Improving the capacity to manage & drill water wells in sub-Saharan Africa: 16 years of collaboration & experiences

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The reality

Drilled boreholes are vital for SDG 6.1, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

The problem

- Poor quality siting, borehole design, drilling and completion leads to premature failure of water supplies.
- Inadequate technical and managerial competence alongside challenges in the operating environment undermines borehole drilling quality.

A multi-stakeholder initiative

- From: 2004 to 2020
- By: Rural Water Supply Network (RWSN)
- To: raise the professionalism of borehole drilling and its management
- Focus: sub-Saharan Africa.

Image: Ensuring that water supplies last requires every borehole to be constructed in a professional manner (Source: Kerstin Danert, DRC).
What did the initiative do?
• Assessments in 13 SSA counties
• Face-to-face training courses
• Online training courses
• Guidelines, manuals, training materials
• Short animated films
• Blogs & webinars
• Seminars & forums

What did it take?
• Cost ≈ USD 1 million in total
• Different funders (core partners: UNICEF, Skat & WaterAid)
• Consistent leadership
• Continuous learning & harnessing opportunities
Methods used

- **Informing**: RWSN Professional Drilling Website, newsletter, & online community (Dgroups)
- **Understanding**: in-country assessments/studies, lessons from the online courses
- **Materials**: Documents & films providing technical guidance
- **Training**: Face-to-face syllabus – 3 courses; online course (2018 & 2019)
- **Sharing & Inspiring**: Online course, blogs, webinars on what others are doing, encouraging others to write and share

See: [https://tinyurl.com/waterdrilling](https://tinyurl.com/waterdrilling)

*Image: Learning about sampling drilling cuttings at the drilling supervision course in Sierra Leone, 2014 (Source: Kerstin Danert).*
Achievements

- Drilling professionalism* is ‘on the map’!
- Wealth of materials published and free
- Others inspired to take action
- Hundreds of professionals exposed to the topic of professional drilling
- UNICEF, WaterAid and UNHCR have made changes to their procurement and project management practices
- Interest in the topic by academic researchers is growing

*Drilling professionalism is defined as the skill, good judgement and behavior expected from a person or organization who can undertake a job well.
....but

Reliable, long-term funding for in-country training and professional development, & addressing constraints in the operational environment remains inadequate.

Investments in capacity strengthening still remain marginal.

New platforms and partnerships

- Capacity strengthening of groundwater management and drilling professionalism is an action group in the Africa Ministers Council on Water (AMCOW) Pan African Groundwater Programme (APAGroP).

Call to action

- Join hands & invest to raise drilling standards in a systematic and long-term manner.
- Support in-country training and mentoring that is fully embedded within local institutions and development programmes.

Image: Driller cools off in Ogun State, Nigeria (Source: Kerstin Danert)
Thank you!

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RWSN - professional drilling - partners and funders

- Africa Groundwater Network (AGW-Net)
- British Geological Survey (BGS)
- Bundesanstalt für Geowissenschaften und Rohstoffe (BGR)
- Department for International Development (DFID) and Adam Smith International
- Lotteriefonds St. Gallen
- National Groundwater Association
- Oxfam UK
- Skat Consulting AG & Skat Foundation
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)
- UNICEF
- WaterAid UK
- Water Integrity Network (WIN)
- World Bank Water and Sanitation Programme Africa (WSP- AF)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Cap-Net
- United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)
- UPGro Programme (Unlocking the Potential of Groundwater for the Poor)
- USAID