Multi-Stakeholder Processes towards establishing Water Management Agencies in South Africa

A Case Study[1]

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Abstract

The multi-stakeholder approach reflects some of the most frequently and fervently debated issues in discussions on governance, democracy, equity and justice in recent years. The term multi-stakeholder is used to include all role-players, government institutions, stakeholders, clients, non-governmental organisations and community based organisations. It is generally accepted that sustainable development requires a process and ultimately consensus-building among all stakeholders as partners to build relationships and knowledge that will enable them to develop sustainable solutions to new challenges**.** It is against this background that the processes leading up to the establishment of new decentralised regional water management institutions in South Africa is described and analysed. The process in the Olifants-Doorn Water Management Area to draft the required proposal for the establishment of a catchment management agency is used as a case study (hereafter referred to as the Olifants-Doorn process). The authors argue that the Olifants-Doorn process up to the formal establishment of the Olifants-Doorn Catchment Management Agency (CMA) is a considerable success story evaluated against the principles of good governance. This is evaluated especially in terms of improving stakeholder equality through capacity building,

achieving representation, the exchange of information, time, human and financial resources committed to the process, and building consensus, while allowing the process to progress at its own pace. Although the enabling constitutional and sectoral policy frameworks facilitate good governance practices and behaviour, the key success factor was largely the professional commitment of the public administration technocrats who are responsible for activating, orchestrating and modulating the process.

INTRODUCTION

It is generally accepted that sustainable development requires a process and ultimately consensus-building among all stakeholders inclusive of all role-players, government institutions, stakeholders, clients, non-governmental organisations and community based organisations as partners who together define the problems, design possible solutions, collaborate to implement them, obtain specific products, and monitor and evaluate the outcome. Through such activities stakeholders can build relationships and knowledge that will enable them to develop sustainable solutions to new challenges (Hemmati 2002:40). In fact, the multi-stakeholder approach reflects some of the most frequently and fervently debated issues in discussions on governance, democracy, equity and justice in recent years.

The aim of the research was to analyse the multi-stakeholder processes leading up to the emergence of new decentralised environmental governance systems for water resources management in South Africa utilising a 'good governance' perspective. For this purpose '*public governance*' is defined as the way in which stakeholders interact with each other in order to influence the outcome of policies and '*good governance'* as the implementation by multiple stakeholders of quality of life improvements through agreed principles and processes of working together (Governance International 2006).

In this article the focus *firstly* fall on the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of the emergence of new collaborative models for environmental governance through multi-stakeholder processes; *secondly,* the scene is set for discussing the particular case study of the Olifants-Doorn process which forms the focus of this article by contextualising the historical background, policy framework and institutional landscape for water resource management in South Africa; *thirdly,* the multi-stakeholder process leading towards the establishment of the Olifants-Doorn Catchment Management Agency will be described; and

finally, some reflections on the prospects and challenges of involvement in water resource management on local level and the lessons learned in promoting good governance is offered.

GOOD GOVERNANCE: SOME POINTS OF DEPARTURE

From governing by hierarchy to the 'new governance' paradigm

Because citizens expect to have a greater say today in the decisions that impact upon their communities, the participation of non-state actors has become an essential component of success, and people's participation in good governance for sustainable development – from policy design to decision-making and implementation – is leading to better long-term outcomes (Küpçü 2005:90). Salamon (2002:600) also expressed the view that there is a clear recognition that the task of public problem solving has become a team sport that has spilled well beyond the borders of government agencies and now engages a far more extensive network of social actors – public as well as private, for-profit as well as non-profit – whose participation must often be coaxed from them and not commandeered and controlled.

According to Salamon (2002:600), the realisation that the complex systems of public action are not self-executing, pose immense management challenges which differ from those characteristics of direct government. Increasingly, forward-thinking public managers are sanctioning the involvement of task-oriented less formal groups in environmental management. As governments look for ways to deal with the challenges, their role is changing from one of direct service provider to one in which they must 'engage and manage partners'. Governing by network instead of bureaucracy relies on the ability to leverage cross-sector partnerships to implement innovative funding and management relationships. The participation of key interest groups from civil society and business is seen as essential to creating lasting public value. It is also based on the belief that involving new actors in decision-making improves the ultimate outcome by creating shared responsibility, improving transparency, and targeting services to community needs more effectively (Küpçü 2005:91). These groups define environmental problems in a more holistic and practical fashion, and work to develop consensus on the way forward (Carley and Cristie 2000:176).

