

REPORT OF

SIXTH BACKSTOPPING MISSION

TO THE NETHERLANDS- SUPPORTED

WATER SUPPLY PROGRAMMES IN NAMIBIA

***Volume 1: Executive Summary, and Joint Conclusions
and Recommendations***

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Backstopping Mission aims to review jointly with the counterpart Core Team of the Directorate of Rural Water Supply the achievements, effectiveness and sustainability of two Netherlands-financed rural piped water schemes in the Omusati/Oshana and Oshikoto/Ohangwena regions in Namibia. Furthermore, the joint Teams assist DRWS to develop and make Community-Based Management (CBM) and the required support structures at regional and national level operational. In this way increased scheme sustainability will be achieved, field experiences gained and lessons learned. These experiences and lessons can then be applied in other schemes in Namibia and also be useful in the development of community-based approaches in non-piped water supply programmes.

As the development of the CBM approach is nearing the finish, a lot has been learned. The first water points have been handed over to Water Point Associations outside the two Netherlands financed schemes. The proof of the CBM is to come and further adjustment will be needed. The process of CBM development has taken quite some years mainly due to the bureaucratic and political environment prevailing. The Namibia case on CBM development is rather unique and should be documented. It will be very useful for future sector staff and sector staff from other countries struggling with similar approaches.

Although the CBM approach development is a great achievement, the duration of development is rather long. The aim of professionals to have a perfect methodology and materials before introducing it in the field has hampered the progress sometimes. This has been the case with the training approach and materials for the Water Point Committees. Handing over the asset ownership is not yet possible. However, this should not delay the introduction of CBM on a larger scale. The interim solution of leasehold agreement should be applied and later on the assets can be handed over. When community members are introduced to their CBM during the planning of their scheme and it takes then some five years before they can really be in charge of the system, this may dwindle their enthusiasm and give ambivalent feelings about the seriousness of the GRN regarding CBM. Important reasons for the relatively long timeframe of development are also that the DRWS had to be shaped after independence. From a pure technical-oriented directorate it had to adopt the community focus. Still several DRWS staff has limited confidence that the CBM approach will be successful.

The progress on CBM in the two Netherlands-financed schemes is steady but not very fast. Now some 18 Water Point Committees of the total of 168 have been trained. With this pace it will take some three years until all have been trained. During that time the physical water structures may have deteriorated, as seen in the Ogongo-Okalongo scheme, and rehabilitation work is to be carried out. The Mission therefore suggested to follow a cluster-wise approach of handing-over water points to the Local Water Association and to the Water Point Associations. In a relatively short period of time, the required training (WPAs and Caretakers), possible rehabilitation and establishment of associations in a cluster of water points will be done.

Good progress has taken place in the development of the Local Water Committees. But also here the time has come that they have to start functioning. In the Oshakati-Omakango scheme payment for water to NamWater (now 20% of total water fee) has been introduced, and so the Local Water Committee (LWC) has become operational. The role of the Maintenance Team in the maintenance of the scheme has soon to be transferred to the caretakers of the scheme, although some resistance seems to exist to hand-over that responsibility. The professional competence of the LWC is still doubted; the Mission

expects that a small professional management unit needs to be attached to the LWC for good performance.

The efficiency of the Extension service within DRWS needs to be addressed to make this service sustainable in organisational and sustainability terms. Re-definition of the scope (and tasks) and re-organisation of the Extension service in areas with established water supply services are required. The recommendations from the *Extension Review Study* have not been implemented yet. With more water points to come, more training needed, also refreshers, and follow-up to water committees needed, a well-functioning service is needed. The role of the Head Office of DRWS to support and coach the regional offices needs to be stronger.

The Mission has the opinion that the status of the two schemes being "development and demonstration" schemes has not been fully exploited. More pilot-testing of specific approaches could have been done. The leasehold agreement should have been introduced sooner to make the introduction of payment politically acceptable. The Mission has the feeling that several DRWS staff at head and regional office, particularly the technical-oriented staff, never accepted the idea of piloting. Opportunities have been missed, particularly the full implementation of the CBM and the field test on the functioning of the CBM.

As a separate mission had reviewed the environmental sustainability aspects, less attention was placed on this area during this Backstopping Mission. The conclusion of that mission that rural water supply was in several cases primarily used for watering cattle from absentee-owners could not be confirmed for the two schemes. The Backstopping Missions made a substantial number of recommendations on environmental issues that had limited application.

Some ideas for follow-up of this series of Backstopping Missions have been raised. These include system development for monitoring of the sustainability of community-based managed rural water supply; documenting the Namibia-CBM case; and giving support to regular internal review on sustainability of community water supply.

Being the last Backstopping Mission, the Team would like to thank all DRWS staff, the community members, the Netherlands Embassy and other sector staff in Namibia for their co-operation during the six Missions.

