

Effective partnerships: Transferring research knowledge into action

Introduction

Successful communication between researchers and the users of research is crucial if the best use is to be made of research findings. However, communication between the researcher, the policy-maker and the practitioner is often constrained by a range of factors. For this reason, intermediary organizations and individuals can play an important knowledge brokering role. If the results of research are to contribute to poverty reduction, and decisions are to be made based on these results, better entry points are needed which allow researchers to engage with policy and decision makers.



The purpose

The SPLASH project aims to understand and make recommendations to improve communication channels through which those involved in water research, policy making and practice interact and through which research results are transferred to potential users. This fact sheet describes the main findings of this study and the possible routes for reaching policy makers and the potential role played by intermediaries.

Headline facts

- All research programmes require a communication and dissemination strategy. There is an extensive body of knowledge which provides guidance on how to do this.
- Placing this dissemination strategy within an appropriate institutional framework increases its effectiveness. Areas of focus should be the development of long-term relationships between researchers.
- Structural barriers exist which work against closer interaction between the research and policy-making communities. Research funders can help provide a more enabling environment and incentive structures for decision-makers and researchers to interact, and can help increase the perceived value of scientific research in a particular country.
- Intermediaries and knowledge brokers play an important role. These can be individuals, networks (such as the Rural Water Supply Network) or platforms (such as the SWITCH Learning Alliance approach).



Recommendations

- It is important to engage with knowledge brokering platforms and networks in the field of water for development in order to increase communication between research funders, researchers and in particular, research users.
- Research funders should require proposals to include an effective dissemination and communication strategy together with plans for assessing research impact. Both these elements can contribute to increased uptake of research results.
- Capacity development of both practitioners and policy makers improves their ability to use research findings.
- Platforms for communicating European Water for development research optimise knowledge brokering at the European level.

Find out more

Fisher, J., Obhiambo, F. and Cotton, A. (2003): *Spreading the word further. Guidelines for disseminating development research*. WEDC, UK

Van Kammen, J., De Savigny, D. and Sewankambo, N. (2006): *Using knowledge brokering to promote evidence based policy-making: the need for support structures*. Bulletin of the World Health Organisation, 2006, 84 (8)

Barnard, G., Carlie. L. and Basu Ray, D. (2007): *Maximising the impact of development research. How can funders encourage more effective research communication?* Final report based on a workshop held at Institute for Development Studies, October 2006. IDS, DFIS, IDRC, CRDI



Further information

This is one of a series of SPLASH fact sheets available on the SPLASH website www.splash-era.net

If you would like to receive the quarterly SPLASH newsletter 'Making a SPLASH', please contact era-net@dfid.gov.uk

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