

# International Symposium on Learning Alliances

Delft 7-9 June 2005



Report of Proceedings

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Published September 2005

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# International Symposium on Learning Alliances

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## Acknowledgements

The IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre and UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education convened the International Symposium on Learning Alliances in Delft, the Netherlands from 7-9 June 2005. The symposium was co-sponsored by CRS Catholic Relief Services, The Natural Resources Institute (NRI) of the University of Greenwich (United Kingdom), the EMPOWERS Partnership and the Colombia-based, Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT). The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) in Wageningen provided funds for six symposium participants.

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*Papers presented at the Symposium and referenced in this document are published in Smits S., Fonseca C., and Pels J., (eds.) 2005 Proceedings of the Symposium on Learning Alliances for scaling up innovative approaches in the water and sanitation sector. The document can be found online at [www.irc.nl/la](http://www.irc.nl/la)*

*This report was produced for IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre and UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education by Peter McIntyre, Oxford UK.*

*Photos: Peter McIntyre; Deirdre Casella (Page 43); Change Management Group, Tamilnadu Water Supply and Drainage Board (Page 46); Plan Ethiopia (Page 47); Catarina Fonseca (Page 57).*

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The Symposium on Learning Alliances was organised by the IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre and UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education



It was co-sponsored by CRS Catholic Relief Services, The Natural Resources Institute (NRI) of the University of Greenwich (United Kingdom), the EMPOWERS Partnership and the Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT).



## Background and summary

### The challenge of scaling up innovation

The importance of water, sanitation and hygiene education is increasingly recognised as a condition for health, well-being and poverty reduction. Their importance was recognised in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which set a target to halve by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.

Bringing reliable supplies of clean water to poor communities in rural areas and in towns and cities has proved difficult, as has improving sanitation and knowledge and understanding about hygiene. With a growing population, countries have to scale up service delivery to avoid falling further behind their goals. But, increased quantity must be matched with quality, so that services are sustainable, and do not impact negatively on water resources.

Schemes imposed without regard for people's needs and wishes, or community structures and engagement often result in a headline gain in coverage, but fail in the longer term. As a reaction to this approach many NGOs and donors have supported projects some of which succeed in raising community awareness and demand led approaches. There have been many innovative approaches throughout the sector and there is an increasing database of success stories.

However, islands of success often remain isolated because they fail to tap in to the institutional, organisational and economic settings specific to the country or region, and are therefore not replicated or scaled up. Some have inputs of skilled staff time that cannot be replicated without an enormous increase in costs; others create parallel structures that bypass 'failing' government services or rely on highly motivated project teams that cannot easily be replicated. Because of these weaknesses, institutions that make regulations and drive service delivery feel no sense of ownership, either of the process or the content of innovative approaches. The very bodies that can scale up innovation and ensure its sustainability are left out of the process. Research and pilot projects have sometimes been successful in developing new approaches, technologies or methodologies. However, these do not often succeed in consolidating learning, sharing knowledge and building capacity. In most cases, dissemination and capacity building components form a small part of the research budget and effort, while the process of learning and sharing lessons begins too late, after the research is over.

One approach to overcoming these problems is by paying greater attention to the process of learning and spreading innovation, rather than focusing only on the innovation itself. This shift in emphasis recognises that a new piece of technology, or a new way of working, can only be beneficial if it is understood, accepted and used. The process of increasing understanding and generalising the use of new methods and technologies requires new or adapted structures.

Alliances that involve key stakeholders and are designed to promote new approaches to learning, sharing information and promoting widespread change have come to be called learning alliances. These structures typically

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*“Islands of success often remain isolated because they fail to tap in to institutional, organisational and economic settings”*

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originate with a group of individuals or organisations with a shared interest in an area of work and in scaling-up innovations. The core group develops broader platforms of individuals and organisations at a number of institutional levels (national, district and community) with capacities in implementation, regulation, policy and legislation, research and learning and documentation and dissemination. Partners use the learning alliance platforms to speed up the process of identifying, adapting and promoting successful innovations.

The central premise of the learning alliance approach is that by focusing on the processes of innovating and scaling up, barriers to uptake and replication can be overcome. Moreover, learning alliances are specifically designed to include governmental institutions who have the ultimate responsibility for the widespread provision of water and sanitation services and (for example) for the integration of hygiene education into schools.

The role of learning alliances is to facilitate and guide processes, rather than instruct or compel co-operation. When this happens, they can:

- Replicate innovation at a larger scale and with greater impact, by carrying out and reviewing research within an alliance of practitioners, researchers, policy makers and community based advocates
- Reduce the time between developing new knowledge and scaling it up, through close communication between the platforms at different levels
- Develop locally appropriate solutions to match local realities, recognising that 'blue prints' or 'silver bullets' for solving complex developmental problems do not exist

## The Delft Symposium

The IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre and UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education convened the International Symposium on Learning Alliances at their base in Delft, the Netherlands from 7-9 June 2005. The purpose was to bring together practitioners, academics, multinational agencies and donors to explore and develop the concept of learning alliances, and to discuss practical examples of how this approach can help countries to scale up good practice and eliminate blockages.

This methodology is relatively new in the water and sanitation sector, and experiences have not been well documented. The aim was to draw together learning examples from the sector and from other sectors, particularly from agriculture and from knowledge management where there has been more experience. The Symposium aimed to share and discuss:

- Practical experiences of scaling up innovative approaches
- Concepts and theory of learning alliances and their applicability to the water and sanitation sector
- Tools and methodologies for working in learning alliances.

Attendance was expected to be in the range of 50-60 people. In the event, the Symposium was declared full after it attracted more than 100 registrations. It was clear that the call for the Symposium had connected with a widespread feeling in the sector that it was time to reflect on some of the problems mentioned above and to work upon more integrated approaches to addressing them. Many practitioners also wanted to share with a wider audience, experiences of joint working and learning. This attendance had a welcome effect on the impact of the Symposium. However, the high attendance placed extra pressure on the time frame and on the size of groups in which much of the work took place.

Participants came from a wide range of institutions, such as universities and research institutes, and included practitioners from NGOs and UN agencies, project and programme

### BACKGROUND PAPER FOR SYMPOSIUM

A background paper, *Learning Alliances for scaling up innovative approaches in the Water and Sanitation sector*, by Patrick Moriarty, Catarina Fonseca, Stef Smits and Ton Schouten can be downloaded from <http://www.irc.nl/page/17422>

managers, and policy makers (see Appendix 4 for attendance list). In that respect, the Symposium resembled participation in a learning alliance, bringing together people working at different levels, coming from different angles to study and discuss the issues. The Symposium was therefore able to give participants a taste of negotiating difficult issues and of the tensions that can arise when different perspectives are brought together.

### The method

The Symposium took place over three days. After an opening session of keynote speakers to set the scene, introduce key concepts and give practical examples, most of the three days was spent in working groups, followed by plenary sessions to receive and discuss report backs. The working groups combined short presentations of country examples with group tasks to select and define the critical elements that make learning alliances successful.

A number of innovative facilitation techniques were used in the Symposium. Working groups were facilitated by IRC and UNESCO-IHE staff who had a careful brief as to what would be expected from each session. Participants were not pre-allocated to particular workshops. Instead, a working group was open to all comers until full. One series of working groups introduced a 'talking stick', to focus on dialogue rather than heated debate.

### SIDE EVENTS

There were many side events and project meetings before and after the Symposium. Two of those events were open to all participants and the reports can be found in Appendix 2.

## Talking stick—for speaking from the heart, not for beating opponents!

The 'talking stick' method was used to manage important discussions within the councils of American Indians and has become widely used within groups to ensure that everyone has a chance to speak, and that debate is not dominated by the loudest voices. The group sits in a circle so that everyone can see each other and the talking stick (any object of value to the group facilitator) is held by the person who is introducing the group. The talking stick designates who has the right to speak. Without it, an individual must remain silent. When the person holding the stick has finished speaking, he or she places the stick on the ground and the next person who wishes to speak picks it up. A facilitator encourages people to speak from the heart.

As well as ordering the discussion, the talking stick has some other interesting effects. Most people find that they think more before they speak, because picking up the stick implies that you have something to contribute. People also listen more as they are not looking for opportunities to intervene. Contributions do not necessarily respond directly to each other, so the conversation does not take the form of an argument. As a result, the group does not get locked into a battle between two or three people with strong points of view.

The talking stick method requires more time to make it work, and is more effective when the group is not too large. At the Symposium, some participants reacted with enthusiasm. Sawaeng Ruaysoongnem, from Khon Kaen University, Thailand, said, "This would reduce potential confrontation of participants. I felt it is good for conflict discussions and will apply it in my work in Thailand." Other participants found it frustrating. One said, "Dialogue is more appropriate to 'conflict' situations, not to critical analysis."



*Two of the organisers Catarina Fonseca of IRC and Edwin Hes of UNESCO-IHE prepare talking stick sessions with facilitators.*

A daily newsletter, the LA Insider (*See Appendix 4*), was produced on each of the three days to give “independent” journalistic summaries of issues and presentations, and to capture reflections of participants. A cardboard “blog box” enabled participants to give feedback on the content and process of the Symposium.

### *The outcomes*

There was widespread acceptance of the analysis outlined in the background paper of sector problems and reasons for failure. Participants were unanimous in their desire to find a mechanism and approach that would learn the lessons of the sector and allow effective scaling up of good practice. The need for change was expressed in many ways, including frustration at blockages that prevent new, more effective ways of doing things from spreading. The Symposium succeeded in generating a greater understanding about the nature of the required change. There was widespread appreciation for one of the keynote presentations that showed how change does not come about by technological advances unless there is also change within people and organisations – in a memorable phrase, software, hardware, and “orgware”.

The Symposium promoted the concept of learning alliances, and succeeded in clarifying issues and identifying conceptual and practical problems. These issues were not all “resolved”. Some problems of definition reflect different realities and possibilities – different answers may legitimately be given at different times, in different places. Many practitioners are happy with a broad definition which fits different situations. From an academic perspective there is a need to be more precise about what constitutes a learning alliance and, more importantly, what does not. These are not only problems of definition, but arise from conflicting pressures to make urgent progress in real world situations while creating space for learning, analysis and reflection. These two aims are often difficult to reconcile.

A learning alliance can become an engine for scaling up innovation and empowerment and to replicate good experiences, adapting them to local contexts. The result is greater effectiveness, as stronger platforms tackle water, sanitation and hygiene issues (or issues in other development sectors, such as agriculture, as shown in a number of presentations) within a broader institutional environment. Learning alliances generate an approach to build capacity and unblock channels of communication, especially because they may make tacit knowledge more explicit. Ultimately, they generate social capital – negotiation skills, multiple platforms, conflict management models etc. – that are also useful to address other problems.

Bringing together a wide range of stakeholders was recognised as creating the potential to learn from a diversity of experiences and to create a holistic approach. Partnership voices can create a synergy in advocacy, in coming to a shared critical analysis of priorities and approaches, in coordinating actions and in mobilising people and resources.

The partnership approach creates joint ownership: stakeholders in a problem are more willing to be part of the solution. The process of learning together was itself seen as powerful. Because each stakeholder brings a different understanding and knowledge of issues to the alliance, this allows scientific knowledge, political knowledge and indigenous knowledge to be given respect and consideration. It was considered important that every learning alliance has a clear purpose and objective, so that each stakeholder can see a benefit in staying with the process. Partners need to set an agenda that will ensure that the alliance does not become a talking shop, and work to achieve a common understanding of roles and responsibilities. This will need to be an iterative process, rather than a one-off event.

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*“A learning alliance can become an engine for scaling up innovations and empowerment and to adapt good experiences to local contexts”*

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The value of a learning alliance that functions through platforms at various levels was appreciated. This helps to promote a needs-based, bottom up approach, while still being able to include decision makers and influence policy. Linking levels from community to policy making was seen as a major contribution to scaling up across a region.

Learning alliances are subject to the weaknesses that can beset all partnerships,. A few powerful stakeholders may take over and silence the voices of marginalised groups. Powerful groups may not even see the need to engage, but continue their old ways; for example, when dealing with environmental problems, such as pollution.

Lack of commitment to the concept or reluctance to share power can rob an alliance of credibility. Lack of political will makes it difficult to engage effectively with major services providers, while conflicts of interest or lack of commitment from other major stakeholders reduces confidence in the process. It is important that there is political will to implement the lessons that emerge from a learning alliance. Without strong leadership and political backing, a learning alliance is likely to remain a low priority and will find it difficult to attract funding and support.

Learning alliances provide an opportunity to improve participation by those who are not normally involved in decision making. The importance of including all relevant stakeholders with effective mechanisms for representation and participation was stressed to avoid excluding poorer communities, women, youth and people who are marginalised in decision making. It was considered important to also include dissenting voices. This is not just an alliance of like minded people. Conflict may be necessary and useful, so long as it is managed in a way that leads to healthy outcomes. It is possible to make progress by consent, even where it is not possible to achieve consensus.

Learning, negotiation and discussion take time, especially when multiple stakeholders address complex issues. The resources and costs of this must be judged against the cost of doing nothing. Sufficient time must be allowed for action research, for learning from research and for monitoring and studying the results. It is also important to demonstrate some quick results to strengthen the commitment of partners. One clear message from the Symposium was that learning alliances may be beneficial for programmes that are designed to address the Millennium Development Goal targets. There were reservations, in that a sense of urgency over the MDGs could undermine attempts to study and learn, and that programming without learning would repeat past failures. However, participants felt that that learning alliances can help countries to scale up to meet MDG targets by acting as engines for change.

### **Leadership and organisation**

Attention was paid to questions of leadership and ownership. There was universal acceptance that governmental organisations are central to the process. Those involved in the South African sector-wide approach (the Masibambane programme) felt that government must take ownership, so that learning alliances do not create parallel structures and so that lessons can be integrated into mainstream water and sanitation services. There was concern that governmental institutions would otherwise feel that their authority and competence were being challenged. However, this does not necessarily mean that government will start the process. Most learning alliances begin with academic institutions or other stakeholders, and generate political support once the process has been initiated. There is a need for committed institutions and for strong individuals to champion the process at the beginning. There were also questions about

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*“It is important that political will exists to implement action resulting from lessons that emerge from a learning alliance”*

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*“Good facilitation was seen as critical to success —the facilitator is a guarantor that the interests of stakeholders will not be neglected.”*

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organisation and process. Is a learning alliance a combination of multi stakeholder platforms, or is it a process? If it is an organisation, does it have to be different and new, or develop out of existing institutions and partnerships?

There was agreement about the essence: learning takes place and the results of learning directly influence programming. In practice, the distinction between a learning alliance as an organisation and as a process is not as sharp as it might appear. The Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT), instrumental in the Latin American Learning Alliance for rural agro-enterprise development, emphasises the importance of the process. Nevertheless, it has paid attention to organisational questions as stakeholders move in and out of the process. The background

paper to the Symposium stresses the organisational need for all significant stakeholders to be involved and for links between platforms at national, district and community level. However, Patrick Moriarty, one of the co-authors, also emphasised learning alliances as an analytical framework for looking at processes of innovation and change.

The organisational structure to carry out the process may differ in different places, at different times. Some presenters emphasised the need for a strong leadership group at the beginning to establish structures and to attract other stakeholders. Others felt that progress could be made more quickly and costs could be kept down by working within existing alliances and building on what institutions are already doing.

Different organisational models carry different sorts of benefit and risk. There was concern that a learning alliance structure could become top-heavy and bureaucratic and be seen as an end in itself. On the other hand, there was also concern that, in the absence of organisational standards, any partnership could be called a learning alliance, and the concept could become a buzz phrase for whatever programmers happen to be doing, causing confusion, and finally cynicism.

### **Facilitation**

Good facilitation was seen as critical to success. Facilitation may be by an individual, or a set of tasks shared between individuals or organisations. The facilitator's main role is to ensure that the process is inclusive and focused on learning. The facilitator is a guarantor that the interests of stakeholders will not be neglected. Facilitation is also needed to ensure that people and institutions from different environments and with different cultural values work harmoniously. Cultural issues need to be handled with sensitivity. It may be necessary to organise separately in some settings to include the voices of neglected groups, such as women or young people. The overriding principle is that these voices should be heard. On balance, it was felt important for facilitators to have knowledge of the content as well as being skilful at the process, although it may be difficult to find facilitators with the right mix of qualities. There were examples where the institutions leading the process had also tried to act as facilitators but the conflict of roles showed this to be undesirable.

### **Follow-up and feedback**

The Symposium had no closing statement. The commitment of participants to build on what they have already been doing, and to learn from what they had heard and debated represents the true outcome of the Symposium. This work is being followed up by the organisers and in countries. Feedback on the Symposium, including some comments on follow up work will be found in Appendix 1 to this report.

## Session 1 Morning of Tuesday 07 June

# Opening and keynote presentations

The first morning was a strong blend of theory and practice as keynote speakers focused attention on a number of key questions that were to dominate later discussion, including the nature of learning and change, the concept of learning alliances, and questions of leadership in taking innovation and good practice to scale.

The Symposium was opened by Richard Meganck, Director of UNESCO-IHE, and Paul van Koppen, Director of IRC, who developed a Socratic dialogue to address the most important questions. Richard Meganck asked about the difference between learning alliances and other forms of partnership such as communities of practice (CoPs). "What is a learning alliance? I am confused." Paul van Koppen explained that, whereas a CoP is a group of people with similar skills and interests, a learning alliance is broader and more diverse. It brings a wider range of partners to the table from different levels, and is focused on the need to accelerate scaling-up and innovation.



*Paul van Koppen, Director of IRC, and Richard Meganck, Director of UNESCO-IHE, open the Symposium.*

## Programme, presentations and discussions

The Symposium, over the course of three days, provided a combination of keynote speakers, presentations, group work and discussion. See programme in Appendix 3. There were many side events and project meetings before and after the Symposium. Two of those events were open to all participants and the reports can be found in Appendix 2.

The first day opened with keynote presentations that introduced participants to some conceptual ideas and problems related to learning alliances, with real-life examples of learning in action. Most of the subsequent time was spent in groups, tasked with looking in greater detail at aspects of learning alliance structure and practice. Groups began with short presentations, following which a pair of facilitators helped participants to complete their tasks, often using cards to list ideas, and then grouping and discussing them. In most cases, findings were presented in a plenary session, followed by an open discussion on the issues.

This section of the report gives some detail of the main presentations and dialogues and discussions that followed in the working groups. PowerPoint presentations that outline presentations at the Symposium can be accessed online at <http://www.irc.nl/page/24203>. The full papers are at <http://www.irc.nl/page/24792>. Some presentations are not available as papers (one presenter, for example, used story telling to great effect to get his points over). Where possible we have given here a short summary of the papers/presentations. Readers can refer to the full paper where available..

We have also summarised the main points that emerged from working group and plenary discussions. A summary is also given of the closing panel debate that related learning alliances to the strategic goals of the water, sanitation and hygiene sector.

## Learning alliance – between power and impotence

### Cees Leeuwis, Wageningen University, the Netherlands

Cees Leeuwis, Chair of Communication and Innovation Studies at Wageningen University, outlined some of the strengths and difficulties of innovation sharing under the title *Learning alliances between power and impotence: underpinnings and pitfalls from social learning theory*. He used as an illustration a policy switch in Holland to deal with excess water on farming land. The existing policy of clearing water from the land as quickly as possible had caused problems with floods, droughts and reduced biodiversity. The new policy was to stop fighting the water, and to manage it within the landscape. This required new technology in the form of small gates and dams at field level. It also required local agreements about operating practices by farmers, new institutional bodies to oversee agreements, new legal rules and a new mechanism of payment. Above all, it involved a new mindset for those managing the water.

Leeuwis described innovations as “evolutionary phenomena” that happen in society rather than in organisations and that could not be predicted. “Innovations do not only consist of technology. They are a combination of hardware, software and ‘orgware’. Technology is just an invention if it does not work and it is not integrated into society.” For innovation to be scaled up requires existing social and technical regimes to be changed or replaced. This does not happen by introducing a new product, but by arriving at an agreement for collective change at multiple levels, with new networks, new relationships and a means of creating space for solutions. The process of stakeholders sitting together, negotiating and reaching agreement is important and needs to be diffused.

New ways of acting result from a combination of factors in addition to new knowledge, including aspirations, social pressure, a belief in one’s own abilities, and perceptions of one’s own role and responsibilities. Social learning is the process by which different stakeholders arrive at complementary mindsets and reasons to act. This requires a number of conditions:

- Pressure and urgency in the system
- A feeling of inter-dependence amongst stakeholders
- Organised stakeholder groups
- Confidence that solutions can be found
- Institutional space to use outcomes, and
- Legitimate leadership for the process.

The learning alliance approach is potentially powerful because it addresses  
~ *Software*: action research which leads to compatible mindsets  
~ *Orgware*: creating enabling environments in institutions  
~ *Hardware*: introducing technological innovations.

It creates linkages at a variety of levels, addresses scaling-up during the process rather than afterwards, documents the process and the lessons and does not search for ‘silver bullet’ solutions.

Leeuwis pointed to some potential pitfalls. There was emphasis on new knowledge and technology rather than on the process of changing social relationships. “You cannot have fundamental change without people changing.”



Cees Leeuwis, Chair of Communication and Innovation Studies at Wageningen University. *Innovations are a combination of hardware, software and ‘orgware’.*

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*“Technology is just an invention if it does not work and it is not integrated into society”*

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Nor should the process of seeking change in such networks and alliances avoid conflict. “I think that conflict is central to change.” Sometimes, it was necessary to confront the existing regime. In a similar way, improving communication was not just about learning new skills, but about challenging people who used information as a way of keeping control. “People do not communicate because they want to maintain the status quo.”

He said that it was often not desirable to create new stakeholder platforms or alliances, but to work with existing ones whose primary purpose might not be about learning. Attention needed to be paid to setting the learning agenda for action research by diagnosing problems and opportunities, identifying gaps in knowledge and understanding and developing strategies and curricula for learning.

## Multi-stakeholder learning in Colombia

### *Jan Teun Visscher, IRC – International Water and Sanitation Centre, The Netherlands*

Jan Teun Visscher outlined a process of multi-stakeholder learning from a seven year programme in Colombia to introduce water treatment by multi stage filtration (MSF). The Technology Transfer Programme on Water Supply Treatment (TRANSCOL) from 1989 to 1996, facilitated by CINARA of the University of Valle in Cali in collaboration with the IRC, was an attempt to address water quality issues which are still not being properly addressed in the Millennium Development Goals. The MDG estimate that 1.1 billion people lack access to safe water is much too low. Colombia, for example, estimates 90% coverage of the urban population; in practice only 30% have access to reliable and safe water. The poor quality of water can be seen by the fact that diarrhoeal disease in many countries has remained high, even though deaths from diarrhoeal disease have been reduced.

Multi stage filtration (coarse gravel pre filtration and slow sand filtration) is a combination of biological, physical and chemical processes. It had shown good results in projects close to Cali and the question was how to transfer the technology to other Colombian communities and make it part of the regular operations of drinking water supply in an environment where many engineers wanted chemical solutions.

Introducing the technology into all eight regions of Colombia became a social as well a technical project. Inter-Institutional Regional Working Groups were formed by key sector institutions in each region, including academics, health service staff, implementing agencies and community organisations. Demonstration projects in each region became learning projects, at first involving technical staff, but later including social scientists. They moved from “I show it – you do it” teaching towards participatory approaches. The IRWGs became a space where authorities, institutions and the community could share experiences, clarify situations and stimulate dialogue to tackle shared problems together. CINARA acted as facilitator and leader of a participatory process that put academic knowledge and community experience on an equal footing. Visscher described the IRWGs as a learning alliance before its time. The key factors were commitment, institutional agreement, facilitation, the mediation of different interests and funding. Decisions were made as a team. It had helped to change thinking, although the technology has only been scaled up and sustained to a limited extent. Ten years after their installation most of the MSF plants are still working. Vertical linkages made at the time continued until the health service mandate changed and budgets were cut.



*Jan Teun Visscher from IRC—estimates of the number of people lacking safe water are far too low.*

## Learning alliances for scaling up innovative approaches in the water and sanitation sector

*Patrick Moriarty, IRC – International Water and Sanitation Centre, The Netherlands*

Presenting the main issues from the Symposium background paper, Patrick Moriarty outlined the problems in scaling up from successful innovation. Pilot projects often use unrealistically high levels of resources or take place outside the policy, institutional, financial or physical setting of the country. No attempt is made to engage key stakeholders in the process while the project is taking place. Instead, dissemination takes place afterwards, often promoting positive outcomes of the project without addressing failures or negative lessons. There is no ownership of innovation outside the pilot team, and no assessment of what capacity building would be necessary to scale it up.

Learning alliances are designed as open and honest learning environments where adaptation and innovation can take place. They become the engine of scaling up ensuring that innovation takes place within a representative environment, so that it can be scaled up afterwards. A learning alliance identifies training and capacity building requirements, and builds the skills and capacity of its own members.

Moriarty led participants through some key concepts.

- **Stakeholders:** It is essential to identify and attract a wide range of stakeholders, and to be inclusive. “If you do not identify important stakeholders on the ground, there is very little chance you are going to be able to scale up quality and effectiveness.” Unlike Communities of Practice (CoPs), which link people with similar backgrounds and interests, learning alliances typically comprise stakeholders who are not peers.
- **Levels:** Stakeholders need to come together at different levels including national, intermediate or district and community levels. Where multinational organisations or initiatives are involved, a global level of the learning alliance can ensure that lessons from one country are shared with others. Learning alliances are about breaking barriers to information flow within and between levels.
- **Platforms:** Stakeholders need to come together in some kind of a structure or platform. The organisational structure must be built and sustained and the links created so that information flows and learning takes place. The relevant platform must, for example, take ownership of identifying problems and overseeing the research. “You don’t do it yourself and then report back.”
- **Facilitator:** The facilitator’s role is crucial in creating trust and ensuring that the interests of parties are taken into account. The facilitator also has a responsibility to make the links work.

Learning alliances were born out of years of frustration at the failure to take innovation to scale. They can be seen as a collection of multi-stakeholder platforms at different levels that are interested in innovation and scaling up, or as an approach where the learning process is integrated into existing partnerships and alliances, or as a way of thinking about sustainability and scaling up.



*Patrick Moriarty outlined the key concepts of learning alliances as bodies to promote open and honest learning.*

He pointed out that innovating and creating capacity for scaling up takes time. Learning alliances need resources and an ‘engine’ to drive the process, in the form of people or institutions who would remain after a project was finished. There were some outstanding questions. Who had the capacity and right to initiate learning alliances? How can this approach be brought into line with project and programme management approaches?

