

QUALITATIVE DOCUMENT ANALYSIS:

‘Practice’ document review



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A review of programming documentation from nine rural WASH development partners was undertaken by Triple S using the Qualitative Document Analysis, or QDA, method to assess examples of 'practice' relating to ten 'building blocks' of sustainable rural water service delivery. The findings show that while all building blocks are represented in programming documents to a varied extent, there is a general lack of reference to asset management and financial planning for life cycle costs across all scenarios. This finding is consistent across both categories of development partner organisation and all types of documents analysed and can therefore be considered as a significant gap in the context of the QDA review.

This finding is telling in light of the consistently high levels of system failure in rural water supply reported from many different country contexts. Given that the vast majority of development partner support is focused on providing capital expenditure, with the expectation that governments and households will pay for the on-going management, operating costs and rehabilitation of systems, it highlights two of the most critical failure points in water service delivery.

1. INTRODUCTION

Triple-S (Sustainable Services at Scale) is a six-year, multi-country learning initiative to improve water supply to the rural poor. It is led by [IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre](#). The initiative is currently operating in [Ghana](#) and [Uganda](#) and Burkina Faso. Lessons learned from work in countries feeds up to the international level where Triple-S is promoting a re-appraisal of how development assistance to the rural water supply sector is designed and implemented.

In 2011, Triple-S undertook a [review of eleven major WASH Development Partner's](#) (DPs) policy documents originating in or around 2008/9, using a technique known as Qualitative Document Analysis, or QDA. The aim of this initial exercise was twofold; firstly, to begin to understand the extent to which themes relating to sustainability were reflected in the priorities of DPs at the start of the Triple-S programme (~2008), and secondly, to form a benchmark to assess progress by which the impact of Triple-S could be measured at the end of the six year period (2014).

Recognising that there are often discrepancies between policy and practice, it was subsequently decided to undertake a similar analysis of documents related to the *implementation* of these policies. This explored the extent to which the ten 'building blocks' (see below) are reflected in programme documents related to rural WASH practices. This document provides a summary of the findings.

1.1 OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Document Analysis is a method for analysing written documents in a rigorous and systematic way. As with all forms of research, the findings from the QDA should be corroborated with other sources of information, including feedback from the organisations themselves. QDA is one of a number of approaches that can help us refine our understanding of DP policies and practices in the water sector.

The QDA was guided by two interrelated principles: ‘dependability’ and ‘impartiality’. The QDA process includes a number of explicit steps: (a) setting inclusion criteria for documents; (b) collecting documents; (c) articulating key areas of analysis; (d) document coding (using Dedoose¹); (e) verification; and (f) analysis². Analysis is considered ‘dependable’ if another reader would have ‘reached the same general conclusion given the opportunity to reach the same set of documents under similar conditions’³ and this principle was taken into consideration the primary analysis of the document was carried out. In addition, a verification process also helped to ensure that analysis was consistent (this was also supplemented, where needed, with a third party arbiter). The principle of ‘impartiality’ means that the team ensured conclusions were drawn only from the documents analysed and not from other experiences and knowledge, to further reduce bias and ensure that the findings referred only to what was written.

The QDA methodology presents an opportunity to collate and analyse documents in order to see patterns and anomalies among a variety of actors working in the water sector, though it does not allow us to analyse an entire organisation or programme fully and the results should therefore be understood in this context. A further overview of the limitations of the QDA method is presented in section 3.5.

1.2 THE DEVELOPMENT PARTNER DOCUMENTS UNDER REVIEW

The DPs reviewed were the same as those that were analysed in the first stage of the policy QDA. These can be grouped into two general categories of ‘funders’ and ‘implementers’ as follows:

Funders	Implementers
African Development Bank (AfDB)	Engineers without Borders Canada (EWB Canada)
Inter American Development Bank (IADB)	Living Water International (LWI)
Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID)	Wateraid
Department for International Development (DFID)	Water for People
The United Nations Children’s Fund UNICEF	European Union Water Initiative (EUWI)
DANIDA (Denmark’s development cooperation)	

1.3 THE INCLUSION CRITERIA

Documents were included in the QDA based on the following inclusion criteria⁴:

- Documents that reflect policy ‘in action’ – this could include assessment, appraisal, or evaluation reports, progress reports, or annual reports for a programme, project, or initiative.

¹ Dedoose is a software for analyzing qualitative and quantitative data, similar to NVivo

² Adopted from ‘Process of Qualitative Document Analysis’ in Altheide, D. (1996) SAGE Research Methods

³ Wesley 2010

⁴ DANIDA and EUWI were not included in this exercise due to the inability to find suitable documents.

- Documents that refer to projects or initiatives that began soon after the policy documentation that was analysed in the Policy QDA (under the assumption that such projects should, in theory, embody the principles stated in the policy documents).
- Documents related to rural water supply delivery service. As most of the DPs have these included in their WASH project and programmes, only parts of document related to this topic were considered.

Documents were gathered primarily through searching publically available sources of information. Where it was not possible to find appropriate documents in this way, the team contacted DPs directly to obtain documents.

1.5 THE BUILDING BLOCKS

There is an increasing recognition that rural water sectors need to move from a focus on implementing stand-alone projects focused on providing infrastructure only to one that emphasises the delivery of sustainable water services. A study into [thirteen different country sectors](#) carried out by Triple-S suggests that ten critical factors are pivotal to this important shift. These ten factors, listed in the table below, can be thought of as the 'building blocks' for making the shift to sustainable service delivery. The documents were therefore analysed by QDA using these ten '*building blocks for sustainability*' as a framework for analysis.

TABLE 1: TEN BUILDING BLOCKS FOR THE SHIFT TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE SERVICE DELIVERY

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. Support to service providers	Structured system of direct (post-construction) support provided to back up and monitor community management entities and other service providers.
6. 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.
7. Learning and adaptive	Learning and knowledge management supported at national and

<i>management</i>	decentralised levels to enable the sector to adapt based on experience.
8. <i>Asset management</i>	Systematic planning, inventory updates, and financial forecasting for assets carried out, and asset ownership clearly defined.
9. <i>Regulation of rural services and service providers</i>	Regulation of the service delivered and service provider performance through mechanisms appropriate for small rural operators.
10. <i>Financing to cover all life-cycle costs</i>	Financial frameworks account for all life-cycle costs, especially major capital maintenance, support to service authorities and service providers, monitoring and regulation

More information on the building blocks can be found at the [Water Services that Last Resources page](#).

2. THE FINDINGS

The findings below present the scores of both funding and implementing DPs and provide summaries of significant findings for both groups and a conclusion with overall findings. Each DP is presented along with a listing of the documents reviewed, a graphical presentation of their average 'performance' in relation to the building blocks and a summary of significant individual findings.

The aim throughout the review has been to balance the raw findings of the QDA with a contextual understanding of the documents themselves, to reduce misrepresentation and to reflect the differing mandates of DPs as they perform their roles in the sector.

2.1 SCORING CRITERIA

The strength of support to each building block in the documents was categorised as one of: 'good', 'okay', 'limited', 'none' or 'unclear' and converted to a numerical score to help compare performance by theme and organisation; the scoring used is as follows:

Good = 3

Okay = 2

Limited = 1

None/unclear = 0

An example which was rated as 'good' would have to include clear and/or consistent references to a practice which related to a building block and would (ideally) also give sufficient information to the reader to judge that this element was being carried out competently and with sufficient resource allocation. An 'OK' score would indicate the presence of practices which related to a building block where there was insufficient detail to confidently give a score of 'good'. A score of 'limited' would indicate only a brief or cursory reference to a practice related to a building block with little corroborative detail or contextual information on the level of resource allocation or prioritisation. The rating 'unclear/none' (both scoring zero) indicated that there was no information clearly attributable to a building block. The combination of 'unclear' and 'none' serves as a reference to the fact that this score does not on its own represent a definitive verdict on practices but is a reference to the level of detail in the programme document.

