

Resilience in Challenging Times

5TH GLOBAL WOPs CONGRESS

Mobilizing Collaboration for Future-Ready
Water and Sanitation Service Providers



Collaboration
Solidarity
Sustainability



CATERING

Image: The 5th Global WOPs Congress is held at the World Conference Center Bonn © GWOPA/UN-Habitat.



CONTENTS

FOREWORD	04
HIGHLIGHTS	07
TAKE-HOME MESSAGES	10
THE CONGRESS WEEK	12
LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND COMMUNITY	42
PUBLICATIONS LAUNCHED AT THE CONGRESS	49
ARTICLES RELATED TO THE CONGRESS	51
FEEDBACK FROM THE CONGRESS AUDIENCES	53
PROGRAMME AT A GLANCE	57

FOREWORD

It is with immense pleasure that the GWOPA Secretariat presents the report on the 5th Global Water Operators' Partnership Congress—our flagship event that took place on 22-25 May 2023 at the International Congress Centre in Bonn, Germany. The Congress was hosted by the Global Water Operators Alliance (GWOPA), an UN-Habitat-facilitated programme, with the generous support of the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

2023 is the year when 'acceleration' has become the keyword. At the midpoint of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we urgently need to pick up the pace of action. Given that the 2023 World Water Day and World Toilet Day revolve around the theme of "Accelerating Change," the UN World Water Development Report 2023 highlighted cooperation and partnerships for water, and the UN 2023 Water Conference focused on global water commitments, the timing of the 5th WOPs Congress held particular significance.

Globally, 2.2 billion people still lack safely managed drinking water services, 3.4 billion lack safely managed sanitation services, and 1.9 billion lack basic hygiene services in 2022. The consequences of not achieving the SDGs, the dedicated Water Goal SDG 6, and the Goal on housing and urban settlement SDG 11, in particular, are immense, directly impacting billions of people's daily lives.

Facing global challenges like climate change, rapid population growth and urbanisation, and the demand for safe water and sanitation services is now more pressuring than ever, and so do the challenges of ensuring equitable access, preserving water quality, and achieving long-term sustainability. Against this backdrop, the series of Water Operators' Partnerships (WOPs) Congresses has emerged as a critical forum for collective actions and knowledge sharing.

The Global WOPs Congress serves as a focal point and discussion platform for water professionals to exchange experiences, best practices, and innovative solutions in water management. At the heart of this Congress lies the spirit of partnerships, where participants from various backgrounds come together to build meaningful collaborations, enabling the advancement of water-related goals on a local, regional, and global scale.

Discussions covered the overarching theme of Resilience in challenging times: Mobilizing collaboration for future-ready water and sanitation service providers focusing on innovation, climate and nature, equity and inclusion, and sanitation. The Congress offered sessions, workshops, a world skill demo, pop-up activities, poster presentations and a learning lab. Further, the Congress week concluded with two technical tours to the City of Bonn's flood early warning system in the Mehlmer Bach stream and to the Bad Godesberg wastewater treatment plant.

In close coordination, Congress participants also joined the German WOPs Forum online, hosted by BMZ in Berlin in collaboration with European Commission, the Association of Municipal Enterprises (VKU), Zambia, and the Netherlands.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to all the speakers, participants, donors and partners, and organisers who contributed their time, expertise, and dedication to make the 5th WOPs Congress an outstanding success.

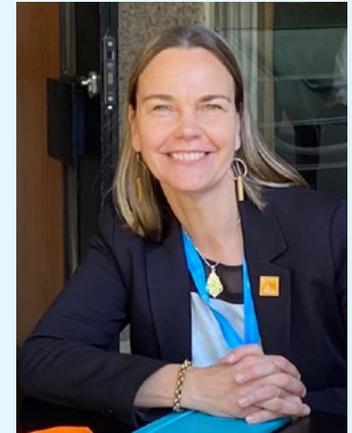
We would like to thank the host country, Germany, for hosting the Secretariat of the Global Water Operators' Alliance and graciously supporting the Congress. The valuable support and engagement of the City of Bonn was also an enormous support for the event's success.

Thank you, GWOPA members and partners, for your commitment to shaping a water-secure future which serves as an inspiration to us all.

The Alliance looks forward to implementing the outcomes of this year's Congress. We look forward to welcoming you all back in 2025 for the 6th Global WOPs Congress!

Åsa Jonsson

Head of Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance (GWOPA)
Urban Basic Services Section, UN-Habitat



ON WATER OPERATORS' PARTNERSHIPS

Water Operators' Partnerships (WOPs) are collaborative initiatives that bring together water utility operators from different regions, countries, or backgrounds to share knowledge, best practices, and resources to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of water and sanitation services. These partnerships aim to address challenges water operators face in providing reliable and sustainable water services, particularly in regions where access to clean water and proper sanitation is limited.

KEY FEATURES OF WATER OPERATORS' PARTNERSHIPS

Knowledge Exchange: WOPs facilitate the exchange of technical expertise, managerial know-how, and operational experiences among participating water operators. Water operators can optimise their systems and service delivery by learning from successful practices and innovative solutions implemented elsewhere.

CAPACITY BUILDING

WOPs focus on capacity development, helping water operators enhance their skills and capabilities in various areas, such as infrastructure management, water quality monitoring, customer service, and financial management. Building human capacity ensures the sustainability and long-term effectiveness of water services.

PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING

The partnerships encourage direct interactions between operators, enabling a peer-to-peer learning environment. Water operators engage in on-the-ground assessments, joint problem-solving, and sharing of lessons learned, fostering a culture of learning and continuous improvement.

TAILORED SOLUTIONS

WOPs acknowledge that each water operator faces unique challenges and contexts. Therefore, the partnerships design customised solutions to address specific needs and constraints faced by the participating operators.

INCLUSIVITY AND EQUITY

WOPs often emphasise inclusivity, striving to include operators from both developed and developing countries, large and small utilities, and urban and rural areas. This ensures a diverse range of perspectives and experiences in the partnership.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

WOPs align their efforts with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation. By supporting water operators in improving their services, WOPs contribute to achieving universal access to safe and affordable water and sanitation.

PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

WOPs foster collaboration not only among water operators but also with various stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, donor organizations, and the private sector. These collaborations enable additional support, resources, and funding for the partnership's initiatives.

LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

Successful WOPs often have a long-term perspective, recognising that meaningful improvements in water service delivery may require sustained efforts over several years.

WOPs have proven to be effective mechanisms for enhancing the capacity and performance of water operators worldwide. They play a crucial role in promoting knowledge sharing, building resilient water and sanitation systems, and ultimately improving access to clean water and sanitation for communities in need.

ABOUT GWOPA

The Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance (GWOPA), hosted by UN-Habitat, builds capacity between water and sanitation service providers to address SDG 6. We are an international network constituting over 140 institutions that support water and sanitation operators through Water Operators' Partnerships (WOPs) and Sanitation-focused Water Operators' Partnerships (SWOPs). WOPs and SWOPs are peer support exchanges between two or more water or sanitation operators, carried out on a not-for-profit basis, with the objective of strengthening operators' capacity and performance to provide a better service to more people.

[More Info](#)

Image: © Kittirat Roekburi.

HIGHLIGHTS

We have curated a carefully selected compilation of highlights, drawing from the discussions held during the week, which are presented below.

CO-OWNED

A unique feature of the Congress was the number of organizations that came together in its design and implementation. As a forum for water and sanitation utility sharing and knowledge exchange, the Congress was a platform to connect with partners and establish new connections. 117 Alliance member organizations were involved in convening the 65 sessions and workshops.



Image: ©GWOPA/UN-Habitat.

GLOBAL PARTICIPATION

With the hybrid modality, the 5th WOPs Congress made it possible to expand the discussions and knowledge exchange globally and enabled the GWOPA membership and interested stakeholders of the sector to participate without the need to travel to the event in person.



Image: ©GWOPA/UN-Habitat.

PRACTICAL MEETS POLITICAL

A unique feature of this Congress was the bringing together of operational and political support for utilities and WOPs. The German WOPs Forum, a political event convened in Berlin by the German government, was live-streamed into the Congress to embrace the two different locations and link the efforts of the GWOPA host country, Germany, to the UN-Habitat-led Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance.

MULTILINGUAL

This year, GWOPA offered conference translation in four languages for most of the session, which was welcomed by the co-convenors and participants who used translations throughout the Congress week.

Arabic	14 %
English	46 %
French	18 %
Spanish	21 %

CONGRESS IN NUMBERS

7 PLENARY SESSIONS

50 THEMATIC & REGIONAL SESSIONS

4 WORKSHOPS

2 SPECIAL EVENTS

2 TECHNICAL TOURS

58 COUNTRIES & TERRITORIES REPRESENTED IN-PERSON

2 WOPs CONGRESS LOCATIONS



169 COUNTRIES & TERRITORIES REPRESENTED ONLINE

440 ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTED

500 IN-PERSON PARTICIPANTS

1,200 ONLINE PARTICIPANTS

117 CO-CONVENERS

19 POSTERS

TAKE-HOME MESSAGES

A lot was said in over 100 hours of substantive sessions.
We offer our top insights from the week's discussions below.

