

Meeting Each Other Halfway: Institutionalizing Community Participation in Integrated Development Plans and Water Services Development Plans in South Africa

Report to the WRC

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WRC Report No. 3130/1/24
ISBN 978-0-6392-0607-3

April 2024



Obtainable from

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This is the synthesis report to the WRC Project No. C2020/2021-00538, titled 'Institutionalizing inclusive community-led planning of water supply in IDP and WSDP'.

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Executive Summary

South Africa's Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and Water Services Development Plan (WSDP) processes provide a legally binding framework, or so-called 'long route to accountability', in which citizens can hold their elected political representatives accountable. This includes municipalities' prioritization and allocation of available internal and external financial, technical and institutional resources for service delivery, and the appointment of internal or external service providers to that end. On the ground, communities interact directly with these service providers in a short route to accountability. However, when it comes to participation for improved water services, communities in low-income rural and urban areas seem inactive. Instead, they protest on the streets. Addressing this void, the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) started establishing and supporting Water and Sanitation Community Forums (WSCFs). In collaboration with DWS and eight WSCFs, and supported by the Water Research Commission (WRC), the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) implemented the project 'Institutionalizing inclusive community-led planning of water supply in IDP and WSDP'. The project examined the stumbling blocks in the implementation of this long route to accountability or in other institutional issues that seem to ignore ordinary community members in under-resourced settings. This evidence is the basis for recommendations to revive the IDP and active participation in the water sector.

The project has two main outputs. The user-friendly "Guidelines for Water and Sanitation Community Forums, municipal officials, and other decision-makers to integrate participatory planning into Integrated Development Plan and Water Services Development Plan processes" synthesize the experiences and aspirations of the WSCFs, as emerged from direct and mutual engagements and dialogues. The present report combines these experiences with extensive literature review on the South African context, disentangling public water services delivery according to the World Bank's long and short routes to accountability.

Our analysis suggests main obstacles in the first leg of the long route to accountability, in which communities express their problems and priorities in the IDP processes via the wards up to the mayor of the Water Services Authority. Voices about specific water issues are quite technical and get lost amidst of many other needs. Even if communities communicate acute problems of lack of maintenance and breakdowns of municipal infrastructure, response is slow or absent. Further, officials tend to focus on municipal systems only. Yet, where municipal water services fail or haven't been implemented as yet, communities find alternatives. Communities already take over some operation and maintenance of municipal systems and are keen to formalise. Communities also participate actively from the planning phase onwards in small systems by NGOs, donors, or private sector, although post-construction support remains needed. Further, especially in rural areas, many individuals or small groups invest in their own sustainable self-supply. Support to self-supply is cost-effective and sustainable. In these various existing or potential co-management modalities, communities and municipal officials or other support agencies meet each other halfway to improve access to water, which none can achieve on its own.

However, without clear community voices bottom-up in the first leg of the long route to accountability, decision-making by both politicians and technical departments is, inevitably, top-down in the second leg of the long route to accountability. Once a few selected projects have

crystallized 'behind closed doors', they become parachute projects, without genuine involvement by the community from the planning and design phase onwards. IDP processes risk become just tick-boxing to show compliance. Lack of accountability to communities in this second leg of the long route to accountability, at its turn, contributes to some of the well-known challenges of Water Services Authorities: debts, bias to new infrastructure instead of maintenance even in low-income areas, failing free basic water services, and general lack of transparency, if not corruption, in complex horizontal and vertical coordination requirements, all of which is compounded by an overall lack of technical capacity.

Based on this evidence, the study recommends the further institutionalization of the WSCFs in the IDP, WSDP and WSA structures and developing their technical and institutional capacity. With their grounded experiences of local needs and opportunities in the short route to accountability they provide precious information and agency to governmental and non-governmental support agencies, including the service providers they mobilise. Fit-for-purpose arrangements to compensate costs or remunerate tasks will secure sustainability. In this way, the current national support to the WSDP to WSA will meet the bottom-up voices in technically and institutionally competent water chapters of the IDPs from local to national level and vice versa. Multi-scale clustered WSCFs, DWS and municipalities in Vhembe already prove this can work well.

Acknowledgements

This report is the result of the unique and fruitful collaboration between communities, government and researchers in the project 'Institutionalizing inclusive community-led planning of water supply in IDP and WSDP' (C2020/2021-00538). The authors would like to thank the members of the Reference Group for their crystal-clear questions, substantive contributions, helpful guidance and active participation in our symposium sessions, workshops, and stakeholder dialogue. In Gauteng and Vhembe, we are grateful for the vital support of the provincial staff of the Department of Water and Sanitation. They shared their impressive experiences with the establishment and support of Water and Sanitation Community Forums (WSCFs). They also enabled us to engage with the eight selected WSCFs. In Gauteng these are: Alexandra WSCF, Bophelong WSCF, Sokhulumini WSCF, Hammanskraal WSCF, and Etwatwa WSCF. In Vhembe they are: Makhado WSCF, Thulamela WSCF, and Collins Chabane WSCF. Last but not least, we thank the WSCFs for sharing their experiences and aspirations, which are at the heart of this project.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Community participation in water provision is a constitutional right, not a privilege or a treat in South Africa. Various Acts and policies operationalize this right. These include the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 and the Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 with the Integrated Development Plan (IDPs) frameworks that institutionalize community participation in local government and that stipulate the support to municipalities by the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), Treasury and other departments. IDPs envisage a two-way process for communication and action in which communities and officials can hold each other accountable (Gonzalez de Asis et al., 2009; Berg, 2013; Mokgobu, 2017). Public participation is also enshrined as a right in the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (PAJA) (No. 3 of 2000).

The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS¹) underscores the importance of community participation in water services delivery, stipulated in the Water Services Act (RSA 1997) and the National Water Act (RSA 1998). Maunatlala (2017) lists the expected benefits: good customer relations at local level; empowerment of local communities and community participation; promotion of local economic development; ownership and responsibility to infrastructure; ability to identify problems and provide quick response; accountability and responsibility to local consumers; and protection and proper management of water as an essential resource. Community-based organizations (CBOs) can become a Water Services Provider (WSP) itself, or be engaged by another Water Services Provider, or conduct specific services such as customer relations, repairs, revenue collection, with or without assistance of NGOs or Water Boards as Support Services Agents. Community members can also invest themselves in infrastructure for self-supply².

Community members agree: “Nothing about us without us” and they name the benefits: “Participation enables communities to do whatever they can do, and which is often easiest and simplest for government anyhow” (MUS Forum members, cited in van Koppen et al., 2021).

However, there is still a gap between frameworks, intentions and realities. Instead of local buy-in and trust in government, newspaper headings expose failing water services, looting, street protests and even litigation cases that enforce feedback from municipalities to users’ reporting of water problems such as leaks, blocked storm water drains, breakdowns, or vandalism (Chamberlain et al., 2020).

To help closing this gap, the DWS Directorate Sector Coordination and Intergovernmental Relations, in collaboration with willing municipalities at district- or local level, has established Water and Sanitation Community Forums (WSCFs) since 2014. Members should include managers from relevant units within the respective Municipalities, DWS, Water Boards and other entities, community representatives, traditional leaders, ward councilor and ward committee representatives responsible for water, representatives from various community structures such as farmers, youth, Non-

¹ Although the name of the department changed over the years, we continue referring to it as Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS).

² Support to self-supply by providing pipes to rural communities has also been proposed by Minister Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma of CoGTA during her keynote at the National Water Summit February 2022.

Governmental Organizations/Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and Community Development Workers. Goals of WSCFs are summarized in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Roles and responsibilities of WSCFs (source: DWS Draft ToR, 2019)

Focusing on these institutional gaps and WSCFs, the Water Research Commission (WRC) supported the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) to implement a project in collaboration with DWS ‘Institutionalizing inclusive community-led planning of water supply in IDP and WSDP’ from 2021 to 2023. The project facilitated exchange, often for the first time, among eight WSCFs in Vhembe (Makhado and Thulamela Districts, mainly rural) and Gauteng (Bhopelong, Alexandra, Majaneng, Sokhulumi, Etwatwa, mainly peri-urban and urban), and partner officials. We also conducted focus group discussions and individual interviews with the WSCFs, interviewed DWS and municipal officials and reviewed national and international literature. We discussed interim findings at symposiums. The report of the final workshop in October 2023 gives the overview of the WSCFs, their functioning, problems and aspirations (see annex).

The first final output of this project was based on experiences and aspirations of the WSCFs, summarized in user-friendly ‘Guidelines for Water and Sanitation Community Forums, municipal officials, and other decision-makers to integrate participatory planning into Integrated Development Plan and Water Services Development Plan processes’, available on WRC Knowledge Hub³. The second final output is the present report. Additional audio-visual outputs take the form of a moving infographic and project video.⁴

³ <https://search.wrc.org.za>

⁴ Infographic at https://mega.nz/file/V3R2GQ7I#LtDfnyV_H8kooHqg11QlcncPhrkc9mOj-dB6f_rpYI and project video at: <https://youtu.be/u1buWgRtAQ?si=P-KYNHtnQCudCe6f>

1.2 Research Question, Method, Conceptualization and Report Structure

The present report places the experiences of the WSCFs in the wider context in South Africa, as also analyzed in literature. The central question, posed by the DWS officials in the Reference Group of this project is:

What are the stumbling blocks and shortcomings that are seen in the current planning frameworks such as the IDP and the WSDP? How can we improve obstacles identified? The current framework allowed every stakeholder, community, and any interested party to participate in the planning of the municipal services including water and sanitation. Out of our experience, we have noted that rural low-income communities tend to be inactive in participating in the planning. The question is: What is causing that? Is it because of the ward system, politicians making decisions above their heads? Or an institutional issue creating an environment where ordinary community members in under resourced settings are ignored? Moreover, what make the limitations for communities to actively participate in planning for water and sanitation in their areas? Why are processes not absorbed, provided, or catered for in the formal government, i.e. IDPs, etc.?

The conceptual approach adopted to answer these questions is borrowed from the generic accountability triangle for public services of the World Bank (2011). This distinguishes a short and a long route to accountability, with a first and second leg in that long route. We apply this framework to disentangle South Africa's institutional framework for water services delivery by municipalities as Water Services Authorities (WSAs), IDPs and WSDP, and multi-tiered CoGTA and DWS (see chapter 2). Common challenges in implementing these frameworks, where the current roles of WSCFs could be strengthened, are assessed in chapter 3. These explain the common non-response to the first leg of the long route to accountability and the exclusion of representative community voices in the second leg of the long route to accountability. More community participation could transform the sub-optimal functioning and dire state of municipal infrastructure; avoid the common 'parachute' projects; and mobilize existing local agency. As chapter 4 further details, various forms of local agency and participation to improve access to water or 'co-management modality' already exist or are wished for. By meeting each other halfway in the short route to accountability, municipalities (or other support agencies) and communities realize concrete improvements in water access that neither party can meet on its own. The co-management modality for municipal systems regards both post-construction participation in operation, maintenance and repairs and pre-construction co-planning, co-design and construction. Community-based small systems and supported self-supply are two other co-management modalities. Chapter 5 traces the required and partially already realized transformation in the long route to accountability to support these co-management modalities, also positively addressing some of municipalities' and CoGTA's internal organizational challenges. The various forms of fit-for-purpose formalization of WSCFs, also financially, are discussed in chapter 6, before conclusions are drawn in chapter 7.

Limitations of the analysis reported here include a limited attention to water quality, sanitation or waste removal (Haigh et al., 2008). Coordination with other water infrastructure projects, for example by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development is also beyond its scope. Similarly, the focus is on water supplies, even though some WSCFs have pro-actively taken up broader water-related and environmental action, for example the WSCF of Alexandra.

2. Accountability triangle of water services in South Africa

2.1 The accountability triangle for public services

Figure 2 presents the accountability triangle of public services (World Bank, 2011). This schematic shows the accountability relations between the three main parties in any public service in a democracy: citizens, politicians with policy makers, and service providers. A long and short route to accountability are distinguished. Both are needed; the how depends on the context. The long route has two legs. One leg is from citizens (also voicing their interests as civil society) to the politicians as their political representatives accountable to them at local, provincial and national level. In the second leg of the long route to accountability, policy makers with their technical experts and administration seek to provide the services that the politicians promised to their electorate in the first leg. This implies state funding, technical expertise and skills, and internal and external organization, including the appointment of service providers for delivering the actual services on the ground. Service providers can be civil servants within government agencies, or they can be specialized contractors, consultants, etcetera, to whom government outsources tasks.

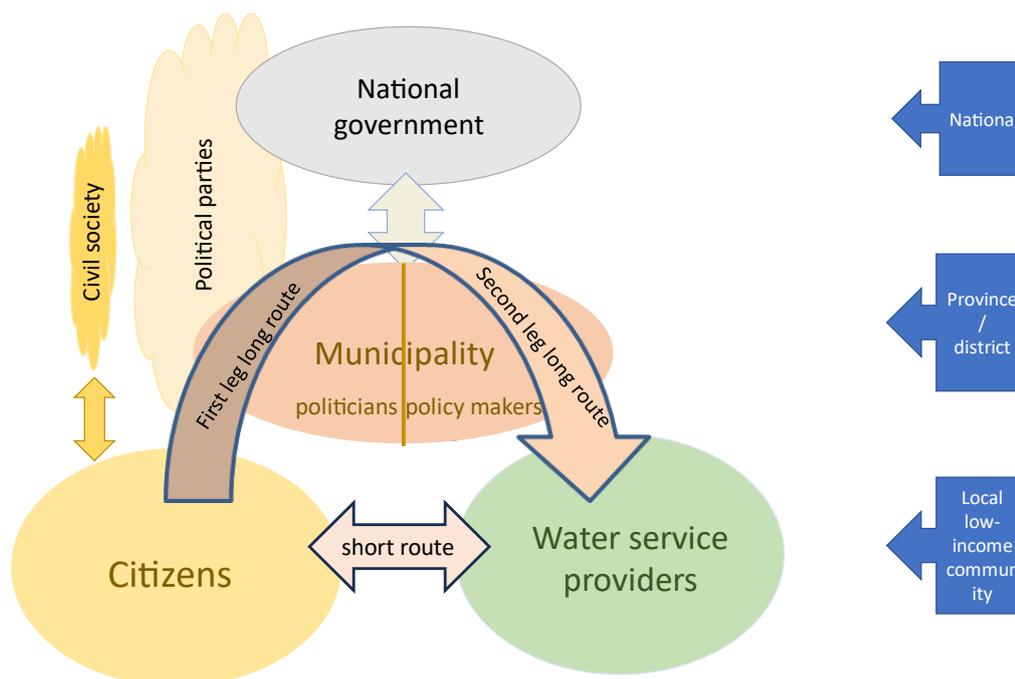


Figure 2. Accountability triangle for water services (adapted from World Bank, 2011)

In the short route to accountability, citizens and factual service providers directly engage in accountable relationships, potentially from the planning phase of interventions onwards. The short route regards a specific, local activity for which higher-level support is made available in the long route to accountability.

2.2 The accountability triangle for water services in South Africa

Figure 3 translates the accountability triangle for public water services delivery in South Africa. Citizens are represented bottom-up in the first leg to accountability by elected ward committees and councillors up to local or district municipalities. The IDP process starts by citizens informing the municipalities bottom-up of their needs and priorities on water issues and many other issues, up to the mayor at municipal level. In the second leg of the long route to accountability mayors with municipal councils engage with their technical and administrative departments to translate the wide range of needs of hundreds of lowest-scale communities, into concrete initiatives. Funds and expertise are allocated accordingly, and service providers recruited and appointed for the concrete service provision. Vital support is provided by national government, in particular Treasury, the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), and the Department of Water and Sanitation.

With the combined support of these national partners, the technical and administrative municipal departments organize the concrete provision of the water services, either internally or by outsourcing tasks to external water service providers. The frontline staff of these service providers engage directly with the community concerned in the short route to accountability. Communities can directly demand accountability from these service providers from planning to implementation and monitoring phases to meet communities' specific needs (Curristine et al., 2007; World Bank, 2011; Carothers & Brechenmacher, 2014; Hofstetter et al., 2020). Locally managed projects can also be funded by external donors (Commins, 2007; Joshi, 2013).

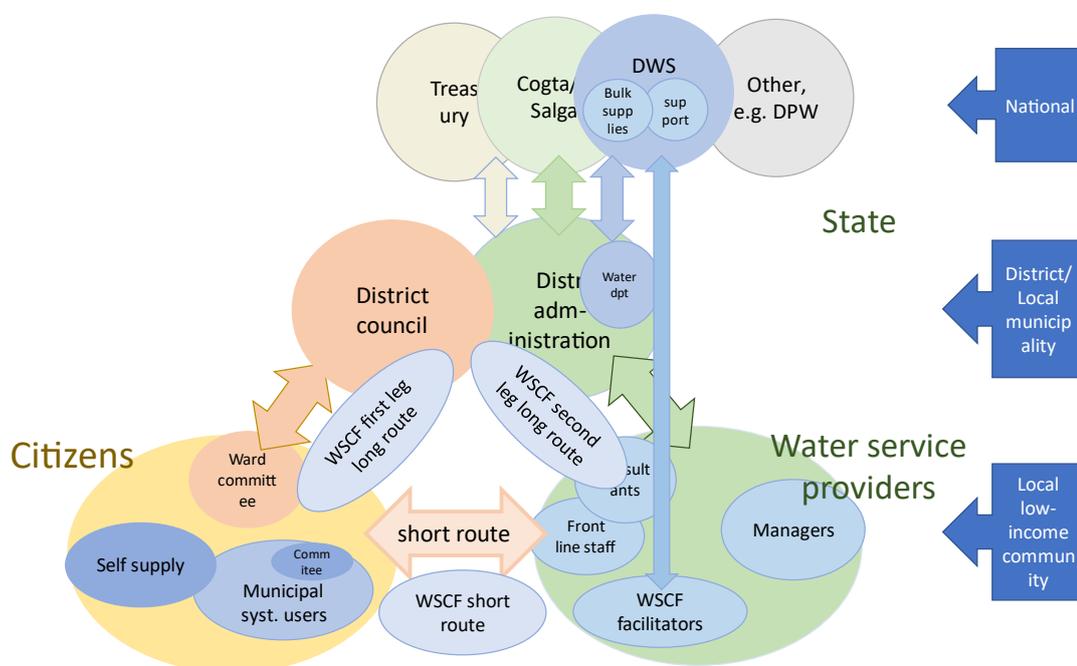


Figure 3. Key players in the accountability triangle of water services provision in South Africa

Individual WSCF members can represent their respective communities in the short route to accountability. The joint experiences of all WSCF members across scales represent well-informed

community voices in the long route to accountability, up to the national support to the Water Services Development Plan.

The following sections further detail this formal framework.

2.3 Municipalities and IDPs

When the democratic state was established in 1994, municipalities obtained significant powers and autonomy⁵ for service delivery in many domains, including water services, as stipulated in the Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000 and the Municipal Finance Management Act, 56 of 2003. Municipalities are supported by the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA). This has the primary mandate of oversight of local government's operations, whereas municipal finances fall under the mandate of National Treasury.

Municipalities are mandated by the constitution to create five-year IDPs for strategic, inclusive, and responsive government in the long route to accountability. IDPs enable engagement of local communities in development planning and in the provision of feedback about the implementation. This legally required public participation is enshrined in ward committees and councilors. The Municipal Systems Act requires public participation in the preparation and review of municipal budgets, agreed IDPs, performance management, annual reports and strategic decisions related to the provision of municipal services.

Concretely, all municipalities are obliged to organize two meetings per year open to the public. The first meeting is the first leg of the long route to accountability: it is diagnostic and enables citizens to express their problems and views on public services on water, sanitation, waste management, roads, electricity, etc. Mayors and the municipal council instruct and enable the technical and administrative sections within the municipality to provide the services. For water, municipalities as WSAs translate the needs and priorities raised in the first leg of the long route to accountability into water services plans in the second leg of the long route to accountability, as reported in the IDP and associated Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP) targets. The second meeting of the IDP presents the prioritized and budgeted projects that are planned for implementation. The IDPs have a five-year horizon, starting right after the municipal elections each five years. This implies that meetings in the second up till the fifth year are updates of this first plan (and depending on pace of progress, partly copied and pasted).

