



LOCAL INSTITUTIONS FOR WATER GOVERNANCE:

A Story of the development of a Water User Association and Catchment Forum in the Kat River Valley, Eastern Cape



by Jane Burt, Alistair McMaster, Kate Rowntree & Robert Berold



9781770055865



TT 295/07



Water
Research
Commission



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*A Story of the development of a Water User Association and Catchment
Forum in the Kat River Valley, Eastern Cape*

Report to the Water Research Commission

by

Jane Burt, Alistair McMaster, Kate Rowntree & Robert Berold

WRC Report No. TT 295/07
March 2008



Obtainable from:

Water Research Commission
Private Bag X03
Gezina
0031

The publication of this report emanates from a WRC project entitled "A Story of the Development of a Water User Association and Catchment Forum in the Kat River Valley, Eastern Cape" (WRC Project no K8/673)

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ISBN 978-1-77005-586-5
Printed in the Republic of South Africa



This account is based on the work of the **Catchment Research Group (CRG)** and the **Catchment Research Creative Group (CRCG)**.

Catchment Research Group members:

Nicole Motteux (1996-2003)
Kate Rowntree (1996-ongoing)
Alistair McMaster (2000-2003)
Jane Burt (1999, 2001-2003, 2005-ongoing)
Monde Duma (2000-2002)
Helen Fox (2005-2006)
Hlengiwe Gumedde (2005-2007)
Paul Vanderford (2005)
Marjolein de Jong (2005)
Helen Brown (2006)

Catchment Research Creative Group members:

Bulelwa Nqweniso (1996-2003, 2006)
Jerry Ntsebenza (1996- ongoing)
Monde Ntshudu (1999-ongoing)
Mathews Nontyi (1999-2003)
Apollo Phillip (1999-2003)
Vuyani Hoboshe (1999)

Oral accounts were contributed by the following members of the **Kat River Water User Association** and **Kat River Catchment Forum**:

Mcebisi Dike
Txola (Jez) Jezi
Thandiwe Memani
Chris Mgwali
Andile Ndindwa
Luyanda Nkayi
Nomapelo Nkonto
Jerry Ntsebeza
Monde Ntshudu
Llewellyn Roberts

Illustrator: Tammy Griffin

Layout and design: Marc Lewis

Collated and written by:

Jane Burt, Alistair McMaster, Kate Rowntree and Robert Berold



The groups involved in the development process were:

The Catchment Research Group

This is an informal group of researchers and practitioners with an interest in Water Resource Management. The Catchment Research Group (CRG) is recognized by Rhodes University and affiliated to the Geography Department at the University. The CRG has ensured that all research by individual researchers works towards the common goal of supporting Water Resource Management in the Kat River Catchment.

The Catchment Research Creative Group

The Catchment Research Creative Group (CRCG) was formed by Xhosa-speaking actors and translators who assisted the CRG to run workshops, develop plays and do field research in the Kat River Catchment. They were also involved in environmental education activities for the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry.

The Water User Association

A Water User Association (WUA) is a statutory body made up of different water users who wish to undertake water-related activities for their mutual benefit. Membership of a WUA is limited to registered water users, as defined by the National Water Act. All Irrigation Boards need to transform to Water User Associations. The Kat River Irrigation Board approached the Catchment Research Group to assist with this transformation process.

The Catchment Forum

A Catchment Forum is a non-statutory body with open membership. It can be established by a group of stakeholders who come together to address a particular issue. In the Kat River Catchment a Catchment Forum was established, with assistance from the Catchment Research Group, to address the needs of villagers who felt they had little say over how water was managed in the catchment.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CF	Catchment Forum
CRCG	Catchment Research Creative Group
CRG	Catchment Research Group
DWAF	Department of Water Affairs and Forestry
HACOP	Hertzog Agricultural Cooperative
ICM	Integrated Catchment Management
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IWRM	Integrated Water Resource Management
KRVP	Kat River Valley Project
NWA	National Water Act
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
TLC	Transitional Local Council
TRC	Transitional Rural Council
WRC	Water Research Commission
WRM	Water Resource Management
WSSA	Water and Sanitation Services South Africa
WUA	Water User Association

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PREFACE

This report describes the development of water resource management organisations (institutions) in the Kat River Valley from 1997 to 2006. The two organisations described here – the Kat River Valley Water User Association and the Kat River Catchment Forum – are given separate narratives for the sake of clarity, although they developed in close association. Both these organisations were nurtured and supported as a result of a research process by members of the Catchment Research Group (CRG) from the Department of Geography at Rhodes University. Funding came largely through the Water Research Commission (WRC).

An initial version of this report was written in 2003 but was not published. At that time the report was written from the perspective of the Catchment Research Group researchers, Jane Burt, Alistair McMaster and Kate Rowntree. They drew on reports, plus a masters and doctoral thesis, to synthesise the many voices that had contributed to the development of the Water User Association and the Catchment Forum. The story was told as the researchers saw it, giving a reflection of how they understood it.

At the beginning of 2006, Jane Burt was approached by the Water Research Commission to update and finalise the report for publication. She decided that the best way to update the report would be to ask the people in the Kat River Valley what had happened and how they felt about the future of their organizations. The WRC agreed to this approach, providing additional funding for some interviews and to employ the professional editing services of Robert Berold and Mindy Stanford to help restructure and compile the report. Unfortunately there was not enough money to interview every Catchment Forum and Water User Association (WUA) management committee member. People were therefore interviewed according to their availability and willingness during the time allocated for the interviews, with a fair number contributing. The report in its present form therefore reflects the thoughts of both the original researchers and the people of the Kat River WUA and the Kat River Catchment Forum.

The developments described here were taking place at a time of great change in South Africa's political and institutional structures, both locally and nationally. The Kat River Valley was one of the first catchments in the country to set up water management structures. At the time there was no clear direction from the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) about requirements for the WUA process, nor was there a clear policy in relation to Catchment Forums. Researchers, practitioners and the members of the various institutions had to learn as they went along.

As is the case with many journeys into the unknown, with the benefit of hindsight the researchers can see that many things could have been done more effectively. Nicole Motteux and Kate Rowntree, who were pioneers of the work in the Kat River Valley, always emphasized that we must not be afraid of making mistakes, as this is integral to learning. This report offers a reflection on what worked and what did not. The researcher authors hope that the story will be useful to others who are grappling with how to implement the National Water Act in a way that honours the Act's principles of equity, sustainability and efficiency.

1. FIRST PROCESSES

The Kat River Valley

Physical Situation

The Kat River Valley is situated on the eastern edge of the Fish-Tsitsikamma Water Management Area (WMA). It is a tributary catchment of the Great Fish River Catchment and occupies 1700 sq km – 1.8% of the area of the Fish-Tsitsikamma WMA. The valley has been divided into three management areas: Upper, Middle and Lower Kat.





The valley is characterised by a range of land uses. In its lower area are export-oriented citrus farmers and commercial rangeland stock farmers. Community-based small-scale agriculture and stock farming are practised in the middle area, and commercial forestry in the north-western upper area. In addition, there are four game reserves in the catchment. The town of Fort Beaufort is the dominant urban centre. Seymour and Balfour are small towns in the upper catchment. (Detailed descriptions of the catchment can be found in Everitt, 1999; Magni, 1999; Soviti, 2002 and Rowntree, 2003.)

People of the Kat River Valley

Commercial citrus irrigators

The Kat River Valley is well known for its citrus industry, with the citrus irrigators being the valley's largest water users. Over 500 hectares of citrus orchards are irrigated from the Kat River, so these farmers have a considerable financial stake in the water supply. Most of the orchards are owned by white farmers, although some orchards in the upper and middle reaches of the Kat are owned by black farmers.

Small-scale farmers and agricultural cooperatives

In the Upper Kat the farming is generally resource-poor. The farms are small by commercial standards, with run-down infrastructure and in many cases land tenure is insecure. Many of those who farm a hectare or less have grouped themselves into cooperatives in order to buy implements, secure inputs and improve the marketing of their produce. An example is the Hertzog Agricultural Cooperative (HACOP).