The process of working with new partners, according to Küpçü (2005:91), offers tremendous potential and presents enormous challenges. Cross-sector relationships must bridge vastly different organisational cultures, find common

objectives and create trust. The question therefore is how to manage such complex webs of relationships without getting tangled?

The strategic role of government

So what is the (new) role(s) of government in this 'new governance' paradigm? Government has an important overall societal role (Carley and Cristie 2000:171). This is a strategic role – the proactive attempts to throw light on present action by looking at possible positive futures. It begins with some sense of the possibilities of the future, call it a vision, and uses this vision to initiate the sub-processes of innovation: the agenda for the future – what kind of society we might want to have – and commitment to implementation based on a desire to realise this future and not some other, less satisfactory one. According to Bovaird (2004:208-209), the strategic management literature prepared the ground for the public governance paradigm that evolved during the 1990s. The driving force for public governance was not the need to make public institutions and public services more efficient. It is rather the need to solve 'wicked problems' (such as, for example, environmental problems) which clearly cannot be tackled by public agencies acting alone. It requires public agencies to be prepared to work with a wide range of other organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

The mode of strategic management in public governance has to change from attempting to impose strategic control on multi-stakeholders towards the negotiation of meta-strategy frameworks within which the decisions of partners will mutually influence each other. Rather than enforcing a fixed strategic vision, strategists must give strategic direction, but then encourage strategic experimentation and diversity in pursuing this direction. The partnerships and networks within which public institutions must learn to operate successfully have some self-organising characteristics and may behave as complex adaptive systems.

Principles of good governance in partnerships/networks

The working of collaborative structures must, apart from solving the 'wicked' problems with which they are faced, also be based on principles of good governance (Bovaird 2004:211). The following criteria have been selected by Bovaird (2004:210-211) from approaches to good governance which have been advocated by major international and multi-national agencies in recent years:
- citizen engagement: participation of citizens and other stakeholders in decision-making;
- transparency: open-book working in respect of all partners (including user and citizen representatives where appropriate) as a critical element of building trust;

- accountability: partners are prepared to account to each other for their actions and performance on all issues which arise – and must be prepared to account to other stakeholders for the overall performance of the partnership;
- equalities and social inclusion: accepted as core values in the working of the partnership – partners must actively seek innovative ways of improving performance against these principles;
- ethical and honest behaviour: accepted as core values in the working of the partnership – partners must actively seek innovative ways of improving performance against these principles;
- equity (fair procedures and due processes): accepted as core values in the working of the partnership – partners must continuously seek innovative ways of improving performance against this principle;
- willingness and ability to collaborate: critical success factor for all partners;
- ability to compete: critical success factor for the partnership as a whole (incorporating both cost consciousness and customer focus);
- leadership: necessary at all levels of the partnership as a whole, in each of its constituent organisations and in the communities which it serves; and
- sustainability: partners must continuously seek improved ways of increasing the sustainability of policies and activities.

Multi-stakeholder processes (MSPs) as instrument towards good governance

Multi-stakeholder processes (MSPs) have gained momentum during recent years as governments seek ways of involving stakeholders that are compatible with their pre-existing institutional arrangements and strong norms. These processes take numerous forms, including informal consultations, thematic panel presentations, side events, working groups, high-level discussions and 'multi-stakeholder dialogue' (Küpçü 2005:93). According to Hemmati (2002:66), in a dialogue of stakeholders, representatives not only state their views, but listen to each others' views for the purposes of developing mutual understanding, including each others' value-base, interests, goals and concerns. Dialogue requires the willing participation of all participants; even one person whose primary orientation is towards getting her or his way can destroy the dialogue.

While multi-stakeholder dialogues have become a regular feature of policy preparatory processes, many factors influence their success and impact. Successful MSPs work with clear objectives and thematic focus, advanced planning, pre-established ground rules, trained facilitation and resources to assist follow-up efforts (Küpçü 2005:93). At a local level, participation according to Küpçü (2005:102), requires developing capacity and integrating local multi-stakeholder processes within sub-national, regional and national processes.

Where successful, this has led to more effective, rapid delivery of services to the intended beneficiaries. It has promoted both upstream coordination (linking community policy objectives to fiscal arrangements) and downstream coordination (linking governance to service delivery). It has also forced accountability among international organisations and government authorities – especially at the local sphere.

