



# FIRST INTERMEDIARY INTERREGIONAL WORKSHOP



Uniting against Poverty

## 11<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2020

# OFID SIP WOP PROGRAM AFRICA ASIA OUTCOME NOTE



## Outline

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### I. First interregional intermediary WOP program workshop

**Objective:** Assessing the progress made by the teams on the ground and exchange on challenges and good practices identified

**Duration:** 3 hours

**Location:** online through MS Teams

**Date and time:** Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020, from 10 am to 1pm CEST

#### Programme

| Time (CEST) | Topic   | Speaker   |
|-------------|---|---|
| 10.00-10.15 | Welcome words, instructions for the meeting and introduction  | GWOPA, Anne Bousquet<br>OFID, Musab Alomar                |
| 10.15-10.35 | Overview for each region by WOP coordinators  | AfWA, Charles Boti/Simeon Kenfack<br>WaterLinks, Mai Flor |
| 10.35-10.50 | Updates from Danang   | Mentee focal point  |
| 10.50-11.05 | Updates from Chittagong   | Mentee focal point  |
| 11.05-11.20 | Updates from Khulna   | Mentee focal point  |
| 11.20-11.30 | Break   | Mentee focal point  |
| 11.30-11.45 | Updates from Blantyre   | Mentee focal point  |
| 11.45-12.00 | Updates from Sodo Town  | Mentee focal point  |
|             | Poll 1  |   |
| 12.00-12.20 | Q&A and discussion/What have been the main challenges so far? What have been the best solutions proposed? | Moderator: Anne Bousquet                                  |
|             | Poll 2  |   |
| 12.20-12.35 | Focus on Manila Water: how to mentor during Covid 19  | Manila Water WOP focal point                              |
|             | Poll 3  |   |
| 12.35-12.40 | Q&A   |   |
| 12.40-12.50 | How to improve on communications for WOP teams  | GWOPA, Elisa Bernal                                       |
| 12.50-13.00 | Discussion  |   |
| 13.00-13.05 | Conclusion and wrap up  | GWOPA, Anne Bousquet                                      |

Number of online participants: 36

| Name                       | Organization                     | Mentor or mentee         |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>AFRICA</b>              |                                  |                          |
| Siméon Kenfack             | AfWA                             | Programme Director       |
| Charles Boti               |                                  | Regional WOP coordinator |
| Judith Tembo               | Blantyre Water Board, Malawi     | Mentee                   |
| Joel Chigoneka             |                                  |                          |
| Andrew Masiye              |                                  |                          |
| Habtamu Fanta              | WSWSSSE, Sodo Town, Ethiopia     | Mentee                   |
| Desta Muse                 |                                  |                          |
| Teddy Gounden              | e-Thekwini, Durban, South Africa | Mentor                   |
| Ashan Nandlal              |                                  |                          |
| <b>ASIA</b>                |                                  |                          |
| Mai Flor                   | WaterLinks                       | Executive Director       |
| Yolanda Gomez              |                                  | Regional WOP coordinator |
| Rana Chowdhury             | CWASA Chittagong, Bangladesh     | Mentee                   |
| Hosain Ali                 |                                  |                          |
| Mohamed Abdullah           | KWASA, Khulna, Bangladesh        | Mentee                   |
| Rezaul Islam               |                                  |                          |
| Le Hoa                     | DAWACO, Danang, Vietnam          | Mentee                   |
| Dang Nguyen Hoai Nhi       |                                  |                          |
| Hoang Thi My Dung          |                                  |                          |
| Le Thi Hong Van            |                                  |                          |
| Ong Van My                 |                                  |                          |
| Ho Thang Thong             |                                  |                          |
| Marven Katamsi             | Kota Surabaya, Indonesia         | Mentor                   |
| Alvin Papatia              |                                  |                          |
| Devona Chadrawaty          |                                  |                          |
| Ananthula Mahendra         | Suez India                       | Mentor                   |
| Chandra Ballabh            |                                  |                          |
| Sandeep Mahajan            |                                  |                          |
| Vasant. Joshi              |                                  |                          |
| Conrad Fernandez           |                                  |                          |
| Noriel Catipon             | Manila Water, the Philippines    | Mentor                   |
| Joe Jit Velasquez          |                                  |                          |
| <b>DONOR ORGANIZATIONS</b> |                                  |                          |
| Musab Alomar               | OFID                             | Donor                    |
| Anne Bousquet              | GWOPA/UN-Habitat                 | Implementer              |
| Elisa Bernal               |                                  |                          |
| Craig Laird                |                                  |                          |
| Maria Martinez             |                                  |                          |

