

Governance in Practice: Developing and Working Towards Implementing a Research Uptake Strategy for the Upper Olifants River Catchment

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Background

- The Upper Olifants River Study focuses on identifying sources of pollution, impacts of pollution and mitigation strategies in the Upper Olifants.
- The study's technical team expressed a need for the development of a research uptake strategy.
- The uptake strategy was developed and is now being implemented in parts.
- This an ongoing process.

Objectives of the Research Uptake Strategy

- To link technical research findings with stakeholder needs
- To set out the need for further research and activities to optimise the uptake of research findings

Inputs into the Strategy

- The strategy is based on qualitative research.
- The research consisted of semi-structured interviews as well as workshop discussions with key stakeholders and researchers involved in the study.
- The findings from these engagements were analysed and incorporated into the formulation of the strategy.

Context of the Upper Olifants River Catchment

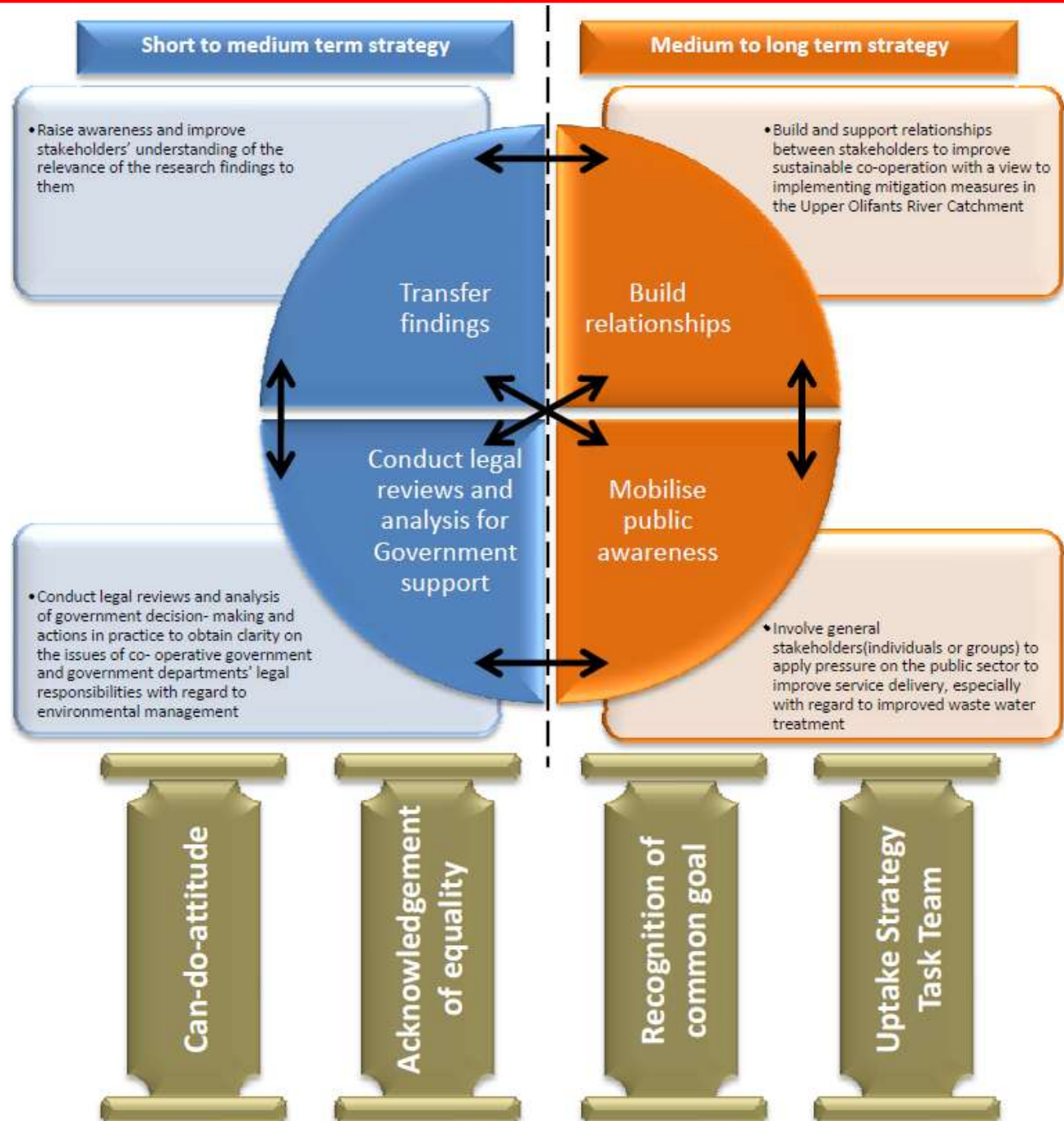
- Based on people's perceptions (interview data)
- Environmental context:
 - water quality is perceived as the biggest problem and has consequences for human health;
 - also concern about water availability in the catchment in future;
 - various perceived contributors to poor water quality.
- Political context:
 - lack of effective management – municipal waste water treatment works;
 - abandoned coal mines and smaller unregulated mining operations;
 - uncertainty around responsibilities of different government departments;
 - lack of stakeholder cooperation.

