



UN
2023 WATER
CONFERENCE

NEW YORK
22-24
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UN 2023 Water Conference

Key Messages



Water and sanitation utilities are key players

- The world is off track to meet the SDGs. It's high time to change our way of thinking and doing. In that respect, we must recognize operators as key players in improving water and sanitation for all, which are essential to local health and wellbeing, everywhere.
- Public service providers are solving the big global challenges locally. They help deliver on all of the SDG 6 targets, and their work contributes to achieving all other SDGs, and help and build and maintain the social contract within populations.
- To ensure we leave nobody and no place behind and achieve SDG 6 and the other water-related SDGs, effective management and affordable services are big challenges. Strengthening local public water and sanitation services is a priority for sustainable services that guarantee Human Rights.
- Water operators need to be further empowered to deliver on the global water agendas by giving them a voice in their implementation and providing them with the instruments. This includes finance, enabling utility-friendly positions within international, national, and local policies and laws, and strengthened capacities.

Water Operators Partnerships Accelerate Solutions

- Water Operators' Partnerships (WOPs) are not-for-profit and solidarity-based partnerships between peer utilities. Being fully action-oriented, WOPs have a strong potential for scalability, visibility, and global impact to improve public services.
- WOPs work by enabling well-functioning utilities to inspire, guide, teach, and mentor utility peers in need of support. Building on peers' shared understanding of professional demands and challenges, partners jointly assess challenges and co-create solutions. WOPs function on non-commercial principles, which are fundamental to the trust and open information exchange between operators that are key to effective capacity development.
- WOPs make their impact by helping utilities acquire and apply knowledge, establish new practices and implement improved approaches. The areas tackled through mentorship encompass the management, financial, and technical levels. Utilities may want to increase efficiency, take up new mandates, regularize services in low-income areas, expand sanitation service coverage, enhance environmental performance, or build human resource capacity following a

remunicipalisation. The resulting capacity and performance improvements can facilitate utilities' access to financing for infrastructural investments, supporting further extensions and improvements to services and ensuring the utility's ownership.

- WOPs are an agile model, low-cost, effective, and highly scalable approach to support our most essential service providers. They can be tailored to utilities' greatest needs and can be carried out in rural and urban territories, small and intermediate cities, metropolitan entities, and regions.
- Rather than substituting capacity, WOPs “do with, not for”, helping local utility staff to make long-term improvements that can continue well beyond the life of the partnership. A growing number of WOPs are long-term and comprehensive, supporting utilities to make significant improvements. Follow-up and maintenance are better ensured than with more classic cooperation projects where follow-up over time is often missing.
- WOPs frequently support investment programs and increase their sustainability. The skills acquired through WOPs lead to efficiencies that improve financial performance and can facilitate access to finance for infrastructure extension and better service provision.
- The positive outcomes generated by WOPs include organisational changes related to improvements in comprehensive knowledge, skills, awareness, and attitude, in addition to a deeper understanding of the organization's needs and strategies on how to address them. Such organizational capacity improvements are supporting utilities' uptake of inclusive service improvements and access to climate finance. These partnerships often generate a ripple effect, with the mentee utility going on to share its enhanced capacities with other utilities.
- Scaling up professional peer partnerships between water and sanitation utilities around the world is urgent to improve the capacity and performance of utilities. We call on governments to support this high-impact approach.

Multi-stakeholders and peer partnerships: a stake for water future

- Improving cooperation at regional and international levels in access to technology and innovation and sharing knowledge contribute to strengthening the global partnership for sustainable development.
- WOPs fit with the three principles guiding the Conference: Inclusive (leaving no one behind); Action-oriented (leading to real impactful results through concrete actions and plans on the ground), and Cross-sectoral (Provision of good services contribute to achieving all the SDGs).
- The UN SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework defines four ingredients to speeding up the pace to meet the 2030 Agenda water goal. With a focus on capacity development in support of finance and innovation, WOPs can be super-accelerators towards SDG 6. Through multi-stakeholder partnerships like WOPs, governance issues can be strengthened over time.
- The Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance (GWOPA) is an example of 'stronger, more networked and inclusive multilateral system' called for by the Secretary-General in his Report to the General Assembly, Our Common Agenda.



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