



Project 518066

AFRICAN WATER

Supporting African involvement in the EU Framework Programme

Instrument: Specific Support Action

Thematic priority: Integrating and Strengthening the European Research Area

D4.1.1

Training material for 2007 UKRO Annual Conference

D4.1.2

Delegate briefing packs for 2007 UKRO Annual Conference

D4.1.3

Programme for African visit to UK

D4.2

Media briefings to support African Water

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Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, UK & UK Research Office, Belgium

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Dissemination Level		
PU	Public	X
PP	Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)	
RE	Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services)	
CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	

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1. Introduction

African Water WP4 “Africans in Europe” was originally called “Africa meet the Commission” and comprised a workshop for a delegation of African water researchers in Brussels, coinciding with the FP7 launch event, in order to increase African awareness of Brussels institutions, meet key EC staff and increase knowledge about framework processes. These activities were revised following cancellation of the FP7 launch. It was felt that these objectives could still be largely met by attendance at the 2007 UKRO Annual Conference in London, UK with some additional side meetings. Therefore, following a competitive selection process (D2.4.2), three representatives from African water research organisations were sponsored to attend the conference in July 2007. An additional training workshop was held in West Africa in November 2007 (D3.2.1).

UKRO (the UK Research Office) is a Brussels-based service provider to UK, other European Mediterranean and Middle Eastern research organisations with information on European funding opportunities. Its services included provision of highly topic-focused information on Calls and EU research news, and UKRO is the UK National Contact Point for the Marie Curie Programme. In African Water, UKRO was subcontracted to supply both general and specialist information and training services.

The 2-day UKRO (the UK Research Office) Annual Conference is aimed primarily at European research liaison officers. The Conference provides an excellent forum for discussion and networking with key speakers from the European Institutions on a wide range of EU policies and funding opportunities. The 2007 conference was held at Imperial College, London on 5th and 6th July 2007 and had a strong focus on FP7 (Appendix 1).

The three delegates were chosen from 19 applications, based primarily on their reasons for wanting to attend the conference and their plans for disseminating the information gained both within and outside their organisation. The delegates were:

- Dr Semu Moges, Arba Minch University, Ethiopia. National Coordinator for the Nile Basin Initiative training project with well-established networks of research organisations in the basin countries.
- Dr Manta Nowbuth, University of Mauritius, Mauritius. Interest in collaborative research in the region (member of Steering Committee and Scientific Coordinating Group for UNESCO IHP Southern Africa FRIEND project) and internationally.
- Mr Piet van der Westhuizen, University of Pretoria Research Office, South Africa (also attended the first training workshop) with the particular brief within the university to enhance participation of the university in FP6 and FP7.

This report details the visit of the African delegates to the UK and the conference (D4.1.1-D4.1.3, in sections 2 and 3 of this report). It also describes the media briefings over the duration of the project to disseminate information about African Water (D4.2, section 4 of this report).

2. 2007 UKRO Annual Conference

The 2007 conference attracted approximately 200 delegates, who heard about various different issues including the European Research Area, Intellectual Property Rights in FP7, ethics in FP7, international cooperation across FP7, financial provisions of FP7 grant agreements, EuropeAid and the European Research Council, many direct from European Commission speakers (Appendix 1). Through their attendance, the African Water sponsored delegates were able to increase their awareness of Brussels institutions, meet key EC staff and increase knowledge about framework processes.

African Water was publicised at the conference, to inform UK research administrators of this mechanism by which their water researchers can make contact with potential African partners.

Presentations and other information were provided as hardcopy in the delegates' conference packs and can also be downloaded from: http://www.ukro.ac.uk/annual_conference/index.htm.

As well as the networking opportunities presented at the event, the African Water team also allowed time for discussions with the three African representatives regarding their specific research challenges and how these issues mapped on to the European Research programmes.



Figure 1: African Water delegates at the UKRO conference - from L to R, Helen Houghton-Carr (CEH), Neil Runnalls (CEH), Semu Moges (Ethiopia), Manta Nowbuth (Mauritius).

3. African perspectives of UKRO conference

The three African Water sponsored delegates to the 2007 UKRO Annual Conference were asked to summarise their impressions of the conference and which topics were and (were not) useful to them and the organisations they were representing. They were also asked to expand upon their plans, set out in their application, for disseminating the knowledge they had gained within and outside their organisation, identifying people and networks that they would be liaising with and the specific information that they would be passing on. Finally they were asked to share any ideas about how an UKRO-type organisation might (or might not) benefit Africa. This section summarises the information received.

