

**Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance**

# **GWOPA Strategy**

**2013-2017**

GWOPA Strategy 2013–2017

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## Foreword by Dr. Joan Clos, Executive Director of UN-Habitat

It is my pleasure to present the Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance (GWOPA) Strategy, which will guide the Alliance's work over the next 5 years. True to GWOPA's principles, the strategy was developed through a participatory process, integrating the diverse views, aspirations and lessons of the many Water Operators' Partnerships (WOPs) implementers and supporters that have joined the network since its founding in 2009. The resulting strategy presents two complementary areas of focus: directly supporting WOPs operations and guiding the global growth of WOPs. The two approaches reinforce each other in the common goal of increasing the quality and quantity of not-for-profit partnerships between water operators worldwide.

These are exciting times for operators, who stand at the important junction of cities and water. There is growing recognition that urban water must be managed as part of the city in which it flows. The integrated urban water management approach is shedding light on the influence of urban land use and services on water quality and quantity. Conversely, the management of urban water and 'waste' flows in cities have major implications on urban ecology, economy, resilience and equity.

With the Millennium Development Goals framework ending in 2015, the UN thematic taskforce on water and sanitation is working hard to ensure that water and sanitation receive the prominence they deserve in the post-2015 development agenda. The Right to Water, sanitation access and wastewater collection and reuse are recurrent priorities in these discussions. UN-Habitat is also leading the way to ensure that cities figure prominently in the Sustainable Development Goals, and that our strategies for building a better future capitalize on the opportunities that urbanization – the great driver of development – has to offer.

Whatever the final formulation of these new goals, operators will be central to their achievement. In the prevention of slums, the extension of water and sanitation services, the improvement of livelihoods, and the conservation and reuse of resources, water operators have a crucial role. WOPs present a solid option for supporting operators to rise to these challenges.

I am thankful for the support of GWOPA's donors, in particular that of the Spanish government and the City of Barcelona, where GWOPA will be hosted for these coming 5 years in an inspiring, multi-disciplinary environment, in reach of the many important water stakeholders from Spain and elsewhere. GWOPA looks forward to implementing this strategy with their support and active participation.

Dr. Joan Clos, Executive Director of UN-Habitat



## Message from Dr. Uschi Eid, Acting Chair of UNSGAB

When the United Nations Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB) was drafting the Hashimoto Action Plan in 2006, the members engaged in long and spirited discussions about what recommendations and actions could have the greatest positive impact on achieving the water and sanitation Millennium Development Goal targets. It was clear then, as it is now, that building the technical, management and financial capacity of water operators was desperately needed. But how to build capacity at the scale needed, in an era when the money and resources available for technical assistance and training is limited? The answer lay in Water Operator Partnerships (WOPs).

By twinning water operators that have expertise to share with those who would benefit from that expertise, WOPs provide a win-win solution for capacity development. Not only is this approach cost-effective, it creates a culture of solidarity and inclusiveness among operators. All of this adds up to better water and sanitation services for the world's most needy.

The following objective was included in UNSGAB's Hashimoto Action Plan I : To strengthen local water services through WOPs while ensuring that WOPs are recognized as an important means of achieving internationally agreed targets. The Board was truly delighted when UN-Habitat adopted this objective as its own and agreed to build the Global WOPs Alliance. We continue to believe that WOPs are important means to contribute to achieve internationally agreed goals and the statistics support this view.

An important shift in the use of drinking water sources in the developing world has been the number of people using piped water connections, from 32 % in 1990 to 46% in 2010. Of 2.1 billion people that gained access to an improved drinking water source since 1990, 2 out of 3 gained access to a piped drinking water supply on premises. It is clear that utilities delivering piped supplies have to play a major role in solving our drinking water challenge. A good investment for the future is increasing both the human capacity and financial solvency of local water operators. Such investments could bring huge gains, especially for children, who die at the rate of almost 4,000 per day from waterborne diseases such as diarrhoea.

As the Global WOPs Alliance sets forth its strategy for the next five years, UNSGAB remains dedicated to supporting its efforts. During the next five years the world will both assess its MDG progress and set forth the post-2015 development agenda. As we assess and set goals, we must also focus on the means to achieve them. Setting goals is the easy part, it is the water operators dedicated to building and maintaining water and sanitation systems that actually move us toward the world we want.

Dr. Uschi Eid, Acting Chair of UNSGAB



# Executive Summary

Thousands of water operators in developing countries face an enormous challenge of strengthening service delivery to supply existing and fast-growing future populations and to meet national and global goals. Water Operators' Partnerships (WOPs) are peer-support exchanges between two or more water operators, carried out on a not-for-profit basis, with the objective of strengthening their capacity, enhancing their performance and enabling them to provide a better service to more people. WOPs have a proven track-record and can be highly cost-effective.

Formally founded by UN-Habitat in January 2009, upon the request of the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, the Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance (GWOPA) is an international network created to support WOPs. GWOPA has analysed success factors, developed guidance material, documented case studies and developed a strong alliance of water operators, UN Agencies, water associations, development partners, labour and civil society bodies, International Financial Institutions and the private sector. GWOPA has to date played a significant role in promoting and facilitating WOPs around the world. GWOPA is now moving to a UN-Habitat office in Barcelona where it has secured stable financing for the next five years.

Drawing from lessons learnt and input from external stakeholders, this 2013-2017 GWOPA Strategy seeks to sharpen its strategic focus, increase impact and concentrate on its main area of comparative advantage – fulfilling its global mandate for promoting WOPs.

## Vision and Mission

GWOPA's vision is that water and sanitation operators help each other to achieve universal access to sustainable water and sanitation services through not-for-profit peer support partnerships. These partnerships result in public operators – the target of support – with strong technical, financial and management capacity, able to provide a sustainable, high-quality service to all.

GWOPA's mission is to promote the effective use of not-for-profit partnerships between water operators to realize its vision. GWOPA will be the global leader in WOPs promotion, facilitation and coordination, and the principle source for WOPs knowledge and guidance so that effective WOPs contribute to meeting national and global water and sanitation objectives including those relating to the Millennium Development Goals, Sustainable Development Goals and the Human Right to Water.

## The 2013–2017 GWOPA Strategy

The strategy has two objectives:

- 1 **Guiding Global Growth of WOPs:** GWOPA's 2013-2017 strategy is to move to large-scale adoption of WOPs. To achieve this GWOPA will undertake activities in four strategic areas:
  - a. **Knowledge Management:** developing guidance material for WOPs, global trend analysis on WOPs and utilities, case studies on WOPs and documentation of best practices and lessons learnt.
  - b. **Branding of WOPs:** creating a clear and meaningful WOPs brand, establishing a global framework for benchmarking and certification of WOPs and establishing clear practices to which water operators can aspire in implementing WOPs.
  - c. **Communications:** through communications, networking, sharing information and disseminating knowledge products, GWOPA will promote WOPs and utilities. It will lead global coordination and advocacy for WOPs and mobilize greater political prioritization of WOPs.
  - d. **Alliance Strengthening:** growing the WOPs alliance by partnering with institutions that can influence WOPs and with agencies that will add value to partners' actions.



## 2 Strategic Operational Support to WOPs:

GWOPA's second objective is to provide operational support to WOPs implementation in the field. The work will focus on three strategic activity areas:

- a. **Strengthening Regional WOP platforms:** strategic support to regional platforms, moving to more performance-related regional support, assisting regional platforms to develop and monitor delivery of regional strategies and, where appropriate, facilitating inter-regional WOPs and transfer of experience.
- b. **Mobilizing Finance** for WOPs and helping to leverage significant follow-up investment from financial institutions for operators.
- c. **Direct operational support:** Strategic support to select partnerships, especially in geographical or thematic areas requiring particular attention.

