

## Attitudes and actions of participants in multi-stakeholder processes and platforms

Samyuktha Varma<sup>a</sup>, Alexandra Evans<sup>a\*</sup>, Carmen da Silva Wells<sup>b</sup> and K. Jinapala<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Battaramulla, Sri Lanka; <sup>b</sup>IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, The Hague, The Netherlands

Multi-stakeholder processes (MSPs) and platforms are being used to address various aspects of water management. They have been championed as a way to improve planning and coordination to involve marginalized groups, and to increase learning and uptake of innovations. Between 2005 and 2008, a project called 'WASPA Asia' established multi-stakeholder platforms in two cities, Kurunegala in Sri Lanka and Rajshahi in Bangladesh, to address wastewater use in agriculture and its impact on farmers' livelihoods. This paper presents findings on the benefits and constraints of a particular MSP around a 'Learning Alliance'. It also describes and analyzes the methodology used to obtain findings and suggests ways in which such a methodology could be used to improve results of MSPs. The paper indicates that the obvious merit of MSPs is in providing spaces for information sharing and awareness-raising. In time, MSPs can evolve to bring about changes in stakeholders' attitudes and actions but in many cases they are established around short-term projects, which limits their potential for (institutional) change. Given this constraint, attitudinal change and a better understanding of the issues amongst stakeholders are major accomplishments. Analysis of the methodology used for the review shows the benefits of regular joint monitoring, open communication, and the usefulness of relatively simple tools such as 'change stories'.

### Introduction

The use of multi-stakeholder processes (MSPs)<sup>1</sup> for the implementation of water and sanitation projects has been promoted for some years, with roots going back to the UN Conference on Environmental and Development (UNCED) World Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (Warner 2005) and emphasis in the water, sanitary and hygiene (WASH) sector increasing after the 2004 Global WASH Forum (Satterthwaite *et al.* 2005). At the time of the World Summit, discussions on natural resource management led to the view that stakeholders ought to be consulted in planning and management of common property. It is now usual practice for groups with interests or 'stakes' in the outcome of projects and programs, to at least have a forum in which they can express their concerns. Approaches to help incorporate stakeholder participation into the planning of projects are being used in many sectors to improve uptake of innovations and to assist decentralized government agencies in the governance of natural resources. Such platforms have been promoted by governments and donors alike with varying degrees of formalization (Warner 2006). More recently, the need to reflect on how platforms can increase their effectiveness resulted in new methods being developed to monitor and evaluate their impact (Moriarty *et al.* 2007a, Smits *et al.* 2007a).

---

\*Corresponding author. Email: samyuktha.varma@cgiar.org

The Wastewater Agriculture and Sanitation for Poverty Alleviation (WASPA) Project worked with stakeholders in Rajshahi in Bangladesh and Kurunegala in Sri Lanka to create multi-stakeholder platforms called Learning Alliances and to develop and implement participatory action plans (PAPs). The project ran from 2005 to 2008 and, in the final year of the project, a review of the Learning Alliances and PAPs was conducted. It focused particularly on the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement for urban integrated water resource management (IWRM) (Evans and Varma 2009). From April 2006 onwards, the project team used a process documentation approach to systematically record the changes arising from the project and to monitor progress. In addition, a study was conducted in mid-2008 to add further information to the ongoing monitoring process. That study focused mainly on the effectiveness of the Learning Alliance process in fostering learning, communication and participation. This paper draws on the process monitoring findings and presents reflections on the methodology of process monitoring.

## Background

The 'stakeholder' concept in water resources management and planning originates in social theory and is most commonly used to describe 'individuals, groups or institutions that are concerned with, or have an interest in, water resources and their management' (World Bank 1996, Warner 2006, p. 17). This widely accepted definition specifically notes that stakeholders ought to include all types of public, private and non-governmental actors, including individuals and communities that might be affected or involved in decisions relating to the use of the resource. The impetus to bring stakeholders together to plan and manage resources followed from the trend to decentralize local government that was promoted in developing countries in the 1990s (Andersson and Ostrom 2008).

Multi-stakeholder processes and platforms have been used in different sectors, to scale up innovations and technology adaptation; and to solve complex problems and institutional fragmentation (Warner 2005, Moriarty *et al.* 2007a,b Smits *et al.* 2007a). The motive is inclusion of multiple interests, to ensure that plans are made equitably and to address and minimize conflict between users. Multi-stakeholder platforms are therefore meant to provide a space for group effort in planning and decision-making. In the context of IWRM, they have been formed 'for horizontal and vertical co-ordination' because of the number of agencies that are responsible for various aspects of water management and the scales at which management occurs (Verhallen *et al.* 2007, Verhagen *et al.* 2008). Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) approaches for MSPs have ranged from modeling approaches that analyze decision support systems, to process approaches that have focused more on the social learning of the actors through interaction and participation (Tuckermann 2007, Warner 2007).

