



SPLASH SANITATION RESEARCH CALL AND PROGRAMME

**Consolidated report from the development of the
research call to the implementation of the research
programme**

Consolidated Deliverables D.9.1 – D.9.3

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1 Introduction

One of the goals of the ERA-NET scheme is to encourage calls for proposals issued jointly by several Members States (and associated countries) as a contribution to pooling the resources in the European Research Area.

SPLASH, the ERA-NET of the European Water Initiative, launched a research call on “Sustainable sanitation service chains in Sub-Saharan Africa” on 1st March 2010. The research programme is both recognising the importance and scale of the sanitation challenge and aims to contribute to the understanding and implementation at scale of sustainable sanitation in low-income areas of Sub-Saharan Africa. The “SPLASH Sanitation Research Programme” is funded by the following organisations:

- Austrian Development Agency (AdA)
- Department for International Development (DFID)
- Ministère des Affaires étrangères et Européennes (MAEE)
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)
- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)
- Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF)

On 1st April 2011, five international research consortia started with individual 3-years research projects, which together form the “SPLASH Sanitation Research Programme”. The present report describes the entire process from the definition of the call theme, the preparation of the call documents, the launch of the call, the evaluation and selection of the research consortia, and the management of the subsequent research programme.

All the above-mentioned steps have been documented in various reports throughout the process. Therefore, the present document is to a large extent a compilation of these reports, which are presented as individual annexes. This report represents in consolidated manner the Deliverables D9.1 (Call development), D9.2 (Call documents) and D9.3 (Management and contractual issues). As such, it is not only a deliverable to adhere to the reporting requirements vis-à-vis the European Commission, but also a documentation of the specific products of the call process, which could be useful for future development of other transnational research calls in the water sector.

2 Call development process and programme design

The SPLASH description of work called for a jointly established and coordinated research programme with funding from more than one Member State. In January 2009, the SPLASH funders approved a concept note about a joint research call on sanitation service chains (see annex 1). Formally, the call development process started in April 2009 with a kick-off workshop in Geneva. The outcomes of the kick-off workshop were presented in a side event at the WEDC conference in Addis Ababa in May 2009 in order to receive feedback from Southern stakeholders. The revised call concept was then presented and discussed during the meeting of the Scientific Advisory Council (SAC) in Helsinki in June 2009. The outcomes of this process were documented for the SPLASH Strategic Management Board (SMB) meeting in July 2009 in Bern (see annex 2). The SMB endorsed the process and subsequently, the formulation of the call documents started in a small working group, lead by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and encompassing participants from the Austrian Development Agency (AdA) and the Water, Engineering and Development Centre (WEDC). Drafts of the call documents were again discussed in the SAC meeting in Dec. 2009 in Mombasa and

at the SMB meeting in Prague in Jan 2010. In Prague, the call funders (ADA, DFID (represented through the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine), MAEE, SDC, SIDA) decided to formally establish a Call Steering Committee (one participant from each funder), agreed that the Call Secretariat should be managed by SDC and that a research programme management organisation should be selected by a tender. In addition to the abovementioned organisations, in Sep. 2010 the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation decided to co-fund the SPLASH call as well.

The programme design has been conducted in accordance with SPLASH findings and recommendations regarding good research management practice, as follows:

- It aims to ensure equal contributions by both northern and southern experts, including in decision-making processes. The programme design mandates that a minimum of 50 percent of funds will be spent in the South by research project consortia. It is anticipated that by improving the symmetry of relationships between northern and southern partners in research processes, the relevance, ownership and overall quality of the research by all parties will be increased.
- The process of programme design was conducted in a participative and consultative way. Furthermore, individual research consortia were required to identify stakeholders and plan to engage with them throughout the research. It is expected that improved engagement with appropriate stakeholders will ensure that research responds to demands, and that this, in turn, will increase ownership and use of findings. As such, the research programme is designed to directly influence the transfer of research findings into policy and practice and to generate research results with high potential for application and up-scaling.
- Information concerning the sanitation research programme has been widely publicised through international and national networks to maximise participation rates and to encourage a high response. Each research consortium is similarly required to dedicate a minimum of 10 percent of their overall project budget to effective, targeted dissemination of their research.
- An overall programme management structure has been established (see chapter 3). This aims to ensure that research projects are coordinated to promote synergies, ensure mutual learning, reduce duplication of effort and support dissemination of the programme at international level. The programme management will also identify emerging research needs and develop a longer term research programme.