- 1 WOPs are at the forefront of global water and sanitation actions by blending resilient and innovative approaches with inclusivity, ensuring commercial sustainability and universal access.
- 2 WOPs are driving transformative change within utilities by fostering collaborations with financial institutions to ensure the scalability and bankability of infrastructure projects.
- 3 Strong local ownership and mentorship in WOPs underscores the need for diverse, accessible knowledge platforms and exchanges of experiences.
- 4 WOPs offer critical help in building urban water and sanitation resilience against climate change, demanding sustained efforts, increased investment, and greater collaboration to address the rising challenges of rapid urbanisation.
- 5 Digitalisation is revolutionising water and sanitation management, with utilities worldwide adopting innovative digital tools to improve efficiency, reduce waste, and enhance service provision.
- 6 The water utility sector must address gender inequalities by adopting gender-responsive measures and promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace. [Gender lens event by The Sustainable Sanitation Alliance.
- 7 Sanitation-focused operator partnerships (SWOPs) are crucial to advancing comprehensive and climate-resilient sanitation services by involving various stakeholders.
- 8 Transparency, accountability, and integrity are pillars of sustainable water services, bolstered by capacity building and tools that promote operational efficiency and community trust.
- 9 Adopting circular water practices and leveraging digital tools are essential to enhance sustainable water management and strengthen sector resilience in accelerating progress towards the SDGs.



THE CONGRESS WEEK

A week dedicated to international operator partnerships. The week from from 22 to 25 May 2023 was all about international operators' partnerships. Cooperation, solidarity, sustainability, resilience, exchange – these are just a few of the topics on the agenda.

All sessions are accessible online via the GWOPA YouTube Chanel playlist.

[Watch](#)

Image: Mr. Michal Mlynár, Deputy Executive Director of UN-Habitat, delivers the opening address to all participants at the 5th Global WOPs Congress ©GWOPA/UN-Habitat.



THE CONGRESS WEEK

PLENARY SESSIONS

Plenary Session

OPENING AND KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Keynote

Mr. Michal Mlynár, Deputy Executive Director, UN-Habitat

Moderator

Mr. André Dzikus, Chief of the Urban Basic Services Section, UN-Habitat

Opening Addresses

His Royal Highness Prince El Hasan bin Talal, Jordan

E. Dr. Eng. Habtamu Itefa Geleta, Minister, Ministry of Water and Energy,
Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Mr. Toily Kurbanov, UNV Executive Coordinator and Designated Official of Germany

Mr. Tires Kathri, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Water and Sanitation, Government of Nepal

Mr. Marco la Marca, Member of Cabinet, European Union

Ms. Katja Dörner, Lord Mayor of Bonn, Germany

The Session

The Congress opening and keynote addresses emphasised the significance of WOPs in enhancing safe water and sanitation service delivery. High-level speakers highlighted improved collaboration, promoting digital technology, ecosystem conservation, and the need for innovation and inclusivity while prioritising public interests. One critical challenge discussed was balancing commercial viability with ensuring universal water access, particularly for low-income communities. They emphasised enhancing democratic governance, transparency, and improving service to these unserved and underserved populations. Recommendations included adopting a global biodiversity framework, focusing on drought resilience, and integrating water into resilience strategies. WOPs were encouraged to strengthen collaborations, support inclusive water management, foster innovation, advocate for policy reforms, and mobilise resources to tackle these challenges.

[More Info](#)

[Watch the Session](#)

Plenary Session

RESILIENT WATER AND
SANITATION SERVICES ON A FINITE PLANET

Keynote

Ms. Andrea Meza Murillo, UNCCD Deputy Executive Secretary

Moderator

Mr. Adriaan Mels, Regional Director at Vitens Evides International

Panellists

Mr. Mohammad Said Al Hmaid, CEO of the Water Sector Regulatory Council from Palestine

Ms. Franziska Meininger, Director, Infrastructure Development Hamburg Wasser from Germany

Mr. Animesh Kumar, Head of the UNDRR Office in Bonn, Germany

Mr. Youssef Nassef, Director of Adaptation division at UNFCCC

The Session

The importance of utilities in community health, economic development, and environmental sustainability was highlighted. These utilities grapple with challenges such as climate change, rapid urbanisation, financial constraints, and energy shortages, all of which strain their ability to provide reliable services. Furthermore, ecosystem degradation necessitates the replacement of natural features like forests and wetlands in water sourcing and treatment. Factors like conflicts, inflation, and high energy prices also exacerbate their vulnerabilities. The discussions also revolved around how water and sanitation operators can integrate resilience into their operations and long-term planning. The speakers emphasised the urgency of climate adaptation and mitigation. They stressed the need for capacity building and expertise development through collaborative efforts within peer support networks to enhance utility resilience.

[More Info](#)

Plenary Session

FUTURE FACING OPERATORS: PERSPECTIVES AND INNOVATIONS TO REACH THE SDGS

Keynote

Mr. Kalanithy Vairavamoorthy, Executive Director, International Water Association

Moderator

Mr. Milo Fiasconaro, Executive Director, Aqua Publice Europea

Panellists

Ms. Eunice Tejan, Director of Commercial Services, Guma Valley Water Company, Sierra Leone

Ms. Castell-Exner, President, Eureau

Ms. Monika Weber-Fahr, Senior Advisor, Results and Partnerships, The World Bank

Ms. Abigail Kemper, Open Cities Lab, Lead, Research and Engagement, Open Cities Lab

The Session

The panellist urged the utilities to adapt to the changing environment and tackle global challenges to ensure inclusiveness and sustained services to mitigate risks and uncertainty. Drawing from the experience of innovative water and sanitation service providers on their strategy and response to future challenges, the plenary shared outlooks, innovative concepts and perspectives to respond to and anticipate global challenges, including climate change, innovation, urbanisation and societal changes. Among the solutions discussed were nature-based solutions and technological innovation, including digitalisation and artificial intelligence, for more informed decisions and tailored solutions.

WOPs were at the centre of the discussions, emphasising the advantages of elaborating the knowledge, techniques and approaches to make WOPs a sustainable mentoring tool for operators in changing times and environments.

[More Info](#)
[Watch the Session](#)

Plenary Session

REDUCING INEQUALITIES: INCLUSIVE UTILITIES, INCLUSIVE SERVICES

Keynote

Mr. Pedro Arrojo, Special Rapporteur, HRC-SR Water & Sanitation-ARROJO AGUDO

Moderator

Mr. Kit Dyer, WASH Specialist, UNICEF

Panellists

Ms. Faustina Boachie, Head of Ghana Water Low Income Customer Support Unit

Ms. Eugenia Giotto, The Director of Gender of AySa

Ms. Jurike Winarendri, Project Consultant at WaterworX – VEI - Dutch Water Operators

Mr. Klaas Schwartz, Senior Lecturer, IHE Delft Institute for Water Education

Ms. Lungi Zuma, eThekweni Municipality

The Session

Opened by the inspiring words of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation, the event highlighted the importance of ensuring equitable access to water and sanitation services while acknowledging these services as intrinsic human rights. The discussions underscored the significance of adopting customer-centric approaches, expanding service networks, and raising awareness about gender equality and inclusivity. The central challenge lies in finding a delicate balance between financial sustainability and achieving universal access to basic services, with a specific emphasis on providing water connections to marginalised urban populations. Effectively addressing the needs of low-income communities and ensuring the accessibility of resources remain continuous priorities within the water and sanitation sector.

[More Info](#)
[Watch the Session](#)

Plenary Session

HOLISTIC APPROACHES TO URBAN SANITATION AND WATER MANAGEMENT

Moderator

Ms. Cecilia Njenga, Director, UNFCCC Intergovernmental Process and Collective Progress

Panellists

Ms. Alyse Schrecongost, Senior Program Officer, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Mr. Ibra Sow, Chairman, Pan African Association, Sanitation Actors

Ms. Jennifer Williams, Executive Director, Faecal Sludge Management Alliance

Mr. Benjamin Gestin, General Director, Eau de Paris

Ms. Kobie Brand, Deputy Secretary General, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability

Mr. Graham Alabaster, Chief, Geneva Office, UN-Habitat

The Session

This plenary shed light on the nexus between the water and sanitation sector with health, environment, energy, and waste management, underscoring its multidisciplinary impact. Illustrative examples included Dakar's sludge treatment linked to energy production and Paris's integration with agriculture. The discussion highlighted the substantial data gaps hindering progress toward SDG 6, pointing out the world's concerning deviation from set targets. In-depth discussions also addressed social and gender aspects, biodiversity concerns, pollution from plastics and other sources, financial viability, and the inclusion of low-income communities in the sector's development.