Villages

Settlements in the middle and upper reaches of the Kat take the form of rural villages or small towns. The largest settlements – Balfour and Seymour – are populated by a few thousand people, while the smallest ones, such as Oakdene and Picardy, consist of fewer than 25 households. People in these villages rely heavily on the environmental resources around them, collecting local fuelwood and drinking water taken directly from rivers.

Fort Beaufort and the Nkonkobe Municipality

Fort Beaufort, the largest town in the catchment, functions primarily as an agricultural service centre. It is home to the offices of the Nkonkobe Municipality, which is responsible for the town's water supply. The Kat River runs through the town. The Nkonkobe Municipality extends over most of the Kat Valley.

Other sectors and groups include forestry plantations, game reserves, the Katberg Hotel and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), for example World Vision.

The socio-historical situation of the Kat River Valley¹

(adapted from McMaster, 2002)

The Kat River Valley has a complex history of dispossession and resettlement, which is reflected in its present demography. Divisions between South Africa and the former Ciskei 'bantustan' in the 1970s and 1980s influenced the patterns of its settlement and economic activity. The catchment on the greater part of the eastern side of the Kat River was part of the Ciskei from the time it was established in 1979. The area in the north and northeast of the catchment, incorporating what used to be the highly productive irrigation farming districts of Balfour and Seymour, was expropriated from white and coloured farmers in 1980 and handed over to the Ciskei.

Social and economic patterns, including land tenure, vary widely. The southwest of the catchment is made up of privately owned white farms with high levels of production, employing labour forces of up to 200 people, depending on the season. The more densely populated sections are communally owned or state-owned, and characterised by low levels of production, exceptionally low levels of employment and a high degree of poverty. The small towns of Seymour and Balfour have experienced disinvestment and economic collapse. Fort Beaufort, the town at the centre of the catchment, supports a relatively large population of 25 500 and continues to function as a service centre, although it too suffers from economic stagnation and high levels of unemployment.

Thandiwe Memani, CF member:

I'm 34. I live with my mother, sister and our children. My family is from Seymour. We have lived here all our lives and only go out of Seymour for work.

Things have changed during my life. When I went to school we got water directly from the dam but we now get it from taps. But we are still not happy with the water, because we know it is coming from the dam, which has graves under it. We never owned houses, whereas now we can own houses. Even if we have not moved into these houses, there are houses for us. We have electricity now. And there are more opportunities for employment. There used to be no sports activities but since the establishment of World Vision there are sports activities. We used to have

¹ Further historical, social and economic descriptions of the valley can be found in Nel, 1998; Motteux and Nel, 1999; Motteux et al., 1999a, 1999b; Soviti, 2002; Kyle, 2003; and Motteux, 2003 and Birkholz, 2006.



a school building – a mud school building – now we have a proper school. Almost all these changes happened after 1994.

We had the same shops but the shops were more expensive and now shops are cheaper, but owned by foreigners from out of town – Somalians. We have a small business-centre with a sewing project, now if you want to fix a chair you can take it there. The employment opportunities include bricklaying, plumbing for the RDP housing, working at the magistrate's court. There is a youth development project. There are chicken and pig projects and irrigation schemes.

Andile Ndindwe, CF member:

I was born here in the Kat Valley in 1973 at the village Stoneage. I have lived here all my life. During the Ciskei government we had fields and people were employed and paid by the government to work on the fields – unlike now. Today the government supports people, but only some individuals, so only a few benefit. You don't see development in our communities. My family was employed by the Ciskei government. Here we have our own fields for which we have title deeds. We got them in the late 1800s from the Queen. I irrigate my fields with a pump and sprinkler, with water directly from the river.

Chris Mgwali, CF member:

I've been in the Kat Valley for almost 57 years. In those early days, the river was clean and there was plenty of water. The Tamboekiesvlei River was helping the Kat River with lots of water. The river was beautiful and deep; there were long sacred pools and beautiful trees, *umgcumu* trees. Now you can count how many trees are here. Along the river there were no degraded tributaries – it was fenced then. There were many of those cats, *ndini* cats. There were lots of animals; the ecosystem was healthy. There were all sorts of species, different kinds of fish like the palam. After 1963 the water changed to brown. It was not the same. In the late 1950s the farmers planted tobacco and used DDT². When it rained, the DDT washed into the furrows and into the river and killed the fish. But the river was still beautiful with reeds.

The 1970s the dam came. I was there when it was launched. I will never forget it. A government official told us we now had to rent water at R21 a year. I've got the receipts somewhere. We could no longer collect water from the river in tractors. The government water department said they would put pipes underground. They said only animals could use the river water, communities would get water through pipes. They said that if people kept up their payments they would get pipes going to the villages. Well,

² DDT – an insecticide, now banned or restricted for use in most countries, including South Africa.



it never happened, not yet. We are still waiting. The Water Affairs had an agent in Balfour, a butcher named Claas. He was the one we were paying. The white farmers were using it, two days for this one, two days for that one, it was rotated. But we were forced to pay. We were only using water for drinking. We did not have storage for water so we could not use it for irrigation.

In 1984 the Ciskei removed the coloureds forcefully, they were loaded in trucks. Then the whites followed in 1985. They started leaving. Then Sebe³ told the people they must work the land. I don't know what happened but people started fighting, saying this is mine, this is mine, this is mine. If one person applied for land, the application form had to go to Bisho, when it came back you found someone else had got the land. Then everything just started going wrong. People mostly got land through the company scheme card. You applied for membership then you get the land. Membership was R125. The farms were called by the names of their old owners, if you knew these names you could go to Bisho and you could get the land. People from Port Elizabeth and Peddie got land in this way. There were very few that got land from around here, except the Nkaya family. My family was lucky we got the Droëkloof.

The farmers who took over land did not come here to irrigate, they brought cattle here from elsewhere. Most community members stopped irrigating because the land was privately owned now. After the farms were taken over, the furrows and dams collapsed. Some farmers also had an agreement with white farmers to bring in livestock; as soon as the cattle were well fed they would be taken away and another lot would come.

Dr Paton came from the other side of Pretoria, from Warmbaths. In 1986/87 Sebe realised that giving out the land to farmers was not working, so he made an agreement with Dr Paton. Before Paton came there were a lot of different farms, but he removed the fences and planted right across the farms. There were some black farmers in Tamboekiesvlei; people who had bought land or got land because of their involvement in the war. This guy just planted over those lands too. He got a lot of money from the Ciskei government; he became a rich man. Then Sebe made a deal with another farmer, Mr Krok. That Krok was a better gentleman than Paton, he worked well with the community. He had a certain kind of cattle that was a better breed than our cattle, and he let people breed their cattle with his cattle. So people liked him. That is why the cattle in this area are nice. He also introduced ostriches.

³ Lennox Sebe, President of the nominally independent Ciskei from December 4, 1981 to 1990.



In 1990/91 Dr Paton suddenly disappeared. His workers were not paid and he left everything – tractors, pipes, farmhouse. New farmers came in. They took over, they fixed Paton's tractors and bought their own. They stopped planting tobacco from here to Tamboekiesvlei; instead they planted in Fairbairn. They were here two and a half years and then they left. Krok also left in 1991 or 1992. Only Ulimocor was still operating. It was difficult for people to irrigate because livestock were everywhere and there were no fences. People asked for the government to fence the fields and that is when they started fencing again.

That is when projects like the Hertzog Agricultural Cooperative (HACOP) and Masibambane started. HACOP was funded from an organisation in Grahamstown and Masibambane was funded by the government and World Vision. Even then it was not easy, because when those projects emerged, people would say, this is my land, and stop them. Remember the farmers that were here were not under Sebe; they were selling land secretly in dark corners, so one day you would see this face and then another day another face. But there was a fight between HACOP and Masibambane about the land so there was no real development.

Catchment management initiatives in the valley⁴

Catchment management activities in the Kat have not been continuous or coherent. There has been a succession of independent research projects, informed by the principles of integrated catchment management (ICM), and in many cases enabled by National DWAF policy and legislation. Most of these projects were run in close association with one another and organised by two departments at Rhodes University – Geography and Environmental Science. All the projects run by the Geography Department were under the leadership of Professor Kate Rowntree. The use of integrated catchment management as a guiding conceptual framework has provided continuity across the separate projects, and most of them have conformed to a research ethic associated with participation, learning and action. The National Water Act of 1998 (NWA) recognised that the discriminatory laws and practices of the past had prevented equal access to water and use of water resources, so the Rhodes University initiatives explicitly supported disadvantaged groups to enable them to participate on an equal footing in decisions about the management of water resources.