## Organization and Governance

GWOPA is a programme of UN-Habitat and contributes to the agency's work plan. The GWOPA Secretariat coordinates the work of the Alliance and takes its direction from UN-Habitat's Executive Director, who is advised by GWOPA's International Steering Committee. The Steering Committee is drawn from Alliance constituencies within GWOPA's broader Alliance Membership. Elections for the Steering Committee occur during GWOPA's General Assemblies. Membership is open to all stakeholders in the water and sanitation sector.

This strategy proposes to expand GWOPA's influence through increased involvement of its members. GWOPA will also seek to broaden Alliance membership amongst key groups that are currently under-represented, including small and mid-sized operators, strong operators who could serve as mentors, International Financial Institutions, universities, knowledge centres and water associations.

## Funding and Budget

The hosting of GWOPA in Barcelona is supported by an annual grant from the Government of Spain of 1.1M Euros (1.4M USD) for a period of five years and a one-time contribution of 500,000 Euros from the Barcelona City Council and a consortium of major private sector actors in the city. In addition to that, to finance the 2013-17 strategy, GWOPA will seek to diversify its donor base, expand its engagement with utilities of the North and encourage the use of innovative funding for WOPs, such as decentralized solidarity mechanisms. GWOPA expects to increase its annual budget from 3million to 5million USD over the next 5 years. GWOPA's staff contingent will grow as a function of need and available resources, while seeking to make use of secondments of young professionals and experts from its partners.



# 1. The Urban Water Challenge

## 1.1. The Need

In March 2012 the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme announced that the Millennium Development Goal target for water had been met on the global level. From 1990 rates, the proportion of people worldwide un-served by improved drinking water had been cut in half, with 2 billion people gaining access during that period. While the announcement was hailed a testament to the power of a concerted global political effort to improve lives, it was cautioned that 780 million people remained without sustainable access to improved drinking water and that progress towards the MDG goal relating to sanitation lagged far behind, with 1.8 billion people worldwide still short of a decent toilet. Furthermore, it was recognized that many of those counted as accessing water supply experience unhealthy, intermittent, or exceedingly expensive water, meaning that the experience of “access” on the ground remains, in many cases, inadequate.

Today, half the people on the planet are urban dwellers. The world’s cities are growing at an unprecedented rate. Most urbanization (93%) is occurring in poor or developing countries. Nearly 40% of the world’s urban growth is the growth of slums; in Africa this is as high as 80%. Urbanization is not only centered in the rising megacities of the South, but also in the inexorable growth of secondary cities and towns.

Investments in infrastructure have not kept pace with urbanization. Water and waste services are not given the priority they deserve, and show significant underinvestment in comparison with their economic returns. Africa for example only invests 1.5% of its GDP in water and sanitation – about a third of what is required – and water tariffs cannot cover the difference; annually African water utilities collect 1.8 billion USD less than the cost of water production.

On top of underinvestment, urban water utilities in much of the world are straddled with low capacity and weak governance. Water utilities in developing countries are characterized by high rates of system leakage, high levels of non-revenue water, significant skill gaps, weak governance and financially unsustainable operations. Many utilities serve less than two-thirds of the population in their jurisdiction with the poor receiving the worst services. Piped water coverage is declining in many settings and

yet the poor pay the highest water prices. Few urban authorities in developing countries have found a sustainable solution to urban sanitation. Many cities and towns cannot afford to extend sewers to the slums; nor can they treat the volume of sewage already collected; nor have they found acceptable on-site solutions to serve the urban poor. Urban sector institutional arrangements are fragmented, and roles are not structured for efficiency or success. Their ability to address service challenges is limited by poor governance, ineffective institutional frameworks, and outdated skillsets. In general, water operators have a long way to go to provide effective and efficient services (see Figure 1).

As water demand grows, water scarcity is an increasing constraint to urban water management and developing new sources is becoming economically and environmentally unjustifiable. Lack of control of wastes results in the loss of valuable resources and increasingly polluted water sources, degrading the environment and increasing the cost of water provision. Sustainable water management requires cities to plan with the whole river-basin in mind.

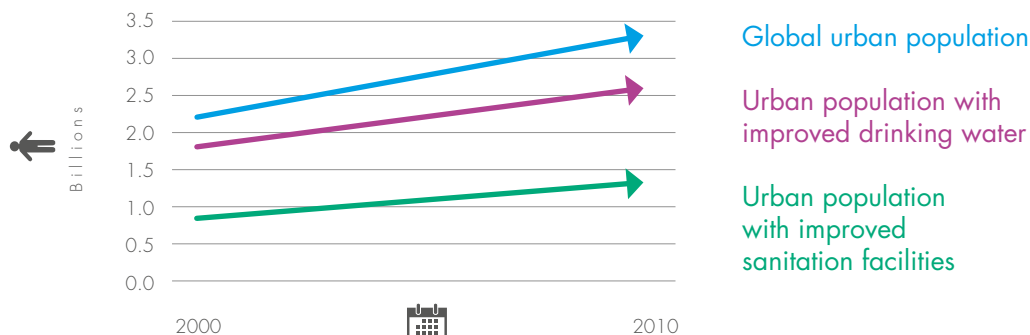
Finally, the water sector is being increasingly affected by climate change, particularly through the impact of extreme events, such as floods and droughts. Water resources are expected to change, both in quantity and quality; and water, drainage and wastewater facilities will face greater risk of damage. The effects of climate change will mean more difficult operations, disrupted services and increased costs for water and wastewater services.

## 1.2. The Opportunity

Urbanization does not only bring challenges; it also brings with it the conditions for improving water management. Cities are generators of wealth and employment, incubators of innovation and creativity, and offer good prospects for better lives. Cities offer economies of scale and opportunities for efficiency in infrastructure development, including water and waste services. Because of the ability to serve many people in a city, the water and sanitation MDGs have been more achievable in urban than in rural areas, where there is greater poverty and where the dispersed nature of rural settlements increases costs.

**Figure 1**

### Urban Access to Water Supply and Sanitation



Urban water and sanitation service delivery extension is not keeping pace with urbanization. While nearly a billion people have gained access to water in cities in this first decade of the 21st century, this is no faster than urban population growth. The absolute number of city dwellers without access to improved sources has grown since the turn of the century (source: WHO/UNICEF, 2012).

Urban environments give the poor the best chance of improving their level of water services. Cities offer the opportunity for integrated urban development with water better integrated within city-wide urban planning. For water management, this could mean adoption of more efficient water treatment technologies, increased capture and re-use of water and wastes, better optimization of the interdependency between water and energy, water-sensitive land use planning, decentralizing management, and reducing the costs of water provision. Box 1 describes the role of UN-Habitat in helping cities capitalize on the benefits of urbanization.

#### The Importance of Water Operators

Despite their frequent lack of capacity, water operators are the key actors in the management of urban water and sewerage services. From independent utilities that supply water and sewerage services on a professional basis to millions of customers in capital cities, to small units in local governments of small towns and community-based operators in slums, water operators vary widely. Whether made up of a vast workforce of managers, administrators, engineers and labourers, or managed by a single individual, water and sanitation operators provide an organizational and technical capacity, even in the poorest towns. The responsibility placed on these essential service providers is enormous and many need urgent, dedicated support.

#### Box 1

##### UN-Habitat: Promoting Positive Urbanization

UN-Habitat is playing a leading role in guiding the urban development agenda. Under new leadership, the organization was realigned in 2012 for greater efficiency, productivity, transparency and accountability. The current work to define the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals presents an opportunity for UN-Habitat to incorporate urban development goals into the wider sustainability agenda. The transition from spontaneous to planned urbanization requires robust governance capacity at both the national and local levels, and it is imperative that water operators play their full role in this process.

UN-Habitat has restructured its operational programme along seven thematic axes: urban legislation, planning, economy, basic services, housing and risk reduction. GWOPA's contribution aligns most directly with urban basic services, however there are also natural connections with the others. Seizing the opportunities that cities offer to improve sustainable water and sanitation services requires stepping outside sector boundaries.