Purpose of the Strategy

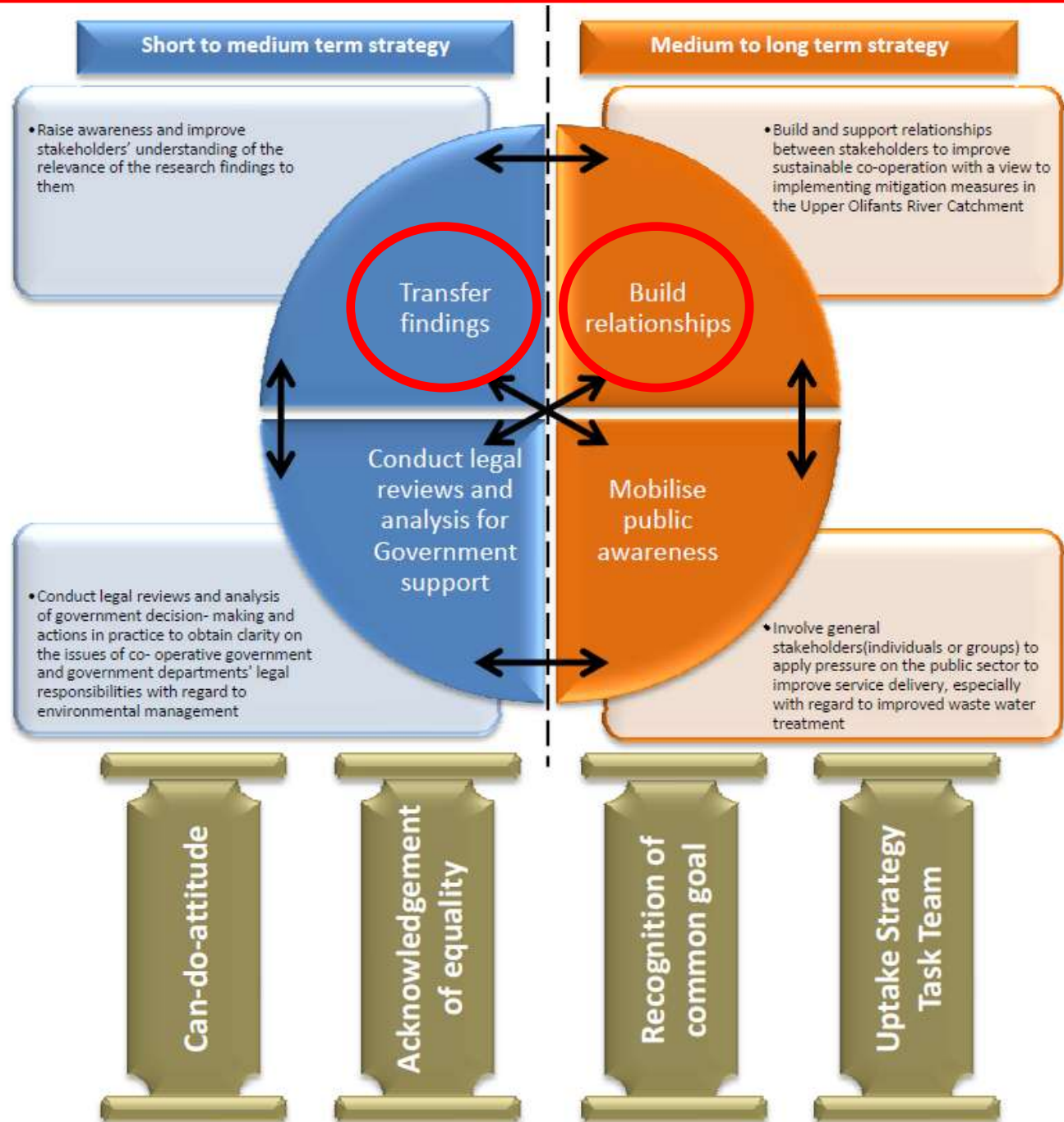
The purpose of this strategy is to suggest separate but inter-connected activities for a way forward when it comes to:

- transferring the research findings of the Upper Olifants River Study,
- strengthening stakeholder relationships,
- creating public awareness, and
- obtaining clarity on the issues of co-operative government and government departments' environmental management responsibilities.

