

# Global Water Operators Partnerships Alliance (GWOPA) - a vehicle for promoting alternatives water privatisation?

Evaluation from five years of Reclaiming Public Water Network engagement in GWOPA

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*DRAFT (please don't quote)*

The Reclaiming Public Water Network (RPWN) has engaged in GWOPA from its establishment in 2009, seeing GWOPA as a global institutionalized platform which could speed up the development of Public public partnerships (PuPs)<sup>1</sup>. RPWN has, jointly with trade unions and like-minded public water operators, promoted PuPs as a tool for public water utilities to improve services delivery and as an alternative to neoliberal policies such privatisation or Public-Private partnerships (PPPs). This paper aims to evaluate GWOPA's development from the perspective of the RPWN .

## Summary of points:

- it is rare in the international water policy arena that critical voices from the water justice movement are heard in a systematic manner. Rather than isolating critical voices, GWOPA has worked with RPWN and made an effort to integrate our demands.
- GWOPA secretariat has over the course of time recognized RPWN as a serious actor to support WOPs<sup>2</sup> development. GWOPA recognize the value of working with CSOs and trade unions.
- Critical policy engagement is possible and has brought positive change.
- GWOPA has survived as a programme under the UNHABITAT and increased its political relevance in water sector policy. GWOPA remains as a unique space in the water policy arena, with public operators at the center.
- However, GWOPA has remained a relatively minor programme within UN system (in terms of budget and power).
- citizens and workers' participation in the governance of regional and global WOPs as well as in specific WOP projects is now widely recognised among WOPs stakeholders. There has been a clear change in the governance of the Latin American WOP platform (WOP LAC). It is necessary to continue monitoring and advocacy to deepen this positive development.
- GWOPA's integrity dimension is still in the process of development. Steps have been taken to build a mechanism to secure that key principles such as not-for-profit, inclusiveness, and transparency is respected and this remains a key challenge. There are reluctant forces within the steering committee questioning the need for this. Serious efforts to enhance integrity are needed, also to secure trust among civil society and water users that GWOPA and WOPs is a genuine alternative policy platform
- 'GWOPA is a small, pro-public ship in a rough, pro-private ocean but has the potential to create meaningful networks'

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<sup>1</sup> Public-public, public-community and community-community partnerships (PUPs) are emerging as a superior alternative to PPPs for developing capacity and achieving water for all. PUPs are the collaboration between two or more public authorities and/or communities and civic organisations, based on solidarity and a shared sense of publicness, to improve the capacity and effectiveness of public water and sanitation services and managing water resources. Ranging from inclusive and accountable twinning arrangements to public-community partnerships, PUPs are relationships forged around common values which exclude profit-seeking.

<sup>2</sup>Water Operators' Partnerships (WOPs) are peer-support arrangements between two or more water or sanitation operators, carried out on a not-for-profit basis in the objective of strengthening their capacity. WOPs are being promoted as a simple but effective method of bolstering the ability of public watsan service providers to play their full role in delivering quality basic services to all. WOPs was the name given to the practice by the UN Secretary General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation when it called, in its 2006 Hashimoto Action Plan, for a global scale-up of the approach.

## **Brief history**

In 2004, the former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, convened a body of international water and sanitation experts (UNSGAB) to advise on priority actions to achieve the MDGs in 'off-track' countries. In response to some UNSGAB members promoting PPPs as the preferred path others (such as trade union federation PSI) fought and gained support for PUPs. The pro-private members of UNSGAB failed to block this, but argued that the UN couldn't set up a scheme that would exclude the private sector. A political compromise was made that "all operators can participate in this initiative on a not-for-profit basis"; academics, NGOs and other actors can participate, also on a non-profit basis. The concept of Water Operator Partnerships (WOPs) was approved by UNSGAB and included in the "Hashimoto Action Plan" that was submitted to Kofi Annan. UN-HABITAT has led the development of the Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance. In 2007, the Global WOPs Alliance was launched as a global network of partners with a common commitment to helping water utilities help one another. From the beginning, the global alliance tried to be open and transparent. A call for expression-of-interest (EOI) in the Global WOPs Alliance Steering Committee (SC) membership was issued by the Alliance Secretariat in 2008. RPNW was consulted by newly hired programme manager at this stage to help mobilize committed public water operators and CSO actors. More than 50 EOI's were received in the Alliance Secretariat. From RPWN and its allies, Sindicato Obras Sanitarias De Buenos Aires (SOSBA), 5 de Septiembre S.A (Argentinean public water operator), ASSEMAE (National Association of Municipal Water and Sanitation in Brazil), the State Water Resources Department of Tamil Nadu in India, Public Services International (trade unions), the African Water Network and the RPWN (CSOs) were selected to be among the first International Steering Committee members.

