Eawag Partnership Programme: Portrait series on the occasion of 10th anniversary

September 14, 2018 | Stephanie Engeli, Paul Donahue
Topics: Society | Organisation & Staff | Water & Development

Research in low- and middle-income countries is an important component of Eawag's mission. The Eawag Partnership Programme (EPP) was developed to strengthen research and research ties with students and academic institutions in the Global South. 10 years and over 80 fellows from 28 different countries later, EPP celebrates the successful building of bridges and transfer of scientific knowledge.

Initiated as a fellowship programme only for UNESCO-IHE master's students, EPP was widened in scope and outreach in 2008 to include a three to four-month global fellowship programme, a dedicated IHE exchange programme and a visiting scientist programme. The EPP Fellowship Programme is the core of EPP and currently supports six fellowships per financial year for distinguished students from developing countries, preferably PhD students working on environmental, technical and/or socially relevant topics in collaboration with Eawag staff.

"The EPP Programme strengthens ties with selected academic institutions in the Global South and boosts the desperately needed capacity of qualified experts and researchers in Africa, Asia and Latin America" Christoph Lüthi, Department Head Sandec

To join EPP, the students' research subjects must be relevant to the developing country and address critical issues, such as problems of water scarcity, environmental pollution, resource exploitation and loss of biodiversity. In their applications they also have to demonstrate scientific excellence. Each

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fellowship is affiliated with one of Eawag's research departments.

Over the next two months, we will present portraits of different EPP Fellows, that tell their success stories and experiences at Eawag.

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Pauline Cherunya, Kenya, EPP Fellow 2015
PhD Student, Environmental Social Sciences department, Eawag

I am Kenyan. I found out about the EPP programme through a chance-interaction with an Eawag-researcher, during an international conference in 2013. On learning more about Eawag in 2014, I enrolled and participated in a 2-day course on WASH interventions. I was fascinated by the research facilities available, the nice working environment, and, importantly, the interesting research topics covered within the ESS and Sandec departments.

After completing my Master's degree, I applied for the EPP-2015 programme, with an aim to explore possibilities of conducting a PhD research under the Wings programme at Eawag. Wings is an inter- and transdisciplinary strategic programme that strives to develop novel non-grid-connected water and sanitation systems that can function as comparable alternatives to network-based systems.

During the four months of my EPP Fellowship, I had the excellent opportunity to interact with the distinguished researchers in the ESS and Sandec departments, who have a lot of experience working in utility sectors, such as water and sanitation. I also participated in weekly seminars, where we explored literature on sustainability transitions, business model innovations, scientific writing and publishing, and qualitative methods. The interactions and seminars culminated in useful insights for a PhD, and together with my supervisors we were successful in defining an interesting research topic - to investigate demand-side perspectives of transitions towards adequate sanitation access in the informal settlements of Nairobi. I started as a PhD student with the ESS department after the completion of the EPP Fellowship.

The EPP remains an important period for my career as it provided me with a rare chance to be supported by experienced researchers to develop research ideas, leading to identification of important research gaps. Through the experiences I have gathered at Eawag, I see myself contributing to the developments in the water and sanitation sectors of African cities – through research, policy processes and project implementation.

While I am still at Eawag, I am happy that I have an opportunity to continue sharing my experiences with new EPPs as they arrive every year - on how best they can use their time here, both from learning and at gaining socio-cultural experiences through travelling!

Related Links

Information on the Eawag Partnership Programme

Portrait series: Part 2

Portrait series: Part 3

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