[More Info](#)
[Watch the Session](#)

Plenary Session

ENABLING WOPS, ENABLING INVESTMENT

Moderator

Mr. Carlos Diaz, Manager of Strategic Programmes on Climate, Policy & Regulation, Utilities, Standards & Performance Improvement Tools

Panellists

Ms. Allison Woodruff, Principal Water Security Specialist, ADB - Asian Development Bank

Mr. Arnaud De Vanssay, Head of Water Sector, European Commission

Mr. Dieter Rothenberger, Head of Programme, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GIZ - Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH

Ms. Barbara Schreiner, Executive Director, WIN - Water Integrity Network

Mr. Walid Mehalaine, Head of Grants & Technical Assistance, OFID - OPEC Fund for International Development

The Session

A common theme of the panel speakers was the vital role of WOPs in strengthening the financial and operational efficiency of water utilities. It spotlighted the need to enhance the capacity of water operators as integral to the success of investment projects and their alignment with expansive investment plans, steering towards sustainable results. The discussions called for a fundamental transformation within utilities, stressing that enduring sectoral improvements must originate internally. Establishing stronger connections between water operators and financial institutions was identified as a vital element for improving financial robustness. Energy efficiency, financial management, and climate funding were key topics, with a push for development and financial bodies to integrate WOPs into their funding frameworks and extend support via initiatives like the Urban Water Catalyst Initiative.

[More Info](#)
[Watch the Session](#)

Plenary Session

CLOSING PLENARY: SCALING WOPS FOR IMPACT

Moderator

Ms. Åsa Jonsson, Head of GWOPA/UN-Habitat

Panellists

Ms. Hadi Toure GUINDO, Water Engineer, SOMAGEP - SA - Société Malienne de Gestion de l'Eau Potable

Mr. Ignatius Jean, CARI-WOP - Caribbean Water Operators Partnerships

Ms. Monserrath Bolaños Alfaro, Director, UNAGUAS - Unión de Acueductos Griegos por el Ambiente y la Salud

Mr. David Boys, Deputy Secretary-General, Public Services International

Mr. David Kuria, Municipality of Nakuru, Kenya

Mr. Siemen Veenstra, WaterWorX

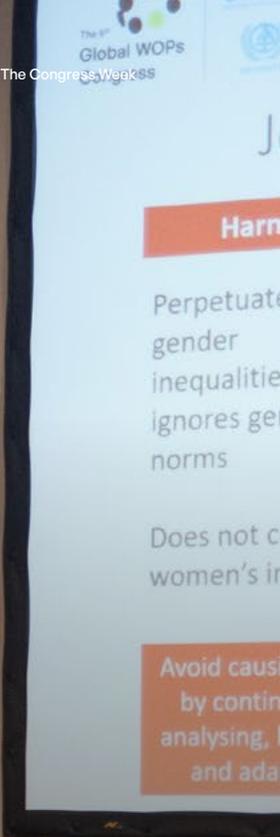
The Session

Local ownership is key to sustainable water and sanitation improvements. The panellists of this session emphasised the need for accessible knowledge platforms and global exchanges of experiences. Youth engagement and adaptable progress measurement were recognised as crucial. WOPs were validated through community expectations and the urgency for global water system reforms, mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Capacity development, investment, and government support were fundamental, urging an integrated approach to water within broader development strategies. Strengthening the WOP approach, focusing on climate change, urban planning, and regional collaborations, and addressing worker conditions, gender, and youth inclusion was essential. Active participation in knowledge-sharing platforms like GWOPA was seen as key to sharing experiences and best practices that could accelerate achieving access to clean water and sanitation.

[More Info](#)
[Watch the Session](#)


Image: Katja Dörner, the Mayor of Bonn, gives a welcome remark at the opening ceremony © GWOPA/UN-Habitat.

Image: ©GWOPA/UN-Habitat.



THE CONGRESS WEEK

THEMATIC SESSIONS

WOPs

Thematic Session I WOPs

THE GERMAN WATER SECTOR IN A NUTSHELL

Co-convenor

DWA - The German Association for Water Wastewater and Waste

The Session

The DWA shared insight into the German water sector and discussed the strengths, potentials, and challenges. This included information on drinking and wastewater, legal bases, standards, technologies, jobs and career development, and benchmarking of the German industry.

More Info

Watch the Session

Thematic Session I WOPs

BEYOND INFRASTRUCTURE: SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT MODELS FOR RURAL WATER AND SANITATION SERVICE DELIVERY

Co-conveners

FESAN - Federación Nacional de Servicios Sanitarios Rurales Chile

WaterAid UK and Nepal

Aya - Instituto Costarricense de Acueductos y Alcantarillados

UNAGUAS - Unión de Acueductos Griegos por el Ambiente y la Salud, Costa Rica

The Session

A cooperative model from Chile was presented, emphasising customer focus, self-financing, and community trust. A case study from Costa Rica demonstrated community-managed systems' success, stressing training, and partnerships. In Nepal, efforts to improve the enabling environment for community-managed services were discussed, addressing data gaps and governance issues. Key challenges encompassed operation and maintenance, governance, community ownership, financial gaps, and water quality protection. The event proposed staff capacity enhancement, rural operator management models, transparent decision-making, community involvement, standardised tariffs, and holistic water resource management as opportunities for these challenges.

More Info

Watch the Session

Thematic Session | WOPs

FROM PROJECT TO NATIONAL STRATEGY: EXPANDING THE ETHIOPIAN WOP EXPERIENCE

Co-conveners

UNICEF Ethiopia

IRC-WASH / VEI - Dutch Water Operators

Woloita Sodo Town Water Supply and Sewerage Corporation

Ambo Water Supply and Sewerage Service Enterprise

Uganda National Water and Sanitation Company

The Session

The discussion centred on establishing a national WOPs platform in Ethiopia to strengthen local utilities and expedite progress towards SDG6. This national WOPs initiative was viewed as an invaluable peer-to-peer mentoring platform, fostering the exchange of knowledge and innovation among utilities. While underlining the significance of domestic support, the conversation also underscored the advantages of forging international alliances with more progressive utilities, which could provide additional expertise and resources to support the sector. Key factors identified for the success of this national WOPs platform were a robust institutional framework, clearly delineated stakeholder responsibilities, dedicated financial mechanisms, and government support. It was acknowledged that the national WASH strategy and external know-how from partner utilities would be pivotal in laying the foundation for the WOPs platform.

[More Info](#)
[Watch the Session](#)

Thematic Session | WOPs

Workshop

MONITORING OF WOPS: GWOPA'S PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT PLATFORM (PMP) SHOWCASING/ TRAINING

Co-conveners

GWOPA

The Session

GWOPA launched a free online tool called the Partnership Management Platform (PMP) to help Water Operators' Partnerships (WOPs) with planning and monitoring. The PMP promoted accountability, participatory planning, communication, and knowledge sharing. The session shared the inspiration behind the PMP and its main features with interested stakeholders.

[More Info](#)
[Watch the Session](#)

Image: ©GWOPA/UN-Habitat.



THE CONGRESS WEEK

THEMATIC SESSIONS

SANITATION

Thematic Session | Sanitation

SANITATION AND WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT IN SWOPS

Co-conveners

IWA - International Water Association
 German Water Partnership
 Waterlinks
 Center for Water and Sanitation India
 VEI - Dutch Water Operators

The Session

The session delved into the challenges faced by sanitation-focused operators' partnerships (SWOPs). It emerged that, in contrast to water operators' partnerships, SWOPs deal with a broader spectrum of stakeholders and adopt a comprehensive approach to service delivery that includes both sewered and non-sewered sanitation systems. Global success stories highlighted the vital role of SWOPs in enhancing and expanding sanitation services and wastewater management. Insights were shared on the integration of public, private, and informal sectors into service provision and on how sanitation-focused operator partnerships are preparing service providers to meet the challenges posed by climate change.

[More Info](#)
[Watch the Session](#)

Thematic Session | Sanitation

SUSANA MEETS THE WATER OPERATORS

Co-conveners

SuSanA - Sustainable Sanitation Alliance

The Session

The Congress demonstrated its excellence as a networking platform for the wider water and sanitation sector. A network for individual expert and professional exchange on sanitation and development-related matters, the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance reached out to the Congress participants to link its constituency of academia, research and non-governmental organizations with water and sanitation service providers.

[More Info](#)

Thematic Session | Sanitation

WHY AND HOW CAN WATER UTILITIES BETTER SUPPORT GLOBAL WASTEWATER MONITORING?

Co-conveners

UN-Habitat

GIZ - Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH

The Session

Wastewater monitoring is critical in achieving SDG 6.3.1 within the 2030 Agenda despite challenges of funding, technology, human capacity, and communication. Country case examples revealed strengths and weaknesses in national approaches. The panel discussion underscored the impact of untreated wastewater on marginalized populations and the necessity for effective monitoring to enhance sanitation, public health, and environmental benefits. Elevating wastewater monitoring politically, encouraging investments, and improving data collection and infrastructure was recommended.