## II. Introduction and regional overview

First the participants were welcomed by Anne Bousquet, GWOPA Programme Officer, who spell out some house rules for the online workshop and gave a short background on the SIP WOP program. The SIP WOP program is funded by the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID), it gathers 5 mentee utilities from Asia and Africa, with 4 mentors from the same regions. The program started with the kick-off workshop in Barcelona in June 2019, which was the last time all the teams met together. At that time, some mentors haven't been identified yet. Therefore, this online workshop was the first time too that all the teams met and exchanged. Focal points and other colleagues from each WOP team joined, as well as the coordinators from the Africa Water Association (AfWA) and WaterLinks; Those organizations are responsible for the project coordination on the ground.

After several months of Covid 19 pandemic, resulting in both local lockdowns and international travel bans, it was time for an intermediary assessment on the progress made on the ground, and for exchanges between the teams on the challenges and solutions that have emerged from the practice.

Musab Alomar, Public Sector Operations Officer, confirmed his organization's support to the program, OFID's dedication to help water and sanitation utilities in their efforts to attain the SDGs, together with UN-Habitat and GWOPA. He wishes all to keep safe during those hard times and to have a fruitful workshop.

There was then an overview of the regional updates from the regional coordinators.

First Simeon Kenfack, AfWA's Head of Programs, and Charles Boti, Africa WOP coordinator, presented the situation for the 2 WOPs coordinated by the Association. In Africa, there have been 3 visits on the ground done before the travel ban, the launching of the project both in Sodo Town, Ethiopia, and in Blantyre Malawi, the joint exposure visit at the mentor's premises at e-Thekwini, Durban, South Africa, and the 2 diagnosis visits at the mentees'.

The activities that were supposed to take place afterwards in March-April 2020 - training session on the 3 selected working areas for the implementation of STAPs and on-the-job training at the mentors' facilities- have not been replaced by online activities and have been postponed. Very little progress has been made on the ground since March for various reasons, which are explained later on in the workshop by the team leaders.

AfWA is now proposing to adapt some of the activities to be delivered online: WOP training of the 2 mentee teams on Project Proposal Writing, with a recruitment of a consultant and the actual writing of the pilot projects.

The other activities which have to take place on the ground are pending.

Mai Flor, Waterlinks' Executive Director, presented the situation for the 3 WOPs in Asia that she is coordinating with Yolanda Gomez.

Luckily, for Danang, Vietnam, mentored by Manila Water, from the Philippines, the diagnosis visit, as well as the exposure visit in Manila could take place, before the pandemic. There was a neighbouring utility from Vietnam which also joined at their own cost, with the agreement of the mentor. This contributed to extend the reach of the WOP program beyond the utilities that

were selected originally. It shows also that there is interest in Vietnam for future potential WOPs. From Danang, 9 staff members joined, though the program only sponsored 5 of them, the other 4 were sponsored by the mentee itself, showing a high level of commitment and ownership of the program. This is the most advanced WOP, with all activities on track, despite travel restrictions. Over the 4 working areas (Customer Service, NRW reduction, Asset Management, HR development), all their activities planned on customer care will be completed by December 2020. An important number of online meetings, workshops, exchanges and training events happened since March, which allowed the mentee to make significant progress in the implementation of its Short-Term Action Plan (see the presentation in Annex). Another success factor for this WOP is that both the mentor and the mentee split into several teams, each specific to one working area. This allows for better and more focused technical exchanges as well as a better workload allocation between the teams and less mentor 'fatigue'. Also, the lockdown both in Vietnam was not very strict and the operations of the utility continued almost at a normal pace.