### *Building a learning water services sector through collaboration*

## **The South African Experience of Masibambane (Let’s work together) and WIN (Water Information Network)**

*Thoko Sigwaza, Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) and Councillor Nandi Mayathula-Khoza, South African Local Government Association (SALGA)*

Speakers from South Africa focused on the efforts of government and local government agencies, with NGOs and communities, to provide water and sanitation services to 22% of the population who lack even basic services in a country where water is scarce. Thoko Sigwaza from the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) described provision of water and sanitation services had been devolved to local government while DWAF retained powers of policy and regulation. Municipalities had become major players and there had been a need to build their capacity. The Masibambane (“Let’s work together”) process is led by the government, which also co-ordinates donor contributions, so that they contribute to the Government’s strategy. The Government has set targets for full coverage of water services by 2008 and sanitation by 2010.

Amongst the collaborative structures are platforms at different levels:

- Provincial sector forums (mainly municipalities) plans, budgets and implements provincial sector strategies
- WS Sector Leadership Group strategically guides the sector
- Masibambane Coordinating Committee oversees sector work and reports at national level

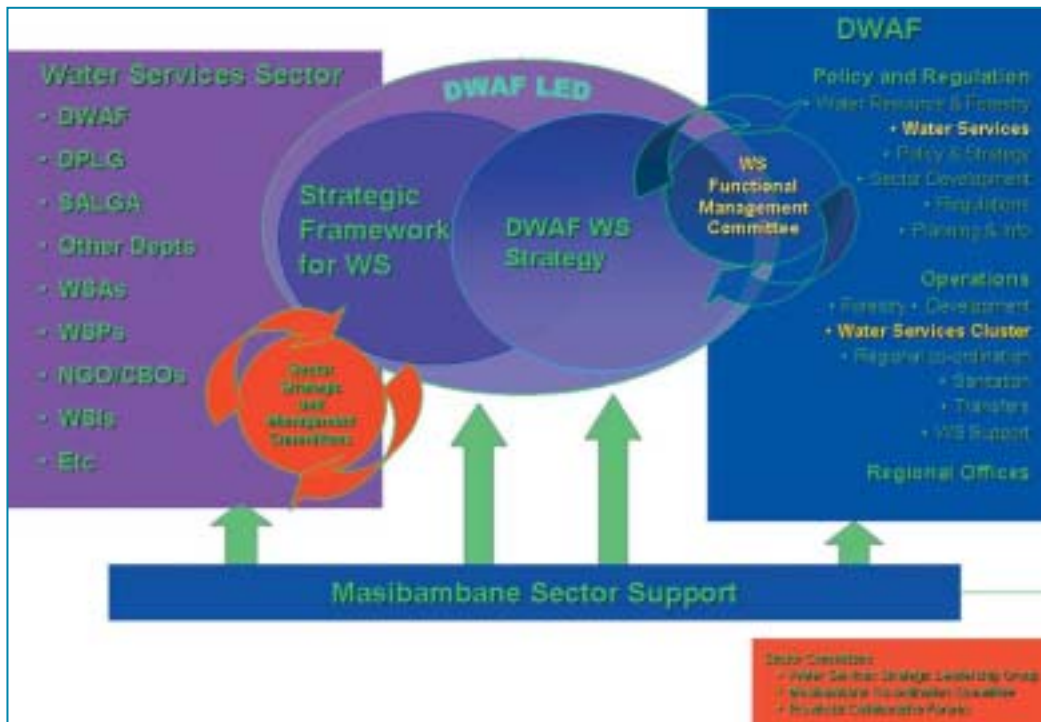
The cultivation of knowledge in the sector is an important part of the process to inform decision-making, with structures to promote knowledge sharing, the ability to learn lessons and networking.

Thoko Sigwaza described how the Water Information Network (WIN) was created to create a coherent knowledge sharing framework, after a wealth of knowledge and information initiatives led to some fragmentation. WIN is an association of stakeholders, housed at the Water Research Commission but accountable to the Water Services Leadership Group. Activities range from information management to peer review and lesson sharing. Methods include internet-based knowledge hubs, e-mail newsgroups, forums, conference, working groups and research.

WIN is moving out its ‘gearing up’ phase and is growing, strengthening partnerships to deliver integrated sector information and knowledge sharing. From 2008, WIN will be expected to lead the learning culture and be capable of producing high value products for which partners and sector institutions will be prepared to pay, so that it becomes financially sustainable.



*Thoko Sigwaza from the South African Department of Water Affairs and Forestry—the cultivation of knowledge in the sector is an important part of the process.*



*Masibambane Water Services Sector Support Masibambane ‘let’s work together’ gives stakeholders and organisations with responsibilities in the South Africa water services sector a common focus.*

Source: Building a Learning Water Services Sector through Collaboration The South African Experience (DWAF, SALGA & WIN)

Sector collaboration had enhanced their potential for knowledge sharing and learning. Some of the main lessons learned are:

- Learning cannot happen in a vacuum – it needs to be part of a sector approach
- It is better to strengthen the capacity of members rather than build separate structures, and to build on existing knowledge
- Roles need to be commonly defined and agreed
- There needs to be a dedicated core capacity to facilitate and drive collaboration
- There must be accountable structures and a sense of ownership by stakeholders
- Local government partners must be part of the decision making process, with consistent support for and between provincial and local government structures
- Learning must support municipalities to deliver better services, and some fast results are needed to increase credibility

She said that the South Africa experience underlined the need for a political and sector mandate, that comes ultimately from the government. “An alliance responds, facilitates, coordinates and supports – it does not lead.”

Councillor Nandi Mayathula-Khoza, Speaker of the City of Johannesburg and an executive member of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), said they worked with the belief that “water is life—sanitation is dignity”.

*Councillor Nandi Mayathula-Khoza, Speaker of the City of Johannesburg and executive member of SALGA.*



SALGA has a representative, support, advisory and advocacy role. Its vision is to ensure that WS information and knowledge is accessible and applied. SALGA acts as a resource, knowledge and information centre and develops the capacity of local government to share information. The approach has been to build on existing knowledge management centres and to co-ordinate and optimise their contributions. SALGA has helped municipalities build capacity to develop services and play a greater role in decision-making. Community needs are identified through consultation with ward committees and through action research.

The councillor said, “We have been involved in facilitation of policy and strategy and programming to implement water and sanitation in the municipalities. We are not just called in at the end. In the past it was difficult to engage them in the issues. Now they are working together. We are now involved in peer reviews, exchange of best practices, and have initiated benchmarks in the cities, district and local networks. All this contributes to improved service delivery, communication and general performance.”

### *Building multi-stakeholder innovation systems for rural agro-enterprise development*

## **Reflections on learning alliance methods, process and initial results**

*Veronica Gottret, Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT), Colombia*



Veronica Gottret, from the Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT), described the process of building multi-stakeholder innovation systems for rural agro-enterprise development in Latin America through a Learning Alliance. This was the first explicit attempt anywhere in the world to build a learning alliance. It grew out of a frustration with the traditional ‘pipeline’ methods of doing research, disseminating results and evaluating the impact. Top down approaches were being challenged by farmer participatory research and user-led innovation systems. The traditional system for training people at district and community level was weak. Trainees had to travel long distances to a training centre. They lost their access to expert advice once they returned home and because the trainers had no contact with trainees afterwards it was difficult to assess impact. “We had reached the limits of traditional training. We could not follow up what we were doing. We were really frustrated.”

A common goal emerged to build a collaborative research and development partnership that would seek to understand and document how adaptive learning occurs in a variety of organisational, cultural and geographic contexts. The aim was to share lessons—bad as well as good—in an active, timely and clear fashion. The process would also identify and disseminate positive innovations between organisations, regions and countries by building bridges between ‘islands of success’.

According to CIAT, a learning alliance is a process, rather than an organisation. “A learning alliance is a process undertaken jointly by actors from research development and policy agencies, through which good practices are identified, shared, adapted, used and innovated upon to strengthen or create local capacities, improve research outputs, generate and document development outcomes and identify future areas of collaboration between participating actors.”

*Veronica Gottret, from CIAT. The first ever learning alliance sought to go beyond the limits traditional methods of research, and top down approaches. (Veronica Gottret substituted for her colleague Mark Lundy.)*

A learning alliance:

- Has clear objectives based on the needs, capacities and interests of participating members
- Shares responsibilities, resources and credit between research, development and funding organisations (sharing credit is hard but essential)
- Views existing knowledge – lay as well as scientific – as a valid input for rural innovations which are site and time specific
- Involves a variety of means of collaborative learning that are relevant for each participant
- Is a long term and continuing relationship that seeks synergies between participating organisations in favour of improved rural livelihoods

CIAT began with development organisations and broadened its approach to include governmental organisations, public sector bodies and donors, as well as research and teaching organisations and local NGOs. CIAT is now exploring further links with private companies. The learning alliance develops a learning cycle for each topic selected by partner organisations, reviewing existing knowledge, preparing a state-of-practice document and designing or adapting approaches or tools for use by partners. The alliance provides information, training, back-up and shares information while partners are implementing this approach and documents the results across organisations, regions and countries. The alliance then revisits the topic to see if further learning cycles are needed.

Reflecting on outcomes, Veronica Gottret said that:

- Development agencies have improved knowledge, skills, capacity and confidence to influence research agendas, a clearer understanding of the benefits and defects of rural enterprise development projects on livelihoods and greater credibility with partners and donors.
  - Research and teaching centres are better at negotiating and working with users and donors, have a greater understanding of how research results are adapted and used in development, are able to present research projects which have tangible development outcomes and produce more relevant and useful training materials.
  - Donors gain a better understanding about successful approaches and have more realistic expectations about development outcomes.
  - Public sector agencies receive timely and rigorous feedback on the effect of policies on rural communities. This means that new or adapted policies are based on the results of practice in the field.
  - Private companies have changed some of their supply chains for specific products to those that are more socially, environmentally and economically sustainable. They have a greater understanding of their effect of their policies on rural livelihoods. They can also source high-quality products from smallholder farms and compete more effectively.
- However, there were also problems:
- Although the idea of multi-stakeholder learning platforms was attractive, they are not easy to fund. “No donor wants to fund anyone to learn!” CIAT obtains funding for social research projects and uses the learning alliance as the vehicle.
  - It was sometimes difficult to get a commitment from an organisation rather than just from the individual who attends. “A clear commitment from both the participant and their boss is needed.”

- Promoting simple documentation that is timely and easy to read is difficult, as documentation is not part of the culture of development organisations. One possibility would be to include journalists or journalism students in the process.
- It is difficult to link learning across geographical and organisational divides – electronic media are not enough.

CIAT has also encountered challenges in finding the right research staff, since not all are cut out to facilitate a learning alliance. Budgets are limited. As a result it difficult to find the time to analyse, write up and publish results.

### Discussion

Following the presentations, keynote speakers answered questions from the floor. Among issues raised were the following:

#### Who is the facilitator?

Who plays the role of facilitator, and who provides leadership? Does a facilitator have to be independent? Where will these skills be found? Is a process that relies on this scarce resource itself sustainable and capable of being replicated? There was a concern that the organisation facilitating the process could inadvertently substitute itself for government or legal bodies responsible for developing services.

Patrick Moriarty acknowledged that IRC had found it difficult to balance its roles in two projects where they had been a main mover in the learning alliance and were facilitating the process. After a time they realised they had to find an independent facilitator. Cees Leeuwis believed that it was important to see facilitation as a set of tasks, rather than as an organisation or individual. The people who did those tasks had to be seen as legitimate by the partners in the alliance.

#### Is a learning alliance a fast track to development?

There was a view that a learning alliance could speed the process of innovation and change. Patrick Moriarty thought that was possible only up to a point. The dangers of too rapid change were shown in the Water and Sanitation Decade in the 1980s, when massive investment resulted in many failed systems. “There is a conflict between trying to hurry development along, and sustainability,” he said. “It is very worrying if once again we are saying, ‘let’s just get it done and think about sustainability afterwards.’”

However, a number of participants felt that the alliances they were involved in were making it possible to implement change more quickly.

#### A “thing” or a process?

There was uncertainty about whether a learning alliance was an organisational set up or a process of change which could take many different organisational forms. Several participants felt that the partnerships they were involved in were effectively learning alliances, because learning



*Councillor Nandi Mayathula-Khoza, fields a question with other panel members*

was central to their work. However, there was concern that this could dilute the concept and lead to ‘learning alliance’ becoming a new piece of sector jargon without real content. Participants spoke about the need to develop capacity and transfer skills as being an essential part of the process.

**Who provides leadership?**

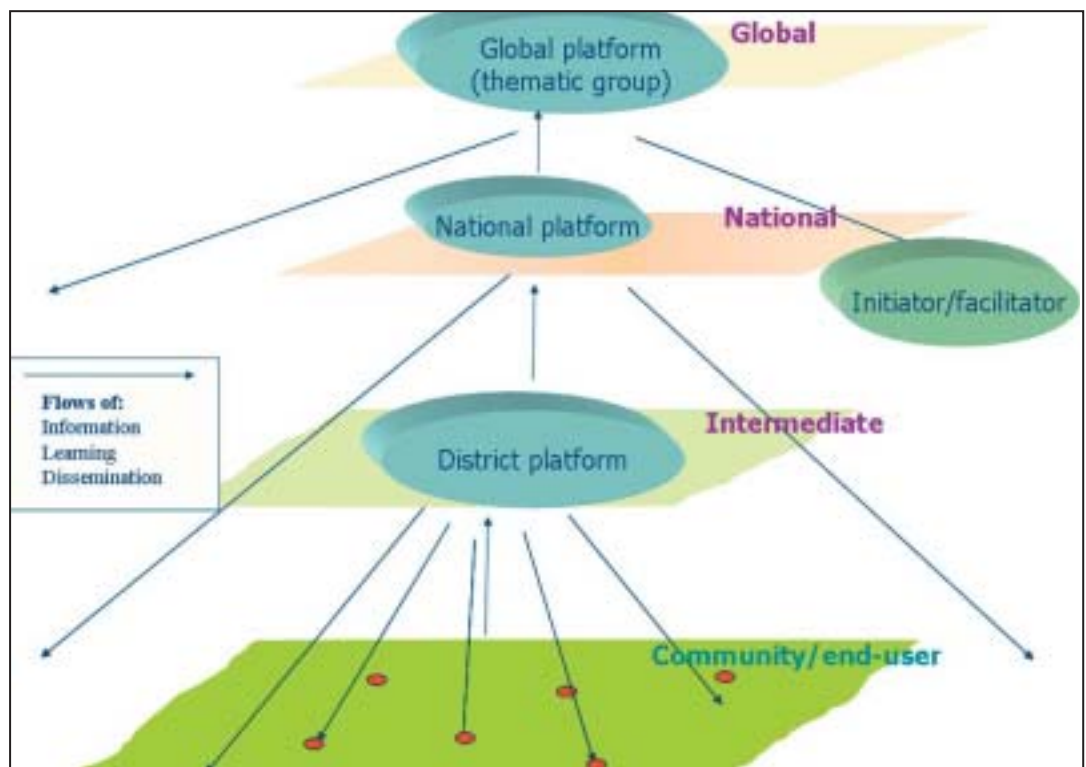
Everyone seemed to agree that governments could not be bypassed because they are a key stakeholder in the process. Citing the South African experience, some felt that the Government must lead the process if they were to commit to it fully. Others felt that a core group could lead it so long as the government was brought on board.

**Who gets left out?**

There was concern about whether excluded groups would be brought into the process. Donna Goodman (UNICEF) spoke about the importance of involving children and young people. “The youth are ready to work with Governments and donors; are the governments and donors prepared to work with youth?” There was also concern about whether women would be sufficiently included. As one participant said, “The people who define needs are those with the power?” There was a feeling that this could be addressed though an honest and transparent process of identifying problems. From the platform it was said: “It is quite clear that the people we are trying to include are those who do not have access to water and sanitation services.” The need for the cultural and social aspects of change to be taken into account was also stressed.

**Who can guarantee security?**

A question was raised from Iraq about the difficulty of extending partnerships in areas where there was little security and great physical danger. This had also been an issue in Colombia, where some people promoting community water projects had lost their lives. Water was an issue that could also bring people together by including all sections of society and promoting the idea that water is for everyone.



Multi sector platforms from global to community level in learning alliances.

Source: Patrick Moriarty, IRC.

## Session 2

### Afternoon of Tuesday 07 June

## Key elements of learning alliances in different sectors

Four parallel working group sessions were held, each with two presentations, followed by an exercise to identify the key elements and characteristics of learning alliances. These sessions brainstormed the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats of the learning alliance concept in their relevant sector, and prioritised cards. The most significant strengths and weaknesses were reported back to the plenary session. In this report we give both the prioritised issues and the full list where this is available. The four parallel session covered hygiene education, agriculture, water and sanitation, and environment.

### Working group 1:

## Hygiene education

Facilitated by Marielle Snel and Jeltsje Kemerink

Presentations about learning alliances in a hygiene education context were based on the Symposium papers:

- Pauline Mwaniki and Misheck Kirimi: *A Partnership approach in improving school sanitation and hygiene in Kenya.*
- Renuka Bery, Mona Grieser and Merri Weinger: *Hygiene improvement at scale.*

**Pauline Mwaniki** (NETWAS Kenya) described how seven organisations in Kenya successfully completed a pilot project to enhance sanitation and hygiene for schoolchildren through improved access to and use of information. As partners rallied around a theme of school sanitation and hygiene education (SSHE), the pilot demonstrated that partnership is a practical approach to mobilise resources and implement projects. Lessons learnt include:

- Ownership of the project and identification of an appropriate project theme helps to ensure commitment, but formalising the partnership is not always a prerequisite
- The active participation of government is a key to the success of the partnership
- Flexibility (learning by doing) is a better approach
- Seed funding plays an important role

**Mona Grieser** (Hygiene Improvement Project, Academy for Educational Development, USA) presented the Hygiene Improvement Project (HIP), to improve hygiene at scale. The project does not start with a small successful pilot and then try to scale this up, but starts at a higher scale, seeking to integrate all aspects of hygiene from the beginning. The requirements for starting at scale are “engaging multiple stakeholders at multiple levels using multiple interventions working on multiple practices” (hand washing, safe disposal of faeces, water storage and treatment etc.). There are some challenges in this approach:

- Commitment of key stakeholders
- Moving people from the comfort zone to the unknown
- Good facilitation

**SWOT ANALYSIS**

The group found the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats displayed in this table to be the most relevant priority issues for learning alliances in the context of hygiene education

Strengths / Opportunities	Weaknesses / Threats
Partnerships, global networks and mutual interests	Lack of a common agenda, low political will, unclear objectives, competition and conflict of interest
Donor/government support	Lack of priority and low funding
Co-ordination of actions, critical analysis of priorities, harmonising approaches and setting norms	Lack of commitment, no ownership, lack of consistency in attendance and fake partnerships
Synergy of strengths	Top-down approaches
Ownership and sustainable programmes	Unclear roles
Awareness and collective learning	Donor pressure and domination
Sharing of experience	Unstable political environment
Technical transfer and empowerment	Difficulties in replication, different implementation methods, low access to facilities
Capacity building	Cultural barriers
Greater impact	Lack of time
User-friendly facilities	Weariness/fatigue
Stronger platforms to advance the SSHE agenda	Wrong combination of stakeholders
	Poor facilitation

**Working group 2**

**Agriculture**

*Facilitated by Jaap Pels and Anne van Dam*

Presentations were based on the Symposium papers:

- Sawaeng Ruaysoongnern and Frits Penning de Vries: *Learning Alliances Development for scaling up of multi-purpose farm ponds in a semi arid region of the Mekong basin*
- M. J. Morris, B. M. Mvumi, W. H. Riwa and T. E. Stathers: *Post-harvest innovation to improve food security in Tanzania and Zimbabwe: Learning alliance lessons*

There is a long tradition in agriculture of working with diverse stakeholders. Farmers have formed associations to learn how to deal with environmental issues and to improve pre- and post-harvesting circumstances. In the water sector, the focus is on scaling up innovations among institutions, such as district authorities. Presentations also showed other dimensions of innovation and scaling up in the farming sector: how scaling up is done amongst groups of farmers, often involving extension services in the innovation process.

**Sawaeng Ruaysoongnern** (Khon Kaen University, Thailand) presented *Scaling up farm ponds in Thailand*. Farm ponds make farmers more self-sufficient and have become part of a national movement for sustainable agriculture. The programme stemmed from a desire on the part of farmers to organise themselves to increase their understanding of indigenous and

scientific knowledge. Local Wisdom Networks allow farmers to learn from each other, and these have grown to include researchers and staff from the Land Development Department, and have the ability to interact with NGOs, research and development organisations, academics and educators and policy makers.

Farmer networks representing 100,000 households and government services collaborate in a learning alliance, although government and private sector involvement is slow to develop. This movement, based on community empowerment and local adaptation, has attracted support from the government and the King of Thailand. Currently there are 12 Local Wisdom Networks of about 20,000 members each, and a programme to create 450,000 farm ponds throughout country. The success so far achieved has attracted support from policy makers. The case study suggests that learning alliance management is time and resource consuming, but saves time and effort in the longer run.

Upgraded knowledge and communities of practice (CoP) are the key outcomes. Learning alliance approaches can support and help to scale up:

- Sustainable water resources
- Participatory water management technology
- The use and sharing of local wisdom
- The integration of technical know-how into knowledge-based development realistic bottom-up and community development

**Mike Morris** (Natural Resources Institute, UK) presented *Innovation in post-harvest processing*. It has been known since the 1970s that diatomaceous earth (DE), a soft whitish powder formed from the fossils of tiny planktons in oceans, rivers and lakes, could protect stored grain against pests. However, this innovation had hardly penetrated the agricultural sector in Africa, where storage problems and the effects of pests on farmers' ability to feed their families and replenish stocks was a largely hidden problem.

DE has the dual benefit of protecting grain against many common pests and reducing reliance on potentially harmful organophosphates. Taking the innovation to scale in Tanzania and Zimbabwe has involved a long period of learning and sharing knowledge by numerous institutions on various levels. A project commissioned in 2002 adopted elements of the learning alliance approach, with stakeholders at six levels from ward and village level to international institutions. A key element has been to change the approach of extension staff from one of instructing farmers, to that of listening to farmers. This was essential to understand the diversity of their storage arrangements and problems. The project has also engaged with civil servants, institutions which authorise the use of DEs and the private sector.

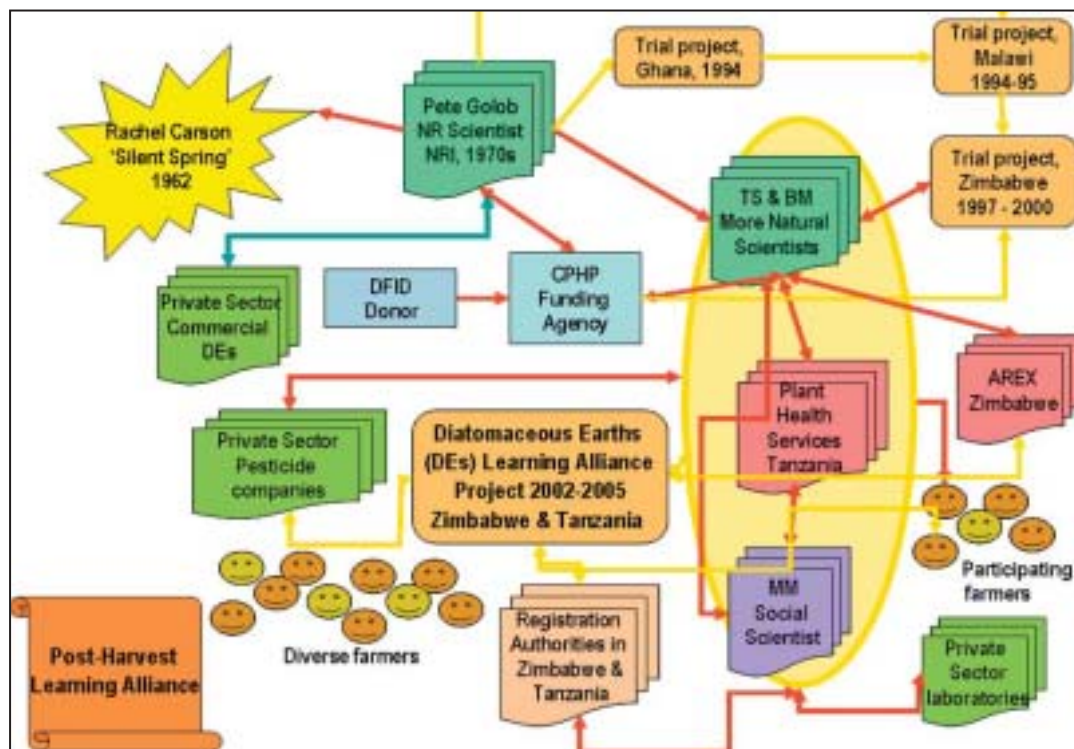
The lessons learned from this were:

- Research and development takes a long time, even for humble technologies.
- Even where there is a strong 'technical' focus, opportunities exist for early engagement and 'trust' building.
- Scientists and technical staff need to understand the diversity in farms and appreciate that farmers are the experts and be prepared to learn from them.
- LAs can provide safe space for disagreements to be resolved.
- LAs require longer time frame than projects: an interested, well endowed funding agent is fine, but a funding strategy is better. Stop-go funding is a problem.



*Sawaeng Ruaysoongnern from Khon Kaen University, Thailand, left, and Mike Morris from the Natural Resources Institute, UK.*

Post harvest learning alliance to spread innovation in Zimbabwe and Tanzania, showing events and stakeholders



Source: MJ Morris, BM Mvumi, WH Riwa and TE Stathers: Post-harvest innovation to improve food security in Tanzania and Zimbabwe: Learning alliance lessons, presentation at Symposium.

### Discussion

After reflection the group expressed the following to be the most relevant issues for learning alliances in agriculture.

Strengths / Opportunities	Weaknesses / Threats
Generates ownership and commitment at several levels	Hard to overcome existing power structures
Includes a diversity of experiences	Risks excluding the poor
Un-blocks communication channels	Shortage of skills to lead / facilitate a learning alliance
Is not project-based	Hard to reach a common understanding of roles, responsibilities and knowledge
Mobilises people and resources on issues	Concept is used as "bait" but then business is done as usual
Promotes a needs-based, bottom up approach	Over-dependent on strong individuals
Includes decision makers	
Promotes an integrated approach	
Promotes capacity building	
Mobilises a broader institutional environment	

Participants in Workshop 2 (Agriculture) drew up a detailed list of strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats (this page) and then voted (right) to create the short priority list on previous page.



