

CRYSTAL CLEAR

The BPD Water and Sanitation Cluster Newsletter

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We would like to extend a welcome to a new focus project that recently has been included in the BPD Water and Sanitation Cluster activities – the Dakar Project in Sénégal. We will provide more information on the Dakar project in future issues.

In this issue, we begin to look at some of the research activities being conducted by colleagues in other institutions. Our primary interests include partnership issues, private sector involvement in the water and sanitation sector, ways of reaching the poor, and community participation in service delivery. We encourage other organisations engaging in similar research to get in touch.



We highlight the La Paz-El Alto project in Bolivia. The project is unique in the BPD network in that through the promotion of the condominal sewer network, the focus on sanitation within the partnership is equal to the emphasis placed on water supply.

We also report on the recent action learning visit which brought an international group of participants to two projects in South Africa.

The Focus Projects: Creating a Learning Environment



At present the Cluster works with eight projects to track the evolution of the partnership, understand its benefits (and constraints), and document the impact on poor communities. Working together with the projects involves efforts to share experience within the group. The number of projects will be kept purposely low in order to maximise this relationship among the stakeholders within the different projects. That said, we would be very keen to learn of other tri-sector experiences in the water and sanitation sector.

We recognise that these partnerships are dynamic - a longer term view is thereby needed to understand how the partnership is working. Viewing the relationships at any given time may not reflect where the partnership was a few months ago nor where it is headed. Any number of factors could help or hinder the process: changes to individuals involved in the partnership,

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national legislation or elections, changes at the community level, changes to the regulatory framework, economic workings, or even international financial markets could impact on the partnerships.

Our work is not about comparing the projects, their progress and outcomes. Lesson learning results from sharing information and understanding why decisions have been taken – establishing those factors that are important for an approach to work across locations. The sharing of information will continue to be facilitated through workshops, action learning programmes, e-mail group discussion, and other mechanisms.

Tri-sector relationships undergo a constant process of internal dialogue and debate. These eight projects have taken the further step of opening their debates to a larger audience (i.e. their peers from other projects). These are not simple projects, but set in complex local and national contexts. The corporate, public and civil society partners have an enormous stake in the success of these efforts: money, reputation, and impact are all on the table.

Admitting that you don't have all the answers requires enormous courage. We would ask that you recognise the integrity of these multinational and national companies, public sector entities, and local civil society groups in putting these projects forward as part of the learning exercise.

Recently at the World Water Forum, there was significant talk about the need to involve the three sectors more effectively in decisions made with regard to water and sanitation services. These eight projects serve as real, living, breathing examples of people and institutions trying to make that happen.

Rounding the Corners of the Triangle

Within the water and sanitation sector, defining the stakeholders in triangular fashion is becoming increasingly inappropriate. Often the boundaries between one sector and another are blurred. Public sector actors can include regulators, national and regional level ministries and departments, and municipal stakeholders. These stakeholders derive their mandate and function from the governing of (and providing for) civil society. At the local level, municipalities advocate on behalf of the communities they serve on the regional or national stage. Similarly, at the neighbourhood level, councilors advocate to the municipality on behalf of the communities they serve. In one of the focus projects (La Paz-El Alto), even the role of the regulator has a "civil society" component – the Superintendencia de Aguas manages a consumer help desk with an open-door policy for members of

the community to register their concerns and complaints directly to the regulator's office.

Similarly, the private sector is far from being a single entity. Definitions of the private sector must also incorporate private vendors, small subcontractor construction and design firms, and the major concessionaire, lease or management contractors.

Perhaps the role of the NGO as a subset of civil society is the most difficult to define. On a superficial level, defining civil society's role is fairly straightforward: its task is to ensure the well-being of the community. NGOs are not a homogenous group; they serve as intermediaries rather than representatives and their skills and capacities are more loosely defined than the other sectors'. While the other sectors have clear mandates and priorities within the partnerships, the NGO sector must usually work the hardest to define its scope, understand its boundaries and limitations, and manage its risk of losing the moral high ground on which its reputation is staked.