Küpçü (2005:103) comes to the conclusion that government's changing role and citizens' demands for greater participation are transforming traditional governance structures. New structures and methodologies, especially those such as multi-stakeholder processes developed at the global level, are starting to infuse governance at all spheres. But many questions, especially about the impact, accountability and equity of cross-sector relationships, are yet to be answered. The justification for supporting better multi-stakeholder participation is that it can create better and longer-lasting results. Strengthening the social dimension of governance requires not only creating the institutions, norms and willingness to hear new perspectives, but the ability to translate this dialogue into action for sustainable development.

SOUTH AFRICA: THE POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT OF WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Historical background

The political issues relating to water in South Africa are best understood in the historical context which, in 1994, left an inheritance of profound inequalities in respect of access to water as a resource and in water service provision (Muller 2001:4-5). The policies and legislation in respect of water regulation in the apartheid era mostly benefited the white minority and their economic interests in agriculture, developing urban commerce and industrial endeavours. With this inheritance, the intention of the post-1994 democratic government is that benefits should be redistributed from a previously advantaged, mainly urban white minority, to an all-inclusive community, including the relatively poor and powerless black rural communities. The *National Water Act*, Act 36 of 1998 was preceded by intense discussion and consultation lead by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (hereafter referred to as DWAF). A series of key fundamental principles and objectives for a new water law in South Africa were formulated that underpin the eventual National Water Act (DWAF 1997). These include the basic principle that the state is the custodian of water that is a public resource to which all citizens have a right of access and that the management and utilisation of water resources has to be for the benefit of society as a whole.

It is clear that the purpose of the legislation is to ensure the effective, efficient and economic management of the water resources, the equitable distribution of water, and the promotion of social and economic development, while also focusing on the protection and conservation of this precious resource.

Policy framework and institutional context

South Africa has an enlightened constitutional framework which lays the foundation for grassroots participation and good environmental governance based on the recognition that, apart from fundamental socio-economic human rights. Section 27 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, 1996, hereafter referred to as the Constitution, specifically addresses the issues of the right of access to sufficient water. Section 24 of the Constitution states that the environment needs to be protected and all decisions must have a sound environmental basis (*Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, 1996*).

It is of particular importance for environmental management in general and water resources management in particular that the Constitution recognises that responsible governance requires co-ordination in all spheres of government. The principles of co-operative government and intergovernmental relations are set out in Chapter 3 of the constitution. Integrated water resources management (IWRM) cuts across all three government spheres, and legislation governing these functions may either prescribe concurrent obligations or may be assigned to one specific sphere. The institutional framework created in this way is not necessarily harmonised as a whole, while the legislative system potentially opens the door to potential inconsistencies and duplication in the implementation of water resource management functions.

The objective of South Africa's public water policy is the management of the quantity, quality and reliability of the nation's water resources to achieve optimum, long-term, environmentally sustainable social and economic benefit for society from their use (DWAF 1997). In the preamble of the *National Water Act, 1998* (Act 36 of 1998), the need is recognised "*for the integrated management of all aspects of water resources and, where appropriate, the delegation of management functions to regional or catchment level so as to enable everyone to participate*". With the introduction of integrated water resources management, the National Water Act requires a paradigm shift in the way water resources are managed. In particular, this requires *firstly* equity, sustainability and efficiency in the protection, development and utilisation of water resources, as well as the institutions that are established for water resource management; and *secondly* decentralisation of decision-making through the establishment of catchment-based institutions, based on a participatory approach to water resources management through the involvement of stakeholders (DWAF 2001a:2-3). The

approach combines the notions of co-management, involving a sharing of management between the state and responsible user-group organisations and decentralisation of management through the regionalisation to water catchment level (Symes 1997:110-112).

Establishment of Catchment Management Agencies

The *National Water Act, 1998* requires the establishment of catchment management agencies (CMAs) for the 19 water management areas (WMAs) throughout South Africa to *"enable the public to participate in managing all water resources within its water management area"*. All water resources, including surface and groundwater will be managed by the CMAs. A map indicating the 19 Water management areas in South Africa, based on surface water drainage areas, is included as Map 1.

