

Hand Drilling Cluster Group Newsletter

No 1

April 2007

Welcome

A warm welcome to the very first edition of the RWSN Hand Drilling Cluster Group newsletter! The cluster group is an initiative to try and coordinate and exchange experiences on hand drilling technologies and approaches. We comprise over 20 people located in Africa, Central and Latin America and Europe. The newsletter is simply an attempt to bring together news and views from the members, and encourage more exchange and dialogue.

Upcoming events

The 12th to 22nd June will see a small gathering of a number of hand drilling promoters in Matameye, Niger. This is a workshop in the real sense of the word, with professionals and drillers from around the world spending several days trying to improve existing hand drilling techniques to deal with fine sandy formation layered with laterite. Jon Naugle of Enterprise Works/VITA is coordinating the work.

USAID, under the West Africa Water (WAWI) initiative are also funding a study entitled “*Water for the Family*” in Niger. The study will examine water quality and water resource issues associated with hand dug and hand drilled wells in Maradi and Zinder Regions of Niger. It will be completed by the end of July 2007. Kerstin Danert has more details.

News

The November 2006 RWSN forum in Accra, Ghana, saw many hand drillers and hand drilling promoters from different places meet each other for the first time. It was the first chance for four hand drillers (Oumarou Abdou and Daouda Yacouba from Niger, Denis Tapsoba from Burkina Faso and Mamadou Mballo from Senegal) to exchange their experiences and express their ideas and concerns to the 300 delegates that attended the forum. Challenges identified by the hand drillers included:

- Initially, populations did not give due credit to the technologies employed and a good deal of promotional and demonstration work was required to carve out a niche in the market.
- To date, ministries and some donors do not consider hand drilling as a serious or meaningful option for rural water supply.
- Field conditions and water table depths limit the use of hand drilling technologies in some areas. Failures in these areas are deemed to be the responsibility of the drillers.
- Availability of materials on local markets is sometimes a problem and hand drillers do not have adequate means of transport for moving their equipment.
- On some programmes implemented by NGOs and other actors, support mechanisms have been inadequate.

Spotlight

Mike MacCarthy, working for Oxfam in Northern Mali is (slowly slowly) trying to phase out high cost rural water supply solutions. “*We recently purchased hand augering tools from Niamey (with much help from Ibrahim of Enterprise Works, Niger) and have drilled a few*

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monitoring test tubewells in the region. We are planning one hand-augered tubewell equipped with a Rope Pump at a primary school near under our current School Water and Health project that ends soon” (Mike MacCarthy, email).

Paul Cloesen, is a name which may not be familiar to all of you. Working Costa Rica, Paul uses the Baptist Drilling Method combined with the sludge method. He explains: “Wells costing 100 dollars or more each are completely out of reach for our target group (at least 80 % of the rural population in our area)...it represents half a year's income...Private enterprise is very good, and we encourage that. Where we work, however, there is simply no (large enough) market for private well drilling. Still, we think that many people (millions in Nicaragua alone) that cannot be attended to this way, need safe water too

So we cut the major cost component: hired muscle-power. We teach groups of people to drill their own wells themselves, reducing input cost to non-local materials. For an 18 meter deep well with a 12m PVC handpump, that boils down to about US\$40 or even less (but this does not include the cost of sending in a "cheerleader"!). But even at that cost, we have to subsidize, since we are still talking about 20-25 % of a family's yearly income. The monetary input required from applicants stands at US\$10 per well, which, in the best of cases, returns the cost of maintenance of the drilling rig. Prospective well owners provide all labour, all local materials and tools, and sometimes (part of) the transport cost of non-local materials.

This approach is different from subsidizing private drillers: people who have built their own well and pump are not only able to maintain them, they can also build additional ones without ever having to call in a professional driller again (whose work has to be subsidized over and over again). They are often also very proud of their achievement, which improves their self-esteem. In Bolivia, the availability of water through this approach has lifted income in such a way that people, a few years later, are able to cover all costs of additional wells by themselves.” (Paul Cloesen, email). For more information, contact Paul.

Resource Persons List

A list of known hand drilling resource persons has just been sent out to the group. It includes information about which countries people are working in, their expertise and contact details. For those of you who dislike paperwork, don't worry, as it is short! Please fill in your details, check if anyone is missing and return it to Kerstin by the 15th May so that she can circulate it to everyone.

Plans for the future

In order to improve the hand drilling information on the RWSN website, cluster group members are requested to have a look at what is already there and make recommendations for improvements to the structure and content. Ideas for enabling more interaction would also be useful.

Paul Cloesen has pointed out that information on the website does not have an adequate category for EMAS nor Baptist drilling methods (ie continuous percussion-sludging). Henk is very keen to see some good comparisons of different hand drilling methods in the same terrain while Alan MacDonald and Kerstin are very keen to get some high quality surveys done to determine areas with potential for hand drilling throughout Africa. It has been suggested that a portfolio, which catalogues the successes and challenges of hand drilling could be developed. These ideas need to be worked on further.

What else should the hand-drilling cluster group, or RWSN members do?

Next Newsletter

The next newsletter will be sent out in July 2007. Please send in any comments or suggestions to Kerstin (kerstin@danert.com) by the end of June. If you would like to produce or edit a newsletter, please contact Kerstin. She will be delighted!

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