[More Info](#)
[Watch the Session](#)

Thematic Session | Sanitation

Workshop

WHEN NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTICIPATION CHANGES EVERYTHING: PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION IN INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Co-conveners

FESAN - Federación Nacional de Servicios Sanitarios Rurales Chile

UNAGUAS - Unión de Acueductos Griegos por el Ambiente y la Salud, Costa Rica

The Session

Participants learned how to analyze the situation of malfunction and abandonment of rural wastewater treatment plants and how to overcome this challenge through a simulation about the participatory evaluation method application in two rural communities of the Canton of Grecia in Costa Rica. This method of participatory evaluation of a wastewater treatment plant has been successfully implemented in the framework of a WOP in 2019 between FESAN and UNAGUAS (Costa Rica) with two rural operators, Acueducto Cajón de Bolívar and Acueducto Santa Gertrudis Centro, with the aim then to develop a pilot programme throughout the province.

[More Info](#)
[Watch the Session](#)

Thematic Session | Sanitation

Workshop

IMPROVING WORKING CONDITIONS FOR SANITATION WORKERS THROUGH STANDARDISED FSM SERVICES

Co-conveners

PASA - Pan-African Association of Sanitation Actors

FSMA - Faecal Sludge Management Alliance

SuSanA - Sustainable Sanitation Alliance

NAWASSCO - Nakuru Water and Sanitation Services Company Limited

Initiative for Sanitation Workers (WaterAid, SNV and The World Bank)

The Session

Sanitation workers face marginalization and unsafe working conditions, necessitating enhanced capacity, innovative protective equipment, and inclusion in national sanitation policies. Standardization in Faecal Sludge Management (FSM) is vital, requiring a universal language, adaptable levels of implementation, and a focus on risk and quality management. The discussions demanded that FSM standards be relevant, co-developed, and focused on promoting human and environmental health. Stakeholders should actively elevate the rights and working conditions of these workers into national and local political agendas and fill knowledge gaps. Faecal sludge management needs to be a priority. Expert discussions and knowledge exchange on standards and certifications must be on the local and international agenda.

[More Info](#)[Watch the Session](#)

Image: © GWOPA/UN-Habitat.

Image: ©GWOPA/UN-Habitat.

THE CONGRESS WEEK

THEMATIC SESSIONS

INNOVATION

Thematic Session | Innovation

TOWARDS DIGITALIZATION OF WATER SUPPLY: IMPROVING SERVICE DELIVERY AND PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY USING DIGITAL TOOLS

Co-conveners

Uganda National Water and Sanitation Company
eThekweni Water and Sanitation
VEI - Dutch Water Operators
Empresa de Acueducto y Alcantarillado de Bogotá
Arusha Urban Water Supply and Sanitation Authority
Mwanza Urban Water Supply and Sanitation Authority

The Session

The discussion highlighted how digitalisation has become increasingly relevant for water and sanitation services in recent years, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Cities like Bogota have successfully incorporated various digital tools and solutions in support of public service provision. Implementing low-cost digital solutions, combined with data engineering, significantly reduces NRW, a crucial factor in water service efficiency. In Durban, the concept of a smart grid for water involves the use of advanced technologies and data analytics to enhance the management of water resources, improve efficiency, and reduce wastage. Uganda is utilising digital applications for low-cost asset management decisions. Tanzania is taking an innovative approach to address non-revenue water. By combining digital leakage reporting and hydraulic modelling, they aim to improve network rehabilitation. This approach shows how technology can be used to tackle complex issues in water management.

[More Info](#)
[Watch the Session](#)

Thematic Session | Innovation

NEW TOOLS FOR UTILITIES TO MOVE FORWARD: SELF-ASSESSMENT AND BENCHMARKING FOR PERFORMANCE, MANAGEMENT, AND CREDIT WORTHINESS

Co-conveners

World Bank Group
Maynilad Water
Addis Ababa Water and Sewerage Authority
Water Supply and Sewerage Association Albania
African Water Association
AquaFed
Water Integrity Network
WIN - Water Integrity Network
VEI - Dutch Water Operators/WaterWorX

The Session

During the discussion, the topic of self-management and learning was explored in relation to improving water supply and sanitation services provided by utilities. The goal was to learn from one's own past and current performance and from others. The side event also provided an opportunity to gain practical knowledge of new tools available, such as the New IBNET platform (www.NewIBNET.org), and other complementary initiatives such as Utilities of the Future and the Water Utility Creditworthiness course. All these resources are available for utilities, regulators, and other development organizations.

[More Info](#)

Thematic Session | Innovation

TOOLS TO SUPPORT UTILITIES DESIGN AND OPERATIONALIZE SAFE, INCLUSIVE, AND SUSTAINABLE SERVICE MODELS IN SANITATION

Co-conveners

ESAWAS - The Eastern and Southern Africa Water and Sanitation Regulators Association

Athena Infonomics

FSMA - Faecal Sludge Management Alliance

The Session

The discussions focused on tools for cities to assess and plan sanitation services, expanding beyond water to include sanitation planning. Panellists highlighted evidence-based analysis of service gaps as a crucial step to improve market efficiency and inclusivity. They emphasised practical approaches for strategic service planning and the importance of a robust data ecosystem at the utility, national, and global levels for informed planning. GWOPA was urged to enhance peer-to-peer learning in sanitation alongside water service delivery. It emphasised the roles of political will and data analysis in advancing urban sanitation and supporting service providers.

[More Info](#)
[Watch the Session](#)

Thematic Session | Innovation

TRANSITIONING INTO DIGITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT WITH MWATER

Co-conveners

WaterAid

mWater

The Session

The workshop introduced mWater, a cloud-based tool for water and sanitation, highlighting its benefits in real-time data collection, asset management, and service delivery. It raised concerns about GPS accuracy and the sustainability of the open-access model. The workshop participants requested utilities to deploy mWater for asset management and decision-making and to promote collaboration and knowledge sharing through partnerships.

[More Info](#)
[Watch the Session](#)

Thematic Session | Innovation

Workshop

WATERPROOF: RAPID RETURN ON INVESTMENT ASSESSMENT OF NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS FOR WATER SECURITY

Co-conveners

TNC - The Nature Conservancy

IWA - International Water Association

The Session

The workshop introduced WaterProof, a tool for pre-feasibility analysis of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) projects. Participants explored the tool's features, including return on investment calculations and NbS implementation recommendations. The workshop marked a significant step in harnessing the potential of NbS, demonstrating how technology and innovative tools can drive positive change in water and environmental management.

[More Info](#)[Watch the Session](#)

Image: © GWOPA/UN-Habitat.



THE CONGRESS WEEK

THEMATIC SESSIONS

CLIMATE AND NATURE-BASED

Thematic Session | Climate and Nature-Based

UTILITIES MITIGATING CLIMATE CHANGE

Co-conveners

CoP Water Resources Resilience and Climate Change

WaterLinks

IWA - International Water Association

WaterWorX

The Session

The panel discussed climate resilience efforts in the water sector, focusing on programs that promote the exchange of climate-related practices among utilities. They highlighted the gap between climate goals and utilities' capabilities, including challenges with greenhouse gas measurement. Environmental strategies like reforestation and water reuse were presented as ways to manage increased demand and improve infrastructure. The discussions emphasized the importance of sector-wide collaboration and knowledge sharing, such as WOPs, to address uncertain climate impacts. They also addressed the complexities of equating energy reduction with greenhouse gas emission reduction and the need for adaptable systems in the face of climate and urbanization uncertainties. The importance of long-term environmental stewardship and regulatory compliance in sewage sludge management and water reuse methods was highlighted.

[More Info](#)

[Watch the Session](#)

Thematic Session | Climate and Nature-Based

GROUNDING NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS
AND WATER RESOURCE PROTECTION

Co-conveners

AySA - Instituto Costarricense de Acueductos y Alcantarillados

EAAB - Empresa de Acueducto y Alcantarillado de Bogotá

ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability

IWA - International Water Association

TNC - The Nature Conservancy

The Session

The workshop centred on nature-based solutions to protect and restore water systems, with examples from Costa Rica, Colombia, eThekweni Municipality, and the United Kingdom. In the discussions, participants stressed the impact of global scaling of cost-effective nature-based solutions through collaboration among stakeholders in municipal water systems, cost reduction for consumers, and the promotion of water funds as funding mechanisms. Key insights for future actions included addressing funding challenges for these solutions, particularly regarding risk mitigation for investments, and effectively communicating the ecological, economic, and flood risk reduction benefits of nature-based solutions.

[More Info](#)

[Watch the Session](#)

Thematic Session | Climate and Nature-Based

EXPLORING ENERGY OPTIONS FOR WATER PRODUCTION AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Co-conveners

USAID's Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Finance 2 Activity (WASH-FIN 2)

APE - Aqua Publica Europea

The Session

The event centred on implementing projects at the water-energy nexus. It emphasised energy measurements, efficient water treatment, incentives for utilities, and improving energy efficiency in water treatment, including wastewater energy harvesting. Participants raised the importance of ready-to-go projects for sustainable development, renewables to reduce carbon footprints, and effective monitoring. Challenges include balancing efficiency and cost, promoting renewables, ensuring access, and policy development. The session advocated for a comprehensive approach to integrating energy efficiencies and renewables and sharing best practices to address energy and environmental challenges.

