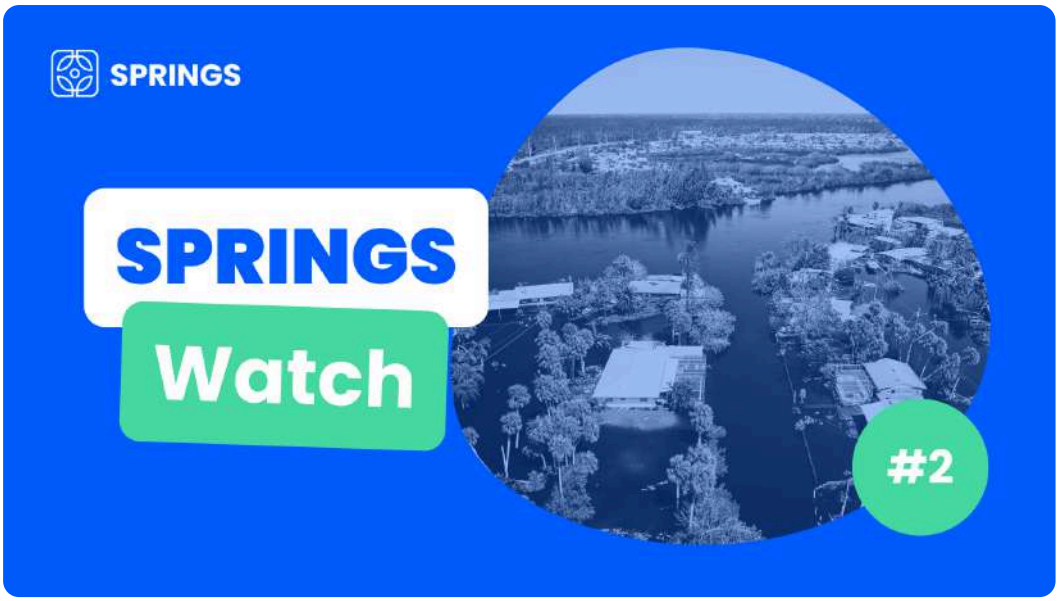


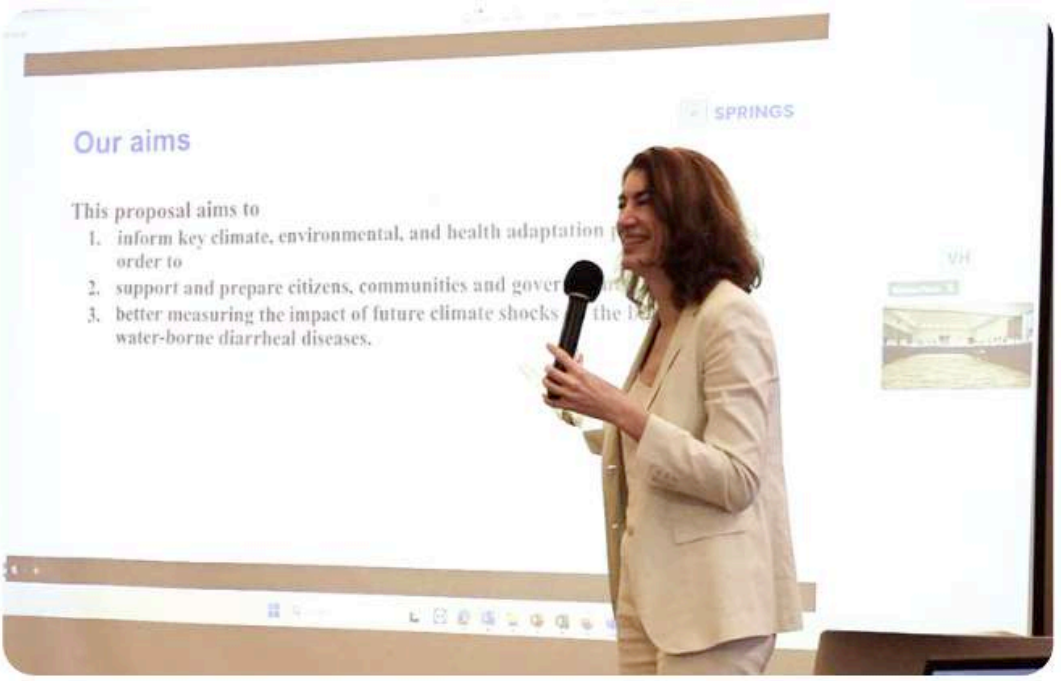
Welcome to another edition of the SPRINGS Watch Newsletter 📰