## **Heated debate in 2009**

The Steering Committee was established during the Global WOPs Alliance Foundation Meeting that was held on January 2009 in Nairobi. The main governance document (the Alliance Charter<sup>3</sup>) was agreed. The Charter includes the rationale of the Alliance, its guiding principles, governance structures and roles (General Assembly, Steering Committee, and Secretariat), as well as the Code of Conduct of parties entering into partnerships under the GWOPA umbrella, and the Alliance membership form. The most important guiding principles<sup>4</sup> for the non-profit based partnerships are inclusiveness, transparency, and a culture of solidarity. The code of conduct<sup>5</sup> provides 'rules' for implementing WOP projects. The not-for profit principle is repeated here as follows: 'activities carried out by any partner or stakeholder within a WOP shall be done on a not-for-profit basis. WOPs should never be used as a vehicle for commercial activities by any party. Activities within a WOP will incur costs for both partners.' These foundation of GWOPA was debated in Nairobi, where RPWN and allies contributed significantly to the results. The composition of steering committee members was another area of heated debate as it would directly influence on the power politics within GWOPA. The most important rule is the majority of SC members shall be representing public water utilities and utility associations. This is the basis why the GWOPA remains an unique policy platform where public utilities play a central role. Besides public utilities, two seats are given to civil society/NGOs, private water operators, labour unions, and the Alliance Partners. Also the GWOPA donors get seats on the SC. Alliance Partners are supposed to be institutions collaborate with GWOPA and contribute more than 1 million US dollars to GWOPA, typically knowledge institutions as well as financial institutions. The dominance of financial institutions in the GWOPA governance was a major concern in the first few years.

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3 [http://www.gwopa.org/images/GWOPA%20Charter%20-%20Oct%202013\\_final.pdf](http://www.gwopa.org/images/GWOPA%20Charter%20-%20Oct%202013_final.pdf)

4 <http://www.gwopa.org/index.php/about-us-gwopa/charter/guiding-principles>

5 <http://www.gwopa.org/index.php/about-us-gwopa/charter/code-of-conduct>

### **Reasons why RPWN engages in GWOPA**

The RPWN considers the establishment of GWOPA as a significant victory also because it signals active UN support for public-public partnerships as an alternative to PPPs. Over 90% of water and sanitation operators are public entities, holding a large majority of the world's expertise in running water services. By providing a vehicle to mobilise the depth and breadth of expertise embedded in public water utilities, GWOPA holds great potential for improving the institutional and human capacity to increase access to water and sanitation. In practice, however, serious problems have emerged due to the active involvement of private water lobbies in the GWOPA process as well as the continued pressure for commercialisation of water services from development banks on which GWOPA relies for financing of concrete WOP projects. We see WOPs as a tool to promote and implement public-public partnerships based on social values. Institutionalisation clearly creates a lot of concerns but it also creates a space to influence water professionals and policymakers. We need to defend WOPs' original meaning and positive potential.

### **RPWN's strategic decision in 2010**

At the assembly of the RPWN in 2010 (Brussels), we discussed our engagement in the GWOPA as well as our strategies in this respect. This included the workshop titled 'UN support for public-public partnerships? How to ensure that GWOPA stays on track to support not-for-profit PUPs?'. In the discussions, many of the above-mentioned concerns were raised, but we decided collectively to 'work on the immediate and strategic political opportunities such as [...] the Global Water Operator Partnerships Alliance (global governance for promoting PUPs)'. The strategy was to develop concrete proposals to reinforce GWOPA's integrity and steer the process in the right direction.

