

# WaterAid Mid Term Review of PCD

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## Summary: Mid Term Review of PCD

This mid-term review (MTR) is aimed at reviewing, refining and revising the Policy and Campaigns Department's (PCD) tactics and strategies, with an analysis of PCD's interaction and role in the formation of the Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) partnership. The key method of data collection for the MTR was semi-structured interviews with 31 key informants, both internal (with staff members and ex-staff) and external (with partners/advocacy and campaign targets).

### Findings

#### Sanitation and Water for All

Over a period of more than five years, WaterAid imagined, helped design the blueprint for, and then with others fashioned and participated in the SWA. This process was not a linear one, and was partly iterative. WaterAid's **strategic choice** to push for the SWA is largely vindicated by its creation, but to some extent also by its form and function. There was a general understanding that the sector governance and prioritisation was dysfunctional both at the global terms and at the national level. The contemporaneous critique and analysis by WaterAid and others strongly endorsed the feeling that the sector was in need of fundamental reform.

The key, WaterAid PCD objectives, broadly defined, were:

- to provide increased political prioritisation for WASH
- to improve WASH sector performance
- to provide an evidential basis for making global decisions

It is too early to say what the SWA will deliver in terms of impact but in outcomes terms, for the **SWA as a whole**, a broadly positive, but also mixed picture of success has been found. Key successes include the accomplishment of setting up a multi-agency single meeting point for the global WASH community and increased political priority for WASH, as well as the hardwiring of a pro-poor focus and the reserved status for civil society participation, while on the ground delivery has been a relatively weak area so far, with key risks of continued fragility and over-bureaucratisation of processes.

In terms of **WaterAid's agency** in helping deliver results and outcomes so far this review finds that WaterAid was instrumental in both the thinking that inspired and shaped the SWA and practical actions that led to the emergence of the SWA, as well as the relative success of its structure and processes. The roots of SWA can be traced to processes and thinking in which WaterAid was closely involved or helped shape. The role was relatively low external profile: a reflection of what was a deliberate ploy not to take credit for the SWA but rather to give the space for others to consider that they were at the forefront. It is also widely accepted that End Water Poverty played a key influencing role, particularly in terms of bringing pressure to bear.

Arguably the most successful element of the SWA has been the **High Level Meeting (HLM)** format. The HLM has brought media interest, political interest and profile to the SWA and given the process a momentum and focal point. Although there is now undoubtedly more interest in WASH amongst donors there is some scepticism around the difference between the rhetorical

commitments and the actual outcomes. The aim to have an **evidential basis for making global decisions**, has been met, in part, by the GLAAS (UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water) report which aims to monitor the inputs needed to extend WASH systems and services. While the evidence in the GLAAS is impressive and the analysis is useful, respondents suggested that it does not go deep enough in terms of information to shape policy responses and a deeper strategy is required into how, where and when the GLAAS evidence is used with policy-makers.

The picture on **improving sector performance** is that, although the SWA has helped accelerate progress in some countries, things are moving very slowly and early success has not led to greater gains being realised. The National Planning for Results Initiative (NPRI) and Country Processes Task Team (CPTT) have perhaps over-focused on the process rather than on political leadership and the practical tasks of establishing and testing country models. In terms of concrete results only Liberia has gone through the 'full' SWA cycle, although several other countries are at various stages of the process. There is recognition that WaterAid played a key role in the Liberia process in terms of both the civil society response and government-donor alignment.

**WaterAid reports** were of high quality and WaterAid policy reports and briefings are seen as clearly argued and substantial, evidence-based and/or based on/drawn from WaterAid's programmatic experience and containing strong examples and case studies.

In relation to the effort around the SWA the role of **campaigning**, through the campaigns team and EWP, has been helpful but also somewhat ambiguous at times. Campaigners have sometimes struggling to identify appropriate entry points and make the issue work in practice.

### **Influencing style**

WaterAid has an influencing style that could be described as quite technical, policy-driven and largely 'insider'. The review has not found a great deal of evidence to suggest that WaterAid's independence and/or effectiveness is danger from being too close to targets, or at serious risk of co-option, partly through the considerable political capital that has been banked. However there is a particular risk of WaterAid's position vis-à-vis civil society in a sector which is relatively low capacity, fractured and disorganised and therefore over-reliant on WaterAid's research, strategy and positioning. This suggests that outsider and insider strategies need to be balanced with a view to the wider sector. In terms of positioning, while the positioning is largely seen as correct for the organisation, it could sometimes take positions that would be better in keeping with its civil society status and remain effective and trusted by partners and governments.

A contested aspect in the review was the degree to which WaterAid has (and also the relative efficacy of having) a clear **political constituency and strategy** with which to bring pressure to bear on decision-makers. In this regard there was a split between those that gave more importance to technical and policy level access and influence and those that said the sector needs a bigger, and more fundamental shift. Although highly influential at a technical level, WaterAid has as yet not managed to embody, some argue, a strongly discernible political

constituency and is seen as lacking an overarching political strategy and a robust analysis of power dynamics, including - in most country programmes - at the national level. This is linked to the sector deficits on reaching out beyond the sector silo and being seen to play to wider power and political trends, limitations which are recognised by WaterAid staff.

Despite good and sustained personal relationships between many external stakeholders and WaterAid staff, a key and consistent finding of this review, particularly amongst those in civil society organisations, is that WaterAid is not viewed as a **civil society partner** that readily shares space with other civil society groups. Given the importance of WaterAid in the sector, a crucial consideration for the future PCD plans should include how to be demonstrably more collaborative and collegiate in working with others on shared objectives, policy and strategy. In terms of coalition-building, WaterAid also has more potential in realising some of the potential of human rights approaches. In terms of the SWA role as seen by sector partners within the SWA, there is dismay from some who see WaterAid as unhelpfully distancing themselves from the wider group.

In terms of **country ownership** while WaterAid's advocacy has strong links to programme work in terms of evidence, certain communities of practice and islands of excellence, there isn't a strong shared sense of advocacy purpose that links to the programmes department and that starts in the country programme themselves, which is a risk for the future. There is some acknowledgment that the problem is recognised, moving the right direction and not only a problem emanating in London. For the SWA, the work was pragmatically grounded enough for externals not to perceive it as being unconnected with what was happening at ground level. The future challenges in linking advocacy North and South will need to be met through a country programme contextual analysis that includes increased political and power understanding, and not just the technical, partnership modalities

### World Bank urban water work

WaterAid engaged in a multi-stakeholder dialogue with the World Bank on urban water and undertook research on four projects in three African cities "to assess the effectiveness of some of the Bank's work in delivering water and sanitation services to the poor". WaterAid shared drafts of the resulting research, which was critical of the Bank's urban water work and especially the (lack of a) focus on the poor. After a lack what WaterAid felt was a lack of real engagement from Bank staff, WaterAid approach the Bank's Executive Directors (ED). The result was a sharp response from bank staff, but also a deeper engagement. A version of the research in the form of short report was published in March 2012 on WaterAid's website, without media fanfare. Key strengths identified with the work were the solid research and evidence base.

Interviewees indicated that although the report had become contested it seems to have been helpful in encouraging a realisation that the Bank hadn't been systematically capturing impact on poor in their indicators. The contested areas relate to the process and the tactics that WaterAid deployed, rather than the substance and content of the analysis of urban poverty. It was felt by some that WaterAid had prematurely communicated to EDs before engaging with senior staff inside the bank and appearing to not have a deep understanding of the internal

politics inside the institution. Nevertheless the differences in approach were resolved, thus resulting in a mainly positive outcome where WaterAid's expertise is providing technical assistance.

A few of inputs to the review held that WaterAid should have done more significant campaigning and media work around the findings, but some outsiders suggested that the reputational risks of this approach were significant. The overall impression is that the work played a useful role in pushing the Bank into thinking about the urban water work and the use of guidelines, although without more detailed research it is not possible to categorically confirm the outcomes of the work.

### Recommended future directions

These are relatively modest adjustments, based on the understanding that the broad strategy has been largely verified by the above findings.

#### Within SWA

The review finds that WaterAid should stay engaged with the SWA and continue to play a full part. In relation to WaterAid's **positioning** within SWA there were mixed views about the next phase, but any re-positioning should be at the level of calibration rather than a wholesale transformation. Any repositioning is something that needs to be clearly addressed in future but the transparency of such a move would need to be weighed against the relative fragility of the SWA. There is a detectable mood inside WaterAid PCD for having a bit more critical distance from some of the partners, if not from the process itself.

In terms of the **locus** for future work, the country level is clearly seen as the area of most pressing need and there must now be an intensification of national level advocacy on SWA. In particular, work on sector strengthening – especially where WaterAid has a strong country programme - needs to address the factors that make a good country plan for water and sanitation, to include further and continuing targeting ministries of finance and health. WaterAid country programmes should also be more vocal at the national level on WASH budget advocacy, as well as mobilising at the country level and serving as a catalyst to open up channels to wider groups in country. There were reservations about the degree to which water and sanitation sector reform fits well with WaterAid's programme portfolio geographical spread.

WaterAid should consider continuing to provide help for donors to focus fund on aid effectiveness at the donor level and in the EU. There is also a role that WaterAid could playing in catalysing (or contributing to) producing a report that would arguably cut to the heart of the need for evidence in the sector, particularly at the level of good practice and what works at country levels and a continued role in continuing to shape and reform SWA. In particular regional processes and involving BRICS countries were identified as a key opening.

In terms of campaigns, it was suggested that EWP also had a continued, but limited role in SWA in terms of reaching to the public and making SWA issues communications-friendly.

### Style of advocacy

In terms of WaterAid's positioning in SWA, it may be that WaterAid wants to keep a careful and thought-through balance between roles, while managing the different impressions amongst sector partners and civil society. It may also be the case that WaterAid values this ambiguity and wants to 'stay surprising', although this represents a risk for the organisation in the future.

WaterAid would benefit from becoming more 'joined up' as an advocacy organisation, with the organisation represented at senior levels where appropriate, such as in the SWA and in advocacy aimed at the World Bank, but also by different functions consistently reinforcing advocacy messages.

A lesson from the iterative nature of the SWA work is that it does not always pay to be too planned and leaving some flexibility in an advocacy plan encourages organic growth of ideas, ownership of advocacy work by staff and, potentially, a greater ability to respond to external influencing opportunities.

PCD is highly valued by country programmes it supports, but the future trend is that it should reflect more 'bottom up' or 'bottom-led' country level priorities. At the moment PCD support is more clearly targeted and the regions, but analysis suggest that future directions should include a stronger focus at the country level. This might include supporting national offices to level to support CSOs to strengthen and sharpen their advocacy strategies. In this regard the value of rights-based approaches should be further explored by PCD in relation to both boosting the opportunities for supporting Southern civil society and in terms of sharpening the justice elements of the policy and campaigning work. This would include more proactively brokering relationships with others and investing in civil society space in the South. Such approaches, including work on the Right to Water, could be bolstered and harnessed by a future engagement from both the policy and campaign teams.

Another aspect of advocacy style that has arisen is the nature of political strategy, power analysis and engagement, both for PCD and the wider organisation. There are questions about the degree which WaterAid is connected to political processes underpinned with robust analyses of power dynamics at the national level in relation to broadening WaterAid's advocacy work at the country level. For advocacy to be effective and the changes sustained then a broader advocacy approach will be required to think carefully about political engagement with a wider than usual set of ministries, business, parliaments and donors.

It is important that these future directions do not compromise the fundamental distinctive competence that WaterAid has, including that the staff are widely seen as sector experts, the relationships that staff have strong relationship with decision-makers and their staff and that the organisation does high quality, evidence-based research, based on programme knowledge and experience.

