GOOD WATER GOVERNANCE AND POPULATION PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AS NECESSARY ANSWERS TO THE WORLD'S URBAN WATER CRISIS
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In the last article prepared for this bulletin as a part of the new developing "study service" section of PROTOS I wrote a summary about users' participation in public water supply and sanitation service provision in small urban centers. So, in this opportunity, and with the objective to know a little bit more about this, I will explain how the study and knowledge of user's participation issues within the good water governance context fits, nowadays, perfectly as one of the best answers to the world's urban water crisis.

To start I have to say that the twenty-first century is the one in which the overriding problem is one of water quality and management. Water management has evolved, but in 2003 some 25,000 people are still dying from malnutrition and 6000 people, mostly children under the age of five, are dying from water-related diseases each day. Furthermore, water consumption has almost doubled in the last fifty years: a child born in the developed world consumes thirty to fifty times the water resources of one in the developing world[1], meanwhile water quality continues to worsen. The nowadays water crisis is an alarming and worrying real fact, where the number of people dying from water related problems like diarrhea diseases is equivalent to twenty fully-loads jumbo jets crashing every day, with no survivors[2].

Up to now, the world is changing at an ever increasing rate and water crisis seems to be more dramatic in the urban areas due to the population growth and urbanization (between 2015 and 2020, urban population will exceed rural for the first time). According to the UN Human Settlements Programme in 1800 only 2% of the global population lived in cities and by 1950 already 30% was urbanised. By 2000, 47% of the world's population was estimated to live in cities, while projections for 2030 suggest this percentage may climb to 60%[3]. As population increases, freshwater increases and supplies per person inevitable decline. Specially, there exists a fast urban growth in the less developed countries: while the most developed regions still have a much higher percentage of their population living in urban areas, the 2015 projection shows the beginning of a reversing trend, with half of the population of the less developed regions living in urban areas, e.g. 75 percent of the world's urban population.

More than a billion additional people will need access to both water supply and sanitation over the next 15 years in order to meet the Millennium Development Goals[4]. Even to maintain the year 2000 proportional level of coverage in urban areas until 2015 will require an estimated 953 million people to gain access to water supply and an additional 838 million to sanitation; an effort equivalent to water supply and sanitation infrastructure development for a population three times the size of that of North America.

For the urban poor, the lack of access to safe water and basic sanitation causes widespread ill health that further limits their productive capabilities. Moreover, deterioration of water supplies and sanitation leads to a progressive decline in urban living conditions- water shortages, pollution and unsanitary water conditions all of which contribute to an urban water and health crisis. Many poor people in cities also pay very high prices for their water from private vendors. Inadequate coverage and decline in urban infrastructure hits the poorest hardest as wealthier households tend to have access to urban water supplies or can afford tube wells if the supply is unreliable or of poor quality.

In this context, urban water problems show a clear fact: the world is in a water crisis and the time to take action is now. Nevertheless, meeting the water needs of fast-growing cities can be extremely

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[1] (UNFPA, 2002)
[2] Information based on the book "The World Water Assessment Programme. Water for people, water for life" United Nations World Water Development Report. 2003
[3] See the EU Water Initiative: http://europa.int/comm/research/water-initiative/urbanisation_en.html
[4] The Millennium Development Goal concerning water indicates "to halve, by 2015, the proportion of people who are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water"

challenging and in order to come up with possible "solutions", new ways of responding to rapid change and making urban environment sustainable are being explored, especially through better management or good water governance that implies greater participation of community groups.

In the practice it is said that weakness in governance systems is one of the major reasons behind the difficulties encountered in following a more robust sustainable development pathway and balancing socio-economic needs with environmental sustainability. Thus, the success of the different initiatives will be dependent on instituting better urban water governance that implies an active participation of the population involved, taking into consideration that what makes governance effective can differ from context to context and depends on cultural, economic, social and political settings.

In this context several questions are formulated, like how are public authorities (municipalities for example) rising to the challenge of learning to work with poor communities to deliver services?, question that can be traduce like: which is the "best option" to empower people to develop a shared water management with the public authorities?, or other question like: how can donors work with local government officials to help develop the will, skills and capacity to work with citizens?. It is not easy to give an appropriate and perfect answer because it' s difficult to generalize about more effective approaches to water management when considering all the world's cities.

Nevertheless, intending to give an answer, in rhetoric and policy, local communities have increasingly become the focal point for moving forward the development agenda through the concept of 'community participation'. Much of the competence of civil society organizations is found in their knowledge about and links in the local context, which are important in choosing appropriate solutions. Local knowledge can form a basis for flexible, innovative and dynamic institutional framework for sustainable water development because local people have a direct interest in improving the quality of life in their community. For projects to succeed, for a sense of ownership to exist, their input into decision-making is critical. Consulting with communities is important for determining the most appropriate intervention, although not only consultation is necessary but also mobilization of the people involved, because an open, transparent and continuous process of consultation and participation is essential if national water resources are to be managed in an equitable and sustainable way.

On the other hand, in the practice, important efforts are being done in the good water management direction, because more and more there is shift in city governance thinking, and development is now increasingly seen as a task that involves society as a whole and not the exclusive domain of governments. In consequence, more and more, good governance refers not just to the formal activities of municipal government but to a gamut of relationships – formal and informal – between civil society and the state at the local level, so here has been a trend in recent years towards local management of water supply schemes and water resources, empowering communities to work together for the betterment of the society.

Although, nowadays, this is not a simple "task" to be developed, real examples of wisely water governance are succeeding in different parts of the world, that demonstrates a change and better management is possible. Clear examples of that are the case-studies that I introduced to you in the past article, concerning Participatory Water Management in Porto Alegre(Brazil), Community Water Board in Itagua(Paraguay), The Saguapac Co-Operative Water Management Model in Santa Cruz(Bolivia) and Urban Community Management in Lusaka(Zambia). A complete information about these cases and detailed information about what has been said in this note, can be found at your disposition in the study section from PROTOS. If you have some time, don't doubt asking for this interesting information because these examples represent the possibilities and best practices other populations could adapt in order to obtain a community empowerment that brings hopeness to the thousands of people that are still looking for its -so expected- development.