### **'Quarantine period' rejected**

One reason that RPWN discussed its continuous engagement was that our proposal to include a quarantine clause in GWOPA's code of conduct was rejected at the 2nd Steering Committee meeting (in 2009). From the beginning, our focus was to insist on safeguards against the abuse of the GWOPA and to prevent WOPs from being used as a vehicle for commercial operators to exploit business opportunities. In order to ensure this a clause to quarantine commercial partnerships for a period of 5 years after the end of any Water Operator Partnership was proposed. The example for this was the quarantine policy of the Partners for Water and Sanitation (PAWS) in UK, who use a two year quarantine period to protect recipients not only from businesses but also from NGOs (as NGOs sometimes replace existing public systems and are not always accountable to the local population). After all, the proposal for a quarantine clause was rejected by the majority of steering committee members. Instead the GWOPA secretariat proposed to add an integrity clause to the code of conduct, in order to consolidate the not-for-profit principle, in the 'Integrity' section of the guiding principles. There was also a suggestion to form an 'Integrity' sub-committee to consider concrete cases where the 'integrity' might be compromised by any participating partners. The secretariat asked the RPWN to play a role in developing this in detail in the integrity sub-committee.

### **Developing proposal rather than walking away**

The rejection of the quarantine clause was unfortunate, but at the Brussels meeting, we decided to develop a concrete proposal for the work of this committee, including how it would enforce decisions and how they would hear of abuses. The complaint mechanism should be built so that any WOP stakeholders can bring concerns of violation. We thought the complaint mechanism had a potential to safeguard WOPs, perhaps more effectively than the quarantine if local activists have an official place to complain about a violation of non-profit principals in WOP projects. We also decided to demand increased transparency of GWOPA, including by developing a global database of all WOP projects.

### **Dominance by regional development banks in Latin America and Asia (2009-2011)**

Before the GWOPA was established, Asia Development Bank (ADB) was active to facilitate twinning programme in the region and hold own framework while Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) became a primal actor to establish the Latin American regional WOP platform (WOP-LAC). These institutions have a record of promotion neoliberal water sector reform. And the regional WOP processes in Asia and Latin America appeared to be partially using WOPs as a mechanism for seeking commercial activity and/or for pushing neoliberal sector reform. The first phases of GWOPA secretariat seemed to lack the power to enforce the original intention of developing partnerships between public service operators with no commercial objectives. We felt the positive contribution of WOPs would greatly depend on whether GWOPA can focus on public-public partnerships and if the not-for-profit principle can be enforced, also in the projects promoted by the regional WOPs processes. This was the background why PSI and RPWN wrote the report "The politics of water partnerships – the future of WOPs and PUPs". The report pointed out the contradictory practices in both Asia and Latin American regional process. However, we decided not to publish this report at the first congress of GWOPA (Cape Town 2011). The situation deserved to be criticised but this report would be too provocative at that delicate stage of implementing the GWOPA, and could further isolate NGOs and unions. And we thought we should not send a negative message about the GOWPA in general since the GWOPA is a rare multi stake holder platform which we can participate in and we should steer it to the right direction by engaging. Instead, we worked further to collect empirical evidence from actual WOPs facilitated by WOP-LAC and published a critique of the Water Operators Partnerships in Latin America and the Caribbean (WOP-LAC)<sup>6</sup> a year later. At 4th Steering Committee meeting in Amsterdam in 2011, the GWOPA programme manager stated tht all regional WOPs platforms had adopted the GWOPA code of conduct officially. This was seen as positive development. Interestingly ADB and IADB became less active around this time and downscaled their financial commitments. Instead French Aid Agency-AFD, USAID, Spanish Aid Agency-AECID became more active. These new financial actors tended to respect GWOPA's process more.

### **Establishing integrity**

Instead of the quarantine clause, a new Integrity clause was added to the code of conduct: *Central to WOPs is the sharing of knowledge in a not-for-profit and unrestrained way and built upon the notion of solidarity between utilities. Its purpose is to enhance the capacity and capability of public utilities within the guiding principle of integrity. Therefore: The partners agree that no information will be intentionally withheld by any party in anticipation of any commercial gains, and no confidential information of one party will be used by the other party for its commercial advantage.*

RPWN worked on the proposal for Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Integrity sub-committee prior to the 3rd Steering Committee (Stockholm 2010), defining tasks, the composition of the sub-committee, complaints mechanism and procedures and sanctions (suspending a partner from GWOPA in case of serious violation of the non-profit principle). RPWN argued that it was important to publish violations and sanctions publicly so that small public water operators considering entering a WOP partnership can be warned (not to make a partnership with certain operators, which may have an intention to seek for profit or taking over). In this way, the GWOPA could increase its credibility as a global platform for non-profit-partnerships and as a safe platform for small water operators to develop their capacity without running risks. While there was support among numerous SC members, there was opposition from private operators and some financial institutions. The GWOPA secretariat, moreover, feared the proposed ToR was too strong and would scare off some WOPs stakeholders. The GWOPA secretariat therefore proposed a revised ToR without the complaint mechanism and without sanctions, but

