

Belegschaft und Bevölkerung der Wasserwerke: Demokratisieren statt privatisieren!

Vor drei Jahren wurde die Wasserversorgung Ghanas privatisiert - trotz des recht breiten Widerstands, der im wesentlichen durch die Nationale Wasserkoalition organisiert worden war. Zwar betont die Regierung bis heute, die Wasserversorgung sei gar nicht privatisiert worden, sondern es handle sich nur darum, dass das Management von einer Privatfirma der holländisch-südafrikanischen Aqua Vitens Rand Limited (AVRL) betrieben werde - die Kritiker entgegen dem zurecht, dass es Aufgabe und Ziel eben dieser Privatmanager sei, das Unternehmen wie eine Privatfirma zu führen. Was eben dazu geführt habe, dass im Jahr 2008 zwar 9 Prozent aller Firmenkosten für Werbung ausgegeben wurden, aber nur noch 7% für Instandhaltung und Wartung...An diesem 1. Mai haben nun die Belegschaften der Wasserwerke heftigen Protest gegen die Privatisierung geäußert - erstmals in der Geschichte dieser ganzen Auseinandersetzung. Diese Proteste greifen die Gruppierungen, die sich weiterhin gegen die Privatisierung zur Wehr setzen auf und betonen, dass damit die einmalige und erstmalige Chance gegeben sei, dass Bevölkerung und Belegschaft gemeinsam kämpfen und miteinander Grundlagen legen können, auch die Wasserversorgung gemeinsam zu betreiben. Dazu die Pressemitteilung "SOLIDARITY STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF SECONDED STAFF OF GWCL TO AVRL" der National Coalition Against Privatization of Water (NCAP) vom 10. Mai 2009:

PRESS RELEASE

SOLIDARITY STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF SECONDED STAFF OF GWCL TO AVRL

The National Coalition Against Privatization of Water (NCAP) expresses its full and unconditional solidarity with 'Secoded Staff of GWCL to Aqua Vitens Rand Limited (AVRL)' in their strong protest issued on 1st May (Labour Day) against the mismanagement, oppression, division and exploitation that they have experienced since AVRL took over Ghana's urban water supply services because of the privatization of water management almost three years ago.

NCAP has an established and proud record of supporting and highlighting the needs and concerns of water workers and the consuming public, especially water-deprived communities, because of our fundamental position that only a water service that provides both decent employment and decent service to Ghanaians is worthy of the name.

We are opposed to privatization, even when being done in stages and through the backdoor, as is the case with taking the first step through privatization of management, precisely because it cannot and will not deliver on these twin requirements - workers' and public welfare together.

We call on all Ghanaians to bear in mind this ultimate unity of interests between the water workers and the public and give their unconditional support to the abused water workers. It is on such basis that we can ensure that the gains of one do not come at the expense of the other, as has unfortunately been the case in the past. The reforms we need to deliver a worthy water service requires a new vision that builds on new relationships founded on mutual interest and solidarity. The crisis confronting the workers today is a good place to start.

As the workers pointed out on May Day, the deplorable water delivery services the Ghanaian population have had to endure during the period of privatized management and AVRL control is due to the ineffectiveness of the private management arrangement.

We whole heartedly welcome this concern of the workers about the "large number of people who are denied water in Ghana" due to the ineffectiveness of the current arrangement. We see this as a positive sign that will yield benefits to

community-labour relations in the expansion of access to water and other essential services

The revelation by the workers that treatment facilities have been abandoned comes as no surprise to the Coalition since the main problem of the national water system i.e. (investment) was dressed up as a management problem, which only privatization could solve. Of course this claim is as bogus as the earlier one that only privatization could solve the problem of chronic disinvestment in the water system, a claim that no one dares to make now.

In reality, very little attention has been paid to repairs and maintenance by AVRL. According to the AVRL's own report for 2008, repairs and maintenance was 7% (GHC 7,124,000) as against 9% (GHC 9,357,000) for advertising and commercials. The whole operation of AVRL has been reduced to fraudulent media hype at the expense of core expenditures such as repairs and maintenance, the outcome of which is the poor service delivery the country is presently experiencing.

The communication outfit of AVRL is quick to pass the blame of repairs and maintenance to GWCL. We would like to state here, emphatically that it is the responsibility of AVRL as per the Management Contract (in Schedule 2, Technical Services).

This shifting of responsibilities by the multi-million dollar earning AVRL 'managers' is useful only for one thing - it exposes that so-called 'public-private partnership' in water (and other essential services like health) is only about private benefit from public investment. Or as NCAP has put it: 'Private Gain, Public Pain'. This is the problem when public resources are given to private control and treated as sources of private wealth.

While Ghanaians die of cholera, while communities wallow in thirst, and thousands of children and adults die every year of water-borne diseases, while malaria and other water-related illness cripple our health services and our economic productivity; while water workers, our own home grown experts in the sector are subjected to "hardship, exploitation and disrespect" and denied their legal exercise of trade union rights such as negotiating a new Collective Bargaining Agreement- a few expatriates calling themselves AVRL are being paid millions of dollars from public funds

The Government- and the Mills' Presidency in particular - must take urgent steps to reverse this sordid situation that is feeding a few expatriates with millions of dollars whilst the main problem of lack of investments to the sector lies unattended. If the Vodafone contract can be reviewed then the AVRL contract must be cancelled! We hold government to its campaign promises, upon which they won Ghanaians' vote!

We are in complete solidarity with the water workers and call on Government to immediately abrogate the contract due to the following reasons;

- 1) AVRL has failed to supply water to Ghanaians as per the contract;
- 2) They have failed to produce water to the standards of the contract;
- 3) They are frustrating water sector staff and destroying Ghana's technical expertise and resource base in the water sector

In place of the management contract we call for an accountable full public management alternative that will respect and judiciously utilize the accumulated knowledge and experiences of the workers. We expect Government to treat the above issues with urgency.

Long Live the Workers and Citizens Solidarity!

Long Live Workers of Ghana!!

Ya Bre with Privatization! Time for a Truly Better Ghana!

Accra, May 7, 2009

NCAP Contact: 0244 419713

Al-Hassan Adam

Coordinator

Africa Water Network

C/O Civic Response

37 New Town Loop

D.T.D Accra-North

Ghana-W/Africa

Tel: +233-21248745

+233-244208184

Email: alhassan.adam@gmail.com