As the primary management institution in each water management area, each CMA is a unique legal entity and must be representative of role-players and stakeholders (water-user groups, other water-interest groups and various local and national government institutions) in its particular WMA. It may have a wide range of potential duties, powers and functions relating to the *"protection, use, development, conservation, management and control of water resources"* (*National Water Act, 1998*: Section 9). Apart from CMAs, the Act also makes provision for the establishment of a number of different water management institutions to facilitate local participation, including, water-user associations (WUAs) and advisory committees (ACs). All of these institutions must give effect to the principles outlined in Section 2 of the Act, and in particular must ensure that they have "appropriate community, racial and gender representation".

The process leading up to the establishment of a CMA therefore requires an extensive process of multi-stakeholder consultation and public involvement to ensure optimum local participation and the expected timeframe for this process was set at 5 to 8 years from 1999/2000 (DWAF 2002:19). In the establishment phase of a CMA, a proposal outlining the water resources, functions, institutional arrangements, organisation structure and viability of the proposed CMA (as prescribed in terms of Section 77 of the *National Water Act, 1998*) was developed. This was done through a consultative process utilising representative catchment forums and overseen by a CMA Reference Group, and finally submitted to the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry for approval. A CMA will become operational, once a Governing Board has been appointed by the Minister based on the formal recommendations of an Advisory Committee, set up by the Minister specifically for this purpose. When a CMA comes into operation, it automatically has certain inherent powers and certain initial functions, which the Act gives to it. These "initial" functions revolve around the investigation and advice on water

Map 1 Map of country of South Africa indicating the 19 water management areas
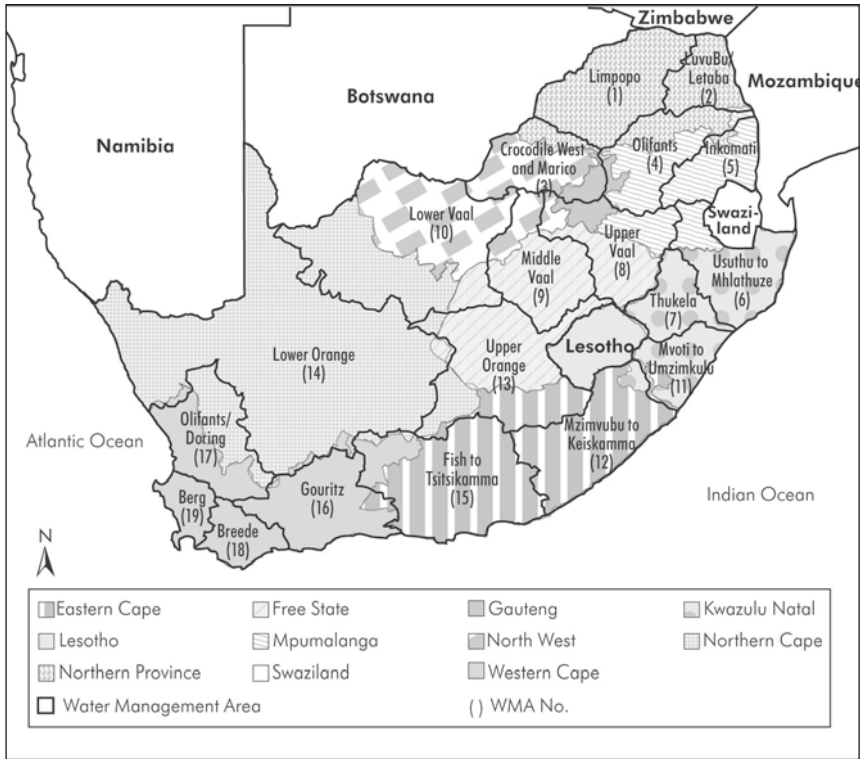

resources management, the development of the catchment management strategy, institutional coordination, cooperative governance, stakeholder communication and administrative activities. All other powers, duties and functions of a CMA are transferred to it by the Minister at the rate at which the CMA will develop and build capacity to perform the respective functions.

THE CASE STUDY: ESTABLISHING A CMA IN THE OLIFANTS-DOORN WATER MANAGEMENT AREA

It is against the above background that the South African government initiated the first multi-stakeholder processes in 1999 with the aim of establishing CMAs in each of the 19 WMAs. The next section will focus on the process towards establishing a CMA in the Olifants-Doorn Water Management Area.

