



Water Research Impact and Uptake Workshop Proceedings

12 – 13 March 2014
Lombardy Hotel, Pretoria



RESEARCH
PROGRAM ON
Water, Land and
Ecosystems



Introduction

The Water Research Commission (WRC) and the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) have both grappled with the challenges of how to enhance the impact and uptake of research. The WRC, South Africa's primary funding agency dedicated to water and related research, has for several years, investigated ways to communicate, promote and enhance the impact of the research it funds and explore mechanisms to ensure uptake and utilisation of this research. Similarly, IWMI, a non-profit, scientific research organization focusing on the sustainable use of water and land resources in developing countries, has sought to embed uptake for impact within its research project design to ensure that it is strategically addressed from the onset. However, this is easier said than done and both the WRC and IWMI found it mutually beneficial to unpack key questions such as: when should impact and uptake be evaluated? With whom does the responsibility of impact lie? In this regard, the WRC and IWMI co-hosted an interactive workshop to explore the potential for future partnerships on research uptake activities in South Africa, and more broadly Southern, Africa.

Research and academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, government departments, and more recently, the private sector, all seek innovative ways to foster uptake of knowledge generated from research. The strategies and tools used to achieve uptake may differ but the overall objectives of working to ensure that knowledge from research is communicated, understood and acted upon by stakeholders from across the spectrum of research users to beneficiaries, are commonly shared.

There is good potential for institutions to learn from each other's experiences in pursuing uptake strategies and developing activities, tools and materials to nurture uptake. There is no 'right' way to nurture uptake but by sharing best practices, and examples of successes and challenges, both organizations hope to be able to enhance the efficacy of their uptake efforts.

The aims of the workshop were:

- 1 To explore the complexities and responsibility of research impact and uptake,
- 2 To explore the potential for future partnership on research uptake activities in South Africa, Southern Africa, and Africa, and
- 3 To develop a community of practice of professionals working in the areas of research impact and uptake from different angles.

Process

The workshop was attended by over thirty key stakeholders in water management research and development (Annexure 1). The process was designed as a collaborative and interactive dialogue. Plenary inputs were followed by question and answer sessions, and alternated with thematic and open space discussions in small groups (Annexure 3). Participants were also encouraged to write issues on a graffiti wall, and to tweet during the proceedings via #ResearchUptake and @WaterWheelmag.

A round of expectations showed that participants were interested in sharing and learning about: concepts, approaches and success stories of research uptake; development impacts; forging linkages in the sector; and forming a community of practice.

Results

“All policy decisions are informed. Unfortunately too few decisions are informed by science and technology”. Mr Dhesigen Naidoo WRC CEO



Speakers shared their experiences with research uptake and impact in their organizations. They reflected on a range of issues which stimulated discussion on monitoring and evaluation, funding, capacity building, and communication. A range of case studies were presented that helped ground the debate. A summary of issues emerging are presented below.

Objective 1 To explore the complexities and responsibility of research impact and uptake

Setting the scene

There is a chasm between science on the one hand, and society and the economy on the other hand. This gap can be bridged by designing for impact as an integral part of research. Investing in partnerships along the R&D Value Chain is critical (Mr D Naidoo WRC). Uptake is also a dynamic, complex, and multi-layered process in which producers and users of research interact and engage throughout the research process. As we strive for global outcomes, what counts is not who has information, but who makes the best use of that information (Dr P Chilonda IWMI). Meaningful community engagement is critical. There are numerous examples of technical solutions implemented

without proper engagement with receiver communities. Engagement is needed to find out what people actually need (Ms J Taylor Earthlife Africa).

Uptake

Research should demonstrate its value, relevance and practical utility to society and the economy. These should be expressed in a theory of change, charting out a variety of impact pathways and tools for specific target audiences (T Windham-Wright, IWMI).

A distinction must be made between uptake and impact. Uptake takes place when stakeholders “become aware of and access research outputs, and the institutions, policies, systems and mechanisms that support this”. Impact is made when there is evidence of a demonstrable contribution to society (Dr I Jacobs WRC).

