

# lessons series

# 13



## MUNICIPALITIES IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CIVIL SOCIETY



Grant Gibbs, [www.hipporoller.org](http://www.hipporoller.org)

"Making knowledge work for us"

# 1

## OVERVIEW

### 1.1. Aim

It is the aim of this project to assist and empower communities to address their water needs through partnerships between municipalities and civil society organisations.

### 1.2. Partners

- District and local municipalities in Limpopo
- Civil society organisations, Operation Hunger and Tsogang
- Ward Councillors
- Communities
- The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry

### 1.3. Projects

- Hippo Rollers
- Rain water harvesting
- Rehabilitation of boreholes

# 2

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This lesson shows how a partnership between municipalities in Limpopo, and a civil society organisation, Operation Hunger, has addressed some of the pressing water needs. The lesson also tells the story of how such a partnership was established and its successes.

### 2.1. Project background

Govender, (2001) Director of the Centre for Community and Labour Studies in Kwa-Zulu Natal wrote: Civil society comprises organisations and institutions on a national, provincial and local level. Institutions of civil society are varied and range from the local SPCA to a bowling club or a stokvel. It is estimated that there are between 55,000 and 100,000 organisations active within civil society that employ up to 500,000 workers. The majority of these organisations are welfare oriented and operate in the poorer areas of the country. Municipalities operating in poor regions do not have the capacity to address all the pressing needs and service requirements of the communities they serve. This is thus an ideal context for a partnership between civil society and municipalities.

### 2.2. Potential for a partnership between civil society and municipalities

Ideally, municipalities and civil society organisations such as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) should cooperate to address the critical need for water and sanitation services in communities. However, these partnerships do not always develop, due to a number of challenges. Govender mentions a few, for example:

- In the post-1994 period many donors stopped seeing South African NGOs as deserving recipient of funds. Many donors chose to establish bilateral links with government. This contributed to NGOs experiencing difficulties in continuing their operations. In the context of financial uncertainty even more of the NGO corps looked for greater security within the public sector.
- The strategic focus of NGOs became confused and diffused. Prior to 1994 the focus of the NGOs was on organising and supporting resistance to the apartheid state. Many NGOs became rudderless when a democratic dispensation came into being. Instead of focusing on what the democratic government was unable or unwilling to do they continued in the same way, often duplicating the functions of, especially, local government.
- The clients or target group of NGOs also faced the challenges of working in a new environment and, in the case of the civic organisations, they entered into a sometimes conflictual relationship with the local ANC branches and also became weak. The civics that formed SANCO were the most devastatingly affected. However, the civics also played a role in unlocking local development processes.

- The current development nexus calls for a new development vehicle and local communities are indeed engaging with local development programmes through local development forums. Local councils are also legally obliged to consult with communities and it is in their interests to ensure that local development forums, with sufficient understanding of development issues, exist. It is also debatable whether the consultation that occurs with local communities is in fact meaningful or whether local government just goes through the motions. (Govender, C. 2001)

Despite these challenges, the necessary legal framework is in place to support cooperation between municipalities and civil society: The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) and the Municipal Systems Act (32 of 2000, Chapter 4) make provision for public participation in the affairs of local government. This, by implication, includes NGOs and other civil society structures. The Municipal Systems Act makes specific mention of NGOs as optional municipal services delivery mechanisms. Similarly, DWAF's Strategic Framework for Water Services of 2003 recognises the role of civil society organisations in developmental affairs of local government.

### **2.3. Background to Limpopo Province and its municipalities**

Limpopo is one of South Africa's poorest provinces. The majority of the population lives mainly in rural areas. Large areas of Limpopo consist of former homeland regions with no history of democratically elected local government.