2.2 FUNDERS

2.2.1 AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (AFDB)

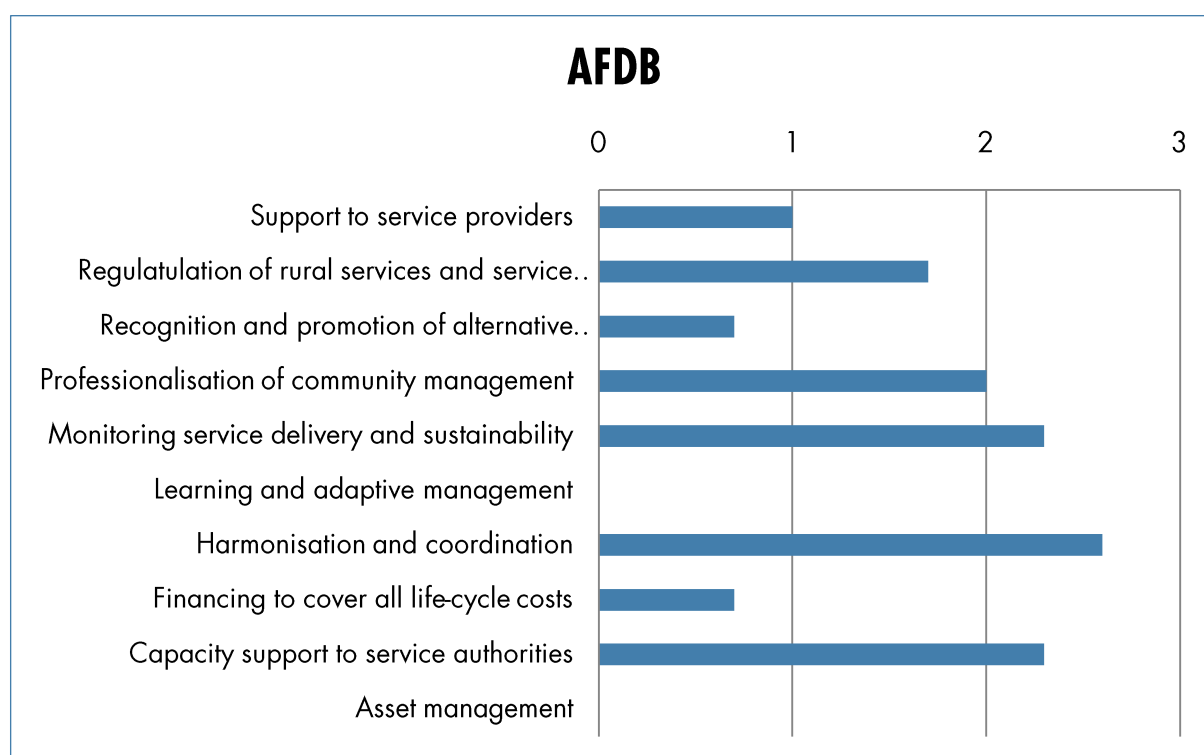
Documents Reviewed

- *National Rural Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Programme (PNEAR), Phase II: Second Sub-Programme 2009-2012, Rwanda*
- *Appraisal Report Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program Ethiopia (2005)*
- *Appraisal Report Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program Uganda (2005)*

Findings

The documents selected for analysis from AfDB were internal appraisal reports which detailed three rural water and sanitation programmes in Rwanda, Ethiopia and Uganda, dating from 2005 to 2009. They covered in detail topics such as technical options, cost and financing, environmental and social impact, procurement processes, sustainability, risks, knowledge development, legal compliance, and a series of recommendations in conclusion.

Four clear gaps emerge from the analysis – asset management, financial planning for lifecycle costs, recognition of alternative service providers and learning and adaptive management. The latter scored poorly as there was no way to gather from the documents whether specific measures beyond those already existing in the in-country sectors were planned or functioning well, though the relative high scores with respect to harmonisation and coordination and capacity support to service authorities clearly mitigates this result. Asset management and financial planning for lifecycle costs scored low since the issue of the long term viability and replacement of infrastructure was not explicitly dealt with in the documents. The Bank noted that centrally funded governments budgets need to rise with respect to Water and Sanitation, but this was not a precondition for funding, nor was there a specific emphasis on major costs further down the line.



2.2.2 INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (IADB)

Documents Reviewed

- *Water and Sanitation Program for Human Development - Phase I Guatemala (2008)*
- *Water and Sanitation Program for Rural and Indigenous Communities (PAYSRI) Paraguay (2008)*

Findings

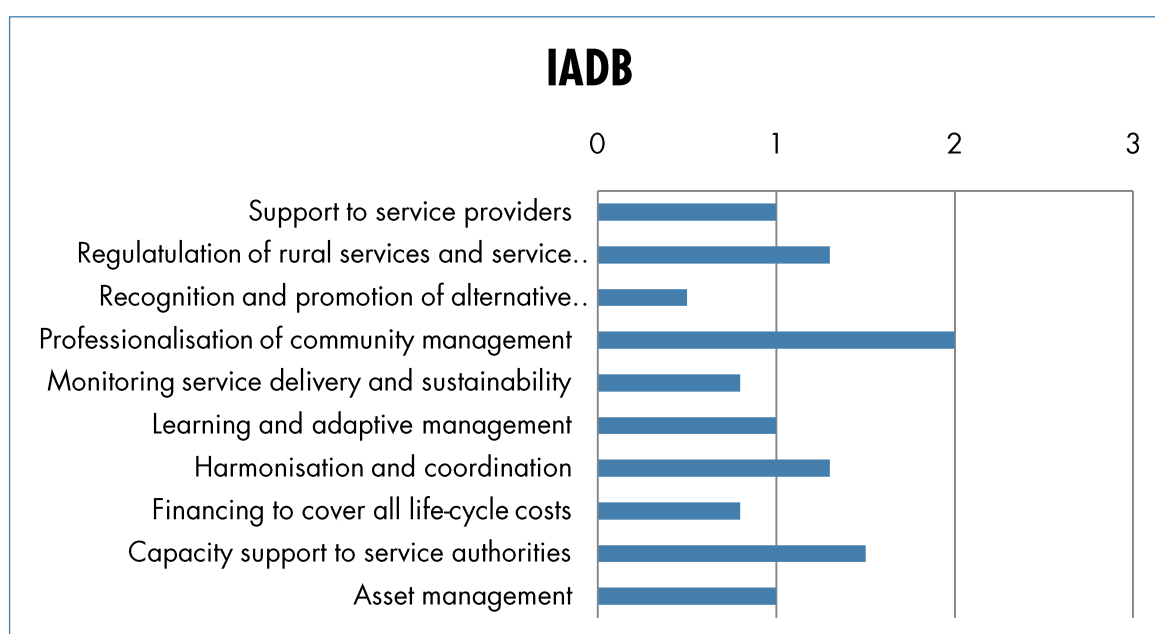
The IADB documents reviewed were loan and grant agreements made to Paraguay and Guatemala in order to implement a number of (predominantly) rural water and sanitation projects, including institutional strengthening and community development initiatives. They are the synthesis of a number of additional studies carried out prior to making the loan, including technical, community, socioeconomic, institutional and environmental studies which situate the proposal in an appropriate evidence base.

Professionalisation of community management scored well - there was considerable attention to the need for improvement of community participation, crucially including the need for legally recognised user associations, as well as the need for interventions to be sensitive to differing local and cultural contexts. Capacity

support for local government was also well addressed and the needs of various institutions were considered with specific funding resources allocated for strengthening. The insistence by GoG in the Guatemalan case that INFOM (Instituto de Fomento Municipal [Municipal Development Institute]) would be the executing agency working via existing government agencies including the National Fund for Peace (FONAPAZ)), rather than a private company, is clearly also important with respect to capacity building and it is encouraging that this was agreed by IADB.

Although the need for user tariffs is well articulated, including the provision of sufficient funds to deal with operation and management costs, long term asset management responsibilities and full lifecycle costs are less detailed.

On average, many of the scores presented below are between the unclear and limited range. However, this may be more to do with the purpose of the documents. The remit of the loan proposal, though clear, concise and well ordered, conforms to a standard project cycle, while many of the building blocks look beyond this time frame.



