

## Uptake of research in policy and practice: The influence of research on government policies

### Introduction

Research on water for development can be an important tool for fighting poverty in developing countries. However, in the past, research results have not been used to their full potential by policy makers and practitioners. Thus, existing knowledge has not always been taken into account when designing and implementing water related policies. SPLASH seeks to address this problem by analysing its causes, and the possible solutions. It also seeks to facilitate the exchange of experiences between EU Member States and developing countries and thereby improve the way research influences development.



### The purpose

This fact sheet is based on a study which aims to understand the links and gaps between the use of research and the formulation of development policies. The results of this work are synthesized here – what is known about good practice in linking research and policy, both in the water sector and beyond, in the SPLASH partner countries. These results have contributed to the development of recommendations for the more effective uptake by policy makers of European funded research on water for development. This is one of the core activities of SPLASH.

### Headline facts

- The influence of research on policy and practice is limited because the processes by which they link are often complex, non-linear and dynamic. This affects the design, implementation and communication of research.
- Research knowledge is communicated through a process of negotiation rather than a direct transfer of information. This means that knowledge is created through the social interaction of interdisciplinary teams. Communication of research knowledge also occurs when research users interpret research findings and feed them into their own decision making.
- Countries apply different approaches to bridge this research to policy gap e.g. by commissioning research, or supporting the communication of research to policy dialogue platforms.
- Other sectors, such as health, agriculture and energy, demonstrate interesting experiences of using research-practice-policy dialogue programmes or regional information brokerage mechanisms.



## Recommendations

Targeted strategic communication of research is key to increasing its influence on policy. It is recommended that:

- Funders set greater incentives for researchers to engage in dissemination, networking and knowledge exchange activities.
- Researchers develop better communication and dissemination skills.
- SPLASH uses findings about best practice to communicate the results of the SPLASH project to different interested audiences.

Assessing the non-academic outcomes of research is key to developing strategic actions to increase overall outcomes. It is recommended that:

- Funders, researchers and SPLASH apply and test existing non-academic outcomes assessment methods in order to understand more about how this works.

Institutional links are key to improving the interaction between researchers and research users. It is recommended that:

- Research users and researchers interact at an institutional level. In this way, the demand for research findings and their availability, can be shared. At an institutional level, this can be achieved through dialogue platforms, networks and knowledge brokering mechanisms.

## Key references

Court, J., Hovland, I. and Young, J. (eds.) (2005). *Bridging Research and Policy Development: Evidence and the Change process*. ODI, ITDG Publishing, UK

Hovland, I. (2007). *Making a difference: M&E of policy research*. ODI Working Paper No 281

Nutley, S., Walter, I. and Davies, H.T.O. (2007). *Using Evidence. How research can inform public services*. Policy Press, University of Bristol, UK



## Further information

A series of SPLASH fact sheets are available on the SPLASH website [www.splash-era.net](http://www.splash-era.net)

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

SPLASH is funded under the EC 6th Framework Programme (FP6) Photographs: Kyung Shik Chung (UN Cote D'Ivoire) and Bob Reed (WEDC),