



## Where to with post-project support?

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Although technical issues are important in implementing rural water systems the most important challenge facing the rural water sector is finding effective means of organizing people in rural communities to finance and manage local water supplies effectively, through community based systems, *with minimal external support*.

The term “*Post Project Support*” has different meanings for different stakeholders in the Water and Sanitation Sector. Some refer to it as “Mentorship”, others as “*Hold-ing the Community’s Hand*”, whilst others argue that it begins once water flows. Many Implementing Agents argue that when all the right combination of factors are put together at community level, sustainability will be achieved and the water supply project will continue to function with minimal external support. According to DWAF’s Sustainability Management Guidelines, “*If all the parts were assembled correctly - technical, social, administration etc. the project could be wound up like a clock and would continue to work, by itself, for the next twenty years.*” (DWAF, 1998: *Sustainability Management Guidelines*).

In South Africa the issue of post project support has been complicated by the recent establishment of Local Govern-ment as a the third sphere of government. This has had significant implications in terms of water and sanitation provision. The new *Water Services Act of 1997* gave the responsibility of water and sanitation provision to Local Government. This is a major breakthrough particularly for rural areas as they did not have an institutional vehicle for water issues. However a lot of work still needs to be done by Water Services Authorities (WSAs) in operationalizing and adapting to their new roles.

The WHO in 1994 strongly recommended that the key support to be given during this post-project phase is the development of a Monitoring System and the utilisation of such a system as a management tool. It so states clearly that Post Project Support can only be given through knowledge of user demand of, and reactions to, the structures and function of the Community Based System introduced. According to the report of the WHO, this “*knowledge can only be obtained through social and technical monitoring. By far the greatest amount of attention should be paid to socio-economic factors. Intensity of monitoring will be highest in the first two to three years after which it can be reduced and finally cease*” (WHO, 1994).

This has been lacking in many water projects, which has resulted in external agencies being unable to detect prob-lems at an early stage, before water stops flowing.

### Purpose of the pilot project

In 1998 DANIDA through Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) funded Mvula Trust (NGO) to conduct a pilot project which investigated the socio-techni-cal support required during the Post Project Phase. Three projects at a Post Project Phase implemented by Mvula Trust and Aquamanzi (Built Operate Train and Transfer Consortium) were assessed.

The paper gives an overview of the findings of a pilot study. It also highlights the socio-technical issues critical for the sustainability of a community-based project. It will also share lessons learned in implementing the interven-tions particularly the process of linking community-based projects with Local Government.

### Summary of key findings

#### Operations and maintenance management systems

It was found that two of the three projects used the Community Based Model for Operations and Maintenance (O&M). The third project was still in a process of develop-ing O&M procedures. There are number of models for O&M management and the essential differences relate to the degree of involvement of the user community, the role of different institutions and tiers of government and the involvement of the private sector. Two of the projects evaluated have trained people from the community to carry out all routine and minor repairs. One of the two projects has a mechanism for support, and the reporting and repair of serious faults is in place. This project has a good working relationship with the organisations which were involved in the construction of the project, installation of the pumps and electricity, and provision of financial and management training. These companies give voluntary ongoing support to the committee. There was minimal support given by the Implementing Agent, it was only through attending meet-ings on an *ad hoc* basis.

#### Management structure

We found that the management structure was strong only in one of the three projects. The weak management struc-ture is understandable in one of these two projects, as they have not received O&M training during this period. The strengths of the project with strong management structures are derived from the fact that the Water committee is part of an Umbrella Committee, which consist of various com-

mittees representing different sectors and that decisions around O&M are decentralised to a standpipe level. This devolution of decision-making powers to the lowest level has increased the community participation of householders in the project. In one of the two projects with weak management structure, the water committee is the umbrella and only committee involved in decision-making, and therefore it is 'removed' from the actual users.

#### *Composition of the management structure*

The three projects have committees that are composed of a range of members with different characteristics. KwaDlamini has a strong component of women, whereas Isulabasha Mvunyane has a fair gender mix with assertive men and women. The educational levels for the majority of Committee members are high in Isulabasha and this seems to work to their advantage. In Emanjokweni and KwaDlamini the Committees do not seem to be strong in leadership and in providing strategic vision. Women chair both Committees.

