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**Water For All:
Improving Water Resource
Governance in
Southern Africa**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Water is critical to the 14 countries of southern Africa, especially for agriculture, which supports most people's livelihoods. But low water quality, quantity and availability make water management a particularly challenging sector in this region. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has coordinated a number of regional initiatives to address these water challenges, including the widespread adoption of the concept of integrated water resource management (IWRM). IWRM pursues the democratisation of water resources through stakeholder participation.

This paper assesses prospects for effective stakeholder participation in water resource management in southern Africa. It uses experiences in countries where the process has somewhat progressed, such as South Africa and Zimbabwe, and to some extent Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland and Tanzania, to draw some important lessons.

At a theoretical level four points loom large. First, improved governance, rather than stakeholder participation, should be the indicator of democratisation in water resource management. Second, water practitioners should be conscious of the fact that effective stakeholder participation depends on a conducive governance regime at the national level, which lies outside their purview. Third, uncritical adoption of the neoliberal concept of beneficial use of water, where water that is being productively used cannot be re-allocated without extreme difficulty, tends to forestall what is essentially a political process. Fourth, and related to the previous point, stakeholder participation without significant restructuring of ownership and access rights, runs the risk of tokenism.

There are also a number of practical issues, which need consideration if stakeholder participation and improved governance of water resources are to be achieved. These include: the process and approach; definition of stakeholder and how can it be best operationalised; entry and levels of participation, administrative and operational realities especially with regards to transaction costs and ensuring that stakeholder participation does not jeopardise public interest. Some suggestions are made on these issues.

WATER FOR ALL: IMPROVING WATER RESOURCE GOVERNANCE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Emmanuel Manzungu

INTRODUCTION

Water is critical to the socio-economic development of the 14 southern African countries: Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. This is because of its importance to all sectors of the economy, but especially agriculture (which uses over 80% of the developed water resources) which supports most of the 200 million people in the region (Chenje and Johnson, 1996; Pallett, 1997; Matiza-Chiuta *et al.*, 2002). It is therefore important to address the four main water challenges that face the region:

1. Water scarcity due to the semi-arid and arid environment, and the low level of water development (Hirji *et al.*, 2002). The number of food insecure people in the region rose by 9% to 46% from the early 1980s to the early 1990s, an increase of 22 to 39 million people (SADC Water Sector, 1998). About a third of the people in the region live in drought prone areas where water shortages are an impediment to increased crop production and food production (SADC Water Sector, 1998).
2. Watershed degradation caused by over-cultivation, overgrazing, deforestation (in part caused by dependence on wood fuel as an energy source by a substantial proportion of the population), and invasion of alien plants (Mazvimavi, 2002).
3. Polluted water bodies caused by poor waste disposal systems and worsened by a rapidly growing and urbanising population without adequate water and sani-

tation facilities. The primary causes of disease and poor health in the SADC region are mainly water related.

4. The management of river basins which cross national borders; these present a number of specific challenges (Green Cross International, 2000a; Savenije and van der Zaag, 2000; van der Zaag *et al.*, 2002)

These problems underline the importance of reconciling often-conflicting social, economic and environmental objectives (GWP, 2000a). There have been suggestions in the international water management community that improved water management cannot tackle such problems without good governance (GWP, 2000a; GWP-TAC, 2000). This perhaps explains why water reforms are underway in over half of the southern African countries (Malawi, 2001; Mozambique, 1995; Namibia, 2000, Swaziland¹, Tanzania, 2002; Zambia, 1994; Zimbabwe, 1998ab).

These reforms are in line with the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) philosophy, which has significantly influenced perceptions about water management worldwide. There are four IWRM principles, which are based on the International Conference on Water and Environment (ICWE) held in Dublin in 1992, and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in Rio in 1992 (Box 1).

Box 1: The four IWRM Dublin principles

- I. Fresh water is a finite and vulnerable resource, essential to sustain life, development and the environment.
- II. Water development and management should be based on a participatory approach, involving users, planners and policy-makers at all levels.
- III. Women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water.
- IV. Water has an economic value in all its competing uses and should be recognised as an economic good.

