



Annual Report 2005

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IRC Chairman



IRC Chairman Lodewijk de Waal

In the penultimate year of the IRC Business Plan for 2002-2006, we once again made good progress in achieving our aims. That was made very clear in the external evaluation by DGIS. The main conclusion of the evaluation report, which was published in November, was that IRC is considered a centre of excellence in the water and sanitation sector. The evaluation also recommended that DGIS continue to provide IRC with core funding until 2015.

We were therefore able to make a start in 2005 on drafting a new Business Plan aimed at effective partnerships, capacity development, and information and knowledge management. We are confident that, on the basis of the evaluation, we can continue our excellent collaboration with DGIS.

But we not only looked to the past and to the future; our daily work also continued. Through symposia, workshops and new projects in the fields of knowledge development and advocacy we made a contribution to the WASH sector and helped strengthen our position within it. This report presents some examples of those activities.

Unfortunately, we also experienced a financial deficit in 2005, mainly as a result of a significant loss on several projects. We will avoid this in the future through tighter internal procedures and improved project management. The Board decided to make up the loss from IRC's reserves, so that it did not affect our programmes.

In 2005 there was an important change in the IRC Governing Board, with Joop Hoekman passing on the Chairman's gavel to myself. IRC is very grateful to Joop Hoekman for the proficiency with which he chaired the Board for many years.

The WASH sector faces important challenges, not least in making its contribution to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Over past years, IRC has shown that it has a significant role to play in the WASH sector. With our expert and dedicated staff, we will continue to play that role in the coming period.

Lodewijk de Waal
Chairman, IRC Governing Board

IRC Director

2005 was a year of different perspectives for IRC. We were confronted with financial constraints, we underwent an external evaluation and we started preparing our new Business Plan for 2007-2011. In overall terms, I was quite satisfied; although not all aspects were positive, the near future certainly looks promising.

Firstly, the external evaluation incorporated perspectives from across the sector. Amidst a generally positive assessment of our achievements, it recommended improvements in the transparency of IRC's diverse roles in the WASH sector, better monitoring, and a stronger link to achievement of the MDGs. Priority should be given to innovation and effective partnerships. The new Business Plan will certainly devote attention to these issues.

A major component of the preparations for the new Business Plan was to map trends and developments in the WASH sector, with a view to the possible role and position of IRC. The outcome of this analysis was captured in 'WASH scenarios 2015: a trends analysis paper'. In 2006, this paper and other background material will be elaborated into a full-fledged Business Plan for 2007-2011.

Further development of the concept of learning alliances was given a significant boost in 2005. In June, together with UNESCO-IHE, we organised a symposium on 'Learning alliances for scaling up innovative approaches in the water and sanitation sector'. The symposium brought together specialists from around the world to exchange experiences, seek new strategies and apply them in different circumstances and environments. Learning alliances are a good example of the integration of the various areas of IRC expertise into one practical approach. It is gratifying to see many organisations, including UNICEF, the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), the EU (SWITCH) and CARE, now adopting this approach on a large scale in their programmes.

IRC's contribution to the sector continued on different platforms, in the Netherlands and in the international arena. Examples include organising, together with our partner CREPA, a micro finance workshop in Dakar, chairing the Dutch NWP-NGO platform, coordinating the support group of the EU Water Initiative Working Group for WS&S, and membership of the Steering Committee of the WSSCC in Geneva.

After several years of IRC hosting the Gender and Water Alliance secretariat, and seconding staff to the secretariat, the Alliance has entered into a new phase by becoming an independent entity. The GWA programme has received funding from DFID and DGIS and, by mid-2005, the secretariat had moved out of the IRC offices to its own premises elsewhere in the Netherlands.

As I mentioned at the beginning, 2005 was a challenging year for IRC in financial terms. I feel, however, that we dealt with the situation well. We have improved our operations and I am confident that similar problems can be avoided in the future.

There is much more in this report. I hope that, as you read it, you will find convincing proof of our continued commitment and practical contribution to the water and sanitation sector.

Paul van Koppen
IRC Director



IRC Director Paul van Koppen

Highlights of 2005

Learning alliances: a platform for change

In June, IRC and UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education co-hosted a Symposium for Learning Alliances in Delft. IRC believes that learning alliances, which have been successfully applied in agriculture and other sectors, offer an effective method for achieving MDG target 10: to halve by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to drinking water and basic sanitation.

Bringing clean water, sanitation and knowledge about hygiene to poor communities has proved difficult. Research and pilot projects are often successful on a small scale but are unable to make the transition to mass coverage. Learning alliances offer a way to build on these isolated successes and upscale them for more widespread replication. They focus on the process of learning, bringing together a wide range of stakeholders at national, district and community level in a needs-based, bottom-up approach which is inclusive, holistic and flexible. It is an approach based on the reality of specific situations, rather than searching for a 'silver bullet'.



An exercise in learning

With 113 participants from 32 countries – including planners, programme and project officers, researchers, resource centre staff, donors, academics and education specialists – the symposium was itself an exercise in negotiating difficult issues with a large group of people with different perspectives. It examined concepts and theories of learning alliances, the tools and methodologies for working within them and practical experiences of scaling up innovations. The general consensus was that learning alliances offered a promising solution to problems in the water and sanitation sector. There was some discussion about whether they should be seen as an organisation or a process. The question in itself captures the essence of learning alliances: they will take a different form in each specific context, sometimes building on existing networks and processes, sometimes requiring new ones. Some participants stressed the importance of guarding against lack of commitment or political will to implement the lessons learned. But a delegate from UNESCO summed up the feeling at the symposium when he said: 'A good beginning with learning started right here'.