3 Management of the call

The following bodies have been created for the management of the call:

- Call Secretariat (CS)
- Call Steering Committee (CSC)
- Call Selection Committee
- Research Programme Management Organisation

The roles and responsibilities of these bodies are outlined below.

3.1 Call Secretariat

A Call Secretariat was set up to assist and support the Call Steering Committee (CSC) in all aspects of managing the SPLASH call. It served as primary point of contact between the CSC and the research consortia applying for funds. The Call Secretariat was lead by SDC until signature of the funding contracts with the research consortia. Subsequently, most responsibilities (with the exception of management and disbursement of funds) of the Call Secretariat were subcontracted to a management organisation.

The Call Secretariat's functions include(d):

- Manage and monitor the progress of the SPLASH call
- Suggest call modalities and processes to the Call Funders, incorporate the requirements of the Call Funders in the call documents
- Prepare and update all call documents (Call applicants Guide, templates for submission of Concept Notes and Full Proposals, Cooperation Agreement between the funders, Peer Reviewer's Guideline, Peer Reviewer's Evaluation Form)
- Advertise the call through different channels
- Organise and manage the submission process
- Provide a helpdesk facility to answer questions from applicants
- Manage the process of suggesting and selecting Peer Reviewers
- Prepare a list of Peer Reviewers for each Concept Note and Full Proposal
- Organise the call for tender process for selecting the management organisation
- Coordinate, document and ensure a transparent process for the evaluation of Concept Notes and Full Proposals
- Prepare the funding contracts with the successful consortia
- Disburse the funds according to the contractual arrangements in the funding contracts, subsequent to the approval of the periodic activity and financial reports/audits by the management organisation and the Call Steering Committee

3.2 Call Steering Committee

The SPLASH Funders established a Call Steering Committee (CSC), as the principal decision making body of the SPLASH call and the resulting SPLASH Sanitation Research Programme. Each party contributing financially to the SPLASH is represented by one delegate in the CSC.

The functions of the Call Steering Committee include(d):

- Steer and supervise the progress of the SPLASH call
- Approve call modalities, processes and documents
- Suggest potential Peer Reviewers to the Call Secretariat
- Approve a final list of Peer Reviewers prepared by the Call Secretariat
- Selection of Concept Notes to be developed into Full Proposals, based on the recommendations of the Peer Reviewers
- Approve the decision of the Call Selection Committee and advise the Call Secretariat to start the contracting process
- Approve the bi-annual project progress reports submitted by the management organisation and give clearance to SDC to disburse the next allotment to the respective consortia. Take decisions in case a consortium fails to deliver their contractual obligations.

3.3 Call Selection Committee

The SPLASH Call Steering Committee established a Call Selection Committee for selecting the projects to be funded, based on the Peer Review Evaluation of the Full Proposals. Members of the Call Selection Committee were internationally recognised experts on sanitation issues from the following organisations: World Bank, UNICEF, the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).

The functions of the Call Selection Committee included:

- Study all the Full Proposals that have been qualified as fundable by the Peer Reviewers, as well as the evaluation comments of the Peer Reviewers

- Select the proposals to be funded, taking into account the personal judgement about the quality of the proposals, the advice from the evaluators and the availability of funding.