National departments provide considerable financial support to municipalities. Since the 1990s, the new government has placed a high priority on the construction of new infrastructure or upgrading to fill the backlog, in particular in former homelands and rapidly growing informal urban settlements. Treasury allocates Municipal Infrastructure Grants (MIGs) to municipalities, which are supported by CoGTA. It is at considerable discretion⁶ of municipalities how they use MIGs, for water, sanitation, roads, electricity, or housing, etc. However, all municipalities, whether in wealthier or poorer areas, are supposed to pay operation and maintenance costs from tariffs and revenue raised. For maintenance of water infrastructure, a yearly percentage of 8 to 10% of capital costs is formally

⁵ As Muller (2021) clarified, municipal autonomy was stiffly negotiated by conservative rural white communities.

⁶ Further research is recommended, also on the links with the RBIG and WSIG below, and the implications of the new raw water pricing strategy that distinguishes social and commercial infrastructure (DWS, 2022).

required. Further, according to the MIG and the Division of Revenue Act, 5% of the MIG is supposed to go towards projects under the Expanded Public Works Program (EPWP), which is coordinated by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure.

In addition to the above-mentioned national grants to municipalities, Treasury also provides equitable share grants to municipalities to provide free basic services to poor households and subsidise other municipal costs where these cannot be covered from municipalities' own revenue. These grants are unconditional, so it is at the discretion of municipalities to use the equitable share for free water services, other services or another purpose altogether. The Municipal Finance Management Act, 2003, does not require any disclosure of how funds from the equitable share are allocated.

The provision of Free Basic Services (FBS) is guided by CoGTA's National Framework for Municipal Indigent Policy and Implementation Guidelines. In 2001, the overall policy still enabled the adoption by DWS of a Free Basic Water policy, which ensures a basic provision of 6000 liters per household per month for free. However, in 2007, the Free Basic Services became a strictly targeted grant across all services and only available to 'indigents'. All non-indigent service receivers are supposed to pay for the services, so municipalities have the revenue to keep the motor running for operation and maintenance for sustainable service delivery. However, recognition of being an 'indigent household' requires complex registration through ward committees and municipalities.

All these cases indicate the considerable discretion of municipalities on how to allocate funding, whether to water services or to other activities in the IDPs. Ideally, the expressed priorities in the IDP process should not only guide all departments at municipal level in their fund allocation, but also NGOs, donors, and the private sector, for example in their social responsibility programs.

2.4 National support in the long route to accountability

The right to sufficient water for all is included in the Constitution (RSA 1996). The Water Services Act 108 of 1997 made provision for newly demarcated local and district municipalities to be designated as the decentralized Water Services Authorities (WSAs). At a minimum, they are responsible to ensure a basic safely managed volume of water for all, so 25 litres per person per day, within 200 m from homesteads.

In addition to the important option for municipalities as designated WSAs to allocate the Municipal Infrastructure Grant to water infrastructure projects, there are two Treasury grants under the mandate of DWS: the Regional Bulk Infrastructure Grant (RBIG) and Water Services Infrastructure Grant (WSIG). The RBIG is a continuation of the national Water Trading Entity, established in 1983, with the state-owned water boards to provide bulk infrastructure to provide industrial and potable water to municipalities and industries. Municipalities are responsible for the reticulation. Since 2010, Treasury also provides Water Services Infrastructure Grant (WSIG). Before that time, there were several DWS-, state- and donor-funded programmes to fill the enormous backlog in access to water services to the Black majority as a result of the apartheid era. Community participation was strong in these projects, for example the Masibambane project. When donor funding ended, Treasury accepted DWS' call for a flexible Water Services Infrastructure Grant to continue filling the backlog, not only for new infrastructure but, as this fund is more flexible, also allowing the financing of maintenance or other costs.

DWS provides institutional support to municipalities in developing the water component in the IDPs through the Water Services Development Plan (WSDP) and the associated master plan and Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP). The WSDP is the water services chapter of the IDPs in the long route to accountability. Accordingly, a WSA must publish, distribute and invite public- and government comment on its draft WSDP, and consider and respond on all comments before adopting. At national level, DWS maintains a detailed, standardized and by now an online system of WSDPs and other water services data, e.g. an infrastructure asset management register, that are key for any planning and monitoring. Further, DWS conducts training, for example to councilors, and Municipal Strategic Self-Assessments (MuSSA) and Municipal Priority Action Plans (MPAP). This also guides DWS's own Master Planning processes and subsequent feasibility assessments, or its support to such assessments.

Further, as regulator for oversight, DWS sets standards in its National Norms and Standards for Domestic Water and Sanitation Services. The draft version of 2017 has been revised into proposed compulsory national norms and standards for water supply and sanitation services. They were published for public comments in January 2024⁷. DWS' mandate to support municipalities includes an obligation to monitor and, as needed, intervene, in sections 62 and 63 of the Water Services Act (Mudombi, 2020; PARI and WaterAid, 2021).

Technically, municipalities receive support from CoGTA through the Municipal Infrastructure Support Agency (MISA). This was created around 2011, largely to provide engineering support to fast-track and align infrastructure delivery in the 27 priority districts in water, sanitation, electricity, roads and storm water infrastructure.

All above-mentioned financial, technical and institutional support in this second leg of the long route to accountability in water services is from national to municipal level, so top-down. The next step is to operationalize these means into concrete service delivery. In former homelands, technical staff that served under the apartheid structures moved to municipalities, in principle. The top-down creation of municipalities as monopolistic WSAs empowered the new municipalities vis-à-vis traditional authorities, for example in the acquisition of land needed for new infrastructure.

In the Water Services Act, explicit attention to communities as potential service providers in the long route to accountability can only be derived from Section 51. This section allows, in principle, for the Minister to establish a water services committee, which could be a community-based organization (CBO). However, a committee can only be established by the Minister in areas where the WSA is unable to effectively provide such services. There is no reference in the Water Services Act to a short route to accountability specifically for water services, in which end-users can meet service providers halfway to influence the services in their communities, bottom-up. Hence, participation on water issues is limited to the IDPs in the first leg of the long route to accountability, in which water is just one of the many needs.

Moving from the conceptual framework of water services to practice, we now turn to a sketch of community perspectives on their (lack of) participation, as expressed by the WSCFs or found in literature.

⁷ <https://www.dws.gov.za/Projects/PERR/documents/Norms%20&%20Standards.pdf>

3. Current implementation challenges

This chapter collects complaints of the WSCFs, other community members, officials or literature on how communities perceive the current functioning of the intended accountability framework. This is not exhaustive, but illustrates persistent challenges, even after more than 25 years, for which it is plausible that stronger and more organized community voices to demand accountability from the players in both the short and long route would have helped solving the problem for all parties. These are gaps that the WSCFs already fill and can fill more effectively. The later chapters will explore more systematically which co-management modalities are possible and where and how WSCFs can and should be linked bottom-up, up to the national level support to the WSDP through the administrative tools that are currently developed.

3.1 IDP processes: a 'waste of time'

In the first round of the prescribed IDP consultation meetings, ward committees, councilors and all interested citizens are invited to express needs and problems. Attendance greatly varies, also depending on the functioning of the ward committee and councilors. Municipal IDP managers deploy efforts to follow due processes, recognizing that community voices are at the coalface of the process. To quote an IDP official in Vhembe District Municipality (VDM): *"Participation is not an issue in the VDM. It would be great to have more women and young people taking up more space in such platforms. Not just being physically present but vocally so. Speaking and sharing views. Young people are visible but feel intimidated to open up to the older people in the room. Many young people partake in community meetings through ward committees and other structures."*

After politicians' and policy makers' prioritization, programme and project development and budget allocations, the ultimate plans are publicly announced in the second round of the IDPs. In addition to problems in language and technical terms, budget figures may be too coarse and difficult to understand. Yet, this step provides vital transparency, also for monitoring progress, for example through social audits.

Participation is complex. For example, communities do not send the same one or two people to represent them in the IDP meetings. Hence, in each step of the IDP process, representatives can be new. They would have missed the previous phases and then raise questions that have already been responded to in the other phases.

However, even though participation in IDPs is tedious, participants are especially discouraged if they fail to get anything worthwhile from the meetings and if escalation of issues and follow-up decisions remain behind closed doors. Various interviews confirm what an official summarized: *"Numerous anecdotal evidence points to the process of integrated development planning as just a 'smokescreen process' used by political appointees at various local government spheres to legitimise projects that would be given to political appointees' associates to implement on behalf of local governments. Instead, many of the projects being earmarked are not based on local community needs and priorities. In other words, IDPs and WSDPs are mechanisms for municipalities to obtain local development support and special grants from national departments. Once such grants have been secured, they are repurposed for other 'projects'".*

This frustration with box-ticking holds even more for water issues, which are often expressed as a high priority. Hence, lack of follow-up is even more discouraging. Dissatisfaction with the current communication in this first leg of the long route to accountability leaves no other choice than going to the street and protest to get municipal and national politicians' attention for turn-around strategies.

3.2 Mediocre services and dilapidated infrastructure

Where municipal infrastructure is available in low-income rural and urban areas, insufficient attention is given to operation and maintenance (Mamakoa et al., 2013). Operation is often unreliable, pressure drops, water for domestic consumption is insufficient, and water is unsafe for drinking. Lack of maintenance and delays in repairs of blocked or burst pipes stop water altogether. When these problems are reported to the municipality, they are often not escalated for response.

In a heated debate during a symposium between community representatives and the general manager (GM) of Vhembe District Municipality (VDM), community members complained: *"Currently the VDM takes 7 months to repair a burst pipe in a borehole"*. Another community member raised: *"I am disappointed by the presentations including the one by the GM of Vhembe. You spoke of over 700 boreholes not working. What is the reason those boreholes are not working? What is he doing about it?"*.

Most boreholes or other infrastructure are aged, and old technologies were used which have exceeded their lifespan. Municipalities are left with severe issues of pipe replacement, boreholes, shut off valves, electrical transformers, and several other components of water supply infrastructure. The longer the installed water infrastructure is used, the more the vulnerability of it to fail. These failures are attributable to the age of infrastructure, the designs which are inadequate, and the poor installation of infrastructure (Baird, 2010; Lienert et al., 2014).

Illegal connections, theft of cables and other equipment, and other vandalism are another cause of this dilapidation. However, broken infrastructure that lays idle for months without anybody taking care invites vandalism.

3.3 Parachute projects

For most communities, there is no follow-up to their expressed needs but no clarification is given why they were excluded from the second leg of the long route to accountability. Or, as a member expressed: *"We read about certain sums of money being allocated for borehole drilling within the municipality but in most cases it ends on the IDP budget and very little if not nothing reaches us"* (Monyai et al., 2020).

For the few communities that do benefit from follow-up, these are 'parachute projects'. Planning and design were behind closed doors. Any assessment of the precise local conditions was as minimalist as possible. Where done at all, interactions were limited to chiefs or ward committee members. No time was spent on soliciting own ideas and priorities of the broader community, other than basic design issues such as freeing up land for the infrastructure. Projects may also be delayed, for example with late arrivals of materials and equipment.

Appointed contractors may prefer bringing their own laborers with the argument that they can better control their performance than – for them – unknown workers recruited from within the communities. The resulting infrastructure is simply handed over to ‘the’ community, without clarity on an obligation for the contractors to guarantee repairs in case of failures. Users’ exclusion and lack of clarity on ownership contribute to vandalism. The quality can be so low that infrastructure is immediately broken again. The municipality that appointed the service provider may not even monitor and check. In other cases, projects are not finished at all, but contractors may already have been paid. Communities can’t do anything. This is all wasteful expenditure (WIN and Corruption Watch, 2020; Hofstetter et al., 2020; Van Koppen et al., 2021).

Parachute projects can even create problems. Monyai et al. (2020) report how contractors suddenly encroached on people’s land without even asking for approval, let alone negotiating any compensation. Land and livelihoods were lost. There can be safety problems. When dams lack fences (or, if designed they were not implemented), children may drown (Monyai et al., 2020). Wrong designs can even lead to immediate abandonment. Asivikelane (2021a; 2021b) found how communal toilets were placed at the outskirts of informal settlements, while people only use them if they are close to their homes.

What we see here is that the relationship between the end-users and the service providers is, in reality, more reliant on the quality of the relationship between the state and the service provider and not necessarily on the quality, sustainability and progress of their work. Service providers recruited by the WSA in the second leg of the long route to accountability remain accountable upward to the WSA, without any accountability to the end-users.

Lack of transparency, but also the complexity of the second leg of the long route to accountability, make that officials can be discouraged when their genuine efforts seem to be ignored. Yet, rumors multiply about causes, which may, or may not be valid, such as fraud, corruption, nepotism, unskilled staff, and lack of formal repercussion for underperforming officials. During the above-mentioned symposium, the District General Manager in Technical Services explained his complex tasks in the second leg of the long route to accountability. However, angered community representatives commented: *“You are here wanting to plan at a higher level but as a district you cannot do little things like repairing pipes and supplying people with water.”* Communities outcry is that *“people do not have water now”* and decisions affecting their lives are made at the top without them.

3.4 Ignoring local agency

In areas where public services haven’t arrived as yet, or where services are unreliable and back-up sources are needed, citizens (including unregistered users from other countries) have to find, and do find alternatives. For example, community members who had not had water for over three weeks or more, commented: *“Put yourself in the shoes of people from Makhado. How do you survive a day with no water, never mind three weeks? People are forced to go buy water from vendors who are tankering water from public boreholes.”*

Informal vendors taking water from a range of water sources are often the only ones to fill this gap. In other cases where public services are weak or absent, water users invest themselves in water infrastructure for self-supply to realize their constitutional right to sufficient water, at no cost to the

taxpayer. Most people were found to depend on self-supply in five of the six low-income rural communities in Limpopo province (Van Koppen et al., 2020). In any case, no harm should be inflicted. Several cases have been documented in which the construction, or even just the promise of – never realized – new construction of infrastructure by municipalities has led to the willful *destruction* of well-working existing community-based water supplies by the contractor's providers (Monyai et al., 2020).

Government officials often ignore, or even punish, this vital life-bringing local agency. This may be encouraged by an implicit assumption that public water services are a monopoly, implemented by the state. This may work well wherever a single centralized public provider can tap economies of scale in sufficiently densely populated urban areas with middle-class 'customers' who all pay. The latter can electronically report any interruption to a well-functioning customer care center, which is – generally – repaired within a week, if not a day.

However, in low-income informal high-density areas, a centralized monopoly system may work, at best, at longer term. In the meantime, there must be alternative sources. However, in many remote, low-density rural areas, a centralized public system may never be viable, as already widely noted in high-income countries. Instead, these governments support and subsidize self-supply, as the main co-management modality (Sutton, 2021; Hofstetter et al., 2021).

In sum, this chapter noted challenges in the implementation of the national and local government legal frameworks and the use of well-available financial and technical support to WSAs in South Africa's accountability triangle. In the first leg in the long route to accountability through the IDPs, water is only one of the many issues in IDPs. Even if officials, consultants and contractors take the wish-lists of the IDPs, but also initiatives originated outside of the IDPs, forward in the second leg of the long route to accountability, accountability downward to the community may merely be reporting the outcomes. For many, IDPs are non-consequential. Moreover, there is no short route to accountability in which service providers systematically interact with water users – other than through the reporting of problems, often with long turn-around times, or in vain.

Yet, WSCFs and literature have flagged various ways to meet each other halfway in terms of 'co-management modalities' in a short route of accountability, as presented next in chapter 4.

WSCFs also expressed their aspirations to participate as community representatives throughout the long route to accountability from local to district level, including budgeting processes. Chapter 5 will analyse how the recognition of a short route to accountability and downward accountability to communities in the long route to accountability can address some of the systemic challenges that WSAs currently face.

4. Co-management modalities in the short route to accountability

Co-management modalities depend on the type of system (municipal systems; another small system; or self-supply) and on the phase in the project cycle. Participation from the diagnostic planning and design stage onwards gives more options than participation in construction, or even only in the use phase. Co-management modalities have proven or plausible benefits. In the following we further detail these differences for municipal systems (4.1 post construction of existing systems; 4.2 pre-construction for new systems or rehabilitation); co-management of small community systems in which communities are expected to take up operation and maintenance responsibilities

(4.3); and supported self-supply, as a quite new co-management modality (4.4). We remind that communities can also take up many other water and environmental initiatives as other types of co-management modalities, but these are not discussed here.

4.1 Post-construction operation, maintenance, repair and monitoring of municipal systems

The monitoring and reporting of breakages and other problems in using municipal systems to the frontline technical municipal staff can become a co-management modality, provided the municipality does its part. This means escalating the reports to the appropriate technical section for swift follow-up. WSCFs and appropriate institutionalized customer care structures can play such roles. WhatsApp groups can streamline these reporting and action structures.

Co-management in the use phase can also extend to local daily 24/7 operation and routine maintenance of small gravity systems, boreholes or last-mile reticulation of a larger municipal system. Especially in rural areas, selected community members often already take up such tasks, also voluntarily. For example, in Makhuduthamaga Local Municipality in Sekhukhune District, there are 34 volunteer operators serving 189 villages. They are appointed, and still upward accountable to the municipality, but they hope this job will be remunerated at some stage (Hofstetter et al., 2020).

Rural users of small municipal systems were also found to contribute money to buy fuel to operate boreholes when the municipal supplies of fuel were temporarily disrupted. This is much quicker than reporting and waiting for the municipality to act. It also avoids having to find – often costly – alternative access to water in the meantime (Van Koppen et al., 2021).

The three main challenges identified are, first, the need for systematic technical training by the municipalities, also on newer technologies or more complex maintenance and repairs, to ensure that high standards of safety of repairs or water quality are met. Second, an accountable internal organization among local operators, users and the municipality needs to be established, in which users and municipalities agree on the respective monetary and non-monetary contributions (see formalization in chapter 6). Lastly, the volunteers for these daily jobs of technical operator are often elderly or retired men. Youngsters may be more attracted if the other two challenges are addressed.

Advantages. Overall, there are several advantages of local operators who also maintain, implement small repairs, and monitor municipal infrastructure, compared to distant operators and technicians upward accountable to the WSA. They include: prompt 24/7 availability; swift response also beyond office hours for immediate minor repairs and care; lower transport costs; sharing and expanding local knowledge of the geo-hydrology and specific socio-economic and institutional needs and options; more accountability to the users; and relatively low or even no wages compared to professional operators appointed by the WSA. Active involvement in operation and maintenance includes protection of the infrastructure and stronger prevention of unauthorised connections, theft and vandalism. If needed, a local security guard can be appointed to those ends. Lastly, many WSCF members actively advocate for this option.

4.2 Co-planning, designing and constructing (parts of) municipal systems

Instead of involving users during the use phase only, co-management can start from the planning, diagnosis and design phase onwards and include contracting or own construction of works or combinations. This holds for small local gravity schemes or boreholes, but also for last-mile reticulation of larger multi-village municipal systems. Incremental extensions of bulk supplies can keep pace with population growth. In large systems, municipalities and DWS reliably operate the bulk infrastructure and main pipes, but community taps and yard or household connections are co-managed with the organized users. Municipal engineers and technicians continue providing advice.

Involvement of communities in participatory diagnostics takes all existing community assets as starting point, and respects users' own priorities and their – often already well-identified – proposed solutions. These solutions are often cost-effective and *incremental*. The NGO Asivikelane (2021a; 2021b) illustrates this by calling for simple, systematic repairs of taps that would reach many more people with improved services than if the few focused, expensive rehabilitation projects of certain parts of the system only, that benefit only few, were implemented. In most situations, it is an unaffordable luxury for users and state alike to immediately jump to high service levels and ignore whatever assets and services already exist.