2.2.3 AUSAID

Documents Reviewed

- *Rural Water Supply & Sanitation Program: Report of the Mid-Term Independent Progress Review (2010)*
- *Civil Society Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Fund, Independent Progress Report (2011)*

Findings

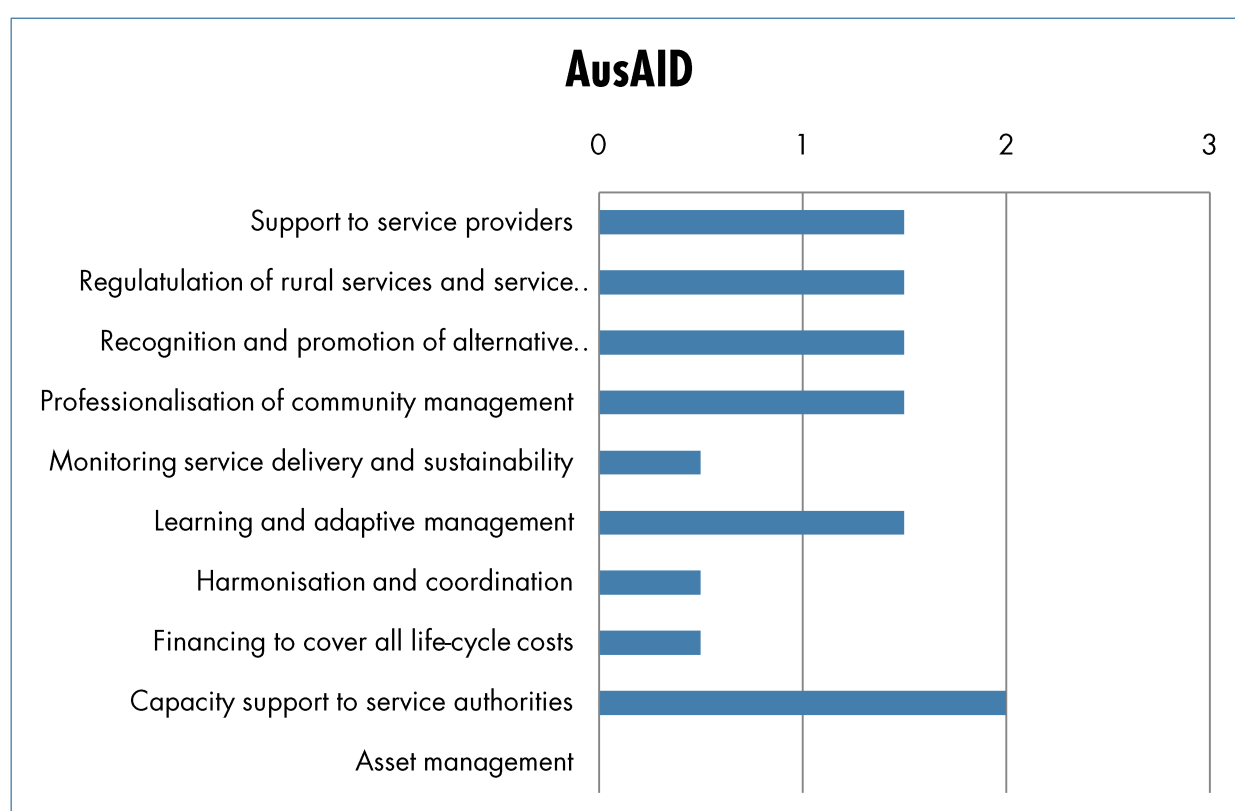
The Independent Progress Report of The Civil Society Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Fund, which provides grants to 11 Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) was reviewed along with a midterm report for a 40 million AUD\$ RWSSP programme in East Timor, which responded more directly to the need for capacity building in a difficult political and economic setting where basic infrastructure needs were still a priority.

Capacity support to service authorities scored well, even in fast changing contexts where it was more difficult to achieve lasting results. As

demonstrated by the recommendations of both reviews, AusAID clearly recognises the need for long term sustainability in WASH interventions but also faces the harsh reality of difficult negotiations between parties who often have competing political and economic interests.

Harmonisation and coordination, monitoring service delivery and sustainability, asset management and financial planning for lifecycle costs were less well developed. Monitoring was considered overly complex in the East Timor programme and CSO (self reported) monitoring was criticised as inconsistent and vague (a sector wide problem therefore)

Both programmes are very different – one is country specific, the other is a multi country challenge fund, however the findings with relation to lifecycle costs and asset management are low in both cases, along with other examples reviewed here.



2.2.4 DFID

Documents Reviewed

- *DFID Proposal for Global Support to the WSP Sustainable Services through Domestic Private Sector Participation (2010)*
- *Sustainable Services through Domestic Private Sector Participation Inception Report (2010)*
- *Water and Sanitation Programme, FY10 End of Year Report (2010)*
- *SS-DSPS Annual Review (2010)*

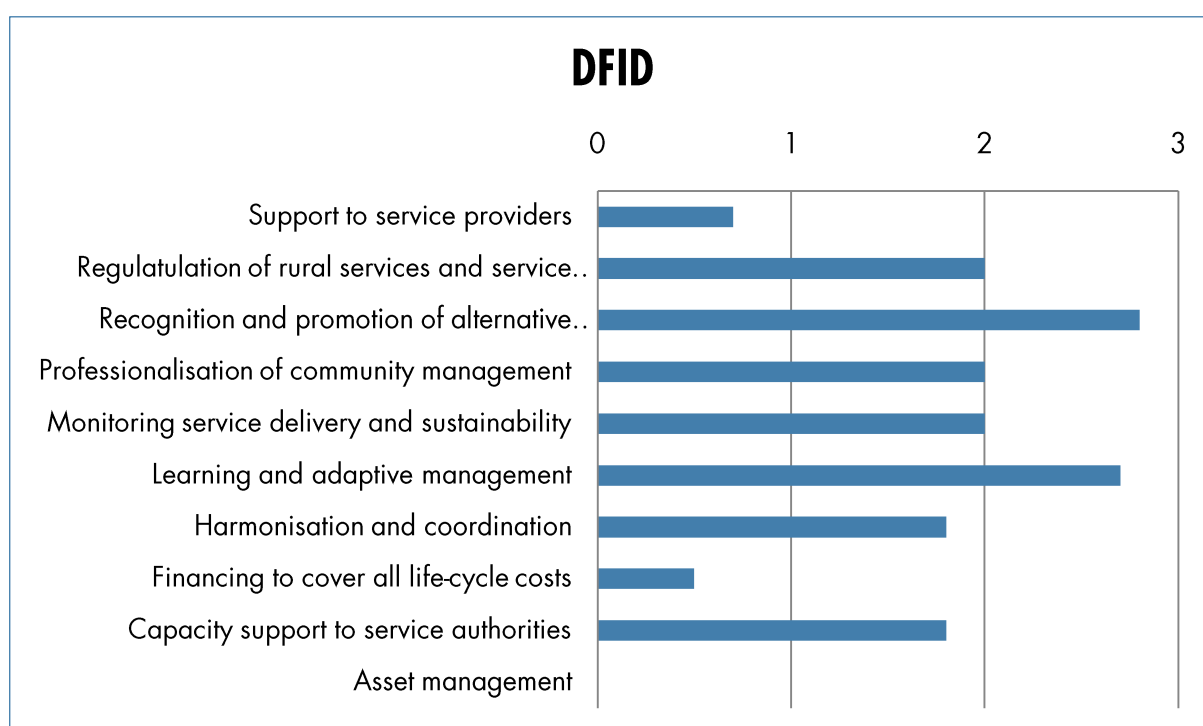
Findings

The WSP Domestic Sector Participation initiative is a 12 country programme, of which DFID funds over 40%, with varying activities in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda, Senegal and Uganda. The reports reviewed illustrate some of the documentation process seen in multi donor funded development interventions, as well as the oversight procedures donors undertake to monitor them.

They span funding proposal, inception report, end of year report and end of year review.

As might be expected, the Sustainable Services through Domestic Private Sector Participation Programme scored well with respect to the recognition and promotion of alternative service providers. There was also strong coverage given to learning and adaptive management across the whole programme, which also scored highly. Well reasoned attention was also given to other building blocks such as regulation, professionalisation and monitoring, while stressing the importance of context and local conditions – giving further weight to the high score in the learning sphere.

Documents scored lower with respect to asset management and lifecycle costs and support to service providers. In this instance, the focus of the programme should be noted as a mitigating factor (primarily to do with encouraging the private sector), although this places additional stress on the need to effectively coordinate with other actors who do concentrate on those issues and to seek to work in a more harmonised sector.