[More Info](#)
[Watch the Session](#)

Thematic Session | Climate and Nature-Based

SUSTAINABLE WATER MANAGEMENT FOR IMPROVED URBAN LIVEABILITY AND RESILIENCE

Co-conveners

DTNP - Droogh Trommelen en Partners

City of Bonn

NAWASSCO - Nakuru Water and Sanitation Services Company Limited

UN-Habitat

The Session

The session highlighted the role of water utilities in enhancing urban resilience and emphasized the necessity for innovative approaches to assess urban hydrological systems. Additionally, urban infrastructure was discussed as a valuable resource for rainwater harvesting and infiltration. Integrating water management into urban design and planning, facilitated by tools such as the water flow diagram, was stressed as vital for achieving city-wide sustainable development and resilience. Case studies, including Nakuru, Kenya's Sponge City concept, were presented to illustrate these principles, underlining the relevance of holistic spatial planning for resilience and efficient service provision. The session also underscored the value of sharing knowledge and best practices among water operators to drive progress in building resilient urban water systems and sustainable practices.

[More Info](#)
[Watch the Session](#)

Image: Stronger Together: Women's Mentoring Breakfast ©GWOPA/UN-Habitat.



THE CONGRESS WEEK

THEMATIC SESSIONS

EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Thematic Session | Equity and Inclusion

ADOPTING A GENDER LENS FOR THE FUTURE OF WATER AND SANITATION JOBS

Co-conveners

SuSanA - Sustainable Sanitation Alliance

AySA - Instituto Costarricense de Acueductos y Alcantarillados

WaterAid

GWOPA

The Session

Gender inequalities within the water utility sector were identified as a critical and often unacknowledged issue. The conversation centred on adopting a gender-responsive approach to address these disparities, enhancing staff capacity to deal with gender-related issues, and fostering an inclusive work environment. During the session, tools for assessing gender, diversity, and inclusion were introduced, with a specific focus on recognising gender disparities in career progression and acknowledging the challenges faced by women in the water and sanitation field. This discussion emphasised the importance of advancing gender equality within the sector.

[More Info](#)
[Watch the Session](#)

Thematic Session | Equity and Inclusion

EQUITABLE WATER AND SANITATION PROVISION IN LOW-INCOME AREAS AND INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

Co-conveners

WIN - Water Integrity Network

Nakuru Government, Kenya

WaterAid

Eastern Umbrella of Water and Sanitation, Uganda

GWCL - Ghana Water Company Ltd.

VEI - Dutch Water Operators

SEDAPAL - Lima Water Utility Company

Engineers Without Borders Denmark and Novafos

The Session

Spatial planning is important for prioritising water services coupled with local ownership and knowledge dissemination. Economic planning taking precedence over utility service delivery, proactive land use planning, and integrity issues in delivering water to Low-Income Settlements (LICs) are identified challenges. The discussions stressed further the role of governments in addressing the financing gap and the need for better preparation to handle irregular practices affecting the poor.

[More Info](#)
[Watch the Session](#)

Thematic Session | Equity and Inclusion

WOPS IN HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS: SOLIDARITY PARTNERSHIPS BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER EMERGENCIES

Co-conveners

GIZ-Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH

GWOPA

Netherlands Red Cross

GWCL - Ghana Water Company Ltd.

LvivVodokanal - Lviv Water and Sewage Municipal Enterprise

SEDD - Dresden Sewage Enterprise

STEB - Cologne Sewage Enterprise

İSKİ - Istanbul Water and Sewerage Administration

The Session

The conversation emphasised the significance of sharing experiences to improve crisis management, strategic planning for various challenges, and the role of partnerships in emergencies. It underscored that well-established partnerships during peacetime, digitalisation, and securing adequate funding during crises are crucial factors for effective crisis response and recovery. However, it also pointed out the need for a comprehensive exploration of the function of WOPs in humanitarian contexts and their potential to foster collaborations between water operators and humanitarian organizations.

[More Info](#)
[Watch the Session](#)

Thematic Session | Equity and Inclusion

LEADERSHIP FOR TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE WOPS

Co-conveners

WIN - Water Integrity Network

VEI - Dutch Water Operators

The Session

Transparency, accountability, and integrity are essential for delivering effective and sustainable water services globally. A leadership program has effectively instilled a reformative mindset in participants, leading to enhanced ownership and operational improvements without additional investments. The WIN's integrity toolbox has been instrumental in improving participatory planning, teamwork, and public trust, subsequently enhancing service quality. Mentoring and innovative initiatives have significantly advanced water reliability and accessibility in low-income areas. A focus on community-centred integrity approaches and preventative anti-corruption models is crucial in addressing public issues related to corruption.

[More Info](#)
[Watch the Session](#)

Thematic Session | Equity and Inclusion

Workshop

STRONGER TOGETHER: WOMEN'S MENTORING BREAKFAST

Co-conveners

SuSanA - Sustainable Sanitation Alliance

Women in Water and Sanitation Network

Community of Women in Water

WfWP - Women for Water Partnership

RWSN - Rural Water Supply Network

African Women Sanitation Professionals Network

FSMA - Faecal Sludge Management Alliance

The Session

A speed mentoring workshop for female water and sanitation professionals with an informal mentoring concept drove the participants to broaden their network for their career development. The women from all walks of professional life in the industry were invited to join the highly interactive workshop. This workshop created peer support and comradeship in a male-dominated environment where women could address gender-specific challenges they have encountered and could seek advice on how to overcome them or share their experiences.

[More Info](#)

Thematic Session | Equity and Inclusion

Workshop

HOW UTILITY MANAGERS EMPOWER THE BEST YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

Co-conveners

AquaFed

Afr'eau - Action-Formation-Recherche en Eau

The Session

The session discussed the challenges of attracting young professionals to water utilities, emphasizing the significance of mentoring, the influence of technology and generational disparities, and the preference for immediate, attainable objectives. Partnerships and guidance in career pathways can be instrumental in enhancing the learning experience for young professionals.

[More Info](#)
[Watch the Session](#)

Ivan Ivanov

THE CONGRESS WEEK

REGIONAL SESSIONS

Regional Session I WOPs

SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE REGIONAL SESSION: 'LET'S SEE, COULD WE WOP SEE?'

Co-conveners

IAWD - International Association of Water Companies in the Danube River Catchment Area (IAWD)

with HWP - Hungarian Water Partnership

EYDAP - Athens Waterworks

SWP - Serbian Water Partnership

SHUK - Albanian Water Association

The Session

Panellists discussed the WOPs initiatives across the Danube Region and Europe, highlighting peer-to-peer exchanges, benchmarking, and the role of external support in enhancing water utility operations. They underlined the importance of stable recurring funding mechanisms for WOPs and clear action plans and further challenges such as resource mobilisation and lack of funding opportunities for the South-Eastern Europe (SEE) region. The session concluded with recommendations to continue consultations on establishing a WOP SEE platform, garner support from regional entities, and develop concrete proposals to strengthen WOP mechanisms in the region.

[More Info](#)
[Watch the Session](#)

Regional Session I WOPs

ASIAN REGIONAL SESSION: THE ROLE OF WOPs IN ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE IN URBAN ASIA

Co-convenor

WaterLinks

The Session

The session delved into the growing challenges climate change poses in Asia's urban water and sanitation sector. With rapid urbanization driving increased demand for reliable services, WOPs have emerged as crucial tools to mitigate climate impact and bolster system resilience. Long-term implementation was underscored as essential for meaningful results. Sanitation services were identified as a lagging aspect, impacting public health and livability. To address these pressing issues, heightened awareness, increased funding, and strengthened cooperation were proposed as necessary steps for expanding regional partnerships.

[More Info](#)
[Watch the Session](#)

Regional Session I WOPs

AFRICAN REGIONAL SESSION: BOOSTING THE WOP MODEL VIA A JOINT CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM MOBILIZING TRAINING HUBS THROUGHOUT AFRICA

Co-conveners

AfWASA - African Water and Sanitation Association
 National Water and Sewerage Corporation, Uganda
 Ethiopian Water Utilities Federation
 GWCL - Ghana Water Company Ltd
 VEI - Dutch Water Operators

The Session

African water utilities were urged to lead in improving service delivery, with external support complementing their efforts. Mentorship and continuous learning were identified as practical approaches to driving positive change. Utilities should invest in long term planning and develop bankable proposals to finance infrastructure projects. By actively engaging with peers, expanding mentorship programs, and investing in their workforce, WOPs can make significant strides to achieve sustainable development by 2030. Advancement of the WOP model in Africa with a call to multi-development banks including the African Development Bank and the World Bank to increased funding for water and sanitation infrastructure projects for utilities was proposed.

