



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION  
OF PUBLIC WATER OPERATORS  
10 YEARS OF COLLABORATION  
FOR THE GENERAL INTEREST



# SOLIDARITY TO REALISE THE GLOBAL RIGHT TO WATER

## Towards better access to water

In 2010, the **United Nations' General Assembly** recognised water and sanitation as a **human right**.

In 2012, the first-ever successful European Citizens' initiative **Right2Water** gathered 1.8 million signatures to call for the **recognition of the right to water at EU level**.

In 2015, the **UN's Sustainable Development Goals** included a dedicated SDG on '**clean water and sanitation**' (SDG 6) and a series of specific targets towards 2030.

Therefore, in 2019, achieving the global right to water needs to remain a **priority at the top of the agenda**.

In the world, **785 million** people still lack basic drinking water service and **27%** of the population lacks basic sanitation service (*United Nations, Special edition: progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, 2019*)

**Solidarity mechanisms in international cooperation** are a critical instrument to support increased access to water at the international level.

## The role of not-for-profit partnerships

**Water Operator Partnerships (WOPs)** are **peer-to-peer, decentralised cooperation projects** between utilities based on solidarity.

**Sharing experiences and best practices** with peers and experts is widely recognised a particularly beneficial tool for all parties involved in the process.

WOPs may take a **variety of forms** and make a great contribution to SDG 6 by supporting utilities in developing countries to **improve performance in water management**.

The **not-for-profit** approach taken by **public operators** facilitates the development of a **trusting relationship** and means that the benefits for the beneficiaries and improvements to water management **are not conditioned by commercial interests**.

True partnerships that focus on **capacity building and skills sharing** allow to build **long-term improvements**, from administrative to technical aspects, and are the prerequisites to the sustainability of additional types of support (technological, financial).

Such **cooperation benefits both parties**. EU utilities also gain an international approach to localised issues, understanding of different practices and a motivation factor and skills-development for their own workforce.

The members of Aqua Publica Europea have long been committed to implementing strong partnerships and supporting access to water and sanitation in developing countries with their own WOPs and by working closely with the **UN-Habitat's GWOPA** initiative (Global Water Operator Partnerships Alliance) with **concrete results**.

**International and national institutions and agencies** play a key role to facilitate access to financing and increased number and impact of WOPs.

*Aqua Publica Europea is the **European Association of Public Water Operators**. For the past **ten years**, it has united **publicly owned water and sanitation services** and other stakeholders working to promote public water management at European and international levels. Aqua Publica gathers **65 members serving more than 70 million people**, in an operator-led association that looks for efficient solutions that serve the public rather than corporate interests.*



# Some examples

## CAMEROON: STRUCTURING AN INTERCOMMUNAL UNION IN CHARGE OF WATER SUPPLY AND BASIC SANITATION SERVICES

In the department of Mbam and Inoubou (Cameroon), 9 cities were concerned about water supply and basic sanitation but did not have the capacities to assume this competency in the context of the decentralisation process.

Since 2005, the French operator **Syndicat des Eaux et de l'Assainissement Alsace – Moselle (SDEA)** along with other French and Cameroonian partners, has been involved in the creation of an **inter-communality** – an inter-municipal structure covering several communes, bringing together these 9 municipalities to **organise locally the public service mission for water supply and basic sanitation**.

Regular exchanges between the **elected officials and the administrative, technical and financial personnel** of the two structures helped to establish the functional principles of the **Syndicat des communes du Mbam et Inoubou – SYCOMI**.

This new body manages about 500 water points and latrines and ensures their maintenance, alongside the users. Residential users are organised in committees responsible for collecting a fee that contributes to the union's financial balance.

This action, funded by the EU (including the **ACP-EU Water Facility**), is now **being replicated** in other Cameroonian territories.



## ETHIOPIA: CAPACITY BUILDING AND PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The water operator from Turin, Italy, **SMAT**, provided support to **Arba Minch Town Water Utility** and Municipality in the Water and Sanitation sector through **capacity building and partnership development**.