Monitoring and evaluation

“What is the use of research if it does not make impact or if the impact it is making is not measured?” - Question from the audience

Uptake and impact should be monitored throughout the research process, the “impact pipe” (D Naidoo WRC). Measuring and attributing uptake and impact of research and its knowledge products is challenging, both short-term and long-term. Thus, it is important to understand what we are measuring: outputs are milestones, while outcomes are changes in behaviour. Impact is sustained change over time, scaled out and up (A Sullivan ex-FANRPAN).

Impact frameworks of research institutes such as IWMI and WRC, articulate outcome and impact domains at different levels - project, programme, and overall strategy -, in line with the institute’s vision and mandate (Annexure 2). It is a challenge to have ambitious vision and mission statements and then having to define instruments, key performance indicators, and targets for these (R Skeef NRF).

The state of water research in South Africa was measured based on scientific publications, patents, and human resources. Although water research is a relatively small activity considering the country’s size, South Africa was ranked 19th of 33 countries in the period 2006-2010. This pulse study could be institutionalized, and should also include R& D expenditure (Prof A Pouris University of Pretoria).

However, statistics on scientific publications are said to be an indicator of outputs, not of outcome or impact. Indicators can only play a useful role when the communication is welcomed, and must be developed with all stakeholders so the research can tell a good story. We need a good science index, like the happiness index in Bhutan. The question then arise what statistics and sub-indicators are needed to produce a good, holistic indicator (P Lukey DEA).

The Sustainability Development R&D strategy is promising, yet will have to prove itself in practice (T Ndukwana DEA).

Culture of uptake

A shift is needed from Research for Research (R4R) to Research for Development (R4D) based on impact pathways, theory of change, and outcome logic models (A Sullivan ex-FANRPAN).

Performance measures in research institutes still focus on producing scientific journal articles, with little or no incentive for end-user engagement and relevant research outputs. This needs to be revised. Uptake should be reflected in performance indicators across all levels of the organization: from local project to global strategic level. Reporting on uptake activities alone is not enough, but should include a focus on uptake and impact. With increasing pressure on researchers to show research impact, there is however a risk that this can lead to coercion to use research output and over-exaggerating or overstating change.

Mechanisms are needed to fill uptake gaps within the organization by allocating a clear portion of budget to uptake, include it as requirement in project reporting, and training and capacity building of researchers.

Capacity building

There is a need for a consistent, higher level understanding of uptake in research institutions. The relationship between uptake and impact must be defined, as well as characteristics of uptake action that leads to qualitative assessment.

It is important to plan and implement impact pathways at different levels, using specific tools and develop specific knowledge products (T Windham-Wright IWMI).

Success of uptake is reliant upon researcher expertise and interests in uptake. Draw on people's personal motivation to achieve impact. A reflexive practice is important to learn from each experience and to improve on the next process (N Funke CSIR).

Community engagement is critical to generate answers and solutions people need and want. Refrain from talking at people, rather ask and empower them by adding science and technology to what people already know and have.

Communications and sharing

Communication to relevant audiences is crucial for uptake and impact. Communication for uptake is aimed at influencing behaviour or decision making. For this purpose, information must be targeted and packaged, using appropriate language, formats, and communication channels.

For community engagement:

- Document to enhance learning
- Use video and photos
- Experts to translate research into useable documents
- Build capacity and use mentors to support use of knowledge products
- Be aware of risks to community members and leaders
- Policy change is not people's priority (N Lefore IWMI)

Products for policy makers must fit within legislative tools and policy, and must be timely. Also, a policy brief may influence decisions but does not guarantee implementation (N Funke CSIR).

Funding

Research should include provisions for uptake relevant to the institution's mandate. A range of options for funding uptake must be explored, such as a percentage of project budget for uptake, incentives for researchers.

Researchers should advocate for the importance of uptake with donors to secure funding.

Calls for proposals should stipulate inclusion of uptake element and budget:

- Design impact pathway from uptake to impact
- Applicant organizations could include team members who can incorporate uptake strategy into their proposals
- Build in flexibility for adaptation research to accommodate changes in impact pathway.