Source: Global Water Partnership-Technical Advisory Committee (GWP-TAC), 2000

A focus on stakeholder participation is captured by the second and third principles, which call for a participatory approach in general and participation of women

¹. Ms. Sindiswa Mthimkhulu provided the information on Swaziland's water reforms. Her assistance is gratefully acknowledged.

in particular (GWP-TAC, 2000). Co-operation within the framework of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), a regional economic grouping to which all the countries belong, is helping to popularise the new management approaches (Greencross International, 2000a). This is evidenced by the *Protocol on Shared Water Courses* in the SADC countries (SADC, 1995; SADC, 2000); the setting up of the SADC Water Sector Coordinating Unit in Maseru, Lesotho in 1996 (the precursor to the SADC Water Division now based in Gaborone, Botswana); as well as the production of the Regional Strategic Action Plan for Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) for the period 1999-2004 (SADC Water Sector, 1998); and the Southern African Water Vision (GWP-SATAC, 2000).

PRECONDITIONS AND ACTIONS FOR IMPROVING WATER RESOURCE GOVERNANCE

Box 2 presents some of the critical preconditions and steps needed for improving the governance of water resources.

Box 2: Preconditions and practical action in governance of water resources

Preconditions

- Transparency and accountability through participatory mechanisms appropriate to local realities, needs and wishes
- Government agencies allocating and managing water resources on the basis of legitimate policies, laws and efficient administration
- Mobilising and coordinating the many social players involved
- Responding to citizens' long term needs by ensuring sustainable management of the resource
- Reforming and developing institutional frameworks

Practical steps

- Making participation meaningful to the participants, with clear measurable impacts
- Setting realistic participation objectives
- Realising that participation involves high transaction costs in terms of financial, human and time resources
- Acknowledging power differences between the different stakeholders, which ultimately determine who effectively participates in what
- Factoring in social and cultural aspects, which may hinder participation of some stakeholders, say of women and the poor
- Recognising that participation is a process and not an event
- Appreciating that communication, and not just information dissemination, is important

Source: GWP (2000); Marimbe and Manzungu (2002).

These issues belie deep-seated theoretical questions about stakeholder participation and governance as raised in the discussion section of this paper (see for example Dube and Swatuk, 2002; Manzungu, 2002a; Manzungu and Kujinga, 2002). In this paper I explore whether the degree to which these preconditions and actions have been met in Southern Africa. I examine the status of governance from the local to the international level by looking at the reform processes in Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. I first use Zimbabwe as a case study to tease out the main issues since its reform process is the most advanced in the region (Manzungu, 2002b).

ATTEMPTS AT STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION: THE ZIMBABWE EXPERIENCE

Formalisation of stakeholder participation: process and institutional arrangements

Zimbabwe embarked on its water reforms in 1995 to achieve equity in access to and management of productive water. Essentially this entailed democratising water resource management by:

- revoking legal provisions that guaranteed privileged access to agricultural water by the white farmers
- de-linking water rights from land rights, since the majority black population did not have land rights, and
- broadening participation beyond water right holders.

There are claims that stakeholder consultation was used along this democratisation road, although these have not been substantiated by independent researchers (see for example Kujinga, 2002; Swatuk, 2002). The process began in 1995 and reached its climax in 1998, with the promulgation of the Water Act (Zimbabwe, 1998a) and the Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA) Act (Zimbabwe, 1998b). A supporting policy document, *Towards Integrated Water Resources Management: Water resources strategy for Zimbabwe* (WRMS, n.d.) was also produced, which recognised stakeholder participation as an important policy and strategy instrument. These processes were largely donor funded, as were two pilot projects, Mazowe and Mupfure catchments, meant to be guinea pigs for the reforms. Mazowe catchment was chosen because of some participatory initiatives by some

users that were occurring there. These pilots were used to debate such topical issues as water allocation criteria (Figtree, 1998) and water pricing (Zimconsult, 1996).