⁴ The next two sections also appear in the Kat River Valley Case Portfolio for the starter document of the WRC project "A Critical Review of Participatory Practice in Integrated Water Resources Management – K5/1434".

Relationship with DWAF

Unlike many of the catchment management initiatives that have taken place in South Africa over the past decade, very few of the initiatives in the Kat were DWAF-sponsored or DWAF-driven, apart from the final establishment of the Kat Water User Association. Most of the initiatives were facilitated by Rhodes University researcher-practitioners who were working within a critical research orientation, in which research and practice are highly interrelated.

Funding for these initiatives came primarily from the Water Research Commission (WRC), with contributions from the National Research Foundation and the Department of Agriculture, among other sources.

However, DWAF legislation and DWAF policy certainly influenced and enabled many of the processes. For example, the establishment of a Water User Association, as provided for in the National Water Act, provided the framework for many participatory processes, resulting in rural villagers starting to have a voice in the management of water use. Similarly, DWAF policy providing for the establishment of Catchment Forums allowed many activities and actions to take place. DWAF staff from both Regional and National offices participated in some of these processes, sharing their knowledge, providing a sounding-board, and listening to what the groups had to share.

Some participatory approaches used in the WUA and CF processes⁵

Participatory Rural Appraisal:

PRA is an ensemble of approaches and methods suited to the understanding and expression of local diversity. This approach enables local people to assess, analyse, cope with, adapt to and exploit accelerating change (Motteux, 2003, p.50; Chambers, 1992a, 1994b). A number of PRA methods were used in these projects including: Mapping, the Transect Walk, Modelling and Visualisation.

⁵ Adapted from Burt and Rowntree, 2003.



CF reflecting on their organisation, February 2004.

Action Research:

This is a common research method used within a critical orientation. More than a method for research, it is a grounding framework for any development or educational process. Action Research is defined as a "collaborative process of learning, realized by groups of people who join together in changing the practices through which they interact in a shared social world" (Kemmis, 1995, p.36). The overall feature of Action Research is a series of spiral cycles that follow a pattern of 'plan, act, reflect, re-define and act' throughout the research and development process (Motteux, 2003, p.51).

Theatre for Development (also known as *Theatre of the Oppressed*): Theatre of this kind is described by Augusto Boal as "a system of physical exercises, aesthetic games, image techniques and special improvisations whose goal is to... turn the practice of theatre into an effective tool for comprehension of social and personal problems and the search for their solutions" (Boal, 1995, pp.14-15; Motteux, 2002, p.83).

The Catchment Research Group/community initiative

The first communities to be exposed to ideas about riverine management were those of Hertzog and Fairbairn. These two villages are directly downstream from the Kat River dam, and each has farming cooperatives that rely on the Kat River for small-scale irrigation. A survey undertaken by Rhodes University researcher, Nicole Motteux, in 1996, found that the members of both communities felt they were being affected by negative environmental circumstances. However, due to poverty, lack of political power, and land-tenure obstacles, they

were in no position to deal with these circumstances. These problems were exacerbated by tensions between the two communities.

After the survey, Motteux focused her research on bringing about social change. Both the Fairbairn and Hertzog communities articulated the need for a workshop that would allow them to understand their environmental problems and construct a plan of action. Two community members were elected to share responsibility with Motteux to prepare workshops. Then in late May and early June 1997, two-day workshops were held in both Hertzog and Fairbairn. The workshops concentrated on participatory rural appraisal (PRA) and theatre for development. Motteux and her Xhosa assistants encouraged participants to use their own knowledge and observations of local conditions to analyse and come to an understanding of their situation. In so doing, a new basis for decision and action was initiated. As Motteux later wrote, "Through the participants' search for knowledge and my search to provide a platform for them on which they could explore their knowledge, we developed a working relationship based on trust and understanding... The community's realisation that they had the ability, the foundation and the right to improve their own environment flowed from the process..." (Motteux, 2002, p.263).

Active Learning



Active learning is an approach to learning, which has at its centre an issue or concern of relevance to the context of the learner. The emphasis on active learning is based on a process of action and evaluation that links it strongly to action research. It is through the process of trying to address an issue that learning takes place and skills and knowledge are developed (O'Donoghue, 2001).



In the workshops participants first discussed their conceptions of conservation, environmental destruction and environmental management. This led to a discussion about what constituted the river environment. This was followed by a forum theatre portrayal of two characters, a *sanuse* (divine healer) who respected the environment, and a disrespectful farmer. The workshops ended with a transect walk, followed by a discussion about the concepts of upstream and downstream.

Role-playing upstream and downstream concepts

For this activity, a model had been constructed to simulate the context of the villagers. A 20-litre drum with a tap represented the Kat dam, an upstream village, and a downstream village. The participants divided themselves randomly between the two villages, and one person was given the role of the dam operator. They then role-played a situation as described here by Motteux (2002, p. 250):

In the land “Kandodo”, the downstream villagers were preparing for Ingoma’s celebration of manhood and needed to collect sweet water from the Inxuba River in order to prepare Xhosa beer in honour of Ingoma. The upstreamers simulated a 12-hour day that involved activities such as collecting firewood, farming, irrigating and washing clothes. Drumming was used to mark off the different hours of the day. The downstream villagers observed the upstream actions, as they attempted to collect a large amount of drinking water in a bucket.

Then the “dam operator” opened and closed the water supply without any warning. He filled up mugs of water and created floods. The people along the river cried out for sensible water flows, but he paid no attention. The upstream group acted out environmental abuses, activities that had been identified in previous exercises. For example they washed their clothes and dishes in the river, others squirted ink from syringes into the river (the ink representing effluent or fertilizer pollution), while some drove toy cars around the river banks, knocking over trees and creating an erosion effect.

When the downstream users collected a cup of water from the bucket, the water was utterly contaminated by soap, ink, toilet paper, plastic animals and sand. They wanted to put a stop to this

and called the village chief, who took this matter to the upstream village chief. The two chiefs had a discussion, but no agreement was reached... This prompted the downstream people to demand that the matter be taken to court.




The court case was role-played with equal enthusiasm and drama, with the accused members being sentenced to a 15-year jail term – retracted on condition that the offenders mended their ways by working together with other communities. Then the participants divided into two groups to discuss the court case, and explore possible solutions. A number of solutions and actions were developed. The solution that was considered to be the best one was that there should be effective communication both between stakeholder groups, and also between stakeholders and decision-makers.

Participatory GIS

Participatory geographic information systems (GIS) is a more technical version of participatory mapping, which is a popular tool in participatory rural appraisal (PRA). In the Kat River Valley, the uses of GIS for participation have ranged from assisting villagers in identifying and recording issues and resources; to developing spatially coordinated plans for activities and on-ground works at the scale of the catchment; to facilitating sharing around needs, problems and ideas at both the village and the catchment scale. GIS – used as a tool for participation – can play an important role in helping people understand the concepts of catchment and catchment management. By working with spatial representations of the catchment, people not only develop a common understanding of the management needs, they also enhance their sense of ownership of subsequent initiatives (McMaster, 2002; On participatory mapping, see Motteux, 2003, pp.61-64).

At the following workshop, participants from Fairbairn and Hertzog identified the following issues associated with the flow releases from the Kat Dam:

- 1 Between releases, water levels were low, leading to poor quality stagnant water, which was collected directly from the river for domestic use.
- 2 Members of the Hertzog Agricultural Co-operative (HACOP) irrigation scheme, which provided the primary income for the Hertzog and Fairbairn villagers, needed a more reliable flow so they could irrigate their crops.

