
Concept

Note

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A concept note for
discussion from
External Learning
Facilitator

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For triple-s International
Workstream, IRC

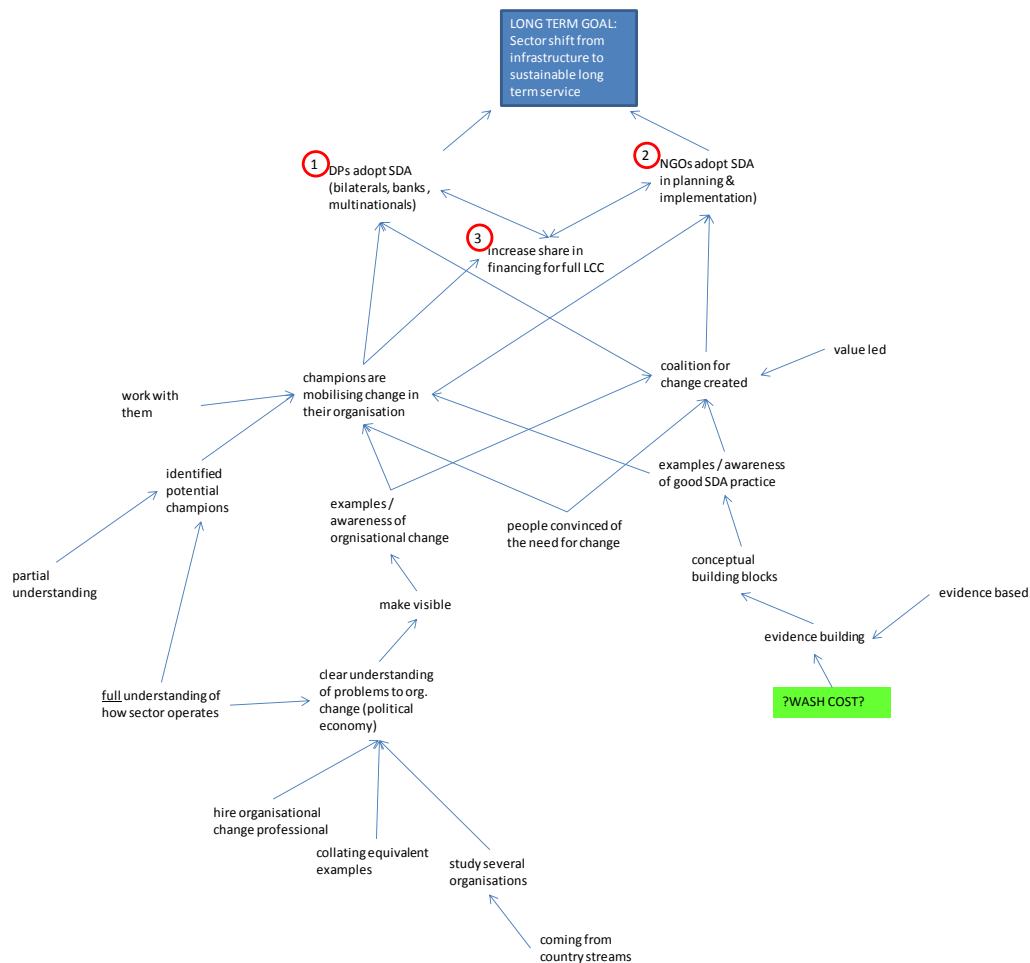
Concept Note from IDS/ELF

Strengthening and monitoring the Theory of Change for Triple-S

S Batchelor & N Perkins, 31st May 2011

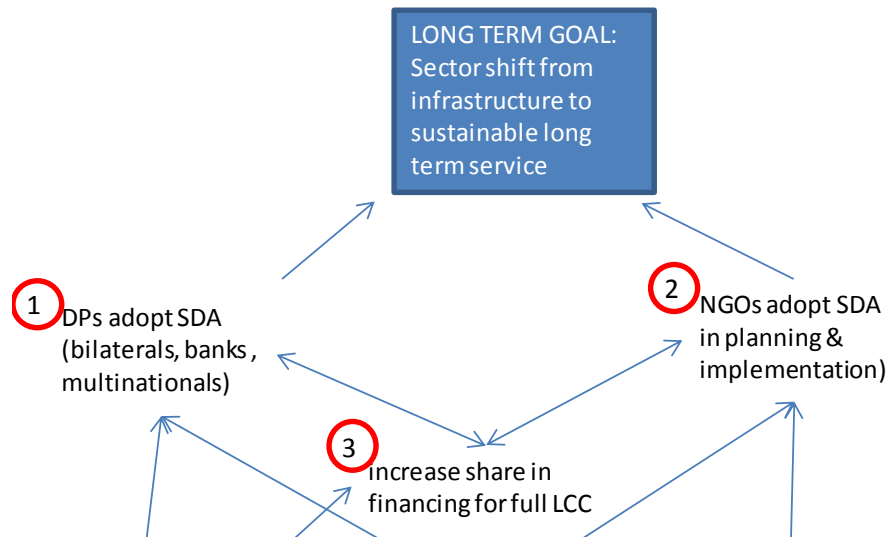
1. Introduction

At the first international learning retreat for TripleS, a start was made on two draft theories of change – discussed during group work for the International Workstream (IWS). One is presented here.



We have already discussed in the learning report how the draft theory of change assumes and embeds 3 different models of influence. Evidence led, Values led and Relational. Our approach here is to consider each route through the proposed Theory of Change.

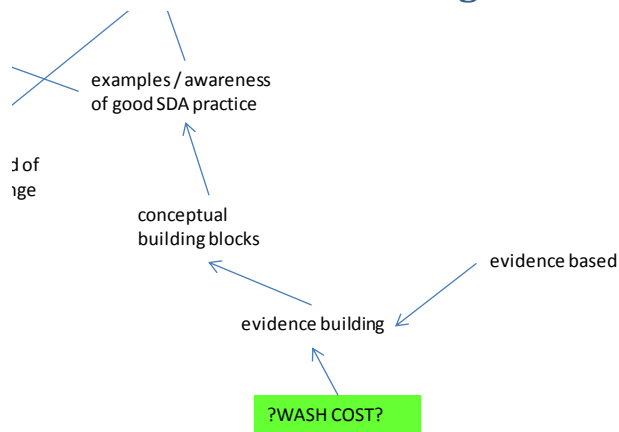
Each route leads us to contribute to the Goal and Purpose. This was the starting point of the TOC development. The long term goal, supported by three main outcome areas . We will not be reassessing whether these purposes are valid, but take these as given.



In this paper we use this Theory of Change to unpack the steps that lead towards this change. At each stage we will seek to ask the questions:-

- what preconditions might be required for this step to occur,
- what do we know about how the step might occur?
- what assumptions are in place which assume this will happen
- how might we monitor to see whether the assumptions are correct.....????

2. Evidence Led - Building on field work



In one thread that feeds towards the purposes evidence is assumed to be important. While the discussion focused on WASH COST, the thread of evidence assumes that evidence is convincing. For instance WASHCOST was presented as a way to provide decision makers with a framework that monetises the total cost of service delivery. By including the full life cycle cost in planning approaches, the

thread leads eventually to NGOs and DPs adopting SDA and increases the share in financing for full life cycle costs.

In the first draft of this paper, WASHCOST was highlighted as a principle source of evidence. One commentator noted “WASHCOST is being prominently flagged as evidence in this concept note: this might be the result of Triple S staff referencing to that maybe a bit too much, while there is more to explore in terms of products. We’ve developed building blocks etc. also coming from the countries. DP are helping us to review these products. So our evidence is in fact increasing. More should come out of the countries in the coming period.” Wherever the evidence comes from, the this line of enquiry in the theory of change presents it as having a persuasive role. The role of evidence depends on assumptions. For instance when looking at some WASHCOST statements we can see the statements make a number of assumptions:-

- That gaining reliable data is effective when undertaken through a community of practice
- That costs can be disaggregated, and compared to other situations
- That modelling will show the relative importance of factors.