[More Info](#)
[Watch the Session](#)

Regional Session I WOPs

EUROPEAN REGIONAL SESSION: ENABLERS' DIALOGUE #2: HUMAN RESOURCES FOR WOPS: HOW TO MOBILISE UTILITY STAFF FOR PEER PARTNERSHIPS?

Co-conveners

GWOPA
 APE - Aqua Publica Europea

The Session

This session explored the critical role of utility staff in the success of European-led Water Operators Partnerships. The ability of many European utilities to engage in WOPs hinges on their capacity to identify and avail interested individuals with specific skills within their workforces. In the session, operators shared experiences on mobilising their utilities' staff time and skill sets to participate in WOPs effectively.

More Info

Regional Session I WOPs

SHARING KNOWLEDGE IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: WHAT WE ALREADY KNOW AND WHAT WE STILL NEED TO LEARN

Co-conveners

Cari-WOP - Caribbean Water Operators Partnerships
 CAWASA - Caribbean Water and Sewerage Association
 CWWA - Caribbean Water and Wastewater Association
 DOWASCO - Dominica Water and Sewerage Company Limited
 WASCO - Water and Sewerage Company Inc

The Session

The panel emphasised the significance of collaboration and the exchange of best practices among water utilities in advancing the achievement of SDG 6 in the Caribbean. Initiatives like the CARIBSAN Project were highlighted as instrumental in strengthening wastewater management and treatment. The Caribbean Development Bank's mission to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development through capacity building for water utilities was underscored. However, challenges remain, particularly in data collection for asset management and risk modelling. The session emphasised the need for enhanced cooperation among water utilities, development banks, and other stakeholders. To address skill gaps and ensure the continuous professional development of water operators, the introduction of the Professional Water Operator Program (PWOP) was recognised.

[More Info](#)
[Watch the Session](#)

Regional Session I WOPs

FROM CRISIS TO OPPORTUNITY: COLLABORATING FOR SUSTAINABLE WATER SOLUTIONS IN A WATER SCARCE MENA REGION

Co-conveners

ACWUA - Arab Countries Water Utilities Association

The Session

The importance of effective collaboration in water resource management to prevent conflicts was discussed. The adoption of digital technology by regional water utilities has proven effective in identifying Non-Revenue Water (NRW) losses. Discussions encompassed various facets of partnerships in the water sector, including regulatory streamlining, funding acquisition, and bolstering institutional capacity for wastewater treatment and recycling before release into water bodies. It was underscored that investments in water infrastructure necessitate a long-term perspective that considers maintenance, operational costs, and capacity building. Suggestions were made to promote research and establish technical groups dedicated to wastewater treatment, worker management, and the water-food nexus. Additionally, the proposal for a collaborative platform for Arab and international water utilities, with the support of GWOPA, holds significant promise for advancing the sector.

[More Info](#)
[Watch the Session](#)



Image: Ines Dombrowsky, Head of Programme for Environmental Governance and Transformation to Sustainability at the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS), delivers a welcome speech to the participants at the special event, IDOS ©GWOPA/UN-Habitat.

THE CONGRESS WEEK

SPECIAL EVENTS

Special Event

OPENING DAY COCKTAIL CO-HOSTED BY THE CITY OF BONN AND THE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION

The Event

By invitation of the City of Bonn and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation, a welcome reception was offered to the Congress participants and delegates, a possibility to connect and network with peers in an informal evening event on the first Congress Day.

Photo Album

Special Event

WATER RESILIENCE FOR THE SDGS AND BEYOND: ADAPTING GOVERNANCE AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The Event

On the evening of the second Congress Day, the special event was jointly organised by the Bonn Water Network, the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS), the UN-Habitat/ Global Water Operators' Partnership Alliance (GWOPA) and the city of Bonn. Bonn Deputy Mayor Melanie Grabowy welcomed distinguished speakers, including Mr. Michal Mlynár, Deputy Executive Director of UN-Habitat, and a discussion panel on the topic of "Adapting Governance and Infrastructure for Water Resilience." The event focused on water resilience as a comprehensive approach, highlighting the importance of engineering resilience in water supply infrastructure and integrative and ecologically centred approaches and institutional and governance dimensions. A reception followed the discussion. The Special Event was co-convened by the Bonn Water Network, the German Institute of Development and Sustainability, the UN-Habitat/GWOPA, and the City of Bonn.

Photo Album

Special Event

WOPS: GERMAN WOP FORUM LIVE-STREAM FROM BERLIN

The Event

On the Congress' third day, 24 May, the host country, Germany, expanded the discussion towards Berlin with the live broadcast from the "WOPs Forum". The 5th WOPs Congress participants were invited to join the Forum host, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

As part of Germany's contribution to the New Urban Agenda, the BMZ initiated the programme "Utility Platform for strengthening partnerships of municipal utilities worldwide." In the framework of the 5th WOPs Congress, Germany's water and wastewater companies shared their expertise with similar companies in GWOPA's partner countries at the German WOPs Forum. They made an excellent link to the Congress.

State Secretary Mr Jochen Flasbarth (BMZ) inaugurated the German WOPs Forum at the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) followed by comments, and discussions from representatives of the European Commission, the Association of Municipal Enterprises (VKU), Zambia, and the Netherlands emphasised in their interventions the importance of Water Operator Partnerships especially in the framework of the New Urban Agenda, for the sustainable development especially on local level.

More Info

LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND COMMUNITY

In addition to sessions, various learning and networking opportunities were offered through different activities.

WorldSkills, Digital Learning Lab, poster exhibitions, GWOPA pop-up Booth, films and technical tours.

Learning Activities and Community

WORLD SKILLS

WorldSkills International is organizing such events in more than 60 skills with the participation of more than 80 countries. Since 2019 the new skill #55, "Water Technology" sets training standards for the water sector. During the WOPs Congress 2023, a demo day showed young staff in action.

More Info



Image: ©GWOPA/UN-Habitat.



22 — 25 May 2023 Bonn, Germany

Learning Activities and Community

DIGITAL LEARNING LAB

The Digital Learning Lab, convened by the German Association for Water, Wastewater and Waste (DWA) was an ongoing exhibition through the Congress week. It provided the possibility for the participants to learn and try the virtual reality device to dive deep into the Microsoft-Holens experience and learn about the VR/AR applications.

The virtual reality glasses are aimed to support the training of water utility staff and the remote control of the water and sanitation plant, showcasing German wastewater treatment plants in 360° view.

More Info

Learning Activities and Community

POSTER EXHIBITION

Throughout the Congress week, poster presentations highlighted best practices and innovation in the lobby of the 5th WOPs Congress venue. This area became a hub of knowledge and innovation as representatives of Water Operator Partnerships (WOPs) displayed a total of 19 posters showcasing their successes and ground-breaking innovations. These presentations served as a powerful testament to the commitment and dedication of the WOPs community in advancing the water and sanitation sector.

More Info

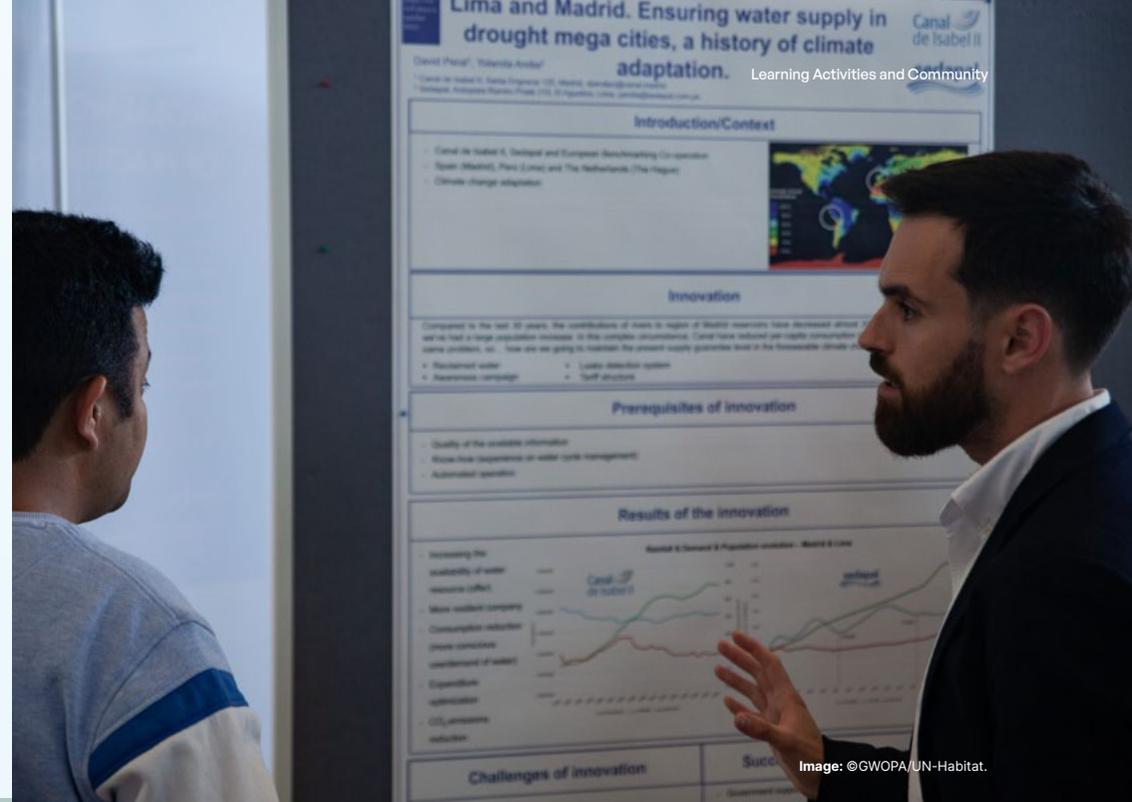


Image: ©GWOPA/UN-Habitat.