Although some progress with monitoring and evaluation of advocacy work has taken place, PCD still struggles with measuring advocacy. The department should be tracking the objectives

through (more) robust reporting, monitoring, designing systems and procedures. Country programme advocacy staff in particular are keen for PCD to lead on this, although the leadership on advocacy tracking could come from anywhere in the advocacy community in WaterAid.

#### **Post-2015 agenda/Sector outreach**

WaterAid staff, already engaged in a number of key post-MDG forums, also have agreed an internal working group. The influencing window is quite short, and more internal discussion to get clarity about what is needed from the process and more clearly articulate what WaterAid 'red lines' might be, whether a stand-alone water and sanitation goal would be helpful and clearly articulating how the sector views the relationship between water and sanitation access and wider water resources management. WaterAid has, correctly, seen influencing the post 2015 indicators as a good way of influencing debate and reaching out beyond the WASH 'comfort-zone'. WaterAid should reach out beyond its sectoral silo towards those who can help create a wider development narrative, with the work on health providing a lead narrative on water and sanitation, rights and the post-2015 agenda.



## Section1: Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose

This mid-term review (MTR) is aimed at reviewing, refining and revising the Policy and Campaigns Department's (PCD) tactics and strategies, with an analysis of PCD's interaction and role in the formation of the Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) partnership.

#### MTR objectives

This evaluation was focussed on capturing and reflecting on lessons for PCD at three levels:

- To assess and measure the degree to which its agency has had a bearing on some of the changes it has sought in the external political and policy agendas, particularly in relation to the work around the Global Framework for Action (GF4A) and the SWA.
- To identify possible improvements to advocacy activities against a picture of the changed external context since 2008/09, as a key component of delivering WaterAid's Global Strategy 2009-2015;
- To help the department capture the necessary evidence and documents that will help build an accurate picture of what has been achieved and whether the 'way' WaterAid has conducted its advocacy has the highest impact.

The purpose of the MTR is essentially, therefore, about organisational learning and the orientation is partly summative, but largely formative.

### 1.2 Approach and process

#### Methodology and evidence base

##### *Interviews*

The key method of data collection for the MTR was semi-structured interviews with key informants, both internal (with staff members and ex-staff) and external (with partners/advocacy and campaign targets). In total 33 interviews were carried out, mostly by telephone but, in the case of some externals, face-to -face.

Interviewees were selected on the basis that that they had knowledge and experience of, or insights into, WaterAid's advocacy effort and they were sampled on the basis that they provided a regional, technical, historical or strategic perspective or particular insights. The breakdown of categories those that were interviewed as part of the review is as follows:

Interviewees by category	
Head office	7
Ex-staff	6
Non-head office ('field') staff	3
<b>Internals</b>	16
Civil society	3
Advocacy targets/sector partners <sup>1</sup>	12
<b>Externals</b>	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31</b>

### Documentation

A number of internal documents – mainly strategies, policy reports and some monitoring and evaluation information - were reviewed as part of the data analysis for the review. These documents were provided to the evaluation team by PCD, selected on the basis of relevance to the review.

### Management of the evaluation

The review was undertaken by two independent external consultants: Steve Tibbett and Chris Stalker. The team reported to Henry Northover, WaterAid's Head of Policy<sup>2</sup>.

### Evaluation outputs

This report is the central output of the evaluation project. An evaluation summary, used to preface this report, and a PowerPoint presentation at the PCD planning meeting in London on 20<sup>th</sup> November, were also developed to facilitate sharing and discussion of the report findings.

The report employs the common review technique of using quotations from interviews and focus group participants for illustrative purposes. Such quotations are generally used to illustrate a wider - or widely held - point of view, although occasionally they are used to outline a particular finding or viewpoint that is considered interesting or important by the evaluators. Where it is the latter, this is indicated.

In the categorisation employed, the term 'staff member' applies to any staff member or ex-staff member interviewed. 'Insider' could also apply to staff members or ex-staff. Other respondents ('external', 'outsider') would usually indicate a civil society partner, donor, sector partner or advocacy target.

<sup>1</sup> In WaterAid's work on SWA, the term 'advocacy target' is not always appropriate as WaterAid is considered a 'sector partner' within SWA parlance: "International organisations with recognised sector expertise and influence"

<sup>2</sup> In early 2011, the same team also conducted a review of WaterAid's approach to monitoring and evaluation of advocacy which provided an excellent context and baseline for analysis

**Limitations**

The evaluation team's ultimate aim has been to produce findings and constructive recommendations and suggested strategic and tactical modifications based on data, analysis and experience, and produced within a time frame that aligns with WaterAid's planning and decision making needs. The wide range of questions and areas explored has meant that, although the evidence base was substantial, in some areas as indicated in the text, particularly in terms of future directions, findings remain at the level of assertion and minority opinion and there is a lack of detail.

The retrospective nature of some the inquiries (WaterAid agency in the SWA) combined with the relatively high numbers of former staff interviewed has tended the data to be slightly historically slanted.

## Section 2: Findings

Overall these findings reflect the evidence-base drawn from the research which was subsequently analysed, interpreted, validated and cross-referenced against other research data.

### 2.1 Sanitation and Water for All

Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) is the global partnership between developing countries, donors, multi-lateral agencies, civil society and other development partners “working together to achieve universal and sustainable access to sanitation and drinking water, with an immediate focus on achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the most off-track countries.”<sup>3</sup> It has five key aims, to:

- Increase political prioritisation
- Support strong planning, investment and accountability frameworks
- Improve targeting and impact of resources
- Support effective decision making by providing detailed information and evidence
- Strengthen mutual accountability

Over a period of more than five years, WaterAid has at first conceived, then helped design the blueprint for, then, working closely with key policy and political institutions, fashioned, and finally participated in the SWA. This process was not a linear one, and was partly iterative in operational terms, but also somewhat in terms of the overall strategy.

#### The ‘strategic choice’ of SWA

WaterAid’s strategic choice to push for the SWA is largely vindicated by its creation, but to some extent also by its form and function. In the words of one internal interviewee: “In terms of value for money and the time spent it was a good choice”. This broad internal perspective was also largely validated by the policy makers and advocacy targets that were interviewed.

The choice was also based on necessary action for reform. There was, in the period preceding the creation of the Global Frame for Action and SWA, a general understanding that the sector was dysfunctional both at the global and, more often than not, at the national level. The contemporaneous critique and analysis by WaterAid and others strongly endorsed the feeling that the sector was in need of fundamental reform. In the words of one influential outsider: “sector governance was a mess”. The existing global institutions (for example UN Water) were widely viewed as “ineffective and not sufficiently unified”

There was also a sense that, amongst those who were closely associated with the things were starting to change. Partly at WaterAid’s instigation and prompting, the 2006 UN *Human Development Report* pointed out that water and sanitation was a relative blind spot in the development world and identified that a new compact was needed. On the financing side, trends showed water and sanitation’s share of aid was decreasing. At the same time the aid architecture had come under closer scrutiny. One interlocutor said: “WaterAid did a good job in spotting the opportunity to change the dynamic in the light of Paris-Accra”.

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<sup>3</sup> SWA website, accessed 13/11/12

WaterAid's *Global Action Plan for Sanitation and Water* paper suggested that a comprehensive plan was needed to "galvanise the international aid system and recipient governments to mobilise the necessary resources, to build the political will and the required capacity to deliver services". The paper found three key faults with the system:

- A lack of political will behind extending coverage of access to water and particularly to sanitation;
- A lack of coordination of donor and recipient government policies and actions around nationally owned development plans;
- A lack of predictable and sufficient finance for the sector that targets the delivery of services for poor people and for low-income countries in particular.

This analysis was shared by many key institutions and individuals at the time and the ideas were further outlined in another credible and respected WaterAid paper early in 2007, which found that:

"The sector now requires a framework of action that would rationalise the fragmentation of promises made for the sector and bring coherence to plans, Summit and conference declarations."<sup>4</sup>

The thinking was more propositional by this stage, and the paper proposed that what was needed was:

**At the International level:**

- A policy-making body made up of senior officials and politicians convened once a year with the authority to make policy and investment decisions. They would be charged with reviewing authoritative reports on global progress being made in the sector that would help identify the systemic bottlenecks and propose remedial policy solutions.
- A financing compact between donor and developing countries needs to be struck. This would reassert the principle first set out by the G8 in 2002 that 'no country plan should fail to achieve the MDGs through lack of finance', with a particular emphasis on delivering adequate and affordable sanitation services.
- Set out the obligations on donors and recipient governments to coordinate around in-country systems and for donors to publish in an accessible form information on the volume, terms and conditions of their support and the criteria for starting or stopping aid

**At the national level:**

- Consistent with the donor obligation to bridge financing gaps for credible country plans, recipient governments should be delivering plans consistent with achieving the MDGs or total coverage.
- One national coordinating body should be responsible for coordinating domestic stakeholders and donors in transparent and accountable policy design and implementation processes
- One monitoring and evaluation system would be charged with identifying coverage rates diagnosing sector bottlenecks and coming up with solutions.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Framework for Global Action on Water and Sanitation, 2007

The GF4A process continued to evolve at this point as it was taken up by others, including some bilateral and multilateral donors.

The GF4A emerged out of thinking within WaterAid at this time, along with discussions with others in the water policy community. In this sense, in the words of one internal respondent, “it fitted with what WaterAid were doing at the time”, both in terms of trying to get political commitments enacted upon and also in trying to address sector architecture. It is therefore possible to trace the roots of the thinking that became the GF4A back into the various policy and political asks that WaterAid had been pushing for some time. It was also needed as a vehicle for creating momentum, and to address the key issue that water was “losing compared to other sectors”.

There is less clarity about the degree to which the idea of something like the SWA was immediately relevant to - and actively sought by - staff, partners and allies in the South. It is undoubted that the case of sector dysfunctionality held (and continues to hold, to a large extent) in many developing countries. One interviewee said: “It may have seemed abstract but SWA did still make sense. WASH is often split between three ministries ... (in terms of the PCD focus in this period) there was no active resistance to it, but sometimes apathy perhaps”.

In terms of the continued participation once the GF4A had emerged as the SWA, there were few credible options available other than to stay engaged. By this time the initiative had become closely associated with WaterAid (in the minds of many, though not all, respondents) and even for those that didn’t or don’t associate it with WaterAid, further engagement was inevitable “because other organisations and governments were doing it ... they couldn’t have abstained”.

The pay off, at least in terms of reputation, authority and positioning, has undoubtedly been very useful. WaterAid is now seen as the key sector NGO, and often regarded as “head and shoulders above the fray”. A number of interviewees indicated that the SWA choice was marked by positive opportunism and smart political work. “WaterAid is now a very powerful actor in the water sector, in part that is because of the work on SWA” according to one knowledgeable insider.

There is a tension present, which reflects the wider sector, between those who want to push for more financing and those that believe that aid effectiveness issues – including absorptive capacity - takes precedence. Those that favour more financing, or that would prioritise a more overtly political or ‘populist’ approach to the sector have argued that a ‘Global Fund-type’<sup>6</sup> mechanism or other structure which prioritised more pooled WASH funding might have served the sector better, or at least would have more quickly acquired traction with donors and spark country-level interest. “It was too late for any of these big splash initiatives ... (there was already) some disillusionment (amongst key donors) and elsewhere – also it may not have been

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<sup>5</sup> ibid

<sup>6</sup> such as the Fast Track Initiative in the Education For All sector to provide support and investment for reaching the objectives in MDG 2, for example

useful and been too globally driven. It might have made country coordination even more difficult ... the water sector is crazily fragmented”, said one informed external.