Even at basic service levels, it is likely that people in low-income areas not only use water for basic domestic uses, but also for food production (milk, meat, eggs from livestock, vitamins and minerals from vegetables), and income (for example from irrigation produce well marketed, or car washing). Income enables financing (self-) services in virtuous circles out of poverty (Van Koppen et al., 2021). Such small-scale productive uses have a higher priority than luxury domestic uses or swimming pools. Context matters, because different people use water for different productive activities, with different volumes, all depending on diversified local livelihoods. This is well recognized in a localized diagnosis.

Participatory diagnostics and co-planning and design of small systems and last-mile reticulation address the reality that households will connect with bulk supplies and pipes after construction anyhow. By then, it is called illegal. However, if timely planned, these connections can be paid (in cash and kind) by the user who wants and can afford, or subsidized for those who cannot afford. If planned and organized upfront, fair water distribution to all can be guaranteed and damage from anarchic connections avoided. This creates real ownership, which combats future vandalism as well⁸. Instead of sending police and security guards to punish these illegal vandals (usually in vain), WSAs, service providers and citizens meet each other halfway to realize constitutional rights.

Whether communities have been part of the final technical design or not, the next phase of the project cycle, implementation and construction of municipal systems, can be co-managed as well. Technical advice and support for local participation in semi-skilled and skilled works by the future water users strengthens technical capacity and insights in the workings of the system, for example where underground pipes are. Works may be voluntary for those who are 'remunerated' by improved access to water. In other cases, stipends would compensate for the time given. Synergies

⁸ The Integrated Development Plan of Vhembe District Municipality mentions the Council's adoption of a policy to effect yard connections where application has been made and where the water source and infrastructure is sufficient.

with the Expanded Public Works Programme are most appropriate⁹. Moreover, community members take pride and are motivated to take care of the system: *“we worked hard for it”*.

Even for the procurement of materials, communities can be given (more) responsibility. As direct beneficiaries, communities have a stake in getting value for money instead of the mark-ups that service providers demand. It also strengthens communities' longer-term relationships with local hardware stores. Further, while external contractors may have to pay expensive security guards for the storage of materials, community members find safe storage places among themselves.

If the municipality decides to appoint external consultants or contractors for complex tasks, future users can still have a strong stake in monitoring progress and judging final performance of the works. Communities' transparent role in signing off for work completed strengthens external consultants' and contractors' accountability downward.

As international experience shows, the entire design can stay in the hands of the final users and be submitted as competitive proposals to a special fund. The African Water Facility implements this decentralisation-of-services project in Benin. Project proposals are developed by end users and the best of these proposals is selected for funding by a technical committee. In this way, communities developed not only capacities to plan projects, but also gained experience in mobilising funding (African Water Facility, 2012 cited in Hofstetter et al., 2020).

Advantages: co-management of planning, diagnosis, design and (part of) construction works with municipal officials mobilizes users' localized priorities and is cost-effective. No outside contractor knows a community and their needs more than they themselves. It taps communities' local knowledge and often already identified incremental solutions. Some prioritized improvements would have been implemented 'illegally' anyhow. Opportunity costs for participation in construction may be modestly remunerated. Last but not least, real ownership is created, which is indispensable to combat vandalism, and may even reduce theft of lucrative copper and other metals from electric cables and transformers.

While this co-management modality is cost-effective, municipalities need to offer facilitation and technical expertise and advice (skills that remain in the community). The main change in the long route to accountability is *timely* community participation and accountability downward: from the diagnostic, planning and design phase onwards. Funding for construction needs to be broadly available, but precise amounts need to await the prioritized bills of quantities and contracts.

WSCF members underlined the cost-effectiveness: *“With government always complaining about no money or no budget, we are saying: we do not want additional money, keep the money within the communities by using our local skills instead of outsourcing”*. And: *“If government pays R20 for services, local community members will provide the same service for R10”*.

This section discussed municipal systems. However, in a community-wide diagnostic, two other co-management modalities are likely to be found as well: small systems financed by others than the municipality and self-supply. Communities may prioritize support to those as well. There are

⁹ The world's largest rural water supply program is not a water program, but an employment generation program: India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. By leaving the choice of works and asset creation to local communities, the latter appeared to prioritise water works and drought proofing. This continues to massively improve both employment and local water management for socio-economic wellbeing (Van Koppen et al., 2014).

independent support agencies who can support such priorities as well, ideally aligning and coordinating with the directions and priorities agreed by WSAs in the IDPs.

4.3 Co-managing small community systems

Other government departments than CoGTA and other agencies (NGOs like Tsogang Water and Sanitation, development banks, social responsibility of the private sector, etc.) often support the design and construction of small water systems or their extensions or upgrades. In the common Build, Operate and Transfer (BOT) model, once such systems are constructed, they are handed over to the users for operation and maintenance. Such community-led water development was the model in the 1990s, before the new municipalities became Water Services Authorities. This was applied, for example, by the Reconstruction and Development Programme on Community Water and Sanitation Services, donor and state supported NGOs like Mvula Trust and Tsogang, or the Masibambane program. By now, it has been widely acknowledged that some form of post-construction support, mainly by local government, remains indispensable, certainly for major repairs or extensions, but also for effective organization of operators and water users for water distribution, maintenance and small repairs.

Advantages are the same as above.

4.4 Supported self-supply

The third co-management modality in the short route to accountability is supported self-supply. In self-supply, self-organized sub-groups of, or individual households design, finance, and operate their own small-scale infrastructure, and may share with neighbors, or, in some cases, become water vendors. Informal self-supply is expanding (Monyai et al., 2020; Hofstetter et al., 2021; Nortje et al., 2021; Van Koppen, 2021). Urban dwellers, who can afford, drill their own boreholes for self-supply. In rural areas, large-scale farmers, who never relied on municipal systems, continue supplying for themselves and to some extent to the workers living on the farms (Chamberlain et al., 2020). In former homelands, which never had proper government water services, water users expand their age-old self-supply. Rural electrification has accelerated the installation of electric pumps.

As mentioned above, self-supply was found to be the most important source of water to homesteads in Limpopo (Van Koppen et al., 2020), as confirmed by the Water and Sanitation Community Forums in Vhembe. Water users' agency in self-supply includes precious technical, human, resource, institutional, and financial assets. Self-supply not only provides vital fallback when municipal systems are unreliable, or absent, but improved self-supply can also meet higher aspirations than the basic services for domestic uses (25 lpcd) for which the government is responsible. Expectedly, this accommodates all water needs including water for livestock, irrigation and small-scale enterprise.

As mentioned, in remote rural areas with surface water resources or shallow groundwater and scattered households, centralized communal systems would be overly expensive. State-supported self-supply is often the most cost-effective and efficient long-term form of water services in low-income areas (Sutton, 2021) but also high-income areas (Hofstetter et al., 2023). Water vending is another alternative source in rural areas and in rapidly expanding informal settlements with limited

or no public water services. As for municipal systems with poor water quality, self-supply may also warrant users to buy (expensive) treated and bottled water for drinking (but not for other domestic uses).

Many governmental and other external agencies can support self-supply by providing technical advice and capacity building. When officials and other support agencies see that there are serious technical risks, such as high pressure or water pollution causing, for example, cholera outbreaks, they can focus their training on those issues. Technical support also includes the strengthening of supply chains of affordable water and energy technologies. Financially, equipment can be subsidized as already happens for jojo tanks or higher-quality pipes.

Institutional support to collective systems can strengthen internal organization for the transparent management of funding without suspicions that operators or committee members “eat money”; the sustainable employment of operators and technicians; or water distribution.

Advantages: support to self-supply, especially to those who cannot afford it without some form of support, is cost-effective and sustainable as it mobilizes and develops users’ assets. Hence, not surprisingly, WSCFs in Limpopo reported that having qualified officials or contractors work with them to make their self-supply sustainable, will mean that even more sub-villages will have access to water.

This chapter highlighted four aspects of three co-management modalities in a short route to accountability, in which government, or other support agencies, directly collaborate with users to ensure access to water. However, the realization of these or other co-management modalities requires clear inputs from community representatives to guide the transformation towards accountability downward across the long route to accountability. These efforts will encounter the well-known complex challenges of WSAs in the long route. Representation by WSCFs bottom-up to each higher scale up to district level and integration in national support to WSDPs can catalyze such win-win scenarios.

5 Meeting each other halfway in the long route to accountability

5.1 Institutionalizing water chapters in the first leg of the long route to accountability and connecting to the second leg

As mentioned, in the first leg of the long route to accountability of the IDPs, water-specific needs are only one issue among many. The ultimate selection of projects and their budgets is to be approved by the Municipal Council and Mayor. This is included in the IDP and its Water Services Development Plan chapter and related municipal Master Plan, which is communicated in the second round of IDP meetings and integrated in the WSDP. However, although IDPs and WSDPs are supposed to be the axes around which planning is integrated and works are scheduled, in reality, water issues may already disappear among the many other issues, especially when budgets are tight (Lienert et al., 2014; Hofstetter et al., 2020). Further, ward committee members or councilors may lack good insight in water (DWS, 2010; Mokgobu, 2017). Politicians, even with the best intentions, may hardly know about complex water problems and solutions (Smith, 2009; DWS, 2010). Politicians can present little understanding of what it means to operate and maintain infrastructure in a way that provides sustainable services to communities. Even when politicians, ward committees and ward

councilors have become rampant with support for water, they may be insufficiently knowledgeable about water issues to adequately express matters raised in their constituencies and solutions at the city council level (Smith, 2011). They may further strengthen the bias to new infrastructure instead of maintenance (see below). Similarly, without a clear and set service delivery life cycle approach, attempts to achieve sustainable services remain unsuccessful (Matji and Ruiters, 2014; Mokgobu, 2017). Instead of playing the role of referee, the politicians in the first leg of the long route to accountability become players too.

This disconnect between politicians on the one hand and on the other hand citizens and water policy makers and implementers in the technical departments can be overcome by institutionalizing a “two-way water communication route” of well-informed citizens, politicians and municipal engineers and technicians. They are the players who strengthen the water component in the first leg of the long route to accountability as the bottom-up water chapters of the IDPs, and immediately connect with the municipal technical departments in the second leg. The mayor, politicians and elected citizens’ representatives remain the referee. WSCFs can play that role.

In Vhembe, they do. Here, WSCFs, supported by provincial DWS, have created a two-way communication line that focuses on specific water issues. This boils down to a specific water chapter already in the first leg in the long route to accountability. Starting at community level, WSCF members represent the water issues of the community at large, whether they are also ward committee members or not. WSCF representatives are clustered from local to district level, where they communicate directly with the technical departments to strengthen the water chapters of the IDPs bottom-up. This “water route” is a two-way communication channel specifically on water issues between communities and municipalities. A municipal official in an important leadership role becomes chair or a member of the Executive Committee of the WSCF. For example, in Makhado Local Municipality, the Portfolio Head for Technical Services was elected as Chair. Elsewhere this could also be the Portfolio Head Community Services, Portfolio Head for Development Planning, or other municipal officials. Councilors, Ward Committee and Community Development Representatives can also be elected as members of the Executive Committee. This integration of municipal offices into the WSCFs means that needs and challenges raised by the communities are quickly and professionally escalated to the relevant technical department.

Importantly, this arrangement is the link further upwards to national level. Currently, the national support in South Africa functions mainly from national to municipal level. In Vhembe the WSCFs ensure that this specific, water-focused communication line is extended further down to the community scale. DWS’s national-level support to the Water Services Development Plans can strengthen this link. In this way, community voices count in the municipality’s design of water projects and allocation of funding. This also allows consideration of a broader range of co-management modalities to apply in communities – again through the communication channels from WSA to local level provided by the WSCFs. For a particular water services project, participatory planning and budgeting can ensure public discussion and reasoning and decision-making that is open to all so it comes from members of the public rather than rubberstamping officials’ ideas. When communities are involved in the design and implementation of the projects, they can better hold officials accountable for implementation (Pieterse n.d.). Such formalization and institutionalization can be done through the IDP Representative Forum or otherwise. More participation in the communication lines of water chapters of the IDP in the first and second leg of the long route to

accountability will render citizens' inputs more consequential for more meaningful results. The WSIGs under the wings of DWS could already operationalize this approach.

In this way, politically elected ward committees and councilors and the mayor remain the 'referee', ensuring accountability, but both communities and the technical departments get a stronger say in 'playing'. Such participation by WSCFs in IDP processes can be applied elsewhere in South Africa as well, and even made mandatory, so part and parcel of the IDP process instead of being bystanders, as they currently are.

5.2 Horizontal and vertical coordination and communication

This is not to deny many remaining complexities WSAs face. To mention a few, for example, municipal activities may not even be mentioned in the IDPs or WSDPs. This is partly because some more vocal communities find other ways to exert pressure and disrupt planning schedules. In responses to protests, municipalities have to engage in 'fire fighting'. Further, the pressure or demand to reach short-term targets quite often diverts focus away from the institutional changes that are required to make service delivery systems more long-term sustainable.

Internal coordination is also challenging. For example, a municipal IDP manager, when asked what causes the delay in project implementation, responded that according to legislation, by the end of May every year, the IDP must have been approved, and project implementation begins in July. The official was clear to say that this is not always the case because with project implementation under different sector departments each with their own calendar, implementation starts at different times, causing delay in project implementation. Many times, other sector departments would start with their part of the construction and wait for the next sector to continue. Moreover, precious technical capacities (see below) are not always put to good use, for example when waiting for the outcome of lengthy procurement processes. This can result in many abandoned government structures that never make it beyond the foundation phase. Again, leaving communities with questions that no one wants to answer and no one to take accountability.

A clear example of this in water services is the (lack of) collaboration between the bulk suppliers (under DWS and water boards) and the reticulation (by municipalities). There are cases in which DWS constructs new bulk supply, but villages still don't get water because the municipality failed to do its part and construct the reticulation. Such RBIG projects have become white elephants. Similarly, for the MIG grants, continuous negotiation takes place about 5B (paid to, and spent by municipalities) and 6B (transferred and spent by DWS) Schedules.

An interview with a DWS official from the Stakeholder Empowerment Unit on the effectiveness of repairs and turn-around time of municipal systems, also emphasizes the need for improved sectoral coordination and sees an important role for the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) here. The interview informs: *"It is important for turn-around time of municipal systems to be effectively pursued as long as this seeks to improve coordination and integration of services in local government to provide efficient and effective services. SALGA needs to play a pivotal role in inter-governmental relations by co-ordinating activities of local government structures and other institutions. Equally important is that the role of SALGA needs to be professionalised and de-politicised to enable SALGA to play its role of monitoring, supporting, and intervening. Therefore,*

monitoring and support arrangements must be adapted to fit the requirements for local level O&M tasks.”

While local municipalities and sector departments need to move away from the siloed approach and move towards an integrated work ethic, municipal officials are said to not fully understand their municipality’s function in its totality. Speaking to an official responsible for the IDP, the interview reveals that during the IDP process, especially the planning phase with relevant municipal officials, *“as an IDP unit we get to see that municipal officials only know about their limited scope of work and often do not contribute to the work of the municipality in an integrated manner.”*

When there are no clear communication processes within the municipality, its committees, and departments, important information falls through the crack, resulting in staff members from different departments missing key information. Unfortunately, internal challenges such as officials being not clear on their municipality’s overall function, can impact how they understand and achieve community participation (Matji & Ruiters, 2014). Instead, cross-sectoral horizontal collaboration requires participation and coordination to be at the center of governance, not just one of the departments.

Challenges also hold in vertical coordination. For example, community members felt that when Makhado Local Municipality had the WSA status, more villages had access to water, but since Vhembe District Municipality was designated as the WSA, people have less or no access to water. A councilor reiterated their sentiments: *“You are not doing justice to our communities. WSA status needs to be given back to the Makhado Local Municipality. You hardly see Makhado people protesting but one day is one day; your days are numbered, and it won’t be nice. As a councilor I would be expected to lead that protest because I will not let an angry mob burn my house. As officials, they don’t know you in the communities.”*

Another infuriated community leader shares: *“When Makhado had the WSA status, they could listen to the community and provide water to them. Currently the VDM takes seven months to repair a burst pipe in a borehole, taps, etc. You are here wanting to plan at a higher level but as a district you cannot do little things like repairing pipes and supplying people with water. People do not have water now.”* Taking the WSA status from Vhembe District Municipality and returning it to Makhado Local Municipality was passionately expressed by community members and well noted by the Vhembe District Municipality general manager.

In all cases, communication between all players is key. The official reports: *“There are various platforms that can be used by municipalities to reach communities; however, such platforms are not optimally utilized. Local community radio stations as well as community forums and other relevant mediums, i.e. social media can reach lots of people. Some of the communication channels are not formalized, formalizing them will have a positive impact and give a sense of accountability.”*

The new District Development Model reviews the past 21 years of the functioning of municipalities to learn and improve these many challenges.

5.3 Developing technical capacity

A cross-cutting issue in all above-mentioned challenges is the shortage of technical skills within the WSA. This eventually affects the turn around time for repairs and the potential other co-management modalities. Most municipal technicians and operators are old. With the Covid-19 pandemic, those in their 60s had to work from home, which meant communities were not attended to. Many technical staff are about to retire. Our engagements with officials indicate that the issue of, for example, turnaround time for repairs is a combination of backlogs, old personnel retiring and not enough young skilled technicians. Human resource planning has become vital to replace (or temporarily re-employ) retiring officials.

Further, although the number of technicians at the national level has increased, their skills levels are lower. The number of municipalities without any civil engineering staff fell from 82 in 2005 to 28 in 2015. The number with only one such employee fell from 60 to 41 over the same period. However, the number of municipalities with no qualified civil engineers increased from 126 to 202 (PARI and WaterAid, 2021).

Moreover, turn-over of technical staff is high. Rural, struggling and dysfunctional municipalities with low morale, which lack technical capacity most, are the least attractive in technicians' career paths (Haigh et al., 2008). Indeed, many highly skilled engineers leave South Africa. Perhaps more importantly, municipalities also complain that the frequent use of temporary outside consultants and high turnover mean that technical capacities and institutional memory that is being built, fail to stay in the municipality. The prioritized pre-feasibility, feasibility and implementation readiness studies are usually outsourced to consultants with the required expertise, although, according to some, municipal staff could well do the smaller-scale interventions themselves. In that way, technical expertise will stay in government.

In other words, there is an urgent need for municipalities to ensure effective recruitment strategies. The need to enhance youth development within the municipalities is an overarching solution that was put on the table. Strategic plans should make provision for appropriate staff recruitment, training, and skill development as well as performance management. An understanding of technical requirements is vital to ensure the implementation of the right and effective solutions.

Both aspects, so planning for recruitment with skill development and strengthening WSAs' internal capacity instead of outsourcing, also hold at local level for the above-described co-management modalities. They also recognize and seek to mobilize and further develop existing technical expertise in local communities.

5.4 Transparent fund allocation to priority needs

Municipal debts and rocketing tariffs

The need for cost-effective water services that mobilize local assets and capabilities where possible, is even more urgent given the worsening vicious circle that is affecting an increasing number of municipalities and water utilities. They are faced with the need of substantial reinvestment for the replacement of existing infrastructure to be upheld and the need for expansion and upgrading of the infrastructure so infrastructure can better meet the growing current demands by growing populations (Heare, 2007; Matji and Ruiters, 2014; Mokgobu, 2017). Yet, as the Auditor General of South Africa (AGSA) found, in the 2018/19 financial year: 79% of municipalities had a financial health

status that was 'either concerning or requiring urgent intervention'. Expenditures were higher than the revenue collected, even though tariffs for water and electricity rocketed. The South African Reserve Bank reported an increase of 213% for water tariffs over the ten-year period from 2010 to 2020 (with a consumer inflation rate of 68%). Outstanding debts owed to local government, mostly for months, have steadily been rising. Almost three quarters (72%) is owed by households, and the rest by commercial enterprises, that can pay, or even other government agencies. The AGSA estimates that 40% of these outstanding payments will never be recovered as households lack the ability to pay.

