



Open letter

Extending and upscaling support for innovative non-profit partnerships in order to contribute to universal access to water and sanitation in Africa, Caribbean and Pacific countries

Brussels, 22 November 2013

To: EU Commissioner for Development, Andris Piebalgs

Dear Commissioner,

With this letter we would like to stress the importance of continuing the support for not-for-profit water partnership projects in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries that was provided by the ACP-EU Water Facility under the 10th European Development Fund (EDF). The Partnerships for Capacity Development in the ACP Water & Sanitation Sector, with an earmarked budget of €40 million, has been hailed as an innovative programme with the potential of achieving significant impact at scale. It is on this background that we call upon you to continue - and strengthen – the European Commission's support for water partnership projects in the upcoming 11th EDF.

During the Budapest Water Summit earlier last month, DG Development's André Liebaert presented the EU Water Facility and indicated that the focus for the 2014-2020 framework was likely to change, emphasizing the Water, Food, and Energy nexus. The new focus would be on sustainable agriculture, efficient energy and water use, climate resilient water infrastructure, among other themes. While we recognize the importance of these issues, abandoning the focus on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) would prove highly problematic. Universal access to water and sanitation remains a formidable challenge in ACP countries and globally. We therefore call for efforts to develop capacity in the water and sanitation sector to be multiplied, not reduced.

There is a growing recognition of the potential of not-for-profit partnerships in the water sector. Both UN HABITAT and UNDP have facilitated the development of global platforms to promote not-for-profit, solidarity based partnerships and also several national aid agencies have shown interest (USAID, ADF France, etc.). The ACP-EU Water Facility has played a pioneering role, not only in providing substantial funding for projects, but also key features like the involvement of Non State Actors and providing a coherent evaluation framework. The innovative features of the Partnerships for Capacity Development in the ACP Water & Sanitation Sector have attracted the interest of the international water community and we firmly believe that these should not be lost.

In August 2012, a report by the Public Services International Research Unit (PSIRU), University of Greenwich evaluated the expected impact of ACP-EU Water Partnerships, and comparatively evaluated the ACP-EU Water Partnerships initiative and other international programmes of not-for-profit partnerships for capacity development in the water and sanitation sector. This evaluation was commissioned for by the European Commission and found that the expected impact of ACP-EU Water Partnerships consisted in millions of people benefiting from capacity development and improvements in key areas for sustainable water development. Highlights of the expected impact

included: 20.5 million people benefiting from expanded access to the poor in water supply; 12 million people benefiting from improved efficiency in management and system maintenance in sanitation; 105.4 million people benefiting from improved integrated water resources management.

The evaluation highlighted a number of important innovative aspects of this programme, which explicitly aims to support capacity development for public authorities in ACP countries through not-for-profit partnerships. Despite the fact that more than 90% of water and sanitation services in the world are provided by publicly owned utilities, the Partnerships for Capacity Development in the ACP Water & Sanitation Sector is unique in focusing specifically on unleashing the potential of partnerships between public operators. The program has successfully engaged a significant number of small and medium-sized public water utilities in ACP countries in capacity-building partnership projects.

There are several other distinctively innovative aspects of the program that deserve to be highlighted. Financial resources are directed towards capacity development for improving water systems, towards good governance and towards sustainable water resources management. Good governance in the water sector can indeed only be achieved through such an integrated approach. Another important innovative element is the involvement of local Non State Actors as supporting partners. The evaluation report points out that the funded projects involve 31 Non State Actors as project partners, 18 of which are based in ACP countries. Half of all the funded projects involve Non State Actors as partners, which is impressively high compared to other international programmes. This community and citizen participation will help make the results more sustainable. The results are remarkably promising and the EU's continued leadership in advancing this approach is clearly needed.

According to the above-mentioned report, the ACP-EU Water Facility awarded grants to 32 partnership projects at the end of 2011. However, the 300 Concept Notes submitted in the first stage of the selection procedure indicate the potential capacity that the ACP-EU Water Partnerships initiative could mobilize if this was to be strengthened.

We would therefore like to propose to extend and upscale partnerships for capacity development through not-for-profit partnerships in ACP countries in the 11th European Development Fund (EDF). We believe that this would be the coronation of 2013 as the United Nations' International Year of Water Cooperation. We would also like to remind you of the fact that European citizens have expressed strong commitment to water as a human right by supporting the first successful European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) with 1.9 million signatures across all 28 Member States. This ECI includes the demand that the EU must increase its efforts to achieve universal access to water and sanitation.

We are keen on providing more detailed proposals to ensure that commensurate efforts are directed towards the realisation of the human right to water and sanitation.

We look forward to your response to our concerns and suggestions and remain at your disposal for discussing these issues further.

Yours sincerely,

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On behalf of
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