External evaluation

An honest broker and a centre of excellence

An external evaluation of IRC, commissioned by the Dutch Directorate General for International Cooperation (DGIS), was carried out in late 2005. The focus of the evaluation was IRC's Business Plan 2002-2006.

The general conclusion was that IRC's clients and partners see it as an 'honest broker' and a centre of excellence in the WASH sector. The evaluation made a series of recommendations, identifying opportunities and challenges for IRC in the coming period.

Partnerships

The recommendations covered a number of areas, including setting priorities, funding, governance, transparency and communication, and gender equality within the organisation. One of the main concerns was the need for IRC to forge effective, long-term partnerships. The evaluation team suggested that learning alliances offer a practical tool for achieving this, bringing organisations with unique know-how and experience together to try and bridge the gap between policies and implementation.

The evaluation team concluded that DGIS should continue to provide IRC with core-funding up to 2015 on condition that its recommendations are put into effect. IRC will take account of the recommendations in drawing up its new Business Plan for 2007-2011.

Solidarity funding

At the request of the French Development Agency (AFD), IRC presented the main conclusions of a study on solidarity funding mechanisms in Europe conducted for the King Baudouin Foundation at the meeting 'Water, Solidarity, Europe' in Paris in March. IRC also participated in the first meeting of the Steering Committee of a global joint initiative (consortium) bringing together North/South and South/South solidarity. The results of this study were discussed with Dutch partners at an Aqua4All stakeholders meeting.

In June IRC's Catarina Fonseca presented a paper on financing mechanisms in developing countries at the first International Conference on Water Economics, Statistics and Finance, organised by the International Water Association (IWA) and the Department of Economics at the University of Crete.

Ensuring safe re-use of wastewater

The Wastewater Agriculture for Sanitation and Poverty Alleviation (WASPA) programme is a global initiative led by IRC, IWMI and Streams of Knowledge.

An estimated 10% of the world's crops are irrigated with sewage, much of it untreated. WASPA aims to help farmers take advantage of this cheap, easily accessible and nutrient-rich source of fertiliser, while reducing the risk to public health.

WASPA's activities in 2005 included the launch of two pilot projects in West Africa, at Mopi (Mali) and Bobo Dioulasso (Burkina Faso). The projects aim to explore the possibilities for applying combined sanitation technologies and improving the safe use of wastewater in agriculture and for other purposes. Other partners include CREPA, EIER and ENDA.

In 2006, WASPA's activities will be expanded to Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, and possibly to Ghana.

*Sharing knowledge
'I am happy to note that IRC is doing an extremely good work for facilitating the sharing, promotion and use of knowledge related to water and sanitation among different institutions'.
Shanta Kumar, Union Minister for Rural Development, Government of India, in a speech during a visit to the Netherlands in 2002.*



Partnerships

IRC and CREPA: renewed commitment

In 2005, IRC continued to work with CREPA (Centre Régional pour l'Eau Potable et l'Assainissement à faible coût), which is active in French-speaking West and Central Africa.

With the support of IRC, CREPA wishes to set up resource centres in the countries in the region. As a first step, the two organisations co-organised a workshop in July at CREPA headquarters in Burkina Faso for the directors of 10 of CREPA's country offices (Représentations Nationales). The participants discussed the concepts, key ideas, steps and tools involved in the RCD process, based on the experience of IRC and of CREPA Mali, where the process had been initiated a year earlier.

IRC's director, Paul van Koppen, visited CREPA head office in Ouagadougou in October, where he attended the annual meeting of CREPA's governing board and participated in discussions on the organisation's new business plan.

Intensified cooperation

In November, a team from CREPA visited the IRC offices in Delft to evaluate the strategic partnership. The partners renewed their commitment to work together and to strengthen their joint programmes. They will continue to focus on themes that have proved relevant over the past two years, including cost-recovery and financing, school sanitation and hygiene, and scaling up community management of water supplies.

Collaboration in the areas of information and knowledge management will also continue, with more joint publications and translations, the development of tools that can be used by both organisations, and the establishment of an editorial management system.



WaterLinks

On World Water Day 2005, 22 March, IRC, Simavi and Aqua4All signed a Memorandum of Understanding for joint innovative work in selected countries, under the name of 'WaterLinks'. Activities will focus on appropriate technology, capacity building and financing mechanism.

The evaluation teams concluded that, despite a very good spirit in the partnership, it could be strengthened by more joint advocacy and fund-raising, and with more linguistic skills on both sides.

The progress of the RCD programme was also reviewed. It will now focus on seven countries in the region: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo. IRC will primarily focus on helping the RCD team at CREPA headquarters facilitate the process in these seven countries, while remaining prepared to intervene at country level on request.

In December, CREPA and IRC jointly organised a workshop in Dakar to prepare concrete national plans for each CREPA Resource Centre so that the search for interested partners could get underway early in 2006.

South-South Exchange

JPO programme Strengthening the capacity of young professionals

In 2005, four young people from IRC partners left their home countries and changed their workplaces to gain experience and new skills as part IRC's Junior Professional Officer programme. The renewed programme offers young professionals the opportunity to acquire and share knowledge at IRC and on internships at partner organisations. Felicité Chabi-Gonni from CREPA in Burkina Faso, Kingsley Acheampong from TREND in Ghana, Adeel Aslam Khan from WESnet in Pakistan, and Dony Philip from SEUF in Kerala, India, all came to IRC first for three months to prepare for their assignments.