In the municipal area of Fetakgomo LM, approximately 6957 households do not receive an income. The unemployment rate is also high, 10 454 people do not have jobs. (www.demarcation.org.za-Census 2001)

Agriculture is by far the most important contributor to formal job opportunities in the province: for every R1m invested in mining, 8 jobs are created; for every R1m invested in agriculture, 40-50 jobs are created! (RESIS 2005)

Almost 60% of the population of Limpopo province lives in abject poverty. The backlog for basic water and sanitation services is vast: 0,71 million households still do not have basic sanitation and 0,34 million households do not yet receive basic water. (DWAF WSNIS - Census 2001)

Groundwater is important for food security. Even though many small scale farmers are experienced irrigation farmers, many communal irrigation schemes in Limpopo fell into disrepair, resulting in the wasting of the investment in infrastructure that was made. (RESIS 2005)

Limpopo is a province prone to droughts and water is scarce. Limited water, not lack of good land, is the main problem in agriculture. During 2004/2005 Limpopo experienced severe droughts, with up to 50% less rainfall than in previous years. Water restrictions were imposed in certain areas, which negatively affected agriculture.

Effective water conservation and demand management, and the careful management of water resources can contribute significantly to increasing agricultural productivity, thereby reducing poverty in the province.

### **2.4. Operation Hunger**

Operation Hunger is a registered Non-Governmental Organisation concerned directly and indirectly with problems of chronic malnutrition and poverty. They assist communities and municipalities in respect of community development and service delivery. They are active in Limpopo running a number of projects, including family planning, ante-natal care, health care clinics and sustainable living programmes outside game reserves. They are also involved in a number of projects to assist communities with access to clean water and water for agricultural use.

Operation Hunger has formed partnerships with the Water Services Authorities (WSAs) Mogalakwena LM, Fetakgomo LM and Lepele-Nkumpi LM, as well as Makghuduthamaga LM and Groblersdal LM. The project initiatives comprise the following:

- Hippo Rollers
- Rain Water Harvesting
- Rehabilitation of boreholes

These initiatives have made an important contribution to alleviating some of the problems in the villages with regard to access to water. International studies have established a clear link between water, reduced poverty and economic growth, and the impact of these initiatives is likely to have the same effect in Limpopo.

Frans Themba, the Regional Manager for Operation Hunger in the Limpopo Province, and Chairperson for Civil Society in the South African Water Sector, described the success of the projects as follows: *"We are assisting municipalities to augment the 25 litres per person per day by these projects, and that will lead to a better life for all."*

Councillor Mampuru of Ward 5 in Fetakgomo Local Municipality confirmed the success of the cooperation: *"As a municipality we believe in a unified approach to service delivery where all relevant stakeholders play their part. Working together towards service delivery leverage resources and cut costs and time as well and the coming in of Operation Hunger is quite strategic."*



Councillor Mampuru of Ward 5 of Fetakgomo

### 2.4.1. Hippo Roller Water Project

Millions of people worldwide are forced to walk long distances, on a daily basis, to collect their water requirements for the day. Traditional methods of collecting water include the use of 20-liter (5-gallon) buckets, which are laboriously carried on the head.

The Hippo Water Roller was specifically designed to make it easier for individuals to transport water. The Hippo Water Roller is a barrel-shaped container designed to transport 90 litres (20 gallons) of water. It comprises of a drum with a large screw-on cap and a clip-on steel handle ([www.hipporoller.org](http://www.hipporoller.org)).

"The drum is manufactured from UV stabilized Polyethylene and has been designed to withstand typical rural conditions such as uneven footpaths, rocks and even broken bottles. The large opening (135 mm / 5.3 inch diameter) allows for easy filling and cleaning of the interior. The sealed lid ensures hygienic storage of water and the steel handle provides firm control over difficult terrain while pushing or pulling the roller.

The innovative design allows water to be placed inside the "wheel" rather than carried above the wheel. The 90kg (200 pound) weight of water is borne on the ground resulting in an effective weight of just 10kg (22 pounds) on level ground. Children and the elderly can easily manage a full roller over most types of terrain. Extensive field tests over many years and various awards have proven the effectiveness of the Hippo Water Roller. Approximately five times the normal amount of water can now be collected in less time with far less effort." ([www.hipporoller.org](http://www.hipporoller.org))



Hippo Water Rollers in action

- by Grant Gibbs, [www.hipporoller.org](http://www.hipporoller.org)

## 2.4.2. Rainwater Harvesting



Water harvesting container with capacity of 2000 litres

The rainwater harvesting project assists people to collect rainwater for household purposes, which would otherwise go to waste.