## 1.3. The Response

### Water Operators' Partnerships (WOPs)

WOPs make use of the fact that while many operators lack capacity, others have it in abundance, and are willing to share it on a solidarity basis. A WOP is a peer-support exchange between two or more water or sanitation operators, carried out on a not-for-profit basis with the objective of strengthening capacity, enhancing performance and enabling the water operator to provide a better service to more people, especially the poor.

WOPs have existed in one form or another for decades and vary greatly in their objectives, approach and outcomes. Nevertheless, they are always carried out by and for utilities, and according to a number of guiding principles, notably not-for-profit and integrity.

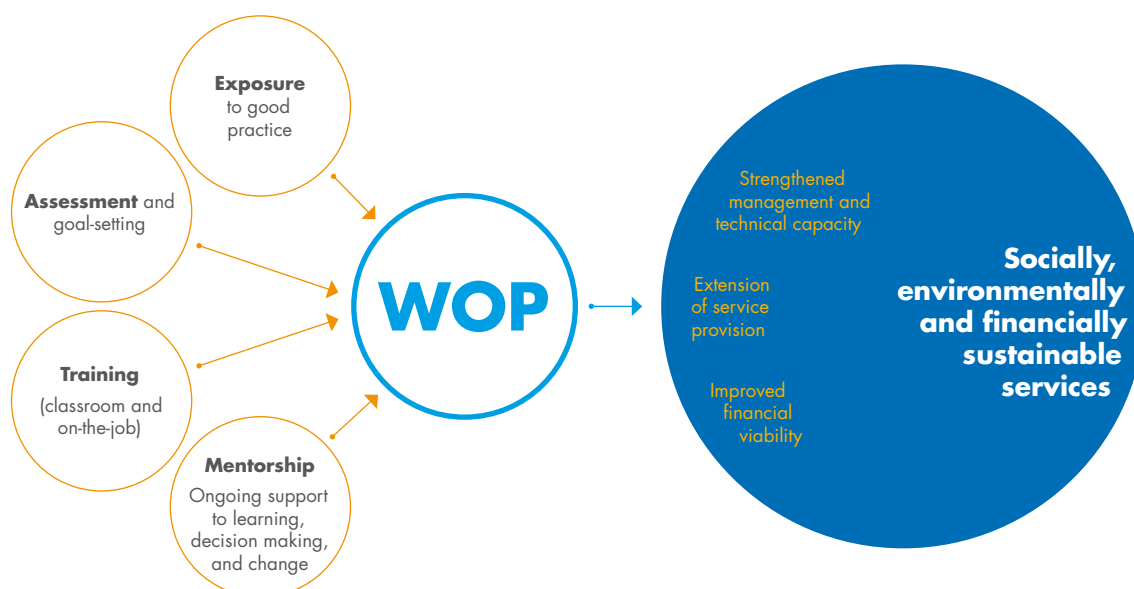
WOPs propose to increase the ability of water operators to meet the needs of the people they are meant to serve, by enabling them to improve and extend their services. WOPs work by harnessing the

skills, know-how and goodwill within a strong 'mentor' utility in order to sustainably build the capacity of another utility – the 'mentee' – that needs assistance. Through mentorship, WOPs progressively strengthen and empower the mentee operator at management, financial and technical levels to implement changes that will lead to better performance and service. Common WOP themes are described in Box 2.

Some WOPs focus on a particular aspect of service provision or seek to change particular processes, while others are more comprehensive. Most work by changing processes that will result in increased efficiency, leading to greater financial sustainability and the eventual ability to improve and extend services. Other WOPs help the mentee extend their services directly. They may focus on transfer of expertise around pro-poor service delivery, extension into informal settlements, fair tariff setting, and so on. Given the dual need of urgently expanding provision and ensuring the capacity to maintain that service over the long term, WOPs ideally pair an explicit focus on service extension with long-term efforts to ensure sustainability (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

### Improving service sustainability at the operator level



## Box 2

### Some of the Areas where WOPs can Help

**Non-revenue water (NRW)** NRW, water that is “lost” (through leaks, theft, illegal usage or legal usage with no payment being made) is a major threat to the viability of water operators. WOPs can help in reducing losses through leakage reduction, better system operation and maintenance and/or improved commercial practices.

**Billing and collection** Utility managers know that efficient billing and collection systems are critical to the financial health of a utility, but they should also support environmental and equity objectives. WOPs can bring in diagnostic skills and knowledge of robust systems that enhance billing accuracy, solve customers’ billing queries and improve collections from overdue accounts. In addition, specific strategies are needed to address non-payment from government agencies.

**Governance** WOPs can help operators improve governance and share experience of processes in which operators are more accountable to users and more aware of customer concerns.

**Sanitation** Operators can play a role in getting more users connected to centralized sewer systems, or in enabling better decentralized sanitation systems. Introducing sanitation into un-served urban areas requires operators to have a range of social, financial and technical skills, which makes the support of experienced operators invaluable.

**Wastewater** Neglected until recently, wastewater is now becoming a priority for cities and development partners. Without proper wastewater collection and treatment, progress in drinking water coverage won’t achieve its full impact on people’s health and dignity. A growing understanding of the water, energy and food nexus is also highlighting the hidden value of ‘waste’ water as a potential resource. WOPs can help demonstrate the options and develop the capacity of staff to manage.

**Energy efficiency** Energy commonly represents upwards of 30% of a utility’s total operation and maintenance costs, and is a major contributor of greenhouse gases. But power is among the largest controllable costs of providing water and wastewater services. WOPs can help utilities to sustainably manage and reduce energy costs by helping operators analyze their current energy usage, implement energy audits to identify opportunities to improve their efficiency, and ultimately develop energy management programs.

**Climate resilience** Climate change impacts pose acute challenges to water utilities: extreme weather events, sea-level rise, temperature changes, and shifting precipitation and runoff patterns may result in changes to water quality and availability and severe impacts on utility assets. Mentor and mentee utilities can together identify risks and adopt climate change adaptation practices, for example in asset management, water supply and demand planning, and in security and emergency preparedness.

**Water quality management, water resources protection and pollution prevention** Water quality, water pressure, continuity of service, protection of water resources and prevention of pollution are key topics in service management which can benefit from capacity building and experience exchange with more experienced operators. Water Safety Planning has been a common topic for short-term WOPs.

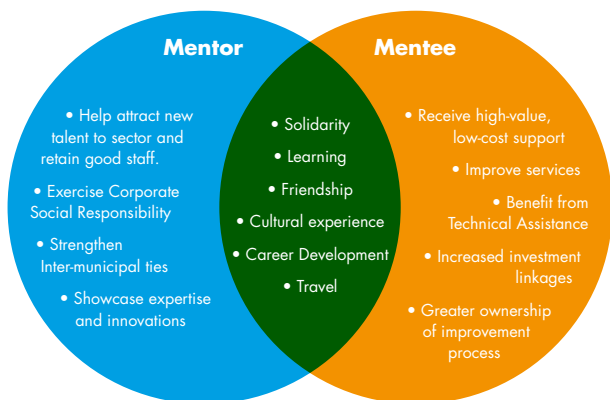
**Human resources development and Labour relations** Lack of skilled staff is the most common problem identified by water operators in developing countries and labour-management conflicts can be an obstacle to effective service provision. Water and sanitation work is often carried out in the absence of health and safety regulations. WOPs can provide training and mentorship to help both management and labour be more effective, and to work more productively together.

**Expanding service access to the poor** Serving the poor, often living as tenants in slums, in informal settlements or highly congested areas, dealing with large-scale illegal connections, or managing small-scale vendor operations requires specific approaches, skills and experience which many busy utilities do not have. WOPs can help build skills and offer tested approaches to extending access.