## The WASPA concept

The WASPA project was designed to utilize MSPs to undertake holistic planning for wastewater use in agriculture – a practice common in the peri-urban areas in developing countries. A global study of 53 cities in developing countries found that poor sanitation leads to pollution of urban water bodies, which are used by farmers practicing urban agriculture. Lacking a viable alternative water source, they use wastewater directly from the sewage systems or indirectly from water bodies contaminated with domestic waste (Raschid-Sally and Jayakody 2008). Better management of wastewater in conjunction

with appropriate sanitation, could contribute to improved water quality, reduced health risks and better living conditions. The hypothesis of WASPA was that:

Changes in attitudes and actions associated with wastewater management and productive use in agriculture can be achieved through collaboration in a multi-stakeholder process (a learning alliance) and participatory action planning.

To test this hypothesis, the project proceeded through several overlapping and iterative steps, which are presented in Figure 1 and Box 1.

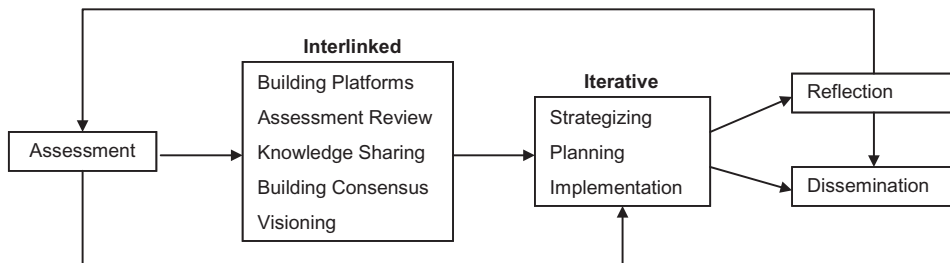


Figure 1. The Wastewater Agriculture and Sanitation for Poverty Alleviation (WASPA) project process.  
Source: Evans and Varma 2009.

#### Box 1. Steps in implementation of the Wastewater Agriculture and Sanitation for Poverty Alleviation (WASPA) project

- **Identify stakeholders** – inventory of stakeholders, their roles, concerns and relationships.
- **Establish Learning Alliance** – inform all stakeholders about the project through individual and community meetings; and encourage them to come together to discuss wastewater management.
- **Assessment, knowledge sharing and consensus building** – rapid appraisal of the existing situation with stakeholders (transect walks, focus group discussions, problem tree development), in order to create an informed basis for discussion.
- **Visioning and prioritizing** – after problem definition by stakeholders, they envisaged the future desired situation, wrote a vision statement and defined strategies to achieve them, and developed action plans.
- **Planning and implementation** – mainly by the WASPA team with working groups selected by the Learning Alliance. Specific decisions relating to the activities set out in the action plan were approved by a core group of 3–4 members elected by the Learning Alliance. Any amendments to the strategies or decisions about prioritizing the strategies were taken back to the Learning Alliance.
- **Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)** – reflection, documentation and participatory analysis with stakeholders to see whether the desired results were being achieved.

Source: Smits *et al.* 2009.

In order to develop and implement PAPs, a shared problem definition and vision were essential; therefore the Learning Alliances were initially required to ensure that each stakeholder group understood the problem of wastewater use in agriculture, from the perspective of other stakeholders. The roles and responsibilities of each in relation to these problems were also shared to facilitate identification of solutions.

### Process monitoring methodology

In order to document and analyze whether the Learning Alliances were achieving these aims, a process monitoring methodology was developed consisting of two components: *process documentation*; and *process review*. Process monitoring is a valuable tool used to foster change and stimulate participation in projects with MSPs; it involves identification of relevant domains of change and definition of indicators to assess them (Smits and da Silva Wells 2006). In WASPA, qualitative information from stakeholders and project team members was used to capture the processes of change, including changes in attitudes towards issues addressed in WASPA and willingness to take action to address those issues.

### Process documentation

Process documentation, which has been used as an M&E tool in several similar projects (SWITCH and EMPOWERS), has been defined by Schouten *et al.* (2007, p. 1) as 'a tool that helps project staff and stakeholders to track meaningful events in their project, to discern more accurately what is happening, how it is happening and why it is happening'. The aim was to continually review, with stakeholders, their views about the issues being tackled by the project and the actions that they took through the PAPs. It also enabled review of progress in line with the expectations of the team and of the Learning Alliance members. The WASPA approach involved five steps and formally defined areas of change to be tracked (Table 1).