It is was, however, strongly argued by most respondents, that policy of going for a ‘high bar’ policy outcome – a systematic change in the way WASH was directed, designed and delivered - was adopted for the right reasons. One external informant said: “this is the right way to do business – setting the bar high, looking for a perfect outcome. In a way it was more idealistic than policy wonk-ish”, but the same informant conceded that: “a more pragmatic approach (such as a *Global Fund*-style mechanism) might have delivered more (in the short term)”.

### Objectives within SWA

In reviewing the advocacy work of PCD we also need to understand and assess what exactly WaterAid was aiming to achieve. In terms of the key WaterAid PCD objectives as partly described in more detail above, but broadly defined in this review by WaterAid staff, were:

- to provide increased political prioritisation for WASH
- to improve WASH sector performance
- to provide an evidential basis for making global decisions

Analyses on these three objectives were supported by investigations on two related further objectives:

- to build an accountability structure around WASH coverage and WASH aid
- to de-clutter the sector from the meetings and processes and to have a senior focal point that brought together senior decision-makers and ministers to consider concrete deliverables and propose remedial actions

It is perhaps important to first note that the various plans and strategy documents that existed in the period 2008-12 did not set out these objectives in this exact way. Rather, a set of emergent, iterative and developing objectives and sub-objectives were present in various planning documents. Overall respondents seemed comfortable that the objectives in the review encapsulated what WaterAid was pushing for over the period (although one internal respondent signalled that those identified here are too broad, easy to agree with and not pointed enough, calling them “motherhood and apple pie”).

Taken together, these objectives, allied with other strategic pushes and advocacy asks within GF4A and SWA represented for most interviewees the right set of issues to push for in the sense that they identified and related to the right problems and priorities within the sector.

The tactical choices, the way the strategy was conducted, also came in for praise: “the issues they identified (were right), the way they influenced the way that DFID went about things, the political prioritisation work of lobbying at High Level Meeting to get DFID high level representation (was good)”.

There was a sense amongst interviewees that the fact that the SWA was, and is, a new process meant that quite a lot of effort simply went into making sure it happened, in terms of, for

instance, of logistics, and administrative practicalities. One internal said: “sometimes we slightly lose the broader perspective ... we could bring more people in (and learn from other similar initiatives like) GAVI<sup>7</sup> ... maybe we could compare (the GAVI experience) and bring them and ask advice on how they are doing ... we are in a bit of secretariat bubble and sometimes lack an outsider perspective”. There was, however, evidence of learning from other sectors in the process of starting the SWA and it is clear that the effort deliberately tried to avoid pitfalls of other similar efforts.

Another point made more than once was that, although DFID was a key driver of the SWA at key moments, they are currently not a very meaningful part of the process now, lacking a large WASH team, and new DFID commitments are not consistent with SWA principles. The point here is that WaterAid should have moved DFID beyond current commitments. “WaterAid have not really ever delivered on the DFID front. DFID is 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> (in the league table) on WASH funding but it is very influential particularly with the World Bank. The new ‘doubling’ of aid commitment isn’t aligned with SWA ... it’s challenge fund based”.

In addition to DFID’s role, a number of observers reflected that, as yet, there hasn’t been demonstrable political leadership from any of the major bilateral development donors. In terms of SWA profile, demonstrating its effectiveness and ability to be a guiding institution it seems that it would have benefited from this leadership by a key donor: “somebody else stepping up to the plate (rather than civil society)”, as one external noted.

Another minority view on the choice within SWA was whether it was a good investment of time and resources to take on the chairing of the Country Processes Task Team: “Henry has put an enormous amount of time ... this was the most challenging of the Task Teams and I can’t point to a second success ... they might have (more usefully) concentrated less on the conceptual framework and more on launching another pilot activity, like Liberia”

## 2.2 Outcomes

### SWA as a whole

In many ways it is too early to say with any certainty what the SWA will deliver in terms of impact. Global processes such as the SWA take years to deliver changes on the ground and still longer to impact on communities and deliver better health and other outcomes. Many respondent feelings about the achievements of SWA as a whole are summed up by one external respondent’s comment: “the jury’s out”. However, there is much to commend and highlight in terms of the outcomes at the international level, and in the process itself.

The first element to emphasise, and an achievement that is easy to underestimate, is the setting up of the SWA itself. The accomplishment of setting up a multi-agency, single focal point for the global WASH community to come together is witnessed by the scepticism with which the original idea was met. “I didn’t see it at first, I am an SWA convert now”, was one frank internal

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<sup>7</sup> The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation



view, while another said: “I wasn’t convinced at first ... the five ones seemed very technocratic but now it is established you can critique it”.

Another important element is the hardwiring of a pro-poor focus. One external commentator said: “It has done (the following): Sector game changer, put the evidence put on the table, got national governments to do something and commit to action ... and (it has got) all the right people are in the room”.

Civil society informants were also impressed by the reserved status for civil society participation in the form of FAN and regional networks.

Another informed external said that the political energy it has generated is a key achievement: “The successes so far are political momentum including - in developing countries - some new momentum, with donors more clearly focused on basic access as a top priority and on the policy side consolidated pro-poor focus ... it has influenced Germany, France and even the World Bank ... it’s a clear success”.

SWA itself has summarised the key successes so far as follows:

- Nine developing countries have confirmed that they are meeting the commitments of increased budget allocations made at the meeting.
- Seven donors have met or exceeded the targets they set for funding.
- The evidence on which to base good decisions is being strengthened by improved monitoring in seven developing countries and data about funding flows from eight more donors.
- Nine countries report improved coordination and accountability among different institutions and six donors have increased alignment with national planning processes.<sup>8</sup>

In general, this review offers a broadly positive - but also mixed - picture of success: “it’s good that we got what we wanted, it has potential, but the secretariat is a bit of a closed shop” was one external comment. Another said: “thing are moving in the right direction, but slowly ... it’s like shifting a tanker ... getting the funding pulled towards greatest needs – not just the ‘donor darlings’ but those that have been neglected like Mauritania, Chad, Central African Republic ... this hasn’t happened yet. In Sierra Leone and Liberia the donor interest is there anywhere ... The other target was to get relative allocation (of WASH aid funding) up to the early 1990 levels. WaterAid needs to keep going.”

In this sense, policy traction, political momentum and the participation of key actors in SWA has been seen as the key accomplishment, while on the ground delivery has been the relatively weak area so far. One outsider said: “I have always been cautious about what it could deliver. For me the issue is water and sanitation ... I wanted to use it as a tool, as a means to an end but some of the complications ... (it is too) bureaucratic, it requires coordination and pooling of resources”. This approach has meant that SWA can sometimes end up going at the pace of the

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<sup>8</sup> SWA Secretariat, 2011, *Sanitation and Water for All (SWA): What is it and what has it achieved so far?*

slowest: “In many ways it was brave of WaterAid to be so ambitious. A global fund doesn’t necessarily deliver the outcomes that the SWA would have done in a perfect world. But it (SWA) was slower to deliver, more difficult to understand, and has a higher risk of failure.”

There is also a sense that although the SWA needs time, it hasn’t necessarily got lots of it. “It’s make or break now”, said one insider, while another remarked on the ability of three or four individuals goodwill and continued interest: “It’s still fragile ... it is more independent now – but still perhaps over-reliant on key personal”.

The creation of the political momentum needs to be shored up by real steps forward in implementation: “The SWA (current) commitments are low hanging fruits like political feasibility, but what would really sort things out is delivery – we need to be (more) practical”. Those that perhaps have more patience emphasise the endurance it takes to build a global structure in a complex environment: “that takes time. All the right people are there, it is doing the right things”.

And in terms of WaterAid’s objectives from the SWA, not all of the original thinking was actualised. For example, a ‘pump prime’ pot of money for country processes has not materialised and the issue of basic sanitation still needs greater emphasis.

There is a danger that the SWA will in some ways end up being about aid management and coordination, which is important, but is a means to end. The process can show little in terms of impact as yet and the worry is that the process depoliticises the debate to the degree that it missed the key issues. One external voice said: “the conversation becomes managerial and less about power and poor people”.

Beyond the overall outcomes, there are some ‘process issues’ that have arisen in conversations with interlocutors. One thing that has been emphasised is the breadth of SWA. There is a perceived need to have more actors and sectors involved: health in particular was a sector picked out for expansion and also children. This would include, for some, a spread of the civil society side of the coalition to include some of the bigger INGOs (Save the Children, World Vision, for example). There is also a sense that as a former President of considerable international stature, the availability of the Chair and the time he can spend on SWA related activity is constrained. There were also comments about the Secretariat being a bit too process-oriented, and of difficulties in dealing with the Secretariat, at a practical level, over media issues and administrative details.

### **WaterAid’s ‘agency’**

Like any social and political change, the design of the GF4A, its adoption and the subsequent emergence of the SWA was a dynamic, multi-dimensional and unique process. There were multiple actors involved and thinking and action arose and was shared across different fronts in various ways. However, this review finds that there is more than enough evidence to suggest that WaterAid was instrumental in both the thinking that inspired and shaped the SWA and

practical actions that led to the emergence of the SWA, as well as the relative success of its structure and processes.

One internal commented that the creation of the SWA “wouldn’t have happened without WaterAid”, while one key external said: “its actual existence is down to WaterAid but ... the process was dynamic ... they helped shape what the planning process looks like”. It is also widely accepted that End Water Poverty played a key influencing role, particularly in terms of bringing pressure to bear and showing the public demand for change and getting political traction.

The roots of the thinking around what led to the SWA can be traced to several processes and sector thinking in the middle of the last decade, many of which WaterAid was closely involved in. The UN Human Development Report 2006, *Beyond Scarcity*, which argued for a concerted drive to achieve water and sanitation for all through national strategies and a global plan of action. This was followed by a WaterAid analysis of other how other ‘successful’ sectors, especially the HIV sector, had structured and oriented themselves. The “3 (national) Ones” were pointed out by Tearfund. DFID, prompted by WaterAid, then outlined the ‘five ones’ for Water and Sanitation:

“At the international level:

- Produce one global annual report.
- Hold one global high-level annual meeting.

At the national level ... the, objectives:

- Draw up one national water and sanitation plan for each country.
- Form one water and sanitation co-ordination group in each country.
- Have one lead UN body in each country.”<sup>9</sup>

It seemed to many that this period was a ‘perfect storm’ of a series of opportunities coming together at roughly the same time; the profound moral case for a response to the global WASH crisis, the push from civil society and the political and economic leadership from a few key donors. In terms of the inspiration for the SWA, the designers of the GF4A and the drivers of the early stages of activity, the main organisations most often identified were DFID, the Dutch development ministry, UNICEF (although more so somewhat later, particularly on the agreement to host and support SWA), WaterAid and Tearfund, although most respondents acknowledged that WaterAid was *the* significant exponent in the early stages.

End Water Poverty added credibility and legitimacy but for some, EWP and WaterAid’s agency was “indistinguishable”, especially in the UK. In addition, WaterAid’s campaigning in the UK was branded ‘End Water Poverty’ from 2007-10, the intention was to show that the UK campaigning was part of a global campaigning movement, but it may have had an unintended consequence of blurring the lines in the minds of externals.

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<sup>9</sup> DFID, 2008, *Water: An increasingly precious resource Sanitation: A matter of dignity*, DFID Water Strategy

One of the most important activities that can be traced directly as influence was during Stockholm Water Week in 2008 - before the High Level Meeting at the UN on the MDGs, where there was a side event. At this event the SWA idea was launched by the Prime Minister of Netherlands and the UK Secretary of State for International Development. The moment was a “breakthrough” according some of those that were close to the emergence of the SWA, and there are clear signs that the event would not have happened had WaterAid not “masterminded it” behind the scenes, working very closely with the Dutch development ministry.