In any research about what works and what doesn’t, there is an overarching sequence of thought. In a recent presentation, the philosopher Nancy Cartwright suggests that you can say of the data and evidence that (assuming it is working at least in one location) that a) It works somewhere (Impact evaluation), b) It ‘works’: it plays a causal role ‘widely’ (unpacking the key causal and supporting factors), c) It will work here (Policy directive). The key point is that evidence that something worked somewhere – or in this case that it cost this in this situation – does not mean it will work everywhere (or cost the same). Nor from a policy makers viewpoint that although it worked somewhere, it doesn’t mean it will necessarily work here.

In one documented situation published by IRC (and happening within the WASHCOST arena) there is commentary of a specific context and discussion of supporting factors that may make that situation very specific. The use of modelling, which is based on context specific evidence, attempts to unpack specific located evidence in context, and enables the supporting factors to be isolated and explored. This then sets up the evidence in order for proponents to say that this factor might play the same causal role in another situation.

But for evidence to influence Policy, there is a need to then say – this causal factor will play out the same way here, in this specific situation.

The Theory of Change suggests that evidence which has disaggregated the supporting factors, will lead to understanding the causal conceptual building blocks, and this leads on to, or is expressed in, examples of SDA good practice.

For the individual country streams, many supporting factors for working Service Delivery Approach rural water supplies may be the same. Within a single country, Ghana or Uganda, the national government policy will be the same, the culture, the influence of the donors, the civil society environment. However for the international stream it will be important to articulate the evidence that SDA works within the context of the supporting factors. For agencies to pick up the evidence

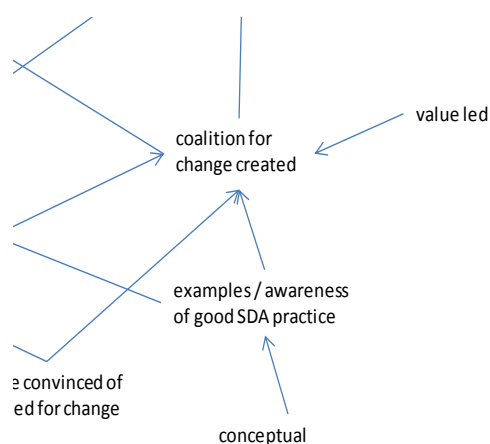
and inform their own action plans and policies, they will need to understand the components of the evidence.

ELF Workstream 1 – Evidence led policy influence

For this workstream it would be good to convene specific stakeholder meetings to discuss the **evidence**. The discussion needs to examine whether the primary evidence is convincing, and what others in the international arena have to say about supporting factors. Evidence has to be sufficiently explained to the receiver in the context and with an unpacking of supporting factors. There needs to be a consultation with the water sector target audience on whether it is convincing.

3. Value led – Coalitions for Change

The evidence led thread, flows into the idea of value led policy influence. As stated in the Learning



report, examples are not evidence per se, they are about creating a movement or feel within the water sector that the ‘best people’ are doing SDA, and creating a peer pressure that ‘we should too’. A value-Based Approach depends on who owns the knowledge rather than what that knowledge is .