Mentor water operators with relevant skills and experience, and mentee water operators that express a demand for assistance to improve their operations, have complementary motivations for taking part in non-commercial partnerships. The main incentive for the mentee operators is to acquire high-calibre skills and capacity at a low cost to improve their performance and gain comparative experience for their staff. The key incentives for mentor operators are building the comparative experience for their staff while making their jobs more interesting, gaining exposure and enjoying global visibility. It's the combined incentives of WOP mentors and mentees that fuel the partnerships (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3**

### Motivations behind a win-win partnership



### Establishment of GWOPA

Recognizing the potential of partnerships as a response to the challenges, the United Nations Secretary General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB) made WOPs a prominent feature of its 2006 Hashimoto Action Plan. Former UN Secretary General Mr. Kofi Annan requested UN-Habitat to lead the establishment of a mechanism to scale-up WOPs, and host its international secretariat.

UN-Habitat founded the Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance (GWOPA) in 2009 and established a global governance structure to guide its operations. A Steering Committee, representing the full range of stakeholders in WOPs, was elected from amongst the membership of the Alliance. The Alliance adopted a set of principles and a code-of-conduct and created an Integrity Sub-committee to help ensure compliance. In 2011, half of the Steering Committee was renewed at GWOPA's first General Assembly.

UN-Habitat established a stable GWOPA Secretariat team of five international staff members at its Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. The Secretariat is now hosted in a UN-Habitat office in Barcelona (see Box 3).

### Box 3

#### Hosting in Barcelona

Seeking to mobilize sustainable funds for GWOPA, UN-Habitat launched a Call for Expressions of Interest to host the GWOPA Secretariat in January 2012. Following review of competitive bids received from the Netherlands, Spain and Turkey, the offer by the City of Barcelona was accepted as the new host for the Secretariat for the next 5 years. The Secretariat has relocated to Barcelona where it will be hosted in a UN-Habitat office in the Sant Pau Complex and backed with core secretariat funding from the Spanish Government.



In its first five years, GWOPA focused its work in four main areas:

### Knowledge Management

GWOPA has analyzed WOPs and shared insights into what makes them succeed. It has developed case studies of WOPs and an evolving global database of WOPs profiles to analyze what makes for impact, and has organized a range of capacity building and knowledge exchange interventions such as the first Global WOPs Congress in 2011. These show that WOPs can achieve significant increases in service access for first time consumers, improve operational cost ratios and billing collection and reduce water losses. Case studies of WOPs carried out in Asia and Africa illustrate some of the results obtained and summarize key lessons on what makes for effective WOPs (see Box 4).



### Global WOPs Coordination, Communications and Advocacy

GWOPA has provided global coordination and advocacy for WOPs. GWOPA has been highly visible in international fora and has developed materials to promote WOPs. It hosts international and interregional dialogue on WOPs and draws from its vibrant network of utilities, professional associations, civil society and financing institutions to empower mentored utilities to identify issues and select solutions. GWOPA has developed a range of electronic and other networking tools to support WOPs.

### Box 4

#### Ingredients of a Successful WOP

Key lessons as to what makes for successful WOPs include:

- Follow-up investments: an important lesson is that the impact of capacity building can be transformative when accompanied by large-scale follow-up investments. For example, an initial WOP may help utilities prepare a thorough analysis of non-revenue water and introduce investment-free practices that help reduce losses, but unless there is the finance to improve the network, the impact will remain limited. WOPs should also play a role in helping utilities generate follow-up resources.
- Time and diagnosis: For lasting impact, WOPs require time for parties to get to know each other, to diagnose, learn and implement, and to begin tackling broader issues of governance.
- Commitment to quality control: A clear definition of measurable objectives is an important starting point for a WOP. Insistence on quality control and follow-up are critical for success.
- Demand-centred approaches: WOPs are most effective when they respond to demand by the mentee. The mentee must be active in defining its own issues, priorities and solutions, and all the staff should be involved, as top-down approaches imposed by the top management tend to be short lived and may encounter resistance.
- Quality mentors: successful WOPs require mentors with the right skill set, sufficiently motivated and open to adapting to the mentee's context. Greater focus is needed in identifying, supporting and incentivizing mentors, particularly in countries of the South.

### Finance Mobilization

GWOPA has assisted in financing WOPs by providing seed funding, linking donors to identified WOPs projects, and giving guidance to water operators on where they could gain financial support for WOPs. GWOPA has assisted in mobilizing funds for dozens of WOPs. GWOPA also works at a political level to advocate that governments and financial institutions allocate more resources to WOPs, and promotes innovative sources of WOPs financing, such as decentralized solidarity mechanisms.

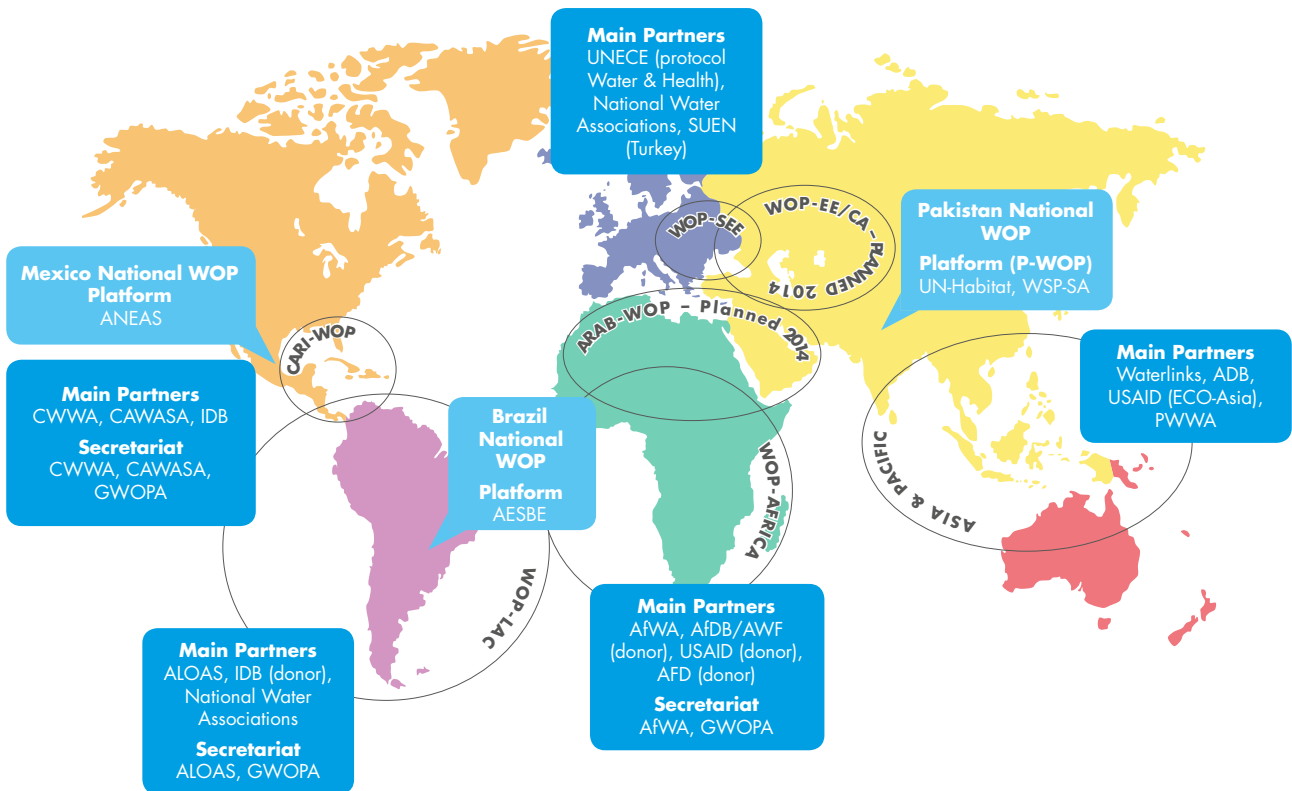
### Supporting Regional WOP Platforms

GWOPA has helped establish regional platforms for WOPs in Africa, Asia, the Pacific, South East Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean. It assists regional WOP platforms to develop business plans, helps them to raise money to support WOPs, and provides guidance on WOPs implementation. In some regions, GWOPA works with established platforms. In Asia, GWOPA's regional partner is Waterlinks, founded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the International Water Association (IWA), and the United States Agency for International Development

(USAID/ECO-Asia). In Africa, considerable effort has been expended in establishing a functional WOP platform with the African Water Association (AfWA). WOP-Africa has received financial support from the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Groundwork has been laid for the establishment of new platforms in Eastern Europe and Central Asia and the Arab Region by 2014. Furthermore, in response to strong demand in Pakistan, Mexico and Brazil, platforms were established at national level to facilitate in-country or international WOPs. The map in Figure 4 shows the major regional and national platforms.