The other WOP between Khulna, Bangladesh and Kota Surabaya, Indonesia, has also progressed well. There are only 2 working areas, NRW reduction and Customer Accounts Management. This is an interesting example where a local mentor has graduated to become a regional mentor, since previously Kota Surabaya had only mentored other Indonesian utilities. Fortunately for those 2 WOPs, the language barrier was overcome thanks to an extensive use of translators and also because a good number of staff is able to communicate in English.

In Bangladesh, the lockdown has been quite strict and most of the staff had to stay home, which was an obstacle to the implementation of the STAP in terms of field work. Unfortunately, the mentee visit to the mentor could not happen before the travel bans were imposed. Despite those obstacles, the project progressed quite well, and one must acknowledge the personal involvement of the MD of Khulna WASA, who attended almost all the numerous online sessions etc., as another success factor for this WOP.

The third WOP is between Chittagong, Bangladesh and Suez India. Even though both the diagnosis and the exposure visit could take place before the Pandemic, this WOP has made very little progress, due in part to lack of Leadership. There were 5 working areas selected (DMA establishment, NRW management, Customer Service, Billing and Collection, IT/GIS) but Waterlinks is asking the mentee to rethink its priorities and reduce the number of working areas for the future activities, in order to compensate the delay in the implementation of the STAP.

### III. Updates from the projects

#### Updates from the WOP teams

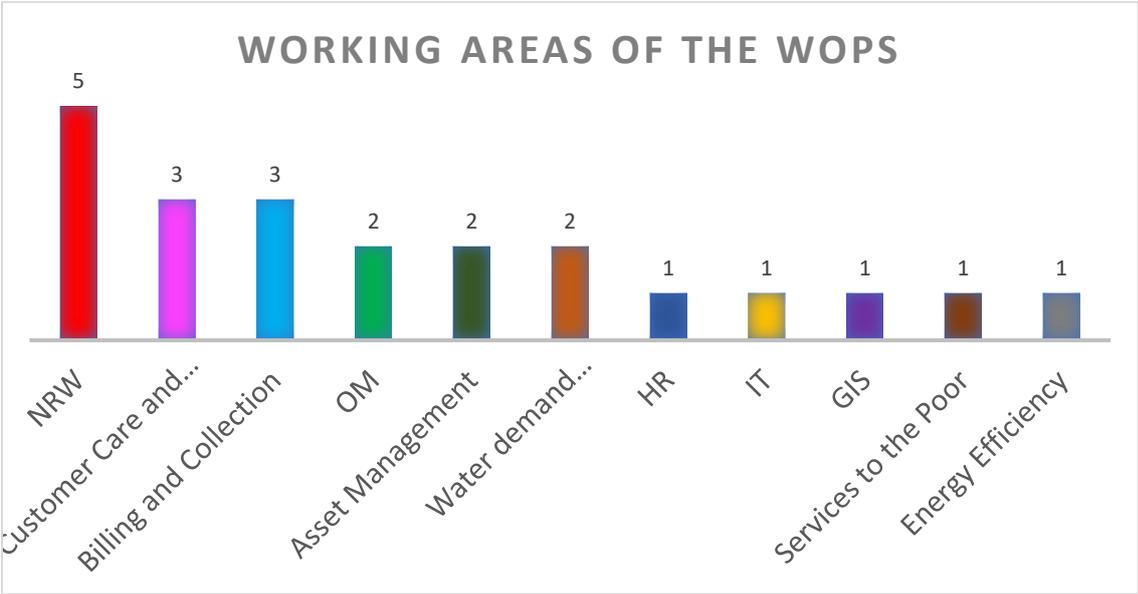
Each team leader from the mentee teams was then invited to make a short presentation on the progress made since March 2020. For each presentation, an overview of the Short Term Action Plan was given, including the Working Areas (WA) selected and the measures recommended, the dates of the field visits and the list of online activities which took place, as well as the

actions implemented on the ground. All the presentations are attached to the report as Annexes. Please see below the working areas selected for each team.