The broad change process to be documented was identified as *the capacity* of stakeholders to deal with WASPA issues (sanitation, wastewater management and reuse). The

Table 1. The process monitoring framework.

Step	Explanation and examples
1. Select change processes to be monitored – how stakeholders perform their roles and how they relate to each other. They should be decided with Learning Alliance members	Understanding of Wastewater Agriculture and Sanitation for Poverty Alleviation (WASPA) concept among stakeholders; attitude towards WASPA concept; changes in practices of stakeholders; development of relations between Learning Alliance members; interest or motivation to be part of learning platforms
2. Define indicators and to guiding questions monitor change processes	Do stakeholders appear interested in Learning Alliances? Indicator: regularity of meetings, attendance levels, contribution and follow-up
3. Define sources of information and data storage – change processes can be best captured through observations	These need to be captured in a structured way: records of meetings and workshops; semi-structured interviews; questionnaires; joint site visits; informal discussions
4. Finalize process-monitoring framework	Combine steps 1–3 into a clear framework
5. Analyze and report – weekly analysis and detailed analysis at logical points in the project	The plan for analysis and reporting will include: what, how, when, who and format

Source: Smits and da Silva Wells 2006.

indicators were then identified as: knowledge – stakeholders’ ability to explain linkages between sanitation, wastewater and agriculture; and empowerment – stakeholders’ ability to explain their understanding to other stakeholders or take up actions.

### *Process review*

The process review supported the monitoring by collecting information at a given time on certain change processes, using various tools (Table 2).

### **Effectiveness of the Learning Alliance and Participatory Action Planning process**

Process monitoring provided some important lessons about how WASPA influenced the attitudes of stakeholders, and their willingness to take action to address hygiene, sanitation and wastewater management and productive use of wastewater.

### *Changes in attitudes*

The review of WASPA meeting minutes, interviews with project staff and Learning Alliance members, revealed that many stakeholders initially found it difficult to conceptualize the

Table 2. Assessment of learning and changes in practices.

Change process	Indicator of change	Attitudes or actions?	Tool
Stakeholders’ understanding of, and attitudes to, wastewater, sanitation and agriculture related issues	Stakeholders can explain a link between wastewater, sanitation and agriculture	Attitudes	Interviews, review of change stories
Stakeholders’ understanding of institutional roles, responsibilities and relationships	Stakeholders can describe the roles and responsibilities of their own and other key stakeholders	Attitudes	Interviews, review of Learning Alliance meeting minutes and change stories
The improvement of relationships between stakeholders	Stakeholders undertake joint activities	Attitudes and actions	Learning Alliance meeting minutes, review of progress with action plans
Interest or motivation of stakeholders to engage with others on WASPA issues	Stakeholders willingly and without project input begin to implement activities that relate to WASPA issues	Attitudes and actions	Learning Alliance meeting minutes, review of progress with action plans, review of stakeholder meeting minutes
Changes in practices of stakeholders	The daily activities of stakeholders have changed in a way that reflects project interventions	Actions	Review of progress with action plans and meeting minutes of Learning Alliance member organizations

Note: WASPA, Wastewater Agriculture and Sanitation for Poverty Alleviation.

connection between wastewater irrigation, sanitation infrastructure and hygiene practices. In the initial workshops, stakeholders focused predominantly on the aspects of sanitation and wastewater for which they were responsible and which directly affected them. By the time of the study, all the authority representatives interviewed showed a clear awareness of the linkages. They specifically expressed their concerns about the impact that wastewater could have on the health of farmers and consumers. For example, the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industry Association (BSCIC) representative noted:

Wastewater should be considered a resource and should be treated before use in agriculture. This also links to sanitation, the environment and hygiene, because the use of wastewater in agriculture can result in farmers getting various diseases and it can indirectly affect consumers of wastewater vegetables.

There was evidence that some interviewees still felt that certain issues should take priority, for example, Ward Commissioners and BSCIC felt that lack of urban planning ranked above wastewater, hygiene and agriculture in terms of importance for the city. The Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) officer prioritized training in crop diversification to grow crops that require less water and which pose less of a health risk. This is in line with the WHO Guidelines (2006) which were extensively discussed with the stakeholders. The BSCIC representative saw the project as being responsible for raising awareness of the issues and establishing the linkages between wastewater management, hygiene and agriculture. The Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) representative saw WASPA's role in institutional change and raising awareness of the links between wastewater, hygiene, sanitation, and agriculture.

