



Summary of findings from the city assessments

SWITCH Scientific Meeting

*30 November - 4 December 2008,
Belo Horizonte, Brazil*

Contents

- Findings of the facilitated city progress analyses
- Recommendations to maximise impacts of learning alliance approach in SWITCH
- Feedback from peer review workshop, MT and EC review



Key points

- Papers provide the city context, explanation of integrated approach (intervention logic), evidence of first impacts
- LAs are central, effectively using their allocated resources, producing greater impacts of science
- From a strong foundation, need to address capacity, resource, support issues in each city
- Strong and supportive network of cities emerging (Accra, Alexandria, Belo Horizonte, Birmingham, Cali, Hamburg, Lodz, Tel Aviv)



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Methodology

- Teamwork
- Skills in analysis/ documentation
- Semi-structured interviews
- 3 target groups
 - Research providers (scientists)
 - Facilitators and research managers (LA facilitator and city coordinator)
 - Research users
- 95 interviews (about 25:25:50 split)
- Common framework for papers



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Suggested SWITCH objectives

1. To support cross-institutional platforms and better **linkages** between urban water stakeholders in a city, and between research providers and users (both to support an integrated approach to urban water management, and to maximize the uptake and impacts of innovative and demand-led science).
2. To improve the **scientific basis** for integrated urban water management within focus cities through fundamental research that fills key gaps across all aspects of the urban water cycle
3. To test and **demonstrate** through action research the feasibility and potential of innovative and better technologies (as set out in the SWITCH approach through demonstrations and other activities)
4. To improve **decision-support processes** within focus cities (e.g. using more effective and accessible tools like City Water) and the realization of IUWM through evidence-based and far-sighted strategic plans and better policies.



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Impacts

- strong evidence that cities are engaging users of research in non-traditional and more effective ways
- leading to greater impacts of SWITCH science



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Lodz: bringing together stakeholders

"Through the learning alliance I first met some people that I only knew by name before....

It was the first attempt to improve communication between the different organisations and to provide a cross-institutional platform to share information and discuss water and sanitation issues...

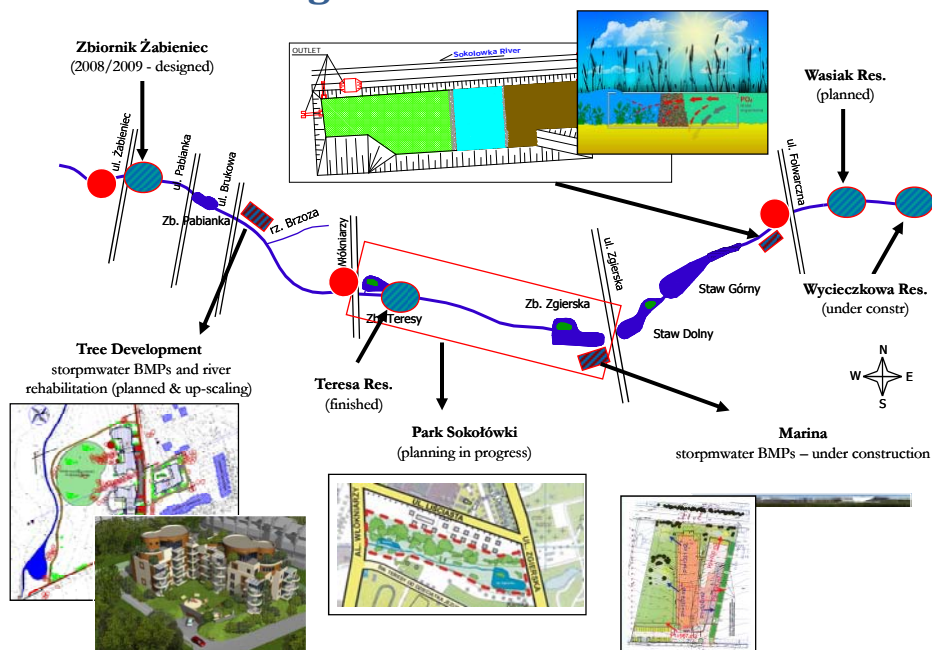
SWITCH is giving an overall picture of how everything is working together in the city and is addressing the issues in an integrated way. This is needed by the individual organisations that themselves only work on a small part of the system"

