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## **Country Level Collaboration**

**Workshop, Abidjan, 3-7 March 1997**

### **Country Experiences**

*The Zimbabwe Case Study in CLC on the  
Rural Water Supply and Sanitation  
Programme*

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**GOVERNMENT OF ZIMBABWE**

**COUNTRY LEVEL COLLABORATION ON  
THE RURAL WATER SUPPLY AND  
SANITATION PROGRAMME**

**ZIMBABWE AS A CASE STUDY**

**PRESENTED BY: A. C. MPAMHANGA**

**VENUE : ABIDJAN, COTE D'IVORE**

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CLC MECHANISMS AND THE CONDITIONS FOR THEM TO BE EFFECTIVE.  
ZIMBABWE AS A CASE STUDY

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1. INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe is a land-locked country in Southern Africa whose areal extent is just under 400 000 square kilometers. The population of Zimbabwe was about 11.0 million as at end of 1996, with about 7,2 million of these people in rural areas. As Zimbabwe is in the tropics, its climate is tropical although it has progressively become drier in the last 16 years thereby leaving most of Zimbabwe in a semi-arid condition. This has resulted in a greater need for concerted efforts, through country level collaboration, in the provision of services that alleviate drought related hardships country-wide especially in rural areas.

2. BACKGROUND

In 1991 the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) formed a working group on Country Level Collaboration (CLC). This working group was assigned a very important task of reviewing the status and experiences of CLC throughout the world. This review was expected to determine necessary inputs for successful CLC and to develop a framework and guidelines which would assist developing countries to achieve improved collaboration at country level.

As a result a number of meetings have been held at which CLC experiences were shared and strategies developed. Some of these meetings are:-

- The Rabat, Morocco, meeting in 1993 at which ten countries presented case studies on CLC.
- The Mutare, Zimbabwe, meeting in 1994 which was attended by 42 participants from nine Southern and Eastern Africa



and five External Support Agencies. This meeting was held with financial assistance from the UNDP-World Bank Regional Water and Sanitation Group for Eastern Africa (WSSG-EA).

- A follow-up regional meeting was held in Entebbe, Uganda, in 1995 attended by eight Eastern and Southern African countries and
- The Water Supply and Sanitation Third Global Forum Meeting in Barbados in 1995.

At all these meetings and many more, common objectives and recommendations revolved around the following issues:-

- a. A genuine need to share experiences on CLC within and among African regions and also across continents in the context of management of rural water supply and sanitation programmes.
- b. A need to analyse the functioning of CLC in terms of benefits, disadvantages, strengths and weaknesses.
- c. Establishment of country specific requirements for strengthening CLC.

CLC in Zimbabwe was documented in 1993 by three sector experts under the umbrella of the Institute of Water and Sanitation Development (IWSD) and many of you here may have seen that document or the CLC report of this working group to the Collaborative Council meeting the following year. (A copy of that paper may be made available to those requiring it).

In these documents CLC mechanisms were documented as well as successes and failures of CLC in Zimbabwe and the various factors which are necessary for CLC to be effective. This short submission attempts to highlight some of these and draw attention to the new lessons that have been learnt about Country Level Collaboration and why it is always not so easy as it may seem at first sight.





### 3. DEVELOPMENTS SINCE 1992

It may be useful to first of all set the context within which developments of CLC have been taking place in Zimbabwe.

- Since 1993 the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme has resulted in a decline in the size of the civil service by almost 25% and a significant reduction in the access of government extension staff to a wide variety of resources to be able to effectively carry out their duties.
- The scale of the water and sanitation activities has increased threefold from 15 District programmes to over 40 districts which is about 75% of the country.
- There has been a major move toward decentralisation with a shift of project management from government departments to the local authorities.
- Reduction of government recurrent expenditure has been one of many factors precipitating the shift toward community management of rural water and sanitation services and a focus on addressing the sustainability question.

### 4. CONDITIONS FOR CLC

The main reasons for relative success of CLC in Zimbabwe are a conducive policy framework and an active NAC and its committed subcommittees at National and subnational levels. Some of the factors that have also positively contributed are:-

- A conducive policy framework and a strong political commitment focussed on empowerment of local authorities and beneficiary communities.
- Clear guidelines and well defined and jointly agreed roles for sector agencies and ESAs.
- Fair chairmanship and a framework for cooperation and not control which is provided through the NAC.



- An adequately equipped and vibrant secretariat.
- Consistent participation by all relevant sector agencies in the NAC, represented by senior level officers with operational experience.
- High level commitment of all stakeholders to cooperation based on mutual interest.
- Involvement of Planning and Finance ministries from an early stage in the programme.
- Adequate resources to support joint action.
- Continuous attention to both horizontal and vertical coordination.
- Need for all sector participants to have a sense of ownership of the water and sanitation programme.
- Transparency in all collaborating partners, i.e. Central and Local Governments, Donors and NGOs.
- A vibrant private sector to support the programme.
- Effective advocacy and awareness campaigns which ensure sustainable political will at all levels, with special targeting at policy makers.