The country teams reported that wastewater farmers were initially unaware of health risks. However, during the course of the project, the farmers gained a better understanding of the link between wastewater, sanitation and agriculture, and risks and benefits. One of the farmers commented:

I always use wastewater for irrigation. I think wastewater should be discharged at particular places so that we can use it as it gives good crops but it causes harm to others. The general consensus amongst the male farmers is that 'wastewater is good for agriculture but bad for health'.

Farmers' understanding of hygiene issues and how to manage wastewater to minimize contamination at the farm level improved as a result of focus group discussions, hygiene and sanitation training and awareness campaigns undertaken by the WASPA team.

In Sri Lanka, the Kurunegala Municipal Council (MC) officers said that the major understanding they have gained from WASPA was that wastewater agriculture needs to be considered as part of the waste management programs of Kurunegala MC as this is upstream of the agricultural land; and that the relevant institutions need to work together. Various comments by stakeholders demonstrate their understanding and attitudes (Table 3).

### *Understanding of roles and responsibilities*

In both countries, community members seemed to have little or no understanding of the roles and functions of line agencies. In Rajshahi, opinion was divided as to with whom responsibility for wastewater and sanitation lay: 'In terms of wastewater, initiatives should

Table 3. Understanding of stakeholders in Kurunegala of the links between wastewater, agriculture and sanitation.

Officer	Their understanding
Maintenance engineer	There must be a central system for managing wastewater in the city. WASPA meetings were very useful for me to understand the gravity of the problem of releasing contaminated water that is flowing to the fields
Medical doctor	The wastewater and solid waste in town must be managed as the farmers need water but not contaminated water
Secretary	I have been in the town for a long time but I only understood the need to look at wastewater and solid waste, and their impact on agriculture, after attending awareness sessions organized by WASPA
Environmental officer	Even as an environmental officer I was used to looking at the wastewater and solid waste problem of the town in a narrow sense. The WASPA meetings made me look at these aspects in a more integrated manner
PHIs	We were used to looking at only waste and health problems. Now we tend to think about the risks to farmers as well as city residents. We have changed our attitudes to low-income residents too and they have been empowered to come to us about their environmental related problems
Divisional officer (DO), Department of Agrarian Services	I personally gained a considerable knowledge by attending workshops and I now know that we need to discuss the overall concept of managing wastewater and solid waste together with agriculture

Note: WASPA, Wastewater Agriculture and Sanitation for Poverty Alleviation.

be taken first at the community level and then RCC should take all other responsibility'. These opinions suggest that the Learning Alliances did not adequately foster improved understanding of roles and responsibilities amongst the community members. However this understanding has begun to increase, since this review, as a result of social mobilization activities and joint physical interventions, such as construction of latrines (MC, Public Health Inspectors (PHI) and community members) and composting (Environmental Officer and community) that resulted from implementing the PAPs.

### ***Changes in actions***

Initially, interactions between stakeholders remained largely at the instigation of the project team and took place through events organized by the team – meetings were rarely informal, ad hoc or arranged by stakeholders other than the WASPA team. The project team had to put in considerable effort to encourage attendance, including personal visits, hundreds of telephone calls and supplying transport to bring stakeholders to the meetings. An initial period of inertia was also reported in a review of a water treatment technology transfer project in Colombia, in which Visscher *et al.* (2007) found that only those who shared a common concern over water quality actually became involved.

As implementation of the PAPs began positive impacts were observed in the motivation of stakeholders to engage with one another. In Sri Lanka for example the Irrigation Department has been working with the farmers to build a solid waste trap; the National

Table 4. Summary of participatory action plan interventions.

Kurunegala	Rajshahi
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction of a garbage trap</li> <li>• Research on fertilizer dosing for wastewater farmers</li> <li>• Hygiene promotion and training for wastewater farmers</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Record-keeping training for the farmers organization and awareness raising among the farmers on the role and function of the farmers organization</li> <li>• Upgrading of communal latrines</li> <li>• Hygiene promotion to wastewater farmers and Wilgoda community (with a special focus on women's groups and children)</li> <li>• Training on home composting for Wilgoda community</li> <li>• Developing cleaner production guidelines for hotels, industries</li> <li>• Rehabilitation of the Kurunegala Teaching Hospital wastewater treatment plant</li> <li>• Provision of mercury separators in dental clinics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study on cleaner production for small industries</li> <li>• Awareness raising on cleaner production for small industries</li> <li>• Street drama with hygiene messages</li> <li>• Developing information products (calendar) with hygiene messages</li> <li>• Agriculture training for wastewater farmers</li> <li>• Feasibility study for small-bore sewerage</li> <li>• Feasibility study on enhancing natural treatment in Bashuir Beel</li> </ul>

Water Supply and Drainage Board (NWSDB), MC and vehicle service stations have been working together; the Wilgoda community has been interacting with the MC; the local government representative of Wilgodawatte (a low income area) is very active and has worked closely with the Environmental Officer and the Agricultural Inspectors (AI) of the Department of Agriculture in organizing the first home gardening program and composting activities (Table 4).

