of international experts who advise Triple-S regarding its strategy. Its members are selected also to provide entry into organisations and constituencies which are targeted by Triple-S. It currently consists of four staff members from the Water and Sanitation Programme, the African Development Bank, The Global Water Challenge and the Government of Mozambique. It meets one to two times a year depending on project needs and opportunities.

8. REFLECTIONS

When Outcomes-Based Management was introduced in the tool box for strategic planning in Triple-S to help increase the impact of the project, we realised that the learning would be a critical part of it. That is when we decided to design for learning about sustainable rural water service (narrative one) and for learning about the values and methods of Triple-S (narrative two). Both should primarily support the outcomes-based work streams to be more effective in achieving impact.

We realised that monitoring is not only central to the Triple-S initiative, but also to the water sector as a whole. So we make sure that tools such as FLOW do not only serve the Triple-S project, but are also aimed at contributing to sector learning in order to achieve sustainable service delivery. Learning should be embedded in and be part of the sector change that Triple-S aims to achieve.

Finally, we also wanted to learn from experience with monitoring in other projects. This had taught us that learning often is considered to be cumbersome and to delay the "real operational work" – we wanted to make space for learning and enable teams to step out of operational realities and enjoy the learning.

With these principles in mind we started to design the learning framework in Triple-S. Part of that was sharing the basic ideas with the teams and getting a learning team across Triple-S up and running. In that process of design we also started the implementation of the learning and monitoring framework. Now and then this led to confusion and hesitation. This increased when, after careful consideration and discussions with Cognitive Edge, we decided to start using SenseMaker™ and FLOW as the core methods for measuring impact of Triple-S. Both tools were unfamiliar for everyone in Triple-S. But, with the support of IRC staff, Cognitive Edge and Irene Guijt (of Learning by Design) we managed to build staff enthusiasm for the tools.

At this moment in time, despite the work load to get the methods up and running, everyone is excited about the methods and the information they will provide. We still have not done a full round of learning in Triple-S. The full round will end on 31 May 2011 with the conclusion of the first year of implementation. Parts of the learning in Triple-S have not yet been fully tested and consolidated. That will be done after 31 May. We will also need to streamline the work with FLOW and SenseMaker™ to ensure they become effective tools within the initiative.

In Ghana and Uganda the ELFs have been working with success since late 2010, but the ELF for the international work stream (IDS) only started its contract in March 2011.

We are still "learning about learning" in Triple-S but, with more confidence and enthusiasm, and with great ownership in Ghana and Uganda. Both FLOW and SenseMaker™ are new tools, but we feel encouraged and supported in using them by WfP (for FLOW), Cognitive Edge (for SenseMaker™), Learning by Doing (Irene Guijt), and the BMGF.

As mentioned, this learning framework is a work in progress. It has been developed bit by bit over the past months. It has succeeded in making Triple-S partners active participants in the

learning process. It has benefited from various initiatives in the past, and has been successful in directly implementing lessons learned from WASHCost and other projects.

It is very focused on the needs of the initiative to make the delivery of rural water service at scale a success which can be replicated in other contexts. Triple-S is confident that by focusing on these it will also fulfill donor requirements through the shared vision between Triple-S and the BMGF.

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