

Effective partnerships: Consultation on innovative South-North partnerships for water for development

Introduction

Consultation of research partners in low-income countries and in Europe is central to ensuring that the opinions of southern partners about ongoing research activities are known and used in its implementation and in the design of new programmes. SPLASH has conducted several consultation meetings in Africa and the Mekong with representatives of public, private and voluntary sector organizations involved in water for development research funded by SPLASH Member States in low-income countries. The discussions during these meetings focussed on improving the design, management and institutional arrangements for water for development research.



The purpose

The purpose of this study is to find out more about how demand-led and participatory research methodologies are successfully applied. The consultations in Cambodia, Kenya, Burkina Faso, Denmark and Austria focused on programme design and management, and research partnerships and dialogue platforms in South-North research programmes. This fact sheet presents lessons learned to assist the planning and implementation of research programmes and improve their effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

Headline facts

- Design criteria for research in water for development centre on specific thematic areas, stressing the importance of participatory approaches and an enabling policy environment.
- Key features of good management of demand-led research programmes focus on extensive stakeholder interaction, enhanced research capacities of researchers in the South and measures to ensure maximum uptake of research findings.
- Effective symmetrical South-North research partnerships require a regulatory framework which specifies the relevant institutional arrangements.



Recommendations

Research programme design criteria

- Thematic priorities are the optimal use of increasingly scarce water resources, drinking water and sanitation services, and flooding.
- Government agencies should involve voluntary and private sector organizations, the public sector and civil society to increase ownership of the research agenda.
- National water administrations can create a policy environment for decentralized planning and public-private-voluntary sector partnerships to maximise demand-led research.

Research programme management guidelines

- Social and scientific research programmes can be most effective through interaction between researchers and the leaders of public, voluntary and private organizations at the local level.
- The role of northern research institutes should focus on enhancing southern capacities in managing, implementing and administering policy- and practice-oriented research programmes.
- Dissemination and communication of research findings should form an integral part of any research programme.

Institutional arrangements

- Southern ownership of demand-led research programmes is increased by more symmetrical relationships between southern and northern research funding agencies.
- Demand-led research initiatives in the South should be linked to capacity building initiatives and research at national and sub-regional level.
- Symmetrical relationships between public, private and voluntary sector organizations need regulatory frameworks that specify the representation, negotiation and decision modalities of the research dialogue platforms.



Further information

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

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