Map 2 Olifants-Doorn WMA indicating location of catchment forums
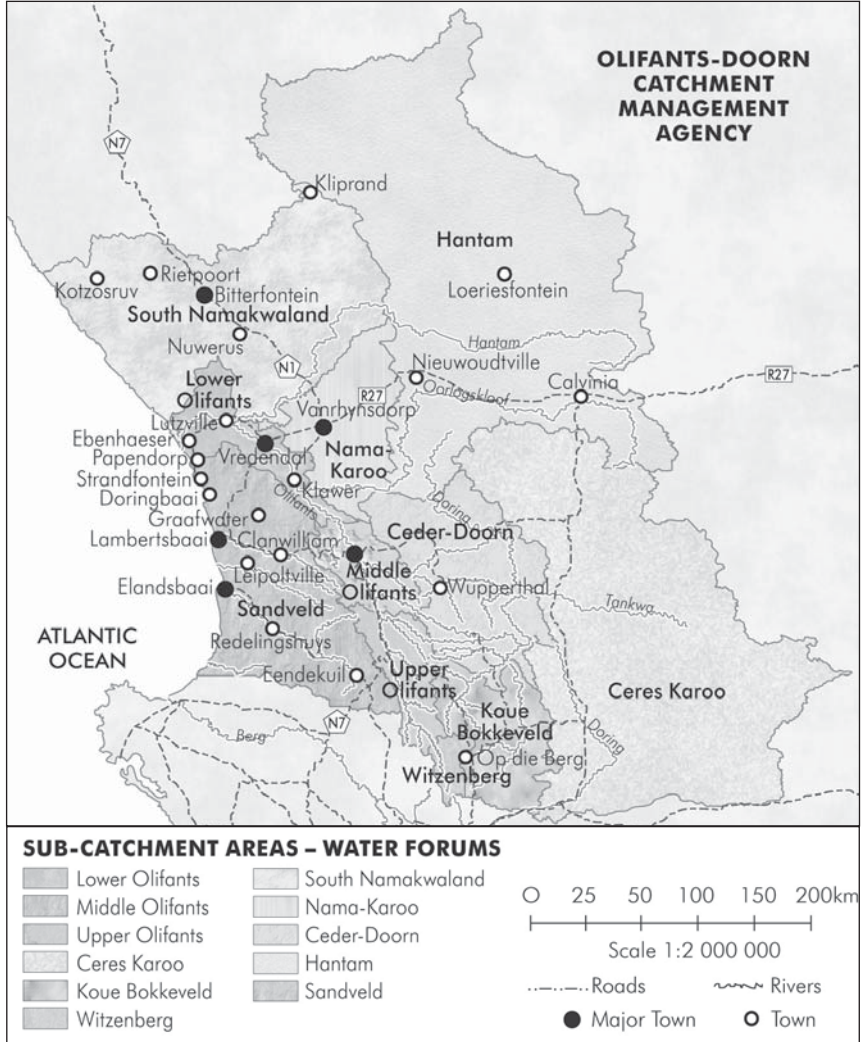
Orientation

The Olifants-Doorn Water Management Area (WMA) – which derives its name from the river draining it, namely the Olifants River and its main tributary the Doorn River – is located on the west coast of South Africa, extending from about 100 km to 450 km north of Cape Town (see map below: from

DWAF [2005b:10]). According to an "*Olifants-Doorn WMA Internal Strategic Perspective*" report produced by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF), the south-western portion of the WMA falls mainly within the Western Cape Province, and the north-western section of the WMA is located within the Northern Cape Province (DWAF 2005a:i).

The agricultural sector (5% of South Africa's **gross domestic product** (GDP) contributes far more to the local economy (43%) than any other sector and is therefore very important for the regional economy of the WMA (DWAF 2005b) . The significance of the agricultural sector can be attributed to the variety of products cultivated in the area, mostly under irrigation. Apart from agriculture, important conservation areas include the Tankwa-Karoo National Park, the Verlorenvlei estuary and wetland in the Sandveld (which enjoys Ramsar status), the Cederberg Wilderness Area, the northern section of the Groot Winterhoek Wilderness Area and the Olifants River system itself with its endemic endangered fish species and the estuary, which is considered to be in the top ten South African locations of importance for the conservation of water birds (DWAF 2005a:iii – v).

Map 2 indicates the area of the Olifants-Doorn WMA and the location of the catchment forums (DWAF 2005b).