**Figure 4**

### GWOPA Regional Support





## 2. Lessons from GWOPA's First Five Years

In preparing the strategy, GWOPA staff were led through a SWOT analysis and interviews, various internal and external reports were reviewed, and 21 stakeholders were consulted (see Annex 1). The resulting lessons were used to inform GWOPA's new strategy:

- 1 Global WOPs promotion and guidance at scale:** As a UN initiative, GWOPA has strong convening power and global reach, can draw on a diverse array of actors and can work with different levels of government. Its comparative advantage is in setting the framework for WOPs, providing guidance, being a knowledge centre for WOPs and promoting WOPs and the work of utilities. As such, GWOPA is well placed to lead global efforts to scale up and raise the quality of all WOPs.
- 2 Global profile and high-return collaboration:** GWOPA's strong existing profile and network might be further strengthened. Formalizing collaboration with some of the stronger relevant global players, including more financial institutions, knowledge centres and water utility networks, would enhance GWOPA's influence.
- 3 Communications and advocacy:** Communications and advocacy are critical to GWOPA's efforts and need to be conducted strategically to address key targets with differentiated messages. Key targets include small utilities that need help, as well as progressive operators who could serve as mentors. An increased focus is needed on development banks and sources of investment finance essential for impactful WOPs, as well as on national governments, whose endorsement can be vital for policy support and loan guarantees.
- 4 Specific branding of the term WOPs:** to improve the quality of WOPs, GWOPA should clearly define success factors for WOPs and use branding incentives to encourage good WOPs practice. The WOPs image gets down-graded when the term is applied to visits, meetings and exchanges which have little lasting impact. WOPs need specific branding and clear guidelines to associate them with high impact not-for-profit exchanges and to raise the bar on all utility exchanges.
- 5 Global knowledge management:** High quality analysis of WOPs and utilities is essential to increase the evidence base on what makes for success. Global and regional monitoring information on WOPs and utilities is needed to track global progress and trends. GWOPA is in a strong position to play a leading role in promoting this global evidence base and analysing trends in WOPs and utilities, and using this information to inform improved practice through WOPs guidance and other tools.
- 6 Promoting good utility practice:** A bold yet balanced vision of strong operators is needed to encourage efficiency and reform and also give attention to social and environmental considerations. Areas for additional guidance to operators include emerging themes such as wastewater, climate change adaptation, energy efficiency, labour-management cooperation, and practices which contribute to realizing the Right to Water.
- 7 Regional WOP platforms:** GWOPA now has considerable experience in establishing and supporting regional WOP platforms. Regions have widely differing requirements and weaker regions need increased support. Roles identified for GWOPA include encouraging international support (by bringing in donors and mentors) and facilitating inter-regional WOPs and knowledge exchange between platforms. In some regions, GWOPA might consider incentivising the performance of regional WOP platforms to give a greater focus on results.
- 8 Financial leverage:** Access to follow-up financing is a key requirement to realizing the full benefits of a WOP. Many stakeholders hope that GWOPA can play a key role in helping operators to gain investment. To do this, stakeholders encourage GWOPA to diversify its funding sources, increase its role in leveraging finance for WOPs from development banks and donors and gain buy-in from the biggest investors in water utilities.

## 3. GWOPA Strategy 2013–2017

### 3.1. Vision

GWOPA's vision is that water and sanitation operators help each other to achieve universal access to sustainable water and sanitation services through not-for-profit peer support partnerships. These partnerships result in public operators – the target of support – with strong technical, financial and management capacity, able to provide a sustainable, high-quality service to all.

### 3.2. Mission

GWOPA's mission is to promote the effective use of not-for-profit partnerships between water and sanitation operators to realize its vision. GWOPA will be the global leader in WOPs promotion, facilitation and coordination, and the principle source for WOPs knowledge and guidance so that effective WOPs contribute to meeting national and global water and sanitation objectives including those relating to the Millennium Development Goals, Sustainable Development Goals and the Human Right to Water.

### 3.3. Strategic Objectives

Responding to the feedback from stakeholders and learning lessons from its first phase, GWOPA's 2013-2017 strategy has two objectives.

#### Objective 1: Guiding Global Growth of WOPs

GWOPA's 2013-2017 strategy is to move to large-scale adoption of WOPs. To achieve this GWOPA will undertake activities in four strategic areas:

#### Knowledge Management

A key strategic action is to strengthen GWOPA's global knowledge management function. GWOPA will deepen knowledge of what makes for successful WOPs and develop and promote disaggregated models of how WOPs should function. GWOPA will enter into partnerships with renowned universities

and learning institutions to support the analysis and production of high quality tools and guidance material for WOPs. Selection of priority knowledge products will be made on the basis of utility demand and GWOPA strategic priorities. GWOPA will continue to produce strong analytical case studies to distill lessons that can help increase adoption and effective use of WOPs.

GWOPA will seek to become the authority in the WOPs arena. This means identifying potential mentors, categorizing their skill set, understanding their motivation and developing a detailed analysis as to what is needed to stimulate their contribution to WOPs. On the other hand, GWOPA will develop a comprehensive understanding of potential mentees, disaggregating demand. GWOPA will, with other initiatives, seek to improve global trend analysis and monitor inputs and outputs of utility performance. A quality management system for GWOPA knowledge products, incorporating target audience and expert peer review, will be put into place.

#### Branding of WOPs and GWOPA

GWOPA will develop WOPs as a quality brand. It will establish a variety of successful models of WOPs leading up to comprehensive, long-term partnerships and, through a branding strategy, create incentives for improving performance in WOPs.

From the development of WOP models of best practice, GWOPA will develop a certification process for WOPs creating incentive for adoption of quality processes. To complement the certification process, GWOPA will establish verification processes.

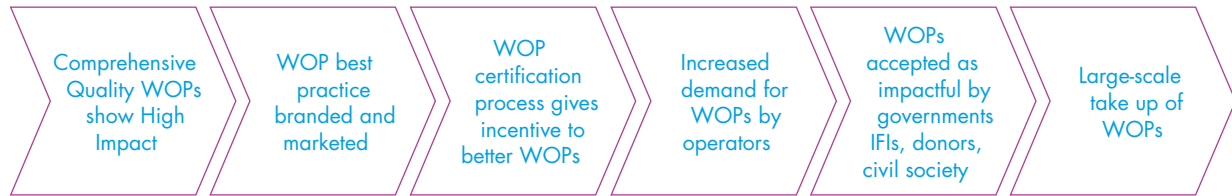
Through maintenance of a strong brand, production of quality materials, strong analytical capacity, WOP certification, high profile partnerships and strong global representation, GWOPA will seek to become a ubiquitous partner in WOPs as they are scaled up around the world. Figure 5 shows how GWOPA will work towards the large-scale take-up of WOPs.

#### Communications and Advocacy

GWOPA's focus on knowledge generation will be matched by increased attention to dissemination. A communications action plan will identify targets and means of dissemination for knowledge products.