Many of the stakeholders, especially community members, commented in the evaluation that they were very pleased that they had been able to meet other stakeholders and for their opinions to be heard. The Learning Alliance process was also able to include stakeholders that had experienced some marginalization in the past, who were invited, for the first time, to express their views and participate.

### **Summary**

- There has been a demonstrable increase in the awareness of stakeholders in relation to WASPA related issues and they now have different attitudes regarding the way in which they should be tackled.
- The WASPA project did not significantly improve stakeholders' understanding of the roles and responsibilities of other stakeholders.
- The implementation of PAPs motivated a significant change in stakeholders' willingness to become involved and even led to attitudinal change. Once they perceived the real possibility for change and 'not just another talk shop' stakeholders were increasingly willing to be involved.

### **Lessons from the evaluation process**

This section reviews the process of monitoring, based on the findings presented above, and reflects on the benefits that it brings to MSPs. It also suggests how it could be improved.



### *The value of process monitoring*

The process review provided the team with a good understanding of the current views and activities of the stakeholders. The change stories were an easy way to make changes over short time intervals visible and to show how project interventions made a difference. For example, the change stories show the value of champions who take up the WASPA initiatives. However, difficulties were also encountered and the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats relating to the use of process documentation and review are given in Figure 2 and some are elaborated below.

### *Adequate baselines*

Process documentation was introduced four months into the project but was given low priority. By the time the changes stories were initiated, 18 months later, many changes had already taken place. Similarly, the process review methodology was only developed in the second year. This meant that there was not an adequate baseline against which to measure change (although there were meeting minutes and status reports). The interviews provided good information about current attitudes but better records of previous attitudes would have shown more clearly to what extent these had changed and whether they had been influenced by the WASPA project. Some of this was captured in the initial stakeholder analysis and

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Simple and flexible.</li> <li>● Captures key changes in mindsets and attitudes, not just physical outputs.</li> <li>● Can be an effective project management tool (if used properly).</li> <li>● Can support institutional memory within the project.</li> <li>● Can combine an insiders' (project team) and outsiders' (reviewer) view, thus generating discussion and insights.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Relies on researchers observing and documenting changes – some may be missed or over-emphasized.</li> <li>● Methodology may not be considered robust enough.</li> <li>● It can take a considerable amount of time and needs resources.</li> <li>● Requires people who are familiar with and committed to the methodology.</li> <li>● Needs a clear understanding of the context and steps taken.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● If used well it can provide useful information as the project progresses, which enables the team to react to current situations and adjust plans as needed.</li> <li>● It could be used in project proposal formulation so that donors also review the project on attitudinal changes not just physical outputs.</li> <li>● It can foster better relationships between team members and stakeholders and increase stakeholder involvement (motivation of being heard through change stories).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● If the team does not fully appreciate the potential benefits of monitoring and reflection it will not be implemented adequately.</li> <li>● It must be implemented from the start to ensure a baseline as a poor baseline makes it hard to monitor change.</li> <li>● It can interfere with relationships between stakeholders and project team members if not done in a supportive and positive manner.</li> <li>● If external documents (e.g. meeting minutes) cannot be collected it is difficult to determine changes in working practices of stakeholders.</li> <li>● If changes are not accurately or regularly recorded it is difficult to support observations with further data.</li> </ul>

Figure 2. SWOT analysis for process monitoring in the Wastewater Agriculture and Sanitation for Poverty Alleviation (WASPA) project.

meeting minutes, but the minutes would have benefited from specific notes on comments or attitudes expressed that related to the indicators.

### ***Integration of the monitoring framework***

Although it was agreed that a short, weekly review of progress would take place; that in-depth reviews would be conducted after significant events; and that reflection on changes observed in the agreed areas should be incorporated into project meetings with field staff, this did not happen as envisaged. Internal review with the team suggests that there was so much work to do to encourage the stakeholders to engage in the Learning Alliance and PAPs that there was limited time for either internal or participatory reflection.

