

**Comments for CSD 16
Workers and trade unions
12/05/2008**

I work for Public Services International, speak on behalf of workers and trade unions.

We welcome the words of USG Zukang Sha, concur with his call for more stakeholder coordination at national level.

We raise concerns about the increased financialisation of our societies, suggest that we may have gone too far in this direction, note the growing awareness that public services are the glue that bind societies, that profit is not the only appropriate motive for allocating resources and mobilising people. Governments cannot privatise all of their responsibilities and commitments to their citizens.

We concur with the Stern report which characterises climate change as the “greatest and widest-ranging market failure ever seen” and suggest we will need a range of public policy tools.

While some progress has been made since WSSD, we echo many of the voices of concern, struggling to identify key elements needed to move forward in water and sanitation.

Good governance is a prerequisite, even before finance, and much needs to be done to improve democratic institutions at national and local levels.

In this respect, we recommend implementing the mechanisms and principles of transparency, accountability, and most important, participation. We call this the T-A-P, the TAP, the all-important principles to get the quality public services flowing to all citizens.

Our members are those workers who, day in, day out, operate and maintain the infrastructure, deliver the services, are closest to the users, to the citizens. We work in the schools that educate our children – the future workers and leaders - and the hospitals that take care of the sick and frail.

When I read the GPPN assessments of type 2 partnerships since WSSD, I am struck by the lack of in-country partners, which weakens these partnerships.

Seems to me that workers and unions could be solid in-country partners, with direct links to employers, to governments and to communities, and with deep knowledge of the inner workings of the utilities in each locale.

I am also struck by the constant call for more capacity building, and wonder again how to implement this call if it does not include workers and their unions.

Partnerships are a work in progress, require new ways of doing things... Require that all parties take risks. Our members, the workers and their unions are ready to take such risks, to explore partnership proposals in order to deliver quality water and sanitation services to all.

We are initiating a range of activities, mostly using our own resources:

We are supporting a number of public-public partnerships between public water and sanitation utilities, local authorities and trade unions.

One is between the province of Buenos Aires in Argentina and the city of Huancayo in Peru, another between Uruguay and Bolivia. We are exploring similar arrangements in Malawi and Nigeria.

We are also working with UN Habitat on their Water Operator Partnerships mechanisms, to try to broaden the range of actors to include workers and their unions – to systematically involve workers in these partnerships.

We ask why the public utilities from the donor countries remain largely uninvolved? Why has, for example, none of the funding from the EU Water Facility actually gone to the public utilities? Governments need to change the rules to facilitate more participation within public-public partnerships.

In Cebu, in the Philippines, we are working with public water managers to develop social benchmarking tools. Labour-management cooperation offers huge potential.

And we are working with the ILO to develop social dialogue mechanisms in public utilities. ILO is the only tripartite agency of the UN, involving workers, employers and governments. ILO must put more resources into this key sector.

We need to see the main actors in the sector take up the offer from the unions, from the workers. So far, I must say, results have been disappointing, demonstrating a lack of will to take risks, to go beyond 'business as usual'.

If you want workers to perform their best, you need to meet a few conditions, none of which are mysterious, but all worth repeating :

Respect : for workers' knowledge and commitment, but also for the ILO's Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

Decent Pay : if you wish to keep your skilled workforce, pay them enough to maintain their families – otherwise they will be forced to migrate to countries where they will receive wages sufficient to meet their family's needs.

Decent Working Conditions : training is important, as is consultation. Health and safety are basic principles to be implemented. We ask employers : don't injure and kill your workers.

So, again at CSD, we ask governments to involve the workers and their unions, whether it be in the agricultural sector, in public utilities, in health and education. We have in-country and global networks which have huge potential to help in meeting all of the MDGs. We look forward to taking up the challenges in real partnership mechanisms across the world.

Thank you.