Repositories, templates, knowledge products, and M&E should be available as support mechanism to uptake activities.

Objective 2 To explore the potential for future partnership on research uptake activities in South Africa, Southern Africa, and Africa

Scientific research can be viewed as part of a R&D value chain. Relationships between role players in the value chain are critical. Scientists should invest in intermediaries for impact on the economy and society (D Naidoo, WRC).

Role players

"Mandates, legitimacy and convening power are the locks and the keys to getting to outcomes and impact". Dr A Sullivan, ex-FANRPAN.

Research uptake processes require building relationships and partnerships, and engaging in separate but inter-connected activities to get from outputs to outcomes and impact. Thus, it is important to map out the system and its stakeholders. Who are the most influential people, whose actions are most likely to bring the change we seek in the most effective way, and impacting the greatest number of potential beneficiaries?

Issues with regards to specific role players:

- Policy making processes are complex, and involve multiple actors and policy makers. Target all levels of Government, political hierarchy, and Departments.
- Intermediaries who specialize in stimulating research uptake are important to achieve impact.
- Social scientists contribute to better understanding of impact and uptake processes.
- Build on people's local practice and multiple water-needs to plan for and provide water services, using a multi-stakeholder action-learning approach (Dr B van Koppen, IWMI).
- Trust the stakeholder engagement process and ensure it remains flexible.

Objective 3 To develop a community of practice of professionals working in the areas of research impact and uptake from different angles

Lessons on learning platforms for research uptake:

- On-line communities are not easier, cheaper or more effective than in person convening
- Internet use is limited in Africa and tends to discriminate against females and people further from main cities
- Social media is not big in Africa (N Lefore IWMI)

Participants agreed that a community of practice on uptake and impact was desirable:

- Documents, materials, knowledge products etc. should be shared
- Information should be translated into suitable products for end users
A mechanism is needed to share impact and uptake experiences
- This platform, the Water Research Impact and Uptake Workshop, should be expanded beyond Southern Africa and become a regular event for the community of practice to share information.

Principles for uptake and impact as research practice emerging from the workshop

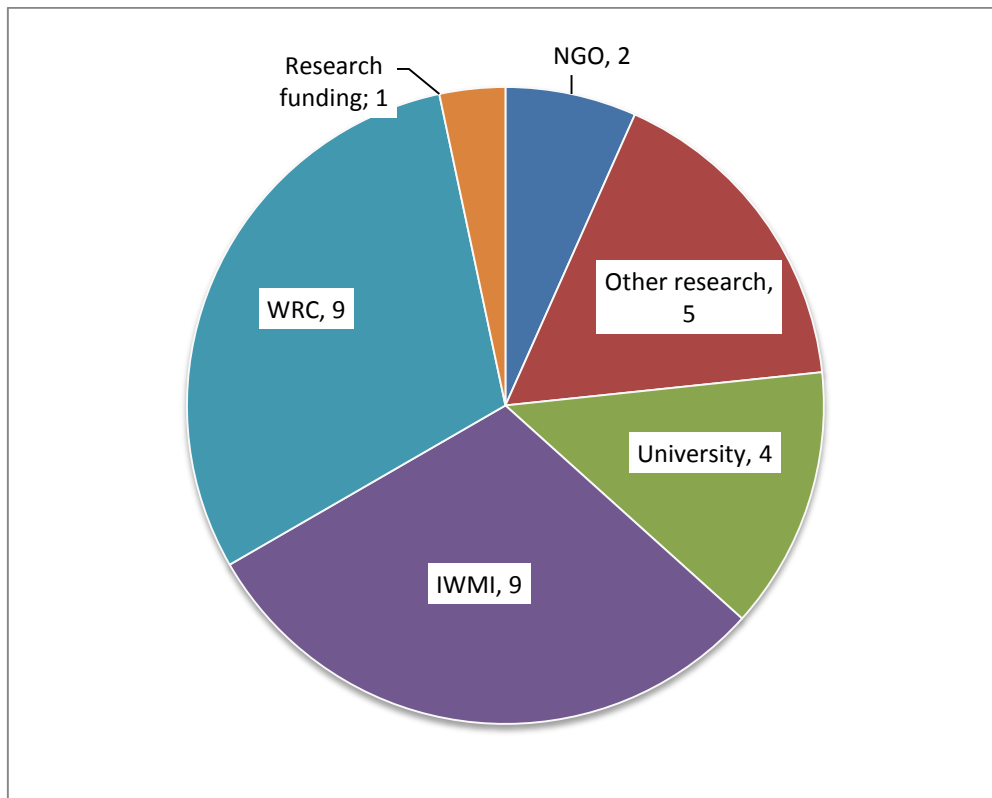
- Know who you are doing the research for
- Who we engage with, going beyond the obvious - the ecosystem of players
- Understand the demands
- Articulate the purpose of uptake – walking the tightrope between relevance and coercion
- Focus on achieving change and practical solutions
- Clarify the scale of change - local to global
- Consider time scales – from knowledge to policy
- Uptake and impact are about process and product
- Research can be a catalyst - not everything can be or needs to be measured
- Distribute responsibility for impact and uptake across partners