The value of process documentation as a mechanism for learning, planning and change, seems not to have been perceived equally by all members of the team. It was seen by some as a burden on an already complex project, whereas if implemented effectively, it could have been a useful tool for project management. Tuckermann (2007) observed that where the process of learning and change takes place in a context in which individuals and organization have already been assigned roles and tasks, M&E may become an additional task and can create stress. Consequently learning should be immersed in the day-to-day activities of stakeholders, then the team can gradually incorporate it into their routine and this will lead to empowerment.

Schouten *et al.* (2007, pp. 20–21) also observed that,

Time and methods for reflecting on and analysing information often become lost in busy projects. Project staff think in terms of arriving at solutions but the intermediary steps of reflection and analysis are not sufficiently valued. Tools, methods and procedures are therefore needed to ensure that project teams systematically reflect on and analyse the material that has been collected. Internal learning is one of the most important benefits of documenting the change process.

It seems that the WASPA project struggled with the typical challenges to integrate learning into projects, the chief one being that M&E is still too often used to account for and demonstrate results to donors, usually via log-frames, rather than for reflection on lessons learned. However, used for learning purposes, it can help project managers and team members to improve project performance (Tuckermann 2007). Developing ways in which to merge accountability to donors with continuous project learning and impact is challenging but is being taken up more and more (see Douthwaite *et al.* 2003, 2007, Springer-Heinze *et al.* 2004).

### ***Fostering positive perceptions and maintaining momentum***

The resurrection of process documentation and monitoring had a positive impact on the team by helping them to see the large amount of work done. Up to then, they had felt as if the Learning Alliance was not progressing, stakeholders were not sufficiently engaged, and that they were the only ones taking responsibility for initiating implementation of the PAPs. These perceptions changed after review and reflection. Similarly, the Learning Alliance stakeholders who were involved in the review became conscious of the efforts that other stakeholders had made and therefore increased their willingness to engage in the Learning Alliance and PAPs (Table 4).

### ***Involving stakeholders***

The value of involving significant stakeholders in the process of documentation and analysis is extolled by Schouten *et al.* (2007) and Abd-Alhadi *et al.* (2006). In WASPA, change processes documented in the change stories, were mainly collected by the project team rather than with Learning Alliance members (although in Bangladesh they did share informally with stakeholders during bilateral meetings). This was partly because the team and stakeholders took some time to become familiar with the approaches, and partly because many of the stakeholders were senior local government officials, so the team found it difficult to spend time with them on such activities. Learning Alliance stakeholders wanted to see physical outputs and did not value the process monitoring in the same way as the researchers on the project.

In the final year of the project, the Learning Alliance and PAP processes were reviewed with stakeholders in workshops in each country. The process monitoring interviews and change stories were used and the stakeholders provided direct feedback and verification. At this point the value of the change stories became clear and the modality of how to effectively use them was understood. If change stories are used as a formal sharing tool within an organized workshop then even senior members of staff and government departments are willing to engage because they have already committed time to being at the workshop; if they see value, they are more likely to support future iterations.

### ***Who leads the process?***

Not only is it critical to involve stakeholders but also to think carefully about who should lead the process within the team. Tuckermann (2007) suggests that external facilitators engaged in M&E processes can, through their relative distance to the project, help pinpoint biases, pre-conceptions, limitations and blind spots. The project team found that there is often a lack of such skilled people, especially in developing countries where less emphasis is put on such roles and more emphasis tends to be on technical expertise (although this is changing). Consequently local experts are often over-committed and international experts are expensive.

### **Discussion**

In this paper we set out to do two things:

- To review the extent to which the Learning Alliance and PAP processes achieved communication, learning and participation;
- To critically analyse the methodology for reviewing the Learning Alliances and PAP development processes and make suggestions for how this methodology could be improved.

The Learning Alliance and PAP processes undoubtedly resulted in a change in the attitudes of the stakeholders towards the use of wastewater in agriculture. The stakeholders developed a wider knowledge of the issues and understood the perceptions of other stakeholders because they were given the opportunity to discuss their opinions and views. Many projects with change or innovation components involve experts who inform and advise stakeholders. In the WASPA project, the Learning Alliance and PAP approaches enabled the stakeholders to learn from one another and to identify where to seek information when it was lacking within the Learning Alliance.

The process of participatory planning stimulated stakeholders to take action and many of the planned activities were implemented by the end of the project. However this required substantial input from the WASPA team and it seems unlikely that it would have happened in their absence. As a pilot for up-scaling, it demonstrates that some changes need to be made in the way in which a project engages with stakeholders if they want to stimulate them to act without project support. Given the hierarchical authority structure in both cities, stakeholders suggested that support from higher government levels would be instrumental in getting things done. Longer-term observation is needed to determine whether the changes in attitude lead to more action.