Andrzej Czapla is an engineer in middle management at the Łódź wastewater treatment plant



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Lodz: linking research to demonstrations



Alexandria: A strategic plan for IUWM

- learning alliance that involves all the senior players in the Governorate, water and sanitation sector
- provides the potential for a SWITCH-supported planning process that could really be implemented
- done well in Alexandria, potential to scale up approach to other cities
- at demo sites selected by the learning alliance, members are engaged in feasibility studies



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Accra: linking to policymakers

- Initiated presidential debates that provided forum to put sanitation on the agenda



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Demand-led research

- learning alliances have validated research topics identified by SWITCH
- Filled some gaps that emerged (city research needs not included in original plan)
- Other gaps where SWITCH has yet been unable to respond to city research needs
- mechanisms to access inputs from research providers are unclear and not well documented

Action research

- much research is not action-orientated
- action research sets the bar high for stakeholder engagement with a focus on research by implementers supported by scientists
- should be careful in accurately describing switch research
- demonstrations provide the strongest potential for realizing action research and should be given more priority

Strategic planning

- Strategic planning is providing a useful focus in many cities
 - cities where there is a **city-wide** strategic planning process and SWITCH works to address the water issues (e.g. Tel Aviv, Zaragoza),
 - cities where **standalone water-focused** strategic planning processes have most potential (e.g. Alexandria, Hamburg) and
 - cities where process is helping **orientate** learning alliances but would need much greater inputs to achieve a strong planning focused output (e.g. Accra, Birmingham, Lodz, Belo Horizonte)

Strategic planning

- Need to understand and have solutions to why much planning remains short-term and fragmented
- requires a more multi-disciplinary approach
- More attention to process to realize high quality outcomes that are likely to be integrated, innovative and legitimate
- Better link needed between these planning processes, and SWITCH research, demos and training
- workshops last week and this week

Rigour in multi-stakeholder processes

- Approach is founded in theory/ hypotheses
- Range of papers and briefing notes provide a wide range of elements and analysis in accessible formats
- Scope for additional scientific research to build on these first attempts at reflective process documentation
 - PhD research will strengthen this aspect in Accra (and Birmingham)
 - IWMI have made a proposal for research on the learning alliance processes and specifically the incentives for researchers to engage in demand-led action research (comparing SWITCH and other similar research projects e.g. CGIAR, Gates and other EC funded research).

Range of stakeholders engaged

- learning alliances should engage a wide range of stakeholders
- Provide safe space for contestation of new solutions and innovation
- most SWITCH LAs resemble communities of practice (clubs) with like-minded organisations and professionals
- non-traditional research partners e.g civil society, citizens, politicians, unions often not included

Recommendations

1. Cities (and researchers working in cities) should follow up on recommendations provided in papers
2. Continued funding of city learning alliances and their networking should be ensured
3. Provide additional support to backstop city processes
4. Balance SWITCH by including city representation in management team
5. Establish an impact evaluation task team to drive project learning
6. Revise internal planning procedures to help drive more demand-led research



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Recommendations continued

7. Augment scientific research on change linked to learning alliances
8. Revisit and implement global learning alliance concept
9. Strengthen strategic planning and decision-support work within a multi-disciplinary team
10. Prioritise demonstrations and linked action research



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Feedback from peer review workshop

- Quality of papers commended, commitment to reflection and cross-city peer review
- Started with real constraints to demand-led research
- New linkages established, coordination happening, following opportunities (not plans)
- SWITCH is grappling with a governance/ institutional change issue (is it fully equipped?)
- Learning alliances appear as 'clubs' and may be unlikely to strongly challenge existing ways of working
- SWITCH is too ambitious, might be more humble (but papers are realistic and honest)

Feedback from EC review

- A thorough and self-critical extra report about the performance of LAs provides valuable insight into the LA process
- The report ...addresses this problem [*interaction between cities*] explicitly. The reviewers support some of the recommendations in [*the*] report
- Resources should be ...transferred to R&D on important institutional problems [*including research on LA processes?*] and/or to support well performing LAs

More information

City papers and summary paper on SWITCH intranet at:

www.switch.watsan.net/page/2853



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Feedback from SWITCH MT



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