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Decision Support Systems for Water Resources Management in Developing Countries: Learning from Experiences in Africa

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Description / Abstract

Decision support system (DSS) tools are rather popular in the literature on water resources management. The European Project “Splash” conducted a survey of the literature and of DSS implementation in developing countries with specific reference on Africa. Experts in the field were consulted through an ad hoc questionnaire and interviews. The results of the survey indicate that the exchange of experiences amongst projects with similar objectives or even the same case study is very limited, with a tendency towards restarting every time from scratch. As a consequence, it seems that DSS developments have produced only limited positive impacts. Most experts contacted shared either the frustration deriving from the limited impacts on intended end-users, who rarely used the tool after the project end, or in the case of ongoing projects, the preoccupation for future maintenance. Responses from the questionnaires indicate that priority efforts should not focus on developing the tools, but rather on improving the effectiveness and applicability of integrated water resource management legislative and planning frameworks, training and capacity building, networking and cooperation, harmonization of transnational data infrastructures and, very importantly, learning from past experiences and adopting enhanced protocols for DSS development.

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