2.2.5 UNICEF

Documents Reviewed

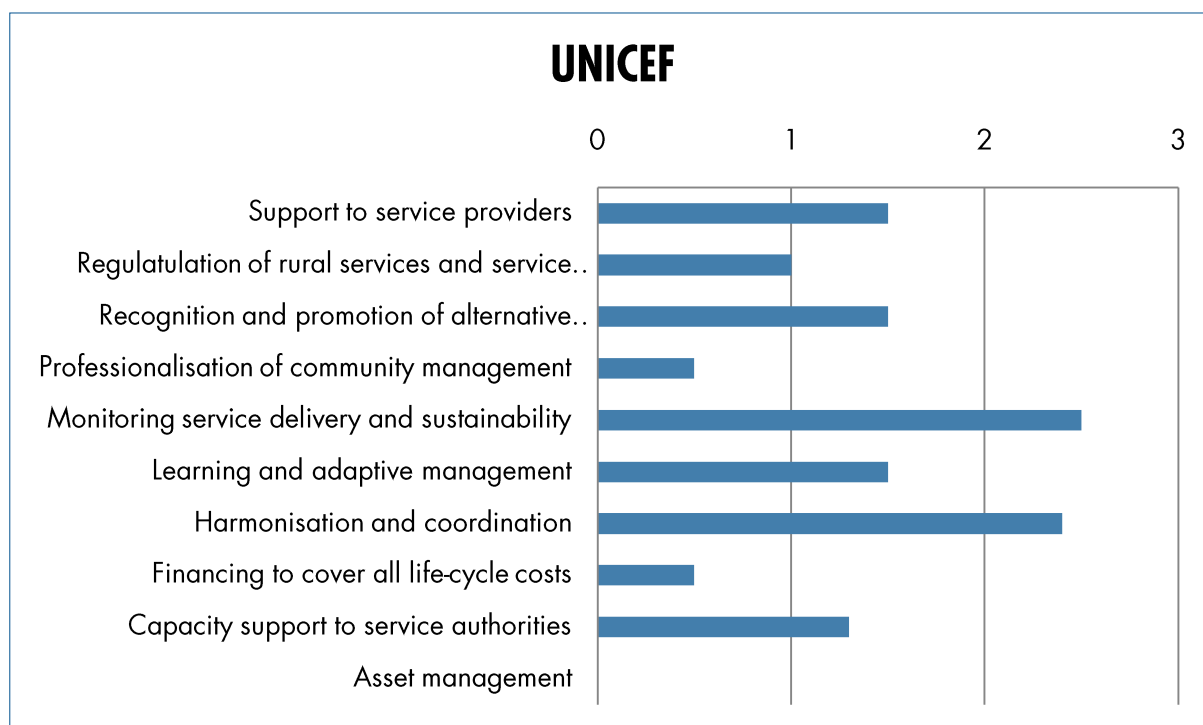
- *Mid-Term evaluation report of EU/UNICEF Supported WASH Programme "Accelerating Progress towards the MDGs on Water and Sanitation in Ethiopia" (2011)*
- *UNICEF Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Annual Report (2008)*

Findings

The UNICEF WASH annual report represented an amalgamation of all UNICEFs WASH activities for 2008, while the mid-term evaluation reviewed was that of a five year multi site, multi discipline WASH programme with additional EU funding, in Ethiopia. As with the annual review, the mid-term review is very wide ranging and touches on many issues, including internal human resources and improved beneficiary engagement. Whilst we have classed UNICEF as a funder, they also perform many of the roles of an implementer.

Harmonisation and coordination, and monitoring service delivery for sustainability scored highly, which is consistent with the performance of a major sector player which has the leverage and capacity to both implement and press for changes in practice and policy at a national level where it operates. This was a common feature in both documents, which yielded many concrete examples of these successful practices.

Capacity support to service authorities, Professionalisation of community management, lifecycle costs and asset management along with regulation of rural services and service providers scored less well however. Aspects of these themes were mentioned and to some extent the low scores can be attributed to the type and scope of documents reviewed; however, the findings indicate that these issues were not addressed clearly and explicitly and certainly do not have the same high communicative profile as monitoring and coordination.



2.3 IMPLEMENTERS

2.3.1 ENGINEERS WITHOUT BORDERS

Documents Reviewed

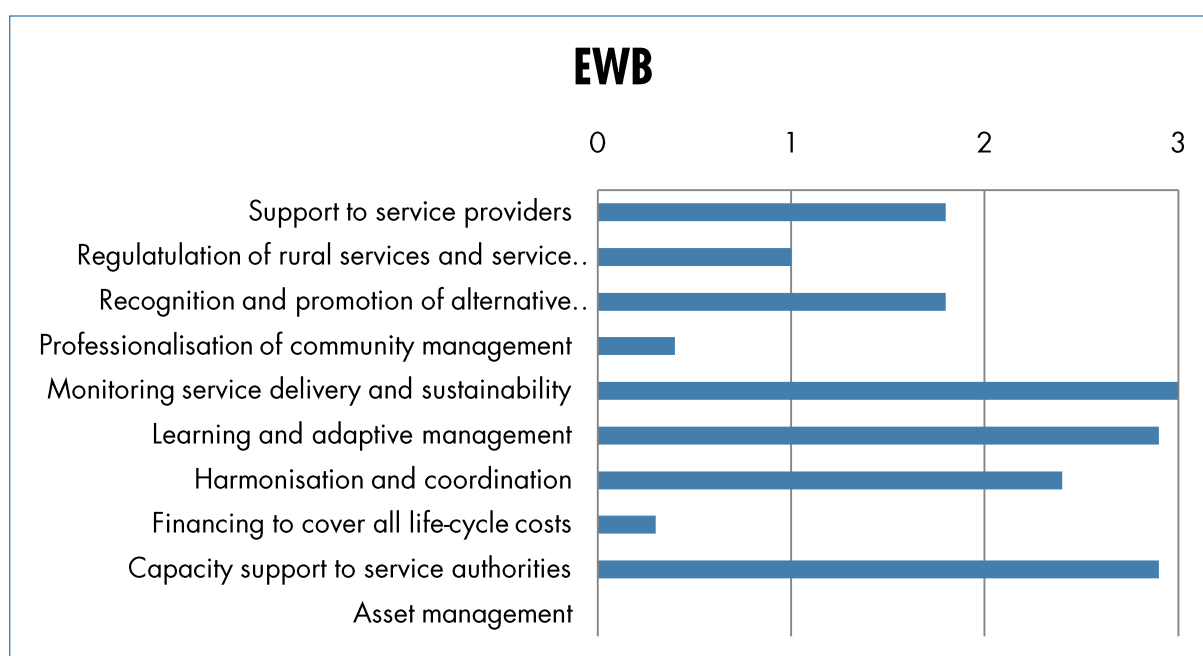
- *African Programs Report Investing in systems for scale (2010)*
- *Mid-Year Update on District Capacity Programme – January to June 2010*
- *Update on the EWB Water Team's Programme – March 2011*
- *EWB General Update on District-Related Work – Sept 15, 2011*

Findings

Engineers without Borders Canada are a small INGO which focuses on providing direct support to local government agencies working in the Rural Water sector via 3, 6 or 12 month work programmes with student and professional engineers from Canada. The documents reviewed were internal update memos which described recent activities and results across Malawi, their primary area of operation. It should be noted that EWB have been working with Triple-S to improve their focus on long term sustainable services.

Capacity support is scores highly, as does monitoring, which is a specific focus of EWB's activities. Related to this is an emphasis on learning and adaptive management, which is correspondingly high and a result of their work with database management. EWB also scored well with respect to coordination and harmonisation, proving that relatively small NGO's can attain additional leverage in the sector and take a lead where their skill set is most appropriate.

Professionalisation of community management, planning for asset management and life cycle costs were not consistently addressed in the documents reviewed. This is somewhat a reflection of the niche role that EWB occupy in the sector and the remit of the documents themselves. This may suggest possible needs or gaps in these areas which require additional attention, as without a sufficiently well trained and resourced community management structure, the longevity of any monitoring initiatives will be at risk and without sufficient funding, even well monitored services will eventually fail.