The project was financed by the **ACP-EU Water Facility** and gathered several organisations: Hydroaid Water Development Management Institute, ENAS S.p.A., CISV, Polytechnic of Turin, AWSSE, University of Arba Minch, University of Trento, Town Municipality of Arba Minch.

SMAT provided **on-the-job training Ethiopian personnel on site and in Italy**. SMAT was involved in different training activities concerning particular aspects of **water infrastructures maintenance and management**.

## SENEGAL: PUBLIC-PUBLIC PARTNERSHIP FOR THE HUMAN RIGHT TO WATER

The project was developed by the water operator from Milan, Italy, **Gruppo CAP**, over three years and in the **Louga region** in the north part of Senegal, in the Kebemer district.

The project involved **4 rural communities comprising 35.000 inhabitants** and included the development of the following activities: **the drill a new well, build a new tank, install and develop a drinking water network and extend the existing network**.

The necessary funds for the project comes from the **Lombardy Region, National Senegalese Government and the ART GOLD programme** of the UNDP for local development.

The innovative element of this project is the **economic involvement of the local authority** (ARD – Development Regional Agency and DRH Hydric Regional Division) that represents the local community and at the same time the final users of the project. This is an example of cooperation at local and regional level and decentralised cooperation.

Furthermore, the creation of a **steering committee for the management and evaluation of the plant** - with the presence at least **50% of women** – represented an added value for the entire project.

## BRAZIL: CITY-TO-CITY COLLABORATION AGREEMENT

Through the **International Urban Cooperation Program** of the European Commission, the cities of **Seville** (Spain) and **Vitória** (Brazil) collaborated in a Public-Public Cooperation project. They **shared good practices in the management of the urban water cycle, the revitalisation of degraded areas, the trees and the fight against social inequality**, amongst others. They also analysed the replicability of successful measures.

A **Common Action Plan** was to be presented to the European Commission and financial entities to attract investors and ensure execution.

Technicians from **Emasasa**, the water operator from Seville and the **Vitória water supply system** held **on-site work meetings** to describe the problems and challenges of the cities, the work teams and the stakeholders involved, to subsequently **design and plan the rest of the actions**.

## PALESTINE: DEVELOPING A GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM

The Barcelona City Council, through **Barcelona Cicle de l'Aigua SA (BCASA)**, has been cooperating for nearly three years with the **Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (WSSA)** from the cities of Bethlehem, Biet Jala i Biet Sahour in Palestine.

This cooperation was a proposal from the Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance (GWOPA) from UN-HABITAT and the framework of cooperation was signed in 2015.

Objectives were to link **BCASA experts in GIS and databases with WSSA technical staff** in order to develop WSSA's GIS for water supply and sewage.

In this context, BCASA and WSSA staff **exchanged information** related to setting WSSA's GIS that was under development thanks to other cooperation agreements that WSSA had ongoing.

Apart from the digital communication, WSSA staff has been able to **visit BCASA installations**, which has been very important for the success of the cooperation.

Further, the **Vice-Mayor of Bethlehem visited BCASA and the Barcelona City Council** with the purpose of consolidating the relationship and to boost other possible cooperation agreements between both cities.

## DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO: IMPROVING THE WATER DISTRIBUTION NETWORK

Under a **EU co-funded program (75% EU – 25% VIVAQUA)**, **VIVAQUA**, the water and sanitation public utility from Brussels, Belgium, partnered with the water public utility **REGIDESO** in Kinshasa, RDC for the **enhancement of the water distribution network of the Congolese capital city**.

First, **training was provided** for sectoring, metering or leak detection and repair in a pilot district. Then, REGIDESO teams were **coached** to be able to **transfer this experience** to other parts of the city, allowing the teams to **effectively appropriate** the technical aspects.

At the end of the project, the entire city of **Kinshasa (10 million ha.) was sectorised off-plan**, as well as other important cities (Lubumbashi, Matadi). **Leak and fraud detection teams are now active** in the water network. With the new detection methods, REGIDESO was able to **recover lost sums and a significant volume of water** in the targeted neighbourhoods with high fraud and leakage rates.