As the SPRINGS project moves forward, we're excited to share some of the stories, progress, and insights emerging from our work across Europe and Africa. In this second edition, you'll find updates from the field, highlights of what we've achieved so far, and a look at what's coming next. At the heart of it all is our shared goal: tackling the health risks linked to climate change, especially diarrhoeal diseases, through research, collaboration, and real-world action.

Enjoy your read!

But first, let's read a message from Vanessa Harris, the project coordinator.

A message from



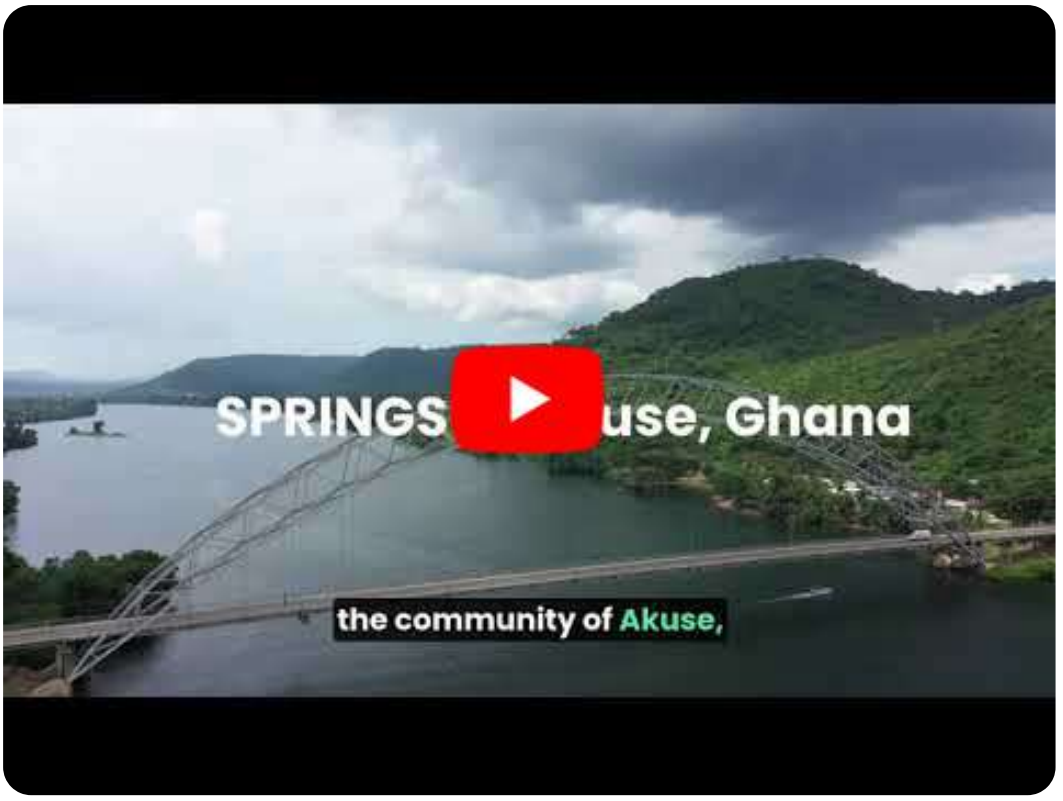
Vanessa Harris, Project Coordinator

As the impacts of climate change increasingly touch our water systems, ecosystems and health, the need for robust, evidence-based research is critical. At SPRINGS, we have spent the past year working to better understand how shifting climate conditions influence waterborne diarrhoeal diseases, a challenge that disproportionately affects vulnerable populations.