Dony (right) with programme assistant Anne Mwangi at NETWAS, Kenya

The four JPOs focused on IRC priority themes of their choice, especially knowledge management, financing and cost recovery, and school sanitation and hygiene education (SSHE). They were very enthusiastic about having the opportunity to work in a different environment. Felicité used the experience she gained at TREND to draft a proposal for knowledge management in CREPA. Kingsley, who was at IWSD in Zimbabwe, presented his paper on 'Technology, Sustainability and Poverty Reduction for Rural Water Supply, the Case of Zimbabwe' in Senegal in December at a regional workshop on microfinance and innovative mechanisms to achieve the MDGs. When Adeel returns to WESnet, he will use his experience working at the Water Information Network (WIN) in South Africa to draw up a knowledge management proposal and design a web site. Dony spent his internship at NETWAS in Kenya, and will use this experience on his return to SEUF to work on a new web site, an SSHE training plan and on knowledge management.

Putting learning into practice

Since it was first set up in 2001, the JPO programme has helped many young professionals to gain wider experience and to bring this back to their own organisations. Jabu Masondo, who was a JPO in 2003-2004, is putting the skills he acquired into practice as a communication specialist for the Mvula Trust in South Africa. He writes newsletter articles and web-site content, is developing Intranet for the organisation, and applies his experience with the shared portal architecture using eZ Publish. In July he completed an assignment for the South African Water Services Sector to provide advice and input for the WIN South Africa web site and in November he facilitated a one-week course in Web site Management and Content Management Systems for the NETWAS Resource Centre in Uganda.

Use and Impact

Spreading the word



SSHE boys group in the sanitation club cleaning their latrine at Bisozi primary school.

A significant part of IRC's activities comprises providing information - online, on paper and by word of mouth. In 2005, IRC staff and partners had 47 articles and papers presented at international conferences or published in international journals and magazines.

IRC's own publication *Source* is used by more than 40,000 policy-makers, sector professionals and information specialists to inform themselves on water and sanitation issues.

A regular feature in *Source* is 'Diary from the field', which focuses on the use and impact of IRC activities in specific local contexts. In the last Diary of 2005, Kitembo Asuman, programme co-ordinator for the Community Empowerment Initiative in Uganda, reported on a visit to Bisozi Primary School in Western Uganda to check on pupils' progress with a sanitation club set up by CEI. 'I learned about forming sanitation clubs while attending a symposium organised by IRC in Delft,' Kitembo said. The head of the school was very pleased with the club, adding that pupils no longer see cleaning and hygiene as a punishment or a burden.

'I have been reading every word of Source since its first appearance. It keeps us informed and enhances our knowledge on progress in developing countries. Thank you for your very valuable efforts.'

*Saul
(Shaul) Arlosoroff,
Director, National Water
Corporation of Israel.*

Guest editors

In 2005, IRC staff coordinated the publication of two special theme issues of *Waterlines*, the quarterly international journal for the water and sanitation sector. The January issue focused on school sanitation and hygiene education and in October, the special theme was financing the water sector.

Cracking open the knowledge doors

A mini-workshop facilitated by IRC in September helped the Water Information Network (WIN) to enhance knowledge management capacity and skills in the South African water services sector. Even in a close-knit network like WIN, knowledge is scattered, presenting the challenge of bringing it together and using it more effectively. Jabu Masondo, Communication Officer from the Mvula Trust, summed up the challenge by saying: 'I hope that one day, WIN will be able to crack open the knowledge doors and bring all the practitioners together to share their knowledge with the entire sector.'

Thanks for listening

As part of the Third Water Supply and Sanitation Project (TWSSP) funded by the Asian Development Bank, field teams conducted project assessments in 102 villages in Sri Lanka. Since many of the villages are in areas controlled by the Tamil Tigers, they often had to work in trying and dangerous conditions. Villagers expressed their gratitude to the teams for listening to them.

The field teams gathered their data using the Qualitative Information System developed by IRC and Pragmatix. QIS is a participatory assessment method to monitor, capture and compare qualitative information. It has proved its value in India, Sri Lanka and Vietnam. In August, a team of four, including Deirdre Casella of IRC, visited Sri Lanka to facilitate the TWSSP assessment. They drew out the key findings and helped draw up plans for remedial action for the final six months of the project.

The reality on the ground

IRC organised a follow-up KM e-conference in 2005. This year, the overall theme was 'Knowledge Management: the reality on the ground'. The discussion was divided into four 10-day sessions throughout the year on the following issues: what is meant by knowledge management, how to create KM awareness at management level, how to share that knowledge, and how to spread the word.

Participation was generally high, but disappointing in the final session. Moderator Jan Teun Visscher suggested that this may be due to 'issue fatigue' on the part of participants and the difficulties of convincing managers of the need for knowledge management in their organisations. The main conclusion of the discussion was that, instead of coming up with arguments to sell KM, it is more important to initiate a discussion on how to do better as an organisation and how to use knowledge management to achieve that.

Successful joint learning partnership

An IRC-sponsored pilot project on school sanitation and hygiene education (SSHE) in Kenya has sparked off a campaign by head teachers for free sanitary towels to be issued to adolescent girls. The project, which involved seven partner organisations, also prompted the government to set up a national school sanitation programme, backed by pledges of support from donors. Kentainers Ltd, a company that manufactures sanitation and water facilities for schools is interested in purchasing the video produced by the project group to promote their products. It may also commission the group to produce a new video specifically for them.

