

Workshop outline

Day 2 (2nd February): Workshop: Public funding for public water

The revised EU Water Facility will for the first time ever make funding available for PUPs – how to broaden the availability of EU funding for progressive public water solutions?

Progress

Activist groups and unions have for many years campaigned against the EU's use of aid money to promote water privatisation and demanded support for public-public partnerships (PUPs) instead. PSIRU has played a crucial role in documenting the concrete results achieved with PUPs. These efforts have no doubt contributed to the fact that the European Commission last year decided to dedicate a part of the 2009-2013 funding of the EU-ACP Water Facility (EUWF) to support PUPs involving EU and ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) countries. The new EUWF (approved in November and to be officially launched on February 9th at an event in Brussels) has a total budget of 200 million euro, of which 40 million will become available for PUPs. This could mark the beginning of a shift in EU development policies for the water sector. The timeline for applications for twinning projects is as follows:

Oct. 2010: deadline for concept notes

December 2010: deadline for full proposals

Approval in spring – please note that funds might be reallocated to other parts of the EUWF budget if not enough projects are approved.

Challenges

- making the new PUP funding window a success so it results in funding for a large number of progressive public-public partnerships which genuinely improve access to water and sanitation in a lasting manner. The first steps in this respect include encouraging progressive public water utilities to consider preparing applications and perhaps even assist with information about how to best apply, how to prepare partnerships and identify partners, etc. It also means learning the lessons for the frequent failure of twinning projects in Africa in the 1980s and avoiding that PUP funding goes to management contracts and other forms of semi-privatisation (see Al-hassan Adam's paper on this).
- how to ensure that partnerships supported by the EUWF go beyond useful but limited approaches (leakage control, expanding piped networks, etc.), featuring holistic, socially and ecologically sustainable and lasting solutions for the whole water cycle?
- encourage the European Commission to expand support for Public-Public Partnerships to non-ACP countries (Asia, Latin America, etc.). There are examples of twinning being supported in past EU funding programs for Asia (Asia Urbs Programme), but also countries like Ukraine and Moldova (European Neighbourhood policy).
- identify other possible sources of funding for Public-Public Partnerships? Northern governments, donor agencies, progressive Southern governments?
- beyond support for PUPs, African countries suffer from seriously outdated infrastructure and lack of investment in renewal and expansion of water systems; without far larger amounts of public funding being made available for overcoming these problems, PUPs will not solve the problems.

Strategies (some options)

- contributing to the success of PSIRU's PuP knowledge clearinghouse and online match making database
- other outreach to and cooperation with progressive public water operators
- building stronger Africa-Europe water activists' links (as well as with Caribbean and Pacific regions)
- promoting socially and ecologically sustainable, lasting solutions for the whole water cycle
- Open letter to new European Commission arguing for Public-Public Partnerships as a cross-cutting priority in all development aid programs
- working with MEPs to promote Public-Public Partnerships as a cross-cutting priority in all EU development aid programs
- accessing other sources of funding for Public-Public Partnerships (Northern governments, donor agencies, progressive Southern governments?)