(E Weight, IWMI)

Way forward

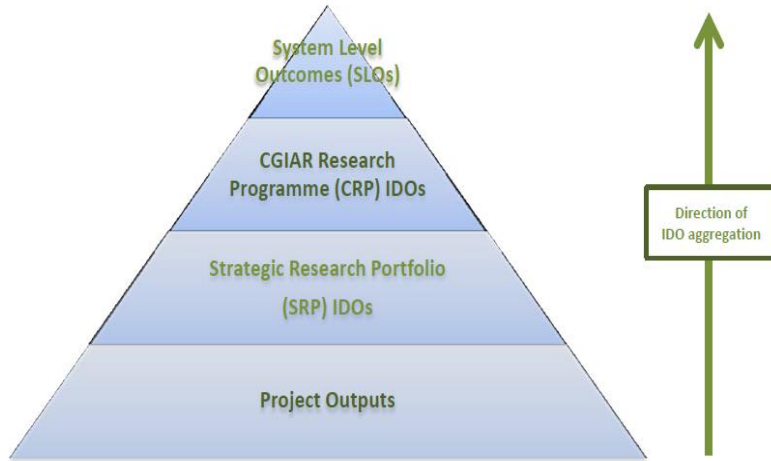
In their closing comments, the organizers highlighted the richness of dialogue that came from various stakeholders. The diversity of knowledge experts allowed participants to gain tremendously from the dialogue; each perspective had a different view. Going forward, further awareness-raising is required about uptake and impact within institutions.

Annexure 1 Stakeholders at the workshop

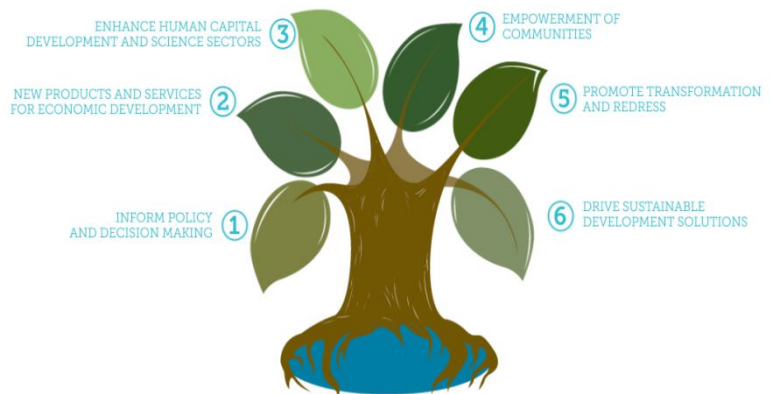
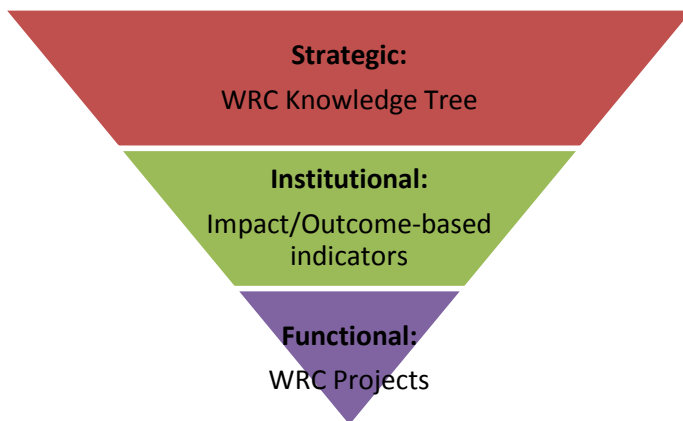