In the reforms, stakeholder participation was provided for within the institutional framework of catchment and sub-catchment councils. The country was divided into seven catchment councils, namely Gwayi, Mazowe, Manyame, Mzingwane, Runde, Sanyati and Save on the basis of the major river systems. Under them are sub-catchment councils demarcated on the basis of the major tributaries, rather than river basins.² For example Gwayi, Manyame, Sanyati and Mazowe catchments are part of the Zambezi River Basin. All Zimbabwe's river basins are internationally shared, which raises the question of how stakeholders are involved at the international level (see below).

The functions of catchment councils are to prepare outline plans, determine applications and grant permits, regulate and supervise exercise of water rights and supervise performance of sub-catchment councils. Day-to-day water management is carried out by sub-catchment councils. These have power to levy fees from water users, unlike catchment councils, which derive their budget from a water fund.

Catchment and sub-catchment councils democratically elect their representatives from the major stakeholder groups. Stakeholder identification and participation has been a problem. Initially stakeholders were generally taken to be irrigators. This was an anomaly given the high contribution rainfed farming makes to agriculture and the large number of farmers that are involved (Rockström *et al.*, 2002; Manzungu, 2002d). Government regulations now identify stakeholders as including Rural District Councils, communal farmers, resettlement farmers, small-scale farmers, large-scale commercial farmers, indigenous commercial farmers, urban authorities, large-scale and small-scale miners among others (Zimbabwe, 2000a; Zimbabwe, 2000b and see Table 1). However, the marginalisation of domestic water supply aspects on the grounds that this was really not a water resource management issue has done little to engender involvement by some rural communities.

2. This is defined as the area that contributes hydrologically to a river system that ends in the ocean or a terrestrial lake or inland sea. A catchment area is defined as an area that receives or catches the rain that flows into a particular river. This is similar to a watershed, which is an area from which all surface runoff flows through a common point (Hirji *et al.*, 2002). In this paper a catchment is taken to be a part of a river basin.

The chief executive officer of the catchment council is government-appointed. Catchment councils are assisted by the Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA), which presides over management of water resources. The Department of Water Development (DWD) is responsible for policy formulation.

Table 1. Typical stakeholder representation on sub- and catchment councils

Stakeholder	No. of representatives
Commercial Farmers' Union (Large scale white farmers)	2 or 3
Zimbabwe Farmers' Union (smallholder farmers)	2 or 3
Indigenous Commercial Farmers' Union	1
Forestry	1
Mining	1
Rural district council (councillors)	1 or 2
Traditional leaders	1 or 2
Urban	1
Small scale irrigators	1

Source: Kujinga (2002)

Experiences with the establishment and operations of stakeholder institutions

Stakeholder institutions were established one year after the promulgation of the Act and within six months of each other throughout the country. The idea behind what has been called *the establish-and-let-evolve approach* (Manzungu, 2002c) was to let the institutions learn by doing. However, it is also true that the short period was to some extent in line with donors' (unrealistic) time frames (Swatuk, 2002). The donor community also bankrolled the post-establishment phase, up to three years in some cases. Dependence on donor funding was, however, shown to be unsustainable when the support was arbitrarily withdrawn because of political problems emanating from the fast track land reform programme that began in July 2000.

The effectiveness of some stakeholders has been poor, especially the rural communities (see Manzungu and Kujinga, 2002 among others) because of lack of financial resources, for example to pay bus fares to attend the meetings. Government-defined regulations for selecting stakeholders have also been a problem as they did not take into account local dynamics. Non-farm stakeholders, such as industry and urban authorities, have not been really active. The emphasis on making all water users pay for water in the spirit that water is an economic good, a central philosophy of the reforms, has not helped at all. This has conveyed

the message that it is merely a revenue collecting exercise. Meanwhile the provision in the Water Act for some people to pay reduced water charges has not been acted upon. The other problem has been a lack of adequate community knowledge about the process, worsened by the use of the English language as a medium for communication. The emphasis on information dissemination rather than communication has also been a problem (Marimbe and Manzungu, 2002).