Efforts are undertaken to better collect water tariffs for revenue, for example through District Water Recovery strategies that focus on the ending of non-revenue water. This means both ending leakages and ensuring that water that is being used is paid¹⁰. The latter implies the – costly – installation of meters, and formalization of illegal connections. With improved service delivery, the willingness to pay is also expected to increase. However, overall, the General Household Surveys 2019 highlight that the percentage of households with access to water has increased but coincides with a decline in the percentage of households that pay for that water. In 2008, 67.3% of households reported that they were paying for water, compared with 44.6% in 2019. Moreover, reportedly, billing seems *ad random*: households that haven't received water for months still get high water bills.

While municipalities' human resources budgets have increased due to substantial salary packages for a Municipal Manager, Directors and Executive Mayors and Councillors (Haigh et al., 2008), municipalities address their debts by not paying bulk providers. Debts to water boards for their bulk supplies are even higher than debts to ESKOM. By March 2021, municipalities owed water boards over R12.6 billion (USD869 million) for bulk water purchased but not paid for. Three water boards are facing a financial crisis (Amatole Water, Bloem Water, and Lepelle Northern Water). Sedibeng Water faced such crisis and has been disestablished. As it is difficult for water boards to cut supplies, additional financial support is needed.

Ironically, in spite of debts, there is also underspending. Planning tends to be over-optimist. This, at its turn, leads to the risk of underspending, augmenting the pressure to spend and over-spend. This puts even more time pressure aggravating rushed top-down implementation of parachute projects that even more ignore community participation.

Biased funding earmarks and allocation

A dire financial situation is compounded by a biased allocation of available funding. Although problems with water figure high in the IDP meetings, the MIG is only very partially used for water infrastructure (PARI and WaterAid, 2021). Moreover, current funding earmarks of especially the MIGs favor expensive new capital projects for infrastructure or rehabilitation over maintenance or support to repair or any co-management modalities. In Treasury's current infrastructure funding model, municipalities are required to fund most maintenance out of their own revenue, and at their

¹⁰ The Vhembe IDP mentions its Water Recovery Strategy, also flagging non-payment of water bills by officials and councilors.

sole discretion, rather than out of dedicated conditional grants. The proposed 8 to 10% of the capital costs that should be paid for maintenance of (water) infrastructure is not achieved at all. The maintenance backlog that should have been paid from revenue is estimated at R200 billion (PARI and WaterAid, 2021). This lack of maintenance accelerates the dilapidation of much infrastructure with ever-increasing costs of any later repair. Rumors go around that the availability of capital grants is even an incentive to purposely destroy infrastructure to increase the demand for new ones. The resulting general deterioration in infrastructure, at its turn, is the main reason for poor quality of services and interruptions affecting the willingness to pay. Hence, fault reporting systems in low-income areas and the allocation of sufficient funding earmarked and ringfenced for repairs and maintenance are urgently needed (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2019; Mudombi, 2020). Vhembe district has started with the process of developing the district-wide operation and maintenance plan. Participation of the WSCFs in budgeting meetings can further expose these weaknesses and, hopefully, assist in transformation, for example, with the more flexible WSIGs managed by DWS as a start.

Failing Free Basic Services

The poor not only bear the brunt of unaffordable water tariffs, but municipalities are also found to divert the Treasury's equitable share allocation to other free services or even their general revenue. The equitable share is paid by Treasury to municipalities, without many conditions, for among others the provision of FBS. The number of households that Treasury funds for FBS in the calculation of its national budget increases. It was 8.7 million in the 2014/15 financial year and 10.36 million in 2020/21. This aligns with the estimated 8.6 million households living below the upper bound poverty line income of R5,072 per month for a family of four.

However, apart from using a communal tap, one must register with the ward as indigent to be eligible for FBS. This not only excludes undocumented migrants, but is costly and cumbersome. There is no appeal mechanism for households when municipalities fail to register. Moreover, poverty can change overnight. The number of indigent households registered by local municipalities has declined from 2015 to 2019. By now, fewer than 3 million are registered as indigent households. This only represents about a quarter of the total number of households counted in the calculations for the national budget allocation. Municipalities are found to divert part of this transfer to general revenue, to pay for other costs.

For Free Basic Water, PARI and WaterAid (2021) estimate that a total of around 4.3 million households factually receive FBW. This includes the 2.2 million households who access water from communal standpipes, and are, therefore, defined as indigent. This is less than 50% of the households that Treasury formally funds for basic water in the national budget.

For all other poor households, tariffs have become so high that even basic quantities have become unaffordable for the poor. Outside South Africa, minimum volumes of basic water are widely acknowledged to be at least 10 kl per month, so higher than the current 25 lpcd, or 6 kl per household per month. For the poor, payment of tariffs directly competes with purchase of food. As a result, instead of alleviating poverty, service delivery has become a *cause* of food insecurity and income poverty (PARI and WaterAid, 2021). This is compounded by the well-documented problems of prepaid metering, assuming one fixed size for households. Yet, household sizes greatly vary and

include tenants as in peri-urban settlements. Further, disconnection is critiqued as infringement on constitutional rights (PARI and Water Aid, 2021). PARI and Water Aid (2021) also found how pre-paid electricity meters force households to pay for electricity, also risking disconnection when fees are not paid. However, disconnecting water supplies due to non-payment is more difficult. So not paying for water has become an expenditure management strategy (coping mechanism) for poor households. To conclude, alignment between Treasury's transfer of funds to subsidise provision of FBS by municipalities and factual delivery of each service is urgently needed, for example by including FBS in the annual audit report and forcing municipalities to account for delivery (PARI and WaterAid, 2021). This is another item for consideration by WSCFs.

Social auditing by WSCFs

In addition to participating in municipal budget allocation meetings, WSCFs can also monitor the implementation of the promised and budgeted plans. Social audits are already undertaken by civil society, for example the Social Audit Network (SAN). A social audit is a community-led process of reviewing official documents to determine whether the public expenditure and service delivery outcomes reported by the government, including contract management, really reflect the public money spent and the services received by the community. SAN or other intermediaries are independent from a municipality and its contractors, avoiding that the latter would lead their own screening of the municipal budgets or social audits (Pieterse n.d.; Van der Westhuizen et al., 2019; Azivelekane, 2021a; 2021b). However, not all WSAs and Water Service Providers have developed efficient reporting systems accessible to communities yet (Mautjana and Mtapuri, 2014; Mokgobu, 2017).

Moreover, even if misbehaviour is proven, consequences of failure may be lacking. The weakest municipalities can be put under administration, although its efficacy is less clear. Constitutional section 139 allows sector departments to intervene in responsibilities of municipalities, but only if provinces initiate and manage as entirely discretionary. When local governments continue to ignore the recommendations of AGSA, the Public Audit Amendment Act of 2018 enables the Auditor General to act. AGSA already plays a crucial role in such strict, transparent and public monitoring of irregular and wasteful expenditures. Investigative journalism and WIN-Corruption Watch expose outright corruption (WIN and Corruption Watch, 2020). In the case of water services, the Water Services Act section 63 entails such measures, but this has hardly been implemented (Mudombi, 2020; PARI and WaterAid, 2021).

Capacity development of WSCFs in the long route to accountability

A stronger community voice in the first and especially the second leg of the long route to accountability requires not only technical capacity but also information and capacity development on institutional issues. A better understanding of high-level district-wide decision-making processes to prioritize and fund water services amidst millions of genuine other needs, will allow municipalities and WSCFs to manage expectations. Even for simple infrastructure, pre-feasibility and feasibility assessments depend on the likelihood and magnitude of funding. Whereas some officials may communicate ballpark amounts of expected grants to communities within which designs can be made, other municipal officers explicitly discourage the mentioning of any amounts, as long as budgets have not been secured as yet. The latter avoids the risk that officials must come back to a community to tell bad news that proposals were rejected. Nevertheless, this must be done. As an official said: "We have to be courageous and honest with communities".

5.5 Transparent procurement of service providers

The last step in the long route to accountability is the appointment of the service providers who are delivering the service. By the time of the presentation of plans in the IDP/WSDP (or otherwise identified, and possibly not even mentioned in the IDP/WSDP), the tendering for the procurement of materials and contractors for construction may already have happened or is yet to be done. Procurement of materials and construction are well-known and often well-prepared hotspots for fraud and kickbacks by ‘tenderpreneurs’, aggressive ‘business forums’, and capture by politicians. There are justified preferential procurement rules, for example that 30% of public procurement contracts be subcontracted to designated groups, as provided for in Treasury’s Preferential Procurement Regulations, 2017. However, this may be abused.

According to Van der Westhuizen et al. (2019), the huge scale of these problems is shown by the fact that 95 per cent of irregular expenditure by the Metros is attributed to non-compliance with supply chain legislation or procurement processes. Corruption is bound to jeopardize the quality of works, if works are finalized at all. In response to corruption, procurement rules are to be tightened and strictly monitored, with clear consequential punishment. Unfortunately, this may delay implementation and leave municipal engineering experts sitting idle.

Service providers may face problems too. Speaking to a ward councilor representative, water service provision failure is at times due to a broken relationship between the service provider and municipal officials. This torn relationship is because of many issues, such as personal disagreements and critiques about nepotism and corruption, which often leads to salaries of service providers not paid on time or at all. When WSCF members can sign off the finalization of works by those service providers, this would support them.

After indicating the pivotal roles that WSCFs already play, or can potentially do, the last question is how these various roles can be formalized, including formal and transparent forms of remuneration. The answers explored in the next chapter are relevant for municipalities and other governmental and non-governmental support agencies that seek to collaborate with the WSCFs.

6 Fit-for-purpose formalizing and remunerating

6.1 Short route to accountability

In implementing co-management modalities on the ground in the short route of accountability, WSCF members represent a community, including the individuals or committees that already take up certain tasks of a specific municipal, small system or self-supply system. Formalization will depend on the precise division of tasks between communities and municipalities, including procurement and remuneration arrangements. Form follows substance. In any case, formalization should avoid disproportionate bureaucracies and costs for all parties involved.

Formalization requires both internal organization within a community and external arrangements between that organization and outside agencies. For internal organization, Mvula Trust (2002) proposed to workshop an internal constitution orally and write the agreements down as a living document that can adjust to lessons learnt and later events. Transparency in selection or appointment of paid workers, tasks, and especially budgeting and spending issues cannot be over-emphasized to address the risk of (rumours of) fellow community members ‘eating money’.

Similarly, paid local operators or technicians are selected by, and remain accountable to the WSCF. This not only enables monitoring the workers' performance, but also helps protecting against 'tenderpreneurs' abusing the WSCF to advance their own interests.

In most cases, some training in bookkeeping and administration and opening of bank accounts, possibly electronic payments and double signatures are indispensable. Significantly, in Mvula Trust's first seven years, the Trust disbursed over ZAR200 million to community bank accounts so that the community-based organizations could manage project finances. Only 0.32% was lost owing to mismanagement and fraud (Mvula, 2002).

For external relations, especially with municipalities, partner agreements can well fit the purpose (Nortje et al., 2021). This can also be a matter of workshopping and documenting existing oral relations on how the municipality and the water user group intend to (continue) meeting each other halfway through specified communication channels. This includes any formalization of municipal payments to operators, materials, or other tasks. Duration of the agreement and conditions are to be transparently discussed in the entire member organization. This management of expectations avoids that, once a certain type of support has expired, users sit back and expect government to provide in any future. Money issues require transparent handling and administration of, e.g. bank accounts and double signatures, in line with basic Generally Accepted Accountant Practice (GAAP).

Further details depend on the local context and funding agency, as stipulated in various White Papers, government Acts and policies, or guidelines originating from local government, DWS or otherwise. Box 1 provides a brief overview.

Box 1 Formalization of communities' handling of public finances for co-management modalities

The Municipal Systems Act (32 of 2000) Sections 78-84

- CBOs of one or more villages can enter into an agreement with the municipality to provide 'municipal services', including water, according to Sections 78-84. However, these regulations are extremely onerous and costly. They were designed for municipalities to regulate potential private service providers by strict competitive bidding requirements (Section 83). Also, trade unions sought to formalize employment arrangements, which increased costs. For community-based organizations/service providers there is a need to create more appropriate, simpler levels of requirements and criteria for compliance that also recognize the community structure as user itself (Nortje et al., 2021).

The White Paper on Municipal Service Partnerships (2000) and Non-Profit Organizations Act.

- The above-mentioned requirements for a municipal service provider can be circumvented if a community *partners* with the municipality, for example in Service Level Agreements. As a municipal partner, a community can provide water to itself (including processes and infrastructure associated with water provision). Mutual roles and responsibilities, as well as governance structures, need to be defined. The community organization is required to adopt a formal constitution and code of good practice. They also need to be registered in terms of the Non-Profit Organisations Act. Such conditions can still be onerous. The Water Services Act needs revision to support such a partnership (Nortje et al., 2021).

Municipal Finance Management Act (56 of 2003)

- The municipalities receive an 'equitable share of revenue' that is supposed to also meet the costs of providing basic water supply to those members of the community who are unable to afford it. The Municipal Finance Management Act, 2003, section 120, provides in detail for the establishment of public-private partnerships to that end. However, there is no mention of such municipal funding for local communities. Hence, the Act needs to be revised to create a funding mechanism to support local communities who enter into agreements with a municipality (Nortje et al., 2021).

Water Services Act (1997)

- Section 51 allows communities to establish community-based water services committees to take responsibility for their own water supply and sanitation service. However, this requires approval of the WSA and even the minister, discouraging community-based initiatives. Section 51 (3) protects the WSA stating "No water services committee may be established if the water services authority having jurisdiction in the area in question is able to provide water services effectively in the proposed service area". This section was to enable ad hoc water service delivery in the 1990s when the brand-new local government in former homelands still had to be established and vested with the mandate to provide decentralized water services. Fear of resistance by traditional chiefs, also about the land required for infrastructure, further fueled strong powers vested in municipalities. Far-reaching autonomy of local government was also being negotiated by a conservative white rural population. The Department of Water Affairs itself also ended up with limited powers in decentralized service delivery. Its mandate remained confined to national oversight, support, and regulation, besides water resources management (Nortje et al., 2021). Section 51 is now outdated and needs to be repealed and replaced to enable better partnerships between community-based Water Services Committees and the municipality.

National Water Act (1998)

- The starting point of the NWA (1998) is that citizens invest in infrastructure for self-supply and abstract water resources to that end, which requires regulation in a public interest. The basic uses at stake are most, if not all, Schedule One uses, so permitted without further formalities. The Basic Human Needs Reserve protects such abstractions as the highest priority for which DWS is responsible.

Other in water:

- Community Based Water Management Approaches (Maunatlala, 2017). These draft guidelines explore various (paid or voluntary) options to appoint a CBO, also for a specific service, e.g. repairs.
- Social franchising: small, locally based enterprises entering a business partnership with a larger established enterprise (Wall and Eve, 2010; Gibson, 2010; Lagardien et al., 2010). This enables decentralized technical maintenance and repairs with strong involvement of community members and their technical capacity building to develop entrepreneurial and technical skills.
- MISA's Municipal and Sectoral Technical Support Programme

Most important other arrangements:

- Expanded Public Works Programme and Community Works Programmes (e.g. construction works; remuneration of an individual operator).
- Primary Cooperatives under Section 7 of the Cooperatives Act 2005 (Act 14 of 2005); cooperatives to manage water system that are formally owned by a municipality.

6.2 Long route to accountability

All contributions that WSCFs make to institutionalize community voices in the long route to accountability contribute to the goals of municipalities and other agencies. As for all politicians, civil servants, or other staff, factually made costs (transport, internet, food) should certainly be reimbursed. This also ensures sustainability; some WSCFs that had to pay these costs and could not afford stopped. Some monetary compensation for the opportunity costs of time commitments would be fair and reasonable.

7. Conclusions

This report analysed the stumbling blocks that are seen in the current planning frameworks such as the IDP and the WSDP: in spite of the fact that these frameworks allow every stakeholder, community, and any interested party to participate in the planning of the municipal services including water and sanitation, experience has shown that rural and urban communities in low-income areas tend to be inactive in participating in this planning. The ward system, politicians making decisions above communities' heads, institutional issues seem to create an environment where ordinary community members in under-resourced settings are ignored. A better understanding of these obstacles was hoped to identify ways to overcome these shortcomings.

Based on literature and the experiences and aspirations of eight active rural and urban WSCFs, our end-conclusion is that there is an important institutional gap, which is filled precisely by WSCFs, especially by the bottom-up clustering of WSCFs in close alignment with IDP, WSDP and WSA structures at municipal and provincial levels, as innovated in Vhembe District. This institutional gap is the lack of a WSDP from community to municipal scale. WSDPs are the water chapter or water component of the IDP that recognizes the specific technicalities of water and water infrastructure. Currently, WSDPs focus on national, provincial and municipal levels but stop there. Municipalities' technical departments engage horizontally with municipal politicians and policy makers. There is hardly or no direct vertical communication line between technical departments and communities. Yet, community water practices and visions should inform and shape the municipal WSDP bottom-up. The multi-scale WSCFs anchored in local realities already fill this gap or can do that. This consolidates community voices about local priority water needs, solutions and demand-led support as a sort of lowest-scale water chapter of the IDPs, for political endorsement and funding.

The conceptual distinction of a long route to accountability with a first and second leg, and a short route to accountability (World Bank, 2011), enabled us to identify these stumbling blocks in further detail, as follows.

In the first leg of the long route to accountability, communities report their practices and needs via the political wards, councillors, and mayors. The WSCFs and literature suggest the following stumbling blocks.

- Water problems can be lost amidst the many other needs in the IDP.
- The political channels (ward, councillor, mayor) lack the technical knowledge about complex specific water problems and possible solutions.
- Communities' inputs in IDPs often remain without follow-up. Any later decision-making by politicians and policy makers in both the first and second leg of the long route to accountability is felt to be behind closed doors. Hence, participation in the two public meetings per year can be perceived as officials' tick-boxing only.
- Even if there is a follow-up project in a community, these are top-down parachute projects.
- Government officials show little interest in the various ways in which communities seek to access water, including their alternative water supply options when municipal infrastructure temporarily fails, or may never reach dispersed communities in remote rural areas. Other ways include small systems and especially self-supply.
- Support by other agencies than municipalities to improve access to water, e.g. other government departments, NGOs, Water Boards, or the private sector, may not be captured in a strict IDP process.
- As a result, the ways in which support agencies and communities can meet each other halfway in the short route to accountability as a community-scale IDP is too narrow. Instead, three 'co-management modalities' can be considered (municipal systems (post- and pre-construction), support to small systems, and supported self-supply). They vary, depending on local context.

These obstacles are overcome when WSCFs co-define the local IDPs as technical water hubs from community scale upward in direct communication with the appropriate technical departments of the municipality in the second leg of the long route to accountability, with endorsement of the politicians. These are proven or plausible benefits.

- For communities' post-construction reporting of municipal infrastructure breakdowns, direct communication lines with the municipal technical departments concerned shortens the turn-around times.
- Post-construction appointment and supervision of local operators and technicians for municipal systems creates more ownership, 24/7 availability, more protection against vandalism and more cost-effective remuneration; WSCFs are keen to take up such tasks.
- For pre-construction engagement in municipal systems, WSCFs aspire more participation from the planning phase of municipal construction initiatives onwards. This mobilizes local agency for higher-priority, more cost-effective and more sustainable projects.
- Technical departments can innovate unconventional co-management modalities (small systems; self-supply) or facilitate coordination with other support agencies.
- In municipalities' appointment of service providers for larger design and construction works, WSCFs can propose local technicians who remain accountable to the community in a transparent and accountable tender process. This can mitigate pressure by tenderpreneurs.
- When municipalities appoint external service providers who remain accountable upward to the municipality, WSCFs can ensure compliance with the agreed performance targets of their works.

- WSCFs can represent community voices in municipalities' prioritization, budgeting, monitoring of works and asset management. They are likely to emphasize maintenance instead of expensive new construction; cost-effectiveness to reduce tariffs; better targeting of Free Basic Water Services; and strengthening of social auditing. Costs of WSCF members' involvement should be covered, at least.