It is interesting, though perhaps not surprising, to note that the further one gets from WaterAid and its close allies the less agency is attributed to WaterAid. (This is magnified by the fact that although there are some mentions of WaterAid’s role in the documentation around the creation and history of SWA, it is largely hidden from sight.) However, even those who sought to play down WaterAid’s role credited them with a strong and important role.

In some ways this relatively low external profile is a reflection of what was a deliberate ploy by WaterAid, who sought not to take credit for the SWA but rather to give the space for others – IGOs, donors and other sector actors – to consider that they were at the forefront and to claim credit for it. This ‘back seat’ advocacy can be a very effective tactic when working in a coalition<sup>10</sup> and for engaging those organisations and individuals for whom taking credit is important. There were pressures from those within WaterAid – in marketing and communications disciplines for example - who were keen on WaterAid claiming more of the recognition, which were largely, and rightly, resisted by the policy team.

In terms of where its influence lies, WaterAid was perhaps most influential at the global ‘design’ level and around the process of the first High Level Meeting, although UNICEF now occupy some of this space as the official convenor. At the country level WaterAid was instrumental in drafting the commitments by the Nepal government and in Liberia. “Bringing case studies” was also an important additional role and highlighting the level of financing, the predictability of financing and so on were “skilfully summarised by PCD and EWP”.

There were (in the beginning) five major technical working groups and “WaterAid had something major to do with all the major Working Group outcomes” and WaterAid have also managed to integrate the key objective of sanitation for all. Documentation emanating from within WaterAid at this time confirms that a great deal of the thinking, shaping and designing of SWA processes began with the organisation, or were influenced by it. However, some argued that it was UNICEF offering to host SWA that in the end gave it legitimacy and allowed it to be taken more seriously, and, ultimately, bought the initiative to life.

Nevertheless, it seems that initial expectations had been raised and this needed continued commitment of the right kind, for example the need to leverage additional external political

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<sup>10</sup> See for instance: Tearfund Advocacy Toolkit  
[http://tilz.tearfund.org/webdocs/Tilz/Roots/English/Advocacy%20toolkit/Advocacy%20toolkit\\_E\\_Part%20A\\_3\\_Why%20advocacy.pdf](http://tilz.tearfund.org/webdocs/Tilz/Roots/English/Advocacy%20toolkit/Advocacy%20toolkit_E_Part%20A_3_Why%20advocacy.pdf)

support. Many experts recognised that this hasn't really happened and - although the rhetoric is strong - that pledges often haven't been met.

### **Increased political prioritisation & the High Level Meeting**

Perhaps the most successful element of the SWA has been the increased political prioritisation that the sector has had and arguably the most successful element of the SWA has been the High Level Meeting (HLM) format. The HLM has brought media interest, political interest (in the form of ministers attending) and profile to the SWA and given the process a momentum and focal point without which it would arguably have floundered.

The political momentum behind the SWA can also be measured by the political interest in the two respective HLMs. The first HLM 2010 was quite small and in the words of one respondent "almost didn't come off". The second HLM in 2012 was far larger in terms of attendees and seniority. There were more developing countries, more ministers and, importantly, finance ministers attended for the first time, although it should be noted that, in terms of numbers, the attendance of Finance Ministers remains consistent at six attending in 2010, and six in 2012. "It's been successful: the profile, the finance ministers (there was) a lot of interest and media and they have got numbers of countries signed up".

In terms of the outcomes stemming from the HLM, the picture is only slowly emerging, but the results appear to be variable. While the UK, Sweden and Australia have all increased investments recently and all the commitments at last HLM "comes to quite a lot" according to one informant, there are others who say the finance hasn't been as comprehensive as might have been expected and "doesn't quite match the rhetoric ... how many of the commitments that are made are re-announcements?"

Although there is undoubtedly more interest in WASH now amongst donors there is some latent scepticism around the difference between the rhetorical commitments and the actual outcomes. One member of staff pointed out that despite DFID promises and announcements the reality is that "In DFID there is still only a tiny team on WASH" and several people were keen to point out that actual detail of the DFID announcement at the HLM and afterwards will mean that new DFID WASH is not in keeping with the spirit, if not the letter, of SWA principles (and indeed those principles that DFID articulated in the first place).

There are also suggestions that the HLM does not yet fully allow space for more detailed discussion and meaningful dialogue. However there were comments that the 'technical meeting' before the HLM is having an impact: "we are hearing that is having a positive effect", said one. And although the HLM has allowed a single focal meeting point for the sector, it hasn't necessarily superseded other meetings in the sector calendar.

One reflection from a key external involved in the first HLM who was tasked with getting engagement from fellow international development ministries was that changes in personnel was key in slowing the process down: "had the same people been in post we could have worked on others to join", but that the learning was also that it was important amongst donors to have

a champion or number of champions who could persuade other donors at a political level, but also at a personal level. Officials and ministers know each other and it is sometimes through *realpolitik* persuasion, but sometimes through a process involving a quid pro quo (“you support this and I’ll support that”), that international processes like the SWA can move forward.

Developing country actors, meanwhile, have seen the HLM as an event to drive interest at the national level. “We take the SWA as an opportunity to have more impact on water with the Water minister, and finance minister”.

### **Evidential basis for making global decisions and the GLAAS report**

One of the key WaterAid and (SWA) objectives was to have an evidential basis for making global decision. This objective has been met, in part, by the GLAAS (UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water) report which aims to monitor the inputs needed to extend WASH systems and services.

There was a strong feeling amongst a cohort of interviewees that, while the evidence in the GLAAS is impressive and the analysis is useful, it does not go deep enough in terms of providing information to shape the policy response. One informant said: GLAAS is a key element of the evidence, it’s a good overview ... but it does not yet go down deeper in terms of evidence ... ‘what works’ would be next key thing ... e.g. working out financial absorptive capacity ... it needs to go deeper”.

Another said that WaterAid could be catalytic or contribute to producing a report that would arguably cut to the heart of the evidential need: “They could prepare an authoritative document about what impact at scale would like ... by surveying the sector and produce a volume of work that people could use ... not just showing the bad things but showcasing good things in the sector”.

There were also complaints about the availability of evidence, for example: “the evidence on the website is very weak for some countries”, although in some ways it was felt that waiting for or relying on the correct evidence, or lack thereof can become a barrier to practical progress: “there is endless talk about criteria... the call is valid but it is more important to crack on with small group of countries”.

Finally, there were also comments from key external informants that perhaps more thought is required into how, where and when the GLAAS evidence is used with policy-makers. Some observers suggesting, for example, that a more focused, clear dissemination strategy for how the report is used with relevant donors, governments, ministries and parliaments is now needed.

### **Improved sector performance (NPRI & CPTT)**

The picture on improving sector performance is also, perhaps, too early to judge in terms of outcomes. However the general sense is that things are moving very slowly and early success has not led to greater gains being realised. In terms of concrete results only one country – Liberia - has gone through the ‘full’ SWA cycle, although several other countries are at various

stage of the process. So far only two country compacts, in Liberia and Ghana, have been achieved.

There is recognition that WaterAid played a key role in the Liberia process in terms of both the civil society response and government-donor alignment. “WaterAid took a lead role in trying ensure that Liberia was brought to the table ... They brokered relationships with donors and supported bringing thinking from Ghana - the South-South linkages. (They did a lot) in terms of navigating the actual policy discussion”.

In addition there is a recognition that the SWA has helped accelerate progress in some countries. Ghana in particular was mentioned as a country that has had compacts and increased WASH allocations in recent years.

The ‘test case’ of Liberia, while an important example for harvesting lessons for the future, has proved hard to replicate. The particular circumstances of donors “lining up and fresh money pouring in” as in Liberia is “not the norm” and new and different ways of making progress need to be found. There is not always a strong match between the countries where donors are keen and the need is greatest.

The NPRI (National Planning for Results Initiative) has therefore struggled to make headway. In the words of one internal interviewee: “sector strengthening is the area of least progress”, although there is recognition that it is also “the most difficult thing to do” but also arguably the most important: “Evidence suggests that countries that have effective country-led WASH processes attract financial inflows, leading to a ‘virtuous circle’ of increased capacity, increased sector finance and accelerated WASH coverage” according to the SWA itself.<sup>11</sup>

The CPTT (Country Process Task Team) has been an area where WaterAid has played a key shaping role, including as chair<sup>12</sup>. CPTT is the task team under SWA that is meant to operationalise the NPRI. There was praise for the way WaterAid has led or tried to lead the process, including the patience shown by staff - “the chair has been indefatigable” - but also a recognition that it has been a difficult process: “The country process task team is furthest behind ... we had to define what we’re doing and WaterAid tried hard to keep it consultative, and that slowed things down ... there was room to be more decisive ... we have a lot of papers but still no clear consensus that could test the theory ... for the task team to show some action ... calls are long and country activities are just one item”.

The NPRI and CPTT have perhaps over-focused on the process rather than on political leadership and the practical tasks of establishing and testing country models. The need to show practical actions and show progress may at this point be greater than getting the procedures perfect and being inclusive of all. One Southern perspective was “I feel that the secretariat is still grappling with what the added value is to country-processes, they need to show leadership and get something done”.

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<sup>11</sup> SWA website, accessed 13/11/12

<sup>12</sup> WaterAid has now stepped down from chairing the CPTT



Ultimately, the processes at the secretariat and in the NPRI and CPTT can only take countries so far. Therefore there is a wide recognition amongst those engaged in these processes that the next 'phase' of action needs to come from the country (i.e. demand) level: "the NPRI, CPTT are working OK, but any change that happens in developing countries has to be done by those countries". There were also attempts to explain the slow progress at the country level. In particular, governments seem to complain about the sheer numbers of commitments and declarations that government feel they should abide by. One said: "governments have become fatigued. The pre-budget budget fiscal allocation is confined - 10% to education, 5% to health etc. – the space is limited and governments feel pressured." There is also a risk that donor resources, when they do come, might not be absorbable.

Indeed it seems that progress was made in west Africa, suggesting good South-South exchange of experiences, for example in Ghana the compact emerged after the progress in Liberia where the government and civil society looked at Liberia but it was "not backed by the same full engagement of the SWA ... partly because there is scepticism about Ghana and their commitment to the water". Sierra Leone is also looking towards a compact, partly based on WaterAid facilitated activities and information exchanges.

Nevertheless, despite the crucial and growing importance of country-level advocacy, the role, status, capacity and influence of WASH advocacy networks seemed to be unclear to many interviewees. There is now a firm belief that the challenges of delivering systemic reform can only be met through national, local and community 'demand-led' advocacy. This would include processes where local stakeholders understand and apply social accountability, communication and transparency concepts and mechanisms to improve governance in water service provision and the system supports citizens in designing and promoting a permanent, sustainable and constructive way of providing feedback from users to providers, as well as informing users about rights to service provision and monitoring budget cycles. It also means helping institutionalise these processes for citizens to engage within the relevant Ministries. In this sense, some interviewees suggested that some of the linkages have been made by WaterAid, with the SWA, helping to provide people with a clear idea of what the government has committed to.

There is an exciting and enhanced role for WaterAid to scale up their work with partners at the national level, through Country Programmes to help build the capacity of social accountability mechanisms. This could include for example, training district-level community members in social accountability concepts and practices for the long-term sustainability of social accountability initiatives, using increasingly well known tools like the Citizen's Report Card (CRC) and the Community Score Card (CSC).

#### **Views on PCD outputs**

In general external informants found it quite difficult to point to specific outputs that were influential, and the part that specific outputs played in moving the debate forward or convincing targets. Instead they preferred to talk about the generality of WaterAid's policy and campaigns outputs.