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- 3 There was a lack of communication and negotiation between Kat River Valley inhabitants and other water users.
 - 4 There was no management structure representing all catchment stakeholders.
 - 5 Community members did not have a say in decision-making.
- (Motteux, 2002, p.273)

These concerns led to a meeting between Rhodes University researchers, community participants and Water Research Commission representatives, held in December 1997. The suggestion that emerged was to make use of the institutional arrangements, allowed by the imminent National Water Act, for communities to participate in decisions about water management. This led in turn to the submission, through the Rhodes University Geography Department, of a research proposal to the Water Research Commission to support the formation of locally-based water management institutions using participatory methods. The following year funding was approved and the project, known locally as the Kat River Valley Project (KRVP), could begin.



Workshops



Workshops play a double role in project research – they provide an opportunity for capacity building, and they gather data. In action research, a workshop is both a platform for learning and a platform for sharing. In the context of Participatory Rural Appraisal, a workshop can be a platform for gathering local knowledge around a particular research interest. It can teach a particular method such as 'how to read GIS maps'. It can be a way of sharing research findings. In any workshop, an appropriate balance needs to be found between the workshop serving on the one hand as a platform for learning and on the other as a process of research.

Preparing for participation in water resource management

A meeting was planned for October 1999, at which the local management structures proposed in the National Water Act (no 36 of 1998) would be discussed with a wide range of stakeholders from the Kat River catchment. Two options for water management structures were to be explored: a Water User Association and a Catchment Forum. The stakeholders to be invited to the meeting would include the large-scale commercial farmers, representatives from regional DWAF and the local village communities. This was



to be a groundbreaking meeting, which for the first time brought together these different stakeholders on a common platform. For this to be successful it was important that the village communities, who had previously been left out of any catchment-scale decision-making process, were given the chance to develop their capacity to participate on a more equal footing with the other stakeholders.

Starting in March 1999, a preparatory workshop was held with the Fairbairn and Hertzog communities. Using forum theatre, together with round-table discussions and focus groups, the two communities engaged with the concepts and issues associated with water resources management (WRM) and Water User Associations. A multi-stakeholder situation was role-played and analysed. Nicole Motteux wrote about the meeting:

“The forum theatre resulted in participants understanding and recognising the importance for representatives to understand integrated water resource management (IWRM) concepts, be able to negotiate, communicate in English and have an interest in desired outcomes. The preparatory workshop enabled participants to discover and reflect on strategies to overcome language barriers and fears of talking in public” (Motteux, 2002, p.284).

The workshop was repeated in 13 other villages during the winter of 1999. At the close of each of these workshops, an invitation to the October open meeting was given to the village, and a representative was chosen to attend the meeting. The awareness process culminated in the Umlambo Children and Teachers’ Drama Festival in Balfour, which was attended by 800 people.

Prior to the October stakeholder meeting, Xhosa facilitators from the Kat River Valley Project made a follow-up visit to each community to make sure that they were ready to participate.



The first open meeting

The first stakeholder meeting with broad representation from the different water user groups took place in October 1999.



The first meeting of stakeholders for the establishment of a WUA, October 1999

The October meeting, held on 12 and 13 October 1999 at the Mpofu Training Centre in the Upper Kat River Valley, was attended by 25 participants. These included representatives from the village communities, commercial farmers, the Kat River Citrus Co-operative, Local DWAF and National DWAF. The meeting was facilitated by Nicole Motteux of the Kat River Valley Project together with John Fargher, from AACM International in Australia, and Dr Ralph Heath from Rand Water in Johannesburg. Other Rhodes University researchers, representatives from the DWAF Directorate of Catchment Management, and the Regional DWAF office provided input. Translators were used throughout.

The use of outside facilitators enabled DWAF staff members to participate equally in the workshop and to express their own hopes, needs and concerns. It also helped the grassroots stakeholders to acknowledge the role and skills of the DWAF stakeholders, while at the same time seeing that they did not always have the answers and resources.

The two-day meeting generated a list of core values (social, economic and environmental), along with core opportunities and core threats



for the management of the river, which were agreed upon by all the stakeholders present. It also produced a draft constitution for a Kat River Water User Association (see Section 5). The two mandates that came out of these workshops were (1) the need to put in place structures to improve communication among stakeholders in the catchment, and (2) the need to disseminate information, build awareness and consult with all the people living along the Kat River. The meeting led to a process of action planning for the establishment of the Water User Association and a Catchment Forum.

A date was set (23 November) for further open meetings on the WUA constitution to be held in Fort Beaufort in the morning and at the Mpofu Training Centre in the Upper Kat in the afternoon.

Follow-up meetings

The meetings in Fort Beaufort and at the Mpofu Training Centre on 23 November each opened with a drama production that brought together all participants in a shared activity. This was followed by an introduction from the steering committee, and a talk by Dr Tally Palmer (Institute for Water Research, Rhodes University), who had been instrumental in the development of the National Water Act. A final meeting for all stakeholders, to resolve issues around the WUA constitution, was held in December 2000.

The requirement that stakeholders should be informed of developments led the Kat River Valley Project to organise awareness workshops in the Upper Kat communities in early 2000. These meeting led to the formation of the Kat River Catchment Forum.

2. THE CATCHMENT FORUM

From the perspective of DWAF, the role of a Catchment Forum is to act as a communication channel between catchment residents and local government, municipality and other institutions. A CF is also a voice for catchment residents, particularly people who in the past have had little say over the management of resources. A CF can also be an educational body, a watchdog, and an initiating and organisational structure for activities in the catchment.

Monde Ntshudu, CRG interpreter and facilitator:

The main purpose of the Catchment Forum is to look at different community activities that impact negatively or positively on the river and environment as a whole, whereas the Water User Association focuses more on practical water issues.

When I started with Nicole Motteux we went from village to village in the catchment to introduce and establish the Catchment Forum. We needed each village to be represented, rather than just taking ten people as different villages with different issues. It was important to bring them together, so they knew each other and know the different environmental issues in other villages. It went very well, but we didn't stop there. We did workshops on river awareness; workshops on what benefits them in the environment and how to make it sustainable and safe for future generations. We really worked on the relationship between the communities and the environment; what the environment needs from them and what they take from the environment.

The community survey

To start building capacity and awareness, a brochure and newsletter were developed with the villagers of Hertzog and Fairbairn to publicise integrated water resource management concepts and opportunities. These were the two villages that had originally identified a need for an organisation to represent community needs in the catchment.

The brochure and newsletter

These publications were good examples of how the ethic of participation and continuous capacity-building was applied in the Kat River Valley. Most capacity-building processes produce newsletters and brochures but not many produce these directly with the communities they work with.

The brochure

Sample copies of other brochures were handed out at a workshop and participants discussed which style they would prefer. In small groups they brainstormed what should be in the brochure. They also developed and drew the logo for the brochure. As there is no term in Xhosa to describe integrated water resource management the brochure became a useful tool for grassroots facilitators to explain IWRM to other groups.

The newsletter

The newsletter was produced by students from the Journalism and Media Studies Department at Rhodes University. The intention of the newsletter was to raise awareness of catchment issues and promote an understanding of the activities of people in the catchment. The students interviewed a diversity of Kat River Valley stakeholders. A lot of photographs were included to make the newsletter interesting for illiterate stakeholders. The newsletter was particularly popular because people recognised themselves, their sons and daughters and their friends in the photographs.

At the same time it was decided that a survey should be done, to gain a deeper understanding of stakeholder communities, and to understand their water use and their interest in integrated water resource management. The Hertzog and Fairbairn communities drew up the survey questions with the help of Nicole Motteux.

A Xhosa team (some members of which later became the Catchment Research Creative Group) administered the survey in 15 catchment communities. The results indicated that stakeholders felt there was a strong need for water resource management. According to most people, there were water resource problems that were not being solved because of lack of communication between communities, individuals and government institutions.

Workshops leading to the establishment of the Catchment Forum

"Stakeholders need to have correct and appropriate information in order to participate and make informed decisions. As Leurs (1998) states, 'those with less power also tend to have less access to knowledge and information or less power in defining what sorts of knowledge and information are useful in development.'" (Motteux, 2003)

Chris Mgwali, CF member:

In 1997/98 Nicole Motteux began to unite people... starting with schools: educating people on the importance of the environment by using drama. At the same time she was also showing them networks where they can get help. That's where people got aware of how to care about the river and what not to use in the river. Before Nicole came here there were 15% households with toilets, but now there are 99%. It has got to do with the awareness she raised.