Resource Centres

Resource centre development continues to move forward

IRC plays a leading role in strengthening resource centres in developing countries and regions to act as a focal point for the water and sanitation sector, by providing advocacy, advice and information.

In 2005, the resource centre development (RCD) process continued to move forward. In West Africa, IRC worked closely with partner CREPA, organising a short workshop for RCD facilitators in Burkina Faso in July (see page 6). In South Africa, WIN-SA made considerable progress as the WATSAN sector umbrella resource centre and network. The South African water ministry, DWAF, would like to see WIN-SA prepare itself for a future role as a regional resource centre. In this context, IRC initiated discussions with WIN-SA and IWSD in Zimbabwe on scaling up RCD in the region.

New RCD partnerships in Latin America

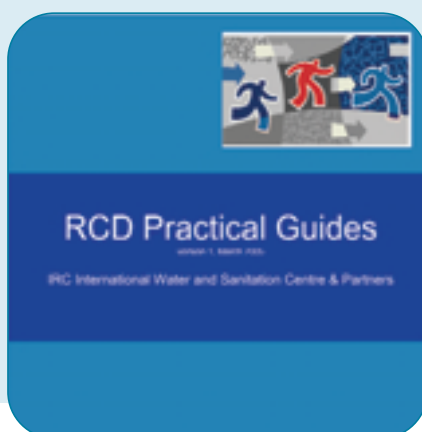
In November, an IRC mission visited Cali, Colombia, for a workshop on RCD in the region. The workshop, organised by CEPIS/IRC/CINARA and STREAMS, was attended by 30 representatives of governmental and non-governmental organisations from Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Brazil and Mexico.

Participants discussed the possibilities for RCD in Latin America and drew up a short-term action plan for 2006. At a meeting following the workshop, the participating organisations expressed their commitment to promoting RCD further in the region.

RCD capacity building in South Asia

In April 2005, IRC organised a regional Training of Facilitators workshop in South Asia, hosted by SEUF, the RCD partner in Kerala. RCD partners from Bulgaria, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, India (national), Kerala, Gujarat and Uttaranchal learned about and shared RCD concepts, facilitation methods and tools.

'I use the RCD Practical Guides very often, especially the sections on business plan development and PR, marketing and advocacy.'
Cate Nimanya of
NETWAS, Uganda.



Offering the benefit of experience

In 2005, working together with its partners, IRC produced a series of Practical Guides to facilitate resource centre development. The guides, available on CD-ROM, offer conceptual guidance, a source of reference, and practical methods and tools. They are not intended as a blueprint, but present the experience of IRC and its partners in facilitating RCD processes in a way that can be adapted to suit specific situations.

The guides are primarily aimed at in-country RCD facilitators, and are part of a package of tools that also includes training and monitoring with the ultimate aim of handing over the facilitating role to local partners and scaling up RCD processes around the world.

WELL on the way

At the WEDC conference in Uganda in November 2005, five of IRC's Southern partners (AMREF, IWSD, NWRI, SEUF and TREND) gave presentations about progress in incorporating knowledge management in their organisations. The five partners have been working with the Learn@WELL knowledge management module developed together with the WELL resource centre.

Learn@WELL KM is one of a series of modules designed to strengthen the WELL network. Knowledge management, a core theme for IRC, aims to help organisations retain their competitive edge by managing the human dimension of their information resources more efficiently.

In recent years, a series of workshops have been organised to provide a forum for partner organisations to meet and learn from each other's experiences in knowledge management. At the conference in Uganda, AMREF, IWSD, NWRI, SEUF and TREND described the changes in their organisations after their KM plans had been implemented. The session provoked a lively discussion and showed that the Southern partners had succeeded in shaping KM plans to suit their own circumstances.



WELL

The WELL resource centre network for water, sanitation and environmental health was established in 1996. It is managed by a core team led by the Water, Engineering and Development Centre at Loughborough University (WEDC), in partnership with IRC and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM).

The WELL core team works together with seven network partners: AMREF: African Medical and Research Foundation (Kenya)

ICDDR-B: Centre for Health and Population Research (Bangladesh)

IWSD: The Institute of Water and Sanitation Development (Zimbabwe)

NETWAS: International Network for Water and Sanitation (Kenya)

NWRI: National Water Resources Institute (Nigeria)

SEUF: Social and Economic Unit Foundation (India)

TREND: Training, Research and Networking for Development (Ghana)

Informing and Communicating

Sharing information is key to solving problems

IRC believes that information and knowledge are key to solving problems in the water and sanitation sector. In 2005, it launched a number of initiatives to improve information sharing with partners and users.

Free online publications

IRC is taking advantage of developments in electronic information sharing to make more of its publications available online, as full text and free of charge. As of 2005, every new published document is available online.

IRC's list of publications contains over 80 titles, many produced jointly with partners. They cover a wide variety of issues including community management, productive uses of water and livelihoods, financing and cost recovery, gender, operation and maintenance, school sanitation and hygiene education, and information and communication in the water and sanitation sector.

Publications available online include:

- *The Joy of Learning: Participatory Lesson Plans on Hygiene, Sanitation, Water, Health and the Environment*
This new guide is for teachers and others who want to design participatory learning activities on hygiene and sanitation. Activities can be adapted to local conditions and cultures and make use of easily available and affordable materials.
- *Monitoring Millennium Development Goals for Water and Sanitation: a Review of Experiences and Challenges*
Provides a useful insight into how the MDGs for water and sanitation are monitored. It identifies challenges and formulates recommendations for further action.
- *The Productive Use of Domestic Water Supplies*
This Thematic Overview Paper looks at the broader range of uses for water, focusing on productive activities and micro-enterprises in households in villages, towns and cities in developing countries.

