A collaboration to mainstream effective knowledge transfer and change in Water Operators’ Partnerships by UNESCO-IHE and GWOPA/UN-HABITAT with support of the Dutch Government
WOPs

Water operators are critical players in efforts to achieve sustainable and universal water and sanitation. But many operators today are not keeping pace with demand. They face a myriad of challenges including rapid urbanization, rising inequity, pressures on water resources, severe resource constraints and ineffective governance frameworks.

There is a growing understanding that strong local capacity can provide the foundations to respond to emerging challenges with meaningful and lasting solutions. Supporting water operators in their organisational development efforts to manage effectively over the long-term is the purpose of Water Operators’ Partnerships (WOPs).

WOPs are peer-support arrangements between two or more water service providers, carried out on a not-for-profit basis in the objective of strengthening operator capacity. They are based on the observation that capacity development supported by mentors can accelerate water operators’ ability to meet the challenges facing the sector. They draw on the fact that much of the innovation and expertise to address water operators’ challenges reside within utilities (not with consultants or other external experts), and that a growing number of these successful operators are highly motivated to share their expertise and innovation with others as “mentors” on a not-for-profit basis.

WOPs were identified as a high-potential solution by the UN Secretary General’s Advisory Board for Water and Sanitation in their 2006 Hashimoto Action Plan.
BEWOP

BEWOP is a 5-year research and outreach initiative aimed at boosting the effectiveness of WOPs around the world. BEWOP, launched in September 2013, is a collaboration between the world’s foremost water sector capacity development institute, UNESCO-IHE, and UN-Habitat’s Global Water Operators’ Partnership Alliance, the organization leading the global WOPs movement.

BEWOP aims to address a potential paradox of the WOPs approach: operators are uniquely placed to share their experience and technical expertise with their peers, however they sometimes lack the pedagogical capacity to effectively transfer their knowledge and the ability to manage the partnership process.

The goal of BEWOP is to strengthen knowledge transfer and change processes in WOPs, in order to maximize the potential for operational improvements of water operators.

Over the next five years, GWOPA and IHE will work in the development, dissemination and application of resources conducive to more effective design and implementation of WOPs. The resulting outputs will support operators to:

✓ Be aware of the context in which the actors operate
✓ Undertake better assessment of capacity development needs
✓ Understand different levels of capacity development and how these inter-relate
✓ Appreciate different types of learning approaches and where they are most effective
✓ Design appropriate programs of peer support
✓ Transfer technical and managerial capacity more effectively
✓ Have wider access to technology choices
✓ Increase financial management capacity and access to sources of finance
✓ Monitor capacity improvements
✓ Work effectively with local stakeholders for greater impact
The Partners

UNESCO-IHE

The mission of UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education is to contribute to the education and training of professionals and to build the capacity of sector organisations, knowledge centres and other Institutions active in the fields of water, environment and infrastructure, in developing countries and countries in transition.

UNESCO-IHE provides a variety of services, listed below by functional area and target group:

✓ Education, Training and Research: water sector professionals, engineers, scientists, consultants and decision-makers working in the water, environment and infrastructure sectors;

✓ Water Sector Capacity Building: water sector ministries and departments, municipalities, water boards and water utilities, universities, training and research institutes, industries, nongovernmental and private sector organisations;

✓ Partnership Building and Networking: knowledge centres, public and private sector organisations.

✓ Standard Setting for Education and Training: water-related academe, universities and other education and training agencies in the water sector;

✓ Policy Forum on Water: UNESCO member states, UN-Water, IHP national committees and other stakeholders.
GWOPA UN-Habitat

In 2006, the UN Secretary General’s Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation called on UN-Habitat to lead a global initiative to improve and scale-up the effective use of WOPs. Accordingly, UN-Habitat created the Global Water Operators’ Partnerships Alliance in 2007. GWOPA now counts within its network utility associations on all continents representing thousands of water utilities, regional development banks, international financial institutions, labour unions, civil society organizations, development partners, and learning institutes. Its goal is to promote and enable impactful WOPs, and it does this by creating awareness about WOPs, producing and sharing knowledge and tools, and rallying the funds and political backing to enable effective WOPs and practice.
The Activity Areas

BEWOP has six complementary activity areas.