<b>Strengths / Opportunities</b>	<b>Weaknesses / Threats</b>
Integrated approach	Donors and government not interested in funding learning
Diversity of experience	Time consuming
Organic process	High up-front costs
Mobilizing issues	Dependent on trust
Discuss difficult issues	Risks excluding the poor
Needs-based bottom-up approach	Hard to overcome existing power structures
Adaptation & Adoptions	Difficult to discuss sensitive political issues openly
Ownership/commitment at several levels	Sensitive to political environment
Flexibility	A lot depends on the facilitator
Sustainability	High expectations
Economic benefits	LA concept has no widely/ generally accepted definition
Help un-block communication channels	Resistance to personal / institutional change
Build on existing networks	Skills needed to lead/facilitate LA
Decision-makers take part	Hard to achieve common understanding of roles and responsibilities
Identify new stakeholders	LA concept is used as excuse
Promotes out-of-the-box thinking	Top down/externally pushed
Open mind	Institutional rigidity
Learning together	Over dependent on individuals
Capitalise on individual strengths	
Capacity building promoted	
Not project – based	
Mobilizes wider institutional environment	
Efficient use of resources	
Opportunity for informal learning	

### Working group 3

## Water and Sanitation

Facilitated by Patrick Moriarty and Peter Bury

Presentations were based on the Symposium papers:

- Jan Reynders and Sara Ahmed: *Who's Water? Learning from Public-'Private' Partnerships in Gujarat*
- M. A. Zárate, J. M. Rojas, J. O. Arbaze and H. L. Stone: *Innovative approaches to strengthening the health sector in Latin America: Experiences in Guatemala and Bolivia*

**Jan Reynders** focused on the Ghogha Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project (GRWSSP) in Gujarat, a partnership coordinated by the Water and Sanitation Management Organisation (WASMO). The GRWSSP seeks to build community capacity to develop and manage local water resources and supply systems and sanitation services. WASMO encourages partnership between citizens and the state government through contributing to the costs of water supply. WASMO was designed as a learning organisation to promote new mind-sets capable of a paradigm shift in the sector, and includes representatives of civil society organisations and water professionals. It builds the capacity of village water committee (pani simitis), some of which oversee the construction of village systems, with a positive impact on water, sanitation and hygiene practices. WASMO tends to set the partnership agenda, rather than supporting partners to do this. WASMO and its Community Management Support Unit (CMSU) have had limited success in creating empowered self-reliant water committees. Pani simitis collect operation and maintenance (O&M) contributions, but fees are set by CMSU.

**Max Zárate** gave a presentation on building partnerships to tackle water and sanitation problems in Guatemala and Bolivia. In San Mateo Ixatán, Guatemala, a public health action plan was devised after communities identified drinking water quality, solid waste disposal and wastewater disposal as problems. A network of collaborators drew together institutions, at international, national and local level, with support from the Ixatán Foundation. Neighbourhood groups and schools students were trained in water analysis and surveys. This showed that the water cycle can be an effective tool to engage community participation and that institutional support is required for funding and capacity building. In Bolivia a collaboration has been formed between Universidad Mayor de San Simón (UMSS) in Cochabamba, East Carolina University (ECU), USA, the Centre for Water and Environmental Sanitation (CASA), the Environmental Health and Safety Programme and the Department of Urban and Rural Planning, to focus on water quality issues, improved water resources management, interdisciplinary research, increasing social capital and community participation.

### Discussion

The group discussed key issues, elements, strengths and risks of learning alliances.

#### Key issues for learning alliances in the water and sanitation sector

- There needs to be a common objective to start a learning alliance—a problem that needs to be solved and a concrete plan about what needs to be done.
- Learning alliances are not new. Many participants mentioned that it basically means working with the correct mindset—improved coordination in the sector, honesty,

transparency, trust—and that it gives a name and conceptual framework to what is already done in some projects and programmes.

- Facilitation is essential and the facilitator must be credible and seen as an honest broker.
- Learning alliances tend to be tied to projects and programmes. Can they exist/start without guaranteed funds coupled with a project?
- The question remains: does everyone understand the key ingredients? How can we reach a common understanding after we leave this Symposium?

**Key elements to make a learning alliance work**

- Continuity. A learning alliance is a process not a one time ‘thing’
- A learning alliance needs organisers as well as facilitators. It is difficult to be a facilitator and at the same time to organise and sell the concept
- Participation is a key element – how do we make sure that there is social inclusion (women, children, the poorest, etc.)? It should be a bottom-up process.
- The intermediate level – staff in districts and municipalities – have the responsibility to provide water and sanitation services to a local population. Building their capacity and involving them in discussions is key to scaling up, even if difficult.
- Networking and working ‘outside the box’ towards improved coordination and information exchange seems to be the key to the whole concept.

<b>Strengths of the learning alliance concept</b>		
<b>Summary</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Number of votes</b>
Scaling up/ Replication	The concept of scaling up innovations to solve problems is very powerful. The potential for replicating good experiences is a strength. LAs provide a platform to adapt ‘replication’ to local contexts.	20
Influences government policies	Linking different levels, all the way up to the policy making level can contribute to scaling up innovations in a whole region.	14
Builds on existing ways of working	LAs are not meant to be new structures, they should build on existing coordination platforms and networks.	10
Can be easily adapted to specific challenges	LAs emerge out of specific needs and the frustration of not seeing impact on the ground. They can tackle many issues in the sector and in other sectors as well.	7
Allows failures	Since LAs are spaces for learning, failures are allowed, even welcomed, as an opportunity to openly discuss what does and does not work.	6
Gives a voice to women and children	LAs are participatory and inclusive, and therefore give voice to the marginalised.	1

*STRENGTHS OF THE LEARNING ALLIANCE CONCEPT IN RELATION TO WATER AND SANITATION*

RISKS OF THE  
LEARNING ALLIANCE  
CONCEPT IN  
RELATION TO WATER  
AND SANITATION

Risks of the learning alliance concept		
Summary	Description	Number of votes
Relies on scarce skills	Facilitation, learning, being neutral, being respected, knowing the sector are critical qualities. Facilitation is so crucial and so specific to the sector and the country/region that it might be difficult to find people with the right mix of skills worldwide.	19
Becomes a buzz-word	Anything can be called a learning alliance! This is a real risks that we already starting to experience. Networks as we know them are not learning alliances.	12
Relies on champions	LAs rely on leaders and initiators to achieve the difficult first stage of getting stakeholders involved and to “sell the concept”.	11
Potentially costly	LA might be costly and take a lot of resources. But this has to be judged against the cost of doing nothing. If we keep working in the same old way, we will never reach the MDGs and go beyond them. Costs can be reduced by building on what organisations are already doing, so the cost is not much more than additional staff time for sharing knowledge.	6
Political instability	In the context of political instability it might be difficult to get commitment to the process from government.	5
Lose fluidity	Once the LA become institutionalised there is a risk of losing flexibility and inclusion.	4
Resistance to change	Entrenched interests make it difficult to achieve some kind of consensus.	0

### Working group 4

#### Environment

Facilitated by Edwin Hes and Wim Douven

Presentations were based on the Symposium papers:

- Inés Restrepo, Gustavo Vivas and Ana Dorly Jaramillo: *Strengthening capacities through learning alliances: improving water use implementing cleaner production in the tanneries in El Cerrito (Colombia)*
- K.V.Rajeshwari, I. Thanumoorthy, Malini Balakrishnan, Vidya S. Batra, Patricia McCrory, Joel Ferguson, Julie-Anne Hanna, Miriam Sartor, Martin Kaschek and Horst Chmiel: *Partnership for sustainable water management practices in Indian Dairy Industry*

**Inés Restrepo** and **Gustavo Vivas**, presented an experience from the leather sector in El Cerrito (Colombia). A learning alliance was developed to address the discharge by local tanneries of wastewater containing heavy metals and chemical compounds. Previous attempts to reduce pollution, based on punishing tanneries, had failed. The learning alliance brought together the tanneries with the environmental authority at provincial level, The Regional Centre for Cleaner Production (CRPML), the Centre for Leather Productivity (CDP), the Cinara Institute from the Universidad el Valle, local authorities and institutions. Once the tanneries became engaged in seeking solutions that would also benefit their businesses, improvements followed. Water consumption and the discharge of polluted water fell. Waste was pre treated. Various technical improvements have taken place and some entrepreneurs are accessing new markets with environmentally sound products. The entrepreneurs have a new attitude towards environmental change that improves their competitiveness.

**K.V. Rajeshwari** made a presentation about cleaner production in the dairy sector in India. Milk production has trebled in India over the past 30 years and the dairy industry contributes to a national problem of increasing industrial effluent. The INDUS partnership for promotion of industrial water efficiency brings together European specialist institutions, the Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) from India, the National Dairy Development Board and industrial units. A test unit was identified in Gujarat which processes milk and produces ghee, ice-cream and cheese. A series of options for reducing waste were put forward for different levels of investment. As well as technical solutions, a sense of team spirit was generated in the plant so that staff were interested in the outcomes. The results of this successful test are now being shared with a wider range of producers.

### Discussion

A question arose from the Restrepo / Vivas presentation to do with the process of starting an LA: should one start with a stakeholder analysis or by identifying the problem? Often, stakeholders come together around a problem that has not been clearly defined. However, it is important for all stakeholders to be involved in identifying the problem. It became clear that the order in which things are done will change from case to case. Starting a learning alliance can be an iterative process, as new stakeholders are invited after an initial group of stakeholders have analysed a problem. A problem mentioned following the Rajeshwari presentation, is that it is difficult to involve private companies who are responsible for pollution. Unless there are reasons to participate (e.g. strict pollution control enforcement), they might not be interested. In India, the test centre was staffed in part by student entrepreneurs who want to learn efficient methods. It was hoped they would take these methods forward when they joined dairies at the end of their course. Trust has to be created before private companies will release data and join a project such as this.



*Part of the action scheme for the learning project to improve the environmental performance of tanneries in El Cerrito.*

*Source: Inés Restrepo-Tarquino, Gustavo Vivas and Ana Dorly Jaramillo: Strengthening capacities through Learning Alliances: Improving water use implementing cleaner production in the tanneries in El Cerrito, Colombia.*

**SWOT ANALYSIS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SECTOR**

A SWOT analysis was completed and participants voted on their priority order. The results are tabulated in highest and lower priority. The highest priority strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats relating to learning alliances in the environment sector are shown on this page. Lower priority SWOT results are shown on page 27.

<b>Strengths/opportunities</b>	<b>Weaknesses/threats</b>
<b>Highest priority</b>	
Powerful lobby instrument –LAs bring together a wide range of stakeholders, and can develop a strong lobbying voice.	Interest groups can dominate the LA. There are differences in power between stakeholders and a risk that the more powerful ones will dominate, while less empowered ones are not be invited. There is a risk (especially in the environmental sector) that powerful stakeholders will not participate if do not have an interest in solving the problems.
Holistic approach – by bringing in all relevant stakeholders, the issue can be looked at from all different angles.	Long time scale. Learning, negotiation and discussion takes time, especially with multiple stakeholders. There is a risk that platforms become talking shops, and that decisions are never reached. LAs are less useful in emergency situations.
Creates sense of ownership – an LA includes all relevant stakeholders, who jointly own the problem, and become part of the solution.	Requires political commitment and understanding. LAs explicitly try to involve government. However, political commitment to implement lessons from the learning alliance is not always available.
Motivates participatory approach – LAs include all relevant stakeholders and promote participation. This implies that a stakeholder analysis is properly completed, and that effective mechanisms for participation and representation are identified.	Can be misunderstood by authorities as challenging their authority. Government entities often have responsibility for dealing with issues that LAs are working on.
Values all forms of knowledge including indigenous knowledge. Each stakeholder brings its understanding and knowledge to the table. Scientific knowledge, political knowledge and indigenous knowledge have equal value.	
Tackles issues of concern to many people. LAs thrive where environmental problems have high public attention.	
Generates social capital – joint work on an environment problem develops negotiation skills, platforms, conflict management models, etc. which creates the social capital to also deal with other problems.	



*Looking and learning: part of the plenary session during the Symposium.*

Strengths/opportunities	Weaknesses/threats
<b>Lower priority</b>	
Flexibility – LAs have flexibility, as they are process, rather than project focused	LAs are not that new.
Problem driven – LAs are driven by the need to deal with a specific problem or issue.	There is an assumption that an LA always reaches consensus. This may not be true or desirable. Sometimes, conflict is better than consensus.
Focus on core and broader learning.	There is a risk that people apply LAs in a recipe-like way, forgetting about the process. LAs are not cook-books.
LAs provide an opportunity for replication and scaling up.	There is a risk that an LA lacks focus, because of the diversity of stakeholders and interests.
LAs create an environment in which local capacity can be built.	There may be LA fatigue, if the process has to be followed for every problem an area is facing.
LAs provide the framework in which a common understanding of issues can be developed.	There is a risk of blurred responsibilities where government entities or other networks work on the same issues. .
	It is hard to build the necessary trust.
	An LA requires a facilitator or catalyst. These are not always there.
	Lack of motivation of key players.
	There are not enough levels to scale up lessons learnt.
	Lack of authority – an LA may learn and propose things, but sometimes other forces overrule proposals.
	Detachment from practical experiences.

Lower priority strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats relating to learning alliances in the environment sector.

## Plenary discussion

The four working groups presented their findings at a plenary session which gave participants an opportunity for a deeper discussion about some of the conceptual issues. Amongst these were:

- **Is a learning alliance a process? Or is it a thing?** If it is a process, does it run the risk of becoming an imprecise phrase used to cover many different types of partnership without adding value to the idea? “It could become a populist phrase that has very little meaning; if so it will lose its credibility very quickly.” If it is an organisation, will it become unwieldy and bureaucratic, lacking focus on real life problems?
- **Who takes the initiative to start a learning alliance and who has ownership of the process?** On the one hand the core group needs to drive and determination to establish the stakeholder platforms. On the other had there is a danger of substituting for institutions and organisations who are the main players in scaling up. However, there is also the risk that those who currently have responsibility and authority want to block change and the learning process.

*“Entrepreneurship is needed. The learning alliance is a mechanism with which individuals can apply pressure and move forward.”*  
*Tom Remington,*  
*Catholic Relief Services*

*“Scaling up will not take place unless the Government takes the ownership. People in organisations need to be able to do things differently.”*  
*Pauline Mwaniki,*  
*NETWAS, Kenya*

*“There are individuals and organisations who refuse to share what they know. They see it as a threat to the power that they hold.”*  
*Rosario Aurora Villaluna,*  
*STREAMS*

## Session 3

### Morning of Wednesday 08 June

## Lessons from specific processes in learning alliances

Participants split into five working groups to discuss the lessons learnt around specific processes in learning alliances. The working groups were on capacity building; the enabling environment; representation and participation; dealing with conflicting interests and power; and knowledge management. Following case study presentations, discussion followed the “talking stick” approach.

### Working group 1

## Capacity building

*Facilitated by Erma Uytewaal and Tunde Adegoke*

Presentations were based on the Symposium papers:

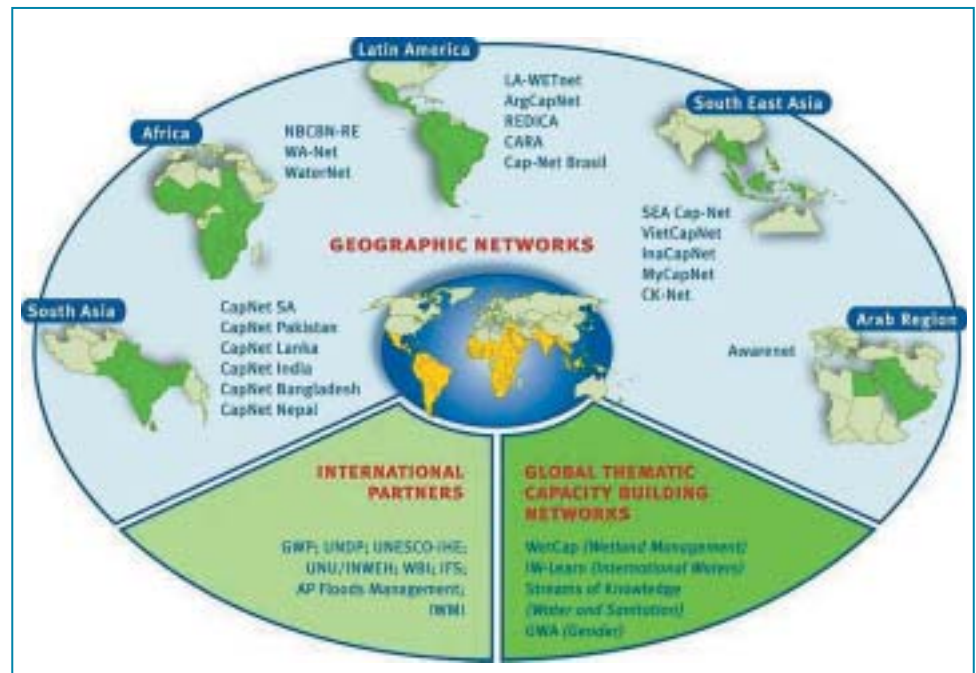
- Paul Taylor and Kees Leendertse: *Capacity Building Networks – an effective way to scale up capacity building*
- Amsalu Negussie: *The contribution of networking and partnership in community initiatives to scale up water supply services, Geita District, Tanzania*

### TALKING STICKS

The ‘talking stick’ approach is described on page 3.

The group was asked to consider: Why do learning alliances need to address the question of capacity building? How can capacity building be integrated into the process? Can learning alliances become better fitted to their time and place through capacity building?

**Paul Taylor**, Director of Cap-Net described this global network for capacity building in Integrated Water Resources Management, which draws together 20 networks around the world and about 1,000 institutions involved in capacity building. However, he argued that networks and alliances are tools, and should not be allowed to become ends in themselves. It is often better to adapt existing networks than to create new ones, and the focus of a network should be downwards towards serving its members, rather than addressing ideas from higher levels. Despite management and financial problems, networks have proven to be effective instruments to increase outreach of capacity building programmes, to improve delivery of high quality training and to increase the relevance of capacity building exercises.



*Cap-Net networks around the world together comprise 1,000 institutions. Source: Paul Taylor and Kees Leendertse: Capacity Building Networks - an effective way to scale up capacity building*

**Amsalu Negussie** from Plan International, South Africa, focused on the contribution of networking and partnerships in scaling up community initiatives of water supply services in the Geita district in Tanzania. Plan sees partnerships and strategic alliances as important in promoting its Child Centered Community Development programme, especially in finding effective solutions to complex development problems. It sees partnerships as an important tool in strengthening the capacity of organisation to enable people living in poverty to claim their rights. Partnerships have been used in Geita to address the challenges of scaling up and to improve the sustainability of village water schemes. The Plan Geita Program uses the District Water and Sanitation Forum to ensure that lessons from the work in selected villages are disseminated and used by other stakeholders, including local government. The work has strengthened an understanding that partnerships at all levels are essential for effective development. However, Plan has also concluded that networks and alliances must have clear methodology and objectives to develop the capacity of poor people in developing countries, to lead the development process and to achieve positive and dynamic changes.

### Discussion

Following the presentations and questions for clarification, participants used the talking stick method to contribute their experiences, knowledge or doubts regarding capacity building and learning alliances. Most contributions related to capacity building. Participants held a variety of interpretations about capacity building and relevant activities. There was a consensus about the limitations of stand-alone training for sustainable capacity enhancement. There were several references to capacity building strategies as vehicles to strengthen capacities of the main actors in the WATSAN sector. However, was not clear how these related to longer term process approaches for capacity development in the sector.

Dialogue was followed by an exercise in which participants wrote onto cards, words or phrases about lessons learnt, recommendations and challenges for capacity building processes in learning alliances. The statements were grouped into four categories.

Several participants saw a crucial link between capacity building and learning alliances. It was also stated that capacity building is the critical link between a pilot project and scaling up. Some contributors indicated that capacity building should instead be considered as an integral part, interwoven in all stages and activities of the LA. However, it was striking that most participants addressed capacity building and LAs as two different processes. Was it fully understood that, without capacity building, learning alliances do not have a *raison d'être* and that, through the LA, capacity building processes become more flexible and effective, with a greater possibility that the results will be sustained over time? Statements such as “Capacity building gives continuity and flexibility to an LA,” and “Capacity building in a LA ensures sustainability,” are examples of an implicit separation of the concepts in the minds of participants.

Various statements referred to the need for more and better strategies, methodologies and tools. It was not always clear whether this was for LA processes in general or for capacity building within LAs in particular. This is also probably due to a lack of conceptual clarity about the role of capacity building within learning alliances.

It was stated that capacity building within the LA should imply much more than just books and courses and “documentation” of the process. It is also about creating dialogue, visits and exchanges in order to change people’s mind sets. What methodologies and instruments will support this?

Many participants made statements about the relation between LA, capacity building and empowerment. The results of a LA (e.g. scaling-up of an innovative approach) can only be sustained when people and communities are “empowered”. In this view, the empowerment can either be seen as a condition for success of a LA or as a necessary result. It also became clear that the LA will and should always contribute to capacity building of stakeholders, including community level organisations where empowerment and capacity building are considered to be integral to a successful LA. In this way, participation, representation and equity become central issues.

Another group of statements related to the flexibility and dynamics within capacity building and learning alliance processes. It was stated that LAs always require “flexible and dynamic capacity building processes” and that “capacity building gives flexibility to a LA”. Both statements seem to be based on the assumption that the flexibility of a LA depends on the characteristics of the capacity building process. We could perhaps put it better in the following way: The set-up and method of working of a learning alliance will determine the flexibility and dynamics of the capacity building process and vice versa. The conclusions of the group, as presented to the plenary session, were that:

- Capacity building is an essential link between a pilot project and scaling up
- Strategies, methodologies and tools are required within learning alliances to improve capacity building
- Capacity building must also build people’s empowerment to sustain innovation
- LA processes must be flexible and dynamic

## Working group 2

### Enabling environment

Facilitated by Patrick Moriarty and Deirdre Casella

Presentations were based on the Symposium papers:

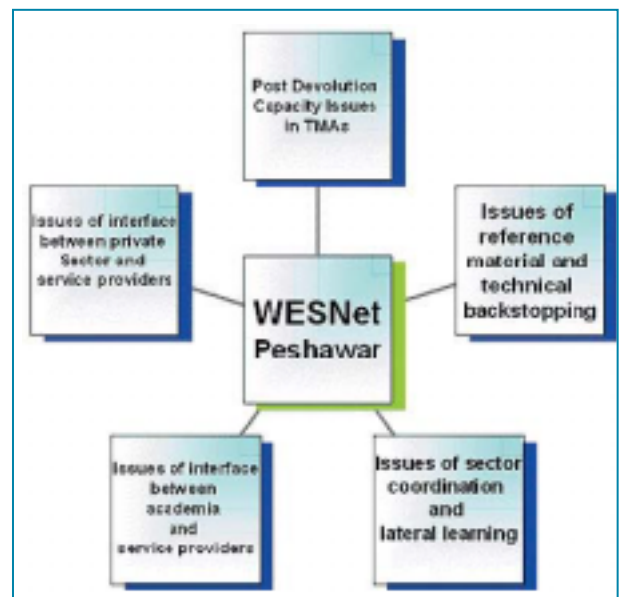
- ⇒ Masroor Ahmad, Farooq Khan Abbasi, Dr. Tameez Ahmad, Saima Shinwari and Peter J. Bury: *Towards WATSAN learning alliances in Pakistan*
- ⇒ Daudi Makamba: *Advantages of Learning Alliances for Plan Tanzania, CARE Tanzania and WaterAid Tanzania Learning Forum*

**Masroor Ahmad** presented an experience from the Water and Environmental Sanitation Network (WESNet) platform in Pakistan, to demonstrate the enabling environment. Devolution of local government and the creation of Tehsil/Town Municipal Administrations (TMAs) offer an opportunity to transform the water and sanitation sector in Pakistan. However, the demise of former institutions and the creation of 340 TMAs created shortages of skilled human resources, and sapped institutional memory. A working group representing a broad range of stakeholders agreed to establish WESNet in North West Frontier Province to fill the knowledge gap and to provide coordination and advocacy. WESNet is mandated as a learning forum and to promote research. It is now a leading sector network in the province and in Pakistan as a whole, and the model is being replicated in other provinces.

The environment demanded patience to get stakeholders around the table and to persuade them to permit coordination. The commitment and patronage of Government has been important. Government ownership, independent management and UNICEF's catalytic role is seen as a perfect blend. It is however difficult to get funding for the core objectives of WESNet, which has developed 'products' to generate income.

**Daudi Makamba** from PLAN presented the experience of PLAN International (Tanzania), CARE International (Tanzania), and WaterAid Tanzania, who were contracted by Dar-es-Salam Water and Sewerage Authority (DAWASA) to implement a Community Water Supply and Sanitation Project (CWSSP) in three peripheral areas around Dar-es-Salaam. They established a CWSSP NGO Forum to share information and experiences and this developed into a platform for shared learning and information exchange. Service providers and DAWASA are invited as guest as necessary. Because work has to be approved by DAWASA, they work very closely with Government. Amongst challenges are aligning policies and working practices so that no one organisation dominates and they all learn from each other, and finding time to ensure that the Forum runs effectively.

Working group 2 was asked to consider what factors outside the learning alliance, such as decentralisation, policy frameworks etc, affect its performance? How can or should learning alliances adapt to these?