2. JOINT CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Community-Based Management of rural water supply (CBM) approach reaches its final stages of development. The DRWS must be commended for that milestone. Although, criticism on the process and duration may be ventilated, it is a great achievement. It is the result of committed work of many DRWS and other staff. The Backstopping Missions have contributed through putting key issues on sustainability on the agenda and giving possible directions in CBM. Not many African countries have come that far. Many are still struggling with the heritage from the "free water" era and other socialistic and bureaucratic attitudes. The "Namibian-CBM" case will be a good example for them to learn from, both from the result and the process. Therefore, documenting this case would be very useful.
2. Some DRWS staff may indicate that the actual test of the CBM is still to come. The first WPs have just been handed over. There is need for close monitoring of the handed over schemes. The newly established LWAs and WPAs remain a learning ground for DRWS, and review and adjustment has to continue. Rural water supply is a dynamic area. Provided socio-economic development continues, in future users will demand for higher water service levels such as house connections. Also management systems may develop in new directions in the future to meet the new conditions and demands from the people.
3. The CBM development is nearing the finish. Its development has been steady but relatively slow. Since 1994 the CBM is being developed but there are still some final stumbling blocks. To make them legal institutions, the WPAs and LWAs have to be formed, their constitutions to be written, management plans to be written and they need to be registered with DRWS. They can then lease the water supply assets through the leasehold agreement. The Rural Water Supply Management Bill will provide the complete legal foundation, including the ability to hand over state assets to the WPAs and LWAs. Namibia works very systematically and thoroughly on these legal issues. However, it takes a very long time as it has to pass through a complicated bureaucratic and political process. In the meantime, DRWS does not dare to take courageous steps to hand-over completed systems to the LWAs. The interim alternative of leasehold ownership, which as preached for a long time, has now come to the fore. Some 10 WPs have been handed over in Hardap under this arrangement. This interim solution should be used in an accelerated pace in other schemes as well to avoid getting faced with crumbling water supply structures and water committees losing enthusiasm. In completed schemes with WPCs established and trained, delays to hand-over do a lot of harm to the CBM principle.
4. The two development and demonstration schemes, Ogongo-Okalongo and Oshakati-Omakango, have been constructed in 1992/1993 with a great deal of community participation. LWCs and WPCs were established. Since 1994/1995, also through the interventions of the Backstopping teams, the preparations were made towards (leasehold) handing over and to make the CBM operational in the two "pilot" schemes. The actual handing over of WPs to the LWAs has yet to start here. Community members are rather confused and some do not take it serious anymore. Their enthusiasm dwindled during the years. Handing over should start as soon as possible using an approach of preparing small clusters of some nine WPAs at the time. DRWS accepted the idea discussed during the final workshop and started preparing for the implementation. Training of WPCs, any final rehabilitation and the formal establishment of the Water Point Association will cluster-wise be completed. This

allows for LWAs to gradually develop further capacities.

5. Even though this sounds a very realistic solution, it will still take some three years till all WPs in the two schemes have been transferred from GRN to LWAs and WPAs. This is a too long period. The attitude of the community members has already somehow changed from co-operative to critical and demanding. The LWCs of Ogongo-Okalongo demands for instance more WPs before they will accept the scheme. The DRWS could look into solutions to speed up the handing-over.
6. Following the above approach, the entire period between construction and hand-over of the two schemes is close to ten year. A remarkable time period for a demonstration scheme. From reactions within DRWS and seeing the opportunities missed, it can be concluded that the schemes' status of being development and demonstration schemes, has not been fully exploited. The Backstopping Mission has the opinion that optimal utilisation of this status would have reduced the CBM development period. Although the Position Paper¹ indicated that the DRWS nominated the two schemes as "pilot" or development and demonstration schemes, this has only been informally accepted by DRWS. Several DRWS staff at HO and RO level, particularly the technical-oriented staff, did not accept the idea of piloting and were not very supportive. Nevertheless, several new approaches were developed and introduced in the schemes but the real pilot-testing of the CBM, i.e, the real community-based management including O&M and payment for O&M and water did not happen. The reasons why it stopped at the methodology and training level are not fully clear. The leasehold agreement would have been legally possible. Here a real opportunity was missed! Now, many schemes are soon at the level of handing-over without having had results from pilot testing of the CBM.
7. One of the bigger stumbling blocks has been the development of the WPC Skills training. Both the present package and the training of seven days are very comprehensive products. They indicate the strive for perfectionism at DRWS. One of the impacts of this training approach is the slow pace of training, delaying the handing-over of WPs. The question is whether training to that level of detail is needed and cost-effective, also as it is expected that members of WPCs may regularly change and then new members have to be trained. (This point is not shared by all Backstopping Team members). The decision of DRWS to have new WPC members trained by outgoing members does erode the committees' capacities and is in conflict with the present perfectionism strived for. The Backstopping Team learned that this training approach will be evaluated after some nine months of implementation
8. The two LWCs were further trained in a participatory process that had also a learning component for the Development Planning Sub-Division. Here the two schemes were fully used as "pilot" schemes. Findings from this learning process will be used in the other schemes and in training approaches and materials to be developed. The present achievement is the result of the commitment of the Development Planning Sub-Division. Despite these good efforts, the participation of some LWC members in the Executive Committee training was rather low. This may be a sign of losing interest. Some LWC members were already appointed before the scheme construction started in 1992! The cluster-wise handing-over will also be very welcome here so that the LWCs can practise what has been learned. Close monitoring and further learning is recommended. The lessons drawn from the monitoring will be important for the development in other schemes.