**Figure 5**

### GWOPA taking WOPs to Scale



GWOPA will lead a strong advocacy and networking component to promote utilities and WOPs. It will convene and actively participate in global dialogue and international meetings to promote the search for solutions to the challenges faced by utilities. GWOPA will also continue to mobilize political and financial support to WOPs. In this respect, GWOPA will make specific efforts to raise the national and global political priority given to utilities and WOPs as a development strategy. GWOPA will continue to develop an active web-platform for communicating on WOPs and for accessing e-tools.

#### Alliance Strengthening

Partnerships are essential to bringing in the range of high level expertise required to support GWOPA's objectives. GWOPA's effectiveness is premised on a robust network. In the coming 5-year period, GWOPA will increase the size and strength of the Alliance at various levels.

The Secretariat will lead an effort to increase the active involvement of GWOPA members in Alliance activities, particularly amongst water operators who are interested in serving as mentors or mentees in WOPs. GWOPA will also elaborate and/or formalize existing collaborations with Alliance partners, specifically with members who can contribute substantively or financially to WOPs. GWOPA will map and monitor the global landscape of water operators and seek to establish working partnerships with influential agencies that can promote WOPs and contribute to the various activity areas of GWOPA.

#### Objective 2: Strategic Operational Support to WOPs

GWOPA's second objective is to provide operational support to WOPs implementation in the field. The work will focus on three strategic activity areas:

#### Strengthening Regional WOP Platforms

GWOPA will continue to support the development of regional, and, where demand exists, national platforms to support WOPs. Regional WOP platforms currently exhibit different levels of organization and require specific types of support from the Global Alliance, from building a governance structure to engaging support staff to financing WOPs activity.

GWOPA will continue to assist regional platforms to develop and monitor delivery of regional strategies and work plans and, where appropriate, facilitate inter-regional WOPs and transfer of experience. In some regions, GWOPA will opt for a performance-based regional support to incentivize performance and to focus support on the most overlooked regions and utilities.

#### Mobilizing Finance and Support for WOPs

WOPs will not grow without financial support to initiate transactions and follow-up investment in service improvement for mentee operators. GWOPA will intensify the mobilization of financial resources both to support transactions as well as helping to catalyze financial support for follow-up investment (see Box 5). The key to financial mobilization in a competitive financial environment is to demonstrate results and impact, so this activity needs to move forward with GWOPA's knowledge management and communications activities.

Figure 6 shows how short term WOPs are being used to develop Performance Improvement Plans (PIPs) that can attract larger investment. Implementation of the PIPs would then be carried out by the mentee with mentor support through a longer-term WOP.

## Direct Operational support

GWOPA will offer a match-making, brokering and facilitation service to partnerships. This support will focus on specific areas and regions, backing reform champions who could provide a model to others, and

on the testing of innovations. Direct strategic support will be carried out under the auspices of the regional platforms, increasing their volume of WOP activities while bringing in additional mentors and expertise, ensuring application of WOPs principles and tools, and maximizing knowledge transfer.

### Box 5

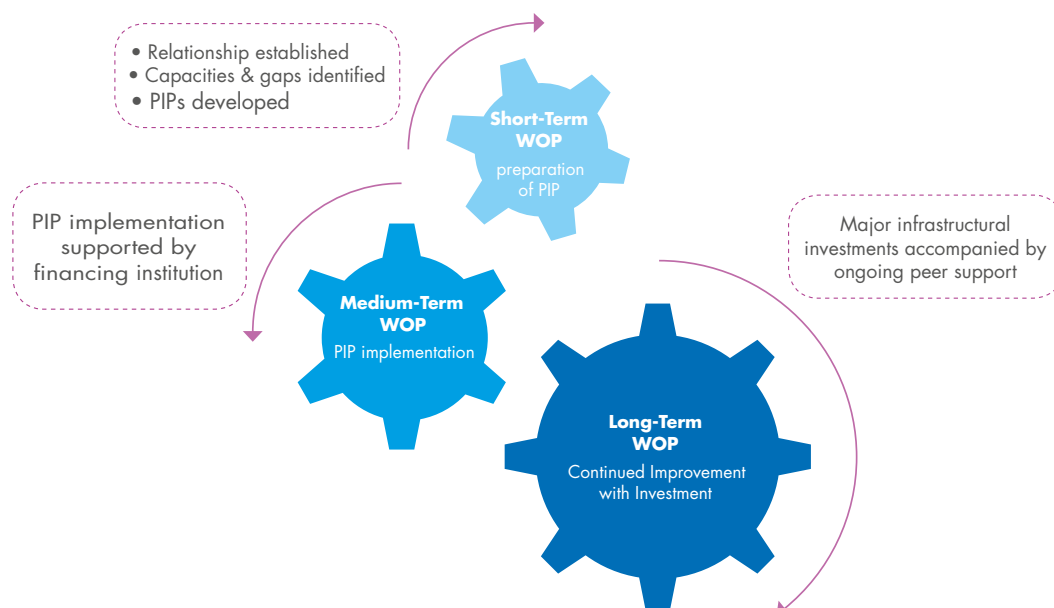
#### GWOPA Support to Financing WOPs

GWOPA will work on a number of fronts to increase financing for WOPs:

- Strengthen the business case and evidence base for WOPs and strengthen relationships with potential financiers.
- Utilize UN-Habitat Trust Fund mechanisms to pool financing for WOPs.
- Assist regional WOP platforms in resource mobilization.
- Advocate for WOPs to include increased attention to improving utility financial management.
- Promote the mobilization of local commitments of financing at the outset of any WOP.
- Refer utilities and WOP platforms to potential donors.
- Identify and promote innovative sources of finance to WOPs, including decentralized solidarity (1%) mechanisms to channel support from Northern utilities to Southern service providers.
- Maintain an accessible database on WOP-friendly funding windows.

Figure 6

#### A model for using WOPs to improve performance



### 3.4. Outcomes

The GWOPA 2013–2017 Strategy envisages the following outcomes by 2017:

#### Overall:

- 1 Increased number of quality WOPs implemented resulting in the improvement of utility performance.

#### For Objective 1: Guiding Global Growth of WOPs

- 2 Increased number of quality knowledge products (analysis of global trends, tools and guides, case-studies, best practices, etc.) being produced and used to guide WOPs practice.
- 3 The WOPs brand becomes clearly distinguishable and associated with successful models of WOPs that lead to comprehensive, long-term partnerships and substantive performance improvement.

- 4 Awareness and endorsement of WOPs by the water and sanitation sector, governments and civil society.
- 5 Enhanced efforts of partners within GWOPA are contributing to a more synergistic and coordinated impact of WOPs worldwide.

#### For Objective 2: Operational Support to WOPs

- 6 Strengthened regional WOP platforms providing high-performing coordination and support in Africa, the Arab Region, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America, the Caribbean and Eastern Europe/Central Asia.
- 7 Increased number of WOPs worldwide being adequately financed and leading to follow-up investment in water utilities by donors, International Financial Institutions, or domestic sources.
- 8 Increased number of WOPs carried out under regional platforms that benefit from GWOPA's facilitation and direct support, and that apply its principles, models and tools.



## 4. Organization and Governance

### 4.1. Organization

The GWOPA Secretariat is institutionally anchored within the Office of the Executive Director of UN-Habitat. The Secretariat implements its work programme in collaboration with active GWOPA members within the WOPs Alliance.

The Secretariat, which under the 2013-2017 hosting arrangements is based in a UN-Habitat office in Barcelona, is led by a GWOPA Programme Manager, responsible for overall implementation of the work programme, liaison with UN-Habitat headquarters, resource mobilization and advocacy. The Programme manager oversees two units, delineated by the two complementary strategic objectives of the Alliance:

the Knowledge and Communications Unit and the Operational Support Unit. The activities of the two units will be intimately linked.