Powerful individuals or groups have been observed sometimes to hijack the process for their selfish benefits. This has led to some commentators doubting the effectiveness of neoliberal policies for delivering stakeholder participation, such as the focus on an electoral register of stakeholders and balloting, given the conflicting water narratives that exist (Mtisi, 2002; Swatuk, 2002).

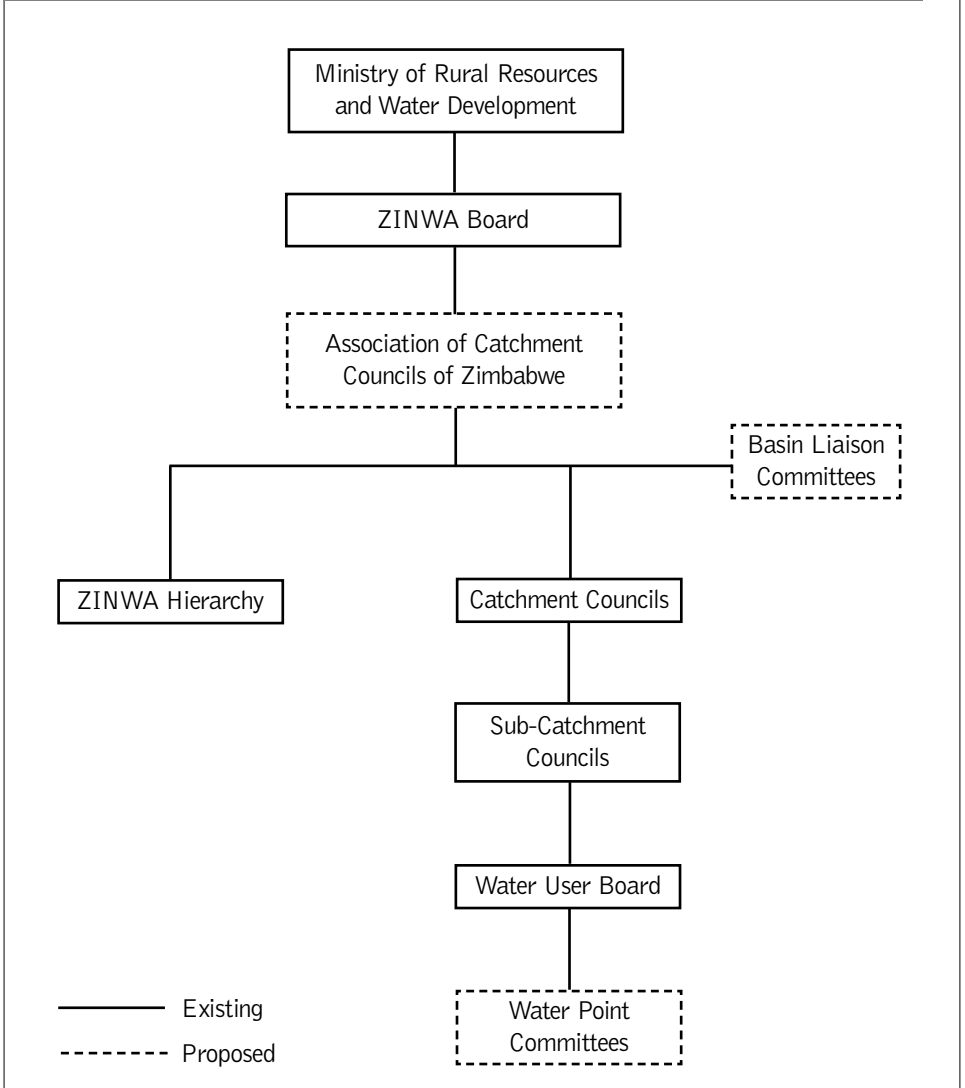
The state has retained considerable influence (Manzungu, 2001), ostensibly on the grounds of protecting public interests. For example the structure of the new water institutions is largely hierarchical with the state at the top (Figure 1). However, the enactment of enabling regulations for the institutions vested in the state has created problems for the new stakeholder institutions. For example, authority for charging various water users and for allocating water permits took more than 12 months to be produced.

