

Getting groundwater off the ground

Kerstin Danert wants to raise capacity for borehole drilling and its management globally

It is now almost a decade and a half since I started to lead work on professional water-well drilling with the Rural Water Supply Network (RWSN). With over 9,700 water supply practitioners in over 150 countries as members, RWSN hosts vibrant online discussion groups and has produced a wealth of quality publications on groundwater development, as well as a series of short animated films on water-well drilling.

In our recent member survey, we learned that the guidelines, manuals, publications and case studies that we have published are appreciated.

Comments such as: "Field note on supervising [...] drilling provided a very useful overview on what to keep in mind"; and "I was able to set up a water-well drilling company with the support of RWSN members" are encouraging.

It is good to know that RWSN members are able to keep abreast of "new

developments in the sector", get a "feel for what others are doing" and know that "the issues for [their projects] are not unique".

While I am glad to find out that the RWSN groundwater materials are being used for training and research, I am aware that there is so much that still needs to be

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Training drilling supervisors in Sierra Leone in 2014

done. If everyone is to have access to safe and affordable drinking water by 2030, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, detailed attention is required for the siting, drilling and installation of boreholes in every single project in every country.

Alas, this is not always the case. The result is that many boreholes fail within a very short time.

RWSN members are telling us that they want more in-country training. Frankly, there is insufficient vocational training and on-job mentoring for those who supervise and drill boreholes or manage water-well drilling projects.

The world needs excellent training courses, on-job training and skilled mentors with time to nurture others. Finance for scholarships and the training institutions are required. Incentives are needed so that government and private enterprises invest in skill development.

And so I can't help but wonder how to make investment in

Additional resources

- Guidance Note on Professional Water Well Drilling: www.rural-water-supply.net/en/resources/details/775
- RWSN Groundwater Community: https://dgroups.org/rwsn/groundwater_rwsn
- Library of RWSN and partner publications on groundwater: <http://tinyurl.com/y8qu8kzy>
- Animated films on water well drilling professionalism: <https://vimeo.com/channels/drilling>
- Contact details: ruralwater@skat.ch

raising skills more attractive for the drilling and borehole equipment manufacturers and suppliers that read *GeoDrilling International*? I am not just talking about training a team on a particular rig, for I know that this happens.

What I mean is the wider picture – training the supervisors, the managers, the mechanics and those tasked with siting.

While privatisation of water-well drilling may have increased competition, in many countries it has not been backed up by the systematic training that is needed to ensure that each country has a cadre of professionals that can provide quality boreholes.

In early 2018, UNICEF, Skat Foundation and the United Nations Development Programme Cap-Net will run their first online training course on professional drilling management. The course, which will be open to a limited number of professionals, will be based on the UNICEF Guidance Note on Professional Water Well Drilling (see accompanying links).

While we are enthusiastic about this course, we are well aware that this is merely a drop in the ocean. So in case you have ideas on how to galvanise more investment to improve drilling professionalism, country by country, project by project, please let us know. ♥



An online training course on professional drilling management will be held in early 2018

Kerstin Danert works for Skat Foundation and Skat Consulting in St. Gallen, Switzerland, and leads the Rural Water Supply Network's (RWSN) theme on Sustainable Groundwater Development. In 2017 she was awarded the Distinguished Associate Award by the International Association of Hydrogeologists



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