

MULTIPLE USE WATER SERVICES (MUS) GROUP GOVERNANCE

Background to the MUS Group

There is a growing recognition that many poor water users have multiple needs for water, for both domestic and productive purposes. However, many of these needs are currently not explicitly met in service delivery. Domestic water supply services tend to focus on the provision of small volumes of water for domestic uses, often ignoring or even prohibiting productive uses. Irrigation services often neglect the needs for domestic supplies as well as other productive uses than field-scale crop production. In response to this, over the past years the multiple-use services (MUS) approach has been proposed, as an alternative approach to services provision, which explicitly aims to meet multiple water needs, contributing to an impact on multiple dimension of poverty. This approach is applied at different levels of scale, from the homestead to the community and the water system.

Since 2003 the MUS (multiple use water services) group (formerly the PRODWAT group) has operated as an informal network of organizations working on multiple-use services. The mission of the MUS Group is to be a platform of organizations, fulfilling resource centre functions, with the aim of improving delivery of multiple-use water services at different levels of scale, so as to better support poverty reduction.

Focus and activities of the MUS Group

The focus of the work of the MUS Group is on water services delivery in ways that support livelihoods, especially for the poor.

It acts as a platform for networking, promoting original research and documentation and dissemination, encouraging peer-review and learning, and stimulating implementation and evidence-based advocacy across sectors on issues related to multiple-use water services. Specific activities of the Group have included, for example, the production of a quarterly newsletter, maintaining a website of resource material, participation in conferences and other events, organization of symposia, development of joint publications, technical exchange visits and Group meetings twice a year.

When members of the Group undertake research, training or advisory services, the Group encourages them where possible to do in collaborative partnerships and to share outputs and lessons through the Group.

Conformation of the MUS Group

The Group includes core partners¹ who take a lead role in organizing and coordinating activities. In addition, there is a much wider membership of some 300 individuals from a

¹ Currently the core partners of the group are the IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), PumpAid, the Water Engineering and Development Centre (WEDC), the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Plan International, Winrock International, Cinara, Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), RAIN Foundation, the Challenge Program on Water and Food (CPWF), the World Fish Centre, and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and FAO.

large number of organizations. These members are on the mailing list, and as such have access to outputs of the MUS Group, but can also actively contribute to the Group's activities.

Group governance arrangements

These arrangements developed through a meeting and consultations in November 2007 and have been updated in August 2009. The governance arrangements start from the principle that the group will remain a voluntary network that is not involved in direct project implementation, and without major funding for group management activities. As a result, light and simple procedures are proposed.

1. *Group membership*: Membership is open and free to any individuals and organisations that have an interest in the topic and subscribe to the Group's mission and focus. Prospective members can join by expressing interest to the coordinator to join the Group.
2. *Core partners*: MUS group activities are organized by a group of core partners. The responsibilities of core partners are summarized in Annex 1. New core partners, who should already be members, may propose themselves or be invited by an existing core partner. Core partners will make decisions related to inclusion of new core partners, or exclusion of existing core partners that are inactive or not meeting their obligations.
3. *Decision-making*: Core partners will strive to take all decisions by consensus, relying upon a majority vote when consensus does not exist. Where possible, major decisions will be taken at Group meetings. Between meetings, necessary decision making will occur by email or phone conferences between the core partners. Minutes for all meeting will be taken by the MUS Group secretary, circulated and published on the group website.
4. *Group officers*: The Group has two officers who are responsible for facilitating smooth operations of the Group: a coordinator and a secretary. The coordinator will be responsible for chairing group meetings and ensuring that group procedures are followed, as well as taking initiatives to represent the group and stimulate group activities. The Secretary is responsible for managing the website, producing the newsletter, managing communications and ensuring documentation of meetings and activities. Some of these tasks may be outsourced to other core partners.
5. *Election of group officers*: Core partners elect the persons taking up either of the officer position. Interested candidates can self-nominate themselves or nominations can be made for the position two months prior to the meeting where the selection of new officers takes place. Core partners can then vote for their preferred candidate (one vote per core partner) to be submitted (electronically) two weeks prior to the meeting. The elected officer will be announced at the meeting and serve for approximately two years, but may be re-elected. In the event that meetings are delayed or no new candidates volunteer, the existing officers will continue to serve until an election process is arranged. The election of officers should be staggered, so that only one of the positions is changed at a time, to ensure continuity.
6. *Boundary between group and member interests*: The group has a networking and learning role and does not seek to engage itself directly in project implementation. In

principle, members and especially core partners will seek to work in partnership and in an open and collaborative manner, whilst recognizing that they may be in competition for activities related to the topic of the Group. It is not expected that all partners will be involved in such activities, but they should seek to share information about opportunities in a timely fashion and agree when, and when not, to collaborate.

7. *Promotion of learning and sharing*: Members are encouraged, and core partners commit, to promote the group and its platforms (e.g. newsletter, website and meeting) as a mechanism for dissemination, sharing and learning about multiple-use approaches and to build the strength and capacity of the group through such activities.
8. *Amendment of group governance arrangements*. Modification of these governance arrangements will be by agreement of the core partners.

Funding

The group is not a legal entity and has not managed any major amounts of financial resources. Members are expected to cover their own time and costs to attend meetings and co-fund meeting facilities. In addition, members are expected to put in their own time in Group activities. However, over the past year, there has been an increase in financial contributions from the FAO and WSSCC to the activities and secretariat of the MUS Group. In order to manage these, the Group will identify appropriate arrangement. For now, IRC (as the current secretary of the Group) will manage those as a separate project code in its accounting system). It will provide financial and narrative reports to the MUS Group on these.

Current arrangements

Barbara van Koppen is the current coordinator of the Group. She fulfils this task as part of her role as CPWF MUS Topic Working Group coordinator, financed by the CPWF. Stef Smits fulfils the role of secretary.

Annex 1: Roles and responsibilities of core partners

Core partners pledge their own resources to help the MUS Group to organise meetings and to help to facilitate other collaborative group activities. These include knowledge sharing, production of joint publications, contribution of articles to the group website, development of pilot programs, and disseminating MUS Group work within their organization and professional networks. Each Core partner pledges to attend at least one group meeting each year. Electronic participation in these meetings will be facilitated when physical presence is not possible. There are generally two meetings per year, and these have usually been held in the Netherlands or the UK, or elsewhere back-to-back with other events such as Stockholm World Water Week or the World Water Forum.

Annex 2: Terms of reference for group officers

The *Coordinator* is responsible for:

- Organizing and chairing group meetings,
- ensuring that group procedures are followed at and between meetings,
- advising the group secretary as required in execution of his/ her responsibilities,
- coordinating initiatives to represent the group ,
- and actively taking initiatives to stimulate group activities.

Functions may be delegated to other core partners and members where appropriate (e.g. chairing sessions of meetings, specific initiatives etc).

The *Group secretary* is responsible for (with support of other core partners)

- leading the management of the website and newsletter production.
- maintaining a member database and managing communications with members.
- managing communications among Core partners and members.
- ensuring documentation of meetings and activities.

Functions may be split or delegated to other Core partners and members where appropriate (e.g. reporting on sessions of meetings, specific newsletter issues, management of parts of the website etc).