



March 9, 2007

**Water and sanitation for the urban poor:  
World Bank dialogue with civil society organisations**

The World Bank and Freshwater Action Network (FAN) last week took a step forward in their joint efforts to develop systematic dialogue between the Bank and civil society organisations (CSOs) about water and sanitation services for the urban poor. They held a joint workshop at the Bank's Water Week in Washington, D.C., as part of a scoping study to assess the potential for dialogue and identify particular themes and modes for dialogue at global, regional and national levels.

The Bank's 15-strong delegation at the workshop was led by Jamal Saghir, the Bank's Director of Energy, Transport and Water in the recently established Sustainable Development vice-presidency. Welcoming the participants, Mr Saghir stressed the institution's commitment to working with CSOs and other actors to strengthen efforts to bring water and sanitation services to all. World Bank participants also included several water task managers from around the globe, as well as specialists in civil society engagement and communications.

Most of the CSO participants were from the FAN advisory group, who developed the project with the World Bank. The advisory group is made up of CSO representatives from Africa, Asia and Latin America including FAN's regional networks in Africa (ANEW), Central America (FAN-CA), Mexico (FAN-Mex) and South America and International NGOs WaterAid and BothEnds. Through its 499 members and associate members, FAN links around 4,000 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs), both directly and through affiliated regional and national networks. Other CSOs taking part in the workshop included Public Services International, the global union federation representing water utility workers; and the Washington-based Food and Water Watch.

The workshop reviewed the lessons of experience of earlier attempts to sustain information sharing and knowledge development between CSOs and the World Bank in the sector, and explored how dialogue could be carried forward in future. Themes discussed included how to enable the participation of poor people in diagnosing and overcoming the obstacles to provision of services to them; how those services can be financed; and the roles of the public and private sectors and community-based groups in providing them.

Between now and June, when the scoping study will be completed, CSOs and World Bank staff will be invited to propose dialogue activities they believe could enhance their efforts to develop and improve urban water and sanitation services. They will also be consulted about the "rules of the game" and other dialogue process issues, with a view to promoting accountability, inclusiveness, transparency and trust. In addition, the scoping study will attempt to link interested CSO and World Bank parties and assist them by assessing the feasibility of their proposed activities, and by identifying possible funding sources.

For more information, and to add your voice in the scoping study, please contact Public World, the consultancy appointed by FAN, with World Bank support, to carry it out. You can contact the scoping study team in four ways:

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