The establishment process

The formal process in the establishment of the Olifants-Doorn Catchment Management Agency was initiated in February 2001 by a number of public meetings which involved a wide range of interested and affected parties. The public meetings served two functions: *firstly* the public was informed about the functions of the CMA and the requirements of the establishment process, and *secondly* individuals, stakeholders, role-players and interested and affected parties in the CMA establishment process were identified (DWAF 2005b:11). These meetings culminated in the establishment of eleven Catchment Forums in the Olifants-Doorn WMA. One committee for each area based on groupings of quaternary surface water drainage areas as per map was formed. The Water Catchment Forums were formally constituted during 2002, with each forum electing a chairperson and vice-chairperson. At the catchment forum meetings, participants were reminded that the objective is to bring water resource management to community level for everyone to understand and participate in the process; communities were encouraged to identify issues, seek solutions and make recommendations to DWAF or relevant institutions related to water management in their sub-catchment (DWAF 2005b:11-12).

In November 2001 all members of the catchment forums, as well as all other interested parties, were invited to a meeting in Clanwilliam for the stakeholders

in the entire Olifants-Doorn WMA. The aim of the meeting was to select a CMA Reference Group on which all sectors are represented to ensure that the respective interests of all multi-stakeholders are accommodated. During this meeting, representation in the Olifants-Doorn CMA Reference Group was discussed and elected to represent the various sectors and organisations in the area (see next section on *Representation*). Representation was not based on volume or extent of water use or on the size of the organisation (DWAF 2005b:12).

The CMA Reference Group meetings were aimed primarily at the development of the formal Proposal for the establishment of a CMA for the Olifants-Doorn WMA as required by law. The proposal was developed in accordance with the process agreed upon at the public meeting held in November 2001 and is based on discussions and agreements reached at subsequent CMA Reference Group meetings. A total of 8 meetings were held (up to May 2003) with the CMA Reference Group to compile and finalise the proposal for the establishment of the Olifants-Doorn CMA. Subsequent meetings of the CMA Reference Group were held on different aspects of water resource management and CMA functioning such as Advisory and Governing Board composition (DWAF 2005b:19).

Representation of multi-stakeholders

In line with the requirements of inclusiveness, participation and transformation as indicated in the Constitution, great care was taken in the process of achieving representation on catchment forums and the CMA Reference Group. The catchment forums would typically be representative of all the sectors, interest and user groups, NGOs and community-based organisations and national, provincial and local government institutions. After agreement was reached on the representation of the *CMA Reference Group* during the public meeting held in November 2001, the following division of representation was accepted: sectoral (34%), geographical (catchment forums) (30%), local governments (11%) and overarching bodies (.25% – a national NGO, national departments, conservation agencies, provincial departments) of the total number of 73 people forming the CMA Reference Group (DWAF 2005b:19). In order to address the issue of gender representivity, the secretaries of the catchment forums (consisting of 10 women) were co-opted onto the Olifants-Doorn CMA Reference Group (DWAF 2005b:19).

Information exchange

As a result of an initial analysis of the communication needs done in October 2001 by seven of the eleven catchment forums, newsletters, followed by

pamphlets (fact sheets), meetings/workshops, newspaper articles and radio were identified as the priority communication vehicles (DWAF 2005b:14-15). Based on this information a brochure was compiled that provided a simplified explanation of the CMA Establishment Proposal and process; the brochures were handed out at forum meetings to provide background information for the public meeting held in Clanwilliam on 13 November 2001, where the Olifants-Doorn CMA Reference Group was elected. The first WMA newsletter for the area was compiled during February 2002 (others followed in 2002 and 2003) disseminating information on integrated water resource management in general and the Olifants-Doorn WMA in particular. Other media were also used for communication and a number of press releases were compiled for publication or broadcasting by the local radio station during the period October 2001 – March 2002 (DWAF 2005b:16).

Support

A support team under the auspices of DWAF: Western Cape and the Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) project met with forum members to record issues and encourage participation right through the process (DWAF 2005b:11). The IWRM project was financially supported by the Danish International Development Agency (Danida) for three pilot WMAs in South Africa with the aim of promoting and building capacity regarding the importance of integrated water resource management. Staff from DWAF, as well as the consultants appointed for the public participation process, was assigned to mentor and support those forums that struggled to convene meetings and/or identify issues. An action plan was drawn up for each forum area, which includes the frequency of meetings to be held by each forum (this could range from once every three months to twice per year – depending on the issues and needs of the area). To enhance the sustainability of and provide administrative support to the forums, a secretary (their remuneration funded by Danida) was appointed for each forum and a temporary post of administrator/secretary to co-ordinate the overall activities of the forum secretaries was also created and filled in February 2003 (DWAF 2005b:16).

