Providing Equitable Access - 
Private Operators Field Experience

Jack Moss – Executive Director

AquaFed
THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF PRIVATE WATER OPERATORS

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Session 3 – Translating the outcomes of the assessments into action to ensure equitable access

Rights to Water & Sanitation

• Universal
• Individual
• State responsibility
• Progressive implementation
• Affirmative action
• Collective systems for delivery
• Investment & operation of “industrial” nature
**Policy from the top**
**Action at the base**

- **Policy**
  - The policy approach (scorecard etc.) comes from the ‘top’

- **Service Delivery**
  - At the level of local unit (municipality)
  - Interaction between:
    - Local public authorities
    - Local operator
    - Consumers

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**Water Services**

- **Collective public services**
  - Inter-user relationship

- **Environmental dimension**
  - Save water & Protect aquatic environment

- **Social dimension**
  - Vital & Public health
  - Supports jobs

- **Economic dimension**
  - Expensive to install & operate
  - Efficiency & Cost optimisation
  - Need adequate investment & cost recovery
Who & What is Involved

- Equality Challenges
  - Geography
  - Affordability
  - Gender, Disabilities, Disadvantaged
- Ethical questions
  - Identification of those needing special help
- Parties to Solution
  - Policy Makers
  - Administrations
  - Operators
  - Service Users

Core Role of Private Operators

- Operate the public service under control and direction of public authority
- Provide a good quality, reliable service to all users
- Optimise the balance of expenditure & income
- Provide advice & information to public authority
Private Operators & RTWS

- Implement the RTWS without realising
  - Principle of “universality” of services
- Contributed to General Comment 15
- Contributed to recognition of RTWS @ UN General Assembly and OHCHR
  - Formal consultations & submissions
- Contributed to work of 1St & 2Nd Special Rapporteurs
- Formal consultations, submissions & Field visits

RTWS Challenges & Contradictions

- How to cut cost but maintain revenue
- Non-revenue water has 2 components
  - Physical losses (leaks & waste)
  - Administrative losses (non-payment)
- Who pays
  - Truly disadvantaged “can’t pay but would pay”
  - Rights abusers “can pay but won’t pay”
- Who/how to decide the difference?
- Who/how to help?
- Who/how to sanction?
Private Operators – Advancing good practice

• Initial challenges of developing countries
  – Geography – Informal settlements
  – Affordability – Low income
  – Gender – Impact of incomplete services
  – Africa, Latin America, SE Asia etc.

• Research and operation practices on access to water for all

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Private Operators – Advancing good practice: France

• Rising prices - Growing inequality
• Recognition & Legalisation of RTWS
• Political Challenges – Practical Answers
• The Operators core job – Deliver services & provide advice
• Answers built on experience and innovation
• The Private Operators image
**Political Objectives of Mayors**

Political objectives that have emerged in discussions with Public Authorities & Private Operators in France

- Respect & Implement the Right to Water
- Encourage non-wasteful use of water
- Preserve local competitiveness
- Help people in financial difficulty
- Reduce water bill for low income families
- Promote tap water as safe & sustainable
- Promote sustainable water consumption for all uses by helping to reduce consumption
- Ensure equity between permanent and seasonal residents
- Ensure homogeneity between water & sanitation

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**Practical Solutions fromOperators**

They can’t do it alone

- Developed social support systems
  - Advised mayors & government
  - Solidarity funds
  - Processes for identifying the needy
- Progressive tariffs
- Practical help for users
  - Cost management
  - Consumption management
- Debt write-off
Greater Paris

- Partnership between SEDIF & Véolia
- Programme “Eau Solidaire”
- 149 Communes in North Parisian Metro Area, 4.4 million inhabitants
- Programme with 3 components
  - Urgent financial support
  - Assistance
  - Preventive action
- Started in 2011