Recommendations are to:

- Create more visibility of WSCFs
- Provide technical training to WSCFs (and to the municipality for that matter)
- Develop institutional capacity and understanding of financing streams from the different national sources, and the need for transparency in decision-making, both internal and in agreements with external institutions
- Design fit-for-purpose formalization of WSCFs across South Africa, with support by DWS in close collaboration with municipalities and CoGTA.

Such further support to WSCFs by DWS across South Africa, in close collaboration with municipalities, is the way to go to solve what no party can solve on their own.

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ANNEX 1. Summary Report Stakeholder Dialogue October 2023

INSTITUTIONALIZING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY-LED PLANNING OF WATER SUPPLY IN WSDP AND IDP FRAMEWORKS

Deliverable 7

C2020/2021-00538

October 31, 2023

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Executive Summary

The International Water Management Institute (IWMI), in partnership with the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), and the Water Research Commission (WRC), facilitated a highly active two-day stakeholder dialogue with members of the Water and Sanitation Community Forums (WSCFs) from both Gauteng and Limpopo provinces. This dialogue included government officials from DWS, and representatives from WRC and the academic and communications community. The event was held on the 4th and 5th of October 2023, at the Premier Hotel, Roodevalley in Pretoria.

Building upon the insights gained through our series of engagements, which included focus group discussions, as well as two prior workshops involving the WSCFs from Makhado, Thulamela, Alexandra, and Bophelong, the primary aim of this dialogue was to extend our collaborative efforts to include additional forums beyond the initial four selected in our research. These were Etwatwa, Hammanskraal, Sokhulumu and Collins Chabane WSCFs. By bringing all these forums together, the aim was to create a space where they could exchange their experiences, perspectives, and ideas in a collaborative and inclusive manner (peer-to-peer learning). This event also provided an opportunity for learning about existing community participation models in local governance.

The first day of the dialogue was centred around the forums learning about the Water Research Commission (WRC) funded project '*Institutionalizing inclusive community-led planning of water supply in Water Services Development Plan (WSDP) and Integrated Development Plan (IDP) frameworks*', getting to know each other, and views from officials. The project team initiated the dialogue by sharing a presentation on the research findings. Following this, a group exercise was facilitated, during which the forums developed and presented posters that highlighted who they are, the activities they engage in, and the strategies they have employed to remain active. Subsequently, government officials participated in a panel discussion centred around the WSCFs and their role in public water provision. The concluding portion of the day was dedicated to introducing and validating the project team's user-friendly audio-visual infographic on participatory water supply planning.

On the second day of the dialogue, Dr Masindi Mapholi from the Directorate of Water Services Planning & Local Government, Water Services Planning Support, began with a presentation titled 'Unpacking the Water Services Development Plan (WSDP) and Integrated Development Plan (IDP).' Following this presentation, a two-part group discussion took place. In the first part of the discussion, participants in groups delved into their practical experiences and lessons learned regarding participation in municipal water planning and implementation. The second part of the discussion focused on identifying replicable best practices for enhancing participation in water services. Forums were encouraged to share ideas on how government officials, particularly those at the local municipality level, and communities can collaborate effectively to achieve sustainable water supply. Subsequently, the forums presented their findings to the audience.

Workshop attendees were comprised of representative from:

- Alexandra WSCF
- Bophelong WSCF
- Sokhulumu WSCF
- Makhado WSCF
- Thulamela WSCF
- Hammanskraal WSCF
- Etwatwa WSCF
- Collins Chabane WSCF
- IWMI research team
- WRC
- Academia
- DWS officials from national and provincial office



Figure 1. Group photo of the two day workshop participants

DAY 1

Introduction and welcome remarks

Harnessing the agency of WSCFs involves providing them with the necessary resources, capacities, and decision-making power to effectively participate in municipal development processes. Using interactive techniques to facilitate meaningful discussions, the objectives of the two-day dialogue were to:

- Facilitate an interactive dialogue between the WSCFs, relevant government officials, local organizations, and other stakeholders to generate meaningful and actionable insights that can inform policy and practice.
- To co-design and document best practices for upscaling participation and co-management in public water services delivery.
- To strengthen the capabilities and knowledge base of not only the WSCFs but also relevant government officials and social partners.

The dialogue (see agenda in annex) began with a warm welcome delivered by Ms. Jabu Mtolo from the Directorate of Inter-Governmental Relations and Strategic Partnership at the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS). In her remarks, Mrs. Mtolo stressed the significance of involving additional Water and Sanitation Community Forums (WSCFs) in the stakeholder dialogue, underlining the valuable opportunity it presented for mutual learning and the exchange of experiences. Additionally, Ms. Sesi Moselekwa, also representing the Directorate of Inter-Governmental Relations and Strategic Partnership, shared some opening remarks. In her remarks, she highlighted the role of such dialogues in fostering knowledge sharing and advancing community-driven solutions and ultimately contributing to improved water service provision and community well-being.

During the event, a tribute was also paid to Ntate' Thabo Seholoba, who had served as the Chairperson of the Bophelong WSCF and was a dedicated environmental activist. His deep passion for water and community development left a lasting impact and was remembered with respect and admiration.



Figure 2. WSCF stakeholder dialogue participants

Soon after the welcome and opening remarks, the IWMI project team presented their research findings. This presentation set the scene for the interactive discussions that followed.

Group Activity One: Poster Development

For the first activity, the forums were grouped into their original forums to develop and present a poster on:

- Who they are? What they stand for?
- What community activities their forum is involved in? How are they supporting their communities?
- With many forums collapsing, how their forum has remained active?

The goal of this activity was to foster a sense of pride and connection within each forum while showcasing their unique contributions to their communities. Each group had 5 minutes to present back to the audience. Below are the insights from the presentations.

Bophelong WSCF

The Bophelong WSCF was established in 2018 and is registered as a Non-Profit Organization (NPO). They identify as the Water, Sanitation and Environment Community Forum because their work extends beyond the scope of 'water' alone. The forum actively engages in a range of activities, including the cleaning of stormwater and dumpsites, conducting awareness campaigns (such as with Joko Tea and Chris Hani Squatter camps), participating in WaterAid initiatives (involving handwash installations and JOJO tank setups), and working closely with Ramosukula Primary School.

The Bophelong forum is committed to extensive community engagement, collaborating with organizations such as Rand Water, Metsi-A-Lekoa, local schools, businesses, as well as local NGOs and NPOs. Despite their dedication, the forum faces various challenges, including limited resources, compliance with tax regulations (SARS), and a lack of support from the local municipality. Regarding their sustainability, the forum humbly states that 'only God knows' because they have encountered numerous obstacles but have persevered in their mission.

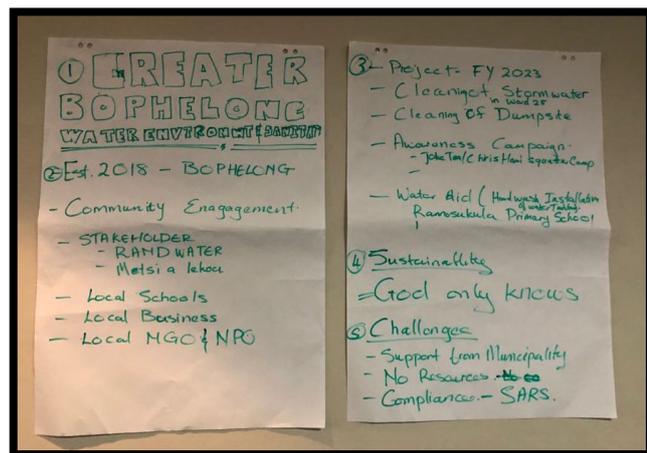


Figure 3. Bophelong Poster

Sokhulumi WSCF

The Sokhulumi Water and Sanitation Community Forum (WSCF) was established in August 2015, and although they encountered membership losses along the way, they currently have 45 dedicated members. The forum's overarching vision is to ensure that every member of their community has access to clean water while promoting responsible water usage. To achieve this vision, the forum

actively engages in various initiatives, including extensive awareness campaigns held in schools, clinics, early career development programs, and within their community.

The Sokhulumi WSCF plays a critical role in educating community members about water conservation, water supply, and hygiene within water tanks. They also undertake the important tasks of supervising community JOJO tanks, overseeing private water tankers to ensure water quality and prevent contamination, and maintaining the cleanliness of tanks and pipes. In close collaboration with their local municipality, the forum addresses issues related to water shortages and damaged water pipes. Additionally, they work closely with their local chieftaincy/tribal leadership, the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), and the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA). Notably, one of the forum's members, from COGTA, provides advisory services and is known as a community development worker.

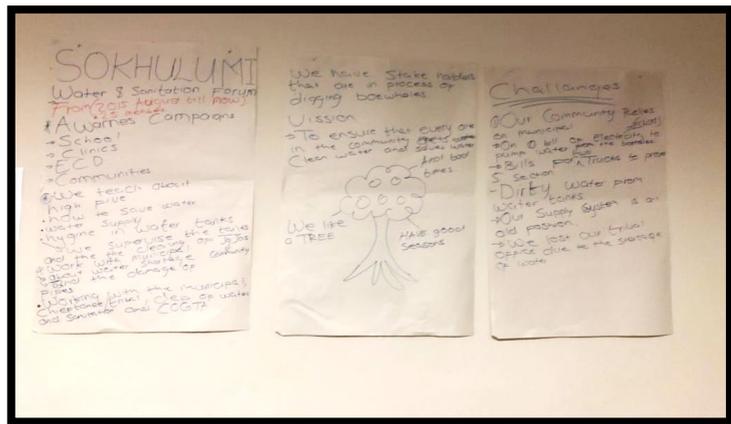


Figure 4, Sokhulumi Poster

Currently, the Sokhulumi WSCF has stakeholders engaged in the important task of digging boreholes for the benefit of the community. While the Sokhulumi community relies on the municipal water system, which consists of communal taps, these are insufficient to meet the needs of the entire communities. The challenge they face is compounded by the ageing infrastructure of the municipal systems, resulting in dirty water being delivered from the community water tanks. Unfortunately, this issue led to the unfortunate loss of their tribal office, which was burnt by frustrated community members.

In terms of sustainability, the forum aptly expressed, "we are like a tree; we have our good and bad seasons." This resonates with the challenges and resilience experienced by all the forums that were present, illustrating their determination to continue their vital work despite obstacles.

Etwatwa WSCF

The Etwatwa Water and Sanitation Community Forum has a long history of operation, having been established in 2016, although it officially registered with RAPTEC in June 2023. Over the years, the forum has faced challenges, with several members leaving due to a lack of financial support from the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS). Despite these obstacles, the forum continues to be exceptionally active and engaged in various activities.

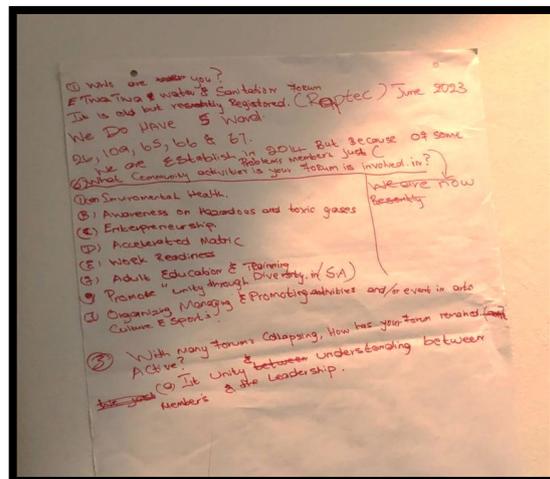


Figure 5. Etwatwa Poster

Their activities include a wide range of areas, making them unique among other forums. The Etwatwa forum is actively involved in environmental health, entrepreneurship, and raising awareness about hazardous and toxic gases. What sets them apart is their commitment to

matic acceleration, work readiness programmes, adult education, and training, as well as promoting unity through diversity in South Africa. Additionally, the forum takes an active role in organising, managing, and promoting initiatives and events in the fields of arts and sports.

Where many forums have faced challenges and collapsed, the Etwatwa forum continued to be resilient. They attribute their continued activity and effectiveness to the unity and mutual understanding among their members and leadership, highlighting the strength of their collaborative spirit.

Limpopo WSCF

The Makhado, Thulamela, and Collins Chabane Water and Sanitation Community Forums (WSCFs) presented as one group during the dialogue. These forums are deeply committed activists who serve as the voices of their respective clusters or communities within the Makhado, Collins Chabane and Thulamela Local Municipality. Their activities encompass a broad spectrum of responsibilities and initiatives.

They begin by collecting data on the state of water and sanitation matters at the cluster level. This data is then escalated to the local forum, and subsequently, the local forum brings these issues to the district level for necessary interventions. These forums also take on the critical role of monitoring infrastructure functionality and seek solutions from the district municipality when issues arise.

Another key aspect of their work is promoting community ownership of infrastructure, particularly in addressing concerns such as theft, vandalism, and illegal connections. Additionally, the forums actively participate in water and sanitation awareness campaigns through programmes initiated by the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS).

On December 13, 2022, these forums collectively signed a pledge to support Section 120 partnerships, which essentially involves private-public partnerships aimed at implementing community-owned projects. This commitment reflects their dedication to community-driven initiatives.

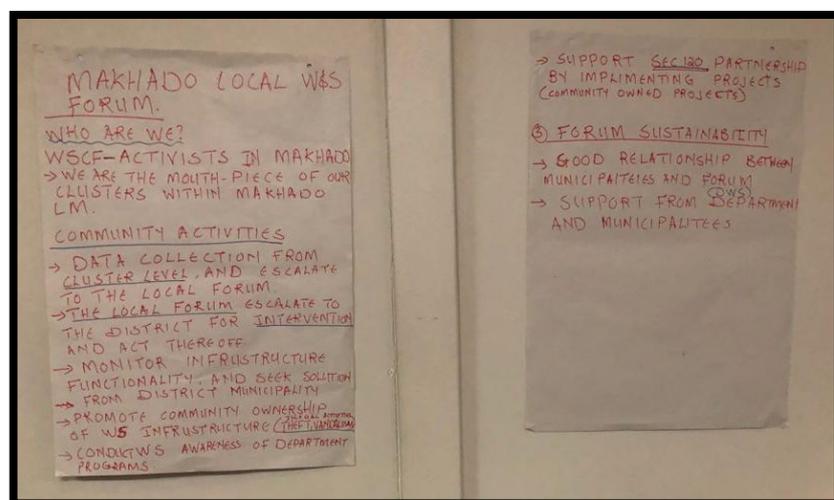


Figure 6. Makhado Poster

The sustainability and continued activity of these forums are attributed to the positive relationships they have established with local municipalities, as well as the support they receive from both the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) and the municipalities. These collaborations and support networks have been instrumental in maintaining the forums' effectiveness and impact in their communities.

Alexandra WSCF

The Alexandra Water, Sanitation, and Environment Forum, established in 2021, has demonstrated impressive growth with over 70 active forum members, representing a diverse constituency. This forum is officially registered as a Non-Profit Company (NPC) but is in the process of transitioning into an NGO. The distinction lies in their cooperative nature as a platform for the community rather than a formal organization. The Alex forum primarily sees itself as a community voice and platform dedicated to addressing community concerns related to water service delivery, sanitation, and environmental preservation.



Figure 7. Alexandra – local context

Their engagement encompasses a range of activities, including reporting water spillages, damaged drains, blocked

stormwater systems, and the issue of illegal dumping into the Jukskei river (see picture) and local parks. The forum also plays a crucial role in identifying areas within the community that require communal water tanks. Through their strong partnership with WaterAid, they support the installation of communal JOJO tanks in areas where access to clean water is limited, such as parks.

What sets this forum apart is their commitment to interpreting government water policies and international treaties to their constituency. They accomplish this through civic education, campaigns, community dialogues, and study groups, ensuring that their community is well-informed and engaged in these important matters.

The driving force that has kept the Alexandra forum active and effective is their shared vision and passion for community-driven development. Their commitment to addressing water, sanitation, and environmental issues underscores their dedication to the betterment of their community.

Hammanskraal WSCF

This forum was established in 2015 and has registered as a Non-Profit Organization (NPO). This status helps them in daily operations and governance. Their primary focus is on raising awareness about water and sanitation issues within schools and the broader community. The forum is deeply committed to the delivery of safe and clean piped water and ensuring that every community, including new settlements, gains access to this vital resource.

In addition to their advocacy efforts, the forum is actively involved in a variety of activities, including campaigns to address pollution and improve public health. They also participate in river clean-up initiatives and campaigns against illegal dumping.

When it comes to their sustainability and continued activity, the forum attributes its success to its unwavering dedication to the communities they serve and a commitment to the Batho-Pele principles, which emphasize diversity and putting people first. Their strong drive for a clean environment and a sense of accountability have also played a pivotal role in sustaining their work. Similar to the Bophelong forum, one of their challenges revolves around ensuring compliance with tax regulations set by the South African Revenue Service (SARS).

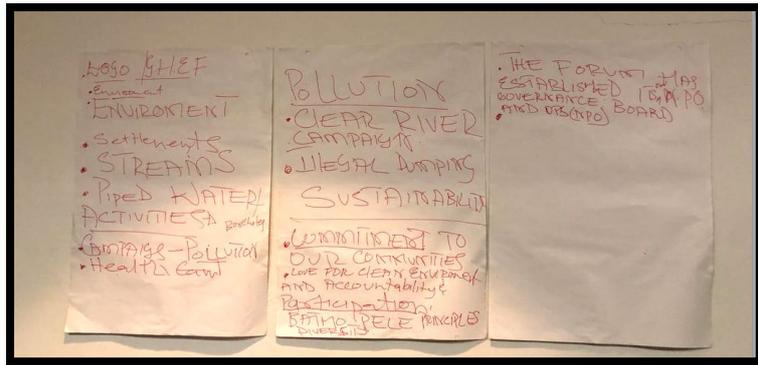


Figure 8. Hammanskraal Poster

Reflections from Group Activity One

The commonalities that emerged across these forums are notable. Most of them are registered as Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs) and share a challenge related to compliance with the South African Revenue Service (SARS). This compliance issue is a recurring concern among the forums. Another shared observation is that all forums have a COGTA member who is part of their forums and is known as a community development worker. Interestingly, the forums expressed that these members do not provide advice but rather receive advice from the forums, indicating the need for a more proactive and supportive role from COGTA representatives.

What has significantly contributed to the forums' sustained activity and sustainability is their unwavering commitment to both them and their communities. Their passion for community-driven development and their deep sense of responsibility have been driving forces behind their continued work.

Notably, the forums from Limpopo highlighted their strong relationships and ties with their local and district municipalities, the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), and local leadership. This alignment and collaboration with key stakeholders have been particularly impressive, demonstrating how effectively Limpopo has obtained buy-in and support from their municipalities. Mr Oupa Machado shared a strategic approach that they used in Limpopo. They prioritized getting the buy-in and support of the Political Management Team of the local municipality, which includes mayors, municipal speakers, chieftaincy, and others. The mayor appointed a technical service portfolio head to lead the forums, and the speaker ensured the active participation of all councillors in the forums. In essence, embedding the forums in the political and administrative structure has been a strategic move that has significantly contributed to keeping the forums sustainable and effective.

Panel Discussion: Officials' views on community participation in public water provision

Following the group activity, the event transitioned into a panel discussion with our speakers: Mr Oupa Machado, Assistant Director at the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) at the regional level, Mrs Ntsebenj Dipudi from DWS at the national level, and Prof Richard Meissner from UNISA. The focus of the discussion was on community participation in public water provision.

Mr Oupa Machado, was the first to share his perspective. He was asked about how they successfully collaborated with Makhado Local Municipality and other local municipalities in Limpopo to ensure that the voices of the WSCFs are heard, particularly in municipal water systems, community water initiatives, and the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) process and planning. He was also asked to comment about the involvement of community members in the WSCFs.

Mr Machado began by stating that 95% of their WSCF members in Limpopo are community members. He emphasised that they cannot resolve community water challenges if they do not involve the Water Service Authority. This strategic approach was advised by their Political Management Team (PMT), which includes mayors, ward councillors, especially the technical portfolio heads. The PMT stressed that without the involvement of these members, water and sanitation issues would remain at the forum level and not be escalated to the relevant units.



