

## Partnerships and the Human Right to Water

International human rights law states that governments have obligations to ensure access to safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation. Every day, however, millions of slum dwellers in the urban South struggle to fetch water and find solutions for sanitation because the public water operators do not serve their settlements. Public private partnerships (PPPs) are considered as an option for better water governance in developing countries.

Water partnerships claim to provide innovative concepts:

- + pooling of expertise and resources from international academia, civil society, and the private sector;
- + approach local problems with bottom-up and demand driven solutions.

Critics suspect them to be:

- attempts of "green washing" or
- a profit-oriented push for the privatization of services.

However, instead of an ideological debate, what is needed is a stringent performance analysis of PPPs, as well as a reality check on their achievements and limitations in realizing the Human Right to Water.

#### **Research Context**

This poster presents results from the DFG-funded research project "Partnerships for Development in Asia and Africa". The project team analyzes the work of 21 transnational partnerships. Key indicators include project-specific characteristics (e.g. institutionalization, resources, process management, capacity development measures) as well as areaspecific characteristics (e.g. local institutional capacities, security).

The findings are based on interviews with professionals at the international and regional level, experts in the project areas, as well as members of the local communities involved in the projects.



#### What matters?



## **Regulatory and Social Context**

In most cases, low capacities and conflicts of interests pose severe limits to a partnership's chances of success. Therefore, PPPs should pay attention to: • Regulatory Context: Secure support of governmental actors, for example by helping building a unit of the public water operator for urban slums to provide them with public water connections and a catalog of clear-cut conditions on how slum dwellers can get their settlement connected to the public water system. Property rights regulations such as ownership of land titles may however, impact on the willingness of political actors to act.

- Social Context: Secure support of non-governmental actors, for example with the setup of a well-installed Community Based Organization (CBO).

#### **Institutional Design**

- Successful project management has to deal with context related problems in the respective local settings.
- A sound level of institutionalization in combination with sufficient flexibility to incorporate practical learning – is most relevant for the effectiveness of monitor customized projects that correspond with local conditions.
- Systematic monitoring and oversight is necessary as undesired side-effects munity is crucial to prevent that the project may involuntarily be taken advantage of by local "big" men and women.

projects. This institutional design should then enable the PPP to develop and

and conflicts of interest cannot be ruled out. Close interaction with the com-

# **Conditions and Limits of PPP Projects**

- sustainable project success.



Conventional Sanitation Facilities in Kibera/Kenya

## **Reforming the UN Institutional Framework**

The UN Commission for Sustainable Development lists in its database 348 partnerships that claim to contribute to the implementation of sustainable development. There is, however, no monitoring of whether these partnerships are at all active. A transparent evaluation system should promote learning on adequate institutional design and management. Moreover, it could inform which partnerships are successful and should therefore be upgraded. The Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 is an excellent chance to implement these much needed reforms of the institutional framework for sustainable development.



Well-directed development of capacities – both on the community level of the beneficiaries and target groups as well as on the administrative level of targeted authorities and municipal corporations – may improve the chances for

Partnerships need to be learning entities: If they do not constantly improve their means to cope with arising challenges in local settings they will fail.

• Social and regulatory obstacles in terms of massive conflicts of interests and security issues; high levels of migration; contested and hierarchic power structures; ethnic heterogeneity; and corruption may rise the complexity of tasks to a level that PPPs cannot handle. In such contexts, we find that partnership projects do not exist or turn out to be failures – mainly because project planners may have had good intentions but were never able to get plans off the ground.



Public Water Point in Bangalore/India

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