

Research for water, environment and development

Make sure that research is relevant for societies – and is being used

Joint seminar hosted by DDRN, DWF and ViVA

May 6, 2010 - 14:00-16:30 - GEUS, Øster Voldgade 10, 1350 København K.

Concept note

Focus on communication and dissemination of research results is increasing. More and more research funders are stressing that the relevance of research for societies is demonstrated and communicated and that research results are relevant for policy makers, societies and companies.

Communication of research results can take many forms and have many pathways. Making sure that stakeholders receive the right amount of information in a version targeted to their needs, at the right time, is one of the key elements of good communication. For researchers, communication is relevant to:

- Inform about activities and lessons learned
- Get attention of partners and funders
- Engage stakeholders
- Create awareness
- And not least - donors want it – often this is a precondition for funding

DWF, in cooperation with DDRN, will hold a workshop to discuss these issues by showing examples of communication and engaging with stakeholders.

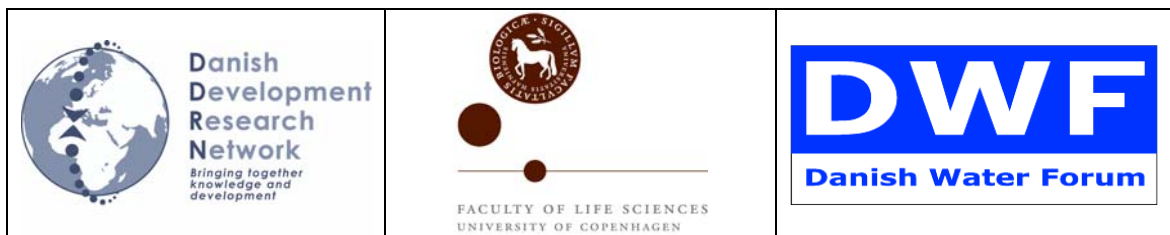
Funders demand good communication

This is the case for EU FP7 research with a focus on benefits for citizens, industries and small and medium size enterprises. This is also the case for Danish development research, being dispersed through FFU (Det ForskningsFaglige Udvalg) writing that: "The FFU applies the 3 criteria used by the Danish Council for Strategic Research – the relevance of the research, the quality of research and the potential effect of the research."

The effect of the research is defined in the application guideline as the growth or value for society that the research can produce. The project's effect in relation to poverty reduction can be assessed by judging the practical contribution of the results of the project to addressing specific development issues.

The FFU further writes in the application guideline that: "The project's strategy for dissemination, communication and application of research findings and to the users at relevant levels (governmental organizations, NGOs, universities, extension services, politicians, development programmes, poor people, etc.) will be assessed."

In FFU applications up to 10% of the project funds can be allocated for publication, dissemination and communication. This is not only printing of materials, but also holding workshops and seminars as well as



alternative forms of dissemination, and information on how the project's findings are to be made public, disseminated and communicated has to be included in the applications.

Effective communication

Full effect of research can only be realized when results are known to and discussed with partners, stakeholders and policy makers. Successful communication between researchers and users of research is crucial for the effective utilization of research in decision-making in policy and practice. Communication between researchers, research funders and research users can happen in a number of different ways, given the high number of different research users, a variety of research producers and the different levels in the policy and practice domains where communication of research happens. Successfully communicating the results of water research has to take this into account and while there cannot be one way of communicating research it is important to be conscious about developing partnerships, involving stakeholders and partners and this is based upon good communication strategies. Among issues to be included are:

Relevance of research for economic development

Research, new knowledge and innovation can be a key driver in fostering economic growth and reducing poverty. Promoting research can contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, but in many countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa this fact is getting little attention and there is a need to increase the awareness about the importance of research. In many of these countries we see that universities are mere teaching institutions and that very little new knowledge, based on experiences in the country, is generated.

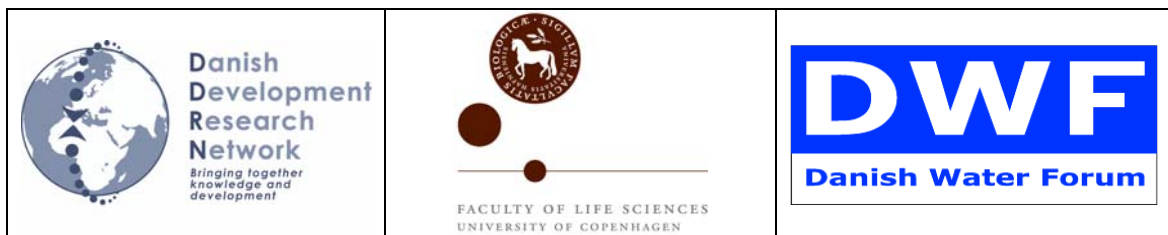
Danish researchers can assist colleges from developing countries in developing and improving their research capacities by working together in partnerships in order to generate new knowledge and to demonstrate the effects of this to society. Governments of course play an important role in supporting research and universities, but often have to be informed about the links between research and development in order to prioritize this issue.

The Splash Project

Addressing the above issues Danish Water Forum has, on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, been partner in a FP-6 financed project – Splash-ERA-net, an Era-net linked to the European Water Initiative with 4 key tasks:

1. Improve coordination of water research for development between European countries, to reduce duplication enhance progress to MDGs
2. Understand and synthesise effective research management and practice, and ensure it is used
3. Speed up transfer of results into practice and policy
4. Agree a research agenda and jointly funded activities

As an element in improving research management and practice and addressing the transfer of results into policy and practice Splash has been active in the field of research communication and development of linkages between researchers and the non-academic world. Splash is a rather large project with 16



partners from 11 countries and there are a large number of outputs from the project, which is running 2007 – 2010.

Danish Water Forum, DDRN and Viva organizations would like to host a meeting to discuss some of the Splash results, mainly four areas more directly linked to communication aspects:

1. Getting research into policy and practice (GRIPP):
 - It is important to ensure a good communication and dissemination strategy
 - GRIPP should be a component in the call
 - If non-researchers are partners, their perspectives must be included, from the beginning
 - Take account of barriers for GRIPP, such as lack of
 - Communication - researchers need communication skills.
1. Inclusion of South Researchers in EU research:
 - Inclusion is based on previous knowledge and personal contacts
 - Relations on design and execution of research projects are asymmetric, but this can be affected by donors and design of calls
2. How to build effective partnerships:
 - Communication is important
 - Need to understand balance of power between partners
 - Transfer of research based knowledge into action can be facilitated by partnerships
3. Contribution of research to economic development and poverty reduction:
 - Water and economy is closely related
 - Research is important for development
 - This is realized by developing countries, but mainly organizations like AMCOW and AMCOST - African Ministers' councils of water and science and technology
 - Government should realize and support these links - how can we contribute to this?

Danish Splash and Communication Seminar:

We find it important to discuss these European findings in context with actual development research projects. Danida has initiated pilot research activities in Tanzania and Vietnam, where partners in the developing countries play a more active role in design and management of joint research projects, including the selection of Danish partners.

The Danish research networks DDRN and DWF have supported communication activities and development of strategies for this in projects in the two countries and have worked actively with improving their communication skills. Representatives of the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) in Vietnam who will be in Denmark on a study tour on research communication organised by DDRN will participate in the seminar to present and discuss their experiences.

Experiences from other relevant research projects can also be presented: Suggestions are welcome. If you are interested in giving a presentation about your experiences with communicating research, please contact Miriam Feilberg at mfe@dhigroup.com before April 29, 2010.