*WESNet was established in North West Frontier Province, Pakistan, to support the newly created Tehsils and to fill knowledge and know-how gaps*

Source: WESNet website, <http://www.wesnet.org.pk/>



*Daudi Makamba from PLAN, Tanzania*

**Discussion**

Following a free-form discussion using the talking stick method, participants listed the following significant factors about the enabling environment:

- Funding
- Institutional and cultural arrangements
- Donor agendas
- Policy environment
- Leadership within institutions
- Capacity building
- Conflicting agendas
- Emergencies

**ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR LEARNING ALLIANCES**

Responses were grouped following a card writing brainstorm session. Topics are shown in the left hand column, with individual cards in the right hand column

Factors that affect LAs	Text from cards
Money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Availability of finances</li> <li>◆ Too little time or money leads to a 'crash course' approach to establishing a learning alliance</li> <li>◆ Funding availability</li> <li>◆ Sustained or continued funding for LAs</li> <li>◆ Funding issues can impact on functioning of LAs</li> <li>◆ Hard to get funds to allow LA to work continuously</li> <li>◆ Money for hardware support for communication</li> </ul>
Donor/finance conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Financial institutions can place conditions on LAs</li> <li>◆ Donor conditions regarding ways of working</li> <li>◆ Funders' agendas</li> </ul>
Policy environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Policy decisions taken without LA involvement</li> <li>◆ Policy &amp; legislative environment</li> <li>◆ Enhance good governmental policies &amp; legislation</li> <li>◆ Policy changes required inside participating institutions</li> </ul>
Conflicting agendas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Parallel alliances can affect LA performance</li> <li>◆ Avoid 'larger' institutions dominating with hidden agenda</li> <li>◆ Personal agendas</li> </ul>
Capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Capacities of intermediate levels affects quality</li> <li>◆ Space needed for learning and uptake inside stakeholder organisations</li> </ul>
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Political will</li> <li>◆ Lack of political will / leadership can affect LAs</li> <li>◆ Lack of good facilitation capacity</li> <li>◆ Attitude of decision makers</li> <li>◆ Management buys in to the concept</li> </ul>
Emergencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Emergency situations</li> <li>◆ Onset of crises / emergency as test of LA resilience</li> </ul>

To adapt to these external opportunities and challenges, learning alliances need to ensure that they develop:

- Communication and transparency
- Strategies and business plans
- Ownership and stakeholder participation
- Some quick wins to show results
- Clear roles and responsibilities for LA members
- Flexibility to change

<b>Ways in which a LA can adapt</b>	<b>Text from cards</b>
Communication and transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Need to de-mystify LA within the organisation</li> <li>◆ Availability of suitable media for communication (esp. with intermediate levels)</li> <li>◆ Clear objectives, transparencies, ownership, institutional arrangements</li> <li>◆ Clear rules of functioning and management</li> <li>◆ Be transparent in information sharing</li> <li>◆ Improve the communication between LA and decision-makers</li> <li>◆ LAs need good communication strategies and mechanisms</li> </ul>
Strategic / business planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Institutional patronage by government is essential</li> <li>◆ LAs should grow from small to scale over time. too big, too fast is dangerous.</li> <li>◆ LAs should be run as businesses and 'self-sustaining' basis from the outset</li> <li>◆ LAs should provide technical support</li> <li>◆ They need some one to play a facilitating role for expanding 'IEC' infrastructure</li> <li>◆ LAs should help to develop capacity building</li> <li>◆ LAs must pay attention to the links between the different levels</li> <li>◆ A business idea for a LA, if not broadly consulted with stakeholders and approved by them, will not work</li> </ul>
Ownership & stakeholder participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ LAs should make sure that the 'bosses' of key stakeholders are on board</li> <li>◆ Selection of LA membership should be on an institutional basis to have ownership for long term sustainability, scaling up &amp; replication</li> </ul>
Quick wins – tangible benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Tangible benefits directly related to LA must be visible to decision makers</li> <li>◆ Need tangible products to become recognised</li> </ul>
Roles & responsibilities of LA members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Need to build capacity of implementers</li> <li>◆ LAs need to restructure implementation machinery</li> <li>◆ Need to establish IEC to change community mindset</li> </ul>
Flexibility to change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Flexibility of an LA to incorporate changes that are caused by outside factors</li> <li>◆ LAs need to work to generate political acceptance</li> </ul>

### Working group 3

Working group 3 was asked to consider: How can different stakeholder participate in learning alliances? How can they be represented? How can representatives ensure that they do not run faster than their constituency?

See also other reports on EMPOWERS from Working Group 4, on dealing with conflicting interests and power, and from Wednesday afternoon Working Group 1 on facilitation.

## Representation and participation

*Facilitated by Jaap Pels*

The discussion was based on presentations, by consultant Paul Verveen and by Mufleh Abaddi from CARE Jordan, who is field coordinator for the EMPOWERS Partnership in Jordan.

**Paul Verveen** focused on issues related to representation. This can affect how far the learning alliance experience penetrates organisations which are, in name at least, represented as stakeholders. It is often the case that a representative who attends a learning alliance or negotiation table learns a lot, but has difficulty in explaining results within their own constituencies. This happens because their constituencies have not properly become part of the process. Paul Verveen used a metaphor—why learn how to fly a plane if you do not know how to land it? By analogy, why learn about new innovations with other stakeholders if you do not know how you are going to take them further in your own organisation?

**Mufleh Abaddi** made a presentation about EMPOWERS in Jordan. EMPOWERS is a four year regional programme for improved water management in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine, which aims to improve long term access and rights to water. This aims to increase the participation and representation of stakeholders in planning and decision-making at intermediate and local levels. The project is developing a participatory planning cycle for Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM), embedding the cycle within a wider process of Stakeholder Dialogue and Concerted Action (SDCA). The SDCA is hosted within a learning alliance that consists of stakeholder platforms at several levels from national to local. A participatory planning cycle supports stakeholders at intermediate and local levels.

In Jordan, where an expanding population and climatic and topographical conditions create severe water shortages, EMPOWERS is working in Al Balqa Governorate. The stakeholder platform at governorate level includes Ministries of Water and Irrigation, The Ministry of Social Development, the Balqa Governorate Ministry of the Interior, and Ministries of Agriculture, Health and the Environment. Stakeholders include a resource centre, NGOs, donors and community groups. A former minister of agriculture heads the steering committee.

Three villages were selected through participatory research. Relationships were established with village councils and community organisations. Committees operate as a base for concerted action and planning, and these foster a sense of responsibility and ownership. They helped to overcome an initial lack of trust, whereby local community members

regarded government officials as people who sat behind desks, while officials tended to see community members as passive recipients of services. During meetings to work on problems, visions and strategies, barriers between officials and citizens began to disintegrate.

Representation within communities is complex. Social structure is based on tribal backgrounds, and heads of large families traditionally take all important decisions, although there is also respect for independent and self-reliant people. The project team works to empower marginalised groups such as ‘minor’ families, women and youth to participate without conflicting with local customs and habits. This requires patience and respect.

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*“Community members regarded government officials as people who sat behind desks while officials tended to see community members as passive recipients of services”*

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## Discussion

The card exercise produced some key strategies for representation and participation.

- Participation provides an opportunity to improve inclusiveness and effectiveness.
- There must be a clear purpose, objective or issue so that participants are clear about their own participation.
- Consent must be achieved, but this does not necessarily mean consensus.
- Conflicting views should be included.
- Regular feedback to each constituency is needed.
- A bottom up approach is preferable but scaling up is time consuming.

### ● Learning alliances are an opportunity for improved participation

Learning alliances provide an opportunity to improve participation by those who are not normally involved in decision making. Each organisation and individual has the same power to voice opinions and to have their words taken into account. Learning alliances are open to everyone; barriers to participation are barriers to learning. Some questions were raised: Who leads a learning alliance? Who owns it? It was agreed that learning alliances should not become parallel processes to governmental institutions, so ultimately, they should be “owned” by government. Participants discussed the need for separate meetings with men and women in specific cultural contexts to improve participation, bringing the outcomes to a higher level. The role of NGOs was also raised. How far do NGOs really represent and give voice to communities? How far do they protect their own existence or vested interests? Some participants stressed the need to empower marginalised groups to attend higher level meetings and represent themselves.

TOPICS THAT CAME  
UP IN DISCUSSION

### ● Participants need a common objective/purpose

There needs to be a purpose and objective that satisfies stakeholders. There has to be an issue to resolve rather than a general desire for learning. The question, “What’s in it for me?” will come up. Each stakeholder has its own agenda, but can contribute to the overall objective depending on the mandate of his/her organisation. The role of each stakeholder needs to be clearly identified to ensure that all key stakeholders are represented. One participant suggested that it is better to acknowledge and take account of different stakeholders’ agendas/aspirations, rather than allow them to remain hidden. Different stakeholders can have different levels of involvement. Local circles of consensus that expand and drive aspirations for change provide a key to the sustainability of the process.

### ● Consent and not necessarily consensus

In a learning alliance, participants will arrive at a decision by consent, not necessarily through consensus. The process is fluid. Different stakeholders will “buy in” to the process at different times, attending meetings more or less regularly. Creating a learning alliance is not a one shot event, but a development: describing the process, clarifying objectives, negotiating, arguing, etc. Documentation of this process is important. It cannot be assumed that the same people will attend the learning alliance over time.

### ● Include conflicting views

Learning alliances, need to actively involve those who are likely to criticise the whole process; that is the purpose of creating a space for learning. Questions raised include:

What if things go very differently from what the initiator had planned? LAs should accommodate the diverse views of all stakeholders, accepting that people may not share (or come to share) the same values and ideas.

- **Regular feedback and key people**

There should be regular feedback to constituencies to ensure a clear understanding. Taking back concepts and complex discussions is more difficult if there are no spaces for learning within each organisation. Key decision makers need to be sitting around the table. But how can we get the right people for a full day several times a year (or more)?

- **A bottom up approach to scaling up is preferable but takes more time**

Learning needs to take place vertically and horizontally. This takes a lot of time; but time is required for scaling up and for ensure the quality of the process.

### Working group 4

## Dealing with conflicting interests and power

Facilitated by Peter Bury and Jeltsje Kemerink

Working group 4 was asked to consider how to deal with the fact that various stakeholders in learning alliances have different interests and varying amounts of power. How is it possible to ensure that less empowered groups participate? How do you manage the negotiation over learning processes?

Presentations were based on the following papers:

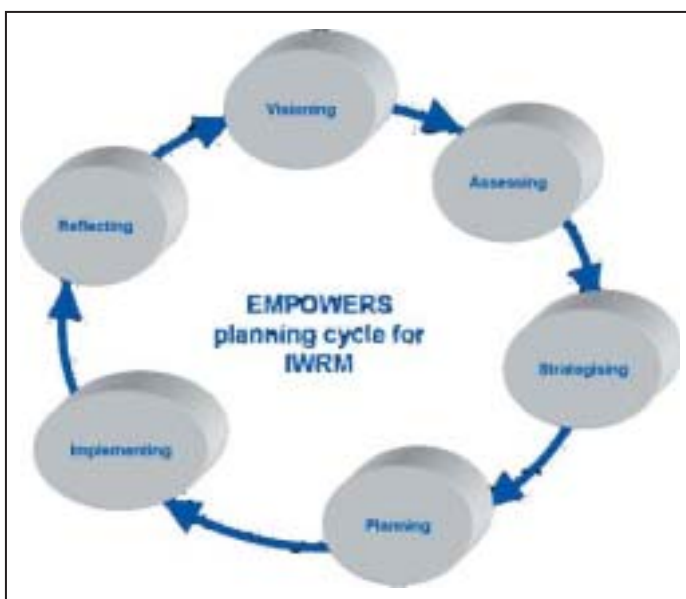
- Simone van Vugt & Esther Koopmanschap: *Power & Conflict in Multi Stakeholder Processes (MSP), IAC MSP portal,*
- Sameera Rifai, Empowers, Palestine: *A case study on stakeholder dialogue and participatory planning in the water sector of Jenin Governorate.*

**Simone van Vugt** described how the International Agricultural Centre (IAC), part of the Wageningen University and Research Centre, facilitates multi stakeholder processes, which are a form of learning alliance. They use Project Cycle Management (PCM) to achieve

a shared vision. One point that came out was the need to understand different types of conflict within the process, which could change over time. The IAC view was that conflict was not always bad. By being aware of opportunities and dangers they could adopt a win-win approach. However, not everybody wants to learn!

**Sameera Rifai** explained how EMPOWERS adopts a learning cycle / project cycle approach, using problem trees to group problems and causes and effects

Diversity amongst stakeholders enriches the process, but it is not always easy to handle their different, sometimes conflicting, interests. The most important points in the process were transparency and learning to know and understand each other. This is very challenging context and dealing with conflicts is one of the key issues. There is also a difficult question about how to approach issues of women and gender.



EMPOWERS planning cycle

See also other reports about EMPOWERS from Working Group 3 above, and from Wednesday afternoon Working Group 1 on facilitation.

**Discussion**

The main points in discussion were on the nature of conflict and how to deal with it. It was agreed that conflicts arise and evolve as the process develops and we need to learn to manage them. Conflict is necessary to resolve problems since people and organisations need to change to ensure progress. Avoiding conflict does not contribute to this healthy process. The way conflict is expressed and managed is influenced by the cultural context and by individual differences. Building the necessary trust and respect takes time. Respect, listening and understanding are important. LA initiators need to deal with gender issues, the cultural context and people’s different cultural backgrounds. It is also important to understand interests and needs. This understanding improves gradually and is not a ‘one shot’ exercise. It is important for clear roles and responsibilities to be set from the beginning.

**PRIORITY ISSUES**  
 The main points from the discussion were condensed and grouped as shown in the table.

<b>The process needs time</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Conflict arises and evolves throughout the process.</li> <li>◆ Understanding of stakeholder interests and needs improves over time</li> <li>◆ Need to empower participants to deal with conflict</li> </ul>
<b>Listen &amp; understand</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Try to understand others, particularly ideas and feelings</li> <li>◆ Understand each other’s need for a share in responsibility</li> <li>◆ Don’t make assumptions, try to understand each client / stakeholder</li> <li>◆ Listening is very important when dealing with conflicts</li> <li>◆ Create trust and respect</li> <li>◆ Consider and analyse both sides in a conflict objectively</li> </ul>
<b>Ensure clear roles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Objectives of alliance should be clear from the beginning; each partner should see clear roles and benefits; take cultural aspects into account</li> <li>◆ Clear definitions of roles and responsibilities</li> <li>◆ Conflict is about feeling lost and losing your stake</li> <li>◆ Dealing with conflict means identifying and sharing stakes</li> <li>◆ Roles and responsibilities must be agreed upon in advance, including benefits of all stakeholders</li> <li>◆ However, there is no need to spell out all conflicts and issues at start of process</li> </ul>
<b>At a personal level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Who wants to learn, who do ‘we’ want to encourage to learn?</li> <li>◆ Be conscious of personal attitude towards conflicts</li> <li>◆ Participants should have a feeling of ownership and be clear about their own agenda</li> </ul>
<b>Deal with cultural aspects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Conflicts can be culturally specific and need to be handled innovatively and sensitively according to social norms prevailing</li> <li>◆ The nature of conflict in LAs is complex and related to context and composition of the group</li> <li>◆ Understanding of and respect for the local context / culture are essential in managing conflicts and facilitating LA processes</li> </ul>

Working group 5 was asked to consider the fact that learning alliances include a variety of organisations in the form of a network. There needs to be a process of knowledge management amongst participants. How can that be done? What steps needs to be taken? Who facilitates the process? What is the role of a resource centre in this?

## Working group 5

### Knowledge management

Facilitated by Edwin Hes

The first presentation was by René van Lieshout on *Learning Alliance and Resource Centres: Search for mutual benefits*. The second was based on the Symposium paper:

- Damián Indij: *Knowledge management: active and collaborative alliances for effective development*

**René van Lieshout** described the possible roles of resource centres in learning alliances, looking at what a resource centre (RC) is involved in, what a learning alliance aims to do and the degree of overlap between the two. There are two main roles for a Resource Centre .

- To facilitate access by WATSAN service providers to support organisation the services
- To improve the performance of the support organisations, by facilitating knowledge development and sharing among stakeholders



Resource centres: partnerships and networking  
Source: René van Lieshout, IRC

RCs uses partnerships and networking to do this. With specific relevance to learning alliances, there are three tasks:

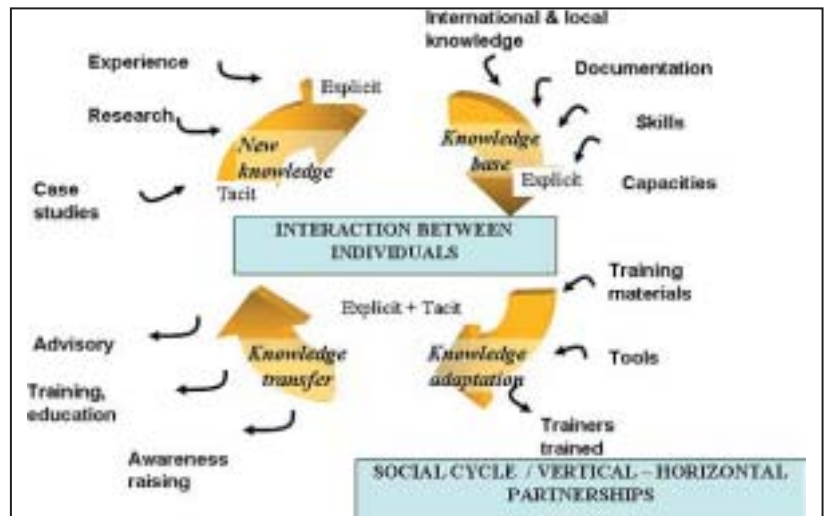
- Facilitation of LA processes
- Information management (IM) functions in LA – website, newsletter, communication
- Knowledge management functions in LA – action research, (process) documentation and dissemination

A discussion followed on the differences between information management (IM) and knowledge management (KM). There are various definitions, and the distinction is not always clearly defined.

**Damián Indij** aimed to further explain the difference between IM and KM, to give a structure to KM processes in learning alliances, and to clarify its role in networks. He presented a KM cycle which is followed in the Latin American Water Education and Training Network (LA-WETnet) for capacity building on IWRM. Knowledge management in networks is about how understanding is created, shared with capacity building institutions and transferred to target groups. KM should result in direct benefits. He presented a knowledge management cycle as a mechanism for linking people and enabling the interaction of explicit knowledge (information) with tacit knowledge (experience, skills and attitudes). This results in the generation of knowledge to strengthen capacity, build institutions and empower target groups for IWRM.

Indij defines capacity building as the process of implementing institutional development, providing tools and knowledge to initiate, guide and support the process. Activities include knowledge transfer, skills development and facilitating the use of these capacities. Capacity is the ability of individuals and organisations to perform functions effectively, efficiently and sustainably. It is not a passive state but a continuing process.

His presentation also raised many questions about the distinction between IM and KM, and about the difference between tacit, informal and indigenous knowledge. The group advocated including local knowledge in KM cycles. LAs can provide a means for bringing together local knowledge and the formal knowledge of development workers so they are used in a complementary manner. Some people argued that LAs make tacit knowledge more explicit.



*Knowledge management cycle in capacity building networks*

Source: Damian Indij

## Discussion

The talking stick dialogue addressed a number of these issues and new topics:

- Knowledge management is not often valued by donors. Everybody says it is important, but few are willing to dedicate time and resources to it. At the same time, there is an urgent need to reach the MDGs. We need to balance between investing in knowledge management and concrete action on the ground.
- Knowledge is power, and in many places, people are not willing to share power. Can LAs address this issue?
- Experiences from Colombia show that communities learn more from each other than from formal institutions, such as NGOs or local government. CINARA is working with community learning centres, in which communities train and coach each other. However, this does not enable institutions to learn from communities and replicate what they learn elsewhere. The LA framework can provide a way to address this vertical flow, without disrupting the horizontal learning flow.
- Horizontal flows of information and knowledge are relatively easier to manage than vertical flows.
- In most countries, there are oral rather than written learning traditions. It is also important to capture orally transmitted knowledge. How can that best be done?

## Conclusions

- There is confusion about Information Management and Knowledge Management. LA's can contribute to greater clarity and common understanding.
- There is a need to make local knowledge more widely known and complementary to formal knowledge, and, sometimes, to make tacit knowledge explicit. LAs can help.
- LAs can make KM happen, especially between communities and intermediate level.
- There is a need to think about community-to-community communication, and about the form of management this requires.
- People do not always want to share their knowledge.

## Session 4

### Afternoon of Wednesday 08 June

## Development of tool kit elements for learning alliances.

Participants regrouped into five groups for the afternoon session to discuss activities in which learning alliances are involved and the tools that are needed to carry out those activities.

### Working group 1

## Facilitation

Facilitated by Peter Bury and Deirdre Casella

Presentations were based on the Symposium papers:

- Jan Teun Visscher, Mariela Garcia and Niels Röling: *Multi-stakeholder learning in Colombia*
- Peter Laban and Patrick Moriarty: *Learning Alliances for local water resource management in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine: lessons from the EMPOWERS project*

**Mariela García Vargas** told the story of how CINARA's largely technical approach to community managed water supply programmes in Colombia evolved into a learning institute for people centred development by cultivating multidisciplinary and appropriate skills as facilitators. CINARA included psychologists to help their team to develop self-knowledge and artists to develop creativity mental and physical flexibility. They discovered that the external agent needs to become a facilitator of the development process—not a teacher. CINARA was able to identify some key characteristics of facilitators, as people who:

- Have high awareness of their strengths and weaknesses and are able to put themselves in the shoes of others
- Can create trust for participants to express thoughts, opinions and feelings
- Have a strong ethical attitude and do not impose their opinions so that participants build a shared vision
- Can generate a friendly atmosphere where differences are respected and conflicts are faced
- Have in-depth knowledge of the socio-economic cultural and political context and are familiar with the alliance objectives and expected results
- Have an ability to listen and to stimulate dialogue
- Use language that everyone can understand
- Have a sense of commitment to the people they are working with.



*Mariela Garcia Vargas from CINARA, Colombia*

**Hazem Fahmy** of CARE Egypt presented experiences from the EMPOWERS Project in Egypt, a pro-poor alliance aiming to improve long-term access and rights to water. This is a regional alliance of 14 local and international organisations that aims to increase the participation and representation of stakeholders to improve the development and management

See also reports on EMPOWERS on Wednesday morning - Working Group 3 and Working Groups 4.

of water resources at intermediate and local level. The learning alliance seeks to identify issues and problems. Bringing perceptions from governorate level, districts and the village into the same room created a synergy. There was conflict but they did not attempt to build a false consensus. It made them think about the role of experts and facilitators. There was a tendency for governorate level experts to see the involvement of the community as a source of data rather than as the point of participation. The facilitator needed to get them to see the expertise of the people. The facilitator needed to build trust, not so much in themselves as a person, but in the process. “Trusting you as an individual is great – it certainly does not hurt. But it is more important that they see you as an honest broker who brings all the issues to the table.”

### Discussion

- Is a facilitator a process expert or a content expert?

Mariela García Vargas felt it was important that a facilitator should know about the content of the development process and share its values. Some disagreed, saying that the facilitator needed to be a process expert, without knowing much about content. The majority felt that it was best to have both facilitation and content skills. At times there may also be a need to involve experts.

- Is the facilitator neutral as to the direction and destination of a learning alliance?

The facilitator should not promote a particular outcome for the group. However, some felt that the facilitator has to be in favour of achieving something, and a pro-poor result, i.e. share the overarching principle of the alliance. If forced to choose, a facilitator should side with the process and be on the side of the poor. It was vital that the end users did not see the process or facilitator as manipulative, or as pushing a government view. All views should be valued and brought to the table in an equal manner. So long as people trusted the facilitator and the process, it would be possible to guide the process. While it is important for a learning alliance to have government leadership, it is dangerous to point a direction in which things are expected to move, as people will not necessarily follow over time.

- How do you find or train neutral facilitators?

It is difficult to find facilitators who are seen as honest brokers. Training is important part of facilitation. They must demonstrate neutrality and be willing to communicate. They must also be present in the community, to be accepted by community members. Trust in the facilitator was essential. One participant noted, “If my actions, words and sayings are true, then people will trust me”. That is the basis of credibility.

- Is learning an end in itself, or a means to an end?

The discussion about facilitators led to a more general discussion about why we want learning alliances. Is it just so we can learn? Or is it so we can achieve an end result?



“The facilitator needs to persuade Government experts to see the expertise of the people.”

*Hazem Fahmy, CARE, Egypt*



“Trust the process to come up with the solutions.”

*Bongani Bethwell Matomela  
DWAF, South Africa*



*“You have a learning alliance to develop something, not as an end in itself. It*

*is a useful tool—let us not make it a magic tool.”*

*Peter Laban, CARE West Bank /Gaza*

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Most felt that learning alliances are not ends in themselves, but instruments in a process to create greater development impact. A learning alliance starts to form around a specific problem that different stakeholders want to address. Stakeholders must share an interest in the problem, to make their investment in solving it worthwhile. A learning alliance is about changing a mindset, independent of the particular problem. It is about the way we work to solve problems in general. A learning alliance brings together different actors at different levels because this generates greater sustainability. The learning alliance is therefore a vehicle, a process and a tool. It was noted that the vision of a learning alliance also needs to be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic & timely) and to come from within the community.

#### **BRAINSTORM AND CARD WRITING**

Participants were asked to write their ideas on cards. Responses were clustered under the following categories:

- What type of organisation do we want?
- What characteristics should a facilitators possess?
- What tools are needed for the process?

#### **Type of organisation**

Members of a learning alliance can be organisations or institutions at many levels from international to local. They are organisations with relevant interests including both governmental bodies and bodies independent from government. The learning alliance should be “Government-led but supported by community representatives”. It was also said that the alliance must include “the leading organisation with the political will for the water sector”. Such an organisation would vary in different places at different times, but would usually include:

- Local Government
- Other public sector bodies (as in South African)
- NGOs
- Civil society groups (“Local human organisations”)
- Community based organisations (CBOs)
- Learning organisations
- People responsible for planning and follow-up within organisations

It was said that the alliance should be broad in its approach. Alliance leaders should use the media to encourage organisations to join. A Steering Committee should be formed.

#### **Facilitator characteristics**

The task of the facilitator is to facilitate the process and to be a catalyst. This requires someone who is even handed and ‘neutral’ between organisations, respects individual views and does not push one outcome or agenda. The facilitator must be a good listener, but also be willing to challenge, by asking relevant questions such as “Can what you propose be scaled up?” It was felt that the facilitator should have knowledge of the sector and content of what is being discussed but be able to work with people from different backgrounds, from different disciplines and with different skills. In addition, the facilitator needs interpretation and analysis skills, conflict resolution skills and to be able to facilitate training.

#### **Tools**

Tools can be technical, conceptual or organisational; high tech or low tech. Some strategic approaches considered in this workshop needed good tools. For example, it was said that a learning alliance must be able to carry out research on good practice, must adopt participatory methods and must have a good communication strategy.

Amongst the tools and methods listed were:

- Seminars and workshops
- Stakeholders dialogues and concerted action (SD & CA)
- Participatory Learning for Action (PLA) tools (such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), Rapid Appraisal of Agricultural Knowledge Systems (RAAKS) and Visioning).
- Electronic communication – e-conferences etc (with hardware and software support)
- A variety of communication platforms
- Monitoring and evaluation tools
- Local tools

#### LOCAL TOOLS

In Malawi alliances use a “BUS-o-meter” as a metaphor, asking “Who is/should be on this bus?” to identify key stakeholders.

## Working group 2

### Action research in learning alliances

Facilitated by Patrick Moriarty

Presentations were based on the Symposium papers:

- Barbara Adolph: *Learning how to do things differently: challenges in sharing tacit knowledge for agriculture and rural development with examples from India and Namibia*,
- Stef Smits, Patrick Moriarty and Barbara van Koppen: *Learning through and about learning alliances: action research in the MUS (Multiple Use Water Systems) project*

**Barbara Adolph** explained the distinction between tacit and explicit knowledge, and ways of making tacit knowledge more explicit through action research. She argued that effective knowledge sharing and innovation can only happen if there is a strong element of action research, which enables partners to share the tacit knowledge embedded in technologies and innovations. Tacit knowledge, (embedded in systems and processes, the skills and experience of individuals or in social culture) cannot easily be captured in written text, and can only be shared through “knowledge in action” – doing things together. Communities of practice (CoPs) enable learning to take place through shared experience, but they have the disadvantage of being composed of peers who all come from similar backgrounds. Learning alliances have a greater variety of stakeholders, and therefore of experiences. However, Adolph says that because of their size, it is rarely possible for all members of a learning alliance to take part in action research.

Despite the disadvantages of projects (lack of scaling-up, poor methods of spreading results, limited time frames and donor expectations) they do enable partners to work together intensively, and can be a starting point for stakeholders to collaborate in the future.