The lowest management level, the sub-catchment council, was found to be too large to be effective. As a result, water user boards, which bring together group water users in a particular section of a river,³ have been created as a level below the sub-catchment council level. Mazowe and Manyame catchments have already adopted these. Lack of adequate legal provision for participation in water resource management at the point where water is used, or a water point in general terms, is another problem. A good example is smallholder irrigation schemes where the lack of a legal status has complicated management (Makadho, 1994; Manzungu and van der Zaag, 1996).

There was also lack of provision for relationships with other non-statutory and informal organisations, such as irrigation management committees and conservation committees. Some progress has been achieved in this regard. For example there is a provision for four stakeholder representatives chosen from submissions by

3. Ironically this institution used to exist under the old River Boards. This third tier is now widely supported.

Figure 1: Existing and proposed stakeholder institutions in water resource management in Zimbabwe



catchment councils to sit on the ZINWA Board that oversees water resource development in the country. There is, however, no known case of report back meetings by these representatives. Steps towards the formation of the Association of Catchment Councils in Zimbabwe, which have now stalled because of lack of money, were a realisation of the need for catchment councils to have a platform at a national level.

There is, however, no clear provision for stakeholder participation at the basin or inter-state levels, although participation at this level has happened anyway. Stakeholder catchments falling under the Zambezi River Basin are participating, as part of the national delegation, in international discussions of the Zambezi River Basin Plan. This was because they existed and therefore could not be ignored. Basin liaison committees can be a useful common platform for catchments within a river basin.

Spatial and jurisdictional boundaries of the new water institutions remain a problem (Latham, 2002). Some of the problems have to do with the fact that communities owe allegiance to their traditional institutions and district and provincial administrative boundaries, which do not necessarily follow catchment lines. Moreover, the hydrologically defined boundaries have tended to split communities. Clear-cut jurisdictional responsibilities between the catchment and sub-catchment councils, water user board and water point committees and rural district councils, still need to be clarified.

The prevailing national political environment has also affected the process. The fast track land reform programme that began in July 2000, with its disregard for rules and regulations, has reversed some of the gains of the water reforms and stakeholder institutions.

Despite these problems some progress has been made. To date some catchment councils, such as the Save Catchment Council, have put in place mechanisms for applying for water permits, payment schedules for commercial water uses and administrative and management structures.

ATTEMPTS AT STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION: REGIONAL EXPERIENCES

The Zimbabwe experience highlights the complexity of making stakeholder participation work. This section examines how the issues are being handled in the other countries where the process has somewhat progressed, such as South Africa, and to some extent Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland and Tanzania.

Establishing stakeholder institutions: piloting the approach

In all the cases described below, the national government agencies responsible for water development have played an influential role, such as in demarcating water management areas. The same institutions also spearheaded the establishment of stakeholder institutions. The concept of pilot catchments was widely used, for

example in South Africa, Swaziland, Mozambique and Tanzania. There were, however, differences in when pilots were used, i.e. before or after the enactment of the relevant legislation. As we have seen, Zimbabwe only used the pilot concept before the institutions were established. It then proceeded to establish the institutions all at once.

South Africa used pilots before and after legislation was adopted. The Olifants River Basin was a pilot catchment before the promulgation of the National Water Act, with the Inkomati River Basin⁴ being adopted afterwards. After much debate the catchment management agency which oversees the basin was officially launched in March 2003. Other basins in South Africa are at various stages in a process that is expected to last 15 years. This is what has been called a *progressive approach* where the aim is to proceed cautiously, building upon earlier experiences. The problem with this approach is that it may take too long and concentrate influence in powerful stakeholders, given its voluntary nature whereby stakeholders are free to determine the pace of the reforms. To prevent these problems, Zimbabwe opted for the legal route of creating institutions. The government of Swaziland seems to be opting for a compromise position. The Mbuluzi River Basin Authority was established before the legal framework was in place. This was chosen because there was already some self-organisation in the basin. All the remaining basin authorities have to be established within five years. Namibia has also opted for a pilot catchment, before establishing the national legal framework in the form of the Kuiseb River Basin Committee.