However it is the case the overwhelming view of externals is that WaterAid reports were and are of high quality and they consistently pointed to the following attributes of WaterAid policy reports and briefings - that they were/are:

- clearly argued and substantial
- evidence-based
- contained strong examples and case studies
- based on, or included elements based on, WaterAid's programmatic experience

Among the more specific reports mentioned were the *Getting to Boiling Point* report, which pointed to the inadequacy of water sector's performance was singled out "They had good analysis, based on programme evidence", the case for the GF4A (*A Global Framework for Action on Sanitation and Water*) the report on diarrhoea (Fatal Neglect), and the paper on country processes (*Aid Compacts*).

Reports around aid figures, donor comparisons and finance in general (for instance Off Track, Off Target was mentioned) were consistently cited as useful and interesting. One said: "they do a lot with basic data and use it in a compelling way by spotting political gaps".

One area that was seen as a gap by some, but one that WaterAid could be well-placed to fulfil is the area of comparative country studies and showcasing 'what works' in terms of systems and interventions at the country level. Although WaterAid already do this to some extent, (more of the latter than the former), the organisation is not yet seen as leading the debate in this area.

However a small minority of externals were not happy to use WaterAid figures, perhaps seeing them as loaded. One said: "they are not always objective ... but then I suppose you can't be both objective and do advocacy". Another compared WaterAid report unfavourably with academic research in terms of rigor and precision, but these were minority views and were always caveated with more positive feedback.

## 2.3 Influencing style

WaterAid has an influencing style - linked to a theory of change - that is quite technical, policy-driven and largely 'insider'. In the words of one staff member: "The character of our advocacy is a lot of corridor work". Many respondents were keen to stress that this style of influencing both fits with the organisational culture and history of an organisation that has quickly grown from its service-delivery, water engineering origins. However, more importantly, it appears to be a highly effective and commensurate with theories of change suitable for the issue in most contexts. One external interviewee who knows WaterAid well said: "WaterAid is the most effective (NGO) lobbyist ... it has clear (policy) lines and is good at establishing channels in different ministries with both officials and ministers".

### "Are we too cosy"?

One area that this review was tasked with looking was the degree which WaterAid was and is sometimes too close to advocacy targets, at risk of co-option and the extent to which this positioning affect may influence effectiveness. This question arose largely through the prism of

the SWA work but also through the World Bank urban water work, and beyond into more general views of all respondents.

In general, the review has not found a great deal of evidence to suggest that WaterAid's independence and/or effectiveness are in danger from being too close to targets, or at severe risk of co-option. One lobby target saw this as something of a 'no-brainer', in the obvious sense that influence is directly related to the ability of an organisation to remain on good terms with those it is trying to influence: "main thing is: you can influence more people with honey than with a stick".

However there was a view present amongst some that there is a particular and peculiar issue vis-à-vis civil society in a sector, which is relatively low capacity, fractured and disorganised and therefore over-reliant on WaterAid's research, strategy and positioning. This view references a perspective that suggests that outsider and insider strategies need to be balanced, not necessarily inside one organisation, but across the wider sector: "They need to build capacity of others in the sector – they have tried through EWP (to a limited extent). They might always be on the inside but how much are they reaching out to others?"

The degree to which respondents felt that the organisation was too close to targets tended to be split between those in governments and multilaterals agencies who felt that the organisation is either positioned correctly or even (in one or two cases) are too oppositional, and some staff and NGO partners who felt that the relative inability to speak out and occasionally take risks sometimes compromised effectiveness. In other words, the centre of gravity of respondents was that positioning was "about right" but that a significant minority felt that although the organisation "wasn't acquiescent" it could sometimes take positions that would be better in keeping with its civil society status and remain effective and trusted by partners and governments. Given the relative weight of target-respondents who are likely to appreciate a non-critical positioning and the overall balance of sector civil society, the positioning of WaterAid is clearly a matter for further consideration.

Some respondents were keen to comment specifically on the relationship with DFID, which is often defined as close, but sometimes questioned as well. One said "It's a fine balance ... the PPA (Partnership Programme Arrangements) gets funded (but) there is a balance between being a critical friend and being too close." Another perspective was: "In the past, there were a number of times that WaterAid had a clear route in and others in the sector may see it as a cosy relationship. But now it's less close relationship."

There was some reported scepticism about WaterAid in the first instance amongst some other donors, in terms of the early stage of the GF4A/SWA work, but it was also conceded that for some donors "all UK organisations are sometimes thought (of as being) in alliance with DFID".

One way in which the specific SWA positioning has repeatedly come up is the question of what is the role of WaterAid advocacy within SWA and how does its positioning vis-à-vis other in SWA play out through its role as a 'sector partner'. Some respondents said they were confused

by WaterAid's activities in the SWA, especially latterly, where the organisation was seen to play a twin role as both partners and part-time critic. Although this wasn't seen widely as a major reputational risk, and may contain some benefits of 'staying surprising', it did cause dismay to some in the partnership.

There was a sense that some of WaterAid more 'edgy' campaigning work has been 'outsourced' to End Water Poverty. This was repeated in different ways several times by internals but the relationship was also described by one as a transparent link: "it was nonsense to outsource the risky stuff to EWP, in reality people knew that EWP was closely associated with WaterAid". The organisation could probably take greater risks at the margins and stay respected and credible.

In terms of why WaterAid is averse to risk and taking stronger positions, there were a number of reasons given for this stance but board membership and branding/fundraising drivers were frequently mentioned as blockages to a more risky tactical posture. In terms of issues, the lack of a strong position on the (water) private sector identified as one area that might need addressing in the future but has proved tricky in the past.

The positioning overall was perhaps summed up by one internal: "WaterAid is sometimes a bit too close ... it is quite risk averse, but the big added value of WaterAid is the expertise which is probably more influential than mobilising a big crowd. If they lost the policy, technical and research input that would be disastrous ... but still they are sometimes a bit too risk adverse in my view."

Ultimately, the question of closeness to advocacy targets, governments and IGOs is part-choice and part-style, and there is no right or wrong answer. It should also clearly be partly be determined by an analysis of external factors and opportunities and positioning should adapt to the particular theory of change employed according to the best analysis available. In other words, effective NGO advocacy will mean having the agility and confidence to develop different theories of change for different issues at different times, dependent on the context and analysis. This has to be balanced against targets, partners and others being confused or unclear about WaterAid overall positioning.

It would not however be good practice to overly follow branding imperatives or supporter development needs. One insider struck the following balance: "it is a challenge that all NGOs have. There is no model answer. When I was there (at WaterAid) one manager wanted to be more critical while another was more cautious ... It also depends on the (external) climate".

### **Building a political constituency**

While closeness to government represents one aspect of influencing style, another aspect that is contested is the degree to which WaterAid has (and the relative efficacy of having) a clear political constituency and strategy with which to bring pressure to bear on decision-makers. In this regard there was a split between those that gave more importance to technical and policy level access and influence and those that said the sector needs a bigger, and more fundamental

shift. One person of the latter point of view said: “you can’t hear the noise ... we need to shift big”, while another said: “Don’t underestimate the power of the people.”

Another angle on the politics of the sector and WaterAid’s role emphasised the apparent lack of a ‘bigger picture’ political strategy and shared cross-organisational understanding at various levels, global, regional, within some CPs and in the UK: “WaterAid did (do) not have a clear political strategy. There is no clear government relations strategy ... and they are overly water-focused”. Another emphasised the role of wider strategic politics and power dynamics across and within these levels. In the UK for example: “Maybe links to a champion would help ... we tried EDMs<sup>13</sup> and the like, but it didn’t really work ... we are not really linked into the wider work of DFID”.

In the US the view was fairly similar: “WaterAid in the beltway have a fair amount of weight in the professional debate ... through SWA they have raised their profile in USAID. Technically there are sound, quite intellectual rather than political, they possibly could be more politically sensitive (they don’t have a constituency of) political support. They are not seen in same light as Oxfam, they (WaterAid) are more intellectual”.

In country programmes too, there were comments that while a few countries had clear political strategies to target bilateral and other international officials, as well as national ministers and parliamentary targets and allies, most countries did not. One informant said: “What we need more is targeted advocacy with strategic focus on some key ministers and the legislature. At the national level, WaterAid and CSO partners and the media network need to accelerate the pace and quality of engagement and lobbying to push for increased financial allocation to WASH. This calls for strategic budget advocacy and lobbying to influence the budget process.”

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<sup>13</sup> Early Day Motions in the UK Parliament

### The WASH Sector: Siloed and silent?

While this review has not been specifically tasked with looking at the issues around sector voice, many respondents were keen to stress that the problems with the sector went beyond the organisational and technical issues that might be addressed by the SWA. This is particularly pertinent for WaterAid, who are seen at the key sector INGO and therefore in some ways both responsible for sector voice, and able to influence and support it most.

Among the reasons and solutions cited for why the WASH sector

- The sector is **siloed** (“water people talk about water” and people outside the sector “switch off” when they do “we need to find compelling ways of linking WASH with other sector and the wider development debates”). The examples of health, HIV, gender and education sectors were often given. As a sector “we are always talking to ourselves ... the World Water Forum and Stockholm Water Week ... we don’t reach out enough”
- Related to this, there is a lack of **compelling narrative** that unifies the sector and links it to the wider development narrative and political discourse
- It is a **complicated and fragmented** sector with no single, unified voice: “that is why we started SWA, but we never started a World Water Organisation. We missed our chance 70 years ago ... at least we now have the SWA”
- The sector doesn’t have a **public face** in the form of a high profile ‘champion’ the examples of Sarah Brown and Elton John, were given. One said that Gates Foundation’s new-found interest “could be a turning point”.
- People assume that “**the job has been done**”, in the sense the water MDG has been achieved five years early and water is a ‘success story’
- **Sanitation is notoriously difficult to sell** and a sensitive issue. The sanitation narrative and MDG has been under-emphasised compared to its relative importance and links to other areas of development, particularly for health outcomes
- Other **INGOs don’t do much on WASH** – either programmatically (although there are few exceptions) or, perhaps more crucially, in terms of advocacy. This is partly because WASH seen as WaterAid’s ‘patch’.
- There is a sense that the sector in general and WaterAid in particular, are “**not combative and overtly political enough** ... water (systems) is not edgy, even when you talk about rights ... (they) never managed to convey that sector of outrage ... it can feel quite technocratic – can feel single issue ... it’s all very obvious it sometimes makes me cringe ... it’s not surprising enough (what’s being said about WASH).

**‘Sector Partner’ role and relationships with other NGOs/organisations/civil society**

Despite good and sustained personal relationships between many external stakeholders and WaterAid staff, a key and consistent finding of this review, particularly amongst those in civil society organisations, is that WaterAid, as an organisation, is not viewed as a civil society partner that readily shares space with other civil society groups. The particular aspects of this seem to be, firstly, that WaterAid, as the sector ‘market leader’ doesn’t feel the need to work closely with other NGOs as it prefers to work with those in power or in global institutions. Related to this is that it doesn’t readily share power, influence and information with others and is sometimes seen as closed to outsiders, despite the obvious points of entry of EWP and FAN (Freshwater Action Network).

Given the importance of WaterAid in the sector, a crucial consideration for the future PCD plans should include how to be demonstrably more collaborative and collegiate in working with others on shared objectives, policy and strategy. This applies in the SWA context as well as elsewhere, although it is recognised that WaterAid played a role in ensuring that Southern civil society groups in the form of ANEW and FANSA can play a part in the process at a regional level. At the same time it is recognised by internals that WaterAid haven’t always seen it as their role to bring in civil society to SWA, concentrating rather on the “main game” of bringing in donors and governments.

A typical view is that “Information flows out to other civil society organisations ... isn’t great ... they are so dominant and so much more resources than anyone else”. Similarly: “WaterAid is too dominant in terms of CSO voices and it’s not healthy, but there is not much you can do about it. They should feel more easy about the space and opening it up”.