During the life of the project, process monitoring, was essential to determine whether the project was taking the right direction towards achieving its intended goals (Smits *et al.* 2007b). A methodology that includes several tools is useful for capturing different aspects of change, such as attitudes and actions. For example, change stories proved a useful tool for energizing the team and improving focus. The interviews supported this with specific opinions and comments but it was extremely difficult to collect secondary material (meeting minutes and reports from government agencies), suggesting that reliance on primary data collection may be more effective. In retrospect, several other tools could have been useful such as a (simplified) version of Impact Pathways (Douthwaite *et al.* 2003, 2007, Springer-Heinze *et al.* 2004) and Most Significant Change (Davies and Dart 2005).

## Conclusions

Irrespective of which tools are used, key lessons are that process monitoring needs to start at the outset and be incorporated into the main body of the project. It requires a facilitator or champion but should be done in full collaboration with all team members and stakeholders; the findings should be analyzed regularly, to ensure that useful information is being collected and to enable the team and stakeholders to react to the findings; the analysis should consider whether the right tools are being used and the correct processes are being monitored.

Where MSPs are implemented in conjunction with participatory process monitoring, the overall outcomes can be enhanced through continuous learning and adaptation, and the motivation that it fosters.

## Note

1. In this paper we consider multi-stakeholder processes to be the whole set of actions and interactions that take place, of which a platform is part, and which may be the centre of the process but is not the end in itself.

## Notes on contributors

Alexandra Evans is a researcher in wastewater and livelihoods at the International Water Management Institute (IWMI). She was the project leader for the WASPA project and has worked on wastewater management projects across South Asia.

Samyuktha Varma is the Executive Officer to the Director General at IWMI. Her background is in social equity and gender, and she also supported the WASPA project's communication and knowledge sharing.

Carmen da Silva Wells is project officer at the IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre and facilitates multi-stakeholder learning and documentation. In WASPA Asia she has supported the work on documentation through change stories.

K. Jinapala is a Researcher at IWMI and a specialist on the social and institutional issues of water resources management, primarily in Sri Lanka. As a long standing member of IWMI Research staff, Jinapala has extensively worked on research areas such as participatory irrigation management and water resources institutions in river basins.

## References

- Abd-Alhadi, F.T., Mizyed, B., El-Zoubi, R., El-Soda, M. and Schouten, T. 2006. Effect of process documentation on building the capacities of EMPOWERS stakeholders for local governance (Middle East) [online]. In: *Symposium on sustainable water supply and sanitation: strengthening capacity for local governance*, 26–28 September, IRC Delft, the Netherlands. Available from: <http://www.irc.nl/page/31141>. [Accessed 8 March 2009]
- Andersson, K. and Ostrom, E. 2008. Analyzing decentralized resource regimes from a polycentric perspective. *Policy sciences*, 41, 71–93.
- Davies, R. and Dart, J. 2005. The ‘Most Significant Change’ (MSC) technique: a guide to its use [online]. Available from: <http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.htm> [Accessed December 2008].
- Douthwaite, B., Kuby, T., van de Fliert, E. and Schulz, S. 2003. Impact pathway evaluation: an approach for achieving and attributing impact in complex systems. *Agricultural systems*, 78, 243–265.
- Douthwaite, B., Alvarez, S., Thiele, G. and Mackay, R. 2007. Participatory impact pathways analysis. Draft prepared for ‘Beyond Farmer First’, workshop, 12–14 December, Institute for Development Studies, Sussex, UK.
- Evans, A. and Varma, S. 2009. Practicalities of participation in urban IWRM: perspectives of wastewater management in two cities in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. *Natural resources forum*, 33, 19–28.
- Moriarty, P., Batchelor, C., Abd-Alhadi, F.T., Laban, P. and Fahmy, H. 2007b. The EMPOWERS approach to water governance: background and key concepts. INWRDAM, on behalf of the EMPOWERS Partnership, Amman, Jordan, p. 153 <http://www.project.empowers.info/page/3337>. [Accessed 25 April 2009].
- Moriarty, P., Batchelor, C., Abd-Alhadi, F.T., Laban, P. and Fahmy, H. 2007c. The EMPOWERS approach to water governance: guidelines, methods and tools. INWRDAM, on behalf of the EMPOWERS Partnership, Amman, Jordan, p. 41 <http://www.project.empowers.info/page/3344> [Accessed 25 April 2009].
- Raschid-Sally, L. and Jayakody, P., 2008. Drivers and characteristics of wastewater agriculture in developing countries: Results from a global assessment. IWMI Research Report 127. Colombo, Sri Lanka: International Water Management Institute, 35.
- Satterthwaite, D., McGranahan, G. and Mitlin, D. 2005. Community-driven development for water and sanitation in urban areas [online]. Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), New York. Available from: [http://www.wsscc.org/pdf/publication/Community\\_driven\\_development.pdf](http://www.wsscc.org/pdf/publication/Community_driven_development.pdf) [Accessed 17 February 2009].
- Schouten, T. 2007. Learning Alliance briefing note No. 6: process documentation [online]. SWITCH project outputs. Available from: <http://www.switchurbanwater.eu>. [Accessed 24 August 2009].
- Schouten, T., Mizyed, B., Al-Zoubi, R., Abu-Elseoud, M. and Abd-Alhadi, F.T. 2007. The inside story: process documentation experiences from EMPOWERS [online]. Available from: <http://www.empowers.info/page/3287> [Accessed 17 February 2009].
- Smits, S. and da Silva Wells, C. 2006. WASPA guidance note 4: Process monitoring [online]. Available from: <http://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/waspa/PDF/Publication/WASPA%20Guidance%20note%204-%20Process%20monitoring.pdf>.
- Smits, S., da Silva Wells, C., Evans, A. and Udukumbure, R. 2009. Integrated planning for sanitation and use of wastewater: experiences from two cities in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. WASPA working paper (unpublished).
- Smits, S., Moriarty, P., Fonseca, C. and Schouten, T., 2007a. Scaling up innovation through learning alliances: An introduction to the approach. In: S. Smits, P. Moriarty and C. Sijbesma, eds. *Learning alliances: Scaling up innovations in water, sanitation and hygiene*. Technical paper series, no. 47. Delft, the Netherlands: International Water and Sanitation Centre.

