

CREATION OF A REGIONAL PLATFORM FOR BEST PRACTICE AND ADVOCACY IN THE CARIBBEAN WATER SECTOR AND CONSOLIDATION OF THE CARIBBEAN WATER OPERATORS PARTNERSHIPS (CARIWOPs) ALLIANCE

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Abstract

UN-HABITAT is promoting the creation of a Regional Platform for Best Practice and Advocacy in the Caribbean Water Sector and the consolidation of the Caribbean Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance (CariWOPs), which is part of the Global Water Operators' Partnership Alliance (GWOPA). A proposal has been drafted to raise funds for the 5-year programme that aims at giving Caribbean water utilities sustained means to underpin and lever their ongoing efforts to improve governance, institutional capacity, financing and public outreach. The programme will be implemented by the Caribbean Water and Sewerage Association (CAWASA), the Caribbean Water and Wastewater Association (CWWA) and the Spanish Association of Public Water and Wastewater Operators (AEOPAS) and will be co-financed by UN-HABITAT, the Inter-American Development Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank. This paper presents the principles and components of the proposal.

Introduction

The Caribbean region has levels of improved access to water varying from 45 and 100 per cent of the population (World Bank), although the definition of "improved" –it includes standpipes and rainwater catchment tanks– implies that the actual proportion of the population with direct, continuing and safe access to water is actually less. Equitable access to water is not often guaranteed, nor is it uncommon for peripheral areas to be deprived of the continuous service enjoyed in towns. In the suburbs particularly, those who live in the disadvantaged areas pay the highest price for their water supply, as it is provided by private companies which can be unscrupulous or may be experiencing difficulties. The combination of leakage, illegal connections, under-billing (in excess of 50 per cent) and inadequate investment in infrastructure –mainly due to governance weaknesses and insufficient presence in the political agenda– often results in intermittent supply, low pressure and poor drinking water quality, at least at certain times of the year and locations. Sanitation coverage is much less extensive than that of water supply, and wastewater is often inadequately or not treated prior to discharge. In general, water tariffs in the region barely cover or are even below operating costs. Financing the sector exclusively through tariffs –without any contributions from the State budget– conflicts with governments' political interests.

Adequate capacity in the Caribbean water & sanitation sector is one of the critical missing factors in current efforts to meet the MDGs, as recognised in reports by the Joint Monitoring Protocol, which tracks progress on the MDGs. However, while there are significant weaknesses in utility performance and service to the poor in some areas, there are also many exemplary practices being implemented by utilities that can be exchanged and transferred by partnering. The aim of partnerships is to transfer expertise, knowledge and learning from water & sanitation utilities, local authorities and other water sector organisations to their counterparts. This is the fundamental basis of water operator's partnerships (WOPs).

The UN Secretary General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB) formally launched the Global WOPs Alliance (GWOPA) in August 2007. GWOPA is a worldwide initiative led by UN-HABITAT that advances the North-South and South-South twinning and partnering of water operators with the objective of sharing the experience and know-how required to ensure they provide the poor with sustainable access to improved water and sanitation services. The Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance for Latin America and the Caribbean (WOP-LAC) was launched in Santa Marta (Colombia) in September 2007. Twenty months later, recognising the specific characteristics and needs of the Caribbean sub-region in the American continent, representatives from water utilities of thirteen Caribbean countries met on May 18th, 2009 in Georgetown, Guyana in a meeting convened by GWOPA, the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), CWWA, CBWMP and the International Water Association (IWA), and the Caribbean platform of WOPs was initiated.

UN-HABITAT is seeking supporting partners to co-finance the initiative, along with the IADB and the CDB. The realisation of the programme will provide funding for partnership projects (North-South and South-South) to develop capacity in the water & sanitation sector, leading to better water and sanitation governance and management, and to the sustainable development and maintenance of infrastructure. This, in turn, will facilitate the social, environmental and economic sustainability of the provision of water services across the Caribbean.