There was also a feeling that, in terms of coalition-building, WaterAid has more potential in realising some of the potential of human rights approaches (HRA). One external (and non-civil society voice) said: “This is new political focus. There is a big overlap potential between HRA and SWA and WaterAid is a bit weak (on HRA)”. In general links with Southern civil society was considered a weakness across WaterAid, although many WaterAid country programme do provide support. This links to the central thesis of some in the sector who see (particularly) Southern civil society as fractured, weak, lacking capacity and adrift, in comparison with other sectors for instance.

In terms of the future role within civil society, it’s clear to most that “individual sector voices will not be well heard”. It will be important for WaterAid to reach out, not only to water and sanitation sector civil society, both North and South, but also beyond their sectoral silo towards those who can help create a wider development narrative.

In terms of the SWA role as seen by sector partners within the SWA, there is dismay from a few who see WaterAid as unhelpfully distancing themselves from the wider group. “WaterAid is the odd one out it’s ... speaks about SWA in the third person. They have an ambivalent position”. Another was more pragmatic about the tensions in the dual role: “it’s not a huge problem. WaterAid speaks with a strong voice that’s fine but the one issue that I have is ... it is meant to

be a partnership. Once it's agreed all partners should agree and they don't contribute always with a partnership voice. It's part of their role .... It's understandable."

### Country ownership

There was strong sense internally, although with some recognition that this was partly historical, that while WaterAid advocacy has strong links to programme work in terms of evidence, certain communities of practice and islands of excellence, there isn't a strong shared sense of advocacy purpose that links to the programmes department and that starts in the country programme themselves. Externally the programme work is clearly appreciated, typically: "WaterAid's reputation around the world rest on its field work and quality of it" and most externals see WaterAid as an organisation that does exceptional programme work that is well linked to policy work and reports.

One internal with experience of country-level work warned about the dangers of not linking advocacy work closely to country priorities: "The longer they can keep connections with country programmes on country experiences the better. It is easy to lose connections and lose legitimacy. They need to keep listening and working closely. They should bring evidence and bottom up advocacy ... in country staff really appreciate the help of the global policy team." More than one internal respondent, however, said that the close links to country programmes that some areas of work had in the past has becomes difficult to hold on as the department, and especially the policy team, has grown exponentially in recent years. "The *Boiling Point* report, at that time, was more rooted in programmes than things are now", said one.

On the SWA, the work was clearly conceived in London, as recognised above, but it was sufficiently grounded for externals not to perceive it as being unconnected with what was happening at ground level. It was a pragmatic approach: "there were issues with it (SWA work) being top down, I mean it's fair to say it was designed here, but it was grounded in evidence and national inputs and insights were opportunistically harvested", said one internal respondent who was closely involved. For example the report *Off Track, Off Target* used "a lot of country evidence, but it didn't start in the South".

Policy work is seen by most internals as "rhetorically driven by experience but not in reality". While the management link goes from country programme to IPD rather than to PCD, "communication isn't always great ... it's getting better ... now advocacy buy-in is better but there are still outstanding structural issues around the harmonisation of country plans and the GAP". This was further acknowledged by the recent PPA mid-term evaluation<sup>14</sup>.

A recent internal evaluation of the *Waterworks* campaign in relation to the GAP found that country programmes felt hurried: "the planning was seen as too rushed and not inclusive across all WaterAid's offices, and the execution of the GAP could have been better ... a mismatch between aspirations of a being a public facing campaign and the reality of how campaigning is

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<sup>14</sup> IOD Parc, 2012, Mid Review of WaterAid's DFID PPA

done in most countries. Further, the SWA HLM did not deliver as a means to refocus sanitation financing priorities and could also ‘do better’.

From the country side there seem to be some acknowledgment that the problem is recognised, moving the right direction and not one way. “Support from PCD is quite good ... communication and information provided by PCD is really appreciated. One area that could be better is ... harvesting lessons and learning from other countries .... (but) my experience of working with country offices is it depends on relationships – the UK can’t make offices to do things, the response can be patchy.” Another said there is sometimes “a bit of hypocrisy on behalf of the country programmes – if PCD wants to support – its hands are tied because it doesn’t want to be supply-driven”.

However many internal interviewees felt that advocacy should be linked more clearly to country programmes priorities, and emanate and originate from them. This is an issue that many INGOs struggle with and there is not a good deal of best practice in the sector to draw on. “Sometimes it can seem that the link wasn’t there ... the priority for SWA was decided in London, wasn’t something that country office pushed for. PCD-IPD link should be stronger ... they should be more joined up. There are elements within the CP’s that could be taken up (by managers) that might give the advocacy team more credibility.”

There was also, historically, a factor that also has played out in relation to the whole-of-organisation advocacy is there was “a lack of empathy” in the organisation for advocacy work per se. This seems to have now changed as advocacy has become more accepted. This has also partly been addressed by the PCD ‘offer’ to the rest of the organisation attempting to link other departments’ concerns and objectives and offering PCD help in those areas as appropriate, but also attempting to capture some assistance for PCD priorities.

### Campaigns

While this review has not been specifically tasked with look at campaigning in WaterAid many respondents were keen to talk about how campaigning related to the policy work on the SWA and beyond.

In relation to the effort around the SWA, the role of campaigning - through the campaigns team and EWP - was “slightly ambiguous”, and campaigners have sometimes struggling to make the issue work in practice. If the SWA is really about making better use of existing resources this has been a difficult message for campaigners to ‘run with’. Indeed aid effectiveness messages are something that campaigners across the development sector have struggled with. In words of one internal interviewee: “the messaging now has to be recession-proof – campaigning has (traditionally) focused on more money, but policy is a more subtle message ... it is about making money work better”. Another perspective was “Global Framework for Action is really, really, hard from a campaigning side, year after year the same message ... it’s hard to put into tangible terms and in terms of translating to Joe Public. I would like to have been more critical and had clearer arguments”.



Advocacy in WaterAid has been described as mainly ‘policy-led’ and the policy team is thought of as the “big brains” in WaterAid, has grown rapidly in recent years and despite earlier comments about a lack of empathy internally is seen an increasingly high status internally. The campaigns team is also keen to push more challenging messages at times and has felt that they have not been able to do this in part because of the policy team’s influencing style and ‘lead’ status. The same could said for EWP, of whom one interviewee said: “WaterAid should let them be more radical”.

Despite this, the adoption of the Global Advocacy Priority (GAP) on sanitation has been helpful in global prioritisation terms, and, although it is still early days, the Global Advocacy Executive appears to be working well, according to respondents. Campaigns actions have also been “useful” and well-organised and by way of example the *flash squat* and *world longest toilet* were mentioned in a positive light. Indeed the evaluation of World Toilet Day found: “We had reasonably clear advocacy objectives for the whole of the GAP” indicate good, solid recent progress and a positive direction of travel.

## 2.4 World Bank urban water work

WaterAid engaged in a multi-stakeholder dialogue with the World Bank on urban water dating back to 2006 facilitated in the first instance by Freshwater Action Network. WaterAid undertook research on four projects in three African cities – Ouagadougou, Accra and Dar es Salaam “to assess the effectiveness of some of the Bank’s work in delivering water and sanitation services to the poor”.<sup>15</sup> WaterAid did share drafts of the resulting research, which was critical of the Bank’s urban water work and especially the (lack of a) focus on the poor, according to internal interviewees.

After some time of mainly email-based contacts, but, according to internal informants, relatively low levels of engagement from Bank staff, WaterAid decided to go to Executive Directors of the Bank. The result was a sharp response from Bank staff, but also a deeper engagement - in the form of two teleconferences – and leading some further ongoing joint work in recent months with WaterAid now involved in reviewing Bank projects (partly because of report).

A version of the research in the form of short report was published in March 2012 on WaterAid’s website, without media fanfare.

A number of interviewees indicated that this had become “a quite contested report” although it seems to have been helpful in encouraging a realisation that the Bank hadn’t been systematically capturing impact on poor in their indicators. One said: “it moved the needle for us – could have been non-constructive”. Some said that WaterAid avoided a “major fall-out” because of the “strategic leadership” from WaterAid: “I commend WaterAid leadership on this, pulled it out of advocacy and into dialogue ... Very helpful in not giving it provocative title they

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<sup>15</sup> Timeyin Uwejamomere and Henry Northover, 2012, *Are World Bank investments benefiting the urban poor? Improving the effectiveness of urban water and sanitation investments*, WaterAid discussion paper.

were on the brink of going public then pulled back – they’re better at systematic analysis, drawing conclusions and developing dialogue”.

The contested areas seem to be more about the process and the tactics that WaterAid deployed, rather than the substance and content of the analysis of urban poverty. It was felt that WaterAid had prematurely communicated to EDs before engaging with senior staff inside the bank and appearing to not have a deep understanding of the internal politics inside the institution. Nevertheless, it is to the credit of those involved, both Bank and WaterAid staff, that the differences in approach could be resolved, thus resulting in a mainly positive outcome where WaterAid’s expertise is providing technical assistance. One external said “the Bank is increasingly better at systematically defining poverty and what are they saying about it (because of this work)”.

Most respondents in this review felt unable to answer questions about the outcomes of this work or the way in which this work was conducted and received. Amongst those that did feel able there was a three-way split between those that said that WaterAid had acted unhelpfully by going to the Bank ED’s, those that felt its actions were basically calibrated correctly and those that felt that a public airing would have led to better outcomes in the long term.

Interviewees pointed to a number of key strengths with the work: a solid research and evidence base, the raising of key issue – particularly the issue that the Bank was poor at targeting urban poor and the fact that key internal guidelines were there but not being followed. One said “it astute call to focus on guidelines for compliance and improvement ... the Bank didn’t expect this ... it was flagged with the Water Anchor but also with ED’s (the UK especially) ... the Water Anchor was upset at first but very keen to address it, resulted in a constructive agreement to work together ... we didn’t make a big splash. The result is that we are still working with them – hope is that will lead to real change”.

A few felt that WaterAid should be more public, and do significant campaigning and media work around the findings: “WaterAid should have highlighted shortcomings using broader media messages”, said one. Some outsiders, however, suggested that the reputational risks were greater: “Communication between the Bank and WaterAid broke down. It took WaterAid a long time to get credibility back – why do they fall into the usual NGO modus operandi? ... It was timing and the way the communication done. They sent us the report and the next thing we heard about it went to ED’s. They could have discussed it with board of directors. It was not all WaterAid’s fault. What is their goal ... they need to be more sophisticated – senior levels should be talking to each other (between WaterAid and the Bank). How many high level discussions have they been? WaterAid has the intellectual voice (but)... every once in a while it falls back on the negative. We would have loved to have had a seminar (in Washington). There is trust and personal relationships that exist.”

The overall impression is that the work was generally useful in pushing the Bank into thinking about the urban water work and the use of guidelines, although without detailed research it is not possible to categorically confirm the outcomes of the work. It does seem that the work has

helped the Bank reflect on how they defined poverty indicators and the extent to which they were systematic about using those indicators as an institution, (although of course the question would be whether this is what Water Aid were trying to achieve in the advocacy?)

Therefore it also seems that WaterAid had “caused ripples” without necessarily meaning to. In this sense, while the bank reacted “über-sensitively” ... but that WaterAid “never addressed the ideological differences between them and the Bank”. The Bank has also said it felt defensive and had reacted as such rather than to address the problems head on: “We are trying to monitor this more ... trying to measure it more and be ready to respond if it’s raised again ... But haven’t changed the design yet”.

While those involved were close to the issue and perhaps not dispassionate about the process and reactions, one external who had no vested interest but was close enough to know about the work said it was “very good work, effective”.