2.3.2 LIVING WATER INTERNATIONAL

Documents Reviewed

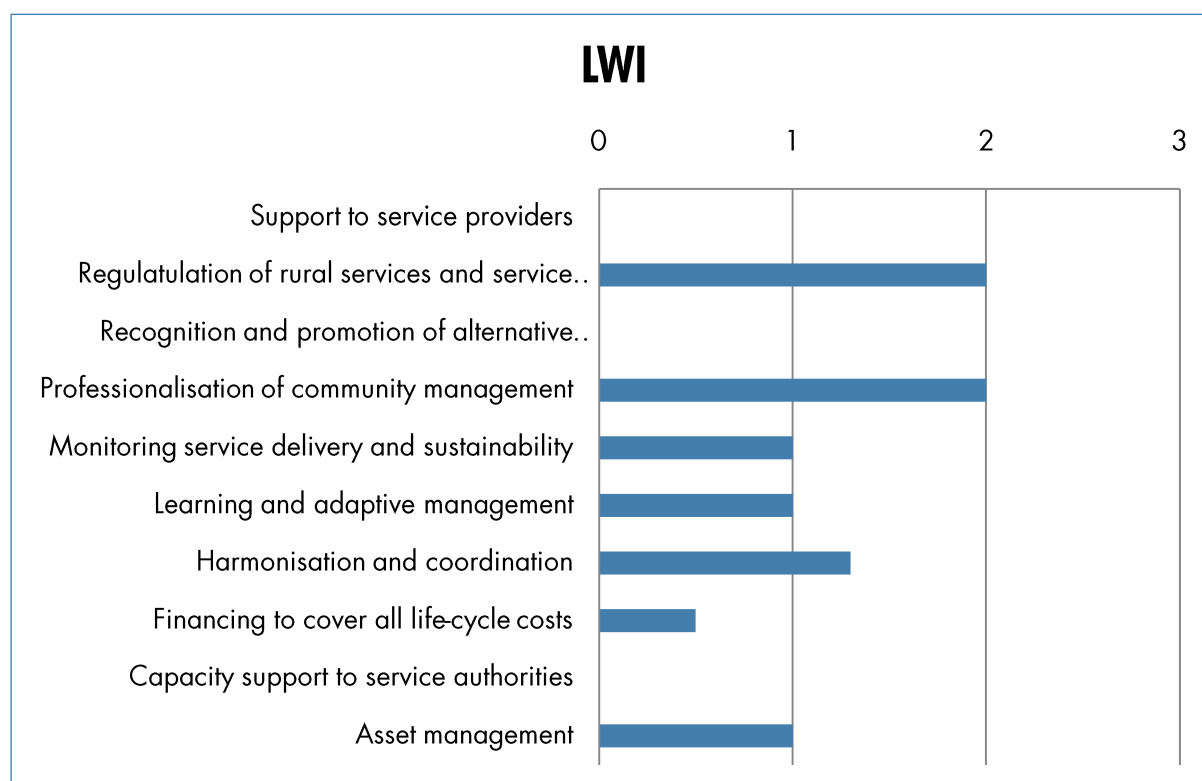
- *Uganda Ruhaama WPA Program Plan (2011)*

Findings

Living Water International is a faith based INGO who work in close cooperation with local Christian Congregations in the Rural WASH Sector. LWI score most highly with respect to professionalisation of community management and regulation of service providers, where they encourage legal recognition of user organisations and appropriate learning and capacity building. Their primary focus is on enhanced community mobilisation and attention to user contributions, in this instance working in an area of Uganda apart from other INGOs where they feel they can have most impact, doing so after responding to requests from assistance from the Ugandan Government.

The inverse of this community focused approach is the relative neglect of the need to work with service authorities and local government and to foster coordinated relationships with other NGOs, and LWI accordingly score less well in these areas. The 'application approach' to locating interventions only where a community has demonstrated a proven ability to manage services in the past could be seen as an example of cherry picking those communities already most receptive and able to achieve the sustainability, at the expense of dealing with challenges head on and helping those with the greatest need. However, on a case by case basis it is a rational approach to ensure that funding is not wasted and interventions are more sustainable.

Comprehensive lifecycle costs and asset management issues are also less clearly documented.



2.3.3 WATERAID UGANDA

Documents Reviewed

- *WaterAid Uganda:*
Annual report for 2006/2007
- *WaterAid Uganda:*
Annual report for 2007/2008

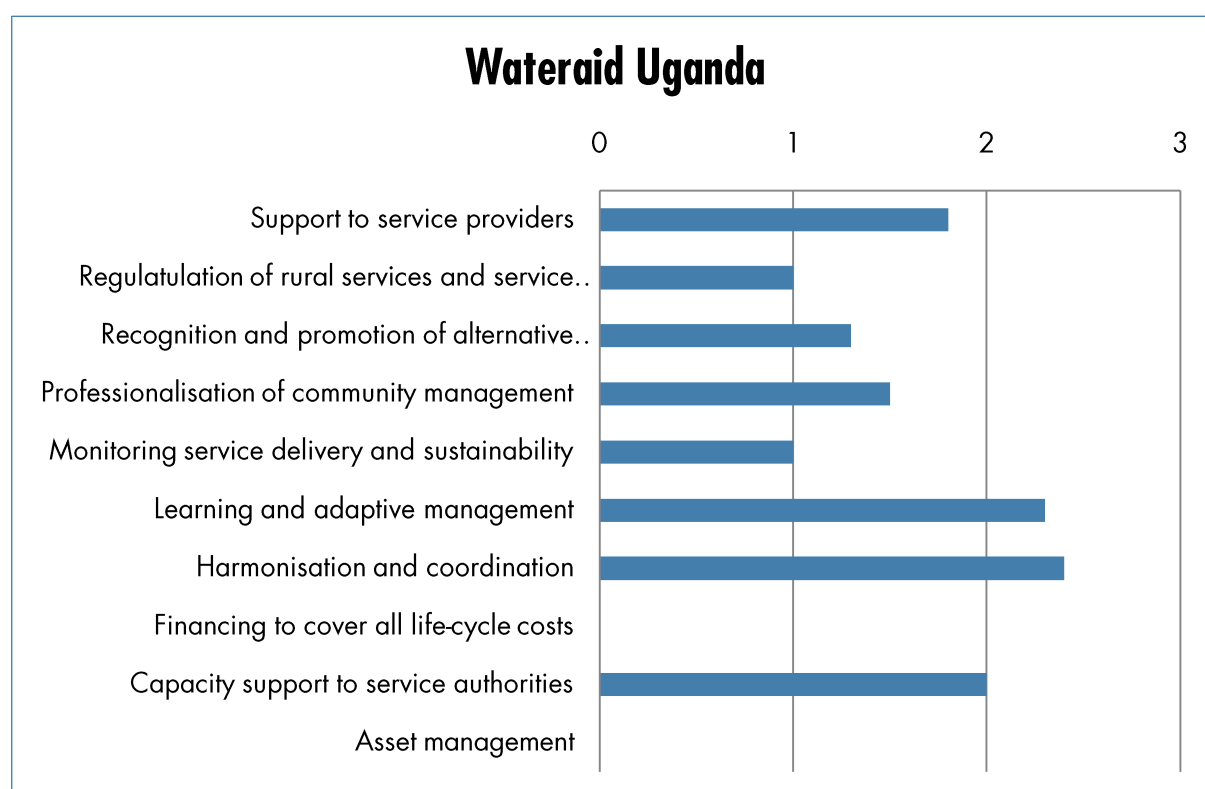
Findings

The documents reviewed were annual reports over a period of two years. These not only give an overview of actions undertaken in country, they also provide an example of a more explicitly 'public' document.

Harmonisation and coordination and learning and adaptive management were the strongest scoring themes, which reflected the dynamic and adaptive approach taken by WaterAid in the sector. Strong partnerships were in evidence with respect to working with and supporting the relevant authorities and community groups. Attention to regulation and recognition of

alternate service providers was less evident, and the overall scores in these areas suffered accordingly. It should be recognised here that regulation is a set of functions that can be carried out by multiple entities and does not only denote the establishment of a formal regulatory body.