A private and public sector misconception is that NGOs speak for the communities with which they work. Though helping to provide a voice for poor communities, each of the NGOs with which the Cluster works states emphatically that they do not speak "for" the community.

The public and private sectors are recognising the critical role,

however ill-defined, that NGOs can play at the community level. The private sector understands that its niche is not in dialogue with communities but rather in the provision of services, and seeks out partnerships with NGOs to work with communities. Increasingly, NGOs are being used as a shield to assist the other sectors in conducting their business. This can compromise the NGOs, and countless international and local NGOs are struggling with decisions surrounding how active they should be with the private and public sectors. Partnerships that bring services into communities, however, can also greatly improve the legitimacy of NGOs.

But civil society is not just represented by formal NGO structures in BPD. In some projects, the public and private sectors work with community-based organisations (CBOs) such as neighbourhood associations, women's groups, or other locally focused organisations. This allows the public and private sectors to forge direct links to the communities and with community leaders. Here the concern is the degree to which power structures within CBOs represent the whole society, including the most disadvantaged households and individuals. Such community groups may lack the co-ordination and capacity to articulate their ideas, desires and needs clearly or the wherewithal to weigh the possible options available. Similarly, from a replication point

of view, community associations are not likely to work with other communities to replicate a project (unless perhaps with communities that are upstream).

Again for the BPD, the strength of the different localised approaches and the complexity of the relationships should provide valuable lessons.

Under Scrutiny: The Need for Research on Water and Sanitation

Water and sanitation provision know-how is constantly enhanced by the valuable contributions made by individual researchers and

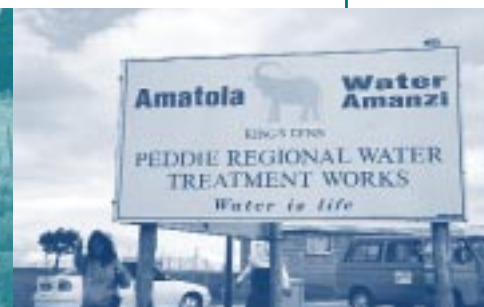


institutions. In this issue, we attempt to highlight some of the works in progress of colleagues in other institutions. In future issues, we will expand this further and encompass more of our partners' research activities.

Unpacking complex situations, deconstructing assumptions and highlighting misconceptions that may have shaped certain positions play an important role in the development of water and sanitation

services. One study along this line is the research starting in April 2000 by Dr Lyla Mehta of the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK.

Dr Mehta's work is entitled "Water and Trade: Rights, Poverty, and the Environment." She points out that global statements and visions concerning water "tend to have a normative and prescriptive character, containing scenarios of best practice and of the worst possible outcomes." Mehta seeks to go beyond the normative character of the various global statements and "raise questions concerning their underlying assumptions, possible outcomes and highlight what they are obscuring."



Mehta's research will investigate two key areas: how to ensure that trading in water and the liberalisation of water-related services will not compromise the needs and rights of the poor to basic water provision, and that international negotiations on these issues do not neglect existing commitments to protect global water resources or compromise on issues concerning poverty-reduction and trans-boundary environmental effects.

Another investigation that expands the choices in the global water debate is the study on "Partnerships and Social Privatisation" being developed by the International Secretariat for Water (ISW) in Montreal, Canada (contact info@i-s-w.org). The ISW organised a workshop in November 1999 where case studies on the social privatisation approach were presented. Under this approach, which is being tested in low-income peri-urban areas, water users themselves own the service. Their organisation operates within the legal framework, and they themselves ensure that the economic viability of the business is addressed. Contracts define clearly the rights and obligations of the different parties, and priority is placed on investments in the capacity-building of the community.