People realised that the fish in the river were being killed by diesel. The black farmers' engines were always leaking. I noticed the bamboo had gone, as well as the *umcunobe*, because the farmer who was here let the livestock graze alongside the river. People later prevented livestock from grazing along the river, so the grass grew up. But what usually happens is before people plant their crop, they burn the fields, so now it was easy for the river resources to catch fire, which is why the bamboo and *umcunobe* are gone now. Because of what Nicole made us aware of, we found a beautiful pool below the dam with a waterfall there. It is a very beautiful place, which we can use as a tourist destination if we get help and improve the economy of this area.

Another thing we learned from Nicole's awareness workshops were the diseases you find in the water. There are other rivers that feed into the Kat and some of those rivers run past septic tanks. Water tests that were done showed that the river water in the Kat is better than water that comes from some rivers that come into the Kat, for example Tamboekiesvlei and Backstein water was the worst quality. So after that people did not like river water. Those who could not afford big tanks organised themselves drums to collect rainwater.

Luyanda Nkayi, CF chairman:

People used to cut wood along the riverbanks and streams, but when the Catchment Forum was formed and there was more environmental awareness, people changed. Now the river looks better. But we need it to continue. We need workshops that focus on how to preserve the



environment, not only for the generation that is living at present. If we keep up the workshops, people talk to people, and it spreads. The guy working for DWAF forestry on the indigenous forestry side, he came to people and presented the forestry programme – now if some want to cut wood they must sign a form so the forest can be manageable. In indigenous forests you can't cut down any type of tree.

Environmental awareness workshops

To provide rural villagers with the information they needed to participate in the growing IWRM activities, Nicole Motteux organised nine environmental awareness workshops with the 15 communities that took part in the survey, for May and June 2000. The workshops had a dual purpose: to further spread knowledge and understanding of the Water User Association process and constitution, and to lay the groundwork for the establishment of a Catchment Forum. The workshops also provided an opportunity to record the environmental threats and opportunities perceived by these communities.

The methods and processes were much the same as for earlier workshops. An important activity in each workshop was a transect walk, where participants observed, recorded and discussed their environment. The images and information recorded at these workshops were collated into a document (translated into Xhosa) titled "Care for the river and the river cares for you – Environmental Awareness Workshops 2000". This document was presented to participants at 15 'Way Forward' workshops held in June.

'Way Forward' workshops

The Way Forward workshops were held so that villagers could select their representatives for the Catchment Forum. Participants worked through the objectives of the CF: qualities that members should have, and what their roles should be. Representatives were then nominated. Before being voted onto the CF, each person was asked to give a motivation as to why they should be chosen and how they planned to fulfil their role as a representative.

On 12 July 2000 the Catchment Forum met for the first time.

Building a catchment identity⁶

Part of the capacity-building process of the Catchment Forum was to develop a catchment identity. This means that the representatives see themselves, not as representatives of their village or even of their own needs, but as representing the needs of all people in the catchment. To gain this perspective the representatives had to understand how the catchment functioned as a unit, and envisage how activities in one part of the catchment had a direct effect on other areas within the catchment. CF members had to become familiar with the physical look of the catchment: where it started, where it ended, who lived in it. They also needed to be familiar with the villages represented by the other CF members, to understand the issues that prevailed in different areas, and how these were interlinked.

Tree planting

Another way of strengthening identity was to involve everyone in activities that symbolised a common identity. One such activity was planting trees. Nicole Motteux described this activity as a way of “building group spirit and implementing a catchment-scale activity with a tangible output that can be understood by many participating stakeholders.” Both commercial farmers and marginalized communities were involved in the tree-planting event. The trees were planted on two commercial farms and in each village that was part of the Catchment Forum. CF members decided what type of tree they would plant, selected the sites, and organised implements for the planting. Each community chose someone near the site to look after the newly planted tree (Motteux, 2003).

The Kat River Valley Catchment Forum met as a body for the first time on 12 July 2000. Representatives from the 15 villages that had participated in the Environmental Awareness workshops held in May and June attended the meeting.

The purpose of this workshop was to allow the members to develop a better understanding of the catchment and of relationships between villages. They used a mapping exercise to analyse the catchment, map the status of each village, and share information so as to better understand the upstream-downstream links. This was reinforced by a physical exploration of the catchment by bus (a catchment transect trip). At each village, the Catchment Forum members spoke

⁶ Rowntree et al., 2002; McMaster, 2002; Motteux, 2003.

about what the main issues were: what threatened them, and what solutions they had come up with.

In the next workshop, held a few days later, the Catchment Forum members participated in a map-based 'action planning' exercise. The aim was to develop a 'future desired state' for the catchment that would remedy the issues identified at the first workshop. Participants mapped significant features onto tracing paper, for example areas of action such as removal of alien vegetation, and structural development such as fences, or furrows for irrigation. A plan of action was then tabulated in association with each mapped action. This included motivating the plan, responsibilities, resource requirements, processes and evaluation criteria.

Catchment Forum members speak about their involvement

Andile Ndindwa, CF member:

I got involved with the Catchment Forum in 1997. David (another CF member) put my name forward to be the representative on the CF, and the community accepted me. I did not take water issues seriously before, but learning the importance of water has been a wonderful experience for me. The CF has done much for the community by bringing LandCare to the people. Because of it I am involved in the Water User Association and I am aware of the issue of licensing and allocation. I am proud of what the Catchment Forum has done.

Chris Mgwali, CF member:

At first I did not really want to be involved. I was just interested – I would go in and listen. There was a young man who was our representative who had to leave. So I got involved. I even brought in another man, Edward [last name not available], because I knew that I would not have that much time. I am very busy with my gardens and I wanted our village, Hertzog, to have active and responsible members. The CF was established at Fort Fordyce in 2000. At that stage there were about 18 villages involved. Later we saw that the CF should expand beyond the dam – a thing we never thought of – to include villages of Cathcartvale and Buckstein.

Txolo (Jez) Jezi, CF representative for Fairbairn, and former manager of the LandCare project:

I was born here in Fairbairn, and except for my high school education in Alice, I've always been here. I became involved in the Catchment Forum in 2000 when we were busy with the Reserve workshops in Fairbairn. My involvement became much deeper when I started working in the LandCare



project. I was employed by the Catchment Forum to manage the LandCare as project manager.

When we started there was no clarity about tenure. Down in the Lower Kat you can see the difference, different farmers own land and they are growing oranges and helping the community around their farms. But here the land is still not owned. In HACOP (Herzog Agricultural Cooperative) people are trying to work the land but it is small scale. The land was never owned by people; in the Upper Kat people were given lease agreements but ownership was with the apartheid government. In the 1970s the land was only given to whites and in the 1980s people could lease land. So tenure is the problem. You can have plans, but what happens at the end of the day is that someone says, 'This is my land'.

The CF has been involved in numerous activities. First there were the workshops that were run by Rhodes, funded by the Water Research Commission. They served as an eye-opener to the community and we were in a position to share what we knew with neighbouring villages. Up till then we were kept as islands, we did not see what others were doing, so the workshops were great in that way.

Luyanda Nkayi, CF chairman:

There have been lots of changes. People have started to understand their rights and responsibilities towards the environment. There have been projects such as Working for Water and road maintenance, and people have had work. People have a chance to say whatever they want to say to local government. We got electricity in some rural areas, and some areas have got tap water. At the moment there is an initiative to review heritage sites such as Fort Armstrong.

Thandiwe Memani, CF member:

I heard about the Catchment Forum in 1999 when I was still at school. I watched the drums being played and my friends and I would ask what was happening there. I was never elected; I just got involved. Wherever there was workshop I would go and attend. At one meeting I heard a facilitator asking who is the CF member for Seymour. There were other members from Seymour, like Nokwayi, Masithole and Mokwandisa, [last names not available] but they got involved in other things. I got involved as a member in 2001, because I heard that in the workshops they were talking about water, and to me, water is life. I also thought one of the Catchment Forum's roles would be to remove those graves in the dam.