¹ The Position Paper has been prepared by the Development Planning Sub-Division

9. The Mission has raised again the issue that the responsibilities and tasks of the LWCs are beyond the capacity of a voluntary committee. The organisational set-up of LWC should include a professional unit with administrative, financial and technical expertise, particularly for the larger schemes in the Omusati/Oshana and Oshikoto/Ohangwena regions. NamWater informed DRWS that they could take over the management responsibilities from the LWCs. Some LWCs members supported this NamWater proposal.
10. The payment for water to NamWater has started in the Oshakati-Omakango scheme. The water fees will be gradually increased with steps of 20% per year. WPCs collect the water charges, retain a certain part for the WP O&M, and channel their water bill payments to the treasurer of the LWC, who pays it to NamWater. It is a lengthy process in which often the RWEOs are the go-between the WPCs and LWC. Efficient solutions could be found in automatic payments from bank accounts, or collection of the charges by the meter-reader.
The Ogongo-Okalongo scheme has not yet started with the payment because the scheme was not accepted by the LWC because of poor condition. DRWS and its Maintenance Team in Oshakati did not really adequately follow-up shortcomings reported some two year ago.
11. The gradual transfer of maintenance tasks from the DRWS regional Maintenance Teams to the caretakers of the scheme and the water points needs further attention. The attitude of the Maintenance Teams was found not very constructive but more defensive towards their tasks in the schemes.
12. Not much has been done to increase the efficiency of the RWEOs. As indicated in previous Backstopping Missions, this is particularly attributed to poor planning, support and guidance and monitoring in the extension service of the RO. Steps to improve the planning at RO level has been made through the training by HO staff on how to make operational planning. An Extension Review Study was carried out by DRWS with support from CWSMSP. The recommendations have still to be followed up.
13. Environmental sustainability is a continuing risk in the north of Namibia. A Review Mission was fielded by the Netherlands Embassy and DRWS to further investigate the links between rural water supply and the environment. Key conclusions of the Environmental Review Mission included poor communication and co-ordination between the ministries dealing with environment. DRWS responded by reviving WASCO and to make it work by bringing WASCO from the PS to the Directors' level. Another outstanding conclusion of the Environmental Review Mission was that DRWS invests in the provision of water in the North, which is substantially used for watering cattle owned by absentee-cattle holders. Observations and discussions that the Backstopping Team had with the two LWCs lead to the conclusion that water from the two Netherlands-financed schemes is hardly used for watering cattle owned by absentee-cattle holders.
14. The balance in the Capacity Development Fund will be used for training specific DRWS staff, for training materials, and materials facilitating the training of WPCs and Caretakers in the two schemes.
15. The "Position Paper", prepared by the Development Planning Sub-Division, is a good overview paper. It also shows the interest within DRWS to have regular review on the state-of-development of CBM implementation, which was done until now by the

Backstopping Mission focussing on the two Netherlands-financed schemes. The quality of present Position Paper shows also that regular review can be done internally by DRWS staff, preferably involving staff from different divisions. Facilitation and guidance by an external sector professional would be recommended.

16. Although a good initiative, the Position Paper was clearly not absorbed by the DRWS. For instance, the DRWS staff did not use it as a central reference document into this Mission. The Core Team could have used the Paper to reflect on the position of the CBM and to raise the outstanding questions to be addressed by the Mission
17. The planned evaluation on the effectiveness and usefulness of the Backstopping Missions did not lead to a satisfactory result. The RNE and DRWS were going to discuss how this could be followed up. The Backstopping Team is very interested to hear from all DRWS staff involved how they experienced and assess this concept of support. The RNE suggested having an independent consultant do this evaluation.
18. Possible follow-up activities of this Backstopping Mission could include the development of systems for "monitoring for sustainability" as part of the MIS and to be carried out as a management tool at all levels from WPA to DRWS HO. Other activities could be the already mentioned documenting of the "CBM in Rural Water Supply in Namibia" case, and the support in the yearly internal review on effectiveness and sustainability of the rural water supply through the CBM approach.