1. Documentation of WOPs worldwide to draw lessons-learnt and best practices
   ✓ A series of documented WOPs case studies
   ✓ A set of recommendations for future models of WOPs based on comparison of best practices
   ✓ Augmented WOPs database capturing WOPs data for analysis and greater accountability

2. Comparative analysis of existing approaches for knowledge transfer and learning processes in WOPs
   ✓ Comparative study of knowledge transfer approaches based on documented WOPs
   ✓ Recommendations and lessons-learned

3. Development and testing of a WOP management tool for the potential use of both partners, encompassing the following main tasks:
   ✓ Assessing performance deficiencies and related capacity areas subject to improvement
   ✓ Identifying suitable capacity development interventions
   ✓ Monitoring capacity and performance changes throughout the project
   ✓ Monitoring the relational health of the partnership and potential areas for improvement guiding the re-definition of capacity development interventions according to emerging circumstances

4. Assessment of existing guidelines, training modules and materials to support operators’ performance improvement
   ✓ Identify and analyse existing materials categorized by thematic areas
   ✓ Recommendations for the re-development of existing materials and the development of new ones
5. Development and testing of new capacity development products/services (guidelines, training modules and materials) for WOPs, with a double focus:

✓ On content: re-developed and new thematic capacity development products/services

✓ On processes: pedagogical resources to support effective knowledge transfer through WOPs

6. Communication, outreach and use of the Capacity Development products in WOPs.

✓ GWOPA and UNESCO networks utilized to disseminate products to target audiences

✓ Communications tools created and campaign launched to assist in outreach

✓ WOPs implementers supported to use new tools and materials

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<th>Activities</th>
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Outcomes

Over the next 5 years, BEWOP is expected to lead to the following outcomes:

✓ Knowledge on the functionality of WOPs, their results and intervening factors in their efficiency and effectiveness is produced and disseminated.

✓ Peer-to-peer processes benefit from new models and mechanisms making them more efficient and replicable.

✓ Partners in a WOP are equipped to more efficiently manage their collaboration.

✓ Resources and services to facilitate knowledge transfer through WOPs are easily accessible and usable.

✓ Capacity and skills within water operators are improved and service performance is increased.

✓ The global water operators’ community, watsan stakeholders and donors acknowledge, participate and support WOPs as a mechanisms to promote sustained operational efficiency in water supply and sanitation services.

Over the long run, BEWOP should contribute to the enhancement of operators’ capacity to cope with emerging technical, financial and institutional issues, leading to better performance of water utilities and improved water and sanitation services for an estimated 50 million end-users.
Approach

Demand-responsiveness

To ensure that BEWOP will address a demand and have clear practical value for WOPs implementers and supporters, three consultative bodies are being assembled to serve as a sounding board for the activities under the partnership:

✓ GWOPA Steering Committee members (15-20)
✓ WOPs Donors and Financiers (5–10)
✓ Water Operators, representing the diversity of operators involved in WOPs globally (15 members)

Dedicated meetings will be held twice a year with the Water Operators’ group, with regular consultations with the other two groups. The consultative bodies will offer direction and provide feedback on project activities, progress and outcomes.
Inception Workshops

Between September and November 2013, inception meetings will be held with consultative groups to gauge the awareness, interest and needs of the target audiences concerning capacity development and the use of WOPs as a support strategy. At these meetings the intended activities and outputs will be presented and discussed with the objective to obtain broad support, and to inform the content of the activities and outputs.

The groups will be convened at relevant major gatherings:

✓ Funders and Financiers at Stockholm World Water Week Stockholm, September 2013

✓ Implementers/Beneficiaries/Water Operators at the IWA Development Congress Nairobi, October 2013

✓ Supporters/Advocates, Water Operators & GWOPA SC members at the GWOPA General Assembly Barcelona, November 2013

Collaboration in Implementation

UNESCO-IHE and GWOPA will use their respective strengths, ongoing activities and networks to jointly implement all project activities.

The partners will also draw upon relevant ongoing activities and collaborations within their respective work to enrich the collaboration. UNESCO-IHE, for example, will draw on synergies with partnerships with the International Water Association and Vitens-Evides International, a major WOP mentor on the global scale. GWOPA, will use existing collaborations with regional WOP platforms and major WOPs implementers around the world to derive lessons, and to test and improve tools through WOPs practice.

The activities under this cooperation will make the fullest possible use of UNESCO-IHE students and alumni. The cooperation will provide UNESCO-IHE Master students the opportunity to design and implement their thesis research at the WOPs, and likewise UNESCO-IHE alumni can contribute to the cooperation. This form of cooperation will promote the concept of WOPs among students and alumni alike.
Communication and Outreach

Ensuring that BEWOP products are accepted and applied widely in WOPs practice is of primary importance for the collaboration. Throughout the project, communication and outreach will represent a major component of all activities. To support dissemination and uptake the partners will:

✓ Produce products based on user demand
✓ Implement outreach campaigns adapted to target audiences
✓ Develop an active BEWOP web presence to update and inform on product development
✓ Train in product use and monitor uptake
✓ Make extensive use of GWOPA networks to ensure products are applied
✓ Align with GWOPA’s knowledge management, communications and branding efforts
Join us
For more information about BEWOP or to get involved, please contact bewops@unesco-ihe.org