Straight to the TOP

IRC's Thematic Overview Papers can be downloaded in PDF form. There is a summary of each paper on the site, so that you can see what it is about. TOPs present recent experiences, expert opinions and foreseeable trends on a specific theme, and offer links to the most informative publications, web sites and research information.

Top 5 downloads from the IRC web site

1. Uso Eficiente Del Agua, **Thematic Overview Paper**, 900 downloads (only available in Spanish)
2. Sanitation Policies, **Thematic Overview Paper**, 731 downloads
3. Monitoring Millennium Development Goals for Water and Sanitation: a review of experiences and challenges, Publication, 718 downloads
4. Waste Stabilization Ponds, **Thematic Overview Paper**, 639 downloads
5. Financing and Cost Recovery, **Thematic Overview Paper**, 605 downloads



Many water sector professionals use IRC free online publications in their work. Steffen Petter, Postgraduate Exchange Student at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, told IRC the publications were 'very useful' in his research, mentioning in particular the Thematic Overview Paper on Financing of Urban Environmental Infrastructure in South Africa. Maher Abu-Madi, a researcher and teacher at the Institute for Water Studies, Birzeit University, Palestine, uses IRC's Thematic Overview Paper on Financing and Cost Recovery in his classes.

Source in Japanese

In June, IRC signed an agreement with the Japan International Corporation of Welfare Services (JICWELS) to distribute IRC's newsletter Source Weekly in Japanese translation. The first Japanese issue was published in August and, since October, it has been sent out to more than 190 Japanese water sector experts and other interested readers.

Additions to the family

In 2005, IRC helped new partners and projects to present themselves on Internet and publish information by providing them with technical architecture. The portal family, which now consists of 20 web sites, is built on open-source software products like Linux, Apache, MySQL, PHP and the content management system eZ publish. As well as helping to set up the sites, IRC provided training on maintenance and planning.

Looking to the future

IRC is looking to expand its range of information services for the WASH sector even further by offering a web-based water and sanitation news exchange. The exchange will input news from IRC and other organisations in the sector and make it available to news services and interested professionals. The services will include news pages in English, French and Spanish available online, by email and RSS, and on paper. IRC will also offer advice on how to set up news services and write press releases.

Nepal workshops open the portal

IRC staff conducted two workshops for participants from the six organisations involved in the Resource Centre Network Nepal (RCNN) in April and November 2005. The workshops focused on the development of a common bibliographic database and a Nepal water and sanitation portal.

The first workshop addressed why a common database and portal were needed and how they could best be designed. An inventory of the existing libraries and databases of the different organisations showed that duplication was a major problem. It was agreed that the RCNN would build up an initial database in Access. The portal was set up relatively quickly using eZ Publish and a web site was activated.

The follow-up workshop in November looked at progress made, problems encountered and possible solutions. Participants also spent a lot of time practising entering content on the portal. This led to some chaotic results, but both participants and trainers learned a number of useful lessons. One thing that emerged clearly was the urgent need for a user guidebook for the portal. The workshop concluded with the drafting of an action plan.

Given the deteriorating political situation in Nepal, organising and holding the workshops was not without its problems, and with the Nepalese authorities clamping down on NGO activities, the member organisations of the RCNN found it difficult to function optimally. Despite this and other technical obstacles, such as the lack of broadband connections among the participant organisations, the workshops were a success and established a good basis for both the database and portal.

TOPs are a popular feature of IRC's web-based services and accounted for four of the five most popular downloads from the IRC site in 2005.



Developing Knowledge

Improving water access in the Middle East

IRC is a partner in EMPOWERS (Euro-Med Participatory Water Resources Scenarios) a four-year programme to increase access to water by poor communities, by improving water resource management. The programme is active in Egypt, Jordan and the difficult working environments of the West Bank and Gaza areas of Palestine.

EMPOWERS approach vindicated in Delft

In June, four members of EMPOWERS staff visited the Netherlands to take part in the international Symposium for Learning Alliances at IRC, which EMPOWERS also partly sponsored. The delegates gave presentations on the structure of the EMPOWERS programme. As a stakeholder-based knowledge community, it is a good practical example of a learning alliance in action. On the final day of the symposium, participants were encouraged to play devil's advocate and ask the EMPOWERS team probing questions about the programme's core approach. After some tough questioning, EMPOWERS emerged from the process with its core approach largely vindicated. The symposium showed the extent to which the programme's work is at the cutting edge of progress in the area of stakeholder involvement in water development.

In October, EMPOWERS published the first issue of its EMPOWERS Insight magazine, which will appear twice a year.



Innovative finance solutions to the MDG shortfall

Perhaps the most urgent problem in trying to achieve MDG target 10 is how to finance water and sanitation services in the poorest countries. The shortfall in funds required to reach the target is estimated at between US\$ 6.5 and US\$ 75 billion a year. This challenge calls for innovative financing, widening the range of both stakeholders and instruments.

Micro finance

In December 2005, IRC and partners organised a workshop in Dakar to discuss one of these instruments, micro finance. The workshop was attended by participants from 11 African countries, Indonesia and the Philippines. It emphasised the importance of support mechanisms and guarantees in reducing the risks involved in micro-finance initiatives. Case studies from Burkina Faso and Kenya showed that it was possible to achieve efficient services despite limited funds. It was clear from the discussion that information and communication were crucial in winning public support and creating a feeling of ownership. And the comment of one participant reminded everyone that the purpose of mechanisms and projects was to have a positive impact on people's lives: 'if you don't have latrines, you can't have a wedding'.