Passing the first-year milestone marked an important moment for our consortium. Over recent months, we've made significant progress: analysing water systems across our four case study sites, engaging with key local stakeholders in Ghana, collaborating with the projects in the Planetary Health Cluster to strengthen the broader impact of planetary health research, and more.

At the same time, we cannot ignore the challenges facing the global research community. Reduced research funding risks slowing critical progress at a time when climate adaptation demands greater attention, not less. These developments reaffirm the importance of long-term investment in science that informs policy and supports resilient, healthy societies. Thank you for your continued interest in SPRINGS and being part of a growing conversation on how to navigate an increasingly complex climate-health landscape.

Feature story: SPRINGS in Akuse, Ghana



Project milestones and progress in the field

SPRINGS Project Consortium gathers for the second time in Akosombo, Ghana

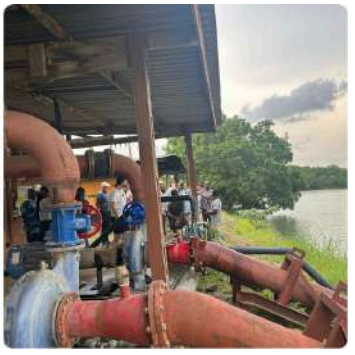
In March, the SPRINGS project held its second annual meeting in the Akuse region, home to one of the project's core case study sites. Hosted

by the **University of Ghana**, the gathering brought together all 15 partners to review progress, align strategies across climate, water quality, and pathogen models, and co-design early warning and adaptation interventions. Set in the climate-vulnerable Volta Basin, the meeting also featured field visits and local engagement to strengthen the project's on-the-ground impact.

Several workshops took place during the week: **RIVM National Institute for Public Health and the Environment** led sessions with water stakeholders to advance Water Safety Planning; **London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, U. of London** convened authorities to prioritise diarrhoeal prevention measures; and **Three o'clock** facilitated community awareness events with teachers and students to explore the health impacts of climate change.