Her contribution raised an (unresolved) question as to whether years of anthropological research is required to make community tacit knowledge explicit.

**Stef Smits** dealt with the action research framework from the MUS (Multiple Use water Systems) project. It showed how action research could make LAs more operational. In this project, learning alliances are being established with key stakeholders at different levels. In order to structure the learning process, an action research cycle has been adopted. For each of the levels, members of the LA go through cycles of action research.



Stef Smits, IRC

- **Are learning alliances compatible with projects and ‘log frames’?**

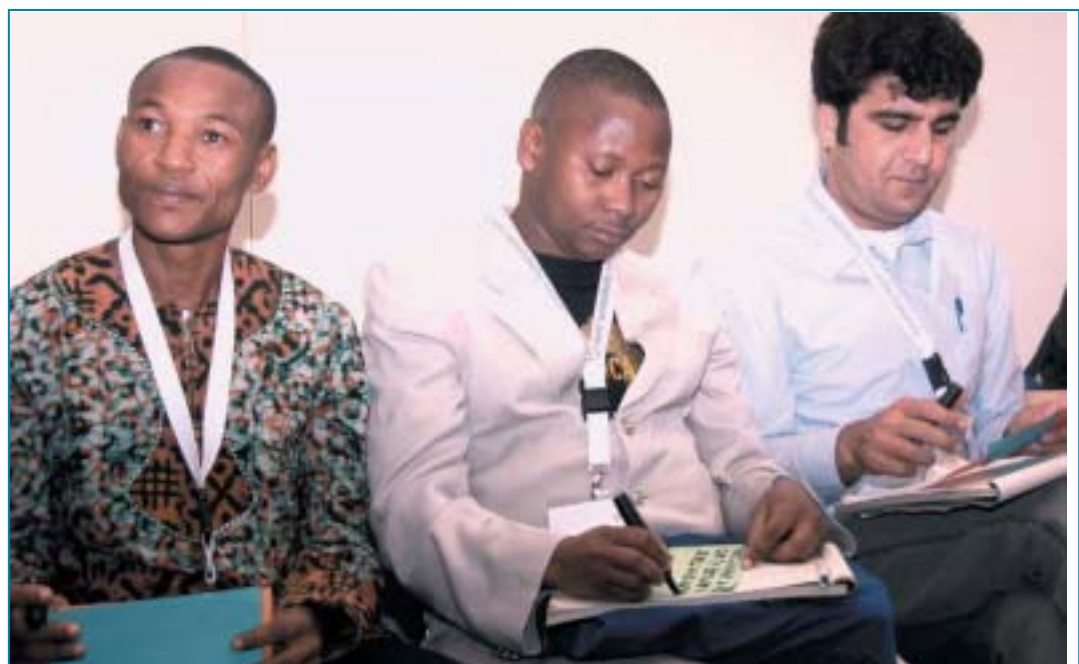
This raised the question of whether learning projects fit the context of project frameworks, ‘log frames’ and outputs. It was agreed that there is a need to take an approach which thinks outside of project boxes. However, projects seed processes, that can become more important than the project outputs. It is not clear how action research can be structured. By definition, action research is scientifically chaotic, as stakeholders only define its direction once it is in motion. Nevertheless, it is possible to provide a structure through a clear project framework and by setting the boundaries of the research. The MUS framework is an example of that. This is a difficult balance to make.

- **Who sets the research agenda?**

In action research, the broad research issue is often set by researchers and the development community at large. In specific LAs the detailed research agenda must be jointly defined, in response to the questions raised by the LA. We conclude that researchers and the development community set the broad agenda, and that this is further defined locally during action research.

- **At which level does the process start?**

The group concluded that this varies from case to case, driven by the needs and opportunities at each level. Sometimes, the blockages to innovation and scaling up are at national level, and it makes sense to start there. In other cases, it may be more relevant to begin at the local or intermediate level. It is recommended to do a quick scan and SWOT analysis of stakeholders and issues at each level, before deciding on a strategy of when to engage with each level, how the level will be approached and how to work on linkages between the levels.



*Brainstorming session in working group 2 to decide how best a learning alliance can use action research*

Category	Remarks
Identification and involvement of stakeholders	The process should start with analysing and mobilising stakeholders at each level. It implies that the action research framework should pay attention to how stakeholders participate or are represented.
Community-driven process	There is a need to involve the community and their tacit knowledge in the action research cycle
Time and resources	Action research requires more time and resources than conventional approaches. Time for reflection is especially important.
Flexibility and space	Action research should be done in a flexible environment, focusing on process. We need to think outside the constraints of project approaches. This implies defining a common goal, but adopting a flexible process to reach that goal.
Focus and ownership	A common focus to which everybody is committed should be developed. Without such a focus, the process can go all over the place. Jointly developing the goal or research agenda also results in more ownership
Documentation and dissemination	Action research especially requires that the process of change is documented
Learning and reflection	Learning and reflection is a key phase in the action research cycle. It needs to be put into effect and given space. Institutions need to become learning organisations themselves to internalise lessons brought back by individuals who represent them in learning alliances.
Facilitators and drivers	They are essential to start the process and keep it going. These roles require skills over and above research skills
Gender mainstreaming and disaggregating	Gender approaches need to be mainstreamed in action research, and results disaggregated by gender. Marginalised groups need to be empowered to participate
Demystify action research	Action research is not rocket science. It addresses practical problems in real life situations
Innovation	The basis of action research is that it aims to innovate or to spread innovation
Effective communication	Communication is needed both horizontally and vertically
Work at appropriate levels	The appropriate level must be identified case by case, based on needs and opportunities in each area.

The table shows the results of a brainstorming session to consider the best ways to make use of action research in LAs. The results are not ranked in priority order.

### Conclusions

- Action research is an approach to research innovations to resolve practical problems within a particular context
- Action research has cycles of assessment, planning, implementation and reflection
- Action research is initiated and tackled by relevant stakeholders, who jointly set the agenda and participate in research and the process of reflection
- Action research may be difficult to put into operation; it risks going in many directions
- Frameworks for putting action research into operation have been introduced
- It is important to work at appropriate level, think outside project boxes, and develop joint ownership of research issues

### Working group 3

## Documentation, dissemination and feedback

*Facilitated by Marielle Snel and Jeltsje Kemerink*

The session opened with a presentation by Vibhu Nayar on democratisation of water management in Tamil Nadu. The other presentation was based on the Symposium paper:

- Gugsu Yimer and Ton Schouten: *Action research on scaling up rural water and sanitation services in Ethiopia.*

**Vibhu Nayar** described how the Tamil Nadu experiment was designed to tackle a growing water crisis. The Tamil Nadu Water Supply and Drainage Board (TWAD) started a self-critical process to reassess roles, functions and relationships. A traditional cultural concept of Koodam was used to support equal treatment, sharing and consensual decision making. The process drew conclusions about greater community decision making, greater consistency in policies, more appropriate design and greater consultation of women, as well as a focus on over-exploitation of groundwater. Engineers agreed (in a Maraimalainagar Declaration) that before starting any new schemes, they would

- Ensure existing schemes are put to optimal use
- Rehabilitate schemes and revive traditional sources
- Aim at 10 % higher coverage from the same budget

Total Community Water Management (TCWM) was launched in 200 villages. Amongst outcomes were a “one tree per child” planting programme, the revival of traditional ponds, tanks and wells, greater equity in supply, safe disposal of waste, water harvesting and self management. The democratisation programme revived traditional water bodies, developed village water plans and greatly increased the involvement of women and school children. Outcomes are promising, but this was the start of a long journey.



*Democratising water management greatly increased the involvement of women and children.*

Pictures: Change Management Group, Tamilnadu Water Supply and Drainage Board, Chennai, India

**Gugsa Yimer** described how organisations active in the Ethiopian rural water sector include government, UNICEF, World Bank, international and local NGOs. Despite long experience of successful community management approaches, scattered experiences are not shared and poorly coordinated. The idea to use action research to scale up rural water and sanitation services was born in an international thematic group, and took shape when Plan Ethiopia responded to an invitation from Plan International to pursue this. A workshop in May 2004 attracted 40 participants from a wide range of sector stakeholders. A National Steering Committee was established headed by the Ministry of Water Resources, with WaterAid and UNICEF as vice chairs and Plan Ethiopia in the role of secretariat.

The aims of the programme are to secure long term (i.e. indefinite) sustainability for community managed rural water supply and sanitation services, and to bring coverage up to 100%. The three year action research programme began in December 2004. The programme has provision for professional support for systematic documentation and dissemination, so that outcomes can be made accessible to a wider audience, broadening the debate on improving rural water supply and sanitation. Ideas being considered include setting up a sector resource centre, creating a web site for the action research programme and producing a newsletter on lessons learned.



*Field visit, Ethiopia.*  
Picture: Plan Ethiopia.

### Discussion

The group attached value to good documentation during the card exercise. The strategic aspects (choice of target groups and clear purposes) and communication channels were regarded as crucial. Process documentation was also important to address questions such as: What is the curve of the learning process? Are there differences of opinion and on what and by whom? How are differences overcome (or not)? Is there negotiation about the different positions and interests among the stakeholders and how does this go? Feedback was seen as important through a variety of methods because learning alliances include a wide variety of stakeholders from community members who are illiterate to academics. How do you make sure that all voices are heard and that everybody has the means and opportunity to tell their stories and share their opinions?

### Strategic points

- Clearly identify and define target audiences
- Know what people want documented and why
- Understand the level of the audiences
- Understand who will use the information and for what
- Set clear objectives e.g. recording process, allocating responsibilities, sharing new ideas
- Decide what type of communication would be most effective for each audience
- Document quickly and systematically – not after implementation is over
- Document relevant processes; avoid “collecting dust”
- Disseminate on a regional basis

A variety of tools and communication strategies are needed for hygiene education. On process documentation it is important to focus on the way things happened and the prevailing conditions. It is also important to document experiences with water management in

Strategic points and proposals for tools were grouped as shown, following a brainstorming session.

communities. Specific information must be fully shared, including statements about the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, conditions attached to grants and fiscal incentives.

#### Decide on channels and their use, including

- The format and manner of documentation, appropriate for each level
- Effective communication channels—brochures, posters, reports and mass media
- Visual and audio tools
- Shared meetings and workshops
- Different levels of language to address different levels of users
- Simple and brief reports
- One-page hand outs in more than one language
- Make manuals from different organisations accessible
- Regular face-to-face meetings

#### Feedback

- Setup systems for feedback
- Feedback lessons learned
- Ensure that feedback goes two ways and is shared
- Feedback from community to policy level to change policies
- Feedback from policy level to community level to introduce changes in the policy
- Ensure regular feedback from stakeholders

#### Methodology

It is important to use community participation learning methods and to cultivate a culture of transparency, and a commitment to openness. This approach requires skilled people – including good facilitators and good reporters. The use of outside documenters – journalists and film makers for example – will give a different and potentially more critical perspective.

### Working group 4

#### Analysis, learning and reflection

*Facilitated by Jaap Pels and Patrick Boel*

Presentations were based on the Symposium papers:

- Derick du Toit: *Preparing people for Integrated Catchment Management: a proposed Learning Alliance for the implementation of a new legal framework for water management in South Africa; Reflexive learning in context*
- Inés Restrepo-Tarquino: *A conceptual framework for technology transfer to the local level in the water supply and sanitation sector in Latin America; Lessons learned from Team Learning Projects*

**Derick du Toit**, from the Association for Water and Rural Development, in South Africa presented *Reflexive learning in context: a case from the Sand River - South Africa with conceptual contemplations*. The Save the Sand Project has developed a framework to involve stakeholders and governance bodies in the development and implementation of a new legal framework for water resources management. The project works with 40 local stakeholder groups, and seeks to engage national, provincial and local level players in dialogue as to how policies play out

at a local level. The process allows local players to arrive at management principles and practices appropriate to their context.

His central thesis was that learning is the basis for action, where learning:

- Is a process not a product
- Is a continuous process that takes time
- Depends on participants' interests and motivations
- Makes meaning within a particular context
- Relates present experiences to past experiences
- Is encouraged by a non-threatening and non-intimidating environment
- Might require actual or direct experience
- Is affected by relationships and interactions within a group

The case study showed a set of horizontal communities of practices integrated vertically through dialogue and action.

**Ines Restrepo** (CINARA) presented a conceptual framework for technology transfer based on years of experiences with slow sand filtration in Colombia. Her presentation showed a number of technology transfer models known from literature and introduced the 'knowledge dialogue model' where stakeholders plan action, and reflect and learn within team learning projects (TLPs) and have space for formal and informal learning.

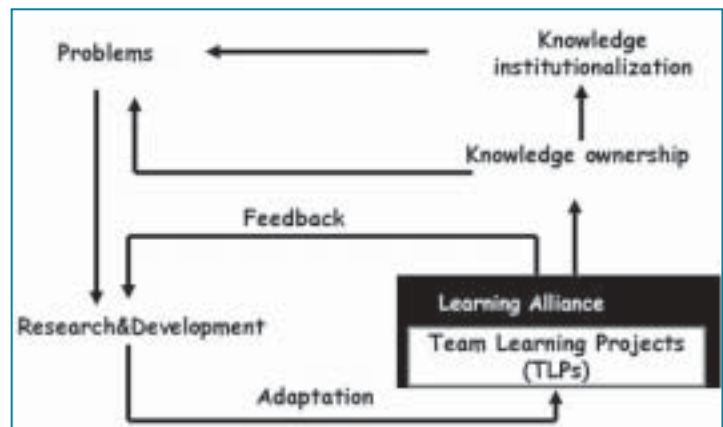
The main lessons presented were:

- LAs work if they generate trust and tackle concrete problems. TLPs are team learning projects.
- Alliances are the sum of different institutions, actors, interests, backgrounds, missions, functions
- Participation depends on there being some perceived benefits
- Responsibilities must be clearly assigned
- Values are learned that contribute towards sustainable human development

One farmer involved in team learning remarked: "In this programme, everyone teaches everyone, and everybody learns from everybody."



A framework for learning, showing learning path and outcomes. Source: Derick du Toit, Association for Water and Rural Development



Knowledge dialogue model. Source: Inés Restrepo-Tarquino



Analysis, learning and reflection working group

“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”

“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to” – said the Cat.

“I don’t much care where” – said Alice.

“Then it doesn’t matter which way you go, said the Cat.” – “so long as I get somewhere,”

Alice added as an explanation.

“Oh, you’re sure to do that,” said the Cat, “if you only walk long enough.”

Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, quoted by Inés Restrepo-Tarquino

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Working group 4 reflected the frustration they felt in dealing with complex issues in a tight time frame, by presenting their flip chart upside-down to the plenary session.

### Discussion

This is a complex topic which invites a variety of conceptual approaches, many of which use slightly different vocabulary and definitions. This complexity and the tight timescale induced a feeling of frustration within the group. This could be seen as reflecting the difficulties of working in learning alliances within real world constraints. Within the time frame, the group could not agree which tools and activities were central to ‘analysis, learning and reflection’. While these activities need to be addressed in a LA, generic recipes can be shallow, unless practice on the ground, including institutional local / regional arrangements, is taken into account. The facilitator and group reporter felt it would be fair to conclude the following about analysis, learning and reflection in LAs:

- Participants come to learn as long as the purpose is clear and linked to their context
  - Analysis, reflection and learning are all integral to LAs; the challenge is to understand their character in context; the group did not want to separate them
  - During the LA process these aspects will grow / evolve
  - LAs should be focused on reflecting on concepts and learning, not based on tools and activities; avoid tools and activities becoming tricks
- However, the question of how this could be achieved was unresolved.

### Detailed findings:

The group compiled a set of cards for what was needed to analysis learning and reflection.

### Analysis

- Clearly identify groups and their water/sanitation related needs
- Identify needs-based problems
- Stakeholder-analysis needed, not only stakeholder identification
- Examine power relationships
- Examine context
- Brainstorm
- Collect information
- Systematise experiences and achievements
- Conceptualise the process
- Define the principles of learning together
- Set a “need to know” learning action goal, and develop .... carefully
- Brainstorm some more
- Collect more information

### Activities

- There is no recipe
- Individuals must understand each other
- Match materials to type & group
- Use an interactive process to engage target groups
- Use focus groups
- Set tasks to be done between sessions
- Set aside time and space for learning

### Tools

- Tools must be useful and not become tricks
- Set time for reflection
- Each learning action goal requires a tailor-made process
- Keep diaries
- Establish a steering group (not everyone agreed)
- The purpose of learning is to do, rather than to know

### General conclusions / facilitators' impressions:

Learning based on analysis and reflection, formal or informal, is at the heart of learning alliances. 'Learning' is a discipline in itself. The emphasis on managing the scaling up of innovations supposes a great deal of organised learning within an alliance—a key activity from the start. The group held an intriguing, but almost academic, debate on how to organise learning, what concepts to adopt, how to structure that process and whether first, second and tertiary learning was being discussed. The reality of a learning alliance is that people embark on and later drop out of a process, and processes vary in speed. Buying into the opportunity to learn by individuals and by their organisations and institutions is the key incentive to sustain the process. Perhaps we should keep in mind 'tell me and I will forget, teach me and I will remember, involve me and I will learn'. Organising / managing people to engage in learning alliances implies that learning will be the key element. The fact that the group concluded that activities and tools should not become tricks, emphasises the view that learning takes place when analysis and reflection is given importance and time is set aside.

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*“The group concluded that activities and tools should not become tricks—emphasising that learning takes place when analysis and reflection is given importance and time is set aside”*

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## Working group 5

### Partnerships

Facilitated by Edwin Hes and Erma Uytewaal

The first presentation was by Ken Kaplan from Building Partners for Development (BPD). The second was based on the Symposium paper:

- Edward Guzha, Mvuramanzi Trust: *An evaluation of existing institutions, organisations and networks capacity and limitations, strength and weaknesses in scaling up innovations and the role of Learning Alliance approaches in the Zimbabwe water and sanitation sector*

**Ken Kaplan** from Building partners for Development (BPD) used an alternative form of presentation by presenting a realistic fictional case portraying recognisable issues relevant for partnerships and networks in the development sector.

*“It appears that the mere existence of networks and partnerships, does not automatically result in learning, adoption and diffusion of innovations.”*

**Fungai Makoni** from the Institute of Water and Sanitation Development (IWSD) described progress in Zimbabwe towards meeting the MDGs for water and sanitation, through the National Master Water Plan. However, disparities between urban and rural areas and lack of attention to community based interventions, support for livelihoods and sustainable changes in hygiene behaviour has encouraged the Water and Environmental Sanitation Working Group (WES) to consider introducing learning alliance approaches. The WES is a partnership including the National Action Committee on water and sanitation (NAC), Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, Department of Irrigation and the District Development Fund as well as local and international NGOs.

The WES aims to ensure that humanitarian water and sanitation interventions are coordinated, recorded and mapped and that the NAC is kept fully informed. It advocates for timely, targeted and sustainable interventions, and aims to promote collecting and sharing relevant information. It contributes to the development of new technologies and approaches, and is planning to organise field visits to learn from interventions and to spread best practice.

Edward Ghuzá's own organisation, the Mvuramanzi Trust has been working successfully for more than five years on ecological sanitation, family wells and rope pump technology, but these have not been taken up and used by other organisations. “It appears that the mere existence of networks, partnerships, associations and groups does not automatically result in learning, adoption and diffusion of innovations in water and sanitation.”

### Discussion

Following questions and clarification, participants wrote on cards short responses to the question: *To implement partnerships in Learning Alliances we need...?* Participants then voted on a priority order (the number of votes is in brackets). As participants could select only what they considered to be two most important, the fact that three groupings received no votes does not imply they were not considered significant.

**Commitment** (16 votes) All stakeholders should be committed to participate actively in the process. The level of trust and confidence in the process influence the level of participation. Trust and confidence are very much related to the open mind set and positive attitude of the partners.



Facilitating the partnership workshop - Edwin Hes

**Good facilitation** (9 votes) The need for a leader(s), champion(s), coordinator or core group to lead the process, was mentioned several times. There was consensus that a learning alliance needs good quality support, especially in its “teething” phase. Whether the facilitator needs to be experienced and knowledgeable in the sector is questionable. However, good facilitation skills and maturity are essential. There were various opinions about whether the process could be facilitated by a member of the LA or whether this could only be done by an independent external organisation or facilitator. The crucial issue of ownership came up in this context.

**Clear rules and responsibilities** (6 votes)

A clear definition of a partnership and a shared understanding of aims and roles of participating actors are required.

**Resources** (6 votes)

Partners should commit financial and human resources. External (seed) money to test the process might encourage stakeholders. It is essential that financial issues are resolved.



*Partners in the partnership working group—clarifying definitions*

**Information sharing** (4 votes) Partners should have a good insight into each others' strategies. This requires appropriate space for communication and information sharing. Within the partnership, there should be clarity about experiences and knowledge and who is doing what. LA partnerships should also be externally oriented with appropriate approaches to a larger group of stakeholders.

**Common objectives** (3 votes) Clarity on (common) objectives is considered important for successful LA partnerships. Common goals, agendas and visions, common concepts and interests were also mentioned.

**Procedures** (3 votes) A clear legal framework outlining the procedures, rights and responsibilities of each participating organisation is required. Clarity on the decision making process and procedures are considered very important.

**Stakeholder involvement** (3 votes) It is crucial that LAs involve partners from different levels, not only national government, but also decentralised government authority involvement. Special attention should be paid to the representation and participation of women, youth and grass-root level communities. It is essential to mainstream their needs and concerns as well as to build on their existing knowledge and experiences.

**Clear benefits** (0 votes) It is important that the learning alliance is able to show early evidence of value for stakeholders, so that partners appreciate the benefits. Equity in participation and benefits was mentioned as a point for attention.

**Conducive environment** (0 votes) An LA benefits from a favourable context—political, legislative, social-cultural and economic circumstances.

**Techniques and tools** (0) What are the right techniques and tools? Are they available? Participative methodologies, broad based consultative processes and systems for clear/open communication and knowledge sharing are required to ensure involvement of actors at different levels.



*Plenary session pulling together the threads of the discussion on tool kit elements for learning alliances.*

## Plenary session

When the groups presented their main findings in plenary session at the end of the afternoon, some of the debates from group discussions were rehearsed in the larger group.

- There was further debate on whether a facilitator should be knowledgeable about the topic. It was agreed that the facilitator does not necessarily have to be an expert on a topic but definitely needs some content knowledge in order to be effective.
- On action research, it was said that mere involvement in the process was not enough. Active participation is needed if the research was genuinely to reflect the full range of stakeholder concerns.
- On documentation, it was stressed that different stakeholders need different kinds of documentation in different formats. It is sometimes hard to capture a delicate process or one that is not based on written documents. Another point was that sometimes what stakeholders think is worth reporting, is not worth hearing. Just giving a report of activities has no added value unless it contains some genuine learning points. From Pauline Mwaniki (NETWAS) came the point that you need dissemination strategy that takes into account resources, but which is also iterative. “For dissemination to be effective it needs to be continuous or people forget.”
- The discussion on analysis, learning and reflection repeated some of the disagreement in the group. Two strands of opinion could be (over)simplified as “*You need a clear conceptual analysis of learning and reflection*” or as , “*If I get a better ability to do my job, that is enough for me.*” One group member reflected, “If we go back to our countries we will find something much more difficult than we found in the group.”
- The partnerships group felt that they had developed some real richness in their detailed identification and grouping of issues, and that this specificity had been rather lost by just reporting group headings. For example it was reported that it was important to include disempowered groups. Group members felt it was important to specify that special efforts should be made to include the views of women, poor people and children.

## Session 5

Morning of Thursday 09 June

### Peer review of programmes and projects, using a learning alliance framework

In the final round of group work, groups conducted peer reviews of existing programmes from a learning alliance perspective. This took the form of short presentations, with one member of a group detailed to play 'devil's advocate' and criticise the project. The aim was to give each group an opportunity to play out a kind of learning alliance experience, looking at positive and adverse lessons from an experience. It offered participants a possibility of placing themselves in the shoes of a person working through a learning alliance approach. Presenters were also able to consider recommendations for the work in which they were involved. Groups took part in a brainstorm session, collating their observations on cards, which were grouped according to themes. To ensure a safe environment for discussion, these results were not reported back in plenary. The four experiences which were opened up for peer review in this way were:



- **POWER**  
*Partnership for Water Education and Research*  
presented by  
Jetze Heun



- *Scaling up School Sanitation and Health Education*  
presented by  
Marielle Snel  
and Kathy Shordt



- **EMPOWERS**  
*Partnership*  
presented by  
Peter Laban



- *Fluid Bonds - Facilitating networks as learning alliances; the case of PRAVAH in Gujarat, India*  
presented by Sara Ahmed

These presentations can be found at <http://www.irc.nl/page/24261>

## Session 6

Afternoon of Thursday 09 June

### Panel debate on learning alliances, project approaches and the MDGs

The era of Millennium Development Goal targets and of projects with detailed logical framework management tools may be a difficult environment in which to innovate, reflect and take time to learn. That was the issue a panel was asked to consider on the closing afternoon of the Symposium on Learning Alliances. IRC Director Paul van Koppen introduced the panel consisting of Kathleen Shordt (IRC), Henk van Norden (UNICEF), Thoko Sigwaza (DWAF, South Africa), Tom Remington (Catholic Relief Services, Kenya), and Frank Jaspers, (UNESCO-IHE). They were joined by Atem Ramsundersingh, team leader for the World Bank's Global Development Learning Network, on a video link from Washington.

They were asked to consider

- Is it possible to develop learning alliances under the current methods of project and programme implementation and finances. In particular, do we need to change methods such as log frames that are focused on goals and outputs and which ignore the process of innovation, adaptation and change?
- How helpful are the MDGs for learning approaches, sharing experiences, learning partnerships and learning platforms at all levels? How do the hard quantity targets of the MDGs relate to the soft quality and sustainability targets of learning approaches?

There was optimism, that learning alliances can help countries to scale up to meet their MDG targets, by acting as engines for change in water, sanitation and hygiene education. Indeed, countries have to focus on innovation, quality and sustainability to break a cycle of failure in which services fail to deliver safe water or hygienic sanitation to poor people.

**Atem Ramsundersingh** called for a shift from a mechanical approach based on management, procedures and satisfying donors towards creative and flexible learning methods of working. "We have wrongly developed a mechanical system, a way of working based on management, procedures and on satisfying donors, while we left behind the urgency to solve the problems on the ground," he said. "We have established a kind of 'donor box' way of thinking, instead of an 'out of the box' way of thinking. If you work in an innovative way, accelerating the processes and increasing efficiency, donors will come to you and beg you 'put me into your project'. Do not focus on making the donor happy, but on satisfying those on the ground."

The MDGs demanded immediate action but the aspirations of the MDGs allowed space for learning. "Learning alliances can be a help for sustainable development and a real contribution to the MDGs."

