

## **MULTIPLE USE WATER SERVICES (MUS) GROUP GOVERNANCE**

### **Mission**

Recognising that many poor water users in the south have multiple needs for water that are not currently well served by a domestic sector that focuses on supplying small volumes of water for ‘basic needs’ and an irrigation sector that neglects drinking and other household water needs...

*The MUS group is a platform for knowledge development that works for the improved delivery of multiple use water services at the household level to better support poverty reduction.*

The group focuses on how water services may be delivered in ways that support livelihoods, especially for the poor, through safely encouraging productive activities like gardening, livestock keeping and micro-enterprises where water plays a crucial but neglected role in people's livelihoods, as well as meeting basic domestic needs, through better domestic and irrigation service delivery.

### **Background**

Since 2003 the MUS (multiple use water services) group (formerly the PRODWAT group) has operated as an informal network coordinated by IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre. It acts as a platform for networking, promoting original research and documentation, encouraging peer-review and learning, and stimulating implementation and evidence-based advocacy across sectors on issues related to multiple-use water services.

The Group does not provide research, training or advisory services as an entity itself, but it encourages its members to undertake these activities, where possible in collaborative partnerships, and to share outputs and lessons through the Group.

The Group includes 8 core partners<sup>1</sup> who take a lead role in organizing and coordinating activities. There are currently 300 members (including both individuals and organizations) on the mailing list (built from participation in events, contacts through the website etc).

The group is not a legal entity and does not manage any financial resources. However, occasionally IRC has provided funding for group activities (including preparation of case studies, case study awards, minor costs for meetings, and travel for southern partners). Members cover their own costs to attend meetings and co-funded meeting facilities. IRC has hosted the group website, which all core partners have rights to contribute to, as well as coordinating production of a newsletter for members based on information posted on the website. Group meetings have been held twice annually, usually hosted by one of the

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<sup>1</sup> 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 and Cinara.

core partners, where the agenda normally consists of a thematic and a group business part.

### **Group governance arrangements**

These arrangements developed through a meeting and consultations in November 2007, are based upon the assumption 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 Group's mission and express interest to join the Group to the coordinator.
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 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 management*: The core partners will select a group coordinator and a group 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 (with support of other core partners) will take the lead role in managing the website, producing the newsletter , managing communications and ensuring documentation of meetings and activities. If significant financial resources are handled by the MUS Group, the core partners will identify a treasurer and ensure appropriate arrangements are in place (e.g. a bank account with transparent financial management arrangements, including biennial reports at MUS Group meetings and annual audit). Each officer will serve for approximately year (between annual meetings), but may be re-selected.
5. *Selection of group officers*: The core partners will seek nominations for the group coordinator two months prior to the first annual meeting with votes (one vote per core partner) to be submitted (electronically) two weeks prior to the meeting. The selected officer will be announced at the meeting and serve until the first annual meeting in the next year. The group secretary will be selected following the same process prior to the second annual meeting of the year. In the event that meetings are delayed, the existing officers will continue to serve until an election process is arranged.
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.

### **Interim arrangements**

John Butterworth has been acting the main coordinator (with support of IRC colleagues) and recently Stef Smits has taken the role of secretary. Until conclusion of a nomination and selection process in early 2008, it is proposed that John Butterworth and Stef Smits act as interim group coordinator and interim group secretary respectively.

### **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. There are generally two meetings per year, and these are usually held in the Netherlands or the UK.

### **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 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 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).

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