

GATS and Development: The Case of the Water Sector

A one-day symposium

Wednesday 13th April 2005
Loughborough University, UK

Organised by: The Department of Geography and WEDC (Water, Engineering and Development Centre) Loughborough University

Ever since the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) was agreed in 1994, a fierce discursive battle has been raging over its potential impacts upon developing countries. For the WTO and those promoting GATS, the liberalization of trade in services offers developing countries opportunities to expand their exports in new directions, increase overall levels of inward investment and improve the quality of their domestic service provision. Critics, on the other hand, claim that the complexities of the negotiations (and the pressure exerted by more powerful countries) mean that developing countries run the risk of signing up for the liberalization of sectors, which may not be in their best interests. Particular concerns have been raised over GATS coverage of key public services, its lack of long-term flexibility and the limitations it may impose upon a government's right to regulate.

To date, most of the debate on these issues has been at a rather over-generalized level. In reality, the potential impacts of GATS will differ in each of the economic sectors that it touches upon and it will have different impacts in individual countries. As such, the intention of this symposium is to focus attention on to one particular sector – that of water supply and sanitation.

With speakers from donors, practitioners, campaigning organizations, academia and the water industry, the day will provide an exciting opportunity for those with a general interest in the potential impacts of GATS to explore the arguments in a more concrete sectoral context, and for those involved in the water sector to explore an issue which will have a major impact upon the future dynamics of their sector.

Confirmed speakers include:

Belinda Calaguas (Water Aid)
Esteban Castro (Department of Geography, Oxford University)
Richard Franceys (Institute of Water and Environment, Cranfield University)
A Member of DFID's Policy Division
Dave Hall (Public Services International Research Unit, University of Greenwich)
Peter Harvey (WEDC)
Clare Joy (World Development Movement)
Sir Paul Lever (RWE Thames Water)
Diana Mitlin (International Institute for Environment and Development)
Andy Reed MP

Plus there will also be a book launch of Reclaiming Public Water – Achievements, Struggles and Visions from Around the World (published by Transnational Institute/Corporate Europe Observatory) by one of the book's editors, Philipp Terhorst.



REGISTRATION FORM: GATS and Development

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FEE: Includes coffee, lunch and tea.

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Fees are payable in advance and places will only be reserved when payment, together with registration forms have been received. Cheques are to be made payable to Loughborough University. For bookings cancelled within 21 days of the seminar, the seminar fee is non-refundable although substitutions may be made. Further details will be sent to delegates on registration.