3.1 Impressions of UKRO conference

Overall impressions of the conference were very positive. All the delegates agreed that they had a much clearer understanding of issues such as how the FP operates, the level of competition for securing funds for research, the importance of a high quality proposal for funding requests, the benefits of developing a consortium with partners with current/previous experience of FP, the legal aspects relating to consortia for research projects, and the services provided by an organisation such as UKRO. The session on intellectual property rights (IPR) and legal aspects was noted as particularly useful as these are issues often not given due consideration at the proposal preparation stage. The finance session was also rated very highly as this is one of the most complex aspects of FP participation once a project has started. The session on EuropeAid alerted the delegates to the non-FP funds available to support research, education and training.

One delegate said “With most of the presentations, I could think of people in my university or elsewhere that should have been sitting there with me and could have benefited from what was being shared. Fortunately, the availability of the presentations gives me an opportunity to bring it to their attention and, where practical, discuss with them. The exposure to the conference, people and presentations was an extremely positive experience. It has answered a number of my questions (and created new questions!). It will help me to improve efforts to facilitate participation by my university in FP7 projects. I am sure my colleagues from Africa had a similar positive experience!”

3.2 Dissemination of knowledge

The delegates greatly appreciated the facility to download the presentations from the UKRO website after the conference so that they could share them with colleagues. For example, one delegate planned to provide a copy of the presentation from the session on ethics and ethical review in FP7 to the Chair of the Ethics Committee at his university as he felt the presentation clearly provided insight into how this issue is dealt with and how ethical review fits into the overall review process.

Other plans for dissemination included:

- Distribution list for dissemination of EU-related information within organisation covering researchers, senior policy and administrative personnel, legal personnel, financial personnel. The list of topics from the UKRO conference would be distributed to this list, giving interested people an opportunity to follow-up on specific topics.
- Targeted dissemination within organisation – specific issues would be proactively provided to relevant individuals within the organisation, as well as requests for additional support to be provided to cover identified areas of weakness e.g. financial aspects.

- Targeted dissemination outside organisation – specific issues would be taken up with identified individuals outside the organisation such as government departments, NCPs, and counterparts at other research organisations and universities, as well as offers to give short seminars or briefings on request.
- Workshop – requests for regional workshops attended by EU personnel to cover specific issues such as IPR and financial aspects. These would be similar to the African Water regional training workshops, but cover a few topics in more depth.

3.3 Future support mechanism for African water researchers

The South African government department responsible for science and technology openly encourages participation in the EU Framework Programme and have nominated National Contact Points (NCPs) in research organisations and universities who can encourage and support participation in FP opportunities. Many individual research organisations and universities also have an identified focal point for FP matters on their staff, charged with (i) staying abreast of FP developments, (ii) understanding the processes involved, (iii) encouraging awareness of opportunities, (iv) encouraging participation, (v) providing support and advice to those actually involved in proposals, and (iv) providing coordination and support with regard to the contracting processes in successful cases.

However, this support often amounts to a very small portion of the NCP or focal point's time and responsibilities and most organisations will, at best, be only moderately capable of managing the finer points of proposal writing, effective budgeting, meeting financial reporting requirements and dealing with EU rules and processes. Consequently, increased professional assistance with such matters would be very welcome. Other countries in Africa are probably no better off and there could be many benefits from the availability of a UKRO-type organisation – or at least an UKRO-type function - to researchers from Africa.

Any researcher wishing to participate successfully in FP needs to comply with the requirements of the EU-FP environment, effectively handling it on a practical, technical and administrative level. This EU-FP environment is complex, has complicated procedures and is geographically and culturally at a distance from Africa. The primary function of an African-EU Research Office should be the practical facilitation of effective interaction between African scientists and the European Union Framework Programmes. The need for support exists amongst African researchers in all disciplines, and is not water-specific.

However, some of the same issues face such an African-EU Research Office as face African researchers themselves. For instance, an office based in Africa will be geographically remote from the EU in Brussels (the customer), whilst an office based in Brussels will be geographically remote from the African researchers it is purporting to support (the users). Furthermore, the office has to have immediate access to knowledge, experience and know-how of how to deal with the EU-FP environment, and not effectively waste time acquiring contacts, knowledge and experience before becoming operational. Therefore, a link to UKRO or a similar organisation would be highly beneficial.