**Henk van Norden**, UNICEF senior adviser for water and sanitation, agreed that learning approaches were compatible with management tools. Donors had required the use of results based management tools, because "in the absence of such tools we were meandering around unable to show what we had achieved." UNICEF always worked in collaboration with Governments, and this allowed them to develop a sense of continuity and a sense of ownership. "Our country programmes use the concepts of programmes and

projects as building blocks. Scaling up is always in partnership with Government. Governmental institutions are in many cases the only available infrastructure to scale processes and increase or make effective the community participation”.

UNICEF had brought government people and staff from their water and education sectors from eight countries to the Symposium. Henk van Norden said, “A good beginning with learning has been made right here.”

**Thoko Sigwaza**, from DWAF, reminded participants that South Africa had its own ambitious targets to scale up water services by 2008 and sanitation services by 2010. She said that the MDGs provided a focus and were a spur to action. However, scaling up works best when a national government and its allies set the agenda. “Donors should accommodate to your strategy—not the other way round.”

**Tom Remington** from Catholic Relief Services in Kenya said, “I think that the MDGs will help us to go to scale. Organisations that adopt a pilot approach never scale up. It takes a lot of work to go to scale and there is a lot of risk. It is much easier to stay in your pilot.”

**Patrick Moriarty**, head of knowledge development and advocacy at IRC, expressed concern that the push to meet targets could be at the expense of quality and sustainability, as had happened in the 1980s Water and Sanitation Decade. “We have seen that in some countries 30%-50% of installed systems are not working in villages. We have heard of places where there is 90% coverage but only 10% have good quality water. The experience of the past seems to be that targets and sustainability are not compatible.”

**Kathleen Shordt**, IRC Senior programme officer, said that management tools needed to become simpler if implementing organisations on the ground were to be equal partners in the process. “The log frame as it is used today is the enemy of innovation. I have seen 16, 18, 20 page log frames. They give power only to managers who can read that stuff. The people we are participating with cannot understand it. I would cut it by a half or a third.”

**Atem Ramsundersingh** said that log frames recorded activity, not performance or knowledge, while learning had to become the substantive issue in capacity building. It was important to find a route between accountability and dialogue, but the shift had to be in the direction of dialogue.

**Frank Jaspers**, head of management and institutions at UNESCO-IHE, said that log frames could be used to record success. “Donors are aware that programmes are nearly all fragmented, and that is why they are moving to framework agreements and to basket funding. They have to look at sustainability as a crucial factor. We are not confined by the log frames—we can use them to get more funds.”



*Atem Ramsundersingh on screen from Washington with Paul van Koppen in the foreground*

Photo: Catarina Fonseca

During the floor discussion, **Mamadou Bagayoko**, UNICEF Education Officer in Burkina Faso, said that learning alliances did not necessarily slow down the ability to act. “A learning alliance should not be seen as a place for learning, per se. It is for the preparation of informed decision making and activity on the ground. People think that learning will take for ever but this is a false debate. If you learn from other people you have a wider impact in a short time. Learning is definitely for a purpose. A learning alliance should have a clear link between learning and doing. Through the action you generate new knowledge and new knowledge should lead to new action.”

**Rosario Aurora Villaluna**, Director of the STREAMS network of resource centres, agreed, but said that in some countries commitment to MDGs did not extend to all of the key players. “National government is committed to the MDGs, but the sad reality is that you do not see local government commitment to them. Some local governments do not even see that they are part of the commitment.”

**Astrid van Agthoven**, UNICEF Iraq, agreed that targets could benefit a learning alliance. “A learning alliance at district level would be a channel for policy feedback and timely knowledge about what makes a difference at ground level, and could quickly make adjustments.” Others, including **Alok Kumar Majumder**, from DANIDA Bangladesh, said that a learning alliance could help to achieve targets more quickly.

**Peter Bury** from IRC said that MDG goals and learning alliances could be seen as two tracks, and people could work on both, without excluding either. The important thing was to ensure that an understanding about learning permeated the organisation, so that the organisation will change. “Some of us will spend a few hours on the MDGs and more hours on learning alliances.”

**Donna Goodman**, UNICEF, stressed the importance of building capacity in children, who were open to learning and to change. “By 2015 they will be adults and they can operate in a different way.”

**Derick du Toit**, from the Association for Water and Rural Development in South Africa, felt that log frames and other monitoring tools were too constraining. “You cannot think outside of the box if you are using a log frame – because it is mostly boxes!”

The question of funding learning alliance was raised. It was said that it took a long time to create a platform that included all stakeholders, and donors do not want to fund that. Other voices, including USAID, said that there was some flexibility in budgets to fund innovation and learning processes. However, donors did expect those running organisations to fund their own development and not to look for so much donor support for that.

**Subethri Naidoo**, who manages a Municipal Transformation Programme for RSA local government, said that DWAF directed how the money they received should be spent and this worked well. When Government was driving the process, it cut through any local political in fighting which might distort priorities.

## The Learning Alliances Symposium closes— learning and action continues

**Ton Schouten** who moderated plenary sessions throughout the Symposium, invited participants to finish without a grand closing statement or a ‘Delft Declaration on Learning Alliances’. He said that the Symposium showed that the concept is still under development; and that the time was not ripe yet for big statements, but to continue to develop the concept and practicalities following the Symposium. He invited participants to think on what they would take home from the event .

Feedback about the Symposium, and what some of the participants took home are collected together in the next section of this report. They include some of those given on the day, those collecting by reporters at the Symposium, those recorded on the ‘blogs’ and those sent in afterwards to the organisers.



*Ton Schouten who moderated plenary sessions at the Symposium..*



*Paul van Koppen, director of IRC, and Richard Meganck, Director of UNESCO-IHE brought the conference to a close, as they had opened it—still learning and still in alliance.*



*Time to go home to put theory into practice—some of the participants after the close of the Symposium.*

## Appendix 1

### Feedback, take-home messages and messages from home

Participants took a variety of positive messages about learning alliances home. The Symposium energised many of those who attended and made them think more deeply about the partnerships they were involved in and how they could become more like learning alliances. Many reflected on how what they experienced during the Symposium could relate to their daily work.

There were many compliments about the organisation of the Symposium and the quality of presentations. There was also some frustration at the intensity of the schedule and that time for reflection was short during the Symposium, as it is in real life.

This appendix draws together some of that feedback, including reactions collected at the time through interviews, posted by participants in the 'blog' box and those sent afterwards to the organisers. It would be artificial to try to draw a common thread from the comments and feedback, so we present them as a series of snapshot reactions.



#### We came back with specific goals

*Ndala Duma from the Water Information Network (WIN) in South Africa published enthusiastic feed back on the WIN web site.*

“It was interesting to learn that Masibambane already has the core elements of a good learning alliance, since it is a multistakeholder platform that is connected at local, provincial, and national levels. The most important objective of Masibambane is working and learning together, not only for good service delivery but for innovation and change. The South African lesson proved to be a valuable one to share. SALGA Councillor Nandi Mayathula, who is also the Speaker of Joburg Metro, and Ms Thoko Sigwaza, Director of the Sector Collaboration Unit in DWAF gave a brilliant presentation. They were indeed, true ambassadors of sector collaboration in the South African water services sector. The Symposium had fruitful results for WIN-SA and its partners. We all came back with specific goals for the Network and its partners. The most important one is that Masibambane must now focus on strengthening the learning agenda, within its various institutional levels. This also means that WIN-SA has a critical role to play in enhancing the activities of various partners towards realising this goal. A positive step towards learning together has already been taken! Viva Learning Alliances, Viva!”

#### The barriers seem to be coming down

*Mamadou Bagayoko, UNICEF Education Officer in Burkina Faso, “I have learned about the importance of knowledge dissemination with respect to water and sanitation in a collaborative manner. Also the willingness of people in academia to come down to field work is also very enlightening. The barriers seem to be coming down.”*



*Mamadou Bagayoko, UNICEF Education Officer in Burkina Faso,*

## The journalist's view

### How can you sell the concept of a learning alliance to a national media that thinks in concrete images?

*Ton Schouten invited Peter McIntyre, the journalist who produced the Symposium LA Insider to present his final column verbally to the closing session. As this was also feedback, we include it here...*

"I tried to think as a journalist about you going back to your countries and deciding that you wanted everyone to know about learning alliances and the work they could do. I thought what would happen if you approached your local media to publicise your work. The media deal in concrete images; things they can see, hear, smell and touch. They dislike abstract ideas; they are allergic to learning and they are suspicious of alliances. I am imagining you turning up at their offices and saying that you have this great idea. It is called a learning alliance! And you want them to publicise a multiple stakeholder platform meeting next week! Unless you can put your ideas into a more concrete form, you will never be able to get people to understand them. And you do have a good story to tell—there is a problem and you have a solution. I think that this is your story:

1. We are letting down the poorest people in the community—their water and sanitation services are terrible, put lives at risk, and sap people's ability to sustain themselves.
2. Over the past 25 years, we have collectively wasted money and time, doing the wrong things and doing them badly.
3. We have made false promises that have not been kept.
4. That is going to change, because we are going to start doing things differently.
5. We are going to listen to people about their problems and ideas for solving them.
6. Professionals, policy makers, researchers and community members are going to talk to each other, understand each other better and stop blaming each other.
7. We are going to find out which innovations work and base what we do on the evidence.
8. We are going to make sure that our information is honest, accurate and transparent. No more claims of 100% coverage if water is unclean or latrines are not used.
9. You have to give us some time to learn the lessons well, so this time we get it right.
10. When we are done, the Minister will drink from the water in a village of your choice!"

McIntyre invited participants to think about pictures to show learning in action, as the WASH-Streams grass root consultation in Bangladesh did when, at its final lunch, it seated poor men and women from villages alongside VIP guests and Government ministers. They could involve young people to send out letters to stakeholders, setting out the problems of water and sanitation in their schools and communities, and what they wanted from policy makers and service providers. Later the media could show success stories.

Should they think further about the name? "A learning alliance does not sound like dynamic change. Perhaps 'learning for change alliance' would be more descriptive." This was not just a question of marketing and publicity. "It is about clarity. Before you can tell the media exactly what a learning alliance stands for, you have to describe it to yourselves. And if you can sell it to the media, you will also be able to sell it to each other."

### **How can we replicate our work in other provinces of Pakistan and elsewhere**

*Masoor Ahmad, from the Water and Sanitation Program South Asia Office in Pakistan.*

“The Symposium was an opportunity to meet with people in the same sector with the same targets but different approaches. Whatever you are doing should be disseminated as far as possible, there should be no re-invention of the wheel and we should focus on replication. I came here to get to know how the work that we have done can be replicated in other provinces of Pakistan, and eventually with people working in India and other parts of Asia.”

*Masoor found the talking sticks an interesting tool to change the way that dialogue takes place. He is taking back the idea of the LA Insider daily news-sheet and the ‘blog box’ to Pakistan, where government officials are organising a seven country workshop on sanitation. “Some people are not expressive in public and this is a very good way to express yourself.”*



*Masoor Ahmad,  
Water and Sanitation  
Program, Pakistan*

### **Government needs a share in ownership**

*Vibhu Nayar, project director of the Tamil Nadu Water Supply and Drainage Board, is working on the democratisation of water in India.*

“Thank you for a very well organised Symposium, which was quite stimulating to say the least. The lack of definitions and the open-ended nature of the subject helped generate debate and garner attention. I feel Learning Alliances is a good perspective as long as it is understood that it is a method/process to overcome the existing deficiencies while scaling up innovation.

“My experiences over the last many years lead me to reiterate that the engagement of Government and dialogue with the system are essential components of defining LAs. Otherwise the discourse is devoid of reality. A probable response would be to include Government in Learning Alliances. But experience shows that Governments would tend to dominate or ignore it, unless they have a specific ownership of the process of making the alliance successful, using it for impact and improving critical service delivery. Another entry point could be to involve cutting edge instruments of Government at field level in the Learning Alliance. Greater interaction at the community level will lead to mutually shared learning. Learning may trigger a new way of looking at traditional roles and responsibilities and initiate internal changes in individuals and organisations because of changed attitudes. This is the context in which an alliance has to evolve and that a facilitator has to catalyse.

### **Work needed to promote learning alliance concept with stakeholders**

*Alok Kumar Majumder, Water and Sanitation Programme Officer for Danida in Bangladesh, is thinking about what would be required to promote learning alliances.*

“The Learning Alliances is a useful concept, because it widens the scope of multi stakeholder participation. The LA offers the scope of horizontal and vertical analysis of any issues, which make the system more efficient. At present Learning Alliances concept is not well known in Bangladesh. In order to enhance the acceptance of LA, a series of interactions with different stakeholders and policy makers is required

“While it has not fully clarified the process, the Symposium helped me to think about LA process. In general, the logistics and organization was efficient and useful. It would have been better, if a field visit was arranged ... [to] open the eyes of the participants to understand how the LA works in a real situation. Too many parallel sessions were conducted on different themes. In future, it would be better, if the parallel sessions of the Symposium are limited to most relevant themes. The time for plenary session should be increased.”

### Finding stakeholders is not easy

*K.V. Rajeshwari from the Energy and Resources Institute, India, (TERI) works to improve industrial water efficiency, and to alleviate the impact of untreated effluents on water quality.*

“I feel that every project we do is a kind of learning alliance. We have a consortium of experts and TERI acts as a kind of facilitator between specialist institutions and local industry.” Finding the right stakeholders was not easy. “Some of the private industries did not want to reveal information. The public industries were more open to the findings and participated in the analysis. They were interested in improving themselves. We observed that the private sector would like the benefits if they believe there is a financial reward. We have learned it is difficult to bring in all the stakeholders in the same place and it can take time to resolve the conflicts. You have to focus on the outcome.”



*K.V. Rajeshwari  
from TERI*

### You did a great job—can it help me to set rational community tariffs?

*Dauda Wurie, Water and Environmental Sanitation Project Officer, UNICEF Angola, plans to improve the process of setting tariffs for community water supply. Can a learning alliance help?*

“All acknowledgements and appreciation for a good job done in my view, must go to the Learning Alliance Symposium organising committee. I think you guys did a great job at making it easy for people like me to have benefited from the complexities of ideas in the Symposium. Operationalising that learning at the local level remains our challenge, but we are looking forward to this. What we are attempting to do here is to make sensible and rational financing arrangements for community water supply schemes. Often community tariffs have been prescribed based, at best on guesstimates of operational and management costs, or on inadequate assessment of these costs, with mostly disastrous consequences.”

### More discussion needed to iron out specific problems

*Amjad Ali Khan, of Deutsche Welthungerhilfe (DWWH)/German Agro Action, Afghanistan, would have liked more time for discussion, and needs advice on bringing in stakeholders.*

“The Symposium was very useful in bringing people from different parts of the world and providing an opportunity to share experiences, mostly the success stories. However, I feel that time for presentations and discussion was short. For the next Symposium I would suggest that the presentation should be in the main hall, followed by discussion, so that every one can benefit. Secondly, I would suggest that each day of the Symposium focus on one thematic area, like social mobilisation, hygiene promotion, capacity building, replication, experiences of working with other partners (both NGOs and government), and scaling up etc.. I think this could be more fruitful and would provide sufficient time for deepening the issues and concept. Considering the huge number of participants, I think logistically it was very well organised and the organisers deserve appreciation. The concept is good and useful, however to make it more useful I would suggest that there should be working or focal groups for different regions i.e. Asia, Africa, Latin or South America, Middle East, which meets may be twice a year.

“To be honest right now I have no clear thoughts on how to make it make more relevant to my work, Though I know that the concept of learning alliance would be very productive, if somehow I could manage to bring other stakeholders to the boat. Since I am working in a country which is in its initial stages of moving from emergency to development, The NGOs are more concerned and focused on their jobs/ targets and the government structure/ institutions are not in a very good situation. Maybe IRC and other LA members could advise me on the issue?”

### **This will help to address the problems of poor communities**

**Baz Muhammad Khattak**, *Local Government & Rural Development Department North West Frontier Province, Pakistan*, believes this will help address the problems of poor communities.

“The Symposium was of benefit and has much relevance to my functions as Secretary of the Department. Water and Sanitation is a high priority need in both the urban and rural Pakistan. There are four Projects under implementation in the North West Frontier Province, Pakistan. With these we will be able to address the problems of poor communities. I am thankful to IRC for giving me an opportunity to understand new concepts through LA.”

### **Security will have to improve before these approaches can be implemented**

**Astrid van Agthoven**, *UNICEF Project Officer for Water and Sanitation, Iraq*, feels that the concept brings together good programming practices in a structured way.

“Although I feel it’s not that new – it brings several elements of other approaches/ good programming practices together in a structured way. In Iraq the environment is not conducive, the situation needs to be more stable. Then when security improves, it will take some time and influencing skills to enthuse a sufficient number of people at different levels to make things happen.”

*The following comments are selected from those posted in the ‘blog’ box at the Symposium. This offered an opportunity for named or unnamed comments, so some of these are anonymous.*

**Sawaeng Ruaysoongnorn**, *Khon Kaen University, Thailand*

“I am interested in “stick holder” techniques for conflict resolution dialogue. The stick controls the discussion since only the one who has the stick has the right to talk. This would reduce the potential confrontation of participants. I felt it is good for conflict discussions and I will apply it in my work in Thailand.”

*Anonymous*

“All the points raised in SWOT discussions in group work should be captured, even those that were not ranked. They may not be important today, but tomorrow they may be most important. I recommend listing Box 1 with ranked SWOT points, and Box 2 with unranked points.”

**Pauline Mwaniki**, *NETWAS, Kenya*, in reaction to the session on conflict management.

“Can people and organisations work together effectively in the absence of trust and respect? Some seem to think so—‘people trust the system, not the person’, someone said. I think this is dependent on the cultural context. In Africa, people lay emphasis on social relations, not inanimate systems. In the absence of relationships, systems gradually lose their strength.”

**Mike Morris**, *Natural Resources Institute, UK*, on the importance of common objectives.

“Our experiences within partnerships is that sharing an understanding of the underlying problems is important. Once ‘partners’ agree on this, there is room for differing individual and organisational objectives, provided they align in addressing the underlying problems.” Mike Morris later e-mailed the organisers to congratulate them on “an excellent LA Symposium”, and to say that the Livelihoods and Institutions Group at the NRI will shortly set up a website for the Post-Harvest Innovation Learning Alliance (PHILA).

There were other requests along these lines and this has been done in this report.

The Post-Harvest Innovation Learning Alliance website is at <http://www.nri.org/PHILA/>

*Anonymous*

“Lots of problems identified remind one of obscure debates around participatory methodology in agricultural extension. What can we learn from the past? Are we not now at exactly the same point, trying to solve problems which have not been solved over the last 30 years? Is LA a new label for the same bottle of wine? Are we aware of our own limits? We should go into the topics at greater depth—we are still at the very surface. We should tackle fewer case studies, and look at one or two examples and learn from mistakes—being open to self-criticism. Cees Leeuwis gave a lot of insights into ‘learning’, ‘innovation’ etc.—we should explore that more.”

*Anonymous*

“More Cees Leeuwis, please!”

*Anonymous*

“I think that we still don’t have a common understanding of what is a learning alliance! We should have shared our expectations of this Symposium at the very beginning. That should be one of the basics of good facilitation.”

*Anonymous*

“I am still not clear on the key elements of a learning alliance. What makes it different from other learning forums?”

*Emmanuel Addai, Communications Officer, WaterAid, Ghana,*

“A very good brilliance concept—great presentations. I have started considering the role of a learning alliance in scaling up WaterAid’s campaign on the rope pump in Ghana. I believe it will work and work very fast!”

*Anonymous*

“The dialogue tool led to a less critical analysis of the tasks and a more discursive individualistic approach that fed into the card entries. Why? Because we were expressly invited to be ‘accepting’ of the opinions of others, i.e. not to be critical and to tease out issues. ‘Dialoguing’ is more appropriate to ‘conflict’ situations, not to critical analysis.”

*Anonymous*

“I sometimes missed ‘deep’ real discussion.”

## Appendix 2

### Side meetings at the Symposium

*Amongst side meetings held at the Symposium, two were open to all.*

#### Future Search - A practical tool for working at scale

On Monday 06 June, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) hosted a workshop entitled *Future Search A Practical Tool for Working at Scale*. This focused on a donor view of going to scale. **Mona Grieser**, Director of the USAID Hygiene Improvement Program (HIP) and **Merri Weinger**, Manager of HIP, outlined a number of reasons why going to scale was important – value for money, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, to create change, to increase impact and to solve problems. Going to scale could mean a variety of approaches. For some it meant scaling up from projects, (islands of success) to whole regions and districts. The Hygiene Improvement Program was approaching this differently. USAID will seek through the HIP programme to seek to start at scale, engaging:

- multiple stakeholders at
- multiple levels using
- multiple interventions working on
- multiple practices (hand washing, safe disposal of faeces, water storage and treatment)

The workshop demonstrated the principles of a Future Search, which is used to bring decision makers together with experts and with people with needs, to start looking at common problems and aims. These sessions can be large, including from 80 to 800 people. The tools were designed to reveal “where you have been and where you are now”, which were prerequisites for making progress on a future course of action.

Those attending the workshop tried out two tools. Participants marked significant events from their personal lives,

events in the sector and events in the wider world onto a time line. This began to describe a history of the sector in a personal and broader context.

Another tool, a mind-map, was used to look at trends in the water, sanitation and hygiene sector. It suggested that the sector will be influenced by such factors as HIV/AIDS, global warming, debt, sector integration, wars, integrated water resources management, globalisation, child rights and education. Future Search is a planning tool, designed to move quickly into gear and to promote mutual learning and action.



*Drawing a timeline at the side meeting, ‘A practical tool for working at scale’.*

#### FUTURE SEARCH

The Future Search method is more fully explained at <http://www.futuresearch.net/>.

The Hygiene Improvement Project is explained in more detail in the Symposium background document: Bery, Grieser and Weinger: *Hygiene improvement at scale*

## Transparency and honesty in the water sector

On Friday 10 June, **Kathleen Shordt**, IRC senior programme officer for knowledge development and advocacy, with **Laurent Stravato** IRC project officer, led a mini-consultation on transparency and honesty in the water sector.

The international drive for greater transparency reflects increasing awareness that resources can be squandered. Kathleen Shordt pointed out that 30%-70% of resources are lost because of dishonesty or corruption. She believed that the Millennium Development Goals could be achieved without additional resources if corruption and dishonesty were eliminated. The group drew up examples of corruption at international, national, district and local levels. This could range from false or broken promises of aid, to political favouritism and nepotism, to stealing materials or digging wells that were too shallow.

- It was said that corruption exists at every level in all countries. Problems are generic; but solutions might be situation specific. The biggest problem was when there was social acceptance of corruption, when it was considered acceptable to add on commissions for no added value, or take a cut of project money.
- Clearly, poverty is a factor. It was said that you cannot eliminate corruption if you cannot reduce poverty and increase equity. But you also cannot wait for poverty to be eliminated to tackle corruption.
- Many people are honest, and give good value for the money they earn. It was felt that examples of honest behaviour needed to be made known as people needed to know what they should do, not just what they should not do.
- People also need to know what to do when they see corruption happening. Reporting procedures and disciplinary procedures need to be robust and widely known. It is important that whistle blowers are protected.

The group felt that there were often hidden forms of dishonesty. Donors often appoint consultants who are incompetent or lack knowledge of the sector and country to evaluate programmes. Sometimes consultants simply write what donors want to hear, or what they think they need to write in order to win another commission.

From South African comes the example of the Scorpion Unit, a police unit capable of tackling corruption at Government and regional level. It has had high media exposure, and made people feel stronger about reporting corruption.

In 2005, IRC has held an e-conference on transparency, honesty and corruption in the water and sanitation sector.

Kathleen Shordt intends to produce a Thematic Overview Paper (TOP) on the topic to highlight issues and good practice.