UPTAKE STRATEGY & PILLARS OF SUPPORT



UPTAKE STRATEGY & PILLARS OF SUPPORT



- Raise awareness and improve stakeholders' understanding of the relevance of the research findings to them

Transfer
findings

• Raise awareness and improve stakeholders' understanding of the relevance of the research findings to them

Transfer findings

Transfer findings

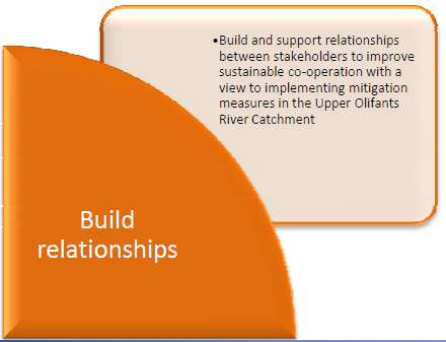
(short to medium term)

- Aim: Raise awareness and improve stakeholders' understanding of the relevance of the research findings to them
- Activities:
 - Identifying stakeholders and stakeholder information needs
 - Determining how the findings should be packaged
- Outcomes:
 - A better understanding of the information needs of the different stakeholders and their perceptions of the research
 - An understanding of the contexts within which different stakeholders operate
 - Research products that will address the information needs identified



Build relationships

- Build and support relationships between stakeholders to improve sustainable co-operation with a view to implementing mitigation measures in the Upper Olifants River Catchment



• Build and support relationships between stakeholders to improve sustainable co-operation with a view to implementing mitigation measures in the Upper Olifants River Catchment

Build
relationships

Build relationships

(medium to long term)

- Aim: Build and support relationships between stakeholders to improve sustainable co-operation with a view to implementing mitigation measures in the Upper Olifants River Catchment
- Activities:
 - Developing a stakeholder perceptions map
 - Hosting a workshop to strengthen trust relationships between CSIR and stakeholders
- Outcomes:
 - Better understanding of the perceptions and power relationships of stakeholders
 - Stronger trust relationships between stakeholders
 - Improved co-operation between CSIR and key stakeholders towards developing more integrated plans for mitigation

• Build and support relationships between stakeholders to improve sustainable co-operation with a view to implementing mitigation measures in the Upper Olifants River Catchment

Build relationships

Build relationships

(medium to long term)

Perceptions of Stakeholders - Preliminary Findings

Interviews 2011/2012

3 most powerful actors

- Community
- Government
- Mining

3 most vulnerable actors

- Communities
- Scientists
- Farmers

3 biggest sources of problems

- Abandoned/small mines
- Pollution from WWTWs
- Government “not doing their job”

ORF conference Oct 2012

3 most powerful actors

- Mining
- Municipalities
- Government

3 most vulnerable actors

- Communities
- Conservation/nature
- Farmers

3 biggest sources of problems

- Pollution from WWTWs
- Over abstraction from mining and industry
- Pollution from farming activities - irrigation

Some perceptions

Farmers: *“The people who up until now have been shouting very loudly and pointing fingers because people are poisoning their land”*

Government: *“The biggest stakeholder is government but there is tremendous political red tape that comes in the way when one tries to do something positive (such as mitigation). We have to get the government to say “we don’t have to go through all this political stuff” and to commit. This includes all the different departments”*

Conservationist NGOs and civil society: *“They are aggressive greenies”*

Mining: *“Industries and mines are only concerned about what they’re responsible for. I don’t think they are really concerned that much about the ecosystem. They won’t be concerned unless they are forced to be concerned by legislation, which they are not. The economic interests are the mines’ primary concern”*

Science: *“Science doesn’t answer to government, science answers to society. We want research to affect the community. To get the government departments to listen, scientists have to engage with farmers. If scientists had a closer relationship with different parties, we would have a bigger “whip” with which to stand up to government with to make government listen.”*

ORF: *“The Forum is made up of the different role players and while they are doing a commendable job to play this role of facilitator it might not be the correct role for them because they are so integrally a part of the community”*

Learning and reflections

- Importance of a research uptake strategy
- Need for early planning of uptake and sufficient funding to implement such a strategy
- Need to manage stakeholders' expectations about what the strategy can achieve

Conclusion

- The Research Uptake Strategy can strengthen relationships and build trust bit by bit.
- This, in turn, can result in some positive changes in the catchment.

Thank you!