The Rainwater Harvesting project helps community members to manufacture concrete rain water harvesting tanks. The tanks have a storing capacity of between 2500 and 3000 litres of water when they are full. Community members are trained to manufacture these tanks, which are then dispatched to indigents in the community. Indigents who qualify for tanks are identified through a participatory process.

Frans Themba of Operation Hunger explained the rationale behind the project as follows: *“We have come to realize that rain water is left to waste and if optimally utilized people could get more water from that. We have trained community members in manufacturing these concrete tanks and we are still training more. These concrete water tanks are then dispatched to the indigents in the communities. We are working closely with the municipality and community structures to help identify the indigents who must qualify for these tanks. In some instances we have to use participatory methods and tools to identify the indigents in communities, otherwise we would end up giving these water tanks to those who are not so needy.”*

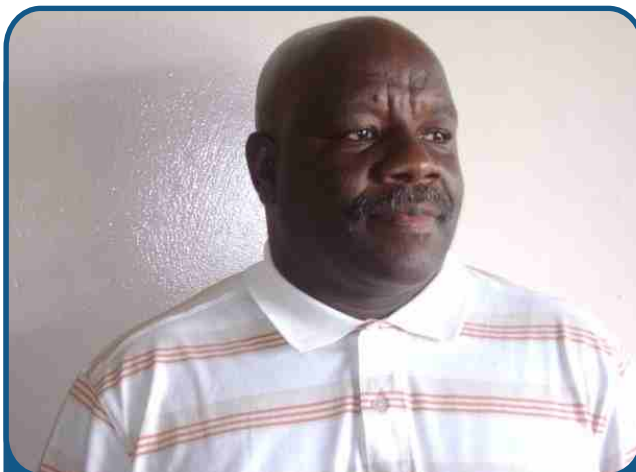
## 2.4.3. Rehabilitation of Boreholes

There are numerous boreholes in the province that could potentially supply communities with water, specifically for agricultural use. Unfortunately, many of these can not be used because the pumps do not work properly. This project aims to involve the community in fixing these pumps.

From discussions at an international conference in Addis Ababa in 2003, it was evident that obtaining investments in agriculture, and specifically irrigation, has been declining over the past few years, due to the concerns about performance of investments in agricultural water use. This trend affected Limpopo as well, as Frans Themba explained: *“We currently have almost 400 boreholes whose hand pumps need rehabilitation and USAID funded us money to rehabilitate only sixty.”*

Whereas Operation Hunger focuses on the rehabilitation of boreholes that provide water to communities, the Department of Agriculture's RESIS programme is involved in the rehabilitation of boreholes with their Revitalisation of Smallholder Irrigation Schemes in Limpopo. Overall, the RESIS borehole rehabilitation programme aims to rehabilitate 126 boreholes between 2004 and 2010. The land affected will cover about 19730 hectares and 12432 farmers will be directly involved. In 2007, 46 rehabilitation schemes have already started. (RESIS 2005)

“Rehabilitation” concerns the reconstruction of dilapidated infrastructure, in this case boreholes. In many cases it also involves the repair of broken handpumps.



Regional Manager, Frans Themba

However, the process of rehabilitation involves much more than merely repairing a borehole. The phases of this ongoing programme are as follows:

- Proposal for funding
- Once funding has been secured, negotiations with the local municipality are initiated.
- Sub-contract with Implementing Agent
- Consultations with local stakeholders to introduce the programme
- Pre-development surveys
- Establishment of management committees
- Exploring construction options, including labour intensive construction techniques
- Training to augment skills available in the community

## 3

## SUSTAINABILITY

It is critical that these projects are sustainable. Sustainability relies on a number of factors, particularly:

- Participation and involvement of all the stakeholders
- Support from all organisations affected or involved.

### 3.1. Stakeholder Participation and Engagement

*“If one wants to get a project done successfully, give a thorough thought about the stakeholders, who are they, what do they want?”*, says John Kings, who is Chairperson for the Masibambane Programme in the region.

