



# Building Partnerships for Development in Water and Sanitation (BPD)

## ABOUT US

**BPD's goal is to enhance and increase water and sanitation provision in poor communities by strengthening partnerships.** Challenges around water and sanitation service delivery in developing countries are not primarily rooted in gaps in technology or finance. BPD promotes more efficient and effective relationships between stakeholders across the public, private and civil society sectors. Active since 1998, BPD is the sector leader in providing non-profit, neutral and independent guidance that both challenges and supports policymakers and practitioners. We do this through action research, direct support, and learning events and activities.

**With more than 10 years' experience,** Building Partnerships for Development in Water & Sanitation (BPD) has become the sector leader in enabling partnerships to meet the water and sanitation needs of poor households in poor communities.

Based on the finding that practitioners dedicate too little time to understanding how their partnerships operate, BPD argues that the scope, purpose, structure and resource requirements of partnerships need to be more rigorously negotiated. To facilitate these negotiations, BPD develops analytical tools for practitioners and supports their practical application. It does this through three interlinked activities:

- **Action research** - with policymakers and practitioners on the ground, to generate quick insights into how different institutional relationships can be most innovative and effective in serving poor communities.

- **Direct support** – to water and sanitation organisations and partnerships, to build stronger relationships, through the application of BPD's tried and tested tools and frameworks.
- **Learning events and activities** - for organisations across the water and sanitation sector, to promote dialogue around institutional relationships.

Further learning is generated through the interplay of the above three activities.

BPD plays a unique role in the water and sanitation sector and has been described as an 'ideas factory', 'a dynamic thought leader' and 'trend shaper'.

An independent charity registered in the UK, BPD is staffed by a small, specialist and widely experienced team, hosted by WaterAid in London. It is governed by a Board of 10 Directors from across the public, private and civil society sectors:

BPD's Current Board of Directors (by Stakeholder Group)		
Public	Neil MacLeod (Chair)	Durban-eThekweni Water – South Africa
Public	Manuel Alvarinho	CRA (Regulatory Agency) – Mozambique
Public	Maria-Angelica Allegria	Ministry of Public Works – Chile
NGO	Allan Cain	Development Workshop – Angola
NGO	Peter Lochery	CARE – USA
Private	Gustavo Heredia	Plastiforte 0 Programa Agua Tuya – Bolivia
Private	Laila Morsli	Veolia Water – France
Private	Thomas Van Waeyenberge	Aquafed – Belgium
Other	Darren Saywell	IWA – The Netherlands

***The sector leader in strengthening water and sanitation partnerships***



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## REFLECTIONS ON PARTNERSHIP

**Partnerships are all the rage in international development. Agenda-setting at the policy level and delivery challenges at the implementation level are now more commonly being addressed through one form of collaborative arrangement or another.**

There is a clear consensus that water and sanitation services in poor communities across the world can be delivered more effectively through pooling the skills and resources of multiple stakeholders. Yet relationships are seldom easy and different contexts require different institutional arrangements.

### Partners, roles and incentives

Water and sanitation utilities, for example, may need to find new ways of working with low-income communities by using CBOs, NGOs or small-scale providers as part of their supply chain. Yet NGOs may also play watchdog roles or focus on policy advocacy and lobbying. The private sector is also diverse and goes much beyond public-private partnerships (PPPs) and multi-nationals - for many poor communities, access to clean water and safe sanitation is through informal or formal smaller-scale private providers.

Partnerships can struggle to accommodate these different visions, making it hard to harness the skills, abilities and local access that each group brings to the table.

### Sanitation partnerships

While partnerships for solid waste and drinking water are increasingly understood, much less is known about large-scale partnerships for sanitation. A key challenge is around finding the balance between household and government responsibility. Matching different incentives at these various levels is not straightforward. BPD suggests that partnerships can play three

distinct roles in sanitation: promoting local level sanitation improvements; linking these into wider waste management and environmental protection; and bringing together an often fragmented set of institutions responsible for different aspects of sanitation delivery.

### Key Partnership Learning

- **Partnerships are better thought of as transitional mechanisms** – partnership is not the goal but a mechanism to test and then mainstream new approaches or contract forms.
- **Don't partner unless you must:** Partnerships are rarely voluntary; partners must need each other.
- **Start with the end in mind:** Partnerships work best when the partners have thought carefully about why they want to work in partnership and what they hope to get out of it over time.

### Partnerships and regulation

Partnership approaches need to be responsive to water and sanitation regulation, which not only shapes incentives, but can stipulate how different partners are involved and which technical and social approaches can be applied. At the same time, partnerships can play a useful role in making regulation effective and relevant to the poor; decision-makers can use partnerships to become better informed or engage those who would otherwise be out of their reach (e.g. marginalised communities, informal and small service providers). Both those regulating and those being regulated must think more proactively about how partnership and regulation interact.

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