

Press Kit

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GWOPA: Helping Water Operators Help One Another

In spite of the efforts to reach the water target of the Millennium Development Goals, still an estimated **750 million people remain without sustainable access to improved drinking water** and some **2.5 billion without basic sanitation**. Many of those counted as accessing water supply experience unhealthy, intermittent, or exceedingly expensive water, meaning that the experience of “access” on the ground remains, in many cases, inadequate.

Water operators are responsible for providing the most essential services – water and sanitation – the majority of the world’s population. When well-performing, they can be a catalyst to development. Without the right capacity and resources, long-term development is almost impossible.

Capacity is critical

In some areas, investment in infrastructure has not kept pace with urbanization and climate change is a shifting challenge faced by many water and sanitation service providers. Even at national and regional, the differences in service provision (quantitative and qualitative) are stark.

Developing operators’ capacity to address and anticipate challenges is critical. Empowered operators can maximise their operational efficiency and play an important role in securing a sustainable future. But there is no one-for-all solution and failing to take into account local contexts and challenges leads to ill-adapted or unrealistic solutions.

What are Water Operator Partnerships?

Water Operators’ Partnerships are one approach that help support operators develop the capacity to find tailored and long-term solutions. WOPs are peer-support arrangements between two or more water or sanitation operators, carried out on a not-for-profit basis with the objective of strengthening their capacity. Through WOPs, utilities help each other provide safer, cleaner and healthier water and sanitation services through exchange of good practices, practical solutions, and ongoing technical guidance.

How WOPs work

WOPs work by harnessing the skills, know-how, and goodwill within a strong ‘mentor’ to sustainably build the capacity of another utility – the ‘mentee’ – that needs assistance. Through such mentorship, WOPs progressively strengthen and empower the mentee operator at management, as well as financial and technical levels to implement changes that will lead to better service.

What GWOPA does

The Global Alliance of Water Operators’ Partnership GWOPA’s vision is that water and sanitation operators help each other to achieve universal access to sustainable water and sanitation services through WOPs. To work towards this vision, GWOPA is increasing the quantity and quality of WOPs across the globe by:

- Promoting best practices and developing guidance tools and materials to support operators during the WOPs process
- Developing a diverse and robust Alliance of WOPs actors, including regional WOP platforms, civil society, donors and facilitators who know their local context
- Building a clear and meaningful WOPs brand that can be easily communicated to help strengthen engagement from operators and other potential actors
- Providing direct operational support to implement WOPs in areas that show potential for scale-up or where help is urgently required
- Facilitating access to funding for operators who have developed action plans through WOPs



Cooperation with Spanish Stakeholder

Since the establishment of GWOPA's Secretariat in Barcelona in April 2013, efforts have been made to establish a close relationship with water and sanitation actors of the host country, and to develop WOPs that best benefit from the capacity of Spanish operators. In addition to the strategic partnership with the Government of Spain and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), concrete collaboration was launched with Spanish operators in 2014 to implement 5 WOPs, including: Aigues del Prat and Aguas Santafesinas (Argentina); the City of Zaragoza and EMAX (Guatemala); BCASA and WSSA (Palestine); Agbar and Aguas de Palmira and EMQUILICHAO (Colombia); and EMASESA and Indonesia.

Support

The GWOPA Secretariat is supported by an annual grant from the Government of Spain that allows it to fulfil its strategy and coordinate the Alliance from its headquarters in Barcelona. In addition to funding the Secretariat, these funds are used to establish cooperation agreements with strategic partners who can facilitate or implement WOPs in the global South, develop practical guidance material and actively promote WOPs as an effective approach by contributing to global dialogues and processes.

Recent WOPs cases

All WOPs are unique and they vary according to the operators involved, duration, thematic area and institutional framework. Nevertheless, all WOPs result in a number of 'quick wins' and can lead to long-term improvements in service provision when taken further.

WOP between CAESB (Brazil) and Aguas del Norte (Argentina)

The WOP focussed initially on improving energy efficiency of the public Argentinian operator who provides water to **1 million** citizens in the city of Salta. The cost of exchange visits and training was around 50.000 USD and within two years the Argentinian operator had saved 100,000 USD and reduced its environmental impact thanks to energy efficiency measures learned through the WOP.

WOP between EMASESA (Spain) and PDAM Tirta Raharja (Indonesia)

Focussing on improving metering and reducing non-revenue water, this one-year WOP (50.000 USD) involved technical training by Spanish staff to their Indonesian counterparts. In the pilot project, non-revenue water **reduced from 68% to 42%**. The approach will be replicated in numerous areas of Indonesia using the skills acquired from the Spanish partner. Furthermore, the WOP allowed the Indonesia operator to confidently invest 25,000 USD in new metering systems thanks to the support of EMASESA.

Ripple effect of WOPs

The Moroccan public operator ONEE is an active actor in WOPs as both mentee and mentor. As a mentee in a long-term WOP with SIAAP (France), they were able to securely take on the role of sanitation operator for **738,000 people** and improve the quality of their service to **1.592.000 water users**. They are now engaged as mentor with ONEA of Burkina Faso that will develop the skills of the mentee in parallel to major infrastructure investment to protect water resources and implement new water treatment systems.

A growing movement

Across the globe, there are over 70 WOPs taking place in which GWOPA plays a supporting or active role through the National or Regional WOPs platforms or directly. By supporting regional platforms in Africa, Asia and Latin American and the Caribbean, and combining their local knowledge with GWOPA's WOPs expertise, the approach is being scaled-up and seen as a valuable tool to achieving sustainable development.