👉 **Read the full article here**

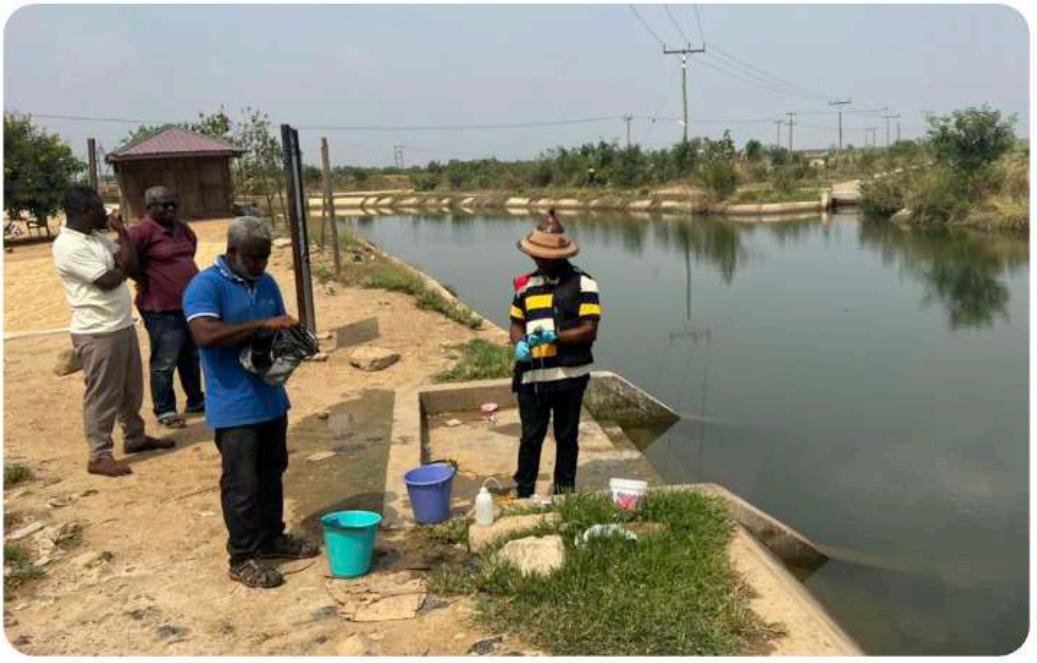




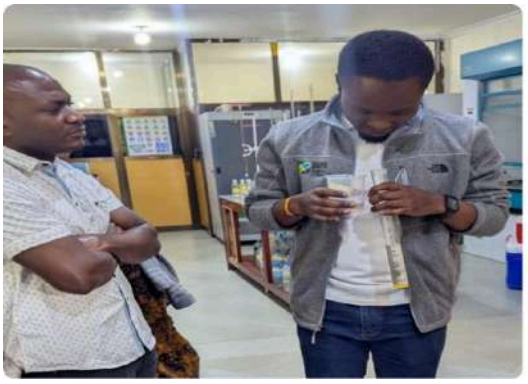
Great achievements happening in the study sites 🔍

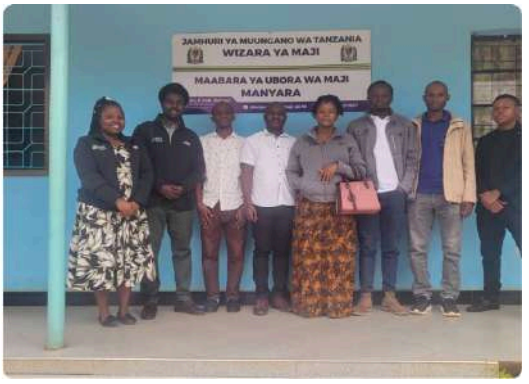
- **Surveillance and water quality monitoring underway in Naples:** In Italy, the SPRINGS team, led by the **UNINA** has launched prospective disease surveillance and water quality monitoring as part of the Naples case study. Since February 2025, the team has been tracking Campylobacter, Cryptosporidium, and Giardia among migrants, adults, and children following ethical approval. In parallel, water is being monitored monthly at four points near a wastewater treatment plant serving mixed urban, agricultural, and livestock areas. Extra samples are collected after rainfall. Together, this work helps link environmental exposure to health outcomes and informs adaptation strategies for vulnerable urban populations.

- **Surveillance and sampling underway in Ghana:** In the Lower Volta Basin, study sites and 18 water sampling points have been established for water quality monitoring and risk assessment, with 144 samples collected so far. At the same time, four local health centres— Kasunya CHPS, Osuwem CHPS, Asutsuare Health Centre, and Akuse Hospital—are supporting stool sample collection and providing clinical data to help assess the burden of diarrhoeal diseases in the region.

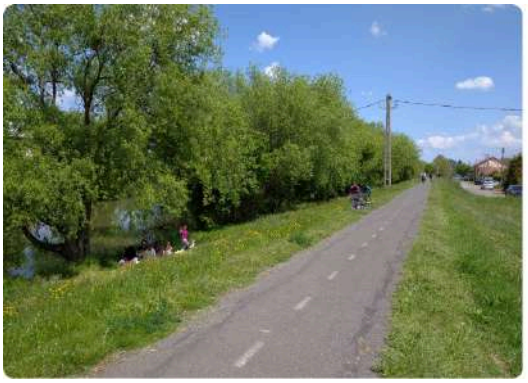


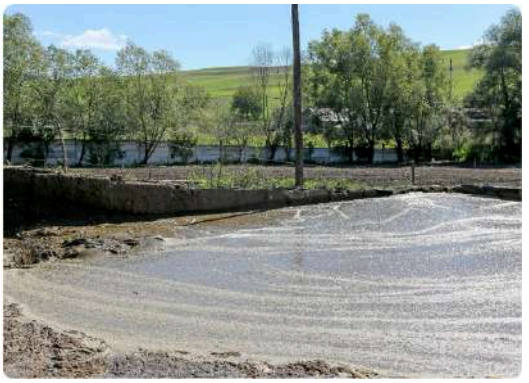
- **Water sampling and capacity building in Tanzania:** Since December, over 428 water samples have been collected in Haydom to assess climate impacts on water quality and support water safety planning. To strengthen data quality and local capacity, SPRINGS field researchers also received hands-on training in January at the Manyara regional lab, focusing on water sampling, instrument calibration, and use of the HANNA multiparameter device.