Each of the units will be run by a coordinator and small team of international staff that will grow with need and as funding allows. The team is supported administratively by an Administrative Assistant and a Programme Management Officer. To complement the core staff, the Secretariat will seek to make maximal use of UN volunteers, Junior Professional Officers and interns, as well as personnel secondments from partner organizations. The Secretariat will coordinate the implementation of work, making growing use of consultants and Alliance partners to extend its scope of expertise and its reach (see Figure 7).

**Figure 7**

#### Organization of GWOPA Secretariat team

Administration/  
Management

Administrative  
Assistant

**Programme Manager**

Programme  
Management Officer

Units

**Knowledge and Communications Unit**

from 1.5 to 4 staff (2013–2017)

**Operational Support Unit**

from 2.5 to 6 staff (2013–2017)

Activity Areas

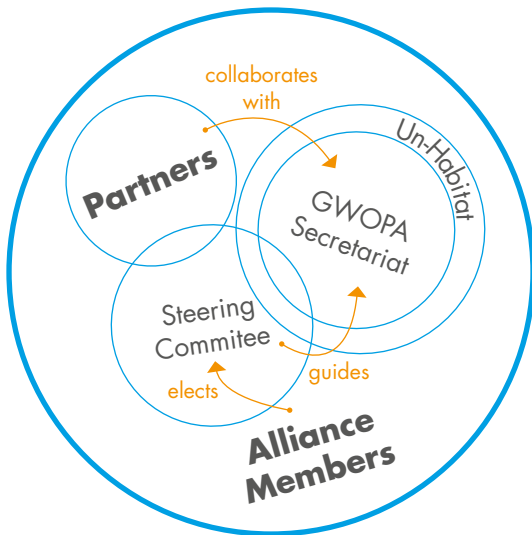
Knowledge management  
Branding  
Communications and advocacy  
Alliance strengthening

Strengthening regional platforms  
Financial linking  
Direct operational support

## 4.2. Governance

**Figure 8**

### Governance structure of GWOPA



Membership in the Alliance is open to all interested water and sanitation stakeholder organizations (see Figure 8). Membership is obtained by accepting to abide by GWOPA's principles in the implementation of partnership activities. Membership puts members within GWOPA's communication network and allows participation in GWOPA's bi-annual General Assemblies (see Box 6).

Alliance Members elect GWOPA's Steering Committee during the biannual General Assemblies from among the Alliance's main constituencies: public water operators and their associations from the various regions, as well as representatives from labour unions, civil society, private operators, donors and expert organizations. The composition of the Steering Committee reflects the geographical and institutional diversity of the Alliance as established in GWOPA's charter. Box 7 shows the current membership.

The Steering Committee currently meets annually and provides overall strategic guidance to the GWOPA activities. The Integrity Sub-Committee (ISC) is an important organ of the Steering Committee, established to support GWOPA in its ongoing efforts to ensure the application of its guiding principles. The ISC reviews partnerships carried out under the WOPs banner and recommends action to ensure coherence with WOPs principles.

### Box 6

#### Bi-Annual Global WOPs Congress and GWOPA General Assembly

Every two years, GWOPA organizes a Global WOPs Congress and a GWOPA General Assembly, which gathers as many GWOPA members and WOPs stakeholders as possible. The Congress strives to be the foremost global exchange platform on not-for-profit peer support between operators, and its objective is to advance effective WOPs practice through knowledge sharing. On the final day of the Congress, the GWOPA General Assembly gathers GWOPA members to provide broad inputs on GWOPA development and to elect one half of the Steering Committee members. The first Global WOPs Congress was held in conjunction with World Water Day 2011 in Cape town, with the next planned in Barcelona at the end of 2013.

### Box 7

#### Composition of GWOPA Steering Committee

- 15** Public Utilities and Associations
- 02** Private Operators
- 02** Civil Society Organizations
- 02** Labour Unions
- 06** Alliance Partners  
Active substantive partners and donors of 1.0 million USD/year or more
- 03** Permanent Members
  - GWOPA Secretariat
  - UN-Habitat
  - UNSGAB (observer)



## 5. Monitoring Framework

A strong monitoring framework is an essential component of a results-oriented strategy. In 2013-2017 GWOPA will apply a monitoring framework to measure the results of GWOPA activities and enable the tracking of WOPs impacts globally. The monitoring system will follow inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes. The monitoring function will be managed internally with an external evaluation commissioned at mid-term of this 5 year phase. As a first action in the implementation of its strategy, GWOPA will establish a relevant baseline and elaborate a monitoring instrument on the basis of the Framework in Table 1.



**Table 1**

**GWOPA Monitoring Framework**

Strategic Objective	Outcomes	Outcome Indicators	Means of Verification
<b>Overall</b>	1. Increased number of quality WOPs implemented resulting in the improvement of utilities performance	No. of WOPs implemented	WOPs surveys, WOPs profiles in database
		Capacity and performance changes in WOP mentee utilities	WOPs surveys
<b>Guiding Global Growth of WOPs</b>	2. Increased number of quality knowledge products being produced and used to guide WOPs practice	No. of publications, resource materials, analytical tools and case studies produced and disseminated	Downloads, dissemination in international events
		No. of WOPs having made use of at least one knowledge product	WOPs surveys, WOPs profiles in database
		No. of water utilities and individuals using at least one knowledge product	WOPs surveys, Operators profiles in database
	3. The WOPs brand becomes clearly distinguishable and associated with successful models of WOPs that lead to comprehensive, long-term partnerships and substantive performance improvement	Establishment of clearly defined WOPs typologies and brand standards	GWOPA reports
		No. of WOPs seeking branding	WOPs branding facility
		No. of WOPs granted label	WOPs profiles, WOPs case studies, WOPs branding facility
	4. Enhanced awareness of the WOPs approach, endorsed and actively supported by the water and sanitation sector, governments and the civil society	No. of communication products (web-site, newsletters, brochures, briefs) prepared and disseminated	Web-site hits & downloads of documents, events organized and releases
		No. of stakeholders involved in GWOPA activities	Target groups invited to contribute to events, partners engaged in activities
		Stakeholder perception of WOPs	Global WOPs Congress feedback, GWOPA surveys
	5. Engaged efforts of Partners within GWOPA contributing to the achievement of a more synergetic and coordinated impact of WOPs worldwide	Stakeholder perception of GWOPA	Global WOPs Congress feedback, GWOPA surveys, Reports of Steering Committee and General Assembly
No. and types of new partners joining and contributing to the Alliance		Administrative records, list of members	
<b>Strategic Operational Support to WOPs</b>	6. Strengthened regional WOP platforms providing high-performing coordination and support	No. of WOPs coordinated by region per year	WOPs profiles in database, WOPs surveys, regional reports, Global WOPs Congress feedback
		Regional WOP platforms have in place and are following annual workplans	Regional platforms Steering Committee reports, regional platform workplans
		No. and types of regional water operators and stakeholders that are members of the platforms	Administrative records, Steering Committee reports
	7. Increased number of WOPs worldwide adequately financed and leading to follow-up investment in water utilities	Level of financial allocations to WOPs	WOPs surveys, feedback from regions and donors
		No. of operators receiving investments for PIPs or other type of plans prepared and implemented through WOPs	WOPs surveys, WOPs profiles in database
		Value of contribution to WOPs by mentors and mentees per year	WOPs surveys, WOPs profiles in database
	8. Increased number of WOPs carried out under the auspices of regional platforms that benefit from GWOPA's facilitation and direct support, and that apply its principles, models and tools.	No. of WOPs carried out with GWOPA support and applying its methodologies.	WOPs surveys, WOPs profiles in database