A WaterAid statement at the recent World Water Forum in The Hague said that "de-emphasising the role of government in actual service provision is flawed and only achieves a further undermining of government capacity." The problem is that governments often face serious limitations in performing their roles. Another research effort investigates how to strengthen the capacity of municipal governments in harnessing private sector participation for poverty reduction. Funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DfID), the research is being undertaken by GHK International (see www.ghkint.com). GHK has tested

its research framework and is selecting case study locations in Southern Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia in collaboration with field offices of the United Nations Development Programme.

A research programme by the Water and Sanitation Programme-South Asia (WSP-SA) intends to show that if projects are properly designed, private sector involvement can address the needs of the poor. The research will document good practice in other parts of the world and investigate the prospects of how large-scale private sector participation can serve the poor of South Asia. It will address concerns on how private sector contracts and concessions should be designed, how service to the poor can become part of the regulatory framework, and how technological innovation and nonconventional methods can improve the service (contact Clarissa Brocklehurst at cbrocklehurst@worldbank.org). Also see Upcoming Events, the Public-Private Infrastructure Advisory Facility (PPIAF) conference scheduled for late May).

Technological innovations potentially reduce costs of water and sanitation provision in poor and water-starved communities. In Durban, South Africa, an effort is now underway to address this challenge. The goal is to develop a low-cost and easy-to-maintain technology for wastewater treatment in settlements where a centralised

wastewater collection system would not realistically be constructed in the near future. The Anaerobic Baffled Reactor will be tested to see how it can be introduced to communities and how it should be managed, and to assess its social and economic impacts. This project is a joint undertaking of the Pollution Research Group of the University of Natal, the Water Research Commission, and Vivendi (contact Maggie Bourbigot at maggie.bourbigot@generale-des-eaux.net).

The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs has come out with its research-action programme on urban sanitation (wastewater and solid waste) management in developing countries. These research activities will analyse and compare current experiences, elaborate methods for sustainable management, and address issues that are still insufficiently dealt with by the current knowledge. Pilot activities will be implemented to test new ways of action and analyse constraints and possibilities. A call for proposals will be circulated in June to select research and pilot activities. (Contact Christophe Le Jalle at [Programme Solidarité Eau le-jalle@gret.org](mailto:le-jalle@gret.org) on wastewater or Claude Baehrel at [Municipal Development Programme-Bénin pdm@intnet.bj](mailto:pdm@intnet.bj) on solid waste).

(Synthesised by Eric Gutierrez)

Partnering for Improved Sanitation Conditions in El Alto and La Paz

Is it possible to provide water and sanitation to low-income areas in a sustainable way? The experience of the Peri-urban Initiative for Water and Sanitation- IPAS¹ suggests that the answer is yes.

Since August 1997, Aguas del Illimani has been operating the concession of La Paz and El Alto. Together they form a metropolitan area of approximately 1,500,000 inhabitants. Due to its demographic composition, El Alto is one of the poorest cities in Bolivia. Close to 73% of the population live under the poverty line; 56% are rural immigrants from other regions in Bolivia who maintain their cultural practices including with regard to basic sanitation. Although La Paz has a better social situation, its slopes are inhabited by people of similar backgrounds to those of El Alto.

Near the beginning of the concession, Aguas del Illimani initiated a partnership with the Water and Sanitation Programme and the Vice-Ministry of Basic Services, both of which were investigating new techniques for the provision of services to low-income urban areas in Bolivia.

¹ A joint project between Aguas del Illimani, the Water and Sanitation Program, the Bolivian Vice-Ministry of Basic Services, and the Swedish International Development Agency.

After initial surveys and research, emphasis has been placed on the condominial system mainly due to its community-focused approach and reduced cost, which ensure a better coverage of services with the same level of investment.

While at the conceptual level the partnership worked well, at the implementation level some obstacles arose mainly from the communities that were to benefit from the system. This opposition was due largely to the initial decision to install the system in residents' yards. Of the three pilot areas selected, over half of the resident population abandoned the project. With the initial goal of the



project to connect 1,000 families, only 400 were actually connected after months of delays.