Figure 9. Panel discussion with Dr Inga Jacobs-Mata facilitating and Prof Meissner, Mr Machado and Mrs Dipudi as panellists.

In Limpopo, they have established a structured approach where community development workers, ward members in water and sanitation and other relevant stakeholders sit together to discuss critical issues, which are then escalated to the district forum. Mr Machado shared that in Limpopo, they have both local and district forums, with the latter chaired by the portfolio head of water and sanitation in the Water Services Authority.

The local forum, in their case, Makhado, has created clusters or ground-level forums in response to challenges such as cost containment and lack of financial support. The executive members of Makhado visit different clusters, or the clusters visit the local forum to raise the key issues they are struggling with.

Mr. Machado also highlighted the challenges faced by community activists, who may be seen as a threat by councillors because of their community engagement. However, their approach ensures that challenges are escalated at all levels. For example, DWS Provincial head chaired the provincial WSCF, where they convened with all chairpersons and secretaries of forums to discuss functionality, challenges, and issues that need to be escalated to higher authorities. This comprehensive approach has proven effective in their context.

In response to the follow-up question about the replicability of the model in other provinces, Mr. Oupa Machado emphasised the critical role of involving municipalities regardless of the context (rural or peri-urban). He noted that while different forums can be established, the active participation of municipalities is essential because they are the ones responsible for addressing emergent challenges. He pointed out that this approach might be more suitable for rural contexts compared to peri-urban areas, where the dynamics and challenges can differ significantly, but we need municipality involvement.

Mr. Machado highlighted an ongoing partnership/initiative between WaterAid, Tsogang, and the Heineken Foundation in the Vhembe region. He stressed the importance of using the forums to implement such initiatives, which may involve tasks like extracting water from the mountains, digging trenches, physical labour, and conducting awareness campaigns. This collaborative effort will be providing training to 100 forum members through EWSETA. Mr Machado further emphasised the need to select individuals for this training from the existing forums, underlining the forums' vital role in community development and capacity-building.

Mrs Ntsebeng Dipudi addressed the question regarding how to establish productive synergies between Water and Sanitation Community Forums (WSCFs), the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), and municipalities. She also discussed the challenges DWS faces in balancing this coordination and the alignment needed.

Mrs Dipudi emphasised the importance of securing political buy-in from the beginning, as it simplifies the process of escalating issues to the relevant municipality heads. She shared their effective practice in Limpopo, where they hold congress meetings involving local WSCFs, SALGA (to share the status of water and sanitation in the region), and municipalities (to provide operation and maintenance progress). The stakeholders invited to the meeting are chosen based on data collected by the forums, and the officials respond to the issues identified by the forums, such as non-functional boreholes or water quality.

However, Mrs Dipudi acknowledged that challenges exist in other regional forums regarding support from municipalities. In some cases, SALGA and other departments like Environmental Affairs may not recognise or consider the forums because the relationship was not established from the beginning, and they may not understand the origins and objectives of the forums. Additionally, she mentioned that some municipalities may be hesitant to involve the forums, fearing potential conflict. These municipalities might not realise that the forums aim to collaborate with them to ensure that the communities they serve receive the necessary support and services.

To add, Mr Machado highlighted the role of COGTA in implementing water projects. He recommended that the forums build relationships with COGTA by inviting them to present progress on their projects during their monthly meetings. Additionally, he encouraged the forums to establish relationships with SALGA as well, emphasising that all ward councillors are under SALGA, and building connections with them is important.

He further added that in recent developments in Limpopo, meetings were secured with COGTA and the Department of Education to address sanitation issues. Mr Machado pointed out that coordinating with multiple stakeholders (COGTA, SALGA, WSCFs, municipalities) can be challenging, and sometimes, it is necessary to navigate politely and adapt to the ways they want to operate. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that the communities' needs are met, regardless of the coordination challenges.

Prof Richard Meissner provided valuable insights into the research context on community participation in local government and shared his reflections based on his work with community forums and water security projects. He emphasised that communities have historically been and continue to be actively involved in water and sanitation issues. Prof Meissner stressed that water security starts and ends at the individual level and that the active participation of individuals is crucial.

He also mentioned the challenges of vandalism and theft in the communities, including the theft of electric transformers, which leads to illegal connections and communities resorting to buying water from individuals selling borehole water. Prof Meissner highlighted that the forums often play the role

of reporting these infrastructure issues but are not compensated for their efforts. Consequently, the forums have become "watchdogs" in their communities, responsible for safeguarding municipal water infrastructure and ensuring that communities have access to clean water.

Reflecting on the discussions, Prof Meissner expressed his appreciation for the dedication and hard work required to remain active in these roles. He, as a political scientist, found it disheartening that individuals are not formally involved in the authoritative allocation of water resources, even though they are already performing this function within their communities. He closed by raising questions about why SALGA might not be fully engaged, speculating whether it is due to funding constraints, capacity limitations, or a lack of resources in general to be actively involved in supporting the WSCFs.

Summary of key points from the panel discussion

The panel discussion shared key insights, emphasising the significance of community participation in addressing water and sanitation challenges. They stressed the importance of involving municipal authorities, particularly the Water Service Authority, to effectively resolve water issues and adapting strategies to local contexts. Additionally, they highlighted the need for political buy-in, successful practices such as congress meetings that unite various stakeholders to respond to community-identified issues, and the challenges of limited support from municipalities and other departments, often due to a lack of prior engagement from the onset.

The panel also emphasised the necessity of building relationships with relevant stakeholders, such as the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), to ensure effective coordination. Further, formal recognition of community roles in allocating water resources emerged as well as questioning SALGA's level of engagement, speculating about potential factors like funding and capacity limitations.

These insights collectively stressed the critical role of community participation, the importance of collaboration between stakeholders, and the challenges and opportunities in community-driven water supply planning.

Group Activity Two: Validating the three co-management modalities.

This session began with a presentation by the IWMI project team who presented three co-management modalities the research team identified. For the group activity, the forums were mixed into five groups to discuss and present back to the audience on the three co-management modalities, these are:

1. Municipal Water Supply,
2. Self-supply,
3. Other community led water and environment initiatives.

For each modality, the forums had to discuss:

- Pros/cons of each modality,
- How sustainable is the modality,
- Identify opportunities for collaboration between forums/community and government officials.

Group feedback: three co-management modalities

Group 1 feedback on co-management modalities

In municipal water systems, the pros presented by group one (see Figure 10 and Figure 11) included providing access to water for everyone and ensuring safe drinking water, but challenges like affordability, illegal connections, vandalism, and lack of accountability were identified. The sustainability of this modality was questioned due to potential lack of accountability issues and bureaucratic reporting systems. Collaboration opportunities included maximizing capacity resources, skills development, and applying the Batho Pele principles.



Figure 10. Group 1 Feedback on the three co-management modalities

In self-supply, accountability, water conservation, and empowerment were highlighted as pros, but concerns about affordability, health hazards, vandalism, improper infrastructure, and lack of regulations were raised. Individual accountability was seen as a means to ensure sustainability. Collaboration opportunities involved individual decision-making on water sharing and the requirement for commercial use licenses.

For the last modality other community-led water and environment initiatives, the pros centred around promoting good water and environmental practices and effective management. However, challenges related to poor infrastructure and communication breakdowns with government departments were noted. Collaboration opportunities included multi-stakeholder support, job creation, skills transfer, and empowerment in different communities.

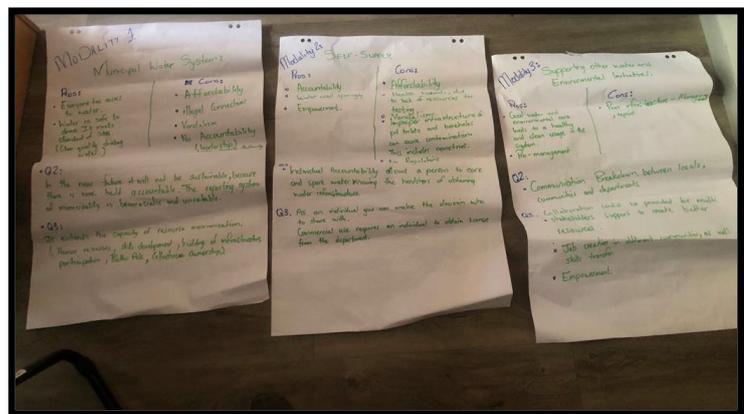


Figure 11. Group 1 poster information capturing their feedback on the three co-modalities

Group 2 feedback on co-management modalities

In the municipal water system, the advantages presented by Group 2 (see Figure 12 and Figure 13) included municipalities having a budget and the potential for communities to partner with government offices for an income and local expertise exposure. No disadvantages were identified by the group, and the modality was seen as sustainable due to municipalities' available resources. Collaboration opportunities involved handing over responsibilities to communities to foster a sense of ownership.



Figure 12. Group 2 Feedback on the three co-management modalities

For self-supply, the pros highlighted that communities could access water at a lower cost. However, concerns were raised about the uncertainty of water quality. This modality was considered sustainable because it was community-driven and owned. Collaboration opportunities included government's involvement in providing high-quality materials.

In the other community-led water and environment initiatives modality, pros included increased community involvement to support forums with a collective vision. However, competition among various stakeholders within the community was identified as a con. This modality was seen as sustainable because it is community-led and driven. Collaboration opportunities consisted of government officials supporting the initiative with technical needs.

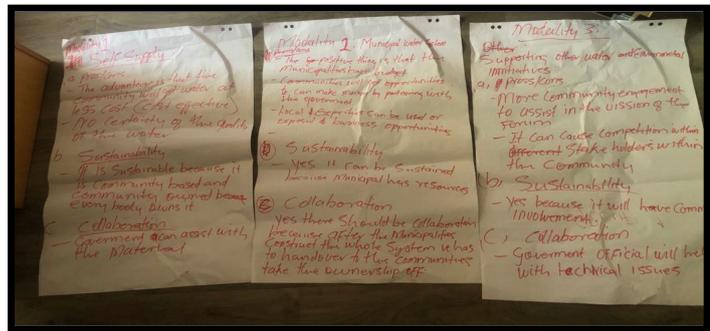


Figure 13. Group 2 poster information capturing their feedback on the three co-modalities

Group 3 feedback on co-management modalities

For the first modality, municipal water systems, no advantages were identified by Group 3 (see Figure 14 and Figure 15), while disadvantages included poor infrastructure maintenance, inadequate municipal planning, and a focus on self-enrichment by Water Authorities. This modality was considered unsustainable due to a lack of knowledge and involvement among municipal and water authority officers. Collaborative opportunities involved proper implementation and support from other Water and Sanitation Community Forums (WSCFs) and other local forums.

For self-supply, no pros were identified, and cons revolved around users' limited understanding, financial constraints, and reliance on untreated water sources, particularly in rural areas. Sustainability was compromised by poor collaboration and government's lack of support.



Figure 14. Group 3 Feedback on the three co-management modalities

Collaborative opportunities entailed allocating an annual budget of R1 million to each WSCF to drive such initiatives.

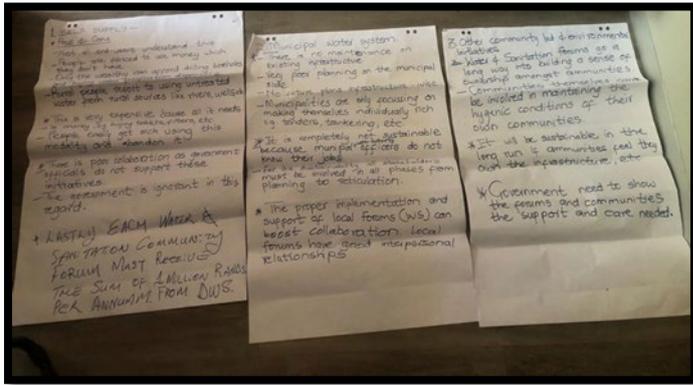


Figure 15. Group 3 poster information capturing their feedback on the three co-modalities

In the other community-led water and environment initiatives modality, pros included a sense of ownership and community involvement in maintaining hygiene. No cons were identified, and the modality was seen as sustainable in the long run if communities felt they owned the infrastructure. Collaboration opportunities involved government demonstrating support and care to the forums and communities.

Group 4 feedback on co-management modalities

In the municipal water systems modality, the responsibility of municipalities to provide clean water was highlighted (Figure 16 and Figure 17). Cons included water supply cutoffs and inadequate system maintenance. To make the modality sustainable, ensuring proper maintenance and clean running water in taps were proposed. Collaborative opportunities involved employing legitimate construction companies from the community members to maintain the water supply system.

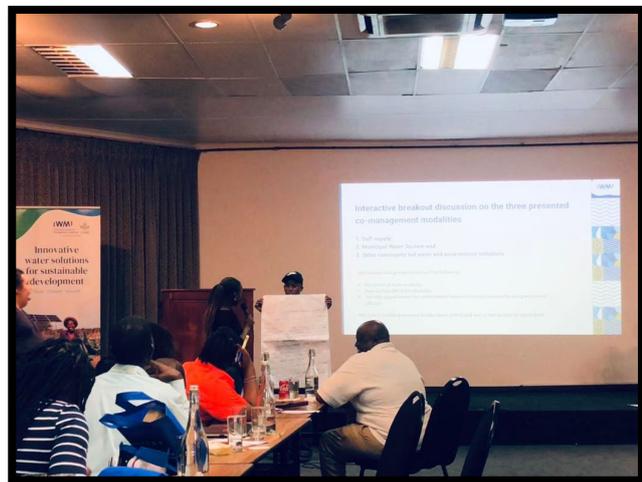


Figure 16. Group 4 Feedback on the three co-management modalities

For self-supply in a rural context (using boreholes and wells), the affordability and regular water purification by users were considered pros. In an urban context (using JOJO tanks), cons included

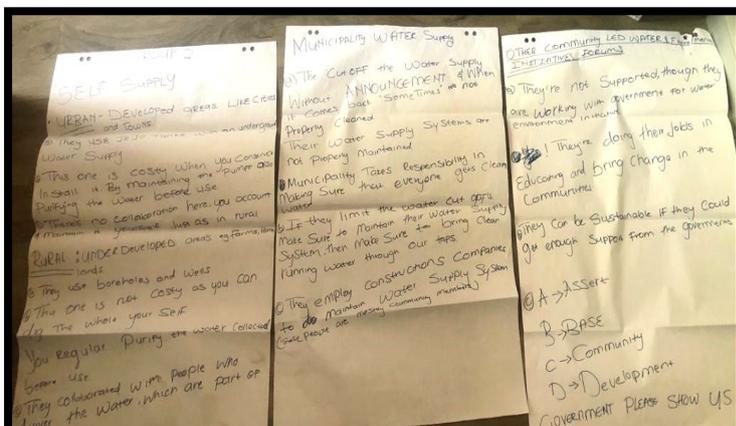


Figure 17. Group 4 poster information capturing their feedback on the three co-modalities

construction and maintenance costs. Sustainability in a rural context could be achieved by working with other community members. Collaboration opportunities included rural communities collaborating with others to install boreholes and doing the maintenance and repairs as a team.

In the last modality, other community-led water and

environment initiatives, pros included uplifting and educating communities while bringing about positive change. A major con was the lack of government support, despite the forums supporting activities government officials should be undertaking. To ensure sustainability, these initiatives would need support from the government. Collaboration opportunities involved capacity building and training

Group 5 feedback on co-management modalities

The last group (see Figure 18 and Figure 19) identified several pros in the municipal water systems modality, these included ensuring infrastructure quality, strengthening infrastructure lifespan, enhancing consumer satisfaction, and appreciating financial viability. However, no cons were identified. Sustainability was linked to revenue collection. Collaborative opportunities involved community consultation, environmental awareness programs, and compliance with environmental bylaws.



Figure 18. Group 5 Feedback on the three co-management modalities

For self-supply, pros included cost-effectiveness, easy access, ownership, and security. Cons involved the possibility of community unrest, poor hygiene, non-compliance with bylaws, and illegal connections. Limited quality assurance was seen as affecting sustainability. Collaboration opportunities included the availability of resources (skills and materials) and in-sourcing. For the last modality, other community-led water and environment initiatives, pros included encouraging stakeholder participation, transparency, openness to all stakeholders, and proactive engagement. No cons were identified. Sustainability was linked to direct engagement with funders through private partnerships and youth involvement in innovative ideas. Collaboration opportunities included stakeholder participation.

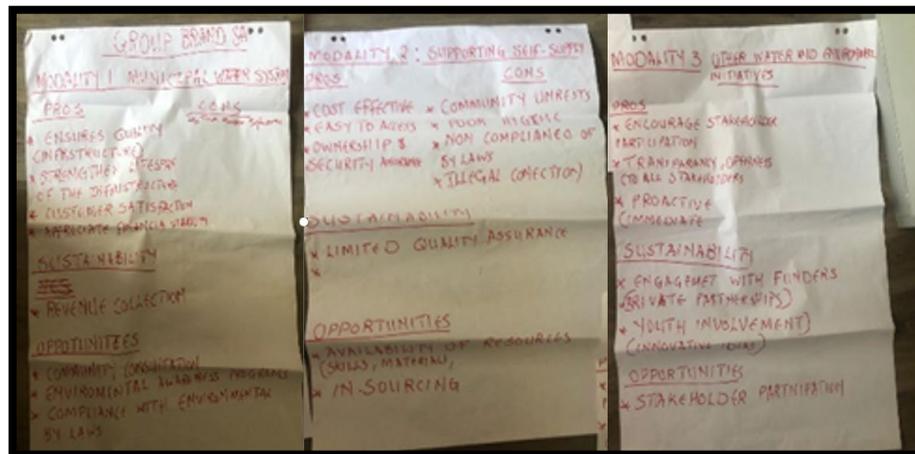


Figure 19. Group 5 poster information capturing their feedback on the three co-modalities

Summary of key points from Group Activity Two

All five groups acknowledged that the three co-management modalities have their merits and offer viable approaches to addressing water challenges (see Table 1). Looking at municipal water supply, the recurring themes across the groups highlighted the importance of municipalities ensuring accountability, water quality, and infrastructure maintenance. Pros included municipalities having budgets and community collaboration opportunities. However, affordability issues and illegal connections were challenges. It was seen as relatively sustainable when maintenance and clean water access were ensured.

Regarding self-supply, the focus was on individual countability and cost-effective access to water. Pros included community and individual-driven ownership and empowerment, but concerns centred around the affordability and water quality assurance. Ensuring community-driven sustainability, particularly in rural contexts, was a positive outcome.

Lastly, on other community-led water and environment initiatives, the groups emphasised community involvement in promoting clean water and environmental care. The pros included fostering a sense of ownership and stakeholder participation, while competition among community stakeholders was a potential drawback. Long-term sustainability was seen in community-led efforts if government support was provided.

Overall, the groups emphasised that while these modalities have potential, they need careful consideration, active community engagement, and collaboration between community forums and government officials to ensure their long-term sustainability and effectiveness in addressing water-related issues.