The stakeholders to be involved in this particular project are:

- Councillors
- Tribal authorities
- Community structures such as Water Committees
- Community members
- The municipalities
- The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry
- The donor organisation(s)

According to Councillor Seroka of Ward 3: *“We feel very strongly that civil society municipal partnerships would help engage other stakeholders more appropriately and effectively in dealing with issues of service delivery which are a challenge for everyone.”*

*“Councillors and community members must be involved in an empowering manner to get optimum results and for projects to succeed the partnership between the municipality and Operation Hunger aimed to achieve this, and in many respects succeeded. Community members were trained to take on implementation of projects. We augmented available skills with what was needed”,* said Frans Themba.

*“We actually realized that by using community plumbers and pump operators for Operation and Maintenance in water and sanitation projects it was cheaper than contracting an organization or someone from outside the community”,* reiterates John Kings.



Councillor Seroka of Ward 3 of  
Fetakgomo LM

## 3.2. Political Support

Both John Kings and Frans Themba emphasised the importance of political support in any intervention to ensure sustainability.

For the projects in Limpopo undertaken by municipalities and Operation Hunger, **political support** would mean the support of:

- o local government, both District and Local Municipalities,
- o provincial government departments,
- o regional offices of national government departments and
- o traditional leaders.

One of the reasons for the success of the projects was due to the support obtained from all the different groups. Frans Themba reiterates: *“In what we do, we have thoroughly engaged the DWAF and municipalities through ward councillors and tribal authorities. We do have buy-in from these stakeholders because we engaged them in the most political correct and ethical manner. There is no way we were going to by-pass such institutions and structures, otherwise we were going to hit a rock. Operation Hunger has a history in water projects in Limpopo. We have built up a reputation and people know they can rely on us to deliver.”*

Councillor Phala, who is the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee, Community Services, in Fetakgomo Local Municipality, echoes the same sentiments: *“In today’s democratic dispensation the buy in of councillors and other political figures in communities is key and vital for sustainability of projects. As councillors we are responsible for any development initiative that happens in a community and we are a mouth piece for municipalities at community level.”*



Councillor Phala, chairperson of the Portfolio Committee, Community Services.

The process towards political support has been achieved through a channel of regular, open communication between all stakeholders.

Projects on such a large scale, that involve so many stakeholders, are bound to face some challenges. However, once the challenges have been identified, solutions can be found, and valuable lessons for future implementation can be learnt.

The main challenges were the following:

#### 4.1. Setting priorities

Most municipality structures are newly formed, and they are still grappling with issues relating to their developmental role. The backlog in service delivery has to be addressed, yet capacity within municipalities is often totally inadequate. For instance, some Water Services Authorities have yet to complete their Section 78 process, which will determine the manner in which they will be able to render service in terms of their capacity. Therefore, the challenge would be to obtain the municipalities' support and allocate resources for projects.

The fact that Operation Hunger could secure their own funds from an international donor put them in the position to be able to offer a service to the municipalities which included the required resources.

#### 4.2. Procurement

Whilst NGOs and other civil society organisations were perceived to be playing a prominent role in the pre-democratic South Africa, their relative importance has diminished over the past decade and formal structures such as municipalities often do not appreciate that civil society can make a valuable contribution if they form partnerships with municipalities.

Furthermore, the application of the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act of 2000 is biased against non-governmental organisations. One of the criteria for deciding preferential status of an enterprise is based on the share capital owned by previously disadvantaged individuals. NGOs are non-profit organisations and cannot reflect share capital owned by members and, as a result, their ability to compete for contracts and tenders is compromised by the points system applied by most municipalities. This is an anomaly that serves to disadvantage non-governmental organizations.

Operation Hunger overcame this challenge by sub-contracting Tsogang, an organisation specialising in the rehabilitation of hand pumps. Tsogang was already established as an Implementing Agency for the municipalities.

#### 4.3. A clear understanding of roles and responsibilities

The roles and mandates of municipalities are mostly clearly specified. Municipalities, however, are not always aware as to whom they could consult regarding the delivery of water services. Operation Hunger, with their extensive community experience, provided assistance to the municipality in this regard.