Annexure 2 Impact frameworks

IWMI impact framework within CGIAR system



WRC impact framework



Annexure 3 Workshop programme

About the WRC Dialogues

The WRC Dialogues are discussion-based events on topical water issues affecting the South African public, the aim of which is to serve as a platform to exchange ideas and opinions related to water. In this regard, the WRC Dialogues are guided by the principles of transparency, openness and honesty; plurality of perspectives and inclusivity, mutual respect; a commitment to problem-solving and mutual accountability; and in the broader interest of knowledge sharing. The value of the WRC's role as convener of these events lies in its ability to be a neutral knowledge broker as South Africa's premier water knowledge resource.

There are three types of dialogues that are organised in this series:



WAT-INDABAS

Wat-Indabas are typically closed facilitated sessions held under the Chatham House Rule. This rule refers primarily to the confidentiality of the source of information received at a meeting. The aim is to facilitate free knowledge sharing in an unthreatening environment. It intends to deepen mutual understandings of the different perspectives of stakeholders when there may be significant conceptual gaps, reference points, and perhaps even a degree of mistrust. Wat-Indabas will often span several sessions and involve the progressive unpacking of key issues related to the subject matter, with the outcome decided at the onset. Under Chatham House rule, participants commit to protecting the identity of other participants and only using the information received strategically to inform actions, research or policy decisions. Attendance is by invitation only.

WATER CURRENTS POLICY SERIES

The Water Currents Policy Series is a range of convened seminars, often held in partnership with a host of collaborating institutions, and comprising of a panel of experts invited to present different authoritative views on a discussion topic. The aim of the Water Currents Policy Series is to create a forum where panellists express multiple and sometimes divergent perspectives on key issues affecting the water sector in South Africa. A key component of this series is that it is outcome-driven with opinion pieces, policy briefs, and other publications generated after each dialogue.

KHULUMA SIZWE SERIES (The nation speaks)

The Khuluma Sizwe Series is an open lecture platform where high-profile speakers are invited to give talks on very impactful water issues affecting the South African public. These events will be widely broadcast and are open to the public.

For more information about the WRC Dialogues and the calendar of events visit the WRC website:
www.wrc.org.za



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Rationale

Research and academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, government departments, and more recently, the private sector, all seek innovative ways to foster uptake of knowledge generated from research. The strategies and tools used to achieve uptake may differ but the overall objectives of working to ensure that knowledge from research is communicated, understood and acted upon by stakeholders from across the spectrum of research users to beneficiaries, are commonly shared.

There is good potential for institutions to learn from each other's experiences in pursuing uptake strategies and developing activities, tools and materials to nurture uptake. There is no 'right' way to nurture uptake but by sharing best practices, and examples of successes and challenges, both organizations hope to be able to enhance the efficacy of their uptake efforts.

Goal

This workshop aims to explore the complexities and responsibility of research impact and uptake. Through a collaborative and interactive dialogue, it is hoped that this workshop will also be a mutual learning exercise for all participating institutions. Furthermore, it will aim to explore the potential for future partnership on research uptake activities in South Africa, and more broadly Southern Africa, and in this regard, develop a community of practice of professionals working in the areas of research impact and uptake from different angles.

Who should attend?

The target audience for the workshop is government departments, research institutions, funding agencies, non-governmental organisations and other institutions specialising in participatory action research, development organisations, donors, professional associations and learned societies.