Tanzania seems to be following the South African route. The country was demarcated (on paper) into nine river basins in 1981. The Rufiji Basin Water Board was established as a pilot in 1991 (Sokile *et al.*, 2002) and efforts to involve stakeholders in water management are underway here (Dungumaro and Madulu, 2002).

In Mozambique a stakeholder institution has been established in the south, in the form of the Regional Water Authority (RWA)-South.⁵ This will bring together the Umbeluzi, Limpopo, Incomati and yet-to-be created Save Basins.

4. In South Africa there are 19 water management areas (WMAs) supervised by popularly elected catchment management agencies (CMAs). Below them are water user associations (WUAs), but their area of jurisdiction is too large from an operational point of view (Manzungu, 2002a). The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) has overall responsibility for water resources in the country.

5. This is one of five suggested basins. The others are RWA-Zambezi, RWA-Centre, RWA-Centre North and RWA-North.

Stakeholder participation in practice

The identification of stakeholders for practical purposes is difficult, as was demonstrated in Zimbabwe where the state had to resort to predetermining stakeholders. In this regard the South African case is interesting. There were claims that the process towards drafting the water law was open, transparent and inclusive and produced a world-class law (see for example Mujwahuzi, 2002; Green Cross International, 2000a). The National Water Act gives water users associations five options for defining stakeholders' voting rights (Republic of South Africa, 1998):

- one vote per entitlement to water use
- a pro rata number of votes in proportion to the quantity of water authorised under a particular catchment, compared to the total quantity of water under all of the entitlements that are registered
- a pro rata number of votes in proportion to the quantity of water authorised compared to all entitlements, compared to the total quantity of water under all the entitlements that are registered
- one vote for every five hectares or part of five hectares of land that can be irrigated in terms of members' entitlement and
- one vote for five hectares or part of five hectares of irrigated land.

In Zimbabwe there was an attempt to separate water supply from water resource management issues. This tended to alienate domestic water users in the rural areas, even though they formed the bulk of the population. Swaziland has ensured that the water supply constituency is represented in the new institutions by including the institution responsible for water supply on the catchment boards.

Yet another problem was the need to reconcile stakeholder participation with the general public interest. In Zimbabwe this was solved by giving the state no voting rights in the institutions. However, the state monitors the situation through its parastatal agency. In Swaziland state agencies constitute the majority of the stakeholders, thereby ensuring public interest protection first hand, but at the expense of broader democracy. In South Africa there is a move towards allowing local stakeholders, in the form of irrigation boards, to spearhead the transformation process for the old to the new institutions, provided this is according to rules.

However, this more often brings about a clash between stakeholders and the state (Manzungu, 2002a). It can therefore be concluded in all cases that the role of the state agency responsible for water development is a contentious issue, mainly because of the degree of autonomy that is supposed to be accorded to stakeholder institutions.

There were some differences between countries in the level at which stakeholder participation was organised. South Africa and Zimbabwe used the catchment for organising participation, whereas Mozambique and Tanzania used a river basin (see footnote 2 for definitions). Swaziland used the basin level because all its rivers drain to the sea.

Overall there have also been some shortcomings in linking local stakeholders to the basin, national and international levels. In South Africa there is no provision for stakeholder participation at the national and international level. This responsibility remains with the Department of Water and Forestry. In Mozambique there is no provision for stakeholder participation in the National Water Council, a coordinating body where all ministries are represented. And the institutions that were created in general did not communicate with the local level.