## 5. MECHANISMS FOR CLC

In Zimbabwe, the principle mechanisms for CLC have been the:-

- The National Action Committee which is an interministerial committee established to determine policy and develop guidelines as well as coordinate national development in the sector.
- The National Coordination Unit (NCU)  
This is the secretariat to the NAC. The 1993 report said "The existence of the National Coordination Unit is undoubtedly one of the most important factors contributing to effective CLC in Zimbabwe."
- Provincial and District Water Supply and Sanitation subcommittees which are equivalent to the NAC at lower levels but the agencies assist local authorities in project implementation.



Whilst in 1993 the local authority was not a significant member of this committee at district level, the movement towards decentralisation has meant that not only have the local authority become a regular member of the subcommittee but in many districts the local authority has assumed the role as chairman and brought the committee in as a subcommittee of the full local authority council.

- Annual Sector Review Meeting

This is the only formal forum for full consultation between Government, local authorities, NGOs and ESAs.

- Mid-term and annual bilateral consultations

- Annual and semi-annual reports.

- Disbursement meetings

- Project appraisal and evaluation meetings.

- Informal meetings with the secretariat and sector agencies.

In short, the Zimbabwean experience shows that the most effective mechanisms for CLC are open communication channels among all collaborators and sharing documentation on policy, strategies, progress and experiences.

## 6. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Most of the conditions for effective CLC are elaborated in section 4 above. This section will try to state some of the strengths and weaknesses of CLC.

- Integrated Approach

The identification of all complementary activities and agencies on a development programme results in a common vision and enhanced efforts in the achievement of targets and objectives.

- Open Communication Channels

Regular meetings and information dissemination keeps all collaborating partners well informed and assist in improving policies, strategies and in understanding of constraints and their possible solutions.



- Increased Sustainability

As beneficiary communities are accommodated as equal partners in the collaboration process, a greater sense of community ownership is enhanced leading to more sustainable programmes in both the construction and operation and maintenance of the facilities.

Collaboration with research institutions and the private sector results in more sustainable locally based technologies with local back-up.

- Limited Documentation

As stated above strong and effective collaboration relies on free flow of information, especially documented information. In Zimbabwe it has been noted that the Socio-economic environment is changing at a fast pace and it has been difficult to keep documentation up to date with these changes. Thus, although there is a common understanding by most collaborators, there is an urgent need to document changes in policy and strategies to keep pace with the times. The NAC Secretariat, in collaboration with other interested parties, has been tasked to urgently attend to this matter.

- Inertia Towards the Decentralisation Process

Fundamental changes have been taking place especially with decentralisation in which local authorities have gradually been undergoing a process of empowerment in which they will eventually take over the management and implementation of the programme. This is a fundamental condition of CLC as this ensures that local authorities and communities become partners in the collaborating process. This means that the central role which government ministries have been playing in implementation will be reduced to that of facilitating implementation by the local authorities. The civil servants at implementation level therefore feel that





their jobs are at stake. This fear has been aggravated by the fact that there is very little documentation and dissemination of information on the Civil Service Reform Programme which should state mechanisms of addressing such perceived problems.

- The National Coordinating Unit(NCU)

The NCU is the most important organ feeding the NAC with materials for decision making. The phenomenal growth of the Water and Sanitation programme has overburdened the NCU such that it has not been able to fully maintain its supportive role, particularly in the preparation of sector strategies and documentation of progress and experiences. The growth of the programme coupled with the major management shift to local authorities should probably have resulted in a reorganisation of the NCU to address fully its roles and possibly to review how other organisations should be assisting in this process. This constraint is however being addressed through a parallel capacity building programme.

- NGOs

NGOs were previously marginalised in the CLC process until recently. New initiatives by the NAC have resulted in a healthy dialogue and process of learning from NGO experiences. Given the increased responsibility of local authorities in service provision it is expected that the NGOs will have an even more important role to play in the future. Therefore the new collaborative systems which have been set up should prove valuable. These now include quarterly meetings of government and NGOs, the participation of NGOs in Provincial and District planning fora as well as commitment to better sharing of information.



- Local Authorities

Decentralisation has resulted in the shift of management responsibility for water and sanitation programmes from government to the local authority who previously had been marginalised in the whole process. Not only have they embraced the existing water and sanitation committees into their planning system but the management by the Local Authorities has resulted in much closer cooperation at district level than was the case previously.

- New areas of collaboration are developing across sectors as a programme to build capacity in the local authorities will be working very closely with the water and sanitation sector agencies.

The 1993 paper identified the threat of loss of control over funding and loss of autonomy as two factors discouraging collaboration. Decentralisation involves both of these. Observations show inertia, at central level, to the full implementation of decentralisation but a very much strengthened CLC at lower levels as agencies see more need to collaborate. CLC has not suffered as a result of this process and has benefited at lower levels. As government gradually shifts its role to one of facilitation and regulation the inertia is expected to diminish while the process of CLC will continue to strengthen as long as it is given the priority it deserves.

What this shows us is that CLC is dynamic. The sector itself is continually changing and CLC must also change if it is to keep up. We can expect ups and downs but by being prepared to learn and adapt we are open to the collaborative process and more likely to succeed.