Increasing transparency, preventing corruption

Transparency, honesty and corruption have finally, after many decades, become a focus of attention in the water sector. To help tackle these issues, IRC and its partners have set up a programme to promote greater transparency and improved governance, reducing corruption through advocacy, action research and collaboration.

In November, IRC organised an interagency meeting as a follow-up to the Stockholm International Water Institute seminar on corruption



at the Stockholm Water Week earlier in the year. Participants from government agencies and NGOs around the world discussed possible joint strategies to combat corruption in the WASH sector. There was a strong sense at the meeting that the time had come to set up a Water Integrity Network, central to meeting the MDGs, with the objective of supporting and reinforcing activities to promote transparency and integrity in the water sector worldwide.

Discussions and meetings to share experiences are usually the initial steps to help mainstream strategies for transparency and honesty in the sector. However, these can be difficult because corruption is a sensitive subject. To help overcome this problem, IRC has published a paper offering pointers on how to organise a first meeting.

MUS workshops – a fertile environment for reducing poverty

In rural and peri-urban areas, many people use water for small-scale productive uses such as gardens, livestock, crop processing, and micro-enterprises. These activities make a major contribution to rural communities – generating income, securing food and helping in the fight against poverty.

Multiple-use water services, or 'MUS' in short, is a participatory, integrated approach focused on poverty reduction, which takes people's multiple water needs as a starting point for providing integrated services.

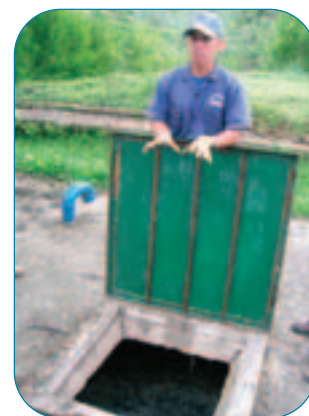
The MUS project, in which IRC is a lead partner, works through learning alliances to develop locally-specific innovations and build capacity for scaling up. It is active in seven countries in five major river basins around the world: Bolivia and Colombia in the Andes, Ethiopia in the Nile basin, India in the Indus/Ganges basin, Thailand in the Mekong basin and South Africa and Zimbabwe in the Limpopo basin.

In June, the project held its third workshop in Delft to review progress and plan future strategy. It also examined ways of internalising the project's research framework. The workshop report concluded that significant progress had been made in developing multiple-use services and that, although there was still much to be done to bridge the gaps between different regional approaches and different disciplines, the workshops provided a fertile environment for exchanging experiences and achieving synergy.

SSHE - Children take their place at the table

More than 100 ministers, policy-makers, programme specialists, and representatives of donors, specialised institutions, development banks and the private sector came together in Oxford, UK, in January with school children from eight developing countries for a roundtable meeting to discuss water and sanitation-related barriers to education. These include lack of collaboration between health, water and education sectors, insufficient teacher training and capacity in schools, and an excessive focus on toilets and taps at the expense of human attitudes and practices.

The schoolchildren played an active role in the meeting, pointing out their water and sanitation needs and priorities at school and in their communities. At the end, the participants issued a Joint Statement outlining a basic SSHE package for schools. The components of the package ranged from practical steps like washing hands before eating, through the provision of clean and well-maintained latrines, to an enabling intersectoral policy environment and adequate institutional arrangements.



Don Checho, operator of the community-managed wastewater treatment plant in La Vorágine, near Cali in Colombia, explains the functioning of the plant to visitors, from the MUS project. La Vorágine uses its water not only for drinking, but also for household based enterprises, such as food stalls and kiosks, linked to recreation in that area, leading to special requirements for their wastewater management.

'Young people, who are the significant victims of the problem of bad water, lack of hygiene and bad environment, are also a strong instrument of change for water development.

These problems do not only affect young people mentally, but also psychologically and physiologically.'
Ibrahim Adamu, aged 12, Deputy Speaker, Nigerian Children's Parliament

Staff and Human Resources

IRC believes in the value of an international and well balanced workforce capable of meeting our professional requirements, whilst also providing a challenging environment for personal career development. This requires a modern remuneration package and flexible employment arrangements, and not limiting ourselves to traditional employment contracts.

In 2005 we introduced a revised personnel manual, including IRC's human resources policy and procedures and guidelines on human resources management. For the first time, staff were also able to choose their preferences under the new KPA-system. The KPA is a set of flexible terms of employment which permits staff to exchange holidays or allowances for other benefits, such as buying a bicycle or increasing their pension.

Other new developments prepared in 2005 were terms of employment for IRC staff working and living abroad for longer periods, and the possibility of working with IRC associates. IRC associates are international sector specialists who will provide expertise and support for our projects on a flexible basis. By doing so, they will increase our operational capacity and strengthen our network by working under the IRC name. Both of these new initiatives are expected to become operational in 2006.

Employee in focus:



Deirdre Casella

Deirdre Casella re-joined IRC as Project Officer in the Knowledge Development and Advocacy section in early 2004. As a Research Associate in 2000, Deirdre was involved in IRC's Gender and Equity Innovation Project, co-coordinating the Gender and Water Day of the Second World Water Forum in The Hague. From 2001 to 2003 Deirdre worked as a trainer/project manager at the National Community Water and Sanitation Centre in South Africa and thereafter independently as a WASH sector gender and capacity building specialist.