Financing to cover all lifecycle costs and asset management were not addressed in any significant detail; while although this could be a feature of the documents themselves, it does tally with the prevailing trend shown by the QDA review that these issues are not explicitly covered by funders or implementers.



2.3.4 WATER FOR PEOPLE

Documents Reviewed

- *Cuchumela Report (2012)*

Findings

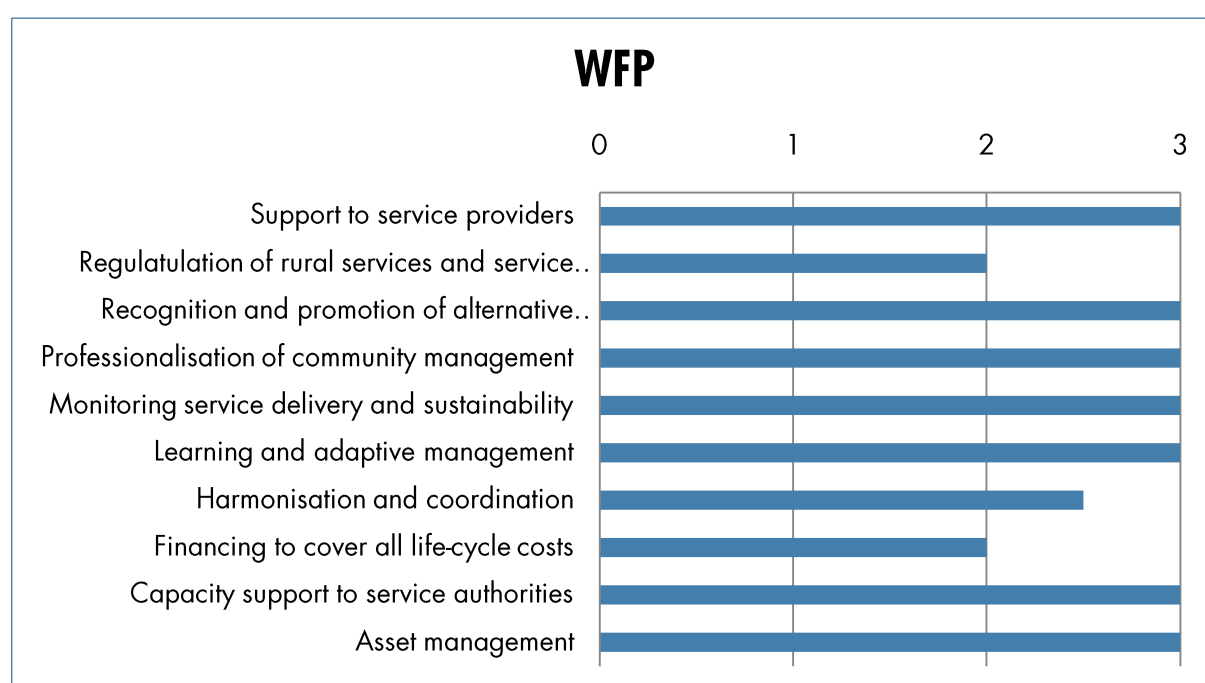
Cuchumela is a municipality in South Eastern Bolivia, near the Cabo Juan Wildlife Reserve. Water for People are a US based NGO with programmes across Africa, Latin America and Asia. WFP score consistently highly across all building blocks, though there was still lack of clarity regarding financing to cover all life cycle costs and regulation of service providers. With high quality being evident in many themes, it is useful to consider why the WFP document scores so well across the board.

WFP's approach revolves around attaining 100% coverage with a significant focus on long term sustainability. Such a comprehensive aim necessitates the use of technically appropriate and tailored methods, full cooperation and collaboration with the local service authorities and the involvement of the local community. The inclusion of householder's names in the appendices of the report and their required level of service was not just an additional detail but an indication of careful attention to needs and a

desire to see beneficiaries as individuals, not numbers.

The second point to note is use of language and accessibility. A clear and straightforward report that is free of excessive jargon, which gives simple clear explanation of aims and actions in everyday English (or Spanish in this specific instance) makes identifying themes easier and conclusions easier to draw with confidence. WFP had a simple (though demanding) aim and described how they achieved it well.

Coordination from the beginning of the programme between stakeholders at multiple levels and effective participatory practices combined with capacity building support and coordinated monitoring allowed for effective progress and information sharing, which is why the related themes of Support to Service Providers, Capacity Support to Local Government, Monitoring and Learning and Adaptive Management scored well.

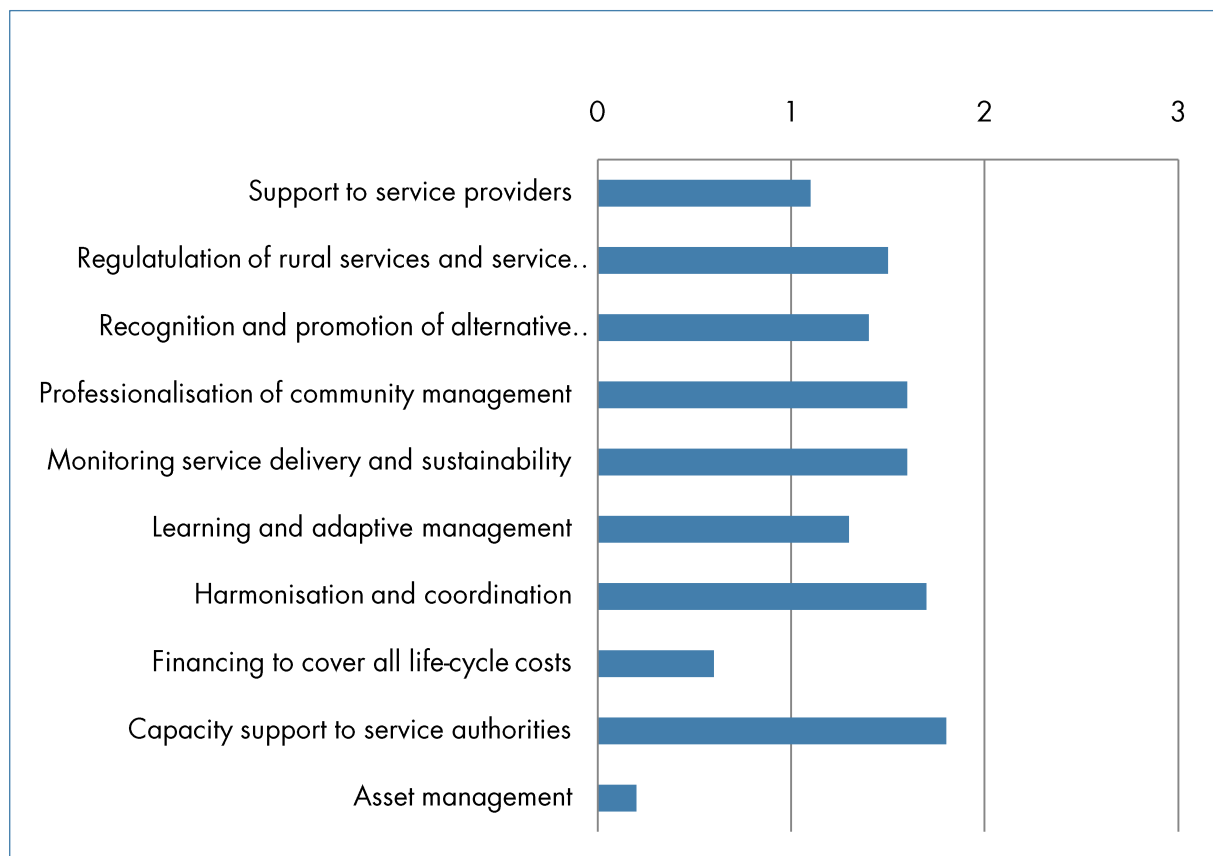


3. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

3.1 FUNDERS

The average scores for funders illustrate that both asset management and financing to cover all lifecycle costs are not addressed in significant detail. While these omissions can in some instances be explained on a case by case basis, depending on the specific context and the remit of the material reviewed, the consistency of this omission across a range of documents and funders supports the conclusion that there is a *systematic problem in this area*.