By the time the second stage was implemented, the lessons had been learnt and Aguas del Illimani began offering an alternative solution in which pipes would be laid in the sidewalk and not the yards. The choice between the two options was to be made by the residents themselves. This change of approach significantly improved implementation by eliminating opposition to having pipes laid

through yards, which removed the perception of the system as a second-class option and, consequently, facilitated faster construction of the system. From September 1999 to February 2000, an additional 1,000 families in four neighbourhoods were connected.

Aguas del Illimani has since introduced the condominial system in two other neighbourhoods, increasing the number of families connected to the system to 2,500. In addition to the six neighborhoods served by the condominial system inside the framework of the IPAS, Aguas del Illimani has two more in El Alto in a partnership with a governmental development agency called FNDR



(National Fund for Regional Development). Although most of the systems are relatively new, the initial results are very encouraging:

- Water consumption (a key problem for a city where the population consumes an average of 45 litres/person/day) has increased 60% from 5 to 8m³.
- Coverage of households with sanitary installations (toilet, shower, sink, etc.) is close to 50% compared to 25% in neighbourhoods with traditional connections.

- While condominal water systems cost an average of 10% less than conventional ones, condominal sewerage systems are between 40 - 55% less expensive.

The institutional framework built to carry out the project is also beginning to show some results, leading to the wider acceptance of the condominal system. All the players involved in the Technical Committee have committed themselves to changing engineering norms (e.g. pipe diameters, use of sidewalks) and all have realized the importance of social interventions as part of the provision of services. The projects schedule aims to have all the regulation in place by mid-2000.

(Article contributed by the projects partners)

Action Learning in South Africa

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Action learning visits promote awareness and in-depth understanding of partnerships for sustainable development. Participants from a number of projects meet to find common solutions to key challenges and gain insight into new ways of working. Three fundamental elements of any action learning visit suggest that they should:

- be based on real, first-hand experience and action

- draw on participants' own knowledge and experience
- rely on reflection and analysis

The BPD Water and Sanitation Cluster completed its second action learning visit building on the experiences from the initial visit to Buenos Aires in March 1999. This time, partnership practitioners from Indonesia, Argentina, and Sénégal joined representatives from the World Bank, the UK's Department for International Development (DfID), and the two projects in South Africa to examine innovative partnership approaches. The aim of the visit was to identify what works (and what doesn't) and to provide an opportunity to share learning among practitioners from different countries. The two projects under examination were the BoTT programme in sustainable water and wastewater services in underprivileged areas of the Eastern Cape and Northern Province, and the BPD programme of water services management in the suburbs of Durban and Pietermaritzburg.

Context

South Africa has a long and rich history of partnerships for development. One of the key challenges which post-apartheid South Africa faces is to translate the political miracle that brought about the peaceful transition to democracy into a similar economic achievement. South Africa needs

to grow and transform its economy to participate in the global market. To enable this, basic services must be provided, cutting through the deep-rooted imbalances that create pressure on local authorities. Since 1994, significant achievements in the provision of basic services have occurred. However, between 12 and 18 million people still are without safe and adequate water and between 17 and 21 million lack basic sanitation. Many of the key problems faced in water provision and sanitation in South Africa are mirrored in other developing or emerging economies. This challenge provided the basis for the study visit.

Objectives

The first study visit to Buenos Aires introduced the overall BPD theme: relationships among the private, public, and civil society sectors. This naturally was continued during the second visit, but the debate was deepened and relationships forged among the different projects. Specific objectives included: building a greater understanding of tri-sector partnership mechanisms and processes; sharing experiences on the role of the community in projects (Community Representation), willingness to pay and cost recovery issues, and education and awareness campaigns; and understanding mechanisms for replication and scale up to national and regional levels.

