

**Research-inspired Policy and Practice Learning in Ethiopia and the Nile Region (RiPPLE)** is a DFID-funded Research Programme Consortium hosted by WaterAid Ethiopia

*RiPPLE Information sheets introduce an aspect of RiPPLE, related issues and references to further resources.*

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# Information Sheet

## Action Research

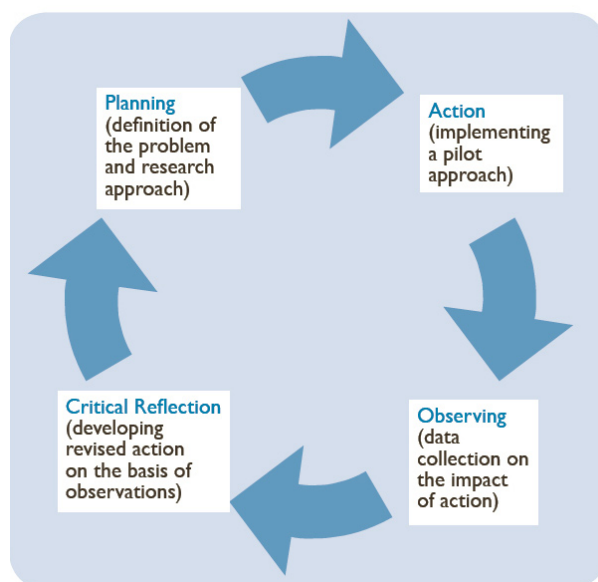
### What is Action Research?

“Action Research” is about **learning by doing**. It focuses on the practical concerns of a community, organisation or group of people, and involves them in testing solutions to the problems they face and evaluating the results. In contrast with traditional research approaches, Action Research has strong links with implementation and an explicit agenda for change. Traditional research might involve observing action taking place and evaluating its impact from a distance; in Action Research, **taking action is an integral part of the research and learning process**.

Action Research is often visualised as a **cycle** in which a team of researchers and stakeholders identify desired outcomes, pilot approaches, evaluate their impact, suggest improvements, pilot the improved approach, and so on. The cycle aims to achieve a spiralling up of both theory and practice, as theory informs practice and practice continually refines theory.

Key dimensions of Action Research are **Involvement** (of community or organisation members) and **Improvement** (development of practical solutions to improve their situation). As suggested by the name, Action Research has twin aims: to study a system (research), while collaborating with members of the system to improve it (action).

Action Research is a **participatory** process which aims to democratise research and achieve useful, practical and just outcomes which improve real-life situations. Taking part in the research and change process is a learning experience for all participants. Action Research takes a **context-specific approach**, recognising that effective solutions to problems need to be locally appropriate and tested in action. It should include **reflective critique** of its own processes to acknowledge and understand any biases, assumptions and concerns held by the participants.



#### Sources:

Handbook of Action Research (ed Peter Reason & Hilary Bradbury). Sage Publications. 2006  
SWITCH Learning Alliance Briefing Note 4: A brief introduction to action research concepts and practice (DRAFT). <http://www.switchurbanwater.eu/content/download/1873/9454/file/LA%20Briefing%20Note%20No%204.pdf>  
Action Research: Principles and Practice (Jean McNiff) 2001. Routledge. New York.