The discussion of capacity support to service authorities, monitoring for service delivery and sustainability, professionalisation of community management and regulation and harmonisation and coordination indicate that these areas are being addressed with reasonable detail and scope appropriate to context; however, the average scores for these building blocks are still low.

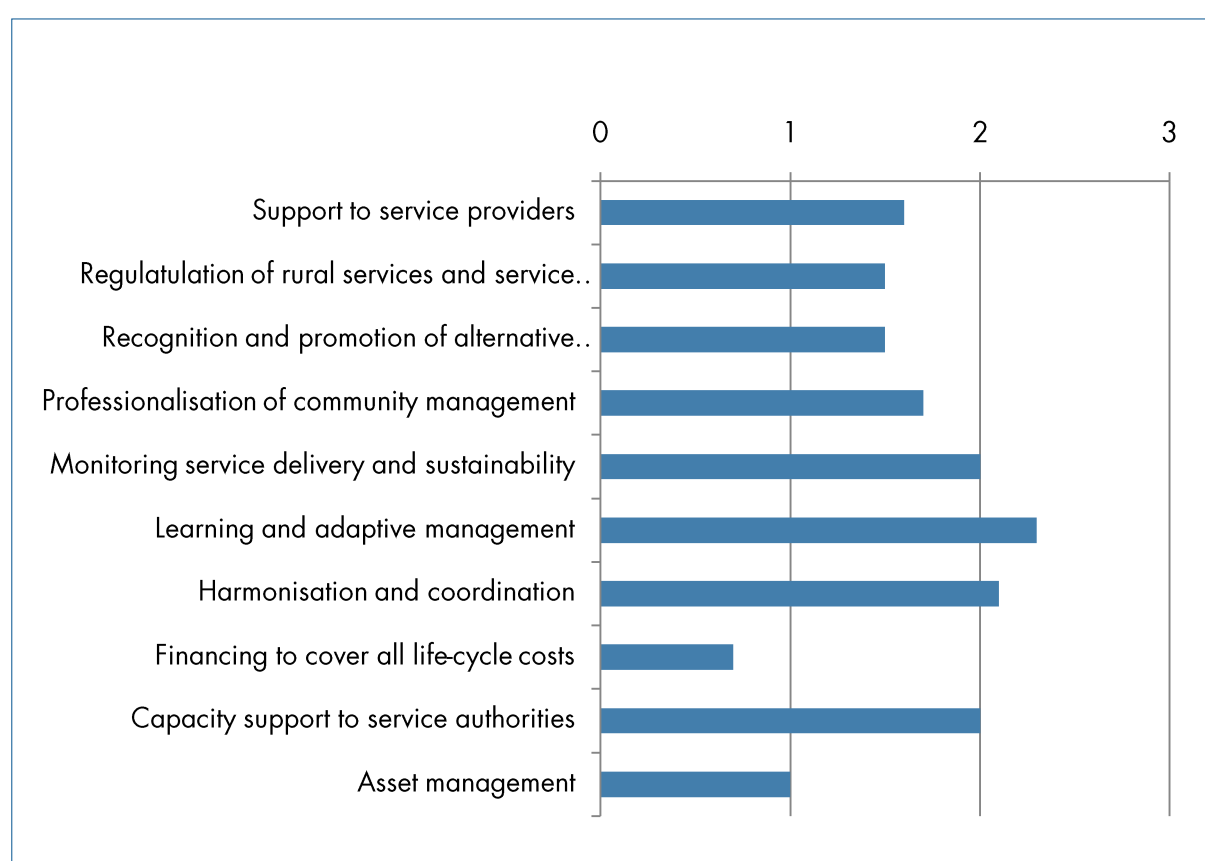


Funders Average Score

3.2 IMPLEMENTERS

The average picture for implementers also shows a weakness with regard to financing for life cycle costs and asset management. The two categories of DP are in reality inextricably linked and a clear distinction between the groups is of course slightly artificial (although different pressures and priorities do exist between different types of organisations).

Learning and adaptive management was on average the highest overall score among implementers, which is encouraging. Capacity support to service authorities is clearly accepted as necessary in this group and in line with the actions Triple-S advocates should be scaled up and improved. Harmonisation and coordination also scored well – though this is an activity that is easier to write about than to practice and it is the hope that these positive signs are accompanied by real successes.



Implementers Average Score

3.3 OVERALL FINDINGS

The most significant and widespread finding with respect to both funders and implementers concerns a lack of attention to lifecycle costs and asset management. This gap was seen across virtually all DPs and across all types of document. For funders in particular, asset management was one of the lowest scoring areas. This lends weight to the suggestion that as practical aims, they currently lie outside the scope of development policy, programming and reporting.

This finding is telling in light of the consistently high levels of system failure in rural water supply reported to be in the range of 30 to 40% from many different country contexts⁵. The identification of costs and the related need for financing is a critical aspect of ensuring that water services can be kept running indefinitely. And yet this is cited as an area in which little is known in many rural sectors in a systematic way, beyond the initial investments in building new infrastructure or rehabilitating failed systems. Given that the vast majority of development partner support is focused on providing capital expenditure with the expectation that governments and households will pay for the on-going management, operating costs and rehabilitation of systems, it can be a critical failure point in water service delivery.

Asset management is closely linked to costing and yet it is even less well addressed in many developing country rural water sectors. Maintaining a desired level of service – as well as the ‘value’ of the underlying assets – should start with an ‘inventorisation’ of systems, components and their expected useful life and cost of replacement. Without a systematic approach to maintaining assets (which is a commonly accepted practice for urban utilities), rural water services will rapidly deteriorate and fail over time.

The average scores were lower than those seen in the earlier [policy review](#) (discussed below) although this should not disguise the fact that there was often considerable difference between individual scores among DPs. Development partner performance is therefore more varied than the average results suggest. This should not detract from the fact that *more could be done to make clear and emphasise practices in programme documents that significantly impact upon sustainability where they are being carried out* – in this way practices will become more mainstreamed and more widespread.

The overall pattern of scoring was similar between both groups of development partners, though scores were on average marginally higher for implementers than funders, especially with respect to monitoring, learning and adaptive management and harmonisation and coordination. These three building blocks, as well as professionalisation of community management and capacity support to service authorities, appear to be well established and referred to in various forms by the majority of DP’s.