## Section 3: Recommended future directions

This section is aimed at providing WaterAid's PCD with some suggestions and broad recommendations about recalibrating and fine-tuning future work. It is therefore based on the understanding that the strategy has been largely verified by the above findings, that no major change in direction is required, and also that – mid-way through the strategic period – the strategy is unlikely to change fundamentally.

The section makes a number of comments and suggestions on three areas: the work within the SWA, the style of PCD advocacy and the post 2015 agenda and sector outreach. In many cases these future directions remain options and present themselves as a choice for PCD in the current planning process.

### 3.1 Within SWA

The review has heard, overwhelmingly, that WaterAid should stay engaged with the SWA and continue to play a full part. The detail of what this role might look like was subject to greater debate.

#### Positioning

In relation to WaterAid's positioning within SWA there were different views about the next phase. Some, mostly internal, interviews suggested that WaterAid should step back from being quite so engrained in SWA processes and that WaterAid should have more of a "critical distance" to take more questioning positions and analysis. But others were more circumspect: "WaterAid should be careful in unpicking what they gave birth to" another said, mentioning the relative fragility of SWA that WaterAid should: "make sure that the SWA doesn't sink".

The overall feeling was that any re-positioning should be at the level of calibration rather than a wholesale transformation and needs to be clearly (and preferably openly) addressed in future. One external, who suggested that WaterAid had already been seen to put some distance between itself and the other SWA partners, said: "is it a partner at the table or is it stepping back? If it pulls back, it has to (do so) with a clear strategy". The transparency of such a move would need to be weighed against the perception of pulling back and how that might be received by partners within the SWA hierarchy and set against its relative fragility.

In terms of what stepping back might look like there is a detectable mood inside WaterAid PCD for having a bit more detachment from some of the SWA partners, if not from the process itself: "We haven't so far drawn any clear lines in the sand between ourselves and other partners (such as UNICEF) at some point we might want to call them on something", but at the same time, "It's a quite small sector. Scope for big splits is limited." This process of distancing could also involve bringing in, and opening up space for, more civil society groups, particularly from the South.

#### Locus

In terms of a locus for policy and campaigning within the SWA, the country level is clearly seen as the most crucial area of pressing need and it was widely suggested that there must now be an

intensification of national level advocacy on SWA. In particular, work on sector strengthening – especially where WaterAid have a strong country programme - needs to address the question: What makes a good country plan for water and sanitation? This would also involve targeting (or continuing to target) ministries of finance and ministries of health.

Not unrelated to this is a question of whether WaterAid should be looking at quality of partnership in SWA or the number of partners. Most agree that should be more about the former in the future: “WaterAid has been concentrating on the numbers – in the future it should focus on quality, rather than continuing to get more and more (countries) to join”. Budget advocacy capacity building for country programmes was also raised, as well as the idea of WaterAid country programmes being more vocal at the national level on WASH budget advocacy. Part of this is already planned with the ‘WASH Watch’ Tool<sup>16</sup> which some interviewees referenced as having significant potential and requiring support and linking into other advocacy approaches such as research and lobbying.

The type of role that WaterAid could play within SWA at the country level was an exciting prospect to some. “WaterAid could really be mobilising at the country level (they should) push the UNICEF person to be convening person in country. Government focal points are key. WaterAid could serve as a catalyst to open up channels to wider groups in the countries. They probably could do more than anyone”.

Others were more measured about the possibilities but nevertheless saw a clear role the organisation: “I hope they haven’t been beaten down – they really need to stay engaged at the country level, they could play an important role in bridging (civil society, government and donors). Their ability to mobilise a multi-country dialogue is important and help to translate this up to the Task Team”. Another similar internal suggestion was: “WaterAid should strengthen local civil society and get civil society to do proper analyses to meet the gaps and help to show that civil society has alternatives. It should pick five or ten countries and see how they could meet the criteria ... to see how to move from promise to action”.

There was a note of scepticism sounded however about the degree to which the job that needs doing in water and sanitation sector reform fits well with WaterAid’s own geographical spread, in terms of its programme portfolio: “WaterAid not strong in the places where the sector is weak”. In particular countries, such as those where the WASH sector needs urgent reform but which are also not donor darlings - Central African Republic, Mauritania and Chad were mentioned - are places that SWA could arguably add huge value. But, these don’t tend to be places where WaterAid has a strong programme or advocacy component. While there is a possibility for some intervention in these areas, there isn’t always a complete package of follow up: “We can do some things ... we can parachute people (senior staff) in to some countries but we can’t follow up (if we don’t have a country programme or advocacy function)”.

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<sup>16</sup> “an online monitoring platform for monitoring government commitments and tracking budgets” ([www.washwatch.org](http://www.washwatch.org))

Not all comments were aimed at country process and national level advocacy. There were also views that WaterAid should continue to provide “help for donors to focus their funds” and work on aid effectiveness at the donor level. In the EU there is not a strong WaterAid voice: “there’s not much EU lobbying at the moment ... getting an EU campaigner would be good” and greater civil society organising in the US was also something that was mentioned that could be complementary and elevate effectiveness. As noted above there may also be a role that WaterAid could playing in catalysing (or contributing to) producing a report that would arguably cut to the heart of the evidential need.

In terms of campaigns, it was suggested that EWP also had a continuing role in SWA in terms of reaching to the public and making SWA issues “communications-friendly, which they seem to be good at”. This relates to the importance of strengthening coordination with EWP and mobilising members to influence SWA processes such as national-global linkages. However, it was also pointed out that the public-facing side (of WaterAid) should not necessarily have a big focus on SWA as “there is not that much to say”.

Finally it may be that WaterAid has a continued role in continuing to shape and reform SWA. In particular regional processes were identified as a key opening: “I think the new opportunity in relation to SWA is to link SWA to regional initiatives like SACOSAN”. The role in SWA of the private sector and the BRICS countries is also an area to explore for the future. A small number of respondents suggested that the SWA needs an institution at the country level which “could be part of the government and play the role of putting relationships together”, although it wasn’t possible to detect a great deal of support for this idea.

### **Determining global political priorities**

International advocacy practitioners and analysts have recently been considering the vexed questions of why some development and poverty issues receive greater attention than others at particular times through advocacy and campaigning. Experience and evidence indicate that this can be through a number of factors, including but not exhaustively:

- the severity of the problem?
- the availability of intervention?
- the extent of Media interest?
- the role of sudden humanitarian crises?
- how effective are global champions?
- donor country fears?
- the extent of effective and strong advocacy?
- donor whims?

An insightful article in health journal The Lancet in October 2007 helped further with this analysis in comparing the strong sustained progress made by the HIV-Aids advocacy community over the past few years, to the relatively slower progress on reducing maternal mortality. The table below (the *Shiffman Framework*) is taken from that article and is useful for WaterAid to

consider during planning processes in terms of identifying where, why and how the gaps might be in WASH being a continued policy priority, programme priority, and most importantly a political priority and WaterAid's role and distinctive competence in contributing to closing those gaps.

Description		Factors shaping political priority
Actor power	The strength of the individuals and organisations concerned with the issue	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Policy community cohesion: the degree of coalescence among the network of individuals and organisations that are centrally involved with the issue at the global level</li> <li>2 Leadership: the presence of individuals capable of uniting the policy community and acknowledged as particularly strong champions for the cause</li> <li>3 Guiding institutions: the effectiveness of organisations or coordinating mechanisms with a mandate to lead the initiative</li> <li>4 Civil society mobilisation: the extent to which grassroots organisations have mobilised to press international and national political authorities to address the issue at the global level</li> </ol>
Ideas	The ways in which those involved with the issue understand and portray it	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 Internal frame: the degree to which the policy community agrees on the definition of, causes of, and solutions to the problem</li> <li>6 External frame: public portrayals of the issue in ways that resonate with external audiences, especially the political leaders who control resources</li> </ol>
Political contexts	The environments in which actors operate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7 Policy windows: political moments when global conditions align favourably for an issue, presenting opportunities for advocates to influence decisionmakers</li> <li>8 Global governance structure: the degree to which norms and institutions operating in a sector provide a platform for effective collective action</li> </ol>
Issue characteristics	Features of the problem	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9 Credible indicators: clear measures that show the severity of the problem and that can be used to monitor progress</li> <li>10 Severity: the size of the burden relative to other problems, as indicated by objective measures such as mortality levels</li> <li>11 Effective interventions: the extent to which proposed means of addressing the problem are clearly explained, cost effective, backed by scientific evidence, simple to implement, and inexpensive</li> </ol>

Table: The four categories for the framework on determinants of political priority for global initiatives

### 3.2 Style of advocacy

There are a few areas that pertain to how WaterAid does its advocacy that have arisen during the review.

In terms of WaterAid's positioning in SWA, there is an apparent lack of clarity in terms of whether WaterAid is playing a partner role: supporting the SWA and only raising concerns in private, or a more 'traditional' NGO-civil society role of being critical, occasionally and in more or a watchdog role, in public. As noted above this lack of clarity has dismayed some of the partners in SWA and there have been requests for WaterAid to clarify this. It may be that WaterAid wants to keep a careful and thought-through balance between these roles, while managing the different impressions amongst sector partners and civil society. However it may also be the case that WaterAid values this ambiguity and wants to 'stay surprising', although this obviously represents a risk for the organisation in the future in terms of how it is perceived both by sector partners and civil society.

Related to this there were comments about the extent to which WaterAid is 'joined up' as an advocacy organisation. In the context of the SWA, this was raised a couple of times in the context of the degree of senior representation at key meetings and fora: "most organisations are represented at higher level (but WaterAid wasn't) and people thought it was odd". But the issue also arose in relation to the World Bank urban water work and in the context of country programmes and marketing strategies. This is common in organisations that have grown



advocacy functions rapidly and perhaps with internal functions that haven't been fully bought in to the key objectives. Advocacy teams are often better at focusing externally, rather than talking to colleagues and building support for the work internally, in other teams.

Another lesson from the SWA work is that, while it is clearly important for work to be planned within a coherent strategy, it doesn't always pay to be too planned and leaving some flexibility in an advocacy plan encourages organic growth of ideas, ownership of advocacy work by staff and, potentially, a greater ability to respond to external influencing opportunities.

A further key lesson in terms of advocacy approach is that, although PCD is highly valued by country programmes it supports, the future trend is that it should reflect more 'bottom up' or 'bottom-led' country level priorities. At the moment PCD support is more clearly targeted and the regions, but analysis suggest that future directions should include a stronger focus at the country level. This might include supporting national offices to level to support CSOs to strengthen and sharpen their advocacy strategies.<sup>17</sup>

One internal said: "country level change comes from informal discussions, from networking and a bit from the media. The standard WaterAid budgeting and planning process undermines this ... it doesn't happen through producing research documents. (We) need to think less formally about change happens – and trying to understand change processes in different countries". This would likely also include more integrated planning and strategy processes, at both country and regional levels, which is understood to be the direction of travel for the department and the organisation as a whole.

In this regard the value of rights-based approaches should be further explored by PCD in relation to both boosting the opportunities for supporting Southern civil society and in terms of sharpening the justice elements of the policy and campaigning work. This would include more proactively brokering relationships with others and investing in civil society space in the South. Such approaches, including work on the right to water which are currently located in the programmes department, might usefully be bolstered and harnessed by a future engagement from both the policy and campaign teams.

Another aspect of advocacy style that has arisen in this review is the nature of political strategy, power analysis and engagement, both for PCD and the wider organisation. There are perhaps three interlocking aspects to the analysis:

- The lack, or perceived lack, of a WaterAid political constituency
- The degree to which WaterAid has a global, overarching political strategy
- The degree which WaterAid is "plugged in" to political processes underpinned with robust analyses of power dynamics at the national level

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<sup>17</sup> In relation to this, there was a comment that workshops "don't really work, we do too much of them in WaterAid" and that new and innovative ways of capacity building and sharing should be found.