The CF activity in Seymour was LandCare. It tried to control erosion, because erosion brought dirty things into the dam. The Seymour CF [members] also sat together and decided to have a clean-up campaign.





We thought let's start at the source with the pollution around the town. And the clean-up campaign was successful. But since then, there has been nothing.

Mcebisi Diki, CF member:

I got involved with the Catchment Forum in 1999. The Catchment Research Creative Group – Bulelwa [Nqweniso], Apollo [Phillip] and Mathews [Nontyi] – came and told us why they were here and what they wanted to do. They told us that the community should elect someone to the CF. I was elected along with the lady of the house, Nomolikaya [last name not available]. The group told us about the importance of the environment and the river ecosystem and how to care for the water in the river, emphasising that there are many species in the river that help with the quality of the river water. We never knew those things [before] the group told us. After that they brought us together, all the villages. We met and then we communicated and introduced ourselves to each other and we started knowing each other, and that's how the CF was formed. Since we came together we built friendships and there was a lot of cooperation because the upstream people realised that what they do affects downstream.

We didn't stop there. We looked at what the CF could do for each village and we put forward what each village needed and that was put together in a booklet called Action Plans. The CF also put together ideas on what we thought should happen in the catchment, such as LandCare and *veld* management. The LandCare project played a very important role, as it provided job opportunities to all the villages. People could send their children to school, buy clothes and food, many people benefited.

Nomapelo Nkonto, CF member:

The Catchment Forum was started in 1999. The first person to come here [Ntilini] was Jerry [Ntsebeza], from Fairbairn. Well, he told us there is something called the Catchment Forum that combines all the villages in the Kat River Valley and he asked us whether we are interested in being involved. I was elected by the community, so was Thandiswa. My involvement with the CF changed my life in terms of getting knowledge and information. I even went to Rhodes [University] to learn computer skills and administrative skills. I gained a lot from my involvement in the CF. Even now I'm happy that there will be projects from the CF, as I am unemployed.

When we started to plan our activities each member was asked what problems were in their village. For us, as Ntilini representatives, we said our main problem was dongas – Ntilini was not the only village that had this problem.

Identification of common issues September- October 2000⁷

The Catchment Forum was developing cohesiveness and a tangible purpose. To keep up the momentum it was necessary to convert the planning into action. One of the needs that all groups expressed in common was erosion control. This led to the identification of LandCare – a voluntary land management project originating in Australia, that has been adopted by the National Department of Agriculture (NDA) (see Chapter 4 for a full description of LandCare). The Department of Agriculture was seen as a possible source of funding. Rhodes University initiated the proposal process, which culminated in a workshop on 13 September 2000.

At the workshop, the participants listened to a presentation about soil erosion principles by Monde Duma, a doctoral student doing research into erosion control. Participants role-played and discussed issues about rangeland management and erosion. They mapped areas affected by erosion, to focus on what the problems were and where they were. The mapping also provided the information needed to calculate areas for budgeting purposes.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this workshop was a discussion on why the proposal should be put forward on a *catchment* basis. The discussion helped Catchment Forum members to realise how important it was for diverse communities to co-operate as a whole catchment and mutually support each other. The CF, by now representing 17 different villages, had far more lobbying power, and it would be taken more seriously than if they had operated as individual villages (McMaster, 2002). The proposal for the LandCare project, called 'Sisonke (We Care) LandCare', was submitted to the Department of Agriculture in September 2000.

⁷ Motteux, 2001; Motteux, 2003, McMaster, 2002, Duma, pending.



The Catchment Forum members, December 2002.

The role of the CF in establishing the WUA

Since its formation, the Catchment Forum was closely linked with the Water User Association process. The CF was a stakeholder in the WUA, and in turn the WUA had an interest in securing the support of the more 'popular' (politically stronger) Catchment Forum. Many of the CF members had participated in the initiation of the WUA in 1999, and as it turned out, many of the CF members stood for election to the WUA management committee. When the WUA was finally established in 2001/2002, the CF played the role of consultative body in the awareness and election process; it acted as a communication channel, passing on information about the WUA at community meetings; and the CF participated directly in co-ordinating and running the WUA management committee elections. All these CF activities led to a more catchment-wide level of support of the WUA.

The Catchment Forum's role in the Ecological Reserve pilot programme⁸

The first draft constitution for the Water User Association was submitted to DWAF in February 2000. Once this was approved, and the WUA was established, reallocation of water could take place in line with the needs of all stakeholders in the catchment. Before this reallocation could take place, however, it would be necessary to determine the ecological Reserve for the Kat River. In anticipation of this process, the Catchment Research Group motivated for a pilot programme to get underway, in which the concept of the ecological Reserve would be explained to different stakeholder groups, and data would be collected on the importance of the river environment to local user groups. Information collected would also feed into the development of guidelines for participatory IWRM (Motteux, Fargher, Rowntree, 2003).

The concept of the Reserve and the intended Reserve research project was first introduced to the Catchment Forum at a meeting in May 2001. This meeting was open to all water users in the catchment, including CF members and commercial farmers, and was attended by DWAF stakeholders. Drama and more formal slide shows were used to introduce the concept of the Reserve. Professor Jay O'Keeffe, an authority on the Reserve process from the Institute for Water Research, was invited as the main presenter. DWAF officials were also invited so that they could clarify any issues that arose.

This meeting was convened with the intention of once again bringing together the wider group of stakeholders in a common forum to discuss an issue that would become relevant to all of them in what was thought to be the near future. The outcome was less positive than hoped. The DWAF officials were largely ignorant of the details of the Reserve; the DWAF officials and the English-speaking farmers dominated parts of the workshop; the Catchment Forum members felt excluded.

To mitigate the negative outcomes of the workshop, a follow-up meeting was held with the Catchment Forum, where CF members were given the opportunity to ask questions about the Reserve and discuss their involvement. One of the requests was that more workshops be run on the Reserve concept, open to all villagers. These

⁸ Burt and Rowntree, 2003; Rowntree, 2003.



workshops were run in collaboration with the Water User Association voting workshops (See Chapter 3, Preparing for the Management Committee Elections), strengthening the link between CF activities and the activities of the WUA. CF members were encouraged to attend more than one workshop so as to meet other villagers and develop a better understanding of the Reserve process to feed back to their own villages.

In December 2001 Catchment Forum members were invited to help develop 'management classes' for the Kat River. By that stage their knowledge about the Reserve had grown considerably. The CF played an important role in the IWRM research work. It collected information from local inhabitants, built awareness, and investigated levels of capacity. It worked as a channel of communication. It was the key to local participation in the Reserve process. Unfortunately, due to delays in gazetting the Water User Association, and the loss of momentum in getting the WUA established as a fully functioning body, the Reserve determination did not get underway until 2005.

An important lesson to be learnt from the first meeting on the Reserve is that specific capacity has to be built to enable Catchment Forum members to participate alongside more educated people and also English speaking people. It would have been more appropriate to hold the wider stakeholder meeting *after* the CF members had learnt about the Reserve through a series of village workshops, not the other way around. This practice has proved successful on a number of other occasions.

The CF executive committee and re-evaluation of the Catchment Forum's role

At the first Reserve workshop in May 2001, the Catchment Research Group facilitator put forward the suggestion of a Catchment Forum executive committee, motivating that it would make it easier to manage any funding that may come to the CF, such as that anticipated from LandCare. Some CF members seized upon the opportunity to form what may have been seen as a power elite within the forum, and immediately pushed the process through without allowing time for discussing the need for such a committee. This raised a number of tensions within the forum and changed the way in which the forum acted in the future. By this time Nicole Motteux had stepped back from the project as she was planning to leave the country. The

relatively inexperienced Catchment Research Group researcher, who was facilitating this meeting, felt uncomfortable about the speed of the process, but found it difficult to know when to step in to guide a situation in which a CF member had already grasped the initiative. When does a facilitator step back and when does he or she need to intervene? The answer is easier to come by retrospectively.