*What defines corruption and how can we achieve transparency—side meeting at the Symposium.*

A special section of the IRC web site now focuses on transparency. Cor Dietvorst from IRC has gathered all the news stories from Source Weekly that focus on transparency or corruption. View these at <http://www.irc.nl/page/17346>

## Appendix 3

# Final Programme Learning Alliances Symposium Delft, 7th- 9th June

Tuesday 7 June 2005

9.00-9.30	<b>Opening (Main Auditorium)</b> Paul van Koppen, Director, IRC Richard Meganck, Director, Unesco-IHE	
9.30-10.15	<b>Key note presentations (Main Auditorium)</b>	
	Cees Leeuwis, Wageningen University, Netherlands	Learning Alliances between power and impotence. Underpinnings and pitfalls from innovation and social learning theory
	Jan Teun Visscher, IRC, the Netherlands and Mariela García, CINARA, Colombia	Multi-stakeholder learning in Colombia
10.15-10.45	Coffee break (Hall 1st floor)	
10.45-11.30	Patrick Moriarty IRC, Netherlands	Learning Alliances for scaling up innovative approaches in the Water and Sanitation sector - Background paper to the Symposium
	Thoko Sigwaza, Masibambane, South Africa and Nandi Mayathula - Khoza, South African Local Government Association (SALGA) Executive Member, South Africa	Building a Learning Water Services Sector through Collaboration: the South African Experience of Masibambane (Let's Work Together) and WIN (Water Information Network)
	María Veronica Gottret in substitution of Mark Lundy, CIAT, Colombia	Building multi-stakeholder innovation systems for rural agro-enterprise development: Reflections on Learning Alliance methods, process and initial results.
11.30-12.15	<b>Plenary panel discussion (Main Auditorium)</b>	
12.15-13.45	Lunch (Canteen)	
13.45-14.00	<b>Introduction to 4 parallel sessions (Main Auditorium): Analysis of key elements in Learning Alliances in different sectors</b>	
14.00-15.00	<b>Parallel session 1: Hygiene education (Room A2a)</b>	
	Pauline Mwaniki and Misheck Kirimi	A partnership approach in improving school sanitation and hygiene in Kenya
	Renuka Bery, Mona Grieser and Merri Weinger	Hygiene improvement at scale
	<b>Parallel session 2: Agriculture (Room A2b)</b>	
	Sawaeng Ruaysoongnern and Frits Penning de Vries	Learning Alliances Development for scaling up of multi-purpose farm ponds in a semi arid region of the Mekong basin
	M. J. Morris, B. M. Mvumi, W. H. Riwa and T. E. Stathers	Post-harvest innovation to improve food security in Tanzania and Zimbabwe: Learning alliance lessons
	<b>Parallel session 3: Water and sanitation (Room A3a)</b>	
	Jan Reynders and Sara Ahmed	Who's Water? Learning from Public-'Private' Partnerships in Gujarat
M.A. Zárate, J.M. Rojas, J.O. Arzabe and H.L. Stone	Innovative Approaches to Strengthening the Water and Health Sector in Latin America: Experiences in Guatemala and Bolivia	

**Tuesday 7 June (Cont)**

14.00-15.00 (Continued)	<b>Parallel session 4: Environment (Room A3b)</b>	
	Inés Restrepo-Tarquino, Gustavo Vivas, Ana Dorly Jaramillo	Strengthening capacities through learning alliances: improving water use implementing cleaner production in the tanneries in El Cerrito (Colombia);
	K.V. Rajeshwari, I. Thanumoorthy, Malini Balakrishnan, Vidya S. Batra, Patricia McCrory, Joel Ferguson, Julie-Anne Hanna, Miriam Sartor, Martin Kaschek and Horst Chmiel	Partnership for sustainable water management practices in Indian dairy industry
15.00-15.30	Coffee break (Hall 1st floor)	
15.30-16.00	<b>Parallel sessions (cont.)</b>	
16.00-17.00	<b>Reporting back in plenary (Main Auditorium)</b>	
17:00-19:00	<b>Welcome cocktail (Socio-Room/Garden)</b>	

**Wednesday 8 June**

9.00-9.30	<b>Recapitulation of previous day (Main Auditorium)</b> <b>Introduction to 5 parallel sessions: processes in Learning Alliances</b>	
9.30-10.15	<b>Parallel session 1: Capacity building (Room A2a)</b>	
	Paul Taylor and Kees Leendertse	Capacity Building Networks - an effective way to scale up capacity building
	Amsalu Negussie	The contribution of networking and partnerships in community initiatives to scale-up of water supply services, Geita District, Tanzania
	<b>Parallel session 2: Enabling environment (Room A2b)</b>	
	Masroor Ahmad, Farooq Khan Abbasi, Dr. Tameez Ahmad, Saima Shinwari and Peter J. Bury	Towards WATSAN learning alliances in Pakistan
	Daudi Makamba	Advantages of Learning Alliances for Plan Tanzania, CARE Tanzania and WaterAid Tanzania Learning Forum
	<b>Parallel session 3: Representation and participation (Room A3a)</b>	
	Paul Verveen	Out-of-the-box/into-the box. Why learn to fly the plane if you do not know how to land it!
	Fadi Shraideh, Rania Alzoubi, Mufleh Abaddi and Fidaa Haddad	Stakeholder dialogue and participatory planning in the water sector of Balqa Governorate, Jordan
	<b>Parallel session 4: Dealing with conflicting interests and power (Room A3b)</b>	
	Simone van Vugt and Esther Koopmanschap	Power & Conflict in Multi Stakeholder Processes
	Sameera Rifai, Buthayna Mized, Falasteen Abo Baker, Sayel Wishahi	A case study on stakeholder dialogue and participatory planning in the water sector of Jenin Governorate
	<b>Parallel session 5: Knowledge management (Main Auditorium)</b>	
	René van Lieshout	The Learning Alliance: An opportunity for resource centres?
Damián Indij	Knowledge management: active and collaborative alliances for effective development	
10.15-10.45	Coffee break (Hall 1st floor)	

**Wednesday 8 June (Continued)**

10.45-11.15	<b>Parallel sessions (cont.)</b>	
11.15-12.15	<b>Reporting back in plenary</b>	
12.15-13.45	Lunch (Canteen)	
13.45-14.00	<b>Introduction to 5 parallel sessions: development of a tool-kit for Learning Alliances</b>	
14.00-15.00	<b>Parallel session 1: Facilitation (Room A2a)</b>	
	Mariela García	The importance of the facilitator in Learning Alliances; reflections from the experiences of Cinara
	M. El- Manadely , K. Soliman , and H. Fahmy	EMPOWERS Project in Egypt: A Successful Example For Learning Alliance Approach
	<b>Parallel session 2: Action-research (Room A2b)</b>	
	Barbara Adolph	Learning how to do things differently: challenges in sharing tacit knowledge for agricultural and rural development (with examples from India and Namibia).
	Stef Smits, Patrick Moriarty and Barbara van Koppen	Learning through and about learning alliances: action research in the MUS (Multiple Use water Systems) project
	<b>Parallel session 3: Documentation and dissemination (Room A3a)</b>	
	Vibhu Nayar	Democratisation of water management in Tamil Nadu, India
	Gugsa Yimer	Action research on scaling up rural water and sanitation services in Ethiopia
	<b>Parallel session 4: Analysis, learning and reflection (Room A3b)</b>	
	Derick du Toit	Preparing people for Integrated Catchment Management: a proposed Learning Alliance for the implementation of a new legal framework for water management in South Africa; Reflexive learning in context
	Inés Restrepo-Tarquino	A conceptual framework for technology transfer to the local level in the water supply and sanitation sector in Latin America; Lessons learned from Team Learning Projects.
	<b>Parallel session 5: Partnerships in Learning Alliances (Main Auditorium)</b>	
	Ken Caplan	Underlying Interests: making partnerships work more effectively
	Edward Guzha	An evaluation of existing institutions, organisations and networks capacity and limitations, strength and weaknesses in scaling up innovations and the role of Learning Alliance approaches into existing water and sanitation sector in Zimbabwe
15.00-15.30	Coffee break (Hall 1st floor)	
15.30-16.00	<b>Parallel sessions (cont.)</b>	
16.00-17.00	<b>Reporting back in plenary</b>	

**Thursday 9 June**

9.00-9.30	<b>Recapitulation of previous day Introduction to 4 peer reviews of programmes and projects, using the Learning Alliances framework</b>	
9.30-10.15	<b>Parallel peer review 1 (Room A2a)</b>	
	Jetze Heun	The PoWER (Partnership for Water Education and Research) programme
	<b>Parallel peer review 2 (Room A2b)</b>	
	Peter Laban and Patrick Moriarty	Learning Alliances for local water resource management in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine: lessons from the EMPOWERS project
	<b>Parallel peer review 3 (Room A3a)</b>	
	Marielle Snel	Scaling up School Sanitation and Hygiene Education
9.30-10.15	<b>Parallel peer review 4 (Room A3b)</b>	
	Sara Ahmed and Shalabh Mittal	Fluid bonds – Facilitating networks as Learning Alliances for policy advocacy: The case of PRAVAH, Gujarat (India).
10.15-10.45	Coffee break (Hall 1st floor)	
10.45-11.30	<b>Parallel sessions (cont.) – recommendations</b>	
11.30-12.15	Break: walk to the market place in Delft	
12.15-13.45	Lunch (Canteen)	
13.45-15.00	Panel debate on project approaches vs learning alliances approaches (Main Auditorium) with: Atem Ramsundersingh, World Bank Institute (by video conference), Henk van Norden, UNICEF, Thoko Sigwaza, Masibambane, South Africa, Tom Remington, CRS, Catholic Relief Services, Frank Jasper, UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education, Kathleen Shordt, IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre	
15.00-15.30	Coffee break (Hall 1st floor)	
15.30-16.00	<b>Recommendations and reflection (Main Auditorium)</b>	
16.00-17.00	<b>Closure and awarding of certificates (Main Auditorium)</b>	
17:00-19:00	<b>Farewell cocktail (Socio-Room/Garden)</b>	

Appendix 4

List of participants Learning Alliances Symposium Delft, 7- 9 June 2005

Name of participant		Organisation	Country	Job title
1	Ms. Mona Y. Grieser	Academy for Educational Development (AED)	USA	Project Director USAID/ Hygiene Improvement Program (HIP)
2	Ms. Renuka Bery	Academy for Educational Development (AED)	USA	KM Specialist/HIP
3	Mr. Farooq Khan Abbassi	APO WES UNICEF Peshawar office	Pakistan	Project Officer
4	Mr. Derick du Toit	Association for Water and Rural Development (AWARD)	South Africa	Project Manager
5	Mr. Ken Caplan	Building Partnerships for Development in Water and Sanitation (BPD)	UK	Director
6	Mr. Kees Leendertse	Cap-Net/UNDP	The Netherlands	HRD Specialist
7	Mr. Hazim Fahmy	CARE Egypt	Egypt	Country Coordinator - EMPOWERS Partnership
8	Mr. Mufleh Aref Haza al-Alaween	CARE Jordan	Jordan	Field Coordinator - EMPOWERS Partnership
9	Mr. Peter Laban	CARE Netherlands	Palestine	Regional Coordinator - EMPOWERS Partnership
10	Mrs. Sameera SA Qubaja – Rifai	CARE West Bank/Gaza	Palestine	Country Coordinator - EMPOWERS Partnership
11	Mr. Tom Remington	Catholic Relief Services (CRS)	Kenya	Agriculture Advisor
12	Mr. Ben Minga Odinga	Catholic Relief Services/ Sudan Program	Kenya	Water and Sanitation Coordinator
13	Mr. Gustavo Adolfo Vivas Forero	CDP del Cuero	Colombia	Industrial Engineer
14	Mr. Sissoko Moulaye	Centre de Recherche et d'Action sur le Developpment Rural (C.R.A.D.R)	Mali	Rural Development Officer
15	Mr. Evariste Kouassi-Komlan	CREPA	Burkina Faso	Head of External Affairs
16	Mr. Alok Kumar Majumder	Danish International Development Assistance (DANIDA)	Bangladesh	Programme Officer
17	Mrs. Angela Masefield	Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF)	South Africa	Deputy Regional Director: Water Services
18	Mr. Amjad Ali Khan	Deutsche Welthungerhilfe (DWWH)/German Agro Action	Afghanistan	Head of Projects
19	Ms. Ibtissam Moheemmad Jawad	Directorate for Water, Babel, Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works	Iraq	Head of Planning Department
20	Mr. Bongani Bethwell Matomela	DWAF- Eastern Cape	South Africa	Deputy Director - Eastern Cluster
21	Ms. Motshidisi Mogamisi	DWAF- Eastern Cape	South Africa	Assistant Director- Eastern Cluster
22	Mr. Allestair Wensley	DWAF-HO	South Africa	Professional Engineer
23	Ms. Nino Manus	DWAF-HO	South Africa	Deputy Director
24	Mr. Sibusiso Lawrence Mthembu	DWAF-HO	South Africa	Deputy Director -Water Services Support
25	Ms. Sybil Jennifer Mary Evans	DWAF-HO	South Africa	Deputy Director - Water Services Support
26	Ms. Thoko Sigwaza	DWAF-HO	South Africa	Director - WSS

27	Mr.	Thomas Ramasenya Meso	DWAF-HO	South Africa	Assistant Director -Sanitation
28	Mr.	Thifhelimbilu Cyril Nemutudi	DWAF-Limpopo	South Africa	Assistant Director - Northern Cluster
29	Mr.	Max A. Zárate B.	East Carolina University	USA	Assistant Professor
30	Mr.	Kamal Adhikari	Environmental Sanitation Section, Department of Water Supply and Sewerage	Nepal	Sociologist
31	Mr.	Sandile Mbanjwa	Ilembe Municipality-KwaZulu Natal	South Africa	Technical Director
32	Mr.	Jan Reynders	Independent Consultant	The Netherlands	Independent Consultant
33	Mr.	Thomas White	Institute for Public-Private Partnerships Inc (IP3)	USA	Chief Executive Officer
34	Mr.	Fungai Makoni	Institute of Water and Sanitation Development	Zimbabwe	Research Officer
35	Mr.	Deepak Lochan Adhikari	International Development Enterprises (IDE)	Nepal	Senior Engineer (Liaison Scientist in the MUS Project)
36	Ms.	Barbara van Koppen	International Water Management Institute (IWMI)	South Africa	Principal Researcher
37	Mr.	Michiko Ebato	International Water Management Institute (IWMI)	Ethiopia	Post Doctoral Fellow
38	Mr.	Dr. Murad Bino	INWRDAM	Jordan	Executive Director
39	Ms.	María Veronica Gottret	ISS/CIAT	The Netherlands	Visiting Researcher and PhD Participant
40	Mr.	Sawaeng Ruaysoongnern	Khon Kaen University	Thailand	Professor
41	Mr.	Damian Indij	LA-WETnet	Argentina	Coordinator
42	Mr.	Baz Mohammad Khattak	LGRDD	Pakistan	Secretary Local Government
43	Ms.	Subethri Naidoo	Consolidation of Municipal Transformation Programme (RSA local government dept) funded by DFID	South Africa	Programme Coordinator
44	Mr.	William Hillary Riwa	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security Tanzania	Tanzania	Coordinator for Integrated Pest Management
45	Mr.	Rodrick Joseph Nthengwe	Ministry of Education Malawi	Malawi	Chief Education Officer (Basic Education)
46	Mrs.	Nynke C. Post Uiterweer	Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment	The Netherlands	Policymaker
47	Ms.	Zanna M.A. Al-Rawandoozi	Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works	Iraq	Director General for Human Resources
48	Mr.	Rakesh Behari	Ministry of Rural Development	India	Joint Secretary & Mission Director
49	Mr.	Hudgeson K.M. Muhezuwa	Ministry of Water Development	Malawi	Principal Community Water Supply and Sanitation Officer
50	Mr.	Mike Morris	Natural Resources Institute (NRI)	UK	Social and Institutional Development Specialist
51	Ms.	Barbara Adolph	Natural Resources Institute (NRI)/ University of Greenwich	UK	Senior Scientist
52	Mr.	Mukti Pokharel	Nepal Red Cross Society	Nepal	Chief, Junior/Youth Red Cross (Sanitation)
53	Ms.	Pauline Mwaniki	NETWAS Kenya	Kenya	Programme Officer
54	Mrs.	Cate Nimanya	NETWAS Uganda	Uganda	Contact person for RCD 18 countries

55	Mr.	Reinhild Bode	PhD Student	Germany	Wuppertal Institute/ Heinrich Böll Foundation
56	Mr.	Gugsa Yimer	PLAN Ethiopia	Ethiopia	Research and Evaluation Advisor
57	Mr.	Amsalu Negussie	PLAN International- Region for East and Southern Africa	South Africa	Regional Water and Sanitation Advisor
58	Mr.	Daudi Makamba	Plan Tanzania	Tanzania	Country Water and Sanitation Advisor
59	Mr.	Sohrab Baghri	PLAN UK	UK	Global Water and Environmental Sanitation Adviser
60	Mr.	Nitesh Kaushik	Royal Development Institute	India	
61	Mr.	Vipin Garg	Royal Development Institute	India	
62	Ms.	Morongwe Adelaide Monyepao	SALGA Limpopo	South Africa	Coordinator - Water Services Support
63	Mr.	Rae MacKay	School of Geography Earth and Environmental Sciences	UK	Professor of Hydrogeology
64	Mr.	Mahdee Abbas Rathe	Sewage Directorate Wasit	Iraq	Chief Engineer
65	Ms.	Leontien Cremers	SNV Netherlands Development Organization	The Netherlands	Junior Officer Water and Dryland Management
66	Mrs.	Nandi Mayathula-Khoza	South African Local Government Association (SALGA)	South Africa	Executive member/ Speaker of the City Johannesburg
67	Mr.	Charles Tlhoale	South African Local Government Association (SALGA)	South Africa	Programme Knowledge Manager
68	Mrs.	Rosario Aurora L. Villaluna	STREAMS of Knowledge	Philippines	Executive Secretary
69	Mr.	M. Gurusamy	Tamil Nadu Water Supply and Drainage Board	India	Executive Engineer
70	Mr.	Vibhu Nayar	Tamil Nadu Water Supply and Drainage Board	India	Project Director
71	Mrs.	K.V. Rajeshwari	The Energy and Resources Institute	India	FELLOW
72	Mr.	Bernard Akanbang	TREND	Ghana	Programme Officer
73	Mr.	Dauda B. Wurie	UNICEF Angola	Angola	Project Officer WES
74	Mr.	Mamadou Bagayoko	UNICEF Burkina Faso	Burkina Faso	UNICEF Education Project Officer
75	Mr.	Soungalo Togola	UNICEF Burkina Faso	Burkina Faso	Project Officer WES
76	Mr.	Francisco Burbano Marin	UNICEF Colombia	Colombia	Oficial Asistente Políticas Básicas - Ambiente Sano
77	Mr.	Fred Ogwal-Oyee	UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Region	Kenya	Programme Officer Water and Sanitation Focal Point
78	Ms.	Teija Vallandingham	UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office	Kenya	Assistant Programme Officer, Education
79	Mrs.	Astrid van Agthoven	UNICEF Jordan	Jordan	Project Officer Water and Sanitation
80	Mr.	Dr. Shamvanth P. Mathur	UNICEF Malawi	Malawi	Head of WES section

81	Mr.	Namaste Lal Shrestha	UNICEF Nepal	Nepal	Project Officer
82	Mrs.	Donna L. Goodman	UNICEF NY	USA	Consultant WES
83	Mr.	Henk van Norden	UNICEF NY	USA	Sr. Adviser WES
84	Mr.	Marcel S. Ouattara	UNICEF West and Central Africa Region	Senegal	Regional Education Project Officer
85	Mr.	Giveson Zulu	UNICEF Zambia	Zambia	Project Officer Sanitation
86	Mrs.	Mariela García Vargas	Universidad del Valle - Instituto CINARA	Colombia	Associated Professor
87	Mrs.	Ines Restrepo-Tarquino	Universidad del Valle/ Instituto CINARA	Colombia	Associate Professor
88	Mr.	Brighton Mvumi	University of Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe	Lecturer/Agricultural Scientist
89	Ms.	Merri Weinger	US Agency for International Development (USAID)	USA	Program Manager, Hygiene Improvement
90	Mrs.	Dr. Sara Ahmed	UTTHAN/PRAVAH	India	Independent Researcher
91	Mr.	Cees Leeuwis	Wageningen University	The Netherlands	Professor
92	Ms.	Femke Gordijn	Wageningen University	The Netherlands	Student
93	Mrs.	Jet Proost	Wageningen University	The Netherlands	Assistant Professor
94	Mr.	Niels Röling	Wageningen University	The Netherlands	Professor
95	Mr.	Masroor Ahmad	Water and Sanitation Program - South Asia (WSP-SA)	Pakistan	Consultant (Water and Sanitation Specialist)
96	Ms.	Ndala Duma	Water Information Network - WIN	South Africa	Coordinator WIN
97	Mr.	Emmanuel Addai	WaterAid Ghana	Ghana	Communications Officer
98	Mr.	Iqbal Shah	WESNet	Pakistan	RCD Coordinator

## Appendix 5 The LA Insider

On each of the three days of the Symposium, *The LA Insider*, gave participants a look back at the debates of the previous day and highlighted some of the main issues. This Appendix includes copies of the newsletters as they were produced at the time.

# The LA Insider

LEARNING ALLIANCE SYMPOSIUM, DELFT Day 1 — Tuesday 7 June 2005

## COMMENTARY

Haziness of understanding breeds insecurity. We may know the words, and even recognise the phrases. But do we really know what a learning alliance is? Or a multi-sectoral platform? And when you go home to your family, are you glad to be back with your stakeholders?

When learning new concepts we need to be sure that we are all using words the same way, and that others who are new to the concept will understand exactly what we are talking about. When describing processes, we need to explain who did what to whom.

Thankfully, the background document to this symposium unpacks most of the key phrases, and you will find summaries of those explanations on the back of this newsheet.

We need a clear understanding because the content of what is being described is exciting and progressive, and even perhaps a bit dangerous, in that it presupposes a move towards decentralisation and democratisation of decision taking.

A lot of people have thought it worthwhile to come to this symposium. Latecomers have had to be turned away. The fact that not everyone could get a place puts a responsibility on those of us who are here to explain ourselves to each other and those outside in the clearest possible terms.

I hope that the *LA Insider* will make a small contribution to that common understanding this week.  
*Peter McIntyre*

## How we can learn to build on success

**W**hy is it so hard to build on success?

Communities take charge of their own water systems. Farmers learn to irrigate more crops with less water. Women save time by installing a well and use that time to earn an income. Children learn at school to wash their hands with soap, and go home to teach their parents. Urban families collect rain water and recycle waste water.

These changes make a difference and are acclaimed, but they often fail to influence their country or district. The background paper to this conference analyses why.

### The problem

New practice does not spread. Success remains stuck where it was invented. Innovation fails to become part of the mainstream and remains an 'alien object'.

### The causes

The realities of the region are ignored – there is a failure to address the existing institutional, legal and financial environment.

- ◆ Resource rich pilots use people and money that cannot be matched once the pilot is over.
- ◆ Dissemination of lessons is unstructured and happens too late – at the end of a project.
- ◆ Working in an institutional vacuum fails to create local ownership.
- ◆ There is a failure to build capacity in relevant institutions.



*She brought you to the conference and now she has a stick! Catarina Fonseca prepares with co-organiser Edwin Hes at a facilitators' session.*

### The task

The task is to help people to learn and put lessons into practice. A learning alliance pays attention to the process of innovating and scaling up, and tackles barriers to uptake and replication.

An alliance of practitioners, researchers, policy makers and those involved in advocacy becomes an engine to disseminate knowledge, spread good practice and address institutional and resource questions, within existing structures.

*"The route to sustainability lies through the development of local knowledge to support local solutions while accounting for local realities."*



*The LA Insider***We want your thoughts**

*LA Insider* will be published daily during the symposium, and we would like to carry some of your daily thoughts. On the Internet they call it a 'blog' but we can still call it a diary. Instead of writing your blog on a computer, jot down a thought on a piece of card and put it in the 'blog box' near the entrance to the conference — an innovative, virus free way of communicating. Every day we will empty the blog box and publish snippets here. Put your name to your blog if you wish, or write anonymously. We look forward to hearing from you.



*In the first side meeting, the USAID Hygiene Improvement Project team demonstrated some tools for scaling up - including a timeline for use at a Search Conference, to establish people's common background. Early arrivals at the Symposium had a chance to try out the tool and discuss the issues.*

## Time to unpack—what exactly is a multi-stakeholder platform?

**A** learning alliance is a series of linked platforms at key institutional levels bringing together stakeholders interested in innovation and the creation of new knowledge in area of common interest – with a view to 'scaling up' innovation and good practice.

**Linked platforms?**

A multi stakeholder platform is a negotiation or decision-making body comprising different stakeholders who perceive the same problem and realise their interdependence in solving it. Platforms can be pre-existing bodies or created for the purpose of learning the lessons of interventions.

**Stakeholders?**

Practitioners, researchers, policy makers and those involved in advocacy. At national level they are responsible for policy and legislation; at intermediate level they are responsible for planning, implementation and support; at community level they are involved with projects.

**Knowledge**

The understanding that enables people to do things effectively? Distinguish this from information, the documentation of data or knowledge.

**Innovation**

The process by which knowledge is created in groups or individuals. It does not have to be an entirely new, just new to the people who are beginning to adopt it.

**Scaling-up**

The widespread replication of an innovation and also its quality and sustainability. "We go from islands of success to whole regions."

**Who forms the alliance?**

A core founding group has a clear idea of what it wants to achieve and they grab the attention of others who are crucial to this aim.

**Why a facilitator?**

A facilitator ensures that links are working within and between platforms and that the focus of alliance time and effort is on learning. The facilitator identifies different perspectives, ensures that people have a common understanding, and shares results and experiences inside and outside the alliance.

**What kind of learning?**

Learn from action research, evaluating what is happening on the ground. Learn from what goes wrong, as well as from what goes right.

**Where located**

Many countries already have water and sanitation sector platforms. Research needs to reflect the realities in support agencies – including their planning cycles. Resource Centres, or Resource Centre Networks can play an important role in facilitating and supporting learning alliances.

**Document the process**

Document the process as it happens and feed it back with reports within hours of a visit or event, so people reflect on what happened, what they learned, and how to take lessons forward. Document warts and all —failures as well as successes.

**Disseminate**

Share lessons quickly. Make the cycle of research-reflection-action a short one. Give feedback in whatever format people will use. Set aside the time and resources for documenting and sharing knowledge.

*"No course or cascade of courses can alone create new knowledge.*

*People have to try something, adapt it until it works, and then continue to adapt as the world changes."*

# The LA Insider

LEARNING ALLIANCE SYMPOSIUM, DELFT Day 2— Wednesday 8 June 2005

A learning alliance can be born out of frustration; it may be fuelled by a need to manage conflict; it must take on vested interests to achieve change. Learning alliances are not another silver bullet for development, but a means of winning a long term shift in the way that the sector thinks, learns and acts.

Day 1 of the Learning Alliance Symposium began to bring the concept to life.

We heard that learning alliances are about bringing together different parties with their own agendas ("a good mix of different stakeholders") and getting them to reflect collectively on what needs to change and how they are going to get there.

We heard of country experiences from Latin America and from South Africa and began to catch glimpses of the experiences from India, Nepal, Pakistan and the Middle East. We also sensed some uncertainty. We heard people ask: "Is a learning alliance a thing or concept? An organisation or a process?" We heard doubt about whether learning alliances are a tool for addressing problems or a means of identifying the real challenges.

We heard about the need to win organisational commitment from governmental and non-governmental agencies. Yet we also heard of the importance of determined key individuals. Does individual commitment lead to real change inside organisations?

## Facilitators in demand

Who plays the role of facilitator, and who provides leadership?



## Forged from frustration — driven by need for change



*Nandi Mayathula-Khoza, Councillor and Executive member of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) explaining how her organisation works with the Water Information Network to achieve ambitious targets for water by 2008 and for sanitation by 2010.*

Does a facilitator have to be independent? Where will these skills be found? Is a process that relies on this scarce resource itself sustainable and capable of being replicated?

## Fast track or slippery slope?

Then there is the question of whether a learning alliance is a fast track to scaling up. Surely, something is needed to get anywhere close to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

And in South Africa we heard how organisational commitment to Masibambane ("Let's work together") was driven by ambitious targets and a sense of urgency for change.

Yet Patrick Moriarty was applauded when he warned of the need to avoid the mistakes of the

last Water Decade in the 1980s, when sustainability was sabotaged by the drive to increase coverage at all costs.

## Bottom-up development

Many projects presented in the sessions showed a commitment to bottom-up development. But we heard challenges about where young people fit into a learning alliance. Are women properly represented? How is the voice of the community represented at the 'top level' meetings.

## More to come

This was Day 1 - a day for unpacking doubts and concerns. And Day 1 is already yesterday's news. Days 2&3 are about searching out some consensus for the answers. Go for it! ■

Learning Alliance Symposium, Delft 7-9 June 2005

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*The LA Insider*

## Innovation is about software and 'orgware' as well as hardware

**M**aking change on a large scale is not about spreading technology — it is about creating a process to encourage fresh thinking and removing the obstacles to change.

Cees Leeuwis, specialist in communication and innovation at Wageningen University, told his audience they must be prepared to change “hardware, software and ‘orgware’” if they wanted to make a difference.

Conflict in this process was not something to avoid — it is integral to winning real change. “You have to combat the existing regime. It needs to be destroyed to put it bluntly.”

In the first keynote speech to the symposium, Cees Leeuwis



Cees Leeuwis

described how the Netherlands reversed a failing policy of removing water from the land as quickly as possible. Instead they try to contain the water and give it space. This meant some new technology to control gates at field level. But it also meant new agreements, institutional bodies, legal rules and payment incentives for farmers. Above all it meant a change of mind-set.

