

**33rd WEDC International Conference, Accra, Ghana, 2008**

**ACCESS TO SANITATION AND SAFE WATER:  
GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS AND LOCAL ACTIONS**

**Capacity building and innovations through joint learning:  
Experiences with Communities of Practice  
and Learning Alliances**

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*This session is organized around two papers presented at the conference: (1) the IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre's (IRC) Resource Centre Development programme's (RCD) experience with a Community of Practice and; (2) the SWITCH's emerging experience with a global Learning Alliance for Integrated Urban Water Management. Communities of Practice are typically composed by peers, that is professionals working at more or less the same level with more or less the same background or working experiences around a well defined topic (e.g. promoting WASH sector Resource Centres). The IRC RCD programme was carried out over a five year period, involving over 15 partners worldwide in promoting national level improved sector knowledge management. A Learning Alliance, in its truest form, brings together a wide variety of professions and interest groups at various levels (global, national, intermediate and local), willing to experiment and learn together on typically rather complex issues. The EU funded five year SWITCH programme aims for a paradigm shift in Urban Water Management. The programme involves eleven cities world wide and over 22 research centres covering the various technical and managerial aspects of urban water management. This session proposes to learn and share about experiences with both approaches, and distil the pre-requisites, the advantages and challenges of both. Where relevant recommendations on efficient and effective joint learning mechanisms for WASH sector capacity building and innovations will be formulated.*

**Outline of the session**

- 1: General introduction, purpose and organisation of the session [5-10 min];
2. A global community of practice: Creating resource centres that build capacity in local WASH service provision Presentation of the RCD CoP experience (paper 1, Bury) [5 min];
3. Learning alliances for integrated and sustainable innovations in urban water management Presentation of the SWITCH LA experience (paper 2, Verhagen, [5 min];
4. Group assignments, composition, clarification [5-10 min];
5. Group work (typically 4 groups, eventually only 2), including preparation presentation outcome [45 min];
6. Presentation group work in plenary [10-20 min];
7. Plenary distillation of key lessons and recommendations [25 min].

**Topics for group work**

<b>Table 1. Group work sessions</b>	
<b>Theme: Local WASH Governance has better overview, access and uses better required information and knowledge</b>	<b>Theme: towards a paradigm shift for Integrated Urban Water Management</b>
Group 1: Resource Centre Development/CoP	Group 3: SWITC /LA
Group 2: Community of Practice	Group 4: Learning Alliance

### Tasks of groups

With reference to the particular topic area, participants discuss and deepen their understanding of the issues and experience, lessons learned and recommendations (e.g. pre-requisites, do's and don't's) about this working approach. The group presents 5 key recommendations and where relevant illustrates them with concrete examples.

Participants are encouraged to join the group where they think they can contribute best.

### Contributors, expertise, and their contribution

<b>Contributor/organization</b>	<b>Expertise</b>	<b>Contribution</b>
Bury, Peter J./IRC	RCD/CoP/SWITCH/LA	Overall facilitation Facilitator of 1 group Documentation outcome session
Verhagen, Joep/IRC	RCD/CoP/SWITCH/LA	Co-facilitation Facilitator of 1 group Documentation outcome session
TREND, Ghana (RCD partner)	RCD/CoP	Facilitator of group 1
SWITCH facilitator Accra (SWITCH partner)	SWITCH/LA	Facilitator of group 3

### Acknowledgements

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### References

- Bury, P.J. (2007) *A global Community of Practice promotes Resource Centres offering Products and Services locally*, WEDC Conference 2008 paper.
- Verhagen, J. (200&) *The global SWITCH Learning Alliance for a paradigm shift towards Integrated Urban Water Management*, WECD Conference 2008 paper.

### Keywords

capacity building, knowledge management, information management, networking, partnerships

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