



Making a SPLASH!

Newsletter 5 – March 2009

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1. Events

Meeting of European donors, January 2009

On 15th and 16th January, DFID hosted a meeting in London of European donors, to consider funding a series of potential joint research-related activities.

Ten concept notes were prepared by the SPLASH partners that outlined activities addressing the lessons learned on making research more effective within the SPLASH programme, while supporting the achievement of SPLASH overall objectives, with a demonstrated transnational benefit.

Donors agreed that five activities should go ahead initially including: the development of open source training materials on research management; a workshop to improve research coordination in Ethiopia; support to the Africa Groundwater Network; the development of a tool to improve evaluation and impact assessment of research activities, and a joint call for new research in sanitation services. Work will start on these activities during 2009.



European donor agency and SPLASH project members

**SPLASH at the 34th WEDC International Conference
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – May 2009**

- **SPLASH conference papers:** SPLASH will present three papers at the 34th WEDC International Conference (<http://www.wedcconference.co.uk/>). The first on “Research dialogue platforms in the context of institutional reform in the East African water sector” (Hartveld) analyses the implications of these institutional reforms for research dialogue platforms in Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. The second, “Linking research and policy in water and sanitation - findings from the SPLASH ERA-Net” (Fisher and Alker) documents the results of an investigation into how to improve the application of research to those engaged in policy making and practice, with important lessons to inform the design and implementation of future research programmes to ensure better uptake of results. Finally, Frank Odhiambo will present “Research management in water for development research”, a study into the role of management in the conduct of water for development research.

- **SPLASH Sanitation Call event 21st May, 17:30 – 19.15 hrs:** SPLASH is to launch a joint research call for the generation of new knowledge on sustainable sanitation systems, service chains and the support of their large-scale implementation in rural and peri-urban settings. The aim of the WEDC Conference event is to inform about the development of the call and to gain input from Southern stakeholders to influence the thematic and geographic focus and the institutional set-up of the call. For more information, contact Manfred Kaufmann manfred.kaufmann@agrl.ethz.ch.

2. SPLASH website

The SPLASH website at <http://www.splash-era.net/> has been updated and improved! New additions include the latest SPLASH outputs. Other developments coming soon are a searchable Yellow Pages of online resources on water for development, and a directory of international capacity development programmes in the water for development sector.

3. SPECIAL FEATURE: Engagement of main actors in the design and management of demand-led research programmes

An important SPLASH objective is the improved prioritisation and utilisation of water for development research. A related issue is that of improving the way research dialogue platforms work, where actors from the public, voluntary and private sectors collaborate in setting research agendas, managing the programmes, and communicating the findings. Desk studies and four stakeholder consultation meetings in the Mekong, East and West Africa and Europe were organized, to find out more about the potential for research programmes to better address the priorities of policy makers, practitioners and beneficiaries. The results of this work (D 4.2, D4.3, D4.4 and D4.5) will soon be available on the SPLASH website.

Demand-led research protocols

Commonly, a distinction is made between science- and demand-led research protocols. Scientific criteria are crucial for setting the research priorities of science-led research, with academic platforms making the decisions about research agendas. For demand-led research, (both policy- and practice-oriented), the social relevance of research themes is the main ranking criteria and multi-actor dialogue platforms decide the research priorities.

It is increasingly recognized that the major management challenges in the national water sectors require collaboration between administration, voluntary and private sector organizations. The institutional landscape in the water sector is changing through the application of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and the Sector Wide Approach to Planning (SWAP). These require decentralization of organizational and operational management to River Basin Organizations and District Water Offices so that water related services can be planned, designed and managed through interaction with public, private and voluntary sector organizations at river basin, watershed or local level.

South-North research communities working on water for development strongly support demand-led research programmes, which address the demands of policy makers and practitioners in IWRM and SWAP organizations and their intended beneficiaries. Demand-led research can also generate support for investing public funds into research to resolve problems affecting low-income groups. Southern research communities recommend enhancing southern capacities in planning, designing and implementing demand-led research in innovative South-North programmes.

SPLASH Report D4.4 presents design criteria and management guidelines for the identification of good practices in demand-led research programmes. The design criteria are the responsibility of the funding agency and cover participatory methodologies, supportive policy environments and flexible funding arrangements for the application of participatory approaches. Management of the programmes is the responsibility of the research consortia, with the guidelines dealing with the application of participatory and consultative approaches and strategies for enhancing Southern capacities to manage and implement qualitative demand-led research, and for communicating research findings to policy makers, practitioners and beneficiaries.

Aard Hartveld, 2009

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