- **Exploring water practices and climate perceptions in Romania:** As part of the Romania case study, **Liviu Chelcea** and **Alexandru Romeo Vãrtej** carried out two field visits — a week in December 2024 and a month from April to May 2025 — around Timișoara. They interviewed a wide range of stakeholders, including doctors, farmers, and residents, focusing on water use, wastewater management, infrastructure, child diarrhoea, and climate change perceptions. Observations such as water collection from public fountains and recreation along the Bega River will support the study's socio-environmental analysis.





- **Climate projections under development:** Led by **Norwegian Meteorological Institute**, the Climate Working Group has completed historical rainfall analysis and is now working on future projections for Ghana and Romania to support health risk planning.

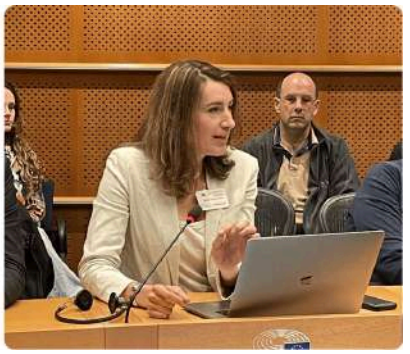
Policy Watch

The Planetary Health Cluster presents in Brussels to Members of the European Parliament 🌱🌍

On 3 June, SPRINGS and the four other projects that form the **Planetary Health Cluster** took part in a high-level event organised by the **European Climate-Health Cluster** at the European Parliament in Brussels.
The event brought together leading researchers and decision-makers to exchange on one of today's biggest challenges: the impact of climate change on public health. The roundtable discussion, titled "Protecting Health in a Changing Climate," highlighted the growing body of scientific evidence on climate-related health risks and called for coordinated, integrated action across Europe. Our coordinator, **Vanessa Harris**, who also serves as co-coordinator of the Planetary Health Cluster, spoke on behalf of the Cluster, emphasising the need to advance our understanding of the complex links between environmental degradation and human health.

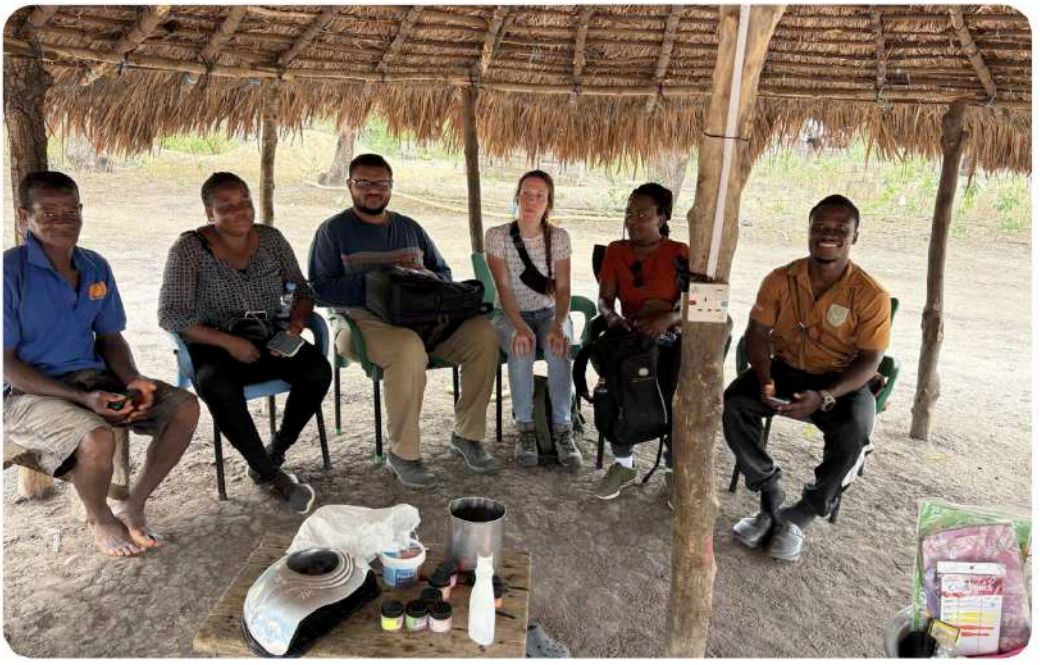
🤝 In the afternoon, the two clusters met to strengthen mutual understanding of their projects, objectives, and anticipated outcomes. A key focus of the discussion was how to increase their impact at the policy level.