Working areas of the WOPs

|                           | Sodo Town | Blantyre | DaNang | Chittagong | Khulna |   |
|---------------------------|-----------|----------|--------|------------|--------|---|
|                           | Africa    |          | Asia   |            |        |   |
| HR                        |           |          | X      |            |        | 1 |
| Customer Care and service |           | X        | X      | X          |        | 3 |
| NRW                       | X         | X        | X      | X          | X      | 5 |
| IT                        |           | X        |        |            |        | 1 |
| OM                        | X         | X        |        |            |        | 2 |
| GIS                       |           |          |        | X          |        | 1 |
| Services to the Poor      | X         |          |        |            |        | 1 |
| Billing and Collection    |           | X        |        | X          | X      | 3 |
| Asset Management          |           |          | X      |            |        | 2 |
| Energy Efficiency         |           | X        |        |            |        | 1 |
| Water demand management   |           | X        |        | X          |        | 2 |
|                           | 3         | 7        | 4      | 5          | 2      |   |

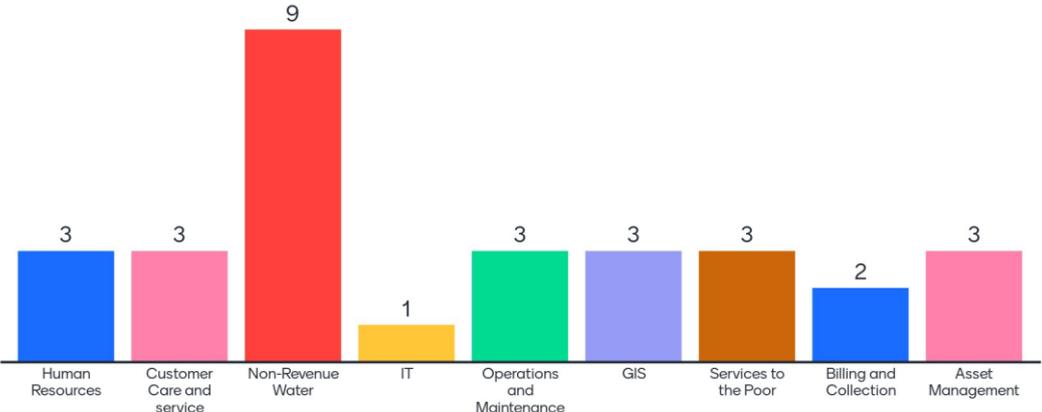
The average number of working areas for the WOPs in this program is 4.



NRW is the most chosen WA, followed by Customer Care and Service and Billing and Collection. The third important themes are OM, Asset management and Water Demand Management. The other themes were only selected once: HR, IT, GIS, Asset Management, Services to the Poor and Energy Efficiency. GIS, HR, and AM have been selected only in Asia, while service to the Poor, Energy Efficiency, OM have only been selected by the African mentees. The common WA between Africa and Asia are NRW, Customer Care and Service, Billing and Collection and Water Demand Management

After the presentations, GWOPA launched an online poll. The participants were asked about the working area that interest them the most for a dedicated interregional technical session or workshop.

**Which theme(s) require(s) a specific session.** Mentimeter



The majority of the respondents choose NRW, which is also the only common theme between all the teams, from Asia and Africa. GWOPA will propose an online workshop on this specific working area later on in the program.

