

Catchment Forums as vehicles for Public Participation

**Presenter: Mluleki Matiwane
University of the Western Cape**

The Participation Imperative

- ▶ In South Africa Public Participation is non-negotiable

The Participation Imperative

- The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry compiled generic guidelines for the public participation process
- These generic public participation guidelines offer assistance to Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) officials in understanding public participation as an aid to decision-making
- They also aim to assist the Department in applying public participation within the scope of DWAF's activities

Levels of Participation

- ▶ Arnstein (1969) stated that there are exists different levels of participation. She described the following levels:

Citizen control	
Citizen control	Degrees of citizen power
Delegated power	
Partnership	
Placation	Degrees of tokenism
Consultation	
Informing	
Therapy	Non Participation
Manipulation	

Many authors after Arnstein also recognised different levels of participation. These are reflected in the table below:

Arnstein (1969)	Bruns (2003)	Choguill (1996)	Berkes (1994)	Connor (1988)
Citizen control	Establish autonomy	Empowerment	Community control	Litigation
Delegated power	Delegate Authority involve		Management Boards	
Partnership	Partner Collaborate	Partnership	Advisory committees	Joint planning
Placation		Dissimulation		Mediation
Consultation	Consult		Consultation	Consultation
Informing	Inform	Informing	Informing	Information- feedback
Therapy		Conspiracy		
Manipulation		Self-management		
	Enable	Diplomacy	Co-operation	Resolution/preve ntion
	Advise	Conciliation	Communication	Education

International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)

- ▶ When analysing public participation processes in terms of the ‘ladder of participation’, there should be sufficient levels to distinguish different degrees of decision-making
- ▶ However, one should avoid so many levels that it becomes too difficult to discriminate between different levels. To this end, the frameworks of Arnstein (1969) and others (Bruns, 2003; Chouill, 1996; Berkes, 1994; Connor, 1988) have too many levels.
- ▶ For the purposes of this study the levels, as identified by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP²), seem an appropriate analytical framework

Increasing the Level of Public Impact

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public participation goal:	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities, and/or solutions.	To obtain feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the public:	We will keep you formed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions, and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

Catchment Forums in the establishment of Olifants –Doorn Catchment Management Agency

- The key issue in the public participation goal is information dissemination
- The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry disseminates information in different ways
- The first and probably most important way of information dissemination is through documents compiled by the DWAF
- These documents were distributed by the public participation consultant before every meeting to every catchment forum member

- ▶ The second way in which the Department kept the stakeholders informed was through sharing information at the Reference Group meetings
- ▶ A third way in which the Department kept the stakeholders informed is through educational fact sheets, newsletters, media coverage in the form of press releases and advertisements, as well as radio announcements and talk shows

- The DWAF created space where the representatives of the Catchment Forums (and other stakeholders) have a voice to express their views and concerns
- The opportunities were in the Reference Groups as well as during meetings held with each catchment forum prior to the Reference Group meeting.
- ▶ It is difficult to assess whether the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry succeeded in achieving the public participation goal of consult
- ▶ The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry created the opportunity for forum members to give feedback on the issues raised. From this angle it was a success
- ▶ However, by limiting the discussion to issues of the proposal to establish the catchment management agency, the department closed down some of the space. From this perspective it was less successful

- ▶ The key issue with the public participation goal of involvement is that the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry deals directly with the stakeholders
- ▶ This is in effect a promise to be accountable to the stakeholders
- ▶ To achieve the public participation goal of involve, public participation goals of inform and consult must be achieved
- ▶ However, achieving the goals of inform and consult does not mean the goal of involve is achieved automatically
- ▶ To achieve the goal of involve the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry must respond to feedback given by catchment forum members
- ▶ There is an indication that the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry and the catchment forum were involved in the establishment of Catchment Management Agency

- ▶ The forums' silence in the next couple of meetings
- ▶ The reason for this it could have been because the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry informed them that the idea of participation was not to discuss issues of general concern to forum members
- ▶ But to work with them to write the proposal to establish the catchment management agency
- ▶ “To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution”
- ▶ It seems that the catchment forum members were aware of the fact that for them to participate in the Reference Group meetings, they needed to be capacitated to do so

Capacity of the forums was enhanced in the following ways:

- ▶ Meetings just prior to the Reference Group meeting, where the agenda of the reference group meeting was discussed and issues clarified
- ▶ The department contributed to the salary of a secretary for each forum, to ease the administrative workload of the chairperson
- ▶ The secretaries received training arranged by the department, and this increased their capacities
- ▶ Finally, the department also made time available during the Reference Group meetings for the presentation of a range of technical topics

- ▶ The public participation goal to be empowered is described as “to place final decision-making in the hands of the public”
- ▶ The question one must ask when evaluating the goal ‘to be empowered’ in the context of the catchment forums and the public participation process in the Olifants-Doorn Water Management Area is: Was there any occasion where the catchment forum members managed to dictate the decision that should be taken?
- ▶ The catchment forums seem to have had no influence on decision-making.

- ▶ It appeared that their input in the Reference Group meetings was not as influential as it was supposed and expected to be
- ▶ The reason for this conclusion is that in the first meeting, the DWAF gave instructions that the forums must group themselves and raise their respective issues based on their geographical areas
- ▶ Although the forums put those vital issues on the table, the issues that the DWAF took up throughout the nineteen meetings were those issues that the Department wanted to focus on in the Reference Group meetings, in order to complete the proposal to establish the Olifants-Doorn Catchment Management Agency

Conclusion

- ▶ **Participation requires all parties to be informed**
- ▶ **Participation requires all parties to be consulted**
- ▶ **Participation requires all parties to be involved**
- ▶ **Participation requires all parties to collaborated**
- ▶ **Participation requires all parties to be empowered**

Summary

- ▶ The DWAF made a genuine effort to always be transparent, to listen to feedback given by the stakeholders
- ▶ However, after the completion of the proposal to establish the CMA was approved and the establishment gazetted, the department decided to put the operationalisation of the established CMAs on hold, a decision the Reference Group could not influence
- ▶ This study has shown that catchment forums in the Olifants-Doorn WMA participated at the level of collaborate
- ▶ CFs had sufficient opportunity to influence the decision taken in the process of writing the proposal to establish the Olifants-Doorn CMA, without experiencing the need or having the clout to actually make the decision

THANK YOU