Results and Discussion

The proposal describes the "programme" –set of initiatives and activities– for which partial funding is requested and it provides evidence that: i) The proposal is adequate to the objectives and principles of the WOPs; ii) the activities can be monitored and their outcome measured and verified; and iii) the action can be managed diligently with the proposed resources. The programme is to be implemented by CBWMP, a long-established organisation in the management and building of capacity, effectively in the name of the CariWOP alliance, with the assistance AEOPAS. The performance improvements will benefit all water stakeholders –users, suppliers, operators and oversight agencies. These groups are represented by CWWA –the beneficiary and by associates. The supporting (and co-

financing) partners are UNHABITAT, the IADB and the CDB. The action also counts in a solid group of non-utility, non-state actors as associates, as depicted in Figure 1.

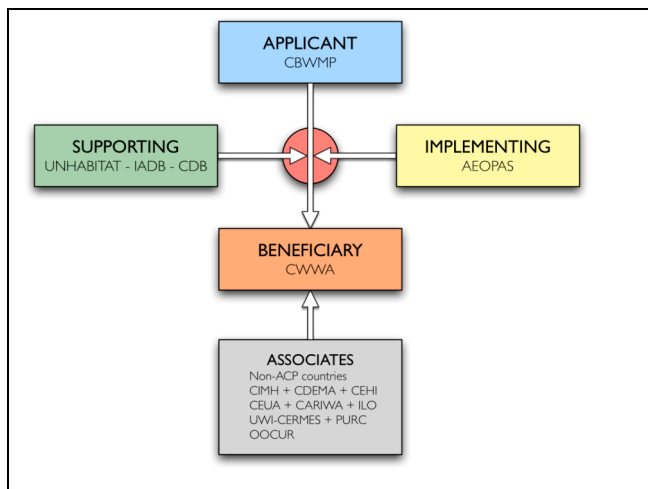


Figure 1. Stakeholder Structure

The action comprises eleven distinct activities, whose strands of development, mechanisms and expected achievements are summarised in the following figure:

STRAND OF DEVELOPMENT	DESCRIPTION OF TASKS AND INSTRUMENTS	EXPECTED ACHIEVEMENT
(A) Development of the CBWMP/CWWA partnership into a Regional Platform for Best Practice and Advocacy in the Water Sector	A1. Independent 'State of the sector' yearly review	-Credible advocacy -Reference policy paper
	A2. Develop a 3-year twinning and partnership plan	-3-year partnership plan -Cooperation agreements -PIPs -Contribution to the MDGs
	A3. Implement a risk-based asset management system (RAMS) at 1 small-medium operator	-Creation of a pilot RAMS model for replication.
	A4. Organise specific training	-Access to funds -Water savings -Increase in tariff revenue -Lesser staff turnover rates -Best practice guides -From aspiration to habit
	A5. PQ and CPD structures. Regional Chapter of AWWA.	-Professional certification -Certification of employers -CPD system
(B) Consolidation of CariWOPs	B1. Strategic consultation to unify representation	-Co-ordination of efforts.
	B2. Interact regionally with international platforms	-Access to expert exchange or expertise/skill transfer
	B3. Commission for liaison with CARICOM	-Representation
(C) Cross-strand initiatives (they act across and in favour of the previous two strands)	C1. Communication platform	-Transparency, accessibility and visibility
	C2. Public Outreach Platform	-Marketing tool -Public awareness
	C3. Partners Networking Forum	One-stop gathering

Figure 2. Elements of the Action

The action is to be implemented throughout a 5-year programme with a total budget of EUR 1.5 million approximately, as depicted in the following figure.

Description	Task	YEARS					Cost (Euro)
		1	2	3	4	5	
Start-up and internal resourcing							45.000
State of the sector review and update	A1						40.000
Performance Improvement Plans	A2						90.000
Risk-Based Asset Management System	A3						140.000
Specific capacity training	A4						160.000
Professional Qualif and CPD institutionalisation	A5						55.000
Unification of representation	B1						40.000
Twinning & Partnering	A2/B2						225.000
Political Liasion Commission	B3						60.000
Web 2.0	C1						165.000
Public Outreach Desk	C2						110.000
Partners Networking Forum	C3						350.000
TOTAL EUROS:						1.480.000	

Figure 3. Implementation Programme

References

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