During the Q&A session that followed, Mai Flor from Waterlinks asked Judith Tembo from BWB (Malawi) how they managed to do so much work on the ground in the past months and how they were assisted in that case by their mentor e-Thekwini, knowing that travels were banned between those two countries. In Asia, the field work itself, like the installation of some equipment, had to be postponed until the mentors are able to travel again. For Blantyre the equipment was already available, and the installation had started before the crisis. As it was crucial for the NRW reduction plan, it was prioritized. The mentor e-Thekwini managed to maintain some exchanges, even though there was no training or capacity building online activity organized. Also, lots of technical discussions had already taken place during the diagnosis and the exposure visit, equipping the team with sufficient knowledge to start some implementation on their own. This shows that the initial field visits are key in the sustainability of the project, provided that the key staff from the mentee is carefully selected for the exposure visit notably, if travel remain difficult afterwards. Teddy Gounden from e-Thekwini also confirmed the efficiency of splitting the teams both from the mentor and the mentee sides, as it was done for the WOP Danang-Manila. Despite the fact that e-Thekwini also provided a lot of written material and recommendations, the difficulty results from the interpretation and implementation

on the field, which is of course much easier and straight forward when the mentor can be present physically. Teddy Gounden added that another major obstacle in the implementation of the projects is the lack of adequate staffing within the mentee utilities in general, including sketchy post descriptions. Human Resources management should almost systematically be included in the working areas of all WOPs. Ashan Nandlal, the other expert from the e-Thekwini mentor team, thanked the organizers and commented that this workshop was very inspiring for mentors too, who can learn from colleagues from Asia on how to improve their own practice. He added that for both African mentees, Sodo Town and Blantyre, they helped in redefining the priorities during the travel ban by focusing on the working areas of the Short-Term action plans where the mentees could make progress by themselves. Blantyre managed better also because they have a well-staffed customer care service. He confirmed the importance of Human Resource and the necessity to have clarity of the organogram of the mentee utility and fill out the HR gaps. Transfer of knowledge and capacity building can only be successful if the staffing is adequate.

To the question asked by GWOPA about an extension of the duration of the programme, the response was unanimous, and all requested an extension of several months. GWOPA will inform the donor OFID accordingly and will come back to the regional coordinators on that matter. Since March 2020, there should have been an average of 2 to 3 visits done by the mentor to the mentee, which did not take place. It will be requested from the teams to revisit their initial plan regarding the visits; as some activities took place online instead of on the field and it may be possible to cancel some of them; When the teams will have more clarity on the travel bans and will be able to plan for visits, they will be requested to provide a reviewed calendar of visits.

The discussion then shifted to the pilot projects on the field. Two Asian mentees, Danang and Khulna have already started defining their pilot projects and procurement needs, as there is a budget of 50,000USD available for those for each team (including management fees and other administrative costs).

For both mentees, the pilot projects are focused on pilot zones already identified, where the implementation of the STAP on different working areas will be concentrated, and they are purchasing both equipment and software.

In Danang, the mentee is looking to purchase Leak Detection equipment and a software for HR management, upon recommendations from the mentor. In Khulna, the mentee will purchase equipment for DMA establishment, like pressure reduction valves, loggers and some Leak Detection equipment, as well as a meter reading app.

GWOPA suggested to mutualize the e training between the two mentees as they are looking for the same type of equipment.

After the discussion, another poll was launched to test the interest of the team for having more details and information on one or several projects.

# More details on which WOP/projects?



The most ‘popular’ WOPS were Blantyre/e-Thekwini and Khulna/Kota Surabaya but others were also deemed interesting for the teams; GWOPA decided that more information and details on at least 4 WOPs out of 5 will be shared, especially during the next workshop on NRW.