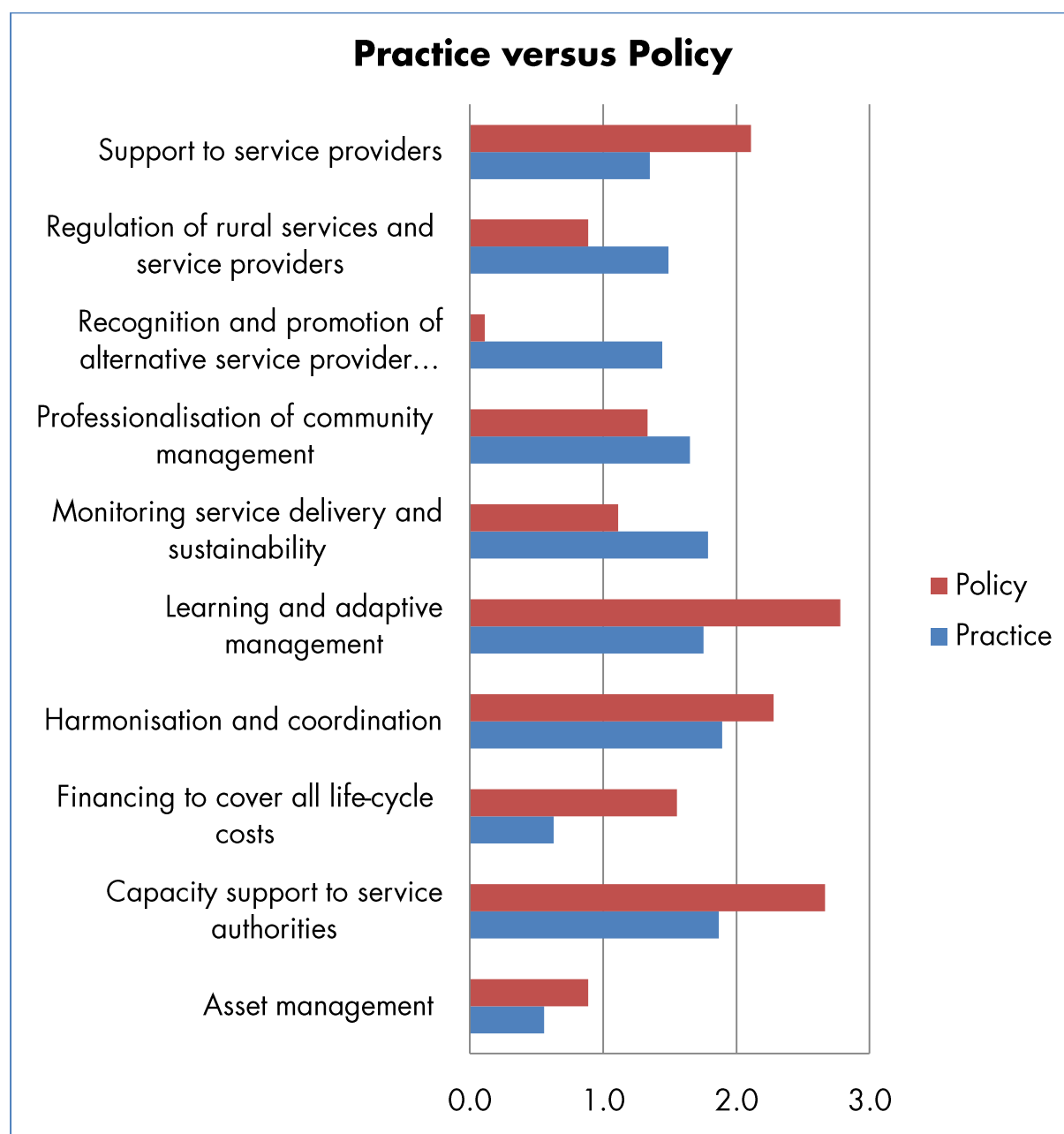
It should also be noted that regulation, recognition of alternative service providers and support to service providers are generally less clearly documented. Support to service providers concerns long term involvement ‘outside’ the project cycle, which may account for its relative absence. Regulation is not always a straightforward matter and can involve many practices that help ensure that service delivery is maintained in a fair, reliable and transparent manner. It is especially important when taking

⁵ 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.; Godfrey, S., Freitas, M., Muianga, A., Amaro, M., Fernandez, P. and Sousa Mosies, L., 2009. *Sustainability check: A monitoring tool for the sustainability of rural water supplies*. Paper presented at the 34th WEDC International Conference: Addis Ababa. Loughborough, WEDC.; Reddy, V R., Rammohan Rao, M S. and Venkataswamy M., 2010 (Undated) ‘Slippage’: *The Bane of Drinking Water and Sanitation Sector (A Study of Extent and Causes in Rural Andhra Pradesh)*. Lockwood, H. and Smits, S. 2011. *Supporting Rural Water Supply Practical Action Publishing*

a longer term view of service delivery. Alternative service providers can include the private sector or self supply, though the quality of the service is more important than who provides it.

The 'stand out' result by organisation was that of Water For People and the specific results seen are encouraging as they confirm that the building blocks can be implemented with long term commitment over time.

3.4 COMPARISON WITH POLICY



There are clear differences between the practice findings seen here in comparison to the QDA policy review. More often than not scores were 'better' for their respective building blocks in 'policy' terms

than in 'practice'. This goes some way to confirm the expected 'policy to practice gap' that is recognised by sector experts and practitioners working on the ground.

This is not the case in all instances however, and monitoring service delivery and sustainability, professionalisation of community management and recognition and promotion of alternative service providers score, on average, higher. That monitoring would attract more attention in programming documents is understandable, though the general level of detail available is still low, as it also is with respect to promotion of alternate service providers. Of course, without reviewing the full body of documents of a particular programme (akin to a full scale review and evaluation) it is not possible to say definitively whether these gaps were addressed by the DP elsewhere and the comparison above should not be taken to imply a policy 'failure' as such.

As discussed throughout the review, the context of the document is important, especially when looking at a small selection of examples, and the individual significance of these gaps is open to interpretation. Practice documents are often more limited in their scope and do not have the aim of presenting a systematic overview of all activities of the DP in question. This difference is likely to account for some instances seen here where a building block is not clearly documented where it might have been in policy terms.

3.5 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE REVIEW

The QDA exercise provides information about the programming documents of development partners in relation to the ten building blocks outlined below. However, written documents may not fully capture the approaches of an organisation. Other forms of triangulation might include on-the-ground assessments, stakeholder interviews, and other research approaches. The QDA exercise should therefore be seen as one of a number of sources of information that can help us to better understand policies and practices in the water sector. With greater resources, the scope of the analysis could be widened, in conjunction with efforts at greater openness and information sharing within the international aid and development community, such as the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). Some additional clarifications and caveats are important to bear in mind when considering the findings:

The number of documents reviewed:	As QDA is a labour intensive process only two to three, or in some instances single documents, were reviewed per development partner. A detailed assessment of a single DP or a single programme would require a greater number of documents to be assessed.
Type of documents reviewed:	In each case the documents reviewed were different in type and style, and hence had different levels of detail, scope and focus. The findings do not therefore represent an overall picture of a development partners activities and comparison between DPs is not intended.

Using averages and scoring:

The building blocks were assessed via four possible grades – ‘unclear/none’, which scored zero points, ‘limited’ which scored one point, ‘OK’ which scored two points, and ‘Good’ which scored three. Scores per document were then averaged to give an overall DP score. As with all averages, caution must be taken not to infer that they represent anything other than a general picture. For a detailed understanding of how each DP was assessed and performed, it is necessary to look further into the individual scores.

Identification of trends:

General comment is only made where appropriate and where the findings strongly indicate a significant trend across DPs and document types. While this limits the number of findings, it adds and reinforces their credibility and importance where they are shown.

3.6 INVITATION FOR COMMENT

We would like to invite comment on these emerging issues from the QDA review. Specifically the problem of lifecycle costing and asset management in the WASH sector and how it can be better incorporated and addressed by both 'funders' and 'implementers', both in principle and in their everyday and documentary practices. If your organisation wishes to comment or to have access to the original QDA review documents and the analysis carried out please contact either

Richard Ward – r.ward@aguaconsult.co.uk

Ruzica Jacimovic – Jacimovic@irc.nl

3.7 COMMENTS RECEIVED

Several development partners provided valuable feedback to the QDA process and all comments on the paper are, and will be, gratefully received. We would like to thank all those who contributed so far and look forward to increasing collaboration around these issues. We also thank those DPs that sent us additional material and have made suggestions for future analysis, which we hope to commence in the coming year.

Local or national context was considered particularly important by many and we regret that more time and space is not available to frame the documents more fully in their local context or to provide greater qualifying detail on the practices of the various Development Partners. The role of some as 'facilitators' rather than 'implementers' or 'funders' was highlighted to us, as was the impact of differing language and whether DP's 'speak as loudly' about some practices as they do about others. We note that the format and emphasis taken by DP's when they write about their practices has consequences in relation to what is considered important and what is able to be learnt and shared among practitioners, both positively and negatively.

We would reiterate that our intention was not to judge or compare DP's but to gain an insight into a broad range of organisations working in the rural WASH sector via the lens of the [10 building blocks](#). By definition, since the building blocks look 'across the system', some DP's will score better than others in different areas as a consequence of their remit, expertise or scale. This variation was expected. So too was variation on account of the differing document types.

We also understand that there are questions about the nature of and priority given to the building blocks themselves. They (the building blocks) may not all be qualitatively equal in any given context, and there may be other factors to consider regarding the sustainability of services. It should be clarified however that the building blocks were arrived at through empirical research - from looking across experiences in a range of rural WASH sectors from 13 different countries. As such we do not claim that they represent the definitive framework, but they are nonetheless useful when applied as a framework for QDA based research across a range of different scenarios.

The strength of the findings in their broadest sense lies in this variation rather than in spite of it. Across such a range the systemic issues that all DP's need to be aware of can come to the forefront, whilst not neglecting the context and specific strengths of individual approaches which can be seen alongside, as the QDA results show.

We welcome further comments and feedback to the address above.

Triple S January 2013