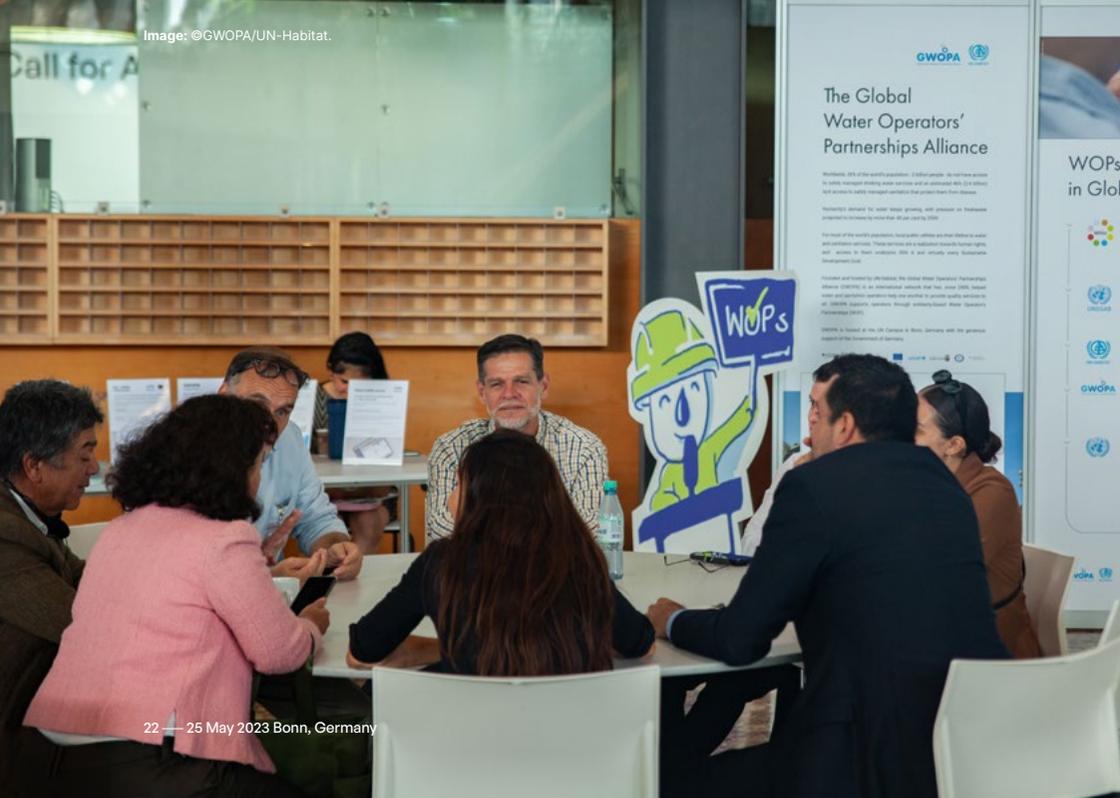


Image: ©GWOPA/UN-Habitat.

Learning Activities and Community

GWOPA POP-UP BOOTH

GWOPA Pop-up booth was a physical space to meet with peers, colleagues, partners and to build the operators' networks. The pop-up booth hosted a variety of organizations that presented their work in different ways. At every lunch and afternoon break, there were meetings with other organizations to determine what they were working on.

More Info

Learning Activities and Community

FILM

WATER GENERATION: YOUNG PROFESSIONALS SHAPING THE FUTURE

The film shared the stories of Young Water Professionals from African utilities presenting their daily work and life routines as employees in water supply or sanitation utilities to raise awareness and advocate for the complex challenges and solutions of their profession. Their testimony on the the major changes the water sector is confronted with, and present the needs in terms of professional training for water operators to meet growing demands despite constrained resources among other needs they might identify.

[Watch](#)


Image: © EU International Partnerships.



Image: © United Nations University - EHS.

22 — 25 May 2023 Bonn, Germany

Learning Activities and Community

FILM

UNU-EHS: FLOOD IN THE AHR VALLEY

In Germany in July 2021, the flooding of small towns and cities in the area between Bonn-Liege-Maastricht caused enormous material damage and human misery. In the Netherlands, Valkenburg was flooded, in Belgium Pepinster was greatly damaged and in Germany the Ahrtal (a touristic wine-growing area) and several old towns in the Eifel area were washed out by floods up to 8 meters above their normal level. The film displayed the emergency water supply during the Ahr valley floods.

[Watch](#)

Learning Activities and Community

FILM

BILT: GREENING TVET

The Bridging Innovation and Learning in TVET (BILT) project provides a platform to share and discuss different approaches to embed sustainability in curricula and training regulations, from the identification of specific knowledge and skills applicable to specific sectors to the integration of transversal skills linked to the awareness about climate change and resource efficiency.

Watch



Image: © UNESCO-UNEVOC.

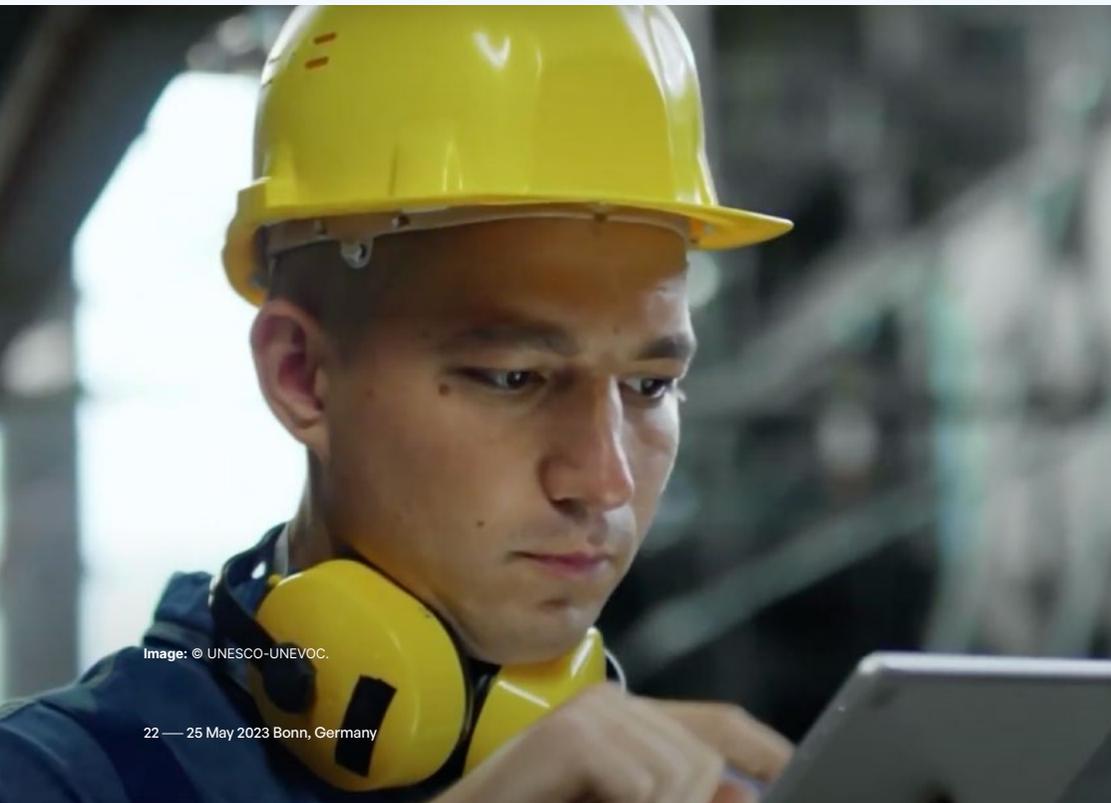


Image: © UNESCO-UNEVOC.

22 — 25 May 2023 Bonn, Germany

Learning Activities and Community

FILM

TVET FOR CLIMATE ACTION

UNESCO-UNEVOC supports TVET institutions in the development and implementation of green strategies to transform their learning and training environments in fulfilment of their role in skilling learners, upskilling professionals in green job sectors, and re-skilling those affected by job losses due to the transition. By mobilising TVET Institutions to engage in advocacy and adopt greening TVET practices, UNESCO-UNEVOC helps enable leaders and educators to effectively develop institutional green and climate-responsive strategies that have a positive impact on society and the labour market.