Set in motion by the Catchment Research Group, this move towards a committee was premature, as it did not develop from a clear need of the Catchment Forum at the time. Up to that point, all the CF members had been involved and contributed to all activities. Now some members felt that this role was being taken away from them and given to the smaller committee group. An additional danger was that a committee structure could lead to the entrenchment of another bureaucracy instead of decentralising participation down to local level.

When viewed primarily as a means of power, knowledge is not always shared willingly. This knowledge-power differential existed between Catchment Forum members and the villagers they represented, and the Catchment Research Group was concerned that something similar would develop between the executive committee and the rest of the CF. To try to forestall this possibility the CRG asked for a workshop on roles and responsibilities. At the workshop, held in May 2001, the CF retold its history, considered the roles it had played thus far, and re-explored its vision. In this way the functioning and responsibilities of the CF committee was formalised to an extent. Reconsidering roles and responsibilities became an ongoing process of reflection of the CF.



River clean-up campaign, Seymour, November 2001. ADD PIC of boys collecting rubbish



On the positive side, the formation of the committee made it easier to consult with outside organisations, such as Regional DWAF and Rhodes University. A formalised Catchment Forum is more likely to be recognised in the future by DWAF, by a future Catchment Management Agency, and by funders. Interaction with researchers was also easier as, instead of having to meet 30 people, they now only had to consult with five or six. The executive committee members were responsible for communicating with the other Catchment Forum members. In reality problems of access to transport and communication were and still remain the biggest obstacles to good interaction between the committee and CF members in the Kat River valley.

The effects of having formalized too quickly, without careful consideration, are still felt within the Catchment Forum to this day. Some members of the CF, who are not executive committee members, have withdrawn or become inactive. Others look to the executive committee to come up with projects and solutions rather than being proactive themselves. When members were asked to name the challenges facing the CF almost every member interviewed identified the organization's main problem as being one of leadership.

Keeping up momentum

Soon after the formalisation workshop, the Catchment Forum learned that the CF-CRG LandCare proposal to the Department of Agriculture had been postponed. They were uncertain about what they should do. Being continually involved in Catchment Research Group initiatives was no longer enough – they wanted to start running projects of their own. To address this, the CRG and CF revisited the initial Action Planning workshop where catchment needs had been identified. The Catchment Research Creative Group and CF members met people in their villages to find out what issues they would like addressed. Once an issue was decided upon, a way forward was planned.

The Catchment Forum members from Seymour were the first to come up with a project – a river clean-up campaign. They were able to organise funds from the local municipality to cover the costs of transport, food and equipment for the clean up. For the first time the Catchment Research Group played a completely passive role. The Seymour CF formed a partnership with local government and showed members of the CF from other areas what could be done.



LandCare goes ahead

In May 2002, after the initial disappointment of postponement, the Sisonke Kat Valley LandCare Project was approved. Three years' of funding was granted, R750 000 per annum, but the final year's funding never materialised due to changes in the Department of Agriculture's priorities. Although it was a Catchment Forum project, Rhodes University was nominated as the implementing agent.

A LandCare steering committee was constituted from members of the Catchment Forum, together with other stakeholders from the Department of Agriculture, Nkonkobe Municipality, and the Catchment Research Group. The steering committee oversaw a four-person management committee employed by the project. All members of the management committee were from the local area.

Work started in September 2002, with gully rehabilitation, fencing, awareness creation and training. The focus of the first two years was the installation of erosion control structures that would provide work (and income) and would have an immediately visible effect on erosion processes. The focus of the third year was to have workshops on how to practice better *veld* management and how to sustain the LandCare initiative beyond the end of the project. Not having funding for this third year meant that the project came to an end without any closure and without funds to pay people: little if any follow-up work has been done to maintain structures.

The LandCare project influenced the Catchment Forum in a number of ways. It led to a change from vision building, appraisal and planning activities, to an action focus. It provided both a purpose and a focus around which the CF could further develop its capacity. It also provided a means of financial independence that led to greater self-reliance. While the LandCare project was happening, the CF committee initiated and ran meetings without the Catchment Research Group. The sustainability of the CF was much closer to being a reality. Unfortunately once the LandCare funding came to an end, the CF once again could not hold meetings without some outside support. Since then the CF only meets when the CRG calls meetings to consult with representatives on behalf of the Water User Association. What the LandCare experience does show is that the CF is more than capable of managing its own affairs if it has the funding to cover basic costs such as transport.



The growth of the CF

The Catchment Forum was officially established with a membership of 17 village representatives from the Upper and Middle Kat. Subsequently it grew further. The Sisonke LandCare project worked in villages that were not originally represented on the forum. This led to village representatives from three more villages (Cathcartvale, Phillipton and Buxton) joining the CF. At the time of writing, the CF was investigating including representatives from the Lower Kat and inviting other stakeholders, such as regional DWAF and municipality representatives, to become members. The CF is officially represented on the Water User Association.




This gradual growth is a testimony to the Catchment Forum's own development and understanding of IWRM issues. As capacity has been built, so has the ability to address more diverse catchment needs, and this has encouraged more stakeholders to become members.

Sharing lessons beyond the Kat River Valley

Kat River CF meets Mtata CF

The Kat River Catchment Forum was the subject of a doctoral study by Eliab Simpungwe from the University of Wageningen in the Netherlands. The focus of his research was a comparison between the Mtata and Kat River Valley Catchment Forums in the light of the new legislation on catchment management in South Africa. Simpungwe chose these two CFs because of their marked differences. The Mtata CF was instigated by DWAF and was essentially composed of government officials, municipality officials and academics, with minimal community participation, whereas the Kat CF was initiated via an identified need of rural communities and supported by researchers, but not by DWAF or the municipality.

As part of his research Simpungwe initiated a meeting at Hogsback, in January 2003, between the two catchment forums. It was hosted by the Kat CF and facilitated by Catchment Research Group researchers, Jane Burt and Alistair McMaster. At this meeting, the CF members shared their experiences regarding their history, roles, challenges and opportunities. The most important issue, voiced by both CFs, concerned sustainability – particularly organisational sustainability.



A follow-up meeting was held in Mtata between the two forums. At this meeting the Kat CF was introduced to the way in which the Mtata CF was run and given a tour of the catchment area.

Kat River CF meets Okhombo CF

In May 2003, the WRC funded a meeting between the Kat River CF and the Okhombo CF of KwaZulu-Natal. The meeting included practitioners from both areas, as well as others doing WRC research projects. The meeting, held in the Kat River Valley, was an informal sharing of the stories of the two Catchment Forums. Both of these Catchment Forums had been initiated by WRC-funded research projects, and had gained further funding via LandCare. Members of the two CFs told their stories and the visitors from Okhombo were given a tour of LandCare sites by the Sisonke LandCare management team. On the second day, practitioners from the two areas met to share their experience of building capacity and participation within the two CFs.



3. SETTING UP THE WATER USER ASSOCIATION

Two beginnings

The Water User Association in the Kat River Valley had two independent points of initiation associated with two different stakeholder groups. The first group consisted of emergent farmers and rural community water users in the upper regions of the catchment, where the Catchment Research Group was engaged in research. The other group was the commercial farmers in the lower regions of the catchment, with whom the researchers had had little contact at the time. This account tells of the coming together of these two groups, and how they came to establish a Water User Association. The formation of the Kat River Catchment Forum came out of the same beginning, and its development is closely bound to that of the WUA.

Transforming the Kat River Irrigation Board

In February 1996 three members of the Kat River Irrigation Board attended a workshop at the Amatole Sun in the Eastern Cape. At the workshop they were introduced to the proposed transformation of the old Water Act. They also attended a workshop in Port Elizabeth at which they were given guidelines for the transformation of Irrigation Boards.

In February 1999, in the year after the National Water Act (no 36 of 1998) became law, the Kat River Irrigation Board convened a meeting in Fort Beaufort to discuss the formation of a Water User Association. The agenda included the new legal requirement to involve all directly affected groups in the formation of a Water User Association. The workshop divided the water users into 16 groups, based on user categories and geographical zones. An *ad hoc* committee representing the 16 groups was proposed (representatives for most groups had yet to be found), and a chairman and secretary were elected.