## An example of good mentoring practice and swift adaptation to travel ban

In addition to the teams’ presentations, Manila Water, the Philippines, the mentor operator for Danang, Vietnam (DAWACO) shared their experience on mentoring in times of Covid 19. GWOPA and Waterlinks identified this example to showcase good practices for mentoring in times of Covid 19 and travel ban. The success of this WOP is also due to the good capacity of absorption and the resilience of the mentee DAWACO, in addition to the fact that Vietnam was less affected by the Pandemic compared to other countries and staff were able to work almost as usual, notably to go to the office and intermittently on the field.

Joejit Velazquez, Corporate, Strategy, Overseas Development Head at Manila Water, explained that they have been able to make good progress in the different working areas of the WOP (Customer Service, NRW, Asset Management, HR) despite their own difficulties in the Philippines. He shared how they strategize their involvement as mentors to make the best of the situation:

- For each working areas, Manila assigned a dedicated manager whose expertise is aligned with the working area, with other several staff from the mentor working as a team. Waterlinks helped them to reorganize the tasks as such. This means that they were able to continue the implementation of the project with different streams of work going on in parallel.
- Then the mentor and the mentee revisited the activities and agreed upon the next steps and re-prioritizing the action plan. They scrutinized all the activities planned and gauged if they were still doable during the pandemic, given the constraints on travels and the restrictions within the mentees’ countries. The different dedicated teams met separately and develop the revised working areas’ action plans. Some activities were totally suspended because they were deemed not to be responsive to the needs of the mentee

under the current circumstances and the teams decided to focus on the essential. For example, under the HR STAP there was a plan to automate the HR processes, with the purchase of a software, but they decided to postpone this step as they realized that there was a need first to assure that for all the positions the ToRs were well defined and the data was cleaned.

- All made an effort to adapt to online communications media to keep the channel of exchanges open. The mentor praised particularly Waterlinks for their role as facilitator, for making this happening by ‘pushing’ the mentee to collaborate fully, scheduling the e-meetings and workshops etc. and by helping in the revision of the plans. The mentors alone can not do this work of coordination, because even in normal times the staff are busy with their own responsibilities, and even more so during the pandemic. Constant communications, openness, follow-up, facilitated by Waterlinks, have really created a strong working relationship with the mentee.
- The mentor also adapted the trainings that were supposed to take place on the ground, either at the mentor’s or at the mentee’s premises, to be provided remotely through webinars. For example for NRW management, a virtual workshop was organized, attended by GWOPA, at the end of March, to decide on the re-prioritization of the STAP and mapping out of the activities, followed by regular follow-up workshops to take stock of the progress made (one per month). In September, an online training was provided on Zero Pressure Test.

During the QA session that followed, GWOPA asked about the feasibility of converting on-the-job training to remote training, such as the Zero Pressure Test, that would require hands-on manipulations of equipment. Also, GWOPA asked if the mentor had already training material available or had to work specifically on developing this material for online purposes. In that case, there was some apprehension from the mentor’s team but they decided to go ahead because the level of capacity of the mentee is quite high, and the mentor adapted their training material for online purposes. The training was a success because Danang had already conducted Zero Pressure Test and the mentee just needed more guidance to improve their practice. Actually DAWACO will only attempt the Test in November by themselves and the Test will be repeated with the mentor on the field as soon as travels are allowed.

GWOPA suggested to mutualize the training material between the teams, not only in Asia, but also with Africa. Waterlinks will reflect on this possibility with the mentors, who are the ultimate ‘owners’ of the material.

Teddy Gounden seconded this suggestion of sharing material and urge AfWA to replicate some of the good practice shared during the workshop and start reorganizing the projects.

Ashan Nandlal suggested also that technical training on common fields of interest could be delivered and good practices from each team documented and shared.