Engagement, capacity building and empowerment

One of the aims of the CMA process was to capacitate forum members so that they are able to participate actively in all discussions relating to water management matters and to address issues at grassroots level and maintain continued community support. The members of three forums identified water resource management, and process management and administrative skills as

focus areas for capacity building at a needs analysis workshop held in April 2002 (DWAF 2005b:16-17). These needs were found be generic amongst the other forums and three capacity-building programmes were initiated from 2002 to empower forum members and other stakeholders to actively participate in IWRM issues, as well as in the process of developing the CMA establishment proposal (DWAF 2005b:14). In general, public engagement was obtained by instituting as many interactive discussions and opportunities for sharing information via a variety of communication media as described above.

Because of the demographics of the Olifants-Doorn WMA, Afrikaans was the predominant language used at all meetings (especially forum meetings). Since a few English-speaking persons often attended the CMA Reference Group meetings, these meetings were conducted in English and Afrikaans. All participants were encouraged to use the language of their choice and all English input was translated into Afrikaans. All documents were prepared in English, but were translated into Afrikaans to enable stakeholders to understand and actively participate in the discussions (DWAF 2005b:12).

Consensus building

During the public Reference Group meeting in May 2003 where the final draft of the Proposal was discussed, the group unanimously agreed that those people who initially participated in the CMA process without any prior knowledge on water matters were adequately capacitated so that they could, over a period of time, understand and actively participate in discussions. There was also consensus that the CMA process in the Olifants-Doorn WMA was truly consultative and representative. The meeting felt strongly that this culture of discussion and involvement should be pursued once the CMA is in place and that the integrated structures established during the CMA process should be used to resolve pressing issues such as land reform and the dire need for additional capacity-building programmes (DWAF 2005b:19).

EVALUATION: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

As the multi-stakeholder approach reflects some of the most frequently and fervently debated issues in discussions on governance, democracy, equity and justice in recent years, the following observations of the factors that influenced the success and impact of the multi-stakeholder process in the Olifants-Doorn WMA case study are offered for reflection:

- Government fulfilled its strategic role by clearly formulating the vision to achieve sustainable, equitable and efficient water resource management in

South Africa, with the National Water Act recognising that the participation of all stakeholders and decentralisation of water resource management to the appropriate level are essential to achieve this vision successfully. Although decentralising environmental governance structures is in line with current international trends, it could be seen as somewhat surprising, given the historical context in South Africa where the transformation project of society as a whole might favour a more centralised approach. Linked to this is the challenge of land reform as another national priority as the ownership of water rights and expertise in water resource management is to a large extent still vested in the previously advantaged (white) group.

- It might be argued by critical observers that the implementation process of establishing the water management institutions as prescribed in the national legislation is nothing more than a top-down process designed with clinical engineering precision and carefully managed by technocrats. However, in the authors' opinion great care was taken in following 'best practices' of public participation and applying the principles of good governance.

- An important characteristic of multi-stakeholder processes is the assumption of stakeholder equality in terms of a stakeholder's right to participate and have power over decision-making and implementation; however, participation in the Olifants-Doorn process by historically disadvantaged individuals was often hampered by the fact that they do not always have the necessary knowledge and understanding of water-related issues. These challenges were addressed by capacity-building programmes which are geared to equip forum members from historically disadvantaged backgrounds with certain skills to enable them to participate meaningfully in forums.

- As representation was not based on volume or extent of water use or on the size of the organisation, the forums and Reference Group were constituted to be representative of all the sectors, interest and user groups, NGOs and community-based organisations, and national, provincial and local government institutions active within the Olifants-Doorn WMA. The process of achieving representation on catchment forums and the CMA Reference Group in the Olifants-Doorn WMA has been quite successful, especially with regard to racial representivity. Gender representivity, however, remains a problem, despite concerted efforts to engage women in the CMA establishment process. A possible downside is the large size of the CMA Reference Group (73 initial members in the case of the Olifants-Doorn WMA) in terms of manageability and dynamics.

- Ideally a multi-stakeholder process should be allowed to progress at a pace which is politically and culturally sustainable given local conditions. It is therefore interesting to note that DWAF does not prescribe any process or deadlines for the establishment of a CMA apart from the requirement of

stakeholder participation in the development proposal. CMA establishment processes could therefore vary between different geographical areas. The Olifants-Doorn process was initiated in the beginning of 2001 and it took 2½ years to get to the milestone where the proposal to establish a CMA was ready to be submitted to the Minister – the first CMA in South Africa was established in 2005 after a 6-year process, although DWAF envisaged three years as the average time frame required. The Olifants-Doorn CMA was formally established with a notice in the Government Gazette in September 2006.