'I joined IRC straight out of graduate school with a

background in grassroots social mobilisation, gender and food security. My relationship with IRC has changed several times since 2000. However, viewed together, these points form a clear continuum of professional development over this period, with IRC featuring in some way at each step. '

'The varied scope of my work at IRC has enabled me to translate the knowledge and skills I brought with me into innovative thinking and approaches to strengthening local development processes for improved WASH services. The role of project manager of the Participatory Management Tools focus area has also provided the

opportunity to develop applied project management skills. This 'learning on the job' element keeps things challenging and interesting. 'There's rarely a dull moment' sums up the nature of my work quite well!'

'Of my different activities at IRC, my greatest enjoyment is meeting and working with partners and new colleagues to develop innovative ideas and shared knowledge on how to strengthen local processes for the provision of improved water, sanitation and hygiene services, in particular for vulnerable and marginalised groups.'

Staff changes

Staff turnover was relatively high in 2005. Ten staff members left and six new members joined. The ten members who left were Tunde Adegoke (Project Officer), Maria Arce (Programme Officer), Teun Bastemeijer (Senior Programme Officer), Eveline Bolt (Senior Programme Officer), Trea Christoffers (Programme Officer), Petra Koole (Management Assistant), Corina van der Koppel (Programme Assistant INCO), Viktor Markowski (Section Head INCO), Leonie Postma (Programme Officer) and Jan-Teun Visscher (Senior Programme Officer). Two staff members left to work abroad, four were on temporary contracts and four found new job opportunities.

The new staff members in 2005 were John Butterworth (Programme Officer), Rosalyn Olyslager (Programme Assistant INCO), Bep van Oostrom (Programme Officer), Coline van der Ven (Management Assistant) and Joep Verhagen (Programme Officer).

At the end of 2005, IRC employed 39 staff members (36.5 FTEs) and there were three vacancies: Section Head INCO, Project Coordination Officer and (Senior) Programme Officer Hygiene.

Ewen Le Borgne

Ewen Le Borgne has been working at IRC for four years for various sections: after coordinating Sources Nouvelles and Boletín de Noticias within the Information and Communication section, Ewen started working for the Resource Centre Development section in 2005, and for the Director's Office for which he coordinates training and advisory (T&A) services.

'Although working on our newsletters was very interesting and rewarding, I felt like exploring other areas of our work.

I discovered the WASH sector with IRC, so I moved to the RCD section, not least to work closer to our partners and to the situation in the field. When the position of T&A coordinator also became available, I decided to take up the challenge and learn two jobs at the same time. Looking back, I really think this change was the right move for me and a helpful contribution to cross-learning within the organisation.'

The opportunity for Ewen to work for three different sections at IRC has helped, for instance, to involve all

the sections in advisory work and EU-funded programmes, to oil the mechanics of cross-sectional cooperation with CREPA, and to raise awareness of information and knowledge management within all departments. 'And I'm determined to keep opening 'borders'. In my eyes, one of IRC's essential contributions to the sector is precisely to bring together parties who used to sit at opposite ends of the table and to make joint learning everybody's business.'

Employee in focus:



Financial report

Income

Core funding from the Dutch Directorate General for International Co-operation (DGIS) was 2.4 million euros in 2005, slightly lower than in 2004 because of carry-over effects.

Income from externally funded projects fell significantly by 312,000 euros, mainly due to the WSSCC no longer co-funding Source (IRC's international newsletter for the WASH sector), a substantial increase in the provision for project losses (95,000 euros) and decreased capacity in 2005 due to relatively high staff turnover and illness.

Major clients for external activities in 2005 were DGIS, DFID (especially for the WELL programme), the EU, UN-Habitat and UNICEF.

IRC income 2002-2005 (1000s of euros)				
	2005	2004	2003	2002
Core funding	2416	2673	2883	1998
External income	926	1238	1008	1194
Other income	73	78	107	92
Total	3415	3989	3998	3284

Expenditure

Personnel costs for 2005 were lower than in 2004 due to a decrease in the number of staff. Because of unexpected project losses at the beginning of 2005 the IRC management decided to reduce its core funding budget by 15%. This was necessary to ensure a stable financial performance within the Business Plan 2002-2006. As a result of effective cost control measures overheads were also substantially lower than in 2003 and 2004.

Because of a major loss of 180,000 euros on one specific external project, there was an overall deficit of 70,000 euros in 2005. The deficit was deducted from our general reserves so as not to affect the budgets set for 2006, the last year of our five-year business plan.

IRC Expenditure 2002-2005 (1000s of euros)				
	2005	2004	2003	2002
Personnel	2267	2282	2231	1883
Core funded projects	795	999	1150	891
Overheads	443	647	504	462
Extraordinary items	-19	21	74	9
Total	3486	3949	3958	3245
Surplus	-71	40	39	39

Remuneration for Board members and the IRC Director

The IRC Director received a total gross salary of 85,600 euros.

The Chair of the Board received a remuneration of 4,000 euros.

The other members of the Board received a remuneration of 1,600 euros each.

Governance

In 2005, IRC continued to make progress with the 'enhanced autonomy process', under which the Dutch foreign affairs and environment ministries will no longer fulfil their dual role as 'legal' supervisor and subsidy-provider to IRC. This will give IRC greater flexibility to operate professionally in the water and sanitation sector. The process will place IRC at a greater distance from the ministries without jeopardising its core funding. In the new situation, IRC's operations vis-à-vis ministry funding will be more accountable and transparent. It is expected that this process will be concluded by the beginning of 2006.