This transition from the formal evidence and the disaggregation into supporting factors that may apply to specific other

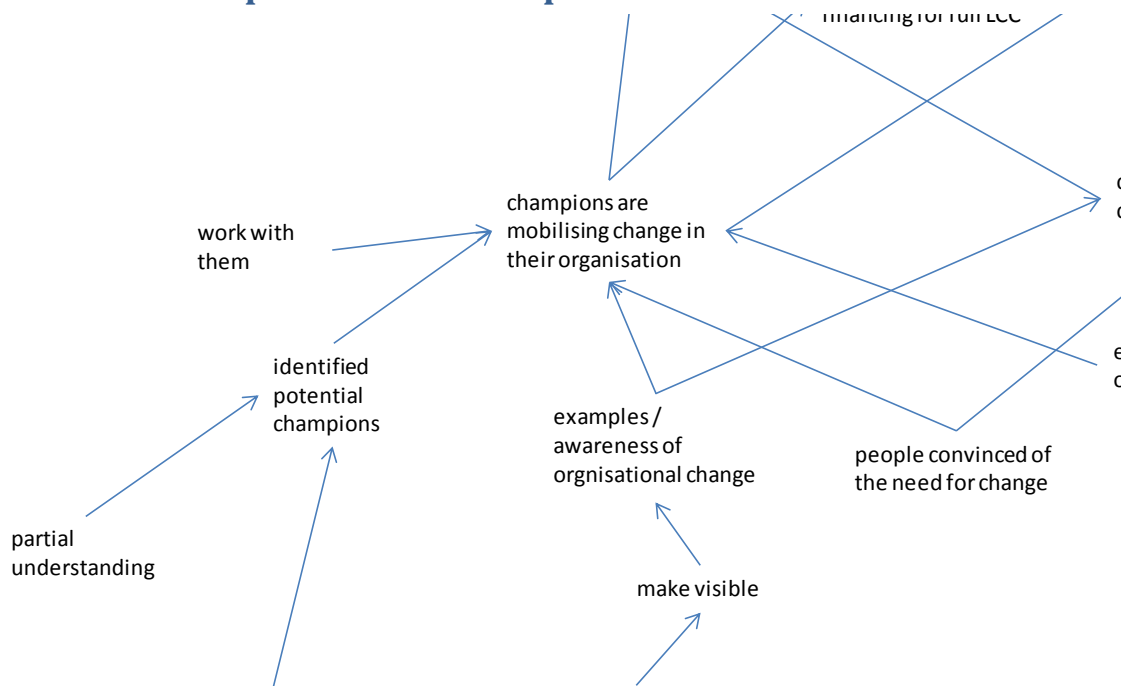
situations, will only be likely to influence where there is some peer pressure to adopt best practice. WASHCOST itself recognises this in the analysis of evidence in creating communities of practice, but Triple-S as a whole hopes for a gaining momentum of pressure that causes change. Sumner and Perkins put it like this “Factors that seem to support greater research impact and influence include ‘Knit-working’ or the building of coalitions of connectors and champions around ideas that lead to change. ‘Knit-working’ and ‘strategic opportunism’ are products of political interests, incentives and capacities (i.e. power as material political economy and power as institutions, norms, conventions and behaviours).” This is also about ‘Strategic opportunism’ or the role of mapping contexts to identify windows of opportunity for impact/influence (not forgetting the role of serendipity!)

ELF Workstream 2 – Value led policy influence

For this workstream it would be good to monitor the media and publications in the Water Sector to identify the political interests. Media monitoring may provide insight into WHO is emerging as leader in the sector , WHAT they are saying, and HOW coalitions are forming (which organisations are echoing the words of another. This will seek to gain a overview of the changing incentives and capacities of the sector.

This will also inform the creation of examples, seeking to ensure the right tone and style to seamlessly enter the popular and most political debates in the sector.