Table 1: Summary of co-management discussion and presentation by the WSCFs

Modality 1: Municipal Water Systems					
Discussion Points	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Everyone has access to water. ➤ Water is safe to drink; it meets the required standard of SAB (clean quality drinking water). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Municipalities have a budget. ➤ Communities can possibly make money by partnering with government offices. ➤ Local expertise can be used or exposed to business opportunities. 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Municipality is responsible for making sure that everyone has access to clean water. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensures quality (infrastructure). ➤ Strengthen the lifespan of infrastructure. ➤ Consumer satisfaction. ➤ Appreciate financial viability.
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Affordability ➤ Illegal connections ➤ Vandalism ➤ No accountability (leadership is the Water Services Authority) 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ There is no maintenance of existing infrastructure. ➤ Very poor planning from the municipal side. ➤ No future planning for infrastructure. ➤ Water Authorities only focus on making themselves individually rich, e.g. tenders, tankering, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The cut-off of water supply without announcement and when it comes back it is sometimes dirty. ➤ The water supply system is not properly maintained. 	N/A
How sustainable is the modality?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In the future it may not be sustainable because no one is held accountable. ➤ The reporting system to municipality is bureaucratic and unreliable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Municipalities have the resources to sustain it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ It is completely not sustainable because municipal and water authority officers do not know their jobs. ➤ For its sustainability, all stakeholders must be involved in all phases from planning to reticulation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ If they limit the water cuts. ➤ Make sure the water system is properly maintained. ➤ Make sure people have clean running water in their taps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Revenue collection.
Identify opportunities for collaboration between forums/community and government officials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ It extends the capacity resource maximization (human resources, skills development, building of infrastructure, participation, applies the Batho Pele principles and collective ownership). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Municipalities after constructing the system can collaborate with communities by handing over some of the responsibilities to the communities thus creating a sense of ownership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The proper implementation and support from other WSCFs (and local forums) can boost collaboration. These forums have a good interpersonal relationship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ They can employ legit construction companies from the existing community members to maintain the water supply system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Community consultation. ➤ Environmental awareness programmes. ➤ Compliance with environmental by laws.

Modality 2: Self Supply

Discussion Points	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Accountability. ➤ Water used sparingly. ➤ Empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Communities get access to water at a less cost (cost effective). 	N/A	<p>Rural context (make use of boreholes and well)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Not costly because you can do it yourself. ➤ You regularly purify the water manually as you collect it, if needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Cost effective. ➤ Easy to access. ➤ Ownership and security.
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Affordability ➤ Possible health hazards due to lack of resources for water testing. ➤ Vandalism ➤ Improper infrastructure of boreholes and can cause contamination. ➤ No regulations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No certainty of the water quality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Not all end-users understand this concept. ➤ People are forced to use money which they do not have. ➤ Only the wealthy can afford drilling boreholes and buy water purification dispensers. ➤ Rural people resort to using untreated water from rural resources like rivers, wells, etc. 	<p>Urban context (make use of JOJO tanks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Costly when you construct and install your own JOJO tank. ➤ You also need to maintain the pumps and purification. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Possibility of community unrests. ➤ Poor hygiene. ➤ Non-compliance of bye laws. ➤ Illegal connections.
How sustainable is the modality?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Individual accountability allows a person to care for the infrastructure and use water wisely knowing the hardships of obtaining water infrastructure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ It is sustainable because it is community driven and owned (everyone in the community owns it). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ There is poor collaboration as government officials do not support these initiatives. ➤ Government is ignorant in this regard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In rural context, it is sustainable because you are working with other community members, to maintain, repairs and operation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Limited quality assurance.
Identify opportunities for collaboration between forums/community and government officials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ As an individual you make the decision who to share the water with. ➤ Commercial use requires an individual to obtain a license from the department. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Government can bring in good quality materials. ➤ ➤ ➤ ➤ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Each WSCF must receive R1 million annually to drive such initiatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Rural communities can collaborate with other community members to install their boreholes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Availability of resources (skills and materials). ➤ In-sourcing.

Modality 3: Other community led water and environment initiatives

Discussion Points	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Good water and care for the environment leads to healthy and clean usage in the system. ➤ Pro-management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ There is more community involvement to support the forums with a collective vision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ WSCFs go a long way into building a sense of ownership amongst communities. ➤ Communities themselves can be involved in maintaining the hygiene of their own communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ They are uplifting and educating their communities while also bringing change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Encourage stakeholder participation. ➤ Transparency, openness (to all stakeholders). ➤ Proactive (immediate).
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Poor infrastructure; management and repairs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ It can cause competition among other stakeholders within the community. 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ They are not supported by the government although they are supporting what government officials should be doing in the first place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ N/A
How sustainable is the modality?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Communication breakdown between local communities and government departments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ It is community led and driven. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ It will be sustainable in the long run if communities feel they own the infrastructure, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ They would be sustainable if they could receive support from government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Direct engagement with funders (private partnerships). ➤ Youth involvement (innovative ideas).
Identify opportunities for collaboration between forums/community and government officials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Collaboration could be provided for multi stakeholders support to create better resources. ➤ Job creation in different communities as well as skills transfer. ➤ Empowerment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Government officials can support with some of the technical needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Government needs to show the forums and communities the support and care that is needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Capacity building and training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Stakeholder participation.

DAY TWO

Reflecting on Day One

The second and last day of the dialogue began with a reflection of day one. Participants had to share what they liked, what they wish could have happened and what they wonder.

I liked:

- The honest feedback we received from the forums, their continued commitment and passion.

I wish/pray:

- That municipalities recognize the existence and importance of the forums.
- That future dialogues can be held in Limpopo, allowing other forums to witness self-supply practices in action.
- Field visits to places like Jukskei River can be arranged to observe their initiatives.
- Exploring the possibility of involving the private sector, enabling them to understand the work of the forums and potentially offer funding through a private sector engagement model.
- Increased support from the DWS for the forums and the opportunity to take their sustainability model to other provinces.
- Encouraging the SALGA and COGTA to attend such dialogues.
- Urging DWS to negotiate with Rand Water to ensure that all water boards can sustain the WSCFs.
- A higher presence of local councillors at the Gauteng WSCF meetings.
- A general shift in the perception of WSCFs, ensuring that they are taken seriously not only by DWS but also by colleagues from other departments. It is important for everyone to promote their significance.
- Everywhere we go as colleagues we need to make sure that we present on the forums to increase their visibility in the political space. Conscientize our local councillors and counterparts.
- I wish there could be less talk and more action. Our communities need access to clean drinking water.
- We would really institutionalize the forums with and beyond DWS, include them in key frameworks.

I wonder:

- If we could work in the capacity development unit in DWS.

To wrap up the reflections, the forums have come a long way since our initial workshop with them. The challenges they faced then have transformed, and they now discuss topics like ensuring South African Revenue Service (SARS) compliance because they are now registered as Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs). They are also exploring how forums can offer technical advisory expertise to communities. Additionally, they are engaged in various activities, and Limpopo has successfully integrated with municipal and political structures to enhance the credibility of the forums. This evolution reflects their growth and progress in addressing water and sanitation issues.

Mr. John Dini, the project manager at WRC, provided additional reflections on the discussion. He emphasised that the suggestion of embedding the forums in legislation, especially within the context of the forthcoming amendment to the Water Services Act, is noteworthy. He highlighted the need to explore opportunities for collaboration among organizations like WRC, IWMI, DWS, and WSCFs to shape and influence such legal changes.

Mr Dini further went on to share that building trust in government is a challenge faced globally, and the forums can play a crucial role in rebuilding trust by actively engaging and participating in water and sanitation initiatives. In closing, Mr Dini said it is essential to consider the next steps and how to take this project forward to really fostering active involvement rather than passive spectatorship by the forums. This collaborative effort can lead to meaningful progress in addressing water and sanitation challenges.

Unpacking the IDP and WSDP

Following the reflections on day one, Dr Masindi Mapholi from the Directorate of Water Services Planning & Local Government, Water Services Planning Support. Dr Mapholi unpacked the Water Services Development Plan (WSDP) and Integrated Development Plan (IDP) (see annex). Following his presentation, participants reflected and asked questions.

Remarks following the presentation.

Firstly, they expressed that the IDP process tends to be a mere formality without meaningful engagement, highlighting the need to transform it into a more substantial exercise. Secondly, the forums emphasised the necessity of capacity building to understand the frameworks presented to them. One forum member expressed, “I am now seeing a lot of gaps that DWS will not be able to fill, do not only give us a toolbox, give us information, and we will get to the toolbox”. Meaning, it is essential not only to provide tools but also to offer comprehensive information and training to bridge knowledge gaps. This statement stresses the importance of empowering forum members with the necessary understanding and skills, enabling them to effectively utilize the provided tools and contribute meaningfully to water and sanitation initiatives.

Furthermore, the forums suggested that the presentations regarding the frameworks should be more accessible, breaking down complex terminology and acronyms for better understanding, especially for laypersons. They also highlighted the importance of formalizing the forums. Moreover, the forums questioned the authorization process for water authority status and the capacity of municipalities to fulfil the role of Water Services Authorities. Lastly, they stressed the need for greater integration and collaboration to address their questions effectively, particularly when dealing with complex water quality issues.

In his closing remarks, Dr Mapholi highlighted the valuable role of the forums in providing support to local municipalities, especially in administrative aspects, where technical expertise may be lacking among engineers. He stressed the importance of finding ways to legitimize the Water Services

Community Forums (WSCFs) and integrating them into the Water Services Development Plan (WSDP) and the broader political agenda. This emphasises the need for formal recognition and inclusion of the forums within the framework of municipal and governmental operations, pointing out their significance in addressing water and sanitation challenges not only at community level but other levels as well.

Group Activity Three: Participation in practice – Experiences and lessons from the WSCFs

In our previous workshops with the forums, they listed several barriers to their participation in municipal water planning and implementation. These were:

- Political powers resulting in nepotism.
- Budget constraints
- Limited stakeholder participation including the forums.
- Corruption/Fraud
- Poor communication
- Poor and unskilled leadership
- Lack of time management
- Limited stakeholder participation
- Unskilled leadership
- Corruption/Politics: it is about who do you know.
- Not involving community members in their discussions
- Poor/lack of proper infrastructure planning
- Budget constraints
- Looting/Protests
- Lack of capacity
- Need more young people.
- IDP dictates.
- Not having enough land to do their projects.
- They do not consult communities during implementation.
- Increased vandalism
- Division within the municipality/Municipal bureaucracy
- Unskilled municipal workers employing unskilled labour.

In their original forums, they discussed how they overcame any of the challenges listed above. The goal for this activity was for the forums to exchange experiences and lessons, to better equip each other. Each forum had 5 minutes to present back to the audience.

Group Feedback: experiences and lessons

Alexadra WSCF on experiences and lessons

The Alex forum faced a significant challenge related to poor communication with their local municipality. They found that building relationships with municipal officials took time and effort, and changes in political leadership often disrupted these relationships as new officials came in. As a solution, they realised the importance of developing connections not only with specific officials but with the entire municipal office, including individuals like safety officers or security guards. This approach enabled them to maintain engagement with both old and new municipal administrations.

Furthermore, the forum actively expanded its communication efforts, reaching platforms such as Power FM, Alex FM, Moja Love TV channel, and more, to strategically convey water and sanitation issues in Alexandra. They have effectively communicated their identity and community challenges through various channels, including newspapers, television, radio, and other mediums, playing an activist role to raise awareness among those willing to listen.

Bophelong WSCF on experiences and lessons

Bophelong forum has encountered challenges related to structural issues, particularly in the areas of community and skills development. They realised that the forum sometimes lacked innovative ideas, primarily because most of their members are older. To address this, they have actively encouraged and involved young people in their activities. The youth have taken the lead in various aspects of the forum's initiatives, including community gardening, school awareness campaigns, and river cleanups. Their involvement has defied the stereotype of young people as passive and lacking a vision for the future. Instead, the Bophelong forum has witnessed the capabilities of the youth, demonstrating that they are intelligent and capable leaders even in the absence of the older generation.

Hammanskraal WSCF on experiences and lessons

The forum pointed out that they are confronted with persistent challenges, including those related to political powers and the resulting issues of nepotism. The presenter explained that they have established a friendship with the local councillor, which has led to a more positive and receptive attitude from the councillor towards the forum. However, the presenter emphasised that this relationship is fragile and that if he were to leave the forum or if the councillor were to relocate, the forum's recognition and support would be at risk. Personal relationships play a critical role in their survival, and the support of specific individuals is vital. He further added, the survival of the forum heavily relies on their ability to leverage personal relationships to promote and advocate for the forum's interests. Should they fail to establish recognition from the local councillor, their existence could be at risk. Moreover, if one of their key focal points decides to retire, it may result in a loss of crucial support for the forum's initiatives and activities. Therefore, nurturing and maintaining these relationships is paramount for the forum's continued existence and effectiveness.

Additionally, the presenter highlighted the need for support from DWS in terms of communication. While the forums have received invitations from media channels, they have declined these opportunities due to a lack of training from the department's communication team on what to communicate and how to interact with the media effectively.

Limpopo WSCFs on experiences and lessons

In the context of the forums in Limpopo, political interference was viewed as positive factor, as they collaborate closely with politicians from across levels, functioning as a unified team. Nevertheless, they still face persistent challenges. These include ongoing budget constraints, with municipal funds being returned annually, and the forums struggling to secure any form of funding. The inadequacy of infrastructure planning remains a concern, e.g. water is still going to Giyani/Sinthumule Kutama while communities around the water source do not have water. There is also a disconnect between the reports in the IDP and the current realities faced by the community members. Increased incidents of vandalism have emerged as a growing challenge, prompting the forums to initiate awareness campaigns, community engagement, and efforts to promote accountability, fostering a sense of ownership for the existing infrastructure. Lastly, the forums require continuous training and capacity-building programmes to address these issues effectively.

Group activity 4: Replicable best practices for participation in water services

In their original forums, the forum members were tasked with discussing ways in which government officials (particularly with local municipalities) and communities can practically meet each other halfway to achieving sustainable water supply. These should be ideas or strategies that can be applied in other places in South Africa and not only for peri-urban or rural communities but rather for both contexts. The forums felt it would be easier to split into two groups, Limpopo, and Gauteng.

Group Feedback: replicable best practices

Group One: Limpopo WSCFs on replicable best practices

The Limpopo WSCFs reported having a positive relationship with local municipalities and expressed a desire for the Vhembe Municipality (Water Authority) to improve its relationship with the forums by acting on assessment reports provided by the forums. They suggested that control over water services should be decentralized to local municipalities to facilitate quicker response to operation and maintenance reports. They also called for municipal authorities to attend forum meetings to ensure a continuous exchange of information. The promotion of working relationships and clearly defined roles and responsibilities between forums, communities, water authorities, and partners was emphasised, with the signing of a pledge with Vhembe seen as a positive step in this direction.

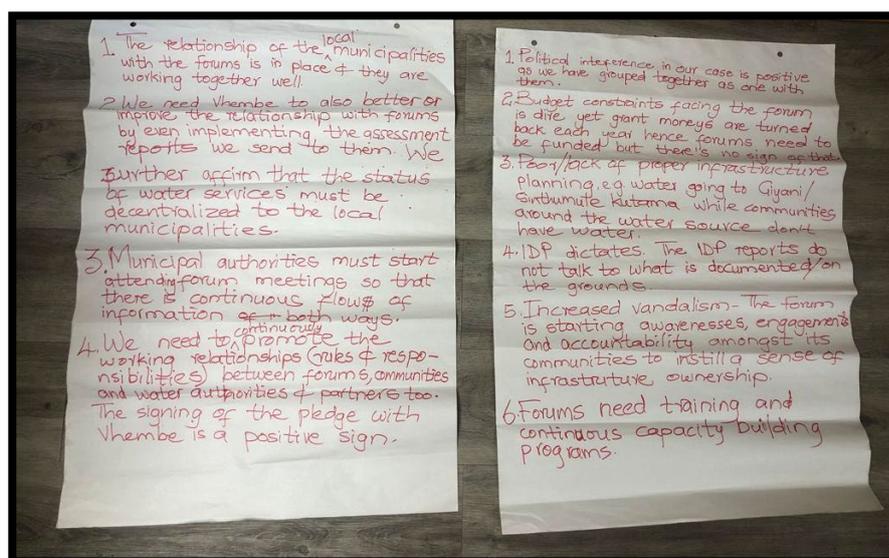


Figure 20. Group one: Limpopo WSCFs on replicable best practices

Group two: Gauteng WSCFs on replicable best practices

The Gauteng forums stressed that communities and government can find common ground by encouraging community participation in the IDP and WSDP. They emphasised the importance of forums being involved in the budgeting process when the WSDP is formulated, not merely as communicators of DWS programmes, but as active participants to ensure transparency. Formal legal recognition of forums was considered vital to grant them decision-making power, and their inclusion in municipal meetings discussing billing matters could be beneficial. Forums might also engage in a bargaining system with the community.

The forums expressed the need for department-led training to empower members with skills and knowledge to support municipal requirements. Additionally, DWS was urged to introduce forums to relevant counterpart departments and institutionalize their role, and influential leaders like Mr. Ernest Maluleka should facilitate introductions to organizations like SALGA, Rand Water, or WSA/B, with support from other DWS Directors to avoid conflict.

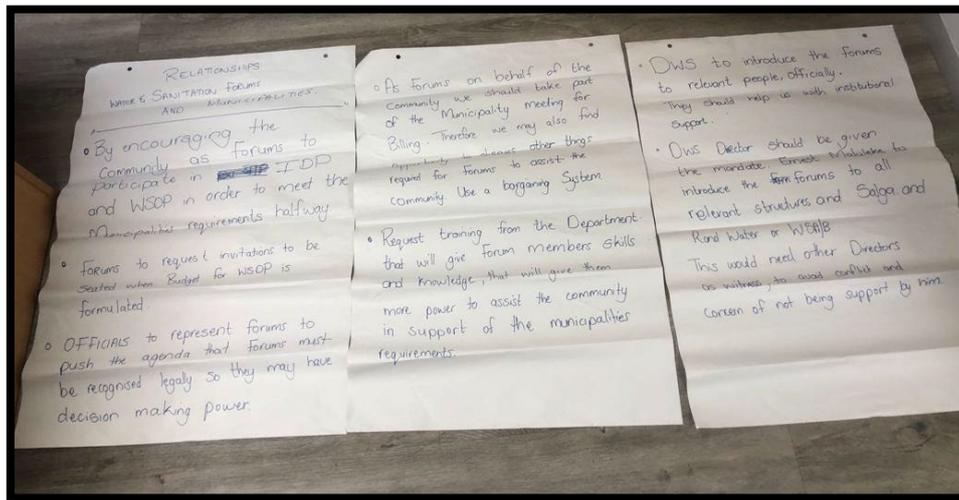


Figure 21. Group two: Gauteng WSCFs on replicable best practices

Wrap up and reflections of the two days.

The two-day dialogue with forums and panellists has been an informative and constructive exchange of ideas and experiences. Throughout the discussions, it became evident that community forums play a pivotal role in addressing water and sanitation challenges in South Africa. The forums serve as vital bridges between communities and government, acting as advocates for their respective constituencies.

While challenges such as trust in government and sustainability persist, these discussions have shed light on possible pathways forward. Collaborative partnerships between forums, government/DWS, WRC and IWMI were emphasised as crucial for achieving sustainable solutions. As the Water Services Act is set for amendment, there is an opportunity to explore legislative changes that can empower and institutionalize these forums, cementing their roles in the water and sanitation landscape. Overall, the dialogue has been an inspiring testament to the resilience, dedication, and innovative thinking of these community forums in addressing critical water and sanitation issues.

Reflecting on these discussions, it is clear that there is a pressing need for greater recognition, support, and collaboration with the WSCFs. The forums, representing the voice of their communities, have demonstrated their ability to drive meaningful change. Their journey from overcoming challenges related to water access and sanitation to addressing broader issues like legislation and trust in government signifies their growth and evolution.

The value of the three presented modalities lies in their adaptability to diverse contexts, addressing the specific needs of both urban and rural communities. By tailoring them to local context means it is possible to create sustainable water and sanitation solutions that respond directly to the needs and aspirations of South African communities. The choice of modality depends on the local circumstances and challenges, and it is essential to promote collaboration and dialogue between forums,

government officials, and organizations to ensure that these modalities are employed effectively, and that no community is left behind.

Moving forward, it is imperative to continue fostering partnerships and mechanisms to institutionalize these forums, enabling them to shape policy and decision-making processes. As our WRC project comes to an end, let us continue to work collectively to build trust and engage communities actively in these crucial matters, these dialogues serve as a stepping stone towards a brighter future where water and sanitation challenges are met with innovative solutions and community-driven approaches. The commitment of these forums is a source of hope and inspiration, and their continued efforts will undoubtedly lead to transformative change in South Africa's water and sanitation sector.