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6 <http://www.tni.org/article/critique-water-operators-partnerships-latin-america-and-caribbean-wop-lac-0?context=599>

focusing on a more 'pro-active' approach to help the secretariat and Steering Committee to adhere to integrity principles. The text of the new ToR elaborates on all the principles, not exclusively the not-for-profit principle. This was a step away from our objective of making the sub-committee an effective alternative for the quarantine period, but still a useful mechanism. The sub-committee is responsible for reporting any concerns about violations of the GWOPA guiding principles to the Steering Committee. The complaint mechanism on violations of not-for-profit principle is defined with the following article in the ToR: *Establishing and operationalizing a mechanism through which concerns about breaches of the WOPs code-of-conduct can be followed-up.*

RPWN emphasised that a strong integrity profile is crucial for civil society groups to be able to promote WOPs within the water justice movement, as part of the solution rather than the problem. The Sub-committee (of which RPWN and PSI are members) made several recommendations to the GWOPA secretariat in 5th Steering committee meeting (2012 in Paris). This included making on-line complaint form available, providing the possibility to inform about concerns about WOP projects via the GWOPA website as well as more actively communicating about the Subcommittee and its role in GWOPA. Implementation of these actions remains to be seen.

### **Global database of WOPs**

RPWN also demanded increased transparency of WOPs by building a global database of all existing WOPs. At the time (in 2010), the absence of an official list of WOP projects endorsed by GWOPA was major obstacle for any proper assessment of the impacts of WOPs. This demand was taken seriously by the GWOPA secretariat and the online database "WOPs profile"<sup>7</sup> was published a year later. In 2012, RPWN made significant efforts to add WOP cases involving members of the network members, including eight partnerships from the US, a cooperation project between two community operators in Cochabamba (Bolivia), and 10 WOP projects run by AEOPAS (Association of Public Water Supply and Sanitation, Spain). This exercise was not only beneficial to increase the visibility of cooperation projects of our allies but also to demonstrate the RPWN's contributions to the global WOP alliance.

### **Citizen and workers' participation**

RPWN and trade union partners has consistently promoted citizens and workers' participation both in the global and regional WOP's processes and in specific WOP projects. The Dutch trade union Abvakabo stated that the success of a WOP project depended on support and participation of workers, both on the mentor and the recipient side (2011 at 1st GWOPA congress in Cape Town). As a WOP project tends to focus on increasing efficiency it is however also likely to result in workforce cuts. From the mentor side, trade unions could question why money is used outside of the country, which could cause layoffs among workers at the recipient water operator. Interestingly, the GWOPA secretariat started working on this issue with RPWN and unions, so they asked us to convey a thematic session in the next GWOPA congress. The session on "Participation - harnessing the potential of civil society and trade unions in making WOPs succeed" featured the experiences of state water authority Tamil Nadu, India, AEOPAS, and OSE(the state water company of Uruguay), including:

- water authorities could learn from communities of their traditional knowledge to conserve limited water resources in rural areas
- public water operators could develop a holistic perspective (not only technical aspects but also social, cultural and environmental aspects) in project planning by working with different actors.

Among the greatest benefits of participation for WOP implementers is that it helps build public support for the partnership project. This is particularly important to distinguish WOPs from any kinds of

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<sup>7</sup><http://www.gwopa.org/index.php/engage-with-us/wop-profiles>

attempts to take over the management of local water services, which is a typical feature of privatisation and PPPs and highly controversial in many developing countries. As a result of the session, GWOPA secretariat and RPWN agreed to jointly produce a set of guidelines on participation to draw out more practical experiences and lessons. Although substantial time was spent on this joint undertaking, it was not yet completed as a concrete joint publication. This experience showed the difficulty to make a joint paper between organisations with very different institutional backgrounds (the GWOPA under the UN programme and RPWN).

Nevertheless, there has been many positive developments., such as the GWOPA secretariat highlighting the workers' role in WOPs in the case study published in 2013 on the WOP between Dunea (The Netherlands) and Mwanza (Tanzania). In this WOP project, trade unions from both The Netherlands and Tanzania were actively involved. The regional (Arab, Africa, South America and Caribbean, Asia) and sub regional WOPs platforms (South East Asia, Pacific), moreover, were asked to report on the participatory mechanisms in their governance structures at the 4th Steering Committee meeting in 2011. At that time no regional WOP platforms had official participation of CSOs and unions in their governance structure.