Programme

Programme facilitator: **Dr Monique Salomon, Tshintsha Amakhaya**

Day 1: 12 March 2014

| Session 1: Organizational strategies for research uptake | |
|---|--|
| 08:30 – 09:00 | Registration and Coffee |
| 09:00 – 09:15 | Welcome and Introduction <i>Mr Dhesigen Naidoo, CEO WRC</i> |
| 09:15 – 09:30 | Scene-setting: Overview of uptake for impact in Southern Africa <i>Dr Pius Chilonda, Head of IWMI Southern Africa office</i> |
| 09:30 – 10:00 | Workshop objectives & programme, introductions & expectations <i>Dr Monique Salomon, Tshintsha Amakhaya</i> |
| 10:00 – 10:20 | WRC's strategic approach to research uptake for impact and the WRC Knowledge Tree <i>Dr Inga Jacobs, WRC</i> |
| 10:20 – 10:40 | IWMI's Africa research uptake strategy <i>Mr Thor Windham-Wright, IWMI West Africa</i> |
| 10:40 – 11:00 | Q&A and Discussion |
| 11:00 – 11:30 | BREAK |
| 11:30 – 12:00 | Strengthening research uptake: examples from the CSIR <i>Ms Nikki Funke, CSIR</i> |
| 12:00 – 12:30 | Case Study <i>Ms Amy Sullivan, Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy</i> |

| | |
|---------------|---|
| | Analysis Network (FANRPAN) |
| 12:30 – 13:00 | Hidden Resources: using communities to widen the scope of research <i>Ms Judith Taylor, EarthLife Africa</i> |
| 13:00 – 13:30 | Q&A and Discussion |
| 13:30 – 14:30 | Lunch |
| 14:30 – 14:50 | Action-research for piloting and upscaling of Multiple Use water Services (MUS) <i>Dr Barbara van Koppen, IWMI South Africa</i> |
| 14:50 – 15:15 | Q&A |
| 15:15 – 16:30 | Small group discussion in stakeholder groups |
| 16:30 – 17:00 | Day 1 Wrap-up: Recap on the spectrum of approaches to research uptake for impact <i>Elizabeth Weight, IWMI Global</i> |
| 17:00 | Dinner |

Day 2: 13 March 2014

| Session 2: Operationalizing uptake strategies and monitoring and evaluation | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| 09:00 – 09:20 | Scientometrics, a universal solution? <i>Prof Anastassios Pouris, University of Pretoria</i> | | |
| 09:20 – 09:40 | The Indicator <i>Mr Peter Lukey, Department of Environmental Affairs</i> | | |
| 09:40 – 10:00 | Sustainable Development RDE Strategy <i>Ms Thembelihle Ndukwana, Department of Environmental Affairs</i> | | |
| 10:00 – 11:00 | Q&A and Group Discussion – monitoring and evaluation of uptake | | |
| 11:00 – 11:20 | BREAK | | |
| 11:20 – 11:40 | Communications and sharing case study on Improved Management of Agricultural Water in Eastern and Southern Africa (IMAWESA) Program <i>Nicole Lefore, IWMI/IMAWESA</i> | | |
| 11:40 – 12:00 | Funding for impact <i>Dr Rocky Skeef, NRF</i> | | |
| 12:00 – 12:20 | Q&A | | |
| 12:20 – 13:00 | Group Discussion – the role of capacity building in research uptake | Group Discussion – the role of communications | Group discussion – funding research uptake |
| 13:00 – 14:00 | Lunch | | |
| Session 3: Tools for internal organizational change to foster an uptake culture | | | |
| 14:00 – 15:00 | Group Discussion – integration of uptake into research design | Group Discussion – incentives and performance reviews, and internal capacity building | |
| 15:00 – 15:30 | Group Feedback | | |
| 15:30 – 15:45 | Forming a Community of Practice on research uptake, and other action points for follow-up | | |
| 15:45 – 16:30 | Day 2 Wrap-up and Way Forward | | |
| CLOSE | | | |