Summary of emerging points for the two days

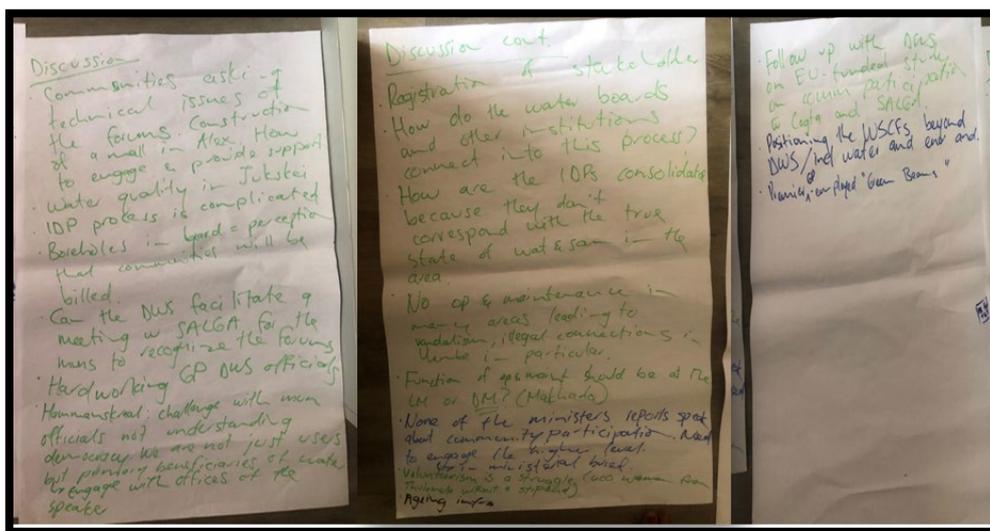


Figure 22. Points emerging from the two-day workshop

There are a number of points that have merged from this two-day workshop. These points are:

- Communities are asking technical issues of the forums. How to engage and support water quality in Jukskei River?
- IDP process is complicated.
- Boreholes in yard creates the perception that communities will be billed.
- Can DWS facilitate a meeting with SALGA for the means to recognise the forums?
- Hammanskraal faces a challenge with municipal officials not understanding democracy/participatory governance. “We are not just users of water but primary beneficiaries”. Need to engage with office of the speaker.
- How do the water boards and other institutions connect into this process?
- How are the IDPs consolidated because they do not correspond with the true state of water and sanitation in our communities.
- No operation and maintenance in many areas leading to vandalism, illegal connections in Vhembe.
- Function of operations and maintenance should be at the Local Municipality or District Municipality (Makhado)

- None of the Minister reports speak about community participation. Need to engage with higher level. Produce ministerial brief.
- Ageing infrastructure
- Follow up with DWS on environmental funded studies on community participation to COGTA and SALGA
- Position the WSCFs beyond DWS, include water and environment issues.

Preliminary findings of the Needs Assessment and Capacity Needs Survey for WSCF

The need for targeted training and capacity-building programs emerged as a common theme throughout our engagements with the Water and Sanitation Community Forums. Our research project acknowledges that equipping the forums with the right knowledge and skills is crucial for effectively addressing water-related challenges. The aim of the survey was to assess the forums' interest in participating training programs, identify the capacity needs of the forums and prioritize key topics that are relevant to the forums' goals and aspirations (see Annex 3).

From the 40 forum members who attended the two-day stakeholder dialogue, 57.5% of the forum members completed the survey, that is equivalent to 23 responses (see Figure 23). To note, the survey will remain accessible until the end of the 2023 to get even more feedback from the existing forums and those from other regional offices as well.

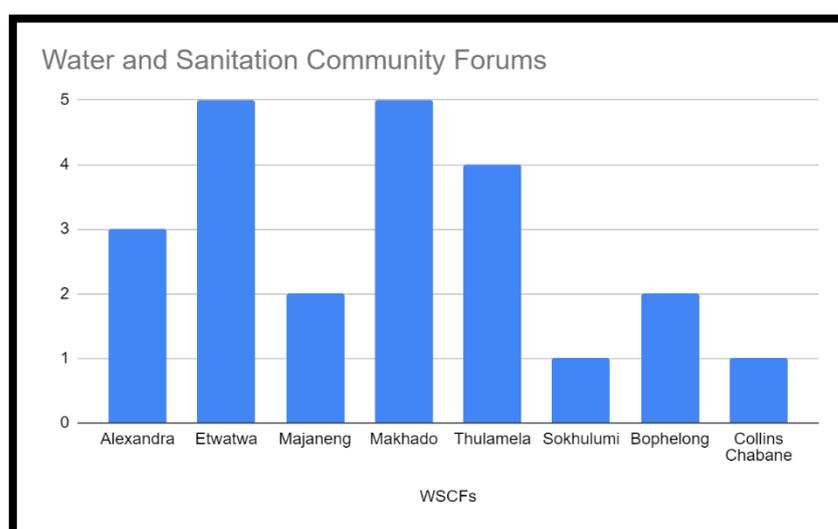


Figure 23: Survey respondents

Approximately 63.5% of respondents indicated that they had actively participated in various capacity-building activities and training programs in the past to enhance their knowledge and skills (see Figure 24). These include workshops on topics such as the hydrological cycle, handwashing, the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), water resource management, and microorganisms. The forums have also engaged in site visits to water treatment and wastewater treatment plants, enabling them to gain practical insights into water and sanitation processes. Furthermore, they have been involved in water and sanitation business training, pollution awareness, and health campaigns(see Figure 25).

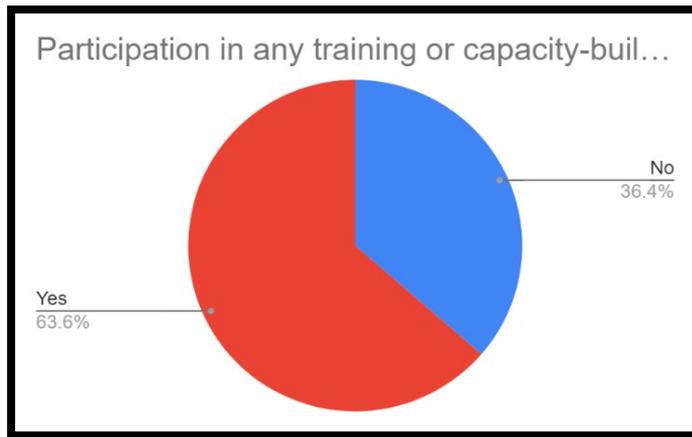


Figure 24: Participation in past capacity-building activities

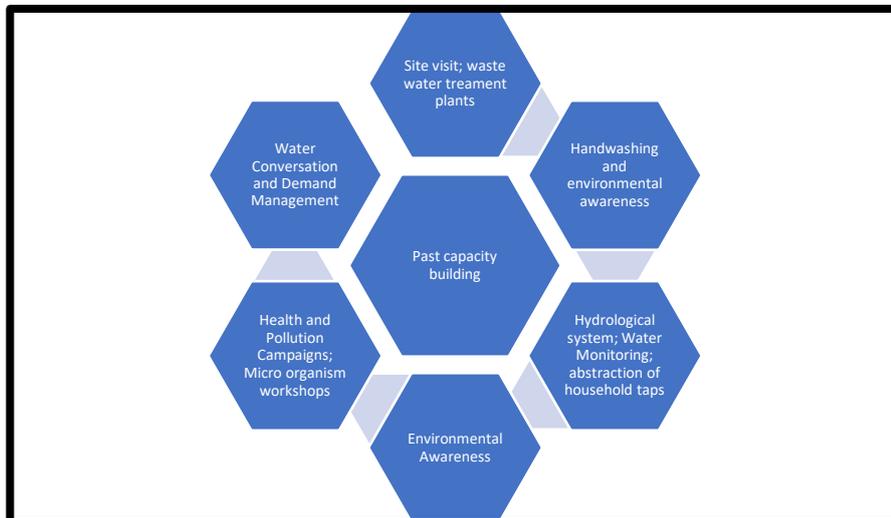


Figure 25: Summary of past training and capacity building

The capacity-building activities and training programmes that the WSCFs have participated in have had a range of positive impacts on their ability to address water challenges in their communities. These impacts include:

- Improved understanding, some of the forums shared that they have developed a better understanding of various aspects related to water and sanitation, equipping them with knowledge and skills to tackle community water issues effectively.
- Access to local municipalities, some of the forums (mostly Limpopo) expressed better access to local municipalities and communities, facilitating engagement with relevant stakeholders.
- Courage and confidence, forums have learned to be more courageous and confident in implementing what they have learned, allowing them to take proactive measures to address challenges.
- Problem identification and analysis, members have improved their ability to identify and analyse problems related to water and sanitation, enabling them to find appropriate solutions.

These positive impacts highlight the importance of ongoing training and capacity-building initiatives in empowering WSCFs to make a meaningful difference in their communities by addressing water challenges more effectively.

On the other hand, some forum members expressed that, despite their participation in workshops and training, these activities have not significantly contributed to their forums' ability to address water challenges in their communities or helped members not leave the forums. This feedback suggests that while training may be valuable, there may be a gap in aligning the content and focus of these activities with the specific needs and challenges faced by the forums in their communities. Additionally, the comment "our people need water and not handwashing campaigns" underlines the importance of addressing the core water supply and sanitation issues that communities face as a priority, highlighting the need for relevant and impactful training and support.

Around 34.5% of respondents from the WSCFs indicated that they had not attended any training or capacity-building programs. In contrast, those who had participated in training reported that they primarily attended programs organized by DWS), focusing on water and sanitation-related campaigns. This discrepancy highlights that while some forums have benefited from specific training initiatives, there is still a significant portion of forums that have not had the opportunity to access such capacity-building activities. This information suggests potential areas for improvement to ensure more equitable access to training and knowledge-sharing opportunities for all WSCFs, ultimately enhancing their ability to address water and sanitation challenges effectively.

Forums identified various capacity and training gaps they have experienced, which include a lack of skills in project management and financial management, insufficient support from local councillors and community development workers, limited understanding of their roles, and financial support deficits. They expressed a need for training and capacity building in areas such as financial management, water, and sanitation legislative frameworks, WSDP, IDP, business management, project management, engagement of community and government, and project development. There is also a desire for increased training on leadership skills and building self-ownership of water infrastructure. Additionally, there were concerns about political recognition and support from entities like SALGA.



Figure 26: Emerging capacity gaps

Regarding the question about current capacity-building needs and priority areas, out of the 23 survey respondents, 21 provided their responses (see Figure 26). It is important to note that this question

allowed respondents to select multiple options. The priority areas, ranked from the most preferred to the least preferred, are as follows:

1. Project Management, including activities such as monitoring and evaluation.
2. Specific technical areas, encompassing maintenance and repairs of small-scale infrastructure.
3. Fundraising.
4. Business plan development and Leadership.
5. Financial literacy.

Respondents also shared other priority areas which include:

1. Training related to WSDP and IDP
2. Public education programs focused on water monitoring and the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP).

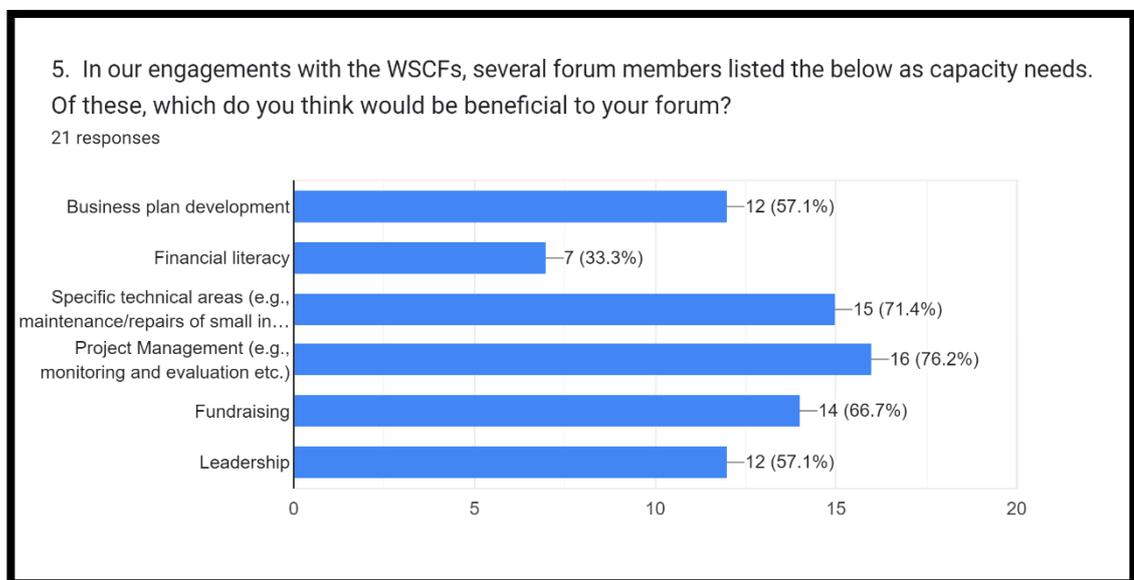


Figure 27: Identified priority areas.

Summary

The WSCFs have expressed a range of crucial capacity-building needs to enhance their effectiveness and impact. These needs include leadership development, particularly for youth members, to strengthen their skills and capacities. They seek comprehensive training in various aspects, including understanding and engaging with the WSDP and IDP, and public education programmes related to water monitoring and the EPWP. Practical skills, such as plumbing, are also a priority.

Furthermore, there is a strong emphasis on specific technical training, project management skills, and leadership development, which are deemed essential for WSCFs to address water challenges effectively. Training in areas like repairs and maintenance of small-scale infrastructure, business development, and fundraising is seen as crucial to building capacity for community engagement. Understanding legislative frameworks, financial management, resource mobilization, and technical training are other key areas that WSCFs have identified as priority needs. Addressing these capacity-building requirements will empower the forums to play a more effective role in ensuring sustainable and improved water services for their communities.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the Department of Water and Sanitation at regional and national levels for their valuable assistance and support in organizing the productive two-day stakeholder dialogue. Special thanks are extended to all the dedicated members of the Water and Sanitation Community Forum for generously sharing their time and insights, which were instrumental in the creation of this report. The Water Research Commission is acknowledged for their ongoing participation and support in ensuring the success of this dialogue.

Annex 1: Agenda

Water and Sanitation Community Forum Stakeholder Dialogue

4-5 October 2023, Premier Hotel Roodevalley

Day One 4 October 2023	Day Two 5 October 2023
<p>08:30-09:00 Arrival and Registration</p> <p>09:00-09:20 Welcome and Opening remarks/prayer, Mrs Jabu Mtolo, Directorate: Inter-Governmental Relations and Strategic Partnership, Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS)</p> <p>09:20-09:45 Icebreaker, setting the scene and purpose: Introduce project video, Dr Inga Jacobs-Mata, Director: Water, Growth and Inclusion, Regional Representative – Southern Africa & CGIAR Country Convenor – South Africa, International Water Management Institute (IWMI)</p> <p>09:45-10:05 Research Findings: Institutionalizing inclusive community-led planning of water supply in Water Services Development Plan (WSDP) and Integrated Development Plan (IDP) frameworks, Ms Ngowenani Nohayi, Research officer: Policy and Water Governance, IWMI</p> <p>10:05-10:30 Group work: Poster development, Water and Sanitation Community Forums (WSCFs)</p> <p>10:30-10:50 Introducing the Water and Sanitation Community Forums (WSCFs) from Alexandra, Bophelong, Majaneng and Sokuhumi</p> <p>10:50-11:00 Reflections: Q/A</p> <p>11:00-11:20 Introducing the Water and Sanitation Community Forums (WSCFs) from Thulamela, Makhado, Collins Chabane and Etwatwa</p> <p>11:20-11:30 Reflections: Q/A</p> <p style="background-color: #00A651; color: white; text-align: center;">11:30-11:45 Tea Break</p> <p>11:45-12:15 Officials' views on community participation in public water provision: Panel discussion</p> <p>12:15-12:30 Reflections: Q/A</p> <p style="background-color: #00A651; color: white; text-align: center;">12:30-13:30 Lunch</p> <p>13:30-14:00 Introducing a user-friendly audio-visual infographic on participatory water supply, Dr Karen Nortje, Senior Researcher: Gender and Social Inclusion, IWMI</p> <p>14:00-15:00 Interactive breakout discussion on the presented co-management modalities</p> <p>15:00-15:45 Group Feedback: Presentations</p> <p>15:45-16:00 Reflections on the day and wrap up</p>	<p>09:00-09:15 Lessons learnt from day one</p> <p>09:15-09:30 Overview of the WSDP and IDP and where community participation/ WSCFs fit in these two key frameworks, Dr Masindi Mapholi, Directorate: Water Services Planning Support, DWS</p> <p>09:30-09:40 Reflections: Q/A</p> <p>09:40-10:10 Participation in practice: Experiences and lessons from the WSCFs</p> <p>10:10-10:20 Reflections: Q/A</p> <p style="background-color: #00A651; color: white; text-align: center;">10:20-10:30 Tea Break</p> <p>10:30-11:30 Interactive breakout discussion: Replicable best practices for participation in water services</p> <p>11:30-12:15 Group Feedback: Presentations</p> <p>12:15-12:30 Wrap up and reflection of the two days</p> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">  </div>



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WATER RESEARCH COMMISSION



water & sanitation
Department: Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Access to ppt:

<https://mega.nz/folder/DvhynRqI#Q5PPRIkZvXaNQdXI0VK06w>

Annex 2: Participants

A total of 61 participants attended the workshop and comprised of the following representatives:

Water and Sanitation Community Forums represented:

- Alexandra WSCF
- Bophelong WSCF
- Sokhulumani WSCF
- Makhado WSCF
- Thulamela WSCF
- Hammanskraal WSCF
- Etwatwa WSCF
- Collins Chabane WSCF

Other representatives:

- IWMI research team
- WRC
- UNISA
- DWS officials from national and provincial office

Annex 3: Survey Questionnaire



Institutionalizing inclusive community-led planning of water supply in Water Services Development Plan (WSDP) and Integrated Development Plan (IDP) frameworks

Survey Questionnaire

Needs Assessment of Training Programmes and Capacity Needs for the Water and Sanitation Community Forums

The need for targeted training and capacity-building programs emerged as a common theme throughout our engagements with the Water and Sanitation Community Forums. The project acknowledges that equipping the forums with the right knowledge and skills is crucial for effectively addressing water-related challenges. The aim of this survey is to assess the forums' interest in participating training programs, identify the capacity needs of the forums and prioritize key topics that are relevant to the forums' goals and aspirations.

I. Demographic Information

Date:	Signature:
Gender: <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say	Water and Sanitation Community Forum you are from: <input type="checkbox"/> Thulamela <input type="checkbox"/> Makhado <input type="checkbox"/> Collins Chabane <input type="checkbox"/> Alexandra <input type="checkbox"/> Bophelong <input type="checkbox"/> Etwatwa <input type="checkbox"/> Majaneng <input type="checkbox"/> Sokhulumi <input type="checkbox"/> Other

	If other, specify:
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II. Past Capacity-Building Activities and Impact

1. Has any member of your forum participated in any training or capacity-building programs related to water and sanitation issues?

Yes No

2. If yes, please list any capacity-building activities or training programs that you, and/or another member of your forum has participated in or benefited from?
3. How have these capacity-building activities effectively impacted your forum's ability to address water challenges in your community and your ability to remain active as a forum?
4. What capacity gaps does your forum (still) experience?

III. Present Capacity-Building Needs and Priority Areas

5. In our engagements with the WSCFs, several forum members listed the below as capacity needs. Of these, which do you think would be beneficial to your forum to make your work as the WSCF more successful and impactful?

Business plan development

Financial literacy

Specific technical areas (e.g. maintenance/repairs of small infrastructure, etc.)

Project Management (e.g. monitoring and evaluation, etc.)

Fundraising

Leadership

Other (specify)

6. From your perspective, what specific training areas should be prioritised? Share the three most important, starting with the most important.

IV Other

7. Please, if you have any other suggestions and views about the capacity of your forum, share those.