### **Key strategies: from watchdog to contributor**

After the first few years experience of engagement and advocacy (such as quarantine clause debate), RPWN shifted its strategy from that of watchdog to more actively engaging in political debate and cooperation. We started working more with the GWOPA secretariat and allies to demonstrate the diverse experiences of cooperation projects (WOPs, PuPs, public-community partnerships). Some of the projects illustrated a strong ethos of public operators, others illustrated the key role of communities. While working closely with like-minded public water operators' managers such as World Waternet (Amsterdam) and ONEE Morocco, we made an efforts to bring progressive public operators and public water associations such as OSE Uruguay, AEOPAS<sup>8</sup> in Spain on board more actively. As a part of this effort, RPWN and PSI produced a short video to highlight progressive water operators' voices. The video '[The Way Forward - Voices from the Global Water Operator Partnership Alliance](#)' (2011).

### **Turning point: GWOPA's survival**

In 2011, with the new leadership of Mr. Joan Clos becoming UN-HABITAT's Executive Director, UN-HABITAT (which hosted the GWOPA programme) indicated that funding for the GWOPA would be cut and that it would therefore not be able to sustain its institutional capacity. RPWN decided to send an open letter<sup>9</sup> to the executive director and to the UN-HABITAT Governing Council members prior to the Governing Council meeting in April 2011. We argued that *"the GWOPA is doing work which no other agency in the UN has managed to do so far. It is reaching out specifically to local public utilities, and is including as stakeholders civil society and workers as well as their trade unions. This new programme needs time and the resources to deliver on the commitments made by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan."* This open letter was signed by 33 NGOs, trade unions and public water operators. Despite our efforts, HABITAT decided to stop funding the GWOPA programme. This caused the departure of the GWOPA office from the HABITAT office in Nairobi, and GWOPA had to seek for a new host institution. Nevertheless, our action clearly demonstrated a broader CSOs and trade unions alliance committed to the GWOPA development. That was the turning point that the GWOPA

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8 AEOPAS is a unique water professional association firmly committed to public water management and human right to water: mainly consisting of water operators but also include civil society (unions, NGOs), research centers, consumer organizations and neighborhood associations, public administration as equal partners. AEOPS members have engaged in numerous solidarity based partnerships in Latin American and Africa, often extremely challenging social conditions(ex. refugees in Tindouf, Algeria).

9 <http://www.tni.org/article/open-letter-un-habitat-executive-director-joan-clos-un-funding-water-justice?context=599>

secretariat realised that CSOs and trade unions' are not merely critical and uncomfortable actors, but partners to work together with.

### **Turning point: ACP-EU Water Facility**

RPWN campaigned for several years to insist on the need for government support for Public-Public Partnerships, including a call upo the European Union to allocate development aid for PuPs. These efforts resulted in the EU earmarking €40 million of the ACP-EU Water Facility to support water partnership projects in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries in 2010. These are not-for-profit partnerships intended to: “develop capacity in the ACP water & sanitation sector, leading to better water and sanitation governance and management, and to the sustainable development and maintenance of infrastructure” (European Commission, 2010: 5). There are some innovative elements in the ACP-EU Water Facility. One of them is that the guideline for the call for proposals explicitly encouraged the involvement of local trade unions and civic organisations as “supporting partners” (European Commission, 2010: 5, 9, 19). The GWOPA secretariat recognised this as an important development to support public utilities capacity through not-for-profit partnerships.

These two political developments contributed to changing the GWOPA secretariat' view towards CSOs and unions and created more space for us in the GWOPA to make further critical and constructive engagements.