## 6. Funding and Resource Mobilization

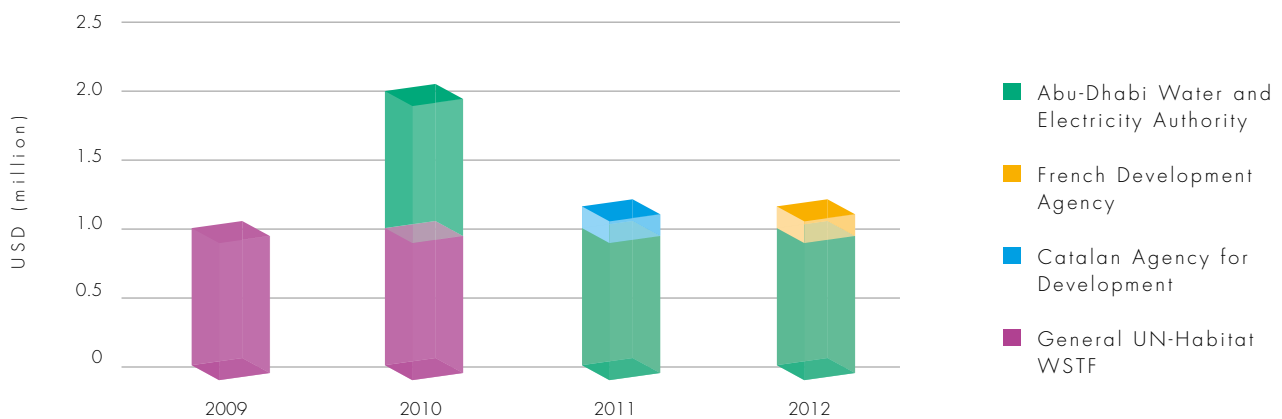
### 6.1. Funding 2009–2012

The staff and operational costs of the GWOPA Secretariat were funded in 2009-10 mainly through the UN-Habitat Water and Sanitation Trust Fund (WSTF) from contributions of the Governments of Spain and Norway. In 2010, an additional 3.5 million USD over a three-year period was received from the Abu Dhabi Water and Electricity Authority.

The Catalan Development Agency also provided a contribution of 100,000 Euros in 2011 to support Latin American and Arab operators to gain capacity in implementing Water Safety Plans. The French Development Agency (AFD) is also contributing 525,000 Euros over the 2012-2014 period to cover the cost of a senior expert to bolster French stakeholders and AFD beneficiary utilities involvement in WOPs. The chart below shows GWOPA's budget evolution for the period 2009-2012.

Figure 9

Donor Contribution and Budget Evolution 2009–2012



## 6.2. Funding framework for 2013–2017

The offer to host GWOPA in Barcelona is supported by the Government of Spain with a sum of 1.1M Euros (1.4M USD) annually for a period of five years and backed by a one-time contribution of 500,000 Euros from the Barcelona City Council and a consortium of major private sector actors in the city. This agreement with the Spanish Government can be considered as the financial pillar of the GWOPA Secretariat for the next five years.

This stable source of core funding allows GWOPA to focus on mobilizing further resources to support its strategic activities. During the 2013-17 period, GWOPA will seek funding from traditional and non-traditional donors. It will also work to expand the involvement of utilities from Northern countries in WOPs, which might encourage development agencies from these countries to provide financial support for WOPs in general. In addition, GWOPA will seek to utilize decentralized funding mechanisms in countries such as France and the Netherlands to support WOPs.

GWOPA will undertake a systematic mobilization of follow-up funds for WOPs, targeting regional development banks and donor organizations.

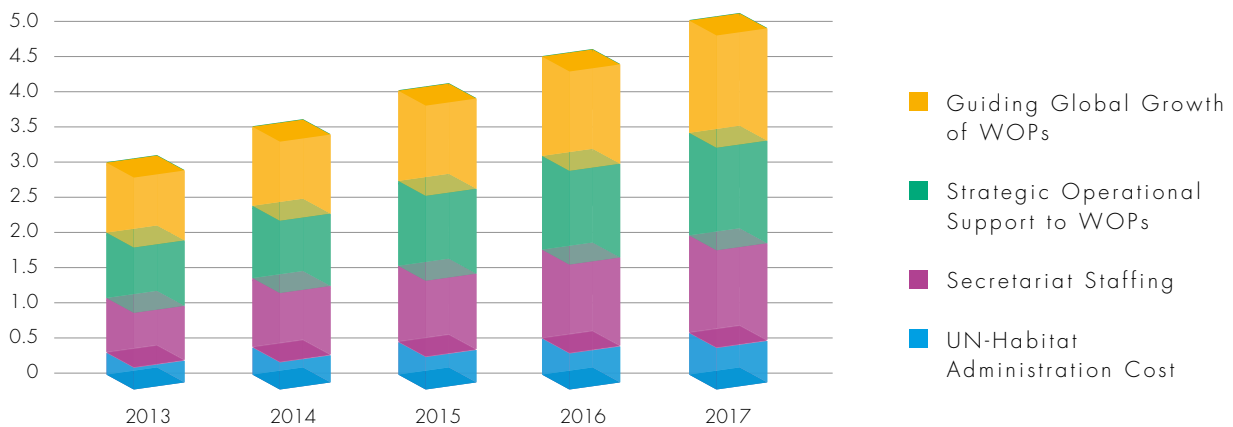
To accommodate a wider donor base, GWOPA is planning to make use of Trust Fund mechanisms within UN-Habitat that would allow its various donors to contribute both earmarked (thematically or geographically) and non-earmarked funds for WOPs related activities. This would help harmonize reporting to various GWOPA donor countries and institutions.

Finally, GWOPA is confident that the quality of its work, as well as its relevance to the sector, the urban arena and international development agenda, will help in broadening and strengthening its financial resource base. An incremental budget increase is therefore expected over the coming 5 years from an annual budget of 3 million to 5 million USD.

The figure below shows the expected budget evolution for GWOPA Secretariat staff and non-staff expenditures for the 2013–2017 period.

**Figure 10**

### Expected Budget Evolution for GWOPA Secretariat 2013–2017



## 7. Risk Management

Identifying potential risks to effective strategy implementation can help them be avoided or mitigated. A number of potential obstacles or threats were taken into consideration in the preparation of the 2013–2017 GWOPA Strategy. Table 2 lists the main risks that might be faced by GWOPA in implementing the strategy.

**Table 2**

### GWOPA Risk Management and Mitigation

Risk	Level of impact	Probability of occurrence	Mitigation Measures
Financial situation constrains GWOPA fund-raising	High	High	Seek alternative financing sources for WOPs
Hosts of regional platforms fail to deliver	Medium	Medium	Enter into performance financing agreements with option to identify alternative hosts
Partnerships fail to materialize with key global players	Medium	Medium	Support from Steering Committee and GWOPA members
WOP Certification proves more complex/costly than anticipated	Low	High	Commission feasibility study Identify interim solutions
Political interference limits GWOPA operations	Medium	Low	Support from Steering Committee, GWOPA members and UNSGAB Diversify support base



## Annex: List of Persons Consulted

#	Organization	Interviewee
1	African Development Bank	Oswald Chanda
2	Africa Water Association	Sylvain Uscher
3	Agence Française de Développement	Maurice Bernard
4	Arab Countries Water Utilities Association	Samir Ben Said (ONEE)
5	Asian Development Bank	Alan Baird and Niels Van Dijk
6	CAPNET	Kees Lendereste
7	CARI-WOP	Victor Poyotte (CAWASA)
8	GWOPA Consultant	Digby Davies
9	Inter-American Development Bank	Corinne Cathala
10	Independent Researcher (UNESCO-IHE)	Maria Pasqual
11	International Water Association	Ger Bergkamp
12	Public Services International	David Boys
13	Rand Water	Hamanth Kasan
14	Reclaiming Public Water Network	Satoko Kishimoto (TNI)
15	UN-Habitat	Robert Goodwin
16	UNSGAB	Margaret Catley-Carlson
17	USAID	Jenny Dato
18	Vitens Evides International	Gerhard van den Top and Siemen Veenstra
19	Waterlinks	Mai Flor
20	World Bank	Bill Kingdom
21	WSP	Glenn Pearce-Oroz





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