“Innovations do not only consist of technology. They are a combination of hardware, software and ‘orgware’ together. Technology is just an invention if it does not work and it is not integrated into society. Innovation happens in society, not in Universities.”

The task was to promote a process rather than a product. “It is the process of stakeholders sitting together and negotiating that needs to be diffused.”

And he warned that people did not always want to learn, and that those with power do not always want to communicate. “I think that conflict is central to change. To say we are dealing with the learning process is not enough. I talk about this in the context of conflict management.”

## Latin America can claim to have planted learning alliance roots

**T**he first explicit learning alliance was formed in Latin America as part of the drive by CIAT to change agricultural development models.

CIAT research organisation is involved in rural areas in a number of Latin American countries. Veronica Gottret told the symposium they had reached the limit of what could be done with traditional training models.

It was not possible to follow people up after training, and those who had been trained could not get support. CIAT could not measure the impact of what they were doing. “We were really frustrated.”

But they did know of success stories in improving rural livelihoods in several countries. They looked for ways to build bridges between these islands of success.

The learning alliance in Latin America was formed by international NGOs and their local counterparts, farmers organisations, NGOs and others. It includes Ministries of Agriculture, donors and research and teaching centres. Links are with the private sector are being made.

The aim is to set clear objectives for change and to share responsibilities, resources and credit. For each topic the team reviews existing knowledge, prepares improved approaches, documents results and studies lessons.

This has resulted in a clearer understanding about the effects of rural enterprise development, and greater credibility with donors. It has made training materials more useful and given a greater sense of direction to research departments. “We know exactly what we want to do because we

have been negotiating this process.”

But Gottret warned that donors do not want to fund people to learn, so they fund the theme, and the learning alliance deals with the process.

Elements of learning alliances have, of course, existed for many years. Jan Teun Visscher from IRC, described how multi stage filtration was introduced in Colombia, starting in the 1980s. When they realised that a technological fix was not working, they abandoned an “I show it; you do it” approach, and established groups (IRWGs) which eventually dealt with issues of change, not just engineering. These became a kind of learning alliance before their time.

Visscher said that some of the essential ingredients for success included commitment, institutional agreement, facilitation, mediation of different interests and funding.

## The LA Insider



Faces from the rostrum (left to right): Thoko Sigwaza from the South African Ministry DWAF, Patrick Moriarty from IRC, Veronica Gottret from CIAT and Jan Teun Visscher from IRC.

# Bringing in real world experience

The presentation from South Africa brought an idea of the size of the task into the symposium hall.

In a context where water is scarce and services were historically fragmented, the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF), local government, which now has responsibility for delivering water supply, and many other organisations of the water sector have come together in a process of Masibambane ("Let's work together"). Each partner has a clear responsibility as well as an obligation to work in collaboration.

Thoko Sigwaza from DWAF and Nandi Mayathula-Khoza from SALGA, concluded that lesson learning has to focus on tangible issues. There must be consistent support for local government.

Partners wanted a better source of information and so the Water Information Network was born.

In the end, however, the process will only work if it delivers benefits for which the partners are prepared to pay.

Patrick Moriarty gave the background on how IRC had come to believe that only a learning alliance process could break the frustration of seeing promising developments fail to be taken up throughout the sector.

It was essential to identify the key stakeholders and involve them in the process. "If you do not identify the stakeholders on the ground there is very little chance that you are going to be able to scale up quality and effectiveness."

There were issues in identifying who would do the facilitation. IRC had at first taken that role, but it was not possible to be both the promoter and champion of the

process and the facilitator at the same time.

And he warned that learning alliances could not be a quick fix to achieve the MDGs.

"I am not sure that the learning process can be speeded up beyond a certain point." And drawing on lessons from the 1980, he warned: "It is very worrying if once again we are saying let us just get it done and worry about sustainability afterwards."

## 'Good COP - bad COP' routine



If you were confused about learning alliances, you were in good company. Richard Meganck (right) Director of Unesco-IHE, told Paul van Koppen (left), Director of IRC, that he was not sure how a learning alliance differs from a Community of Practice (COP). Paul told Richard that a COP is a meeting of like minded people with similar skills, while a learning alliance is much more diverse. Their double act is returning to the stage on Thursday. Who will play good cop, and who will play bad cop?

*The LA Insider***All or nothing?**

"Can you be a 50 per cent learning alliance, or is it all or nothing?". Joep Verhagen (at IRC since 1 June after working nine years in India) asked in desperation at the first breakaway session of the Water and Sanitation group towards the end of the discussion on the first day.

The answers from the facilitators: as long as your programme is interested in learning and sharing results at different levels, it is a learning process. Others added: and change your mindset to learning with others.

In the voting in this group on strengths of the learning alliances number three with 10 votes was: **Build on existing working together arrangements.** Number one strength identified was the possibility of scaling up (20 votes). The group identified influencing government policies as the second strength.

**Your 'blogs'**

Thank you for your blogs - not too many have arrived so far but they are all welcome and we are sure there must be others "in the post".

One anonymous blogger wanted to express appreciation for the first plenary speaker Cees Leeuwis for his stimulating contribution.

Emmanuel Addai from Water Aid Ghana writes "A very brilliant concept —great presentation."

He adds: "I have started considering the role of a learning alliance in scaling up Water Aid's campaign on the rope pump in Ghana. I believe it will work and work very fast."

Keep your comments coming. They are all welcome.

**Ownership, commitment seen as main benefits**

Ownership and commitment are seen as two of the main strengths and requirements for the success of learning alliances. They also offer opportunities to share expertise and to compliment existing knowledge.

These were some of the key points from the first series of workshops in which participants voted for the qualities that they wanted learning alliances to show and the problems that they may face.

They can unblock communication channels and build on what is known. They can become a powerful lobby.

Partnerships, coordination and capacity building were seen as strengths, as were their influence on government policy and their contribution to scaling up.

If those were the pluses, what were the fears?

These included the intransigence of existing power structures, which in turn could lead

Sameera SA Qubaja-Rifai, from CARE in Palestine, giving a report back to the plenary session.



to the exclusion of the poor and other marginalised groups.

There was also concern about a lack of a common agenda, and lack of commitment or political will to the learning alliance.

There were considerable fears about lack of facilitation skills and therefore difficulties in replication and sustainability.

There was also a worry that learning alliances could become the latest fashion and just a 'buzz word' where people would put the badge on what they were already doing, but not change their practice.

The importance of champions who could push the process was stressed.



One person three votes democracy in action in the agriculture working group on Tuesday afternoon. Members of the group were selecting their choices for the most important strengths and opportunities, weaknesses and threats in the learning alliance process.

# The LA Insider

LEARNING ALLIANCE SYMPOSIUM, DELFT Day 3 — Thursday 9 June 2005

Perhaps you only know you are getting somewhere when the passions are raised.

The workshops looking at why learning alliances need certain qualities brought debate and some fireworks, but also a degree of consensus.

Participants produced their ideas onto dozens of cards during group work, and then had to reduce them down to a few key headings for presentation in the plenary. In the process, a lot of detail was lost, some issues became a little fuzzy around the edges and some tempers were frayed. As one of the organisers said: "Welcome to the learning alliance."

But each group also had some presentations to launch their topics and a chance for some discussion and debate.

In the morning they had also been introduced to the 'talking stick' as a method of creating a

## Group work generates both light and heat

dialogue rather than a debate. Some loved it and will use it elsewhere. Some thought it inappropriate as an analytical tool (see the blog page for details).

### Facilitation

Mariela Garcia Vargas (CINARA, Colombia) outlined the skills a facilitator needs, including an ability to put themselves in the place of others.

Mariela felt they should have an understanding of the cultural and political context and know about objectives and expected results.

Alok Majumder, from Danida, Bangladesh, who presented the report back, felt that the facilitator should be more independent so that they could be seen as having a more neutral role.

Some in the workshop argued

that it was wrong to remain neutral about the core aim of the development.

Peter Laban from CARE, working in Palestine, said:

"You have a learning alliance so you can develop something. It is not an end in itself; let us not make it a magic tool."

Hazem Fahmy, from EM-POWERS, Egypt, said that if a facilitator could take sides with the process, and ultimately for the poor, but they should be strictly neutral between participants.

"Trusting you as an individual is not the most important. It is more important that you are seen as a honest broker who will bring the issues to the table." ■

*"Is anyone training these facilitators? When I go home I definately going shopping for a facilitator." - (workshop comment)*



Mariela Garcia Vargas



Hazem Fahmy



Derick du Toit from AWARD South Africa presented the analysis, learning and reflection outcomes. "I feel as though I had borrowed your car and have to tell you that we crashed it!" The group presented their cards upside down as a reflection of lack of progress - but many saw the debate as healthy.



Learning Alliance Symposium, Delft

7-9 June 2005

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*The LA Insider*

## Why are you here anyway? What have you learned?

**W**hy did you busy people travel to the Netherlands to take part in this symposium? We asked you why you had come, and what you had learned.



### Scaling up

**Bernard Akanbang**, a project officer for TREND in Ghana, is working to increase community participation in water supply and sanitation in poor urban areas. His organisation plays the role of facilitator in a Tripartite Partnership (PTT) with the public and private sector. He believes that this is becoming a learning alliance and is looking for ways to scale it up.



### Learning Forum

**Daudi Makamba**, water and sanitation adviser to Plan Tanzania has formed an alliance with NGOs to implement a World Bank funded project in peri-urban areas of Dar es Salaam. A Learning Forum meets quarterly to review progress, share experiences and plan future work. It enables organisations with different backgrounds and different approaches work together.



### Government needs ownership

**Vibhu Nayar**, project director of the Tamil Nadu Water Supply and Drainage Board, is working on the democratisation of water in India. He believes that there should be a more constructive

approach to involving governments in partnerships. "NGOs come up with a brilliant idea and ask the Government to adopt it. The approach is wrong. We never help the Government to come up with a brilliant idea that it owns.

"Some part of the discussion is as if a learning alliance is an external activity which we ask stakeholders to buy into. Why not let the learning alliance come from them, as a combination of aspirations of stakeholders at different levels?

"Our experiment shows that organisations can lead a government to change. I would say, try to make sure that ownership lies with the government, because ultimately government is going to take the risk."



### Finding stakeholders 'is not easy'

**K.V. Rajeshwari** from TERI, the Energy and Resources Institute in



India, has built a consortium to improve the efficiency of industrial use of water and alleviate the impact on water quality of untreated effluents.

"I feel that every project we do is a kind of learning alliance. We have a consortium of experts and TERI acts as a kind of facilitator between specialist institutions and local industry."

Finding the right stakeholders was not easy. "Some of the private industries did not want to reveal information. The public industries were more open to the findings and participated in the

analysis. They were interested in improving themselves. We observed that the private sector would like the benefits if they believe there is a financial reward.

"We have learned it is difficult to bring in all the stakeholders in the same place and it can take time to resolve the conflicts. You have to focus on the outcome."

### Learning how to replicate in other regions

**Masoor Ahmad**, runs a Water and Environmental Sanitation Network from the Water and Sanitation Program South Asia Office in Pakistan. The symposium was an opportunity to meet with people working in the same sector with the same target but different approaches.



"Whatever you are doing should be disseminated as far as possible, there should be no re-invention of the wheel and we should focus on replication.

"I came here to get to know how the work that we have done can be replicated in other provinces of Pakistan, and eventually with people who are working in India and other parts of Asia."

Masoor found the talking sticks an interesting tool to change the way that dialogue takes place. He is taking back the idea of the *LA Insider* and the 'blog box' to Pakistan government officials who are organising a seven country workshop on sanitation later this year. "Some people are not expressive in public and this is a very good way to express yourself."

The LA Insider

## UNICEF builds alliances for girls' education and school hygiene

Strong attendance by UNICEF staff from several regions at the symposium shows how seriously they see the task of building alliances to improve the reach and sustainability of work with children, women and families.

Mamadou Bagayoko, UNICEF education officer in Burkina Faso, says: "We no longer consider education as a teaching process or learning for its own sake. It is learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to help somebody else know. Education is learning for a purpose.

"The purpose of learning alliances is for doing. Learning for a purpose is the new paradigm in education and development.

"We believe learning alliances can use schools and educational institutions as entry points to bring about new sets of knowledge, about how to disseminate knowledge and good practices about water and sanitation and hygiene education in the school context. It is for us a strategy to



Mamadou Bagayoko: "A learning alliance should have a clear link between learning and doing".

foster and accelerate girl's education particularly in the African context."

Alliances will bring together water, sanitation and education specialists with community leaders – people with different backgrounds who have a common interest in how to make the best use of water and how to promote hygiene and sanitation in the community as well as in schools.

"A learning alliance should have a clear link between learning and doing. Through action you generate new knowledge, and that new knowledge should lead to new action.

"Learning alliances could also be an opportunity for Government. They also want to learn."

What has Bagayoko gained from coming to the symposium?

"I have learned the importance of knowledge dissemination in a collaborative manner. Also the willingness of people in academia to come down to field work is very enlightening. The barriers seems to be coming down."

### Support for country offices

Marcel Ouattara, UNICEF regional education officer in Senegal, is supporting country offices to set up learning alliances around water and sanitation, school hygiene education and sanitation and girl's education.

"We may not call them learning alliances but in all countries we have working groups around girl's education, around early childhood development. Maybe we can extend them to bring in other people. As you work you assess your work and you realise that you have some pitfalls. "By consulting with other stakeholders you can find solutions quicker than if you do it alone. It is an open forum where we can benefit from each other's experience. It is all for the benefit for the child.

"What I have heard is not a new concept, but it is better structured and conceptualised. It gives us a better perspective on how we can work with each other and identify some of the factors of a successful learning alliance scheme."



Partnerships are complex. Grouping the cards at the participation session with facilitator Edwin Hes.

*The LA Insider*

## Bloggers bite back

**Y**ou certainly found the blog box. A range of observations, recommendations and criticisms in our postbag today.

Some people feel there is still a lack of basic definitions.

One says: *"I am still not clear on the key elements of a LA. What makes it different from other learning forums?"*

Another says: *"I think that we still don't have a common understanding of what is a learning alliance!"*

And this correspondent adds (crossly, I think) *"Why didn't we share our expectations of this symposium at the beginning? That should be one of the basics of good facilitation!"*

Another participant comments on the shaping of sessions. *"I sometimes miss 'deep' / real discussion."* This writer would also like more examples to learn from.

Criticism too of the way that unranked cards were not shown in plenary. *"They may not be important today, but tomorrow they may be the most important. Recommend box 1 with the ranked SWOT and box 2 with unranked points."*

This correspondent also felt that facilitators should have allowed discussion on the SWOT cards before they were ranked.

The 'talking stick' mediated dialogues found favour in some quarters and not in others. Sa-waeng Ruaysoongnern, from Khon Kaen University, Thailand,

*"As soon as someone says 'we need leadership', everyone wants to be a leader."* (Overheard in partnerships group).

writes enthusiastically: *"This would reduce potential confrontation of participants. I felt it is good for conflict discussions and will apply it in my work in Thailand."*

But another participant felt that this was a weakness. *"The 'dialogue' tool led perhaps to a less 'critical analysis of the tasks but rather a more discursive individualistic approach."*

*"Why? Because we were expressly invited to be 'accepting' of other opinions - ie not to be critical and tease out issues. Dialoguing is more appropriate to 'conflict' situations, not to critical analysis."*

This correspondent also felt that the format on Tuesday afternoon prevented participants from 'interrogating' the case studies. He/she points out that something put forward in a case study as a strength, was listed as a potential weakness, without a discussion with the presenter.

Now for two observations strictly on content rather than process.

Mike Morris writes about partnerships. *"Our experience/belief is that sharing an understanding of the underlying problems is important. Once 'partners' agree this, there is room for differing individual and organisational objectives – but together they will align with addressing the underlying problems."*

Pauline Mwaniki (NETWAS, Kenya), asks: *"Can people or organisations work together effectively in the absence of trust and respect? Some seem to think so. 'People trust the systems, not the persons,' someone said."*

*"However, I think this is highly dependent on the cultural context. In the African (Kenyan) context, people lay emphasis on social relations, not inanimate systems. In the absence of relationships, systems gradually lose their strength."*

Finally, a couple of housekeeping requests. A plea for more microphones in the hall, and a request for all the presentations to be provided on a CD.



*Wednesday afternoon and the symposium was still packing people into the auditorium. The interest in this topic has been shown by the high attendance at this event, the strength of feeling about some of the issues and the high level of participation at all the sessions.*

## Appendix 6

### Internet coverage of the Symposium

#### UNESCO-IHE COVERAGE

UNESCO-IHE articles can be found at <http://www.unesco-ihe.org/vmp/articles/news/new-20050607-19-18-6.html>

#### *Articles from the UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education web site.*

27 May 2005

##### **Symposium: Learning Alliances, 6-10 June 2005**

IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, and UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education organise an international Symposium on “Learning Alliances for scaling up innovative approaches in the Water and Sanitation sector”. The focus of the event will lay on conceptual development and practical experiences acquired so far in the water and sanitation sector. More than 80 experts and stakeholders from diverse countries and organizations will attend the meeting.

The Learning Alliances methodology is relatively new to the water and sanitation sector. A number of experiences do exist, but these are not all well known. In the agricultural sector and knowledge management initiatives, more experiences with Learning Alliances have been documented. These can provide useful insights for the water and sanitation sector.

What are Learning Alliances?

Learning Alliances typically consist of a group of individuals or organisations with a shared interest in innovations in a certain area and in the scaling-up of these innovations.

Learning Alliances are a series of connected structured platforms at different institutional levels, designed to break down barriers to both horizontal and vertical information sharing and thus to speed up the process of identification, adaptation, and uptake of innovations. These platforms bring together a wide range of partners with capabilities and mandates in implementation, regulation, policy and legislation, research and learning and documentation and dissemination. Important elements of LAs are:

- Assumption: Carrying out research within an alliance of practitioners, researchers, policy makers and activists will lead to potential for replication at a larger scale and thus a greater impact.
- Scaling up life cycle: Involving different levels in Learning Alliances will shorten the time between developing new knowledge and scaling it up.
- Local re-invention: The acceptance that ‘blue prints’ or ‘silver bullets’ for solving complex developmental problems do not exist, makes it necessary to develop locally appropriate solutions to match local realities

07 June 2005

##### **Learning Alliances: exchange beyond partnership**

The directors of IRC and UNESCO-IHE, Paul van Koppen and Richard Meganck respectively, opened the Symposium on Learning Alliances on Tuesday 7 June. The three-day event was kicked-off by explaining what this concept is and yields. Is it a partnership? Is it a community of practice? Learning Alliances is a new approach connecting different levels of stakeholders in a platform to break barriers and share information. What is innovative about Learning Alliances in comparison with previous discussion platforms? According to Van Koppen, it brings more partners from different areas and wider levels of stakeholders to the table; processes are to scale up; and this approach speed innovation up. It also demands more involvement to improve processes and allows stakeholders to accommodate the outgrowth to local needs.

Conforming a new concept, theory or working tool is as much a challenge as getting the donors' support to apply it and the 140 members of the audience engaged to discussions on advantages and weaknesses of Learning Alliances.

Among the benefits, the invitation to raise new mind sets was appointed as essential. "Innovation does not consist of technical devices only, but of new hardware, software and organization ware at multiple levels", noted Cees Leeuwin, from Wageningen University.

Delegates from UNICEF, the South African and Iraqi Governments, Latin American Universities and education centres, and NGO's agreed that effective innovation happens in society, not in academic and research centres. Hence, changing processes need to scale up, blow up and scale down again to spread and result in wider application.

Learning Alliances is primary about changing social relationships, which calls for stakeholders sharing and exchanging information, processes and conflicts as positive forces to enhance change.

The role of facilitator in the processes, how to identify the right partner organizations with common interest in the topic, how to delimit the scope and the scale of the alliance, how to identify and bring in the proper innovative mechanisms, how to add value and promote a more effective developments were the main issues participants came across during the discussion sessions.

Nevertheless, the main concern in all the working groups was how to involve Governments and donors. Are they ready to work with Learning Alliances? Though more effective, Learning Alliances is a long-distance race. They have a long-term pay-off. How would politicians and donors be triggered to commit to these new platforms when they are engaged to short-term results?

Many questions won't necessary find an answer this week, maybe in the future, but the learning process every delegate has just set in is irrevocable.

09 June 2005

### **Symposium Learning Alliances: Forget donors; mind the poor**

The last day of the Symposium on Learning Alliances (7-9 June) brought the most lively and ardent debate to the main auditorium. How to involve Governments and donors and what is the role for them to play within Learning Alliance were already topics appealing delegates' participation. Indeed all the working sessions during the week had ended up, one way or another, with funding concerns (if not misery worries) on the table.

Allocating financial resources to long-term pay-off working/learning platforms is not very popular among donors, regardless how many multi-level stakeholders they bring in. But, what can be done about it? What do donors have to say?

Thoko Sigwaza, councillor at the Ministry of Water Resources and Forestry in South Africa, advised managers and coordinators to design projects focusing on implementation and on building up credibility. "Donors should accommodate to your strategy, to your plans, rather than the other way around", noted Ms. Sigwaza.

Atem Ramsundersingh, from the World Bank, shared that opinion: "We have wrongly developed a mechanical system, a way of working based on management, procedures and on satisfying donors, while we left behind the urgency to solve the problems on the ground". "We have established a kind of 'donor box' way of thinking, instead of an 'out of the box' way of thinking", analysed the team leader of the GDLN centres. "If you work in an innovative way, accelerating the processes and increasing efficiency, donors will come".

Though delegates in the audience disagreed with such an optimistic view, everybody admitted that seeking donors' commitment takes too much time and energy away from the essential goal: covering the urgent on-ground needs.

In this context, Governments of many countries are essential to scale up (and down) all the processes. As Henk van Norden from UNICEF remarked, "Governmental institutions are in many cases the only available infrastructure to scale processes and increase or make effective the community participation".

At the event's closure, the main recommendations echoing in the auditorium had to do with the key elements of Learning Alliances and its own definition. Many delegates expressed their concerns about the right definition for LA and others wondered if there should be a definition. After all, whatever you call it, the essential purpose is to multiply effective experiences and provide people with water and sanitation.

*IRC SOURCE*

*BULLETIN ARTICLE*

IRC Source coverage can be found at <http://www.irc.nl/page/25058>

### **Learning alliances 'could help countries scale up to meet MDGs'**

Learning Alliances can help countries to scale up to meet their Millennium Development Goal targets, by acting as engines for change in water, sanitation and hygiene education.

But countries have to focus on innovation, quality and sustainability to break a cycle of failure in which services first fail to reach the poorest people, then fail to deliver safe water or hygienic sanitation and, within a few years, fail altogether.

This was the consensus at the Symposium for Learning Alliances hosted by IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre and UNESCO-IHE in Delft, the Netherlands. The Symposium, from 7-9 June 2005, attracted 113 participants from 32 countries, who focused on how alliances could be built at country level to learn from the lessons of failure and to build on islands of success.

#### **Platforms for change**

Learning Alliances are designed as platforms for change – bringing key stakeholders together to scale up success stories in water, sanitation and hygiene education. They are action-orientated forums where research results are shared with policy makers and programme managers, who make themselves accountable to communities, judged by real-life results on the ground.

The Delft Symposium was itself a learning experience – an opportunity to hear country experiences and to define problems and solutions – and there was no final declaration. But the panel debate that closed the Symposium found a degree of consensus that learning alliances could contribute to short term as well as long term change.

However, there was concern that rigid monitoring of programmes by "log frames" and tick boxes is failing to measure quality or the process of learning which must inform a new approach to development.

#### **"From leading to learning"**

Atem Ramsundersingh, team leader for the World Bank Institute's Global Development Learning Network, (on a video conference link from Washington) called for a shift from a mechanical approach based on management, procedures and satisfying donors towards organic and flexible learning-based methods of working. "From leading to learning", as he phrased it.

The key was to work with greater creativity. "Do not focus on making the donor happy, but on satisfying those on the ground. It can be done under the present system if a learning alliance is driven by a sense of urgency and a desire to solve problems on the ground. We need a strong sense of community and of urgency because we do not have much time."

He added: "Learning alliances can be a help for sustainable development and a real contribution to the MDGs. The MDG targets are for immediate action tomorrow, but the aspirations of the MDGs do have space for learning."

Henk van Norden, UNICEF senior adviser for water and sanitation, agreed that learning approaches were compatible with management tools. Donors had required the use of results based management tools, because "in the absence of such tools we were meandering around unable to show what we had achieved."

A team from South Africa described how the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF), local government, and other organisations came together in a process of Masibambane ("let's work together") and how the Water Information Network had been formed to meet their joint need for better quality information.

#### **"Donors should accommodate to your strategy"**

Thoko Sigwaza, DWAF director of water and sanitation services, said that the MDGs provided a focus and South Africa has set its own ambitious targets to scale up water services by 2008 and sanitation services by 2010. However, scaling up worked best when the national government and its local allies set the agenda. "Donors should accommodate to your strategy – not the other way round."

Tom Remington from Catholic Relief Services in Kenya said: "I think that the MDGs will help us to go to scale. Organisations that adopt a pilot approach never scale up. It takes a lot of work to go to scale and there is a lot of risk. It is much easier to stay in your pilot."

Rosario Aurora Villaluna, Director of the STREAMS coalition of resource centres, agreed, but said that in some countries, like the Philippines, commitment to MDGs did not extend to all of the key players. "National government is committed to the MDGs, but the sad reality is that you do not see local government commitment to them. Some local governments do not even see that they are part of the commitment."

#### **Push for target at expense of quality and sustainability"**

Patrick Moriarty, head of knowledge development and advocacy at IRC, expressed concern that the push to meet targets could be at the expense of quality and sustainability, as had happened in the 1980s Water and Sanitation Decade. "We have seen that in some countries 30-50% of installed systems are not working in villages. We have heard of places where there is 90% coverage but only 10% have good quality water. The experience of the past seems to be that targets and sustainability are not compatible."

Kathleen Shordt, IRC senior programme officer, said that management tools needed to become simpler if implementing organisations on the ground were to be equal partners in the process. "The log frame as it is used today is the enemy of innovation. I have seen 16, 18, 20 page log frames. They give power only to managers who can read that stuff. The people we are participating with cannot understand it. I would cut it by a half or a third."

However, Frank Jaspers, head of management and institutions at UNESCO-IHE, said that log frames could be used to record success. "Donors are aware that programmes are nearly all fragmented, and that is why they are moving to framework agreements and to basket funding. They have to look at sustainability as a crucial factor. We are not confined by the log frames – we can use them to get more funds."

Mamadou Bagayoko, UNICEF Education Officer in Burkina Faso, said that learning alliances could result in swift action. "A learning alliance should not be seen as a place for learning per se. It is for the preparation of informed decision making and activity on the ground. People think that learning will take for ever but this is a false debate. If you learn from other people you have a wider impact in a short time."