### **Finance is always a contentious issue**

WOPs implementers should not compromise the WOPs principles, rather financiers need to understand the WOPs concept and be creative to accommodate WOPs elements in their projects. But there were continuous references from financial institutions such as World Bank that WOPs should contribute to financial sustainability in public utilities in order to make them more 'bankable'. We argued that it's a big mistake if WOPs implementers would focus on satisfying banks' commercial interests through WOPs. On this background, progressive GWOPA stakeholders saw the clear need to increase autonomous finance for public utilities for solidarity cooperation. During the International Water Week in Amsterdam (November 2011), World Waternet (the international cooperation part of public utility of Amsterdam) hosted sessions such as 'Water Operator Partnerships-Each one Teach one' and the so-called 1% water and sanitation solidarity levy was discussed. This 1 % policy (1% of public water company revenue for international solidarity projects) exists in different ways in several countries: as a national scheme in the Netherlands and France, and on the regional /municipal level in Spain, Italy and Switzerland. World Waternet's budget for international cooperation largely comes from this scheme. SIAAP (waste water company in Paris region) has engaged in 25 international cooperation projects in 18 countries with €1.9 million/year budget from this scheme. UNDP hosts the Global Water Solidarity (GWS)<sup>10</sup> which connects local actors in decentralized solidarity cooperation with municipal water authorities in developing countries. While it looks GWOPA and GWS should be complementary rather than competing, it remains to be seen if more coherent institutional coordination will emerge. The above-mentioned ACP-EU Water Facility is an example to follow for other donors and RPWN argued for national donor agencies to explore this option.

### **Finance for PuPs: European Citizen Initiative (ECI)**

As part of our continuous advocacy efforts, RPWN with trade unions allies sent an open letter to Andris Piebalgs (EU Commissioner for Development) to argue that the EC should continue the development aid scheme for public public partnerships in the upcoming 11th European Development Fund (EDF)<sup>11</sup>. Follow-up on this came from Aqua Public Europea (European association of public water operators). The members of APE provide collectively water and sanitation services to over 60 million European

<sup>10</sup> [http://europe.undp.org/content/geneva/en/home/partnerships\\_initiatives/global-water-solidarity/](http://europe.undp.org/content/geneva/en/home/partnerships_initiatives/global-water-solidarity/)

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.tni.org/article/open-letter-extending-and-upscaling-support-innovative-non-profit-partnerships?context=599>

citizens) and German public water association (Allianz der öffentlichen Wasserwirtschaft - AöW). This advocacy demand, moreover, was included as one of three policy demands in the European Citizen Initiative (ECI) for the right to water. A broad alliance of unions and NGOs successfully completed the first European Citizen Initiative (ECI) on the human right to water by collecting 1.66 millions valid signatures from 28 EU countries. The ECI is a newly created tool for European citizens to demand that the European Commission develops legislations on a priority issue. This successful ECI appears to have helped achieve policy change at the EC and increase the chance of further funding for Public-public partnerships.

### **Mitigating financial institutions influence in WOPs**

Funding for WOPs implementation remain largely under the control of international development banks. RPWN argued that the GWOPA should facilitate a democratically-governed global funding mechanism for WOPs implementation, to which national governments can make contributions. In 2013, the GWOPA adopted a 5-years strategy in which it re-established its policy to promote WOP projects more directly. This is a positive shift. In the 5th Steering Committee meeting (2013 in Paris) the GWOPA's manager explicitly stated that GWOPA would like to mobilize more resources to directly support WOPs (through national and regional WOP platforms). RPWN has argued that GWOPA should explore the idea of a Public Utility Advisory & Financing Facility (PUAFF).

### **Latest developments**

The GWOPA secretariat proposed to set up a programme committee during 5th Steering Committee in Paris to prepare the programme for 2nd GWOPA congress (November 2013 in Barcelona). This participatory approach was fresh and very welcome. The steering committee meeting in Paris, moreover, was scheduled for two days (instead of 1 day in the past), which allow more substantial discussions. This enabled discussions on a longer-term strategy for GWOPA, the sustainability of WOPs and how to develop political support for WOPs. Also GWOPA 5 years strategy(2013-2017)<sup>12</sup> was discussed. In brief, the 5 years strategy presents two areas of focus: directly supporting WOPs operations and guiding the global growth of WOPs. GWOPA to provide operational support to WOPs implementation in the field including strengthening regional platforms, mobilizing financial support and providing direct operational support. It also is to encourage knowledge-sharing. It is worth mentioning that AquaFed (the Federation of Private Water Operators) aggressively attacked strong references of public water utility. For instance the Vision paragraph in the draft strategy read: *public water and sanitation operators help each other to achieve universal access to sustainable water and sanitation services through not-for-profit peer –to-peer support.*<sup>13</sup> The chair of steering committee wisely confirmed the spirit of the Hashimoto action plan and stated clearly that the GWOPA is an inclusive global platform and it aimed to be a supporting mechanism mainly for public water operators.