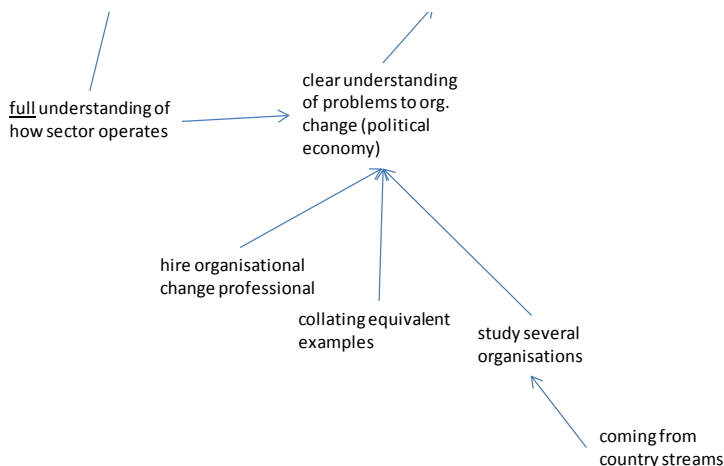
4. Relationship led – WHO is important?



To the left of the draft Theory of Change a section focuses on identifying individual Champions and building their capacity not only to understand the debates of the water sector (taking in the examples from the evidence/coalition thread), but understanding how organisations change.

In the words of Sumner and Perkins, “In this approach it is ‘not the knowledge that counts but the dialogue; influence is not just about changing minds but being open to changing your own mind in the process. The notion is that politics can be neutralised with conscious attempts at equality.’” We can see this in the diagram – words such as ‘work with them’, ‘partial understanding’ acknowledge that it is not the quantity or quality of the knowledge but the relationships. These are clearly articulated in the strategy, particularly in the invocacy approach and the associated mini strategies.

There are three elements to this thread within the TOC that can be drawn out. At one level this is about identifying the right people, the Champions. It is possible that over the time of the programme the Champions will come and go. The existing strategy of mapping the key



organisations and tracking the key people within those organisations already addresses this point.

However at another level this is about organisational change. Few if any of the Champions will be able to change their organisations without strategic support. They may have strategic ‘ammunition’ – evidence from the evidence

thread, and a coalition of other members of the water sector pushing for change. But the ammunition will fail if they do not know how to use it within their own organisation. For every Champion that succeeds in changing their organisation, there are several that move on feeling defeated.

To strengthen this point there is a need to understand how organisations change. According to the discussion at the learning retreat there were original plans to hire a organisational change specialist to support the Champions. It would seem that such support is still necessary given the thread on the TOC that fed into this relational zone.

The third point is that the Champions need to understand the political economy of the sector – ie how their organisation might fit in the wider picture. As we said in the learning report:- “We feel there needs to be investment in analysis of the problems of the sector. This is not the problems of rural water supplies – we have said above that these are becoming well known. But more on the problems of organizational change and in particular how those organizations in the sector might be resistant to change. This will likely include an analysis of political economy that keeps barriers in place and inhibit change. For instance the complex and large scale Banks – how can they implement change.”

ELF Workstream 3 – Relational led policy influence

The IWS needs to put in place an analysis of the political economy of the sector. It needs to create resources, not just for explaining the Service Delivery Approach, but resource to assist Champions in organisational change. It is not clear whether this should be an ELF workstream or a contract managed directly by the main team.

There is also a need for monitoring the interactions with the stakeholders. As undertaken in the lead up to the learning event, even a relatively late set of stakeholder interviews can be revealing. A more systematic set of stakeholder interviews would provide a feedback loop that could help the IWS to provide the right contextual inputs to assist Champions to stay on track.

5. Concept – Monitoring and Learning from the IWS

How could we monitor the progress across these three threads of influence?

Convened discussion on evidence	This will monitor whether the evidence is being presented with enough disaggregation of supporting factors and in a convincing format.
Media monitoring on coalitions	IDS could scan the media for growing coalitions within the water sector, seeking to place Triple-S in a value led context
Stakeholder feedback	IDS will as part of its ELF core contract undertake a series of interviews with key stakeholders being mindful not to overload key players, and to balance the portfolio of feedback.
Optional – organisational change priorities for the water sector	An analysis of political economy that keeps barriers in place and inhibit change.

We will seek feedback on this draft concept note before unpacking these into contractable work packages.