👉 The following day, the Planetary Health Cluster held a full-day internal workshop dedicated to learning, exchange, and developing a shared vision and understanding of the concept of Planetary Health. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with both clusters and advocating for policies that put human and environmental health at the core of Europe’s efforts.



👉 Read the full article here

Researcher voices



What does fieldwork look like when you're studying the health impacts of climate change?

Over the spring, four SPRINGS PhD researchers: **Aude Lemme**, **Frederike Kooiman**, **Patience Lerato Sihwa**, and **Mutaz Abdelaziz**, travelled to Akuse to carry out fieldwork in the Ghana case study site.

Their work ranged from mapping exposure pathways and planning water safety strategies to learning directly from community members and local health professionals. 🗣️ Each of them brought a unique lens to the field and took home new insights that will shape the project moving forward.

👉 **Meet the researchers and read their stories on the SPRINGS website**:

- **Interview with Aude Lemme**
- **Interview with Frederike Kooiman**
- **Interview with Patience Sihwa**
- I**nterview with Mutaz Abdelaziz**

Our PhD hires

Ruth Mango, Postdoc at **University of Ghana**. Ruth has joined the team as a postdoctoral fellow to lead the qualitative data collection and community engagement activities. Her work will focus on exploring the social and cultural dimensions of climate-related diarrhoeal diseases in the Ghana case study.

The road ahead

- **Downscaling climate models and linking with water modelling.** The climate team is comparing downscaling strategies to strengthen rainfall projections. A manuscript is in preparation to help communicate these methods to public health professionals and support efforts to reduce climate-health risks.

- **From evidence to action – prioritising adaptation interventions.** SPRINGS is now focusing on identifying and modelling adaptation strategies to reduce the burden of waterborne diseases. Building on a broad literature review, the team will work with local stakeholders, starting in Ghana, to refine, prioritise, and assess interventions based on relevance, feasibility, and cost-effectiveness. This will also define key policy indicators for evaluating impact and scalability.

- **Strategic collaboration on policy pathways.** SPRINGS is actively contributing to the Planetary Health Cluster's joint work with the University of Venice to co-develop a shared strategy for climate-resilient health interventions, aiming for more integrated and impactful adaptation policies.

- **Next steps in Romania: expanding fieldwork and engagement**. SPRINGS will continue fieldwork in Timișoara, expanding to schools, clinics, and underserved communities. The team will collect data on child diarrhoea incidence at the Paediatric Hospital and interview paediatricians, health authorities, water and sanitation experts, and others. Visits will also cover public fountains, farms, and rural households to better understand water access among vulnerable groups.

- **Next steps in Italy: on-site stakeholder dialogue**. In July, the RIVM will visit Naples to verify the system description by visiting local water infrastructure with the UNINA team and ABC Napoli. The visit will help to identify intervention priorities and improve collaboration among institutions and local stakeholders.

Stay connected, stay informed

Downscaling the probability of heavy rainfall over the Nordic countries - Rasmus E. Benestad, Kajsa M. Parding, and Andreas Dobler

Spatial variation in housing construction material in low- and middle-income countries: A Bayesian spatial prediction model of a key infectious diseases risk factor and social determinant of health - Josh M. Colston, Bin Fang,Malena K. Nong, Pavel Chernyavskiy, Navya Annapareddy, Venkataraman Lakshmi, Margaret N. Kosek