The geographical and institutional boundaries of water management bodies by and large follow hydrological boundaries. In all cases these are fixed by the state. This tends to create problems at the local level as reported in Zimbabwe (Latham, 2002). The same problems have been observed in South Africa (see Box 3).

Box 3: National ideals versus local realities in South Africa

In the Limpopo Province of South Africa black smallholder farmers were irrigating from a river they shared with white commercial farmers. However, they did not want to form a Water User Association (WUA) that included white farmers; they wanted their own organisation. The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) objected on the grounds that this was against the law, would be against the spirit of co-operation, would be difficult to administer and would represent a return to apartheid days of separate development. The farmers stood firm. In the end DWAF conceded on the understanding they would still be part and parcel of the WUA that would bring them and white farmers together.

Source: Manzungu (2002)

Similar administrative and operational problems to those which occurred in Zimbabwe also delayed the establishment of stakeholder institutions in South Africa. The process to formally establish the Inkomati Basin was held up by government bureaucracy, as well as by the demands of the participatory processes itself (Manzungu, 2002a). For example a variety of structures was discussed without elaborating the day-to-day functions of these new institutions (Rogers *et al.*, 2000).

Obtaining the money needed to initiate and maintain the process is another formidable challenge. In Malawi, Mozambique, Lesotho, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe there has been a reliance on donors to varying degrees. This is a problem, as these might pull out at critical times as happened in Zimbabwe.

DISCUSSION

Water reforms in southern Africa have been very much shaped by the internationally driven IWRM bandwagon, which extols stakeholder participation in water resource management. If progress is to be made in this area, there is a need to seriously engage with some of the basic theoretical questions as well as the crucial practical aspects. Fortunately, the process that is unfolding in some countries, such as South Africa and Zimbabwe, and to some extent Swaziland, Tanzania and Mozambique, provides some useful lessons. These experiences suggest that the emphasis on stakeholder participation as the yardstick of democratisation in water resource management is misplaced because of the difficulty of defining stakeholders and getting them to work together. This is also because stakeholder participation may not adequately represent society; for example, influential stakeholders may monopolise the process. This is supported by the well-documented limitations of the participation paradigm (see for example Cooke and Kothari, 2001). I suggest instead that improved governance should be seen as the reason for involving the wider society in water resource management, and stakeholder participation should be the means for realising that goal (Manzungu, 2002b).

The practical issues that need to be considered if better governance is to be achieved include: the process and approach of establishing institutions; defining stakeholders and operationalising stakeholder participation; entry and levels of participation; administrative and operational realities, especially the transaction costs involved; and protection of public interests. These are discussed in turn below and recommendations made for each.

Process and approach of establishing institutions

The process and approach of establishing institutions is an important discussion point. First is it better to take the South African approach, i.e. establish stakeholder institutions progressively, allowing for experiences in one basin/catchment to feed into the next? Or is it better to establish them all at once and let them 'learn by doing', as happened in Zimbabwe? If the water reforms are seen as a political tool for resolving long-standing societal inequalities, then a step-by-step approach may be a problem. This observation is especially relevant to post-apartheid South Africa. In Zimbabwe it was felt that a white privileged class could not be dislodged by progressive water reform. Swaziland is also facing the inequity dilemma; here large sugar cane estates use most of the water. Such perceived inequity apparently reduced the establishment period to only five years. The interesting question is whether this short timeframe, coupled with staffing stakeholder institutions with government representatives, will necessarily translate into improved governance of water resources.

It is certain that there can be no meaningful governance of water resources without a fundamental re-structuring of ownership and access to the resource (Manzungu, 2002). But wholesale or significant restructuring can have serious economic and political dislocations, at least in the short term. There can be political fallout as investors may be scared off by such a drastic approach. In such circumstances there is every reason not to want to rock the economic boat; witness Zimbabwe's experience, which has been accompanied by serious economic and political problems. Therefore a fine balance has to be struck between stakeholder participation and protecting public interest. The neoliberal concept of beneficial use of water underpinning most of these reforms, where water that is being productively used cannot be re-allocated without extreme difficulty, tends to undermine radical reform (Manzungu, 2001).

