



**Capacity Building Workshop on Partnerships for Improving the Performance of
Water Utilities in the Asia and Pacific Region
25--27 July 2006, Bangkok, Thailand**

Workshop Brief

Background

The UN Millennium Summit (6-8 September 2000) adopted the Millennium Declaration, which contains, inter-alia, a number of international development goals, including one on water: to halve by 2015 the proportion of people who are unable to reach or afford safe drinking water. The Governments reaffirmed their commitment to this goal in the World Summit on Sustainable Development (26 August - 4 September 2002), and further committed to halve by 2015 the proportion of people who do not have access to basic sanitation. Governments also agreed to develop integrated water resource management (IWRM) and water efficiency plans by 2005.

Public water utilities remain the major providers of water and sanitation services in the urban centers. But these utilities are facing many problems, including lack of technical, management and financial capacities to overcome the challenge of providing sustainable water and sanitation services.

Against this background, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Sustainable Development is organizing a capacity building workshop for the senior water utility managers of the Asia and Pacific Region. It will serve as a forum for sharing country-specific knowledge and experiences about the nature and extent of policy and institutional reforms implemented in public utilities of various countries, and their impact on improving the performance of utilities.

Scope and Themes of the Workshop

The main objective of this workshop is to contribute towards the implementation of the global water and sanitation agenda by strengthening the capacities of water utilities in meeting the dual challenge of service expansion and efficient delivery of services. The workshop will be an opportunity for the senior water utility managers of the region to engage in a dialogue with their counterparts from other countries and experts representing various international development organizations to address these challenges.

It has been repeatedly emphasized in many of the water-related meetings and conferences that efficient service delivery is not possible if capacity building requirements continue to be neglected. Capacity building has many dimensions—ranging from human resources development to policy and institutional reforms to improved financial governance. This challenge needs to be approached using a multi-disciplinary and multisectoral approach with concurrent emphasis on technical, economic, social, institutional, environmental and legal issues. Accordingly, this workshop will focus on the following five interlinked themes.

- (i) issues and challenges in urban water supply;
- (ii) strengthening partnerships between regulators and operators;
- (iii) making water utilities financially sustainable;
- (iv) improving the performance of public water utilities; and
- (v) launching the water operators' partnership.

Each session will include some keynote presentations, country case studies and panel discussions. A total of 50 participants will attend this workshop, representing water utilities, private sector, local governments, international organizations and regional networks.

Expected Outcomes

The proposed workshop is an important step forward in helping the managers of public water utilities acquire expertise in: implementing institutional and policy reforms; strengthening institutional governance and accountability; formulating capacity building plans for the public utilities; and developing and administering partnerships among water operators. Such expertise will enable the public utilities to become more efficient, responsive to their clients, commercially astute and financially solvent. Moreover, this meeting will serve as a vehicle for raising awareness about the progress being made and the way forward. Results of this workshop will lead to improved south-south cooperation, especially among water utilities.