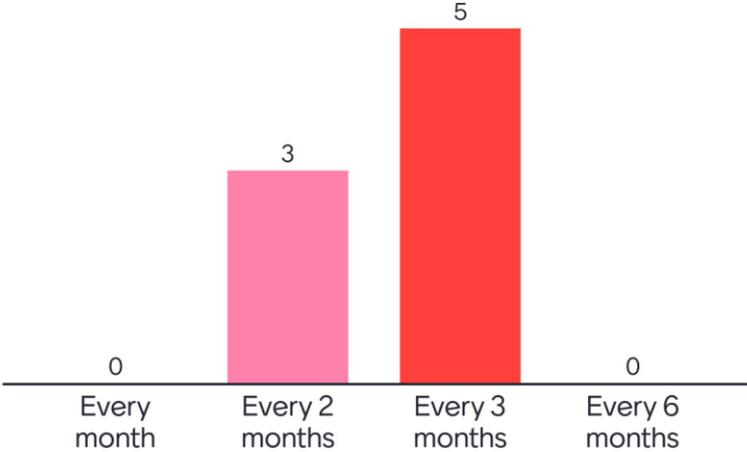
GWOPA took good note of this suggestion and replied that there will be at least a training module delivered on NRW, with some good practice examples and hopefully some training material shared by the teams as well. GWOPA will meet with AfWA and Waterlinks to organize this.

The last poll about the frequency of interregional workshops was then launched. GWOPA mentioned that this referred to different formats of workshop (not having all the teams

presenting but rather focusing on specific technical working areas, pilot projects, highlight on good practices etc).

## Frequency of interregional workshops

Mentimeter



It was therefore decided that there will be interregional workshops organized every 2.5 months.

### Boosting internal and external communications for the WOP program

The last part of the workshop was dedicated to communications needs with an intervention with Elisa Bernal, communications consultant for GWOPA (see presentation in Annex).

The idea was to reflect on how to boost the internal and external communications for the WOP program, using some examples from another important WOP program going on, where GWOPA is involved, which is the WaterWorX program with Dutch mentors (10 Dutch water operators and local water operators in Africa, Asia and South America, see <https://gwopa.org/what-we-do/projects/waterworx/>)

GWOPA proposed to have regular updates of the projects published and disseminated through our various social media channels in a more systematic manner than it has been done so far; GWOPA will develop a communications strategy, including also the dynamization of internal communications at the interregional but also at the regional and team levels, and will discuss its implementation with the two co-implementers, Waterlinks and AfWA.

## IV. Conclusion

The workshop was a good opportunity to reconnect and maintain or regain momentum for some of the projects and was appreciated by all participants as such. The messages were positive about the willingness and the renewed interest for making those WOPs successes. As one of the participants pointed out, the fact that no utility partner has dropped out until now is itself a good marker of success. Lessons learned, especially from Asia, showed that the concept of

WOPs remains valid and operational even through difficult times and travel bans, provided that a few conditions are met. It highlighted the crucial role played by the facilitators at regional level, in dynamizing, organizing, boosting the exchanges within the WOP teams and maintaining the mentors’ and mentees’ motivation. The shared experiences showed that still the initial visits were crucial in allowing the possibility of remote mentoring as well as the motivation of the mentee teams and their capacity of implementation on the ground. Of course, availability of the necessary tools to do so (good internet connection, sufficient IT equipment) is a vital condition for remote WOPs. A re-prioritization of the action plans is also necessary. Beyond this, the example of the WOP between Manila Water and Danang showed that there is still room for improvement in other WOPs for a reorganization of the implementation modalities, such as splitting into teams.

Clear steps were identified for the way forward for the programme, including for GWOPA in its global coordination and support to interregional cross-fertilization roles.

- Organization of the next interregional workshop on NRW in collaboration with Waterlinks and AfWA, at the end of January 2021
- Revision of the Short Term Action Plans for the 2 mentees in Africa
- Revision of the Short Term Action Plan for Chittagong
- Systematization of the communications efforts, both internally and externally, led by GWOPA with inputs from all teams and co-implementers, including sharing documentation on some of the selected WOPs (specific focus on Blantyre, Malawi).



Implementation of the component ‘Services to the Poor’ of Sodo Town’s short-term action plan: Poor households provided with water supply free of connection cost. Ethiopia