

Water integrity – a golden opportunity for customer satisfaction and utility performance?

Together with GIZ and ACWUA we convened a session at the Global Water Operator's Partnership Alliance Conference in Barcelona to discuss how water and wastewater utilities can turn integrity risks into business opportunities.

Utility representatives from Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan and Kenya shared their experiences on assessing and managing integrity risks during the first part of the session. The country and organisational contexts of the utilities represented a variety from national utilities like the Egyptian Holding Company for water and wastewater that provides water to almost 90 million people and has 130,000 employees to local government utilities like the Kenyan Kericho Water and Sanitation Company Ltd. (KEWASCO) that serves about 116,000 people and has around 130 employees. While they encountered specific challenges and opportunities, some shared patterns emerged from the experiences: Many of the utilities prioritized processes of human resource management, procurement, billing or customer relations for taking risk management measures. Besides support from the top management, open communication and trust among the involved staff came out as some common success factors for the process.

Introducing participants to some the available tools for strengthening integrity management in water utilities, GIZ presented the [water TAP approach](#) used in the MENA region, which will soon be published in a practitioner's manual jointly with ACWUA and WIN. Meanwhile, WIN presented the Integrity Management Toolbox for utilities that was jointly developed and piloted with GIZ and cewas in Kenya.

In the session's closing panel, CEOs and senior management from the utilities shared their motivations and expectations related to integrity. Given that all participating utilities were government owned, the linkages to broader political processes was an important point of discussion. Mr. Ahmed Benaddou, advisor to the Moroccan Minister in charge of water and representative of the national utility ONEE, identified three success factor for integrity change in utilities: the social and political engagement, the good governance environment and leadership. Moreover, improving public reputation and customer relations emerged as one important rationale for managers to engage in integrity management. In this regard, Eng. Festus Ng'eno from KEWASCO noted that the SMS-based customer communication and complaints management system they introduced as part of the integrity process greatly assisted KEWASCO to improve regulatory compliance on complaints management.

The session's insights were well reflection in the closing session of the GWOPA conference. In the panel discussion Mamadou Dia, President of Aquafed, highlighted that improving transparency, accountability and participation (TAP) in service delivery will key to for both public and private water service providers to successfully engage with consumers and to achieve sustainable financing. Another point of lively discussion in the closing session was the relationship between utilities and local governments, between water and politics. David Boys from Public Service International called for "new politics of water" that will have to push interest paddling and corruption out of decision making in the water sector.

Presentations from the integrity session:

Country experiences:

- Egypt, HCWW (Mohamed Moawad)
- Morocco, ONEE (Mostafa Ettourki)

- Tunisia, SONEDE (Atika Souissi)
- Miyahuna, Jordan (Duha Altarawneh)
- Aqaba Water, Jordan (Montasser)
- Kericho, Kenya (Janet Irongi)

Approaches for strengthening integrity in utilities:

- Concept of « Water TAP » (Mostafa BIAD & Thomas Petermann, GIZ)
- The Integrity Management Toolbox (Lotte Feuerstein, WIN)

Panellists:

- Mr Mohamad Moawad: Head of Human Resources of HCWW, Egypt
- Mr Mohamed Dahech: CEO of SONEDE, Tunisia
- Mr Ahmed Benaddou: Adviser to the Minister of water, Morocco
- Ms Duha Altarawneh: Director of Audit department, Miyahuna
- Mr Festus Ng'eno, Managing Director of KEWSCO, Kenya

Moderation: Dr. Thomas Petermann, GIZ