- Smits, S., Garcia, M., Moriarty, P. and Laban, P. 2007b. Building learning alliances – some initial findings. In: S. Smits, P. Moriarty and S. Sijbesma, eds. *Learning alliances: Scaling up innovations in water, sanitation and hygiene*. International Water and Sanitation Centre. Technical paper series, no. 47, Delft, the Netherlands: International Water and Sanitation Centre.
- Springer-Heinze, A., Hartwich, F., Henderson, J.S., Horton, D. and Minde, I. 2004. Impact pathway analysis: an approach to strengthening the impact orientation of agricultural research. *Agricultural systems*, 78, 267–285.
- Tuckermann, B.C. 2007. Challenges and key success factors to integrating learning and change in monitoring and evaluation of development projects. Case study of an urban agriculture project in eastern Cuba. *Knowledge management for development journal*, 4 (1), 21–30.
- Verhagen, J., Butterworth, J., Morris, M. 2008. Learning alliances for integrated and sustainable innovations in urban water management. *Waterlines*, 27 (2), 116–124.
- Verhallen, A., Warner, J. and Santbergen, L. 2007. Towards evaluating MSPs for integrated catchment management. In: J. Warner, ed. *Multistakeholder platforms for integrated water resources management*, 259–270. Hampshire, Ashgate Publishing, 281.
- Visscher, J.T., Mariela, G. and Röling, N. 2007. Multi-stakeholder learning in Colombia; from TRANSCOL to team learning projects. In: S. Smits, P. Moriarty, and S. Sijbesma, eds. *Learning alliances: Scaling up innovations in water, sanitation and hygiene*. Technical paper series, no. 47. Delft, the Netherlands: International Water and Sanitation Centre, 61–81.
- Warner, J. 2005. Still waters run deep: (Non-)participation in multi-stakeholder platforms. In: FAO/Netherlands International Conference on Water for Food and Ecosystems. 31 January - 4 February 2005, The Hague, The Netherlands. [http://www.fao.org/ag/wfe2005/casedb\\_en.asp](http://www.fao.org/ag/wfe2005/casedb_en.asp) [Accessed 10 January 2009].
- Warner, J. 2006. More sustainable participation? Multi-stakeholder platforms for integrated catchment management. *Water resources development*, 22 (1), 15–35.
- Warner, J. 2007. The beauty of the beast: Multi-stakeholder participation for integrated catchment management. In: J. Warner, ed. *Multi-stakeholder participation for integrated catchment management*. Surrey, UK: Ashgate Studies in Environmental Policy and Practice, 281.
- WHO 2006. Guidelines for the safe use of wastewater, excreta and greywater. Volume 2: Wastewater use in Agriculture. Geneva, Switzerland, 196. [http://www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/wastewater/gsuweg2/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/wastewater/gsuweg2/en/index.html) [Accessed 15 January 2009].
- World Bank 1996. *Participation sourcebook*. Washington, DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.