PROCEEDINGS FROM BEST PRACTICE WORKSHOPS

SPLASH Best Practice Workshops in Uganda, Montreal and Brussels 2010

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http://splash-era.net/index.php
**Contents amendment record**

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**Distribution:** Refer to deliverable list in Description of Work 7.3

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1 Background information

The original description of work, an integral part of the contract for SPLASH, envisaged that the project would share what it had learned about good practice in research through a workshop, to take place towards the end of the existing contract. Rather than focussing on a single event, there has actually been a programme of participative involvement at key international sector and development research related events, several of which have taken place during 2010, with additional potential involvement in others planned for 2011 and beyond. Amongst these, three specific events were identified as having the key objective of satisfying the need to disseminate the good practice we have learned and the need to reach a range of target audiences including policy makers, practitioners, donors and researchers. The following events were therefore chosen and form the basis of this report:

- The 15th International African Water Congress and Exhibition, Kampala, March 2010
- The IWA World Water Congress, Montreal, September 2010
- SPLASH Good Practice workshop – sharing our learning and planning our future, Brussels, October 2010.

In addition to these events, during the period of the project, SPLASH has recognized the importance of sharing good practice on an ongoing basis through its planned dissemination activities. These have included:

- hard copy and electronic quarterly newsletters;
- project documents categorised as ‘public’;
- a series of 16 factsheets that synthesise some of the key outputs;
- two briefing notes on how researchers and research programmers can influence the degree to which research is used through research partnerships, research management processes and research products;
- four learning notes demonstrating what SPLASH has learnt from these key activities, together with any recommendations for the future; and
- open source training materials on research management.

In addition, there are three online databases:

- SPLASH partner-funded programmes database (a searchable online database of existing SPLASH partner-funded programmes);
- Water for Development Yellow Pages (provides listings by country of online resources for development-related water research); and
- Capacity Building Directory (covers international programmes which develop capacity in the water for development sector).

All of the above resources are available free of charge on the SPLASH website at [http://splash-era.net](http://splash-era.net)

2 What is SPLASH good practice?: lessons learned on the uptake of research

A workshop in October 2008 provided a platform to synthesise eleven lessons learnt across the SPLASH work programme, which would improve the uptake of research results, relating to all
stages of the research cycle, from inception to monitoring and evaluation. The list of main lessons (see Box 1) aims to contribute to all four objectives of SPLASH through reviewing the insight generated by the SPLASH project about how to design, conduct, manage, communicate and evaluate water research in developing countries.

**Box 1 Summary of Lessons**

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<tr>
<th>Inception Phase</th>
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<tr>
<td>2.1.1.1 Strategic and operational objectives of programmes must be clearly stated and understood by all involved in the programme, and used for effective monitoring and evaluation.</td>
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<td>2.1.1.2 The relevant stakeholders must be identified and a plan for engagement defined and followed. Actively involving the relevant stakeholder in the research process is a challenge for the future.</td>
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<td>2.1.2.1 The number and the complexity of application and reporting procedures create a high administrative burden on (southern) research organizations</td>
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<td>2.1.3.1 Available (national) funding is currently insufficient to capitalise on local research skills in the South.</td>
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<td>2.1.4.1 The involvement of southern research organizations in European-funded research programmes is inadequate.</td>
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<td>2.1.4.2 North – South research partnerships are often asymmetric, which reduces ownership and commitment to the process.</td>
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<td>2.1.4.3 Efforts to build capacity can have negative effects if poorly designed and lead to trained personnel seeking better jobs elsewhere or leaving the country.</td>
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<th>Implementation Phase</th>
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<td>2.2.1.1 Good research management includes clearly defined roles for all partners, and the inclusion of partners who can demonstrate their ability to fulfil these roles.</td>
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<td>2.2.2.1 The timing of research and policy cycles is not synchronised and follows different paces: the research cycle is often too short for influencing policies as well as rapidly developing policy processes that cannot be sufficiently supported by research.</td>
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<th>Communication and dissemination</th>
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<tr>
<td>2.3.1.1 Dissemination of research results is inadequate.</td>
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<td>2.3.1.2 Duplication of research occurs and existing knowledge is not used to its full potential.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.3.1.3 Intermediary actors play an important role in helping to make better use of research results, however, their functions and ways to support them are not well understood.</td>
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<th>Monitoring and Evaluation</th>
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<td>2.4.1.1 Research impact and outcome assessment is still weak.</td>
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A set of corresponding recommendations were also developed, aimed specifically at the stakeholder groups of funders, research institutions and research programmes. These recommendations provide
guidance on making effective dissemination of research results at programme and project level a requirement; on increasing the coordination of existing programmes; and on recognising the role of and actively supporting intermediary organizations. More detail is available in fact sheet 4 at http://splash-era.net/downloads/SPLASH_Fact_Sheet_4.pdf.

3 The workshops

3.1 SPLASH at the 15th International African Water Congress and Exhibition, Kampala, 17th March 2010

The context
SPLASH was very pleased to host a session during the 15th International African Water Association (AfWA) Congress in Uganda in March 2010. The session “Communicating and using research for improved effectiveness in the water and sanitation sector” considered how best to conduct research to optimise the use of results by policy makers and practitioners. Keynote presentations considered the good practice established within the SPLASH project, as demonstrated by the Water Research Commission (WRC) of South Africa, 2ie of Burkina Faso (one of the recently established Centres of Excellence in Water Science and Technology under the NEPAD / AMCOW / AMCOST initiative), and SACCNET (a network which aims to establish cross sectoral knowledge sharing in southern Africa).