The *ad hoc* committee never actually met. The chairman was unable to commit his time due to the pressures of the harvest season, and he approached Nicole Motteux from Rhodes University for assistance in the process. From that point onwards, the formation of the Water User Association was facilitated largely by the Kat River Valley Project and funded through the WRC (Motteux, 2001; Motteux, 2003). In setting up the WUA, the Kat River Valley Project played a dual role: facilitating the multi-stakeholder processes leading to



the establishment of the WUA, and actively supporting villagers to ensure their effective participation.

The Water User Association establishment process took two and a half years, from October 1999 to April 2002. It began with a series of meetings of all stakeholders, at which an initial constitution was drawn up and a four-person steering committee elected. The initial constitution was submitted to the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry in February 2000. After a number of modifications at the request of DWAF, it was finally approved in December 2001. The process to elect a management committee took place from July 2001 to April 2002, with the management committee's first meeting held on 9 May 2002.

Jerry Ntsebeza, small scale-farmer representative of the WUA:

Things started in the Kat in 1996/97 with Nicole [Motteux] and Bulelwa [Nqweniso]. At this time I was attending workshops as an ordinary person, a member of the community. They were environmental workshops but we also used to raise issues. The critical issue was the bridge at Fairbairn. It was overflowing because of a lot of sediment, and at times of floods it would overflow. Nicole helped us in writing a proposal. Then contacts started between the community and DWAF.

The communities of Hertzog and Fairbairn were also concerned about the release of water from the dam, we did not know how and when water was released. We were not notified as a community. Community members would cross the river on the way to school or something and then when they came back the river would be flooded and they would struggle to cross. The bridges were also in bad repair.

It was the old Irrigation Board then, but it was only for the white citrus farmers. Not even the farmers from HACOP knew about water rights. Some farmers did not care about the water quality, they used old diesel that leaked out and into the river. After the environmental workshops the farmers they came together, DWAF was involved, and Rhodes facilitated. We heard about water rights, we heard about a Water User Association. We decided to elect a committee for different areas: Upper, Lower and Middle Kat. I was part of the committee to draft the constitution. Rhodes helped us and DWAF helped us as well.

Llewellyn Roberts, vice chair of WUA:

The National Water Act created a lot of interest from the Lower Kat farmers as a possible way of getting a guarantee of irrigation water. The other interest



came from those who were not irrigators but saw an opportunity to get water rights. The old Irrigation Board realised they would have to comply with the transformation. So we set up a few meetings. Both the scheduled users and non-scheduled users were involved. We tried to work out a plan for complying with the new Act. That is when we got in touch with the Rhodes Geography Department – they were already on the ground. They arranged various workshops to get the support and information transfer to all the people. We worked on the constitution, developing some sort of voting rights for managing water. Then we had elections. We thought we were through by then, that we would get a quick business plan together. We just needed to work out the Reserve. Most people don't see that as a big issue, they just want to manage the water. At least people know now that there is a system.

Monde Ntshudu, Catchment Research Group interpreter and facilitator:

I have been working in the Kat for about seven years. I came to know the Kat very well, almost every village, especially villages close to the river. This is because I was spending time in the villages helping different research projects for different Masters and PhD students. I fell in love with the catchment because of the hospitality, the kindness, the spirit of giving, even though the area is not an economically viable area. The communities are friendly and welcoming and prepared to share whatever they have.

In 1999 Nicole Motteux called all stakeholders together and introduced the National Water Act and what was required. I was there as interpreter at that time. There were lots of farmers in the Kat, large and small, and the old Irrigation Board that needed to transform. We took the initiative to do that in the Kat. We helped them establish a steering committee for a Water User Association and to put together a constitution. Eventually the constitution was cleared by the Minister [of Water Affairs and Forestry].

Then it was my task to inform each village about the constitution and the Water User Association. This is part of the NWA – that everyone has to have a say. So the task was to introduce the Act and the Water User Association to the communities. This went very well. After that we went up to the stage of organising the elections for the management committee that will take decisions about water in the Kat. From there the WUA had training of how this organisation was new and the way it was going to function. I wasn't involved with that; it was a consultant. Years later I became involved again as the WUA is to develop a Catchment Management Plan. My role was again translation, facilitation and report writing. At the moment we are in the process of completing the Catchment Management Plan.



The whole process was very very inclusive. Nobody can come at a later stage to say they were not included in the process. It doesn't matter whether you are domestic or large-scale, the process considers all stakeholders and their needs as very important. And the process had the blessings of the Department of Water Affairs. All stakeholders were invited to come and bring their comments, whereas before people just took it that farmers and the municipality would do that.

Now we've got established and very experienced people in the WUA. People that have been involved in professional organisations who can help the Water User Association move forward. Outside organisations know whom to contact if they want to contact the Kat River Water User Association.

Drafting the constitution

The first draft of the constitution was put together at the October meeting, held at the Mpofu Training Centre in the Upper Kat River Valley. Various local stakeholders as well as representatives from the DWAF Directorate of Catchment Management, and the Regional DWAF office attended this meeting.

The two-day meeting generated a list of core values (social, economic and environmental), core opportunities, and core threats in relation to the management of the river. These were agreed upon by all the stakeholders present. This led to a process of action planning for the establishment of the Water User Association.

The final phase of the workshop was the development of a draft WUA constitution. Each component of the constitution was presented by one of the outside facilitators, and then negotiated. Some of the decisions were:

- 1 Commercial irrigators would be accorded 60% of the votes and small-scale users 40%. This was decided because the commercial irrigators were proportionally the heaviest investors in the water supply system and its management. However it was also agreed that small-scale irrigators who were reliant on the river should not be dominated or compromised by the actions of the commercial irrigators. At this stage no provision had been made for the inclusion of urban water service providers or rural domestic (Schedule 1) users.



- 2 The DWAF director of Catchment Management explained the concept of a Catchment Forum. The workshop participants agreed that a CF could play an important supporting role in the establishment of a Water User Association.
- 3 It was agreed that the Water User Association should support catchment management as one of its functions.
- 4 The National Water Act pro-forma constitution requires that the first participants in the Water User Association process authorise a group of founding members to act on their behalf to establish the WUA. For this purpose a steering committee of four was elected, consisting of a commercial irrigator from the Lower Kat, one from the Middle Kat, an emerging/small-scale irrigator from the Upper Kat, and a domestic water user from the Upper Kat. It was agreed that the steering committee would work jointly with the Kat River Valley Project.
- 5 A schedule of existing water users was formulated, which is a requirement for the ratification of a Water User Association constitution.
- 6 A date was set (23 November) for further open meetings on the constitution to be held in Fort Beaufort in the morning and at the Mpofu Training Centre in the Upper Kat in the afternoon.

The development of the constitution

The process of developing the constitution was central to the transformation of relations in the Kat. Through intensive negotiations, the different groups came to see and respect each other's circumstances and fears, and to accommodate each other's needs. Although the white farmers were initially frustrated with the slowness of the process, their continued commitment meant that the black farmers came to trust the Water User Association as a body through which their needs could be recognised and dealt with.

The constitution of the Water User Association evolved into a relatively precise document with clear mechanisms for implementation. This development is reflected in the record of decision-making, with some of the points reflected below:

12 and 13 October:

- The management committee would consist of seven people.



23 November:

- It was agreed that an 8th member be added to the management committee to represent emerging farmers/irrigators.

7 December:

- The term of office for management of committee members would be **three** years.
- The Kat River catchment would be divided into two sub-areas, "North" and "South", with the dividing line just below the confluence of the Kat and Blinkwater rivers. Four members from the North and six from the South would constitute the management committee, as follows:

North

- Hertzog Agricultural Co-operative (Emerging Irrigators)
- Transitional Local Council (TLC) Seymour (Domestic)
- Transitional Rural Council (TRC) Balfour (Domestic)
- Ex-Ulimocor farmers (Irrigators)

South

- Riverside (Irrigators)
 - TLC Fort Beaufort (Domestic)
 - TRC Fort Beaufort (Domestic)
 - Kat Co (Kat River Citrus Cooperative) (Irrigators)
 - Lower Kat Farmers (Irrigators)
 - Emerging Lower Kat Farmers (Emerging Irrigators).
- Each community stakeholder could decide which of the ten voting sub-