3.4 Management organisation to support the Call Secretariat

Once the funding contracts with the consortia were in place, the management of the projects was be subcontracted to a management organization. The functions of the management organisation include:

- Collect, monitor and approve periodic activity and financial reports (bi-annually) and audited financial reports (annually)
- Report bi-annually to the Call Steering Committee about progress of all the funded projects, give clearance for the disbursement of funds from the SPLASH account at SDC to the respective consortia, and suggest actions in case a project would be off-track
- Convene a joint kick-off workshop with all research consortia to establish a collaborative working environment, to allow joint learning and to identify synergies between the projects.
- Convene a mid-term workshop with all the funded consortia to share preliminary results, discuss project progress, facilitate lesson learning and make adjustments in the projects if needed.
- Convene a synthesising workshop after termination of all projects, including all the funded consortia, the funders and other relevant stakeholders, in order to distil specific and/or generic lessons from the projects, formulate a joint dissemination strategy and discuss the potential and the strategy for large-scale implementation of the results.
- Elaborate a synthesis report of the findings of the projects, covering the abovementioned workshop topics.

3.5 Contractual arrangements

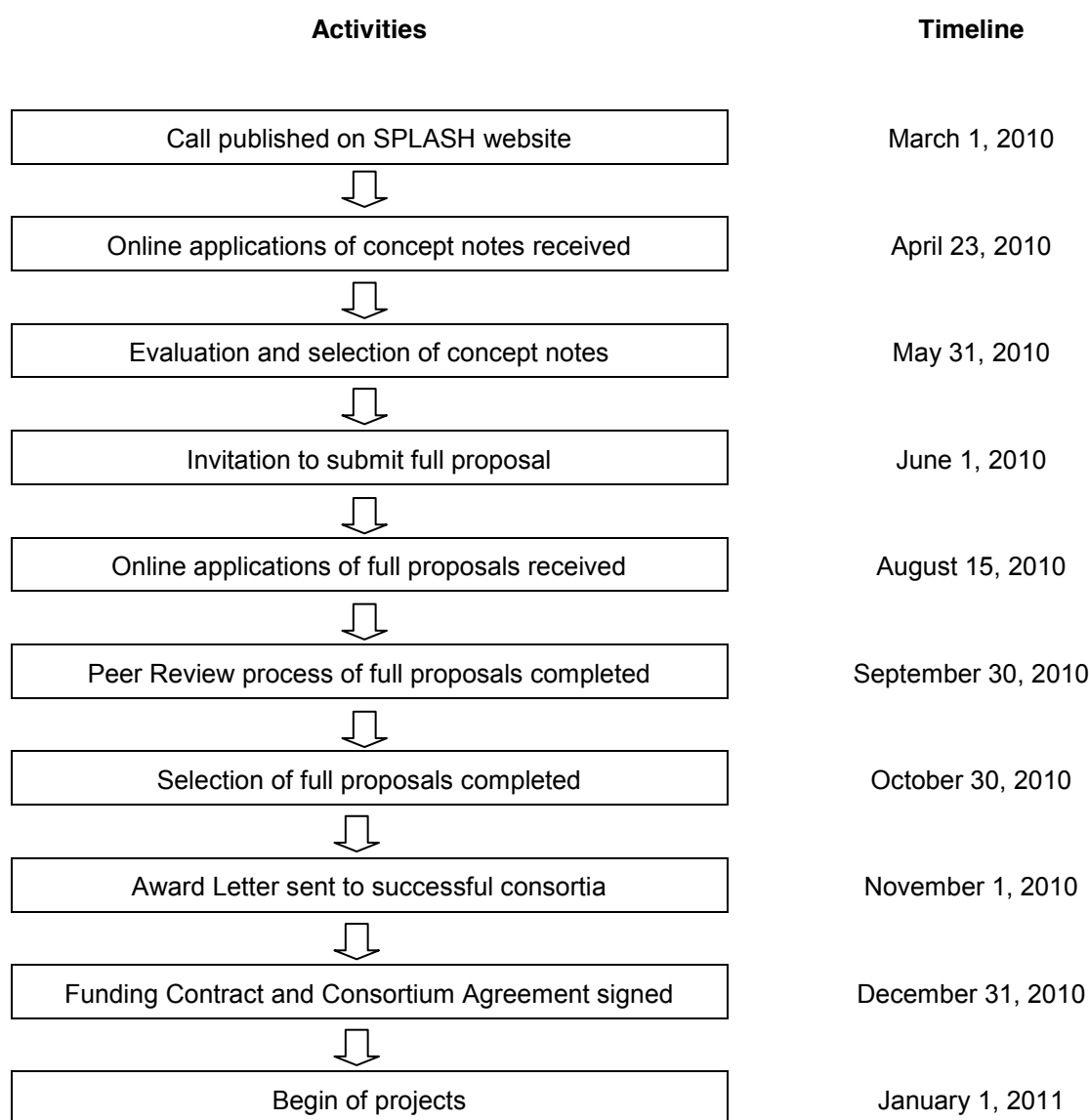
Three types of contractual arrangements were implemented for the SPLASH Sanitation research programme:

- An “Agreement on Delegated Cooperation” between the national donor agencies (AdA, DFID (represented through the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine), MAEE, SDC, SIDA) contributing to the call. Note: In addition, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation entered into a bilateral agreement with SDC covering their contribution to the programme.
- A contract between SDC and WEDC for the management of the programme from the starting date of the research consortia
- Individual research contracts between SDC and the 5 different research consortia

4 Launching of call, evaluation and selection of proposals

On 1st March the “SPLASH transnational call on sustainable sanitation service chains” was officially launched and widely publicised through the SPLASH network. The major objective of the call was *to contribute to the understanding and implementation at scale of sustainable sanitation service chains in low-income urban areas in Sub-Saharan Africa.*”

The application and selection process was structured into a two-stage process, with concept notes in the first stage and after an evaluation and selection, full proposals in the second stage. The steps and the intended timeline are indicated in the flow-chart below:



Comment on timeline: The intended timeline was respected up to the stage of the award letters. Afterwards, establishing the funding contracts with the consortia, and the agreement on delegated cooperation took more time than anticipated, which delayed the start date of the contracts of the consortia to 1st April 2011.

The SPLASH call on sanitation service chains had a budget of approximately 2.2 Mio Euro. The call was based on a “real common pot” model. This model implies that the call funders will pool their funding and administer it centrally. The research projects commissioned by the SPLASH call on sanitation service chains were limited to 36 month in duration. Transnational research consortia could apply for a total SPLASH research contribution in the range of 250'000 – 500'000 Euro.

The SPLASH call supports demand-led research. Key features of good management of demand-led research include comprehensive stakeholder interaction, enhanced capacities of researchers in the South and measures to ensure maximum uptake of research findings.

In the first stage, applicants were invited to submit short concept notes that respond to the objective of the call. The first stage of the call was supported by the following documents:

- Call announcement (annex 3)
- Call applicants guide, including template for application and budget (annex 4)
- Terms of Reference for Peer-Reviewers (annex 5)
- Instructions for Peer-Reviewers (annex 6)

The SPLASH call received 44 concept notes that were all fed into a peer-review process in which each proposal was evaluated by at least 2 independent reviewers. The review results were compiled by the Call Secretariat and discussed at the Call Steering Committee Meeting in May 2010 in Vienna. As a result, 11 proposals were shortlisted and invited to send in full proposals.

On 1st June 2010, the shortlisted consortia were invited to submit a full proposal. The second stage of the call was supported by the following documents:

- Applicant's guide for shortlisted consortia (annex 7)
- Application form for full proposals (annex 8)
- Instructions for Peer-Reviewers of full proposals (annex 9)

The shortlisted consortia were provided with funding for a planning workshop to strengthen partnership and interaction between the different partners in a consortium and to allow for a truly participative planning process. 11 full proposals were received and were fed into the peer-review evaluation process in which each proposal was evaluated by 4 independent reviewers. To avoid direct interventions by the funders on the final selection, the Call Steering Committee agreed to establish an independent Selection Committee. The Call Secretariat compiled all the peer-reviews and made them available to the Selection Committee. Based on the judgements of the peer-reviewers and own considerations, the Selection Committee selected in a meeting in Nov. 2010 five research consortia for funding. The decision of the Selection Committee was subsequently endorsed by the Call Steering Committee.