In all of these cases there may be good reasons for the relative underplaying of these aspects of advocacy strategy, but it is the last of these that may require further thought in future years, in relation to broadening WaterAid's advocacy work at the country level. For example, this may have the operational implication of national level advocacy staff conducting analysis of political and power dynamics across, and within, different government departments. It is possible that the current policy advocacy positioning is, as an illustration, usually through partnerships arrangements with the Ministry of Water (or similar) through technical assistance modalities. For advocacy to be effective and the changes sustained then a broader advocacy approach will usually be required involving political engagement with ministries other than water and finance as well as parliaments, business and donors, dependent on the national context.

It is important that these future directions do not compromise the fundamental distinctive competence that WaterAid has, including that:

- the staff are widely seen as sector experts,
- the strong relationships that staff have with decision-makers and their staff
- the organisation does high quality, evidence-based research, based on programme knowledge and experience

These attributes are highly valued both internally and externally, and validated in part by the recent PPA mid-term review<sup>18</sup>. Therefore moves in the directions suggested should be carefully calibrated and monitored and involve long term planning and a strategic direction of travel.

Finally, although some progress with monitoring and evaluation of advocacy work has taken place, PCD still struggles with measuring advocacy. "We know we are not going for the bean counter approach – we don't want to get hung up on the 100 million figure – but we are a bit stuck". The department should be tracking the objectives through (more) robust reporting, monitoring, designing systems and procedures.

Country programme advocacy staff in particular are keen for PCD to lead on this, although it is worth noting that, due to the lack of best practice and newness of this type of work, the leadership on advocacy tracking could come from anywhere in the advocacy community in WaterAid, and thinking cross-departmentally and cross-geographically might be a useful way forward.

### 3.3 Post-2015 agenda/Sector outreach

At the end of 2010 the 88% MDG water target had already been met and exceeded but at least 11% of the world's population are still without access to safe drinking water, and only 63% of the world's population now have improved sanitation access, an area which is predicted to miss the target by 2015.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> IOD Parc, 2012, Mid Review of WaterAid's DFID PPA

<sup>19</sup> WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation, 2012, *Progress on Drinking Water and Sanitation 2012*

What replaces the MDGs will doubtless begin to shape the development agenda and narrative in the period running up to 2015 and beyond it and there are, doubtless, lessons in the current targets that WaterAid will want to learn from.

WaterAid are already engaged in a number of key post-MDG forums, at the technical level and staff are involved in groups on water, sanitation, hygiene and equity and non-discrimination. An internal working group has been created in WaterAid so thinking on this area is well under way. The influencing window is quite short, possibly 6-12 months and there were calls to have more internal discussion to get further clarity about what is needed from the process and more clearly articulate what WaterAid 'red lines' might be, and also, what is WaterAid's public profile and positioning going to be if they are breached?

WaterAid has, correctly, seen influencing the post 2015 indicators as a good way of influencing debate and reaching out beyond the WASH 'comfort-zone'. There is also a pervading question about the degree to which WaterAid is happier working at the technical rather than the political level (as noted above). This is especially pertinent in regard to the post-2015 political process, which more than one interviewee described as "a bit of a mess" or in similar terms. One internal respondent said: "we are well positioned on the technical side but the key thing is the political side: how do the targets get fed in to the political process? The question is whether there is agreement in the end, or whether we take a different view". Another said: "We are well positioned to advocate for ambitious targets. Prioritising the work is very difficult ... but we need to get networks like health, education involved. But this is challenging as WaterAid is not used to being in these places."

As noted above, it will be important for WaterAid to reach out beyond the usual sectoral silo towards those who can help create a wider development narrative. The work on health in PCD is a strong indication that the teams are thinking outside of the WASH silo. The links with other development areas should continue to be explored and work on health could provide a lead area in which a wider narrative on water and sanitation, rights and the post 2015 agenda.

One area of contention is whether a stand-alone water and sanitation goal would be a good thing or not. There were mixed view on this amongst interviewees. Another area is clearly defining and articulating how the sector (and WaterAid) views the relationship between water and sanitation access and wider water resources management. According one interviewee "I want us to be more outside the 'W' world than we are. We do need to play the WASH card but also reach out."

Some expert external interviewees proposed that WaterAid's advocacy added value could be to focus on the principles that everyone has sustainable access to safe, adequate, and reliable water. There were also comments about the need to show governments how they can get resources themselves and move beyond aid dependency by expanding tax base.

## Appendix 1: Terms of Reference

### The Mid-Term Review for WaterAid's Policy and Campaigns Department

#### Background

WaterAid reached the mid-way point of its five year Global Strategy 2009/10-2015. The Strategy attaches high priority to advocacy and “influencing”. This elevated ambition marks a decisive shift of emphasis for the agency. While WaterAid’s financial support is still largely dedicated to continuing with its “service delivery” work, the Strategy has required a significant shift in staff thinking and financial resources to implement the influencing agenda. These additional resources bring with it the responsibility to accurately assess the value and impact of WaterAid’s work. WaterAid now wants to commission consultants expert in advocacy M+E to assess whether the Policy and Campaigns Department’s advocacy resources are being used to optimal effect.

While WaterAid and PCD has built up a picture of the indicators it will use to measure the success of its advocacy and has partially implemented some of systems recommended by the 2011 consultancy, there is now a need for an in depth assessment of whether the activities and strategies used are the best or whether an outside set of eyes can recommend or suggest viable alternatives. In short, we need an assessment to build up a qualitative picture of the robustness of our advocacy. In particular, we need a way to assess the strength of interventions in policy-making processes. This requires more qualitative assessments of the relative merits of particular advocacy activities and relationships.

#### Purpose of the Project

WaterAid’s PCD believes that effective advocacy requires continuous revisions to tactics and strategies in ways that respond both in the external policy-making environment and in the knowledge gained from deeper engagements in policy-making processes.

While WaterAid’s Global Strategy gives a fairly clear and fixed idea about what it is trying to achieve, there are two related questions that this project will help PCD and WaterAid, in time, to answer:

#### **Is what we’re doing likely to help achieve our goals? Are we doing the right thing?**

The objectives of the project are twofold:

- 1) To help PCD assess and measure the degree to which its agency has had a bearing on some of the changes it has sought in the external political and policy agendas;
- 2) To help PCD identify possible improvements to our advocacy activities against a picture of the changed external world since 2008/09;
- 3) To help PCD capture the necessary evidence and documents that will help build an accurate picture of what has been achieved and whether the ‘way’ WaterAid has conducted its advocacy has the highest impact.

It may also be a possibility that the consultant(s) will be called on for additional work in helping other parts of WaterAid in the UK and overseas to build up the techniques, evidence and methodologies for their own reviews.

### Project Activities

- To read through and understand the relevant WaterAid literature (ie Global Strategy, PCD's plans, the "100m beneficiaries note", the "Influencing definitions" paper, "Global Indicators", IPD's guidance notes on country strategy papers and others identified by project manager [HN]). IN particular the evaluation will aim to build an understanding of the SWA and WaterAid's agency in its creation. With the development of a semi-structured interview format with the Heads of Campaigns and Policy, the Review team will be expected to gauge the efficacy of the SWA to deliver WaterAid's Vision and Mission.
- Meet with relevant members of the Department to build a knowledge of i) PCD's view of the change agenda, ii) the day-to-day work of advocacy team members to understand how advocacy is conceived and implemented iii) the relationships and identified principal policy-making targets and allies
- Understand the role of the PCD departmental members vis-à-vis the rest of WaterAid and particularly by interviewing key people in the International Programmes Dept (including the head of Programme Support Unit, the Heads of Regions, teleconference interviews with Regional Advocacy and Policy Advisors (so-called "RAPAs") and with representatives from some of WaterAid's Country Programmes (CPs).
- **Interview PCD's external stakeholders including the allies and targets of its advocacy with a presentation of broad findings of feedback and key recommendations to PCD**
- Submission of any other supplementary advice and thoughts to the Department
- Managed by the Head of Policy Henry Northover and with the support of Tim Brewer.

### Assessment of PCD's work in developing *Sanitation and Water for All* (SWA)

The central flagship of WaterAid's advocacy since 2008 has focused on the creation and effective functioning of the SWA. The SWA has 3 component parts:

- i) The biennial High Level Ministerial Meeting or (HLM) between Ministers of Finance, WASH and Donor Ministers
- ii) The *Global Annual Assessment and Analysis of Sanitation and Water* (or GLAAS) that, together with the JMP, that aims to provide the evidence for the critical decisions to be taken by the WASH sector
- iii) The *National Planning for Results Initiative* (or NPRI) that aims to build a functioning sector in off-track fragile states.

The Review will ask whether PCD has positioned itself to best effect for addressing the WASH crisis and the purposes of SWA.

Outputs	Date for completion
Introduction to the work, to relevant WaterAid literature - Impact indicators (SPIs) and measuring advocacy, 100m target papers, the PPA evaluation – the organisational organogram, the principal supports for	2 Days

the evaluation. Form an understanding of the PCD's strategies and the fit with WaterAid's Global Strategy with a clarity on some of the internal debates Discussions with Head of Policy managing the project	3 Days
Meetings with PCD members, IPD principals, RAPAs, HoRs, CRs	3 Days
Interviews with key external advocacy targets including in the UN system, amongst bilateral and multilateral stakeholders and the allies	5 Days
Feedback and write up of notes, findings and recommendations (no more than 10 sides)	3 Days
Write up of the evaluation's methodology and approaches for use in WaterAid's CPs	2 Days
<b>Total</b>	<b>15-16 Days</b>

Henry Northover  
August 2012

## Appendix 2: Interviewees

Name	Relevant Position
<b>Externals: WASH</b>	
Christoph Merdes	Deputy Head of Division Water, Energy, Urban Development and Geoscience Sector at Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
Julia Bucknall	Sector Manager, Water Department, World Bank
Jon Lane	Former Director, World Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council
Dano Wilusz	Former Foreign Affairs Officer, USAID
Muyatwa Sitali	Former head of the WASH NGO Coalition in Liberia
Clarissa Brocklehust	Former Chief of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, UNICEF
Heather Skilling	Water and Sanitation Specialist, USAID
Peregrine Swann	Senior Adviser, World Health Organisation
Danielle Morley	Acting Consortium Coordinator
Cindy Kushner	SWA Coordinator
Jaehyang So	Manager of WSP, World Bank
Dominick De Waal	Finance Specialist at the Water and Sanitation Program, Kenya
<b>Externals: not WASH</b>	
Laura Webster	Head of Policy, Tearfund
Mike Foster	Former Minister of State, DFID; Head of Communications, WaterAid
Yaw Asante Sarkodie	Team Leader, Water and Sanitation Monitoring Programme, Accra, Ghana
<b>WaterAid staff</b>	
Margaret Batty	Director of PCD
Fleur Anderson	Head of Campaigns
Henry Northover	Head of Policy
Hratche Koundarjian	Media Officer
Yael Velleman	Principal Policy Analyst on GF4A and the SWA.
Tom Slaymaker	Deputy Head of Policy
Olivier Germain	End Water Poverty
Abdul Nashiru	Regional Advocacy Manager for West Africa, WaterAid
Ibrahim Musah	Policy Manager, WaterAid Ghana
Rabin Lal Shrestha	Head of Advocacy, WaterAid Nepal
<b>Former staff</b>	
Ollie Cumming	Senior Policy Analyst
Laura Hucks	Senior Policy Analyst
Steve Cockburn	Coordinator of End Water Poverty

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Jennean Alkadiri	Campaigns Officer
Sally Warren	Campaigns Manager
Sue Cavill	Consultant, DFID