### **Democratisation of WOP-LAC**

The secretariat of WOP-LAC (Latina America platform) moved to ALOAS (Asociación Latinoamericana de Operadores de Agua y Saneamiento) in Argentina (from IADB headquarters in Washington DC) in June. A new WOP-LAC coordinator was recruited. The transition of the WOP-LAC Secretariat to ALOAS presented an opportunity to open the platform up for representation of non-utility actors such as civil society organizations, following GWOPA's guiding principle of inclusiveness. In

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<sup>12</sup> [http://www.gwopa.org/images/GWOPA\\_strategy\\_2013-2017\\_final.pdf](http://www.gwopa.org/images/GWOPA_strategy_2013-2017_final.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> the final text was slightly changed quietly : GWOPA's vision is that water and sanitation operators help each other to achieve universal access to sustainable water and sanitation services through not-for-profit peer support partnerships. These partnerships result in public operators – the target of support – with strong technical, financial and management capacity, able to provide a sustainable, high-quality service to all.

fact, PAPC (Platform for public community partnership in Americas, acting as a CSO representative in the steering committee) and AEOPAS were invited to be a part of WOP-LAC. They participated in the meeting right after the congress. WOP-LAC expressed explicit interest to learn from PAPC's experiences working with communities as well as from AEOPAS's cooperation projects.

## **2nd GWOPA Congress in Barcelona**

The congress was attended by 275 participants from 80 countries. RPWN with allies organised its own strategy meeting right before of the congress so that our allies could participate in the congress too. In total 35 network members actively participated in the congress to make our voices heard. Prior to the GWOPA congress, 8 submissions (contributions to the conference programme) were made from RPWN. As a result, network members were selected as speakers in 2 plenaries and 6 thematic sessions (10 people). With these opportunities, we could present our experiences and perspective on partnerships (focusing on communities, participations, water resources protection, democratisation). New steering committee members<sup>14</sup> were elected including Aqua Publica Europea, Ingeniería Sin Fronteras and CONTAGWAS (Consideraciones generales sobre legislación sanitaria). PAPC remains another two years as civil society's representative, whereas RPWN resigned after four years term. David McDonald (Municipal Services Project) wrote a blog article for the Guardian website summarising the present state of GWOPA very clearly ('Global public water alliance must not be allowed to evaporate').<sup>15</sup>

## **Summary of state of GWOPA (from GOWPA annual report 2013-2014)**

- the number of WOPs profiles in GWOPA's database has surpassed 110 and continues steadily to climb.
- During the Congress, an additional 10 WOPs agreements were formally entered into.
- GWOPA and UNESCO-IHE began working 5-year research (Boosting Effectiveness of Water Operators' Partnerships (BEWOP)), to apply effective knowledge transfer and change processes in WOPs.
- Two cases studies (Vitens-Evides International, Netherlands – FIPAG (Chokwe, Inhambane, Maxixe, and Xai-Xai), Mozambique and Dunea N.V., Netherlands – Mwanza Urban Water and Sewerage Authority (or MWAUWASA), Tanzania) are completed.
- New case studies (Thekwini Water and Sanitation, City of Durban, South Africa – Bulawayo City Council, Zimbabwe National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC), Uganda – Kisumu Water and Sewerage Company (KIWASCO), Kenya) are being worked.
- Eight WOPs have been initiated by WOP-Africa since 2012 in African regional WOP platform,
- Eight WOPs have been initiated in Latin America by WOP-LAC.
- Sixty-five WOPs have been facilitated in the Asia region through the combined efforts of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and USAID since 2008. Currently, ADB is supporting 14 ongoing WOPs with 21 others under preparation.
- OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) granted 1.0 million USD for WOPs in Africa to support nine 'first-phase' WOPs lasting for one year. The three main thematic focus of these WOPs will be management of non-revenue water, extending access to the poor, and extending access to sanitation.
- 1 WOP between Eau de Paris, Ville de Paris, Agence Française de Développement (AFD), Office National de l'Electricité et de l'Eau Potable (ONEE, Morocco), WSSA (Bethlehem) and GWOPA were signed during the Congress.

<sup>14</sup> All steering committee members list is available at <http://gwopa.org/index.php/about-us-gwopa/structure/steering-committee>

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2013/dec/30/global-public-water-alliance-evaporate-gwopa?](http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2013/dec/30/global-public-water-alliance-evaporate-gwopa?CMP=twtd)  
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