5 Start of the five projects that form the SPLASH Sanitation research programme

5.1 Selected research consortia

The following research consortia are funded by the SPLASH Sanitation Research Programme and have entered 36 months contracts with SDC, starting 1st April 2011.

- **Catalysing self-sustaining sanitation chains in informal settlements**
Coordinated by the University of Surrey, Robens Centre for Public and Environmental Health, United Kingdom, and including partners from France, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda

- **Economic Constraints and Demand-led Solutions for Sustainable Sanitations Services in Poor Urban Settlements**
Coordinated by the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich, Centre for Development and Cooperation, Switzerland, and including partners from Uganda and Switzerland
- **FaME (Faecal Management Enterprise): Providing Sanitation Solutions through Value Chain Management of Faecal Sludge**
Coordinated by the Swiss Aquatic Research Institute, Department of Water and Sanitation in Developing Countries (SANDEC), Switzerland, and including partners from Austria, Ghana, Senegal, and Uganda
- **Maîtrise de la filière assainissement dans un écosystème côtier à Douala et les quartier populaires de Yaoundé au Cameroun**
Coordinated by the Ecole Nationale Supérieure Polytechnique de Yaoundé, Cameroon, and including partners from Cameroon and France
- **Sustainable and resilient sanitation service chains in Maputo province, Mozambique – action research and piloting for benefit of the urban poor**
Coordinated by the International Water Association (IWA), the Netherlands, and including partners from France, Mozambique and the United Kingdom

5.2 Selected management organisation

The SPLASH Call Secretariat received two offers in response to an international call for tender for the management of the SPLASH Sanitation Research Programme. The Call Secretariat has evaluated both offers according to predefined criteria and the Call Steering Committee has selected the Water Engineering and Development Centre (WEDC), Loughborough University, United Kingdom, for the management of the SPLASH Sanitation Research Programme.

5.3 Progress to date of the SPLASH Sanitation Research Programme

The first reporting period for the research consortia covered the period from 1st April to 30st September 2011. Each consortium has produced a progress report and these individual reports have been summarized by the SPLASH programme management organisation in a consolidated report. The following paragraphs present the main findings of this report.

The SPLASH Sanitation research programme has started well. All projects have commenced activities, and whilst each have experienced some delays, in part due to the late start of the overall programme, none of the projects anticipate longer term problems due to the delay.

Overall coordination activities including a well-attended kick off workshop and teleconference have helped to establish a shared understanding of the programme, and to develop relationships between projects. In addition a number of joint dissemination activities have taken place as outlined in Section 3. Great strengths of the programme include geographic representation in Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone countries of sub Saharan Africa, and interventions which address the entire sanitation service chain.

Significant areas for potential learning and sharing between projects exist, and include: mechanisms for engagement with local stakeholders; understanding financial flows along the sanitation service chain; development of relationships and networks between early career researchers; research methodologies; understanding and promoting mechanisms to stimulate demand for sanitation services; and addressing the needs of vulnerable groups in provision of sanitation services. Similarly

three projects are working in Kampala, Uganda such that coordination of activities, for example sharing information as to which communities are being surveyed has proved beneficial within the programme.

Identified challenges and means of overcoming these for programme coordination include suggestions to strengthen technical review and means to facilitate greater sharing between linguistic communities. A further suggestion from the programme management team is advice to all projects to pay greater attention to clearly articulating and sharing the project purpose and the specific research questions within their projects which will achieve the project purpose. Greater streamlining of these statements and questions at the earliest possible stage would support meta-analysis of programme level results at a later stage; some comments towards achieving this are made by reviewers.

List of Annexes

- Annex 1 Concept note sanitation research call**
- Annex 2 Call preparation process**
- Annex 3 Call announcement**
- Annex 4 Call applicant's guide (concept note stage)**
- Annex 5 Terms of reference for peer-reviewers**
- Annex 6 Instructions for peer-reviewers**
- Annex 7 Call applicant's guide (full proposal stage)**
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