Watch

Image: Participants learn about the warning system at the new Rhine from the civil engineering office of the City of Bonn © GWOPA/UN-HABITAT.



Learning Activities and Community

TECHNICAL TOUR

NEW RHINE INTAKE AND EARLY WARNING SYSTEM MEHLEMER BACH

50 participants and delegates visited the new Rhine intake and early warning system for the Mehlemer Bach stream on the last day of the Congress. The civil engineering office of the City of Bonn guided and accompanied the technical visit.

The tour showcased the City of Bonn's response to the flooding events of recent years, causing millions of dollars worth of damage to infrastructure alone. With better knowledge of increased precipitation leading to floods, the city initiated several flood management measures. The new Rhine intake consists of a cut-off structure built on the lower reaches of the Mehlemer Bach stream. It relieves the old stream bed during heavy rainfall, protects the town and channels large volumes of water underground directly into the Rhine. In addition to the new Rhine intake system, an early warning system completes the early warning measures.

The success of the system in tackling the flooding situation is three-fold: flood management towards flood mitigation, flood preparedness and flood response. It embraces the catchment, streams and sewers, and is looked at from a social, technical and legislative perspective. Good results could already be observed in the summer of 2021, when those measures were crucial in minimising the impact of heavy rainfall.

Photo Album

Learning Activities and Community

TECHNICAL TOUR

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND TRAINING IN BONN
WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANTS

The second technical tour invited 50 Congress participants and delegates to the Bad Godesberg wastewater treatment plant. Located on the edge of the Rheinaue recreational park, it treats wastewater for around 110,000 people, which is one-third of Bonn's population.

The treatment plant in Bad Godesberg cleans 5.2 million cubic meters of wastewater per year, while in dry weather it generates up to 375 liters of wastewater per second, and in the case of rainstorms it is 800 liters per second. Its special feature since 2017, the treatment plant has been equipped with QR codes for quality assurance. The Conference participants received an introduction to the so-called wastewater technology training kit. Developed in Bonn, it is now also used abroad as a compact module for capacity building through training staff in wastewater treatment plants in the country and worldwide as for example in Jordan.

Photo Album



Image: The participants visit the wastewater treatment plant in Bad Godesberg and learn about the various techniques used in wastewater treatment.

PUBLICATIONS LAUNCHED AT THE CONGRESS

We have curated a detailed compilation of publications released
during the Global WOPs Congress week.



**Water Safety Plan Manual:
Step-by-Step Risk Management
for Drinking-Water Suppliers
Second Edition**

WHO/IWA

[Download](#)



**Groundwater Assessment and
Management for Sustainable
water-supply and Coordinated
Subsurface Drainage:
A Guidebook for Water Utilities
& Municipal Authorities**

Stephen Foster & Radu Gogu

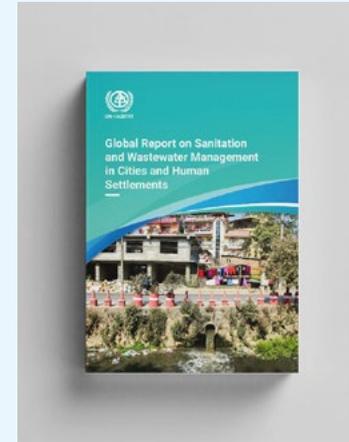
[Download](#)



**Completion Report
WaterWorX Phase 1**

VEI/WWX

[Download](#)



**Global Report on Sanitation and
Wastewater Management in
Cities and Human Settlements**

UN-Habitat

[Download](#)



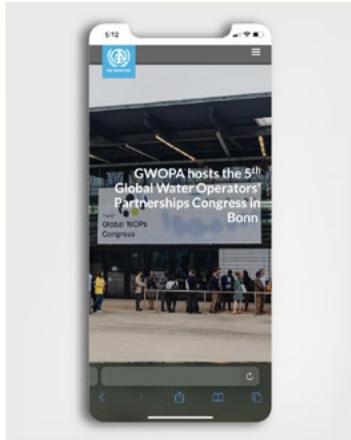
**When Vulnerabilities are
Exploited—The Role of
Sextortion in the WASH Sector in
Bangladesh**

WIN/UNU-MERIT

[Download](#)

ARTICLES RELATED TO THE CONGRESS

UN-Habitat News Center, HabPost, German Water Partnership, The International Water Association, and other internet portals published related articles about the congress.



GWOPA hosts the 5th Global Water Operators' Partnerships Congress in Bonn

UN-Habitat News Center

[More Info](#)



Feature Story: GWOPA convenes the 5th Global Water Operators' Partnership Congress in Bonn (HabPost)

HabPost

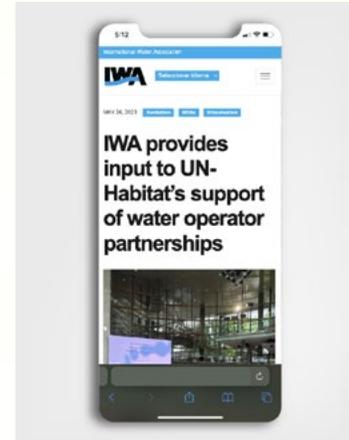
[More Info](#)



Congress Energizing Partnerships for Investments in Climate-Resilient WASH: Inspiration and insights from the 5th Global Water Operators' Partnership Alliance (GWOPA) Congress

USAID

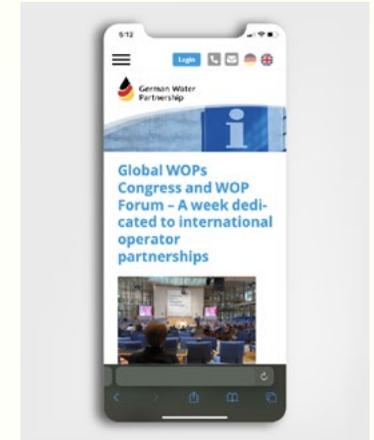
[More Info](#)



IWA Provides Input to UN-Habitat's Support of Water Operator Partnerships

The International Water Association - IWRA

[More Info](#)



Global WOPs Congress and WOP Forum – A Week Dedicated to International Operator Partnerships

German Water Partnership e.V.

[More Info](#)

FEEDBACK FROM THE CONGRESS AUDIENCES

There were several ways to share feedback with the Congress organisers.

“

I attended the conference and found it to be highly productive. Due to its success, I decided to join the online sessions for Day 2 and Day 3. The presentations were informative and comprehensive, and each one was followed by a moderated discussion. The conference session was organised and arranged well in terms of timing and interactivity, allowing for ample opportunities to speak and share ideas. Overall, it was a successful event. I personally hope to attend the next conference.

“

I had a very nice experience overall during this congress. Having attended two other conferences this year, including the UN 2023 Water Conference and IRC WASH symposium, this congress was particular on the specificity and the practicality of the topics addressed.



Image: ©GWOPA/UN-Habitat.



“

The diversity of presentations was very interesting for me and made me realise how each country or organization has to do so that young professionals will be able to sustain productivity and progress at work.

“

I just say I am so much impressed with the session and got a chance to make a strong network that can be useful for the betterment of WOPS.

“

I was inspired by the success stories presented at GWOPA, showcasing innovative approaches to ensuring sustainable access to water and sanitation. It has motivated me to explore similar strategies in my own utility, aiming for improved efficiency and sustainability.

“

I am delighted to have participated in the 5th WOP Congress held in Bonn last week. On day 1 and 2, I had the privilege to present my poster on “Rising Waters, Sinking Sanitation”. This connected my work on flood management in Bentiu, South Sudan to the SDG 6. This work was a collaboration between IOM - UN Migration, Deltares, Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) and Aquaverum which sought to find solutions to the flood that has lasted for about 3 years in Bentiu. I had many exciting discussions with experts and gained different insights on initiatives addressing risks posed by water in the context of climate change.

“

It was a great honour for me to participate in 5th GWOPA Congress to see knowledge sharing from water practitioners and academicians around the world. During the event, I had an opportunity to share our untiring efforts to achieve SDG6 and to promote innovation (with mWater). I also share our story on how low-income families in Semarang (Indonesia) face constant struggle to get clean water due to economic difficulties, severe flooding and land subsidence. And the presence of WOP, VEI WaterWorX and Water for Life project has given significant impact to water utilities (PDAM Kota Semarang) in improving community engagement and creating a positive transition in water service. This event also allowed me to broaden my professional network and to meet inspiring people.





PROGRAMME AT A GLANCE

Download



The 5th
Global WOPs
Congress



Resilience in Challenging Times

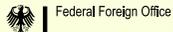
5TH GLOBAL WOPs CONGRESS

Mobilizing Collaboration for Future-Ready
Water and Sanitation Service Providers

In partnership with



Federal Ministry
for Economic Cooperation
and Development



Federal Foreign Office



Funded by the
European Union



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
Netherlands



حكومة أبوظبي
GOVERNMENT OF ABU DHABI