#### **Financial systems**

##### *Cost recovery*

In Mvunyane it was found that the monthly flat rate of R5 per household was affordable by the community and has generated sufficient funds to effectively operate and maintain the system. The project had about R9000.00 profit in the bank. This was not the case in KwaDlamini. The R5.50 flat rate was not paid regularly and the Committee struggled with the electricity bill.

##### *Tariff collection system*

Mvunyane has a Water Office where householders are expected to pay towards the end of the month. Those who cannot afford to pay, report to the Standpipe Committees, who then report to the Main Committee. This was different in KwaDlamini. They do not have an office. A lot of people did not know where to pay. They collect water tariffs on pension payout days. This has caused a heavy reliance of the project on pensioners as a source of income.

##### *Dealing with defaulters*

In Mvunyane there was a good system of dealing with defaulters. The Standpipe Committee visits the member of a standpipe if no payments have been made. The second step involves reporting to the main Water Committee which then reports to the Tribal Authority. Penalties are paid if the case has been reported to the Tribal Authority. Other projects do not have a system of dealing with defaulters.

##### *Cross subsidization*

Communities seem to have their own ways of dealing with this. The poor families in Mvunyane are expected to clean around the communal standpipes, but this was not the case in KwaDlamini.

#### **Linkages between the project steering committee (PSC), water committees and local government**

In all three projects linkages are very weak. Isulabasha Mvunyane mentioned that they have approached local government with the aim of building the relationship. They felt that local government is not ready to interact with them, as there are no clear guidelines. They requested that DANIDA should provide workshops aimed at developing guidelines and policies between local water committees and local government.

#### **Community participation**

Although all projects emphasised that communities were involved in decision-making, householders' involvement seems to be very weak in Emanjokweni and KwaDlamini.

#### **Lessons learned**

##### *Decentralization of O&M responsibilities to the lowest (standpipe) level*

Mvunyane is a good case, which shows the decentralization of participation to a standpipe level. Each standpipe has a Sub-committee, which oversee the standpipe. Although payment is made to the office, reporting on defaulters is through the Standpipe Committee.

##### *Commitment of the training agent*

In Mvunyane the Training Agent was regularly available to the Committee two years after the project was completed. This is done voluntarily, and the Training Agent has created a good relationship with the Committee.

##### *Community size*

Mvunyane is a small community with about 500 households. Communication and interaction is easier between the Committee and community members. A spirit of cohesiveness seems to exist.

##### *Previous level of service (demand driven approach)*

The Mvunyane community has a history of searching for potable water. The previous level of service was poor and unreliable and hence all community members are active participants of the current scheme.

##### *Single development structure - accountability of local water committee (LWC) as the water services provider (WSP)*

The Water Committee is part of a broad development structure and all development in the area is coordinated by a single development structure.

##### *Financial management system*

The Committee has a good record keeping system. The R5 flat rate is recorded according to key allocations in the Cashbook:

R1.00: Repairs  
R1.30: Salaries  
R1.50: Electricity supply  
70c: Administration  
50c: Maintenance issues

*Community driven*

There was a strong commitment from the Committee to drive the process. The Committee has a deep knowledge of the scheme.

**Guidelines for post-project support to community-based water projects**

Figure 1 highlights the key issues on which Post Project support should be based on . It is recommended that formal support be for a period of one year be given by an Implementing Agent and targeted towards establishing a Community based organization managing full Water Service Provider functions and limiting external support to expertise not available at local community level . Ongoing support and monitoring should be developed to ensure that the following is adhered to:

- provision of continuous water supply at acceptable quantity and quality
- customer satisfaction
- acceptable levels of O&M
- affordable O&M
- cost recovery at affordable rates
- tariff collection system
- satisfactory reporting to Water Services Authority
- Good scheme management (financial administration, staffing and general administration).

**Conclusion**

The pilot study highlighted important social, financial, health and technical issues to be done during the post project support. The success of any post project support will depend on the effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation systems that are put in place.

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