It is possible that only a moderate number of African countries/organisations would initially subscribe to such an African-EU Research Office, but as the scope of activity grows, the organisational structure should evolve to deal with it, providing services to researchers from any African organisation – or country - that subscribes. Links to NEPAD and the AU would address the political dimension, although a lot of resources and effort are already deployed in these organisations.

4. Media briefings to support African Water

African Water sought to increase awareness of its activities by active promotion through different media channels. These actions sought to increase awareness among researchers, research managers/policymakers and the general public. Target audiences were in both Europe and Africa.

Media enquiries were generally met by provision of project brochures and/or examples of outputs (training materials and presentations). In other situations, summary information on the objectives and activities of the African Water project were prepared for the media using text and diagrams from the project Description of Work.

The main source of media enquiries came from press media who had first located the African Water website. In these circumstances, the enquirers already had an interest in (i) research for development, (ii) water and sanitation research (e.g. in relation to MDGs), (iii) African research in these areas, and/or (iv) EU-Africa research collaboration. Hence, the media enquires were very specific to issues / articles already being developed and where specific examples were required. These were usually dealt with by one-to-one telephone discussions.

A secondary area of media interaction came from, or as a result of, proactive approaches from African Water to various electronic media e.g. networks, e-news, e-conferences. For instance, the launch of the African Water website www.africanwater.net in June 2006 was reported in several news items by other relevant networking projects e.g. www.scidev.net whose weekly news email bulletin is sent to approximately 23,500 subscribers. Generally, only electronic material was provided to these e-media, with a strong emphasis upon getting users of these e-media to link to the African Water website and subscribe to the regular newsletters.

A third type of interaction with the media was through personal contacts at conferences, exhibitions, and publicity events. In these circumstances, hardcopy materials (brochures) and links to web-based information were found to be most effective and adaptable to the different requirements of each event.

In these ways a variety of different materials were brought together in different formats for provision to the media.

Appendix 1 Agenda for 2007 UKRO Annual Conference

Thursday 5th July 2007		
10:00 – 10:45		Registration and Coffee
10:45	Plenary Session	Conference Opening
10:55 - 11:50	Key Note Address	Review of European Research Area Mr. Isi Saragossi, Director, Directorate C : European Research Area, DG Research,
11:50 – 12:45	Plenary Session 1	European Institute of Technology, EIT Mr. David White, Director Directorate A – Lifelong Learning :Education and Training Policies DG Education and Culture
12:45 – 13:15	Key Note Speech	Malcolm Wicks, Minister for Science and Innovation
13:15 – 14:30		Lunch
14:30 – 16:00	Parallel Session A	Intellectual Property Rights in FP7 Ms. Alicia Blaya, Senior Legal Advisor, IPR-Helpdesk Project
14:30 – 16:00	Parallel Session A	Ethics and Ethical Review in FP7 Ms. Mary FitzGerald, Policy and Project Officer, Directorate L, DG Research
16:00 – 16:30		Coffee Break
16:30 – 18:00	Parallel Session B	International Co-operation across FP7 Mr. Alessandro Damiani Head of Unit, International Scientific Cooperation Policy, Directorate D, DG Research
16:30 – 18:00	Parallel Session B	Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (2007-2013) Mr. Patrick Lambert, Director, Intelligent Energy Executive Agency (IEEA)
19:00		Drinks Reception Sponsored by Imperial College London Guest Speaker Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz, Deputy Rector, Imperial College London
20:00		Conference Dinner
Friday 6 th July 2007		
08:30 – 09:00		Registration
09:00 – 10:30	Plenary Session 2	Financial provisions of FP7 Grant Agreement Ms. Myriam Gomez-Martelo, Legal Officer, Directorate A, DG Research,
10:30 – 11:00	Plenary Session 3	FP7 Indirect Costs – Panel Discussion
11:00 – 11:30		Coffee Break
11:30 – 13:00	Parallel Session C	EuropeAid – New External Programmes 2007-2013 Mr. Jacobus Richelle, Director General, DG AIDCO -EuropeAid Cooperation Office,
11:30 – 13:00	Parallel Session C	FP7 Joint Technology Initiatives – Innovative Medicines Initiative Dr Octavi Quintana-Trias, Director, Directorate F DG Research
13:00 – 14:15		Lunch
14.15 – 14.45	Plenary Session 4	UKRO Achievements 2006/2007 and Priorities 2007/2008 Ms. Amanda Crowfoot, Director of UKRO
14.45 – 15:45	Plenary Session 5	European Research Council Update Mr. William Cannell, Head of Unit, Directorate S1, DG Research
15:45		Closing Remarks
15:45		Coffee Available