The results
A highly participative session chaired by the UK Department for International Development confirmed SPLASH findings that in order to be most effective research should aim to be:

- demand led in order to ensure relevance, and working through long term programmatic partnership arrangements and networks to benefit from a range of complementary skills and economies of scale;
- communicated in appropriate formats to meet the differing needs of various users; and
- of high quality in order to ensure long term sustainability and credibility with the users of research results.

This was chaired by Simon Kenny from DFID Uganda and was well attended by more than 50 delegates. Following the presentations there were several lively discussions which contributed to the conclusions listed above.
SPLASH also had a stand within the exhibition area, from which various resources including factsheets and briefing notes were distributed.

### 3.2 SPLASH at the IWA World Water Congress, Montreal, September 2010

**The context**
The International Water Association is working to mainstream development issues within its existing programmes and to broker expertise and knowledge to support activities in low- and middle-income countries. For this reason, SPLASH, as a programme dedicated to enhancing water and sanitation service provision, was invited to participate in the IWA’s World Water Congress and Exhibition in Montreal. Having an exhibition stand in the Development Corner, SPLASH met with many interested people and disseminated its various resources. It also hosted two development dialogue sessions within the Development Corner programme. Moving away from the traditional PowerPoint presentation format, these sessions took the form of interviews with key informants willing to share their valuable experience.

**The results**
The first, on ‘The Why? When? and How? of sharing research results’ highlighted that the effective communication and dissemination of new knowledge and findings from research is essential if the benefits stemming from investments in research are to be fully realised. In this dialogue session, SPLASH and a panel of speakers from the research, policy and practitioner communities shared experiences and discussed issues such as: ‘Which dissemination approaches work best with which audiences?’ and ‘How can new technologies help us?’ The aim was also to learn from the audience about how they communicate research or become aware of other research findings and encouraged suggestions for what concrete actions SPLASH can take to encourage and promote these good practices and support these efforts. The first interviewee was Gil Mahe, from IRD, France, who related his experience of being involved in the international coordination workshop on research and development related to water issues in the Niger River Basin. The second interviewee was Ian Smout, who talked about effective dissemination activities of the EU-funded SWITCH project.

The second dialogue was on ‘The Why? When? and How? of engaging with stakeholders when conducting research’. The benefits of stakeholder engagement are thought to be many: to ensure that research is demand responsive; and to ensure that results will be used, but who we should engage with and how to do this was the focus here. During this highly participative dialogue session, the following questions were considered: ‘Who are
relevant stakeholders?’, and ‘How we can implement dialogue and engagement strategies?’. Taking part in interviews were Neil Macleod from Durban Water, and SPLASH Project Manager, Anne Blenkinsopp. Both provided fascinating insights into their different approaches to stakeholder engagement, followed by a lively discussion with the audience.

3.3 SPLASH Good Practice Workshop – Sharing our Learning and Planning our Future, Brussels, October 2010

The context
In co-ordination with the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs during its presidency of the EU, SPLASH hosted a workshop in Brussels from 27th to 29th October. The overall objective of the workshop was to increase the contribution made by water for development research to achievement of the water related international development goals. The workshop served the dual purposes of:

- sharing findings and good practice between SPLASH and research and development partners; and
- engaging these relevant stakeholders to discuss and refine future plans of SPLASH beyond December 2010, dependent on a contract amendment request to extend the duration of this into 2011.

The participants
Between 50 and 60 participants from Europe, Africa and the Mekong region attended for all or part of the meeting. These included policy makers, EUWI Secretariat members, donor organizations, members of the SPLASH Strategic Management Board (SMB) and Scientific Advisory Council (SAC), as well as coordinators of related ERA-Nets, and other platforms, networks and partner institutions such as AQUAKNOW, the network of African Centres of Excellence for water, Africa Groundwater Network and IFS, Sweden.

The results
SPLASH achievements and outputs were presented in line with its objectives, and presentations on how these had been met by SPLASH activities and resources. We were also pleased to receive presentations from partner organizations and related initiatives, which helped us to share learning and experience to maximise synergies and help networking. In addition, proposals for SPLASH future work aligned to these objectives was presented followed by open discussion of the ways in which SPLASH can build on this and go forward into 2011 and 2012.

A meeting of the SPLASH SMB on Friday 29th October considered the proposals and comments of the SAC and made tentative decisions to proceed with some specific areas of work provided by the SPLASH contract is extended by the European Commission. These meetings allowed SPLASH to achieve the outcomes listed below, which were discussed in groups and in plenary with recommendations made to maximise effectiveness.

- to share good practice on many aspects of research management;
- to generate constructive comment and feedback on the work undertaken by SPLASH to date;
- to jointly discuss, and as a result strengthen, the proposed future work of SPLASH;
- to make funding decisions and resource commitments to establish a future work programme which will enable SPLASH activities to continue for a period of at least 2 further years; and
• to guide the constitution of future management and working processes for SPLASH into the future.

4 Conclusions

The three events described above provided valuable opportunities to share and discuss SPLASH findings about good practice related to development research over the four years constituting this phase of the project, and has confirmed the validity of the SPLASH objectives.

The first two workshops took advantage of existing international sector fora, where a range of audiences were to be gathered. This reduced both the organizational and travel costs incurred by SPLASH and provided a cost effective means of reaching our intended audiences of policy makers, practitioners and researchers. At each of these members of the SPLASH team staffed an exhibition stand, from where SPLASH resources could be disseminated and informal discussions held with interested delegates.

The final good practice workshop in Brussels was an independent event, not attached to any larger sector conference. The list of invitees was carefully put tougher in consultation with all SPLASH partners and members of the SAC and SMB, and included practitioners, donor organizations and programmers of research, and members of the development research community. It served two important purposes: firstly, to facilitate an active and constructive dialogue between SPLASH and development partners, in order to share findings on good practice from SPLASH more widely, and secondly, to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to help shape, and participate in, the future work programme of SPLASH.