Greater Paris
Urgent financial support 1/2

- 2 Approaches
- Aide Eau Solidaire (Mutualised help for water)
- For subscribers (Have a billed connection)
  - Combines help with dignity
  - Véolia contributes to a fund managed by CCAS (Communal Center for Social Action)
  - Financial assistance disbursed by CCAS
Greater Paris
Urgent financial support 2/2

- For non-subscribers (Tenants living in un-metered flats etc.)
- “Fonds Solidarité Logement” Social Housing Fund
  - The water supplier contributes to the (FSL)
  - The tenant applies to FSL and receives direct support with money drawn from the fund
- Véolia also offers easy payment options & has written-off significant debts

Greater Paris
Assistance

- A dedicated customer relations team
- 8 specialists work with people in need, public authorities and local associations
- Special focus on people in great difficulty
  - Extreme poverty
  - Sub-standard housing
  - Special difficulties
- Personalised solutions
  - Payment facilities
  - Personalised contracts
  - Help to control consumption

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Preventive Actions

- **Local mediation**
  - Water supplier participates in local initiatives organised to help people in need

- **Helping responsible use**
  - Work with local NGOs to provide information and help

- **Domestic plumbing**
  - Working with local associations to help maintain and repair domestic plumbing installations to reduce leaks and consumption

- **Additional benefit – job creation**
  - (C 50 jobs per year)

Evalutaion

- **An external independent evaluation for the parties involved – Very positive**

- **Individual aid system 2013**
  - 2,464 families helped €510,000

- **Collective aid system 2013**
  - 3,064 families helped €300,000

- **Debt write-off**
  - 2011-2013: €160,000 for 260 families
### Dunkirk - environmentally-friendly and socially inclusive water pricing

- Partnership between Dunkirk Water Syndicate, a Suez subsidiary, & other social organisations
- 27 communes 220,000 Population
- Environmentally-friendly encourages residents to consume less water
- Socially inclusive - takes households’ income into account.
  - Universal Additional Medical Cover (CMU-C “Couverture Médicale Universelle Complémentaire”).
- 8,600 families are eligible

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### Dunkirk - Water pricing

- Rising block tariffs – additional weighting using a social indicator applied to vulnerable households
- Three price bands
  - “essential” water, (for food and hygiene) theoretical consumption of 15 m³ per household per year.
  - “useful” water
  - “luxury” water.
  - Households consuming 0 - 75 m³, a 20% reduction of water charge compared with previous tariff & a 70% reduction for households covered by the CMU-C scheme
  - Additional “water cheque” for large families
Sustainable water fund

• “Sustainable Water” - encourages businesses to invest to reduce consumption and to protect an increasingly scarce resource
• To finance the fund, the price of water increased by 0.01 €/m3 for this range of users.
• Cross subsidy

Consultation & Evaluation

• “Environmentally-Friendly and Socially Inclusive Forum” - residents, local authorities and social security organisations to assess the effectiveness of the measures
• Five tools used: analysis of bills, surveys, questionnaires, workshops and inhabitants
• Feedback is positive, some adjustments required
  – 70% positive opinion of environmentally-friendly aspect
  – 63% positive opinion of socially inclusive aspect.
An Important Caveat

- Un-civic behaviour
  - Can pay won’t pay
  - Adds to cost of everybody else
  - A challenge for Authorities & both public & private operators

- Countries with largest share of private service operation have made sanctions of disconnection or service limitation illegal – Rapid rise in arrears in payment by those who could & should pay

- A practical and political solution to this challenge is needed.

Conclusion

- Private operators in France & elsewhere are actively engaged in working with public authorities to make the rights to water and sanitation a reality for all

- Putting flesh on the bones of UN ECE’s “No One Left Behind” and “Equitable Access Scorecard”

- “Solidarity” requires the collaboration & intervention of multiple parties

- Solutions can be tailor made
Some sources of additional information


http://www.emag.suez-environnement.com/dossier/tarification-equitable-eau

http://www.fp2e.org/Site/Eau_Assainissement/solidarite.php