Using pilot catchments to develop the approach was a common practice throughout the region. It is important to be clear about what these pilots are to achieve. Questions like whether the pilot catchment should be used before and after the legal process is enacted, and how many and which catchments should be used and for what length of time, should be regarded as secondary. Basically a pilot catchment should not be treated as a microcosm of specific realities, but as a reflection of the processes involved. It should be used to deduce generic lessons rather than specific issues.

Defining stakeholders and making stakeholder participation work

Effective stakeholder participation comes in part from defining who the stakeholders are. Theoretical definitions of stakeholders⁶ do not really help in organising stakeholder participation. The dilemma posed by the theoretical definition is the same as that posed by the IWRM definition (where virtually everyone in a catchment or basin, including the environment, is potentially a stakeholder). The question is, do all stakeholders wield the same influence, and if not, who determines which stakeholders should have more influence? Is there such a thing as a direct or primary stakeholder (Mujwahuzi, 2002), and if so, what is the relationship between these and the other stakeholders? At a practical level it is clear that there has to be a refinement of 'stakeholder' from its lofty and inoperable theoretical definition. This is why Zimbabwe took a deterministic approach to identifying stakeholders.

How to assess whether stakeholder participation is being achieved is another issue. Individual countries need to come up with objective criteria/parameters. It may be necessary to define what constitutes an acceptable level of participation, or a threshold at which participation can be said to have taken place. This obviously varies from country to country depending on the prevailing political environment. Some of the labels that are frequently used should be re-evaluated. For example, is stakeholder participation the same as or different to the related terms of community participation (Mujwahuzi, 2002) and public participation (MHSE/MTPWWM, 2000)? If different, how are these forms of participation operationalised? It is likely that community participation does not really apply where water rights and water use are on an individual basis. It can, however, be used in multi-user projects where there is some sort of community in existence.

Entry and levels of participation

There is also the issue of the best level at which to organise stakeholder participation: the catchment or river basin? Organising stakeholders on a catchment basis makes it difficult to ensure participation at the basin level, as stakeholders can lose sight of the bigger picture. This may exclude stakeholders from discussing trans-boundary water issues that are based on basin commissions and are often negotiated between states. Organising stakeholders at the basin level as an entry point is likely to result in losing sight of the realities of the local level.

6. E.g. "All those who affect, and/or are affected by policies and actions; these can be individuals, social groups or institutions of any size, aggregation or level in society" (Grimble et al., 1995).

We may also need to consider what roles are played by the level of water resource development, size of the basin, intensity of water use and population density. Elsewhere I have postulated that South Africa and Zimbabwe adopted the catchment approach because of the high level of water development in these countries, making it important to have smaller management units (Manzungu, 2002). A related question is the number of administrative/management levels and the relationship between these. While some schemes have attempted to include representatives from the lowest level, the entry point tended to miss the real grassroots actors, as was the case in Zimbabwe. One noticeable omission by all the countries was the lack of participation by local level communities at the national and inter-state levels. This needs to be corrected.

Administrative and operational realities

Administrative and operational problems are another challenging area, especially given the transaction costs involved in setting up new organisations. The question is: is dependence on donors sustainable in the long run and if not, what are the alternative financing arrangements? Many southern African countries are overly dependent on donors, and it is about time these countries put money where their water is! As argued by Swatuk (2002), governments could fund the water reforms but chose to use the money in other often questionable ways.

The overall political culture of a country (or more specifically, status of governance) plays an important role in shaping stakeholder participation, since effective stakeholder participation cannot occur without a conducive governance context. Zimbabwe is a case in point. This often lies outside the purview of water practitioners, but is a point well worth remembering, so that delicate negotiations over governance issues can be conducted. Failure to realise this may result in conflicts with the powers that be. Despite these problems, if carefully crafted, stakeholder participation may help in democratising not only water resource management, but wider society as well.

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