Enhanced autonomy will provide greater scope to adapt the IRC statutes and the related governing structure to modern needs. The IRC Board and the Works Council have agreed to base the IRC Foundation structure on the 'Raad van Toezicht' (Board of Supervisors) modality. In 2005, the preparations for implementing this structure were near completion. New statutes and new bye-laws for both the Board and the Director are expected to be in place by mid-2006.

In 2005, the IRC Board met three times: on April 21, on September 27 and on December 9. It approved the Financial Accounts for 2004 in April and the Annual Budgets for 2006 in December. At the September meeting, the Board members met with the Chair of the Works Council. Also at the September meeting, Lodewijk de Waal was elected as the new Chairman. He succeeded Joop Hoekman, who stepped down after many years. The Board wishes to thank Joop for his long-standing dedication to IRC and his significant achievements.

IRC Board of Governors as at 31 December 2005:

- Chair: L. de Waal
Director of Humanitas Vereniging (as of June 2006)
Former Chairman of the FNV, the largest trade-union association in the Netherlands (1997-2005)
- Secretary-Treasurer: G.W. Ardon
Head, Water Supply and Waste Water Department, Directorate General for Environmental Protection, Netherlands Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment

Members:

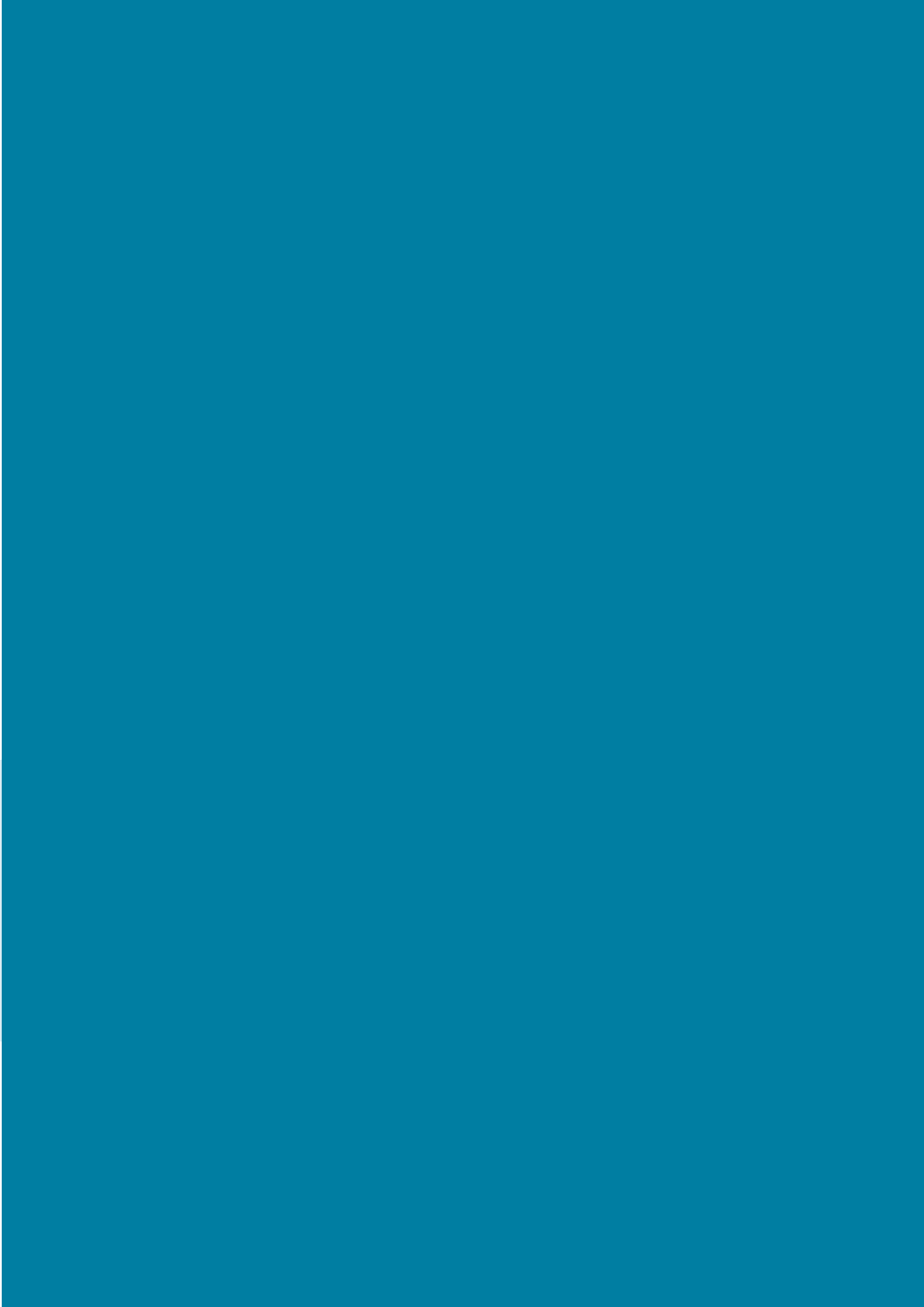
- A. Leusink (Deputy Chairman)
Consultant and entrepreneur, former Managing Director, NEDECO, Netherlands Engineering Consultants
- W.A. Segeren
Former Rector, International Institute for Infrastructural, Hydraulic and Environmental Engineering (IHE)
- J.C. van Winkelen
Chairman of the Executive Board, Vitens N.V.

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