- To be done well, multi-stakeholder processes require time, human and financial resources, and the political will to conduct them and to value their outcomes. The continuous involvement of all stakeholders in the Olifants-Doorn process was to a great extent made possible by means of the financial support provided through the IWRM project funded by Danida. It is also an expensive process, as many previously disadvantaged individuals and communities do not have the financial capacity to travel to meetings at their own cost, or take time off from work (and lose some income) to attend meetings. The forums were also supported by DWAF staff as well as the consultants appointed for the public participation process, while a secretary was appointed for each of the eleven forums to provide administrative support to the forums and thereby enhance their sustainability. It is an interesting question, though, to consider whether the participation process would have been as successful if the external donor funding had not been available?

- Crucial for transparency, empowerment and building trust is the exchange of information between the stakeholders. It would seem that adequate attention was given during the Olifants-Doorn CMA establishment process to the communication needs and vehicles of communication to reach the stakeholders, taking the characteristics of the audience into account (i.e. newsletters, pamphlets, meetings/workshops, newspaper articles and radio were identified as the priority communication media over some more technically sophisticated media such as television or the internet). All official documentation was also made available on DWAF's website.

- The question of language can be a serious stumbling block for the ability of stakeholders to actively participate in multi-stakeholder processes and can disempower people in itself. Although constitutionally, in SA all eleven languages are official languages, in practice English is the major language all South Africans share, mostly as a second or third language, and it therefore became the *de facto* official communication language. Based on the demographics of the Olifants-Doorn WMA, Afrikaans was predominantly used at all meetings and all English inputs at meetings as well as official documentation were translated into Afrikaans to enable

stakeholders and role-players to understand and actively participate in the discussions.

- A key expectation of multi-stakeholder processes is an emerging consensus over the real nature and extent of the problem at hand, and a consensus about, and commitment to, the means of resolution. It is therefore worth noting that every person present during the public Reference Group meeting in May 2003, where the final draft of the Proposal was discussed, unanimously agreed that the Olifants-Doorn process of CMA establishment was truly consultative and representative.
- Because of the successes achieved in the establishment of the Olifants-Doorn CMA, the IWRM project management decided to allocate more funds to the Olifants-Doorn area than originally approved. Despite being the smallest (in terms of water availability) of the three WMAs (including Crocodile-West/Marico and Mvoti WMAs) supported by the IWRM project, it eventually received most of the funding because of its successful implementation of all objectives of the project.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

South Africa has an enlightened constitutional framework which lays the foundation for grassroots participation and good governance. These principles are also embedded in the country's public water policy with an emphasis on equity, sustainability and efficiency, and the decentralisation of public decision-making through the establishment of water catchment-based institutions. A participatory approach to water resources management through the involvement of stakeholders is fundamental to this policy (DWAF 2005b). The first multi-stakeholder processes to establish a catchment management agency were initiated in 1999. Five CMAs were established by 2007 and it is envisaged that most of the other CMAs will only be established by 2012. This presents unique case studies to evaluate the multi-stakeholder processes in terms of some of the core values of good governance systems such as participation, transparency, accountability of public decision-makers to the public and key role-players, stakeholders, justice and equity.

In the case of the Olifants-Doorn water management area the formal process for the establishment of the Olifants-Doorn Catchment Management Agency was initiated in February 2001. Because CMAs are still in the process of being established and still to take on all water management functions, it is not possible to draw concrete conclusions on whether the involvement of new actors in public decision-making improved the ultimate outcome by creating shared responsibility, improving transparency, and better targeting integrated

water resource management to serve community needs. However stakeholder equality was improved through capacity building, achieving representation, the exchange of information, time, human and financial resources committed to the process, and building consensus while allowing the process to progress at its own pace. It is generally acknowledged that this lead to a considerable success story and could serve as an example for other water management areas. Finally, although the enabling constitutional and sectoral policy frameworks facilitate good governance practices and behaviour, the key success factor is the professional commitment of the public administration technocrats who are responsible for activating, orchestrating and modulating the process of capacitating and developing the proposals for the establishing the CMAs.

NOTES

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