*"A strong and active civil society has an important role to play through the identification of local priorities in the planning process and through holding water services authorities accountable to the implementation of their plans."*

*Strategic Framework for Water Services (2003:41)*

The success of the projects in Limpopo, and the manner in which challenges have been identified and addressed, have important implications for other municipalities and civil society that plan to form partnerships. The most important of these are:

1

## **Communities should be involved in their own development interventions**

NGOs have realised, over the years, that community involvement in projects is essential for their success and sustainability. Ultimately the successes of such projects would be to ensure phased withdrawal of external specialists without any negative impact on projects.

NGOs are particularly good at assisting communities to take ownership and be accountable for their water services. A key contribution to the sustainability of critical aspects of water services, is to ensure that borehole pumps and the Hippo rollers are maintained in good working order.

Community mobilisation/information gathering exercises should aim to maximise beneficiary participation in planning and implementation.

Election of management should be done in order to ensure that people from across the spectrum within a community are represented.

In the partnerships in Limpopo, information gathering exercises and meetings ensured exposure of the broader communities to the projects, and training schemes helped to equip specific members of the community to make positive contributions. Management transfer to water committees also enabled the community to participate on a strategic level.

2

## **Strategic collaboration between stakeholders should be structured so to assist municipalities to deliver key water and sanitation services.**

A partnership with a civil society organisation can be successful in assisting to deliver key water and sanitation services. Such partnerships could contribute to job creation and help with poverty alleviation in poor communities. It is therefore an opportunity for municipalities to become actively involved in uplifting their poor communities without extensive resource allocation. The partnerships should help with the leverage of resources thereby reduce the implementation and running costs. Innovative methodologies and processes are often the result of these partnerships.

3

## **Strategic support of political and community champions should be obtained**

No programme, despite its potential positive contribution, will succeed if the full support of all the political and community "champions" has not been obtained.

The first step in this regard would be to identify all the "champions" and determine the most appropriate manner in which to initially engage with them and ensure their continuous involvement. Establishing appropriate communication channels, and maintaining ongoing communication, would contribute to ensuring continued support.

One of the most important relationships to establish would be between Councillors and traditional leaders.

A clear understanding of roles and responsibilities between the municipalities and the NGO is also essential. The municipalities have to include NGO projects in their Integrated Development Plans.

4

#### **Use communication channels that already exist**

Municipalities often have existing communication channels that function well, and partnerships should take full advantage of these, rather than trying to establish new ones.

5

#### **Municipalities should realise that civil society could support them in a non-interfering manner in alleviating poverty**

It is essential that municipalities realise that civil society has a specific and very valuable contribution to make a partnership with them should not threaten municipalities, but should be structured in such a way as to contribute to the alleviation of poverty in the communities served by the municipalities. If roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, it could reduce pressure on the resources of municipalities. Such partnerships could also assist in capacity building and cooperative governance of local authorities.



**Hippo Water Rollers in action**

- by Grant Gibbs, [www.hipporoller.org](http://www.hipporoller.org)

## FURTHER READING

6

DWAF Water Services National Information System

Govender, C. 2001. Trends in Civil Society in South Africa today. Umrabulo, Issue 13.  
[www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/pubs/umrabulo/](http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/pubs/umrabulo/)

Shaker, M. 2005. Presentation on the a Case Study on revitalization of Smallholder Irrigation schemes in Limpopo Province ("RESIS")

### Relevant websites

[www.hipporoller.org](http://www.hipporoller.org)

[www.operationhunger.co.za](http://www.operationhunger.co.za)

[www.demarcation.org.za](http://www.demarcation.org.za)



Rain Water Harvesting Concrete Containers

The WIN-SA lessons series aims to capture the innovative work of people tackling real service delivery challenges. It also aims to stimulate learning and sharing around these challenges to support creative solutions. To achieve this, the lessons series is supported by ancillary learning opportunities facilitated by WIN-SA to strengthen people-to-people learning.

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This document hopes to encourage on-going discussion, debate and lessons sharing. To comment, make additions or give further input, please visit [www.win-sa.org.za](http://www.win-sa.org.za) or send an email to [info@win-sa.org.za](mailto:info@win-sa.org.za).

**Our mission** is to ensure the body of knowledge in the sector is well managed, readily accessible and applied, leading to improved decision-making and performance, especially of local government.

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