BoTT

First, participants met in East London to gain an understanding of the BoTT (Build, operate, Train, and Transfer) programme in South Africa's Eastern Cape and Northern Province. The project structure and objectives were explained by the partners (Amanz' abantu, Metsico, WSSA, Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, Mvula Trust). The project is ambitious in its scope, with a service area of approximately 2 million people in Eastern Cape alone. It aims to speed up the rate of development of sustainable water service contracts in primarily rural low-income areas. The service delivery problems in such areas clearly were understood by the participants, often from personal experience.

Any misunderstandings over the partnership approach and project concept were overcome as participants had the opportunity to visit sites and talk with local communities. Dialogue with steering committees, which allow real community participation in the decision-making process, highlighted the difficulties but also the successes of the project. During these discussions, the question of cost recovery and willingness to pay was raised, along with issues surrounding different levels of service.

Although the reasons for a culture of non-payment are very specific to South Africa, the problems of cost recovery are fairly universal.

Participants were very interested in seeing different methods of prepayment in practice. The committees also discussed the use of local people for contracts and the aim to build skills and capacity through training programmes.

Following these visits, participants were encouraged to ask questions, clarify any issues, and share their impressions of the project. The partners were open about



difficulties they faced. Participants also were charged with the difficult task of defining partnership and drawing some conclusions on the partnership process. Although this was strenuous, participants appeared to value the opportunity to discuss the issue with professionals from other sectors and countries. More generally, it became apparent that although circumstances vary enormously, participants had a great deal in common. As with the rest of the visit, time was short but the value of discussion and reflection was evident.

KwaZulu-Natal

The last three days were spent in the KwaZulu-Natal province

reviewing and visiting the BPD pilot project, which aims to improve water and sanitation services for disadvantaged suburbs of Durban and Pietermaritzburg. Participants were familiarised with the significance of changes following the 1994 national elections, the redrawing of local boundaries, and subsequent strains on local government resources. After gaining an understanding of the partners (Durban Metro,

Pietermaritzburg Transitional Local Council, Umgeni Water, The Mvula Trust, Vivendi, Water Research Council) and the structure of the project, participants were taken into the field to view the projects, discussing in some detail with the communities in the pilot areas. Representatives from the project were keen to share their experiences on the visit. Participants were invited to a school in the townships to understand how sanitation issues are brought to life through pictures and theatre. They also were offered the opportunity to talk with local representatives about the effect of the project on community life and any problems they had faced. Visiting a training centre, viewing a location and condition

survey, understanding different levels of service, and most of all talking with communities helped participants understand the variety of activities incorporated into the project.

Conclusions

The final session took place in Durban. At that point it was the participants' turn to present their own projects, highlighting both the diversity and complementarities of their partnerships. This proved a useful exercise in forging connections among the five projects represented and drawing out future issues for debate. It takes time to reflect on the learning process, but initial feedback suggests most participants were enthusiastic about their experiences, lessons learnt, and methods of applying that knowledge in their own countries and projects. It is too early in BPD's history to truly assess the value of action learning visits as a vehicle for increasing understanding and encouraging experimentation, but at this point it seems like a very valuable tool.

This brief summary cannot do justice to the week or to the warm hospitality extended by the hosts. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their contribution to creating a positive learning environment.

(Contributed by Katherine Madden, PWBLF)

Upcoming Events

Infrastructure for Development: Private Solutions and the Poor

31 May-2 June 2000, London



The Public-Private Infrastructure Advisory Facility (PPIAF), the Department for International Development (DfID), and the World Bank are sponsoring an international conference focusing on serving the poor through private participation in infrastructure. The conference will focus on the following three themes:

- Understanding the challenge of expanding infrastructure access for low-income households in developing countries.
- Expanding infrastructure service options for low-income households through market structure and regulatory reform.
- Reducing financial and institutional barriers to improved infrastructure services for low-income households.

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1st World Congress of the International Water Association

3-7 July 2000, Paris, France

The congress will cover research-oriented (science and technology themes) and applications-oriented (operation and management themes) topics. More than 1,000 delegates are expected to attend to focus on water resources management, drinking water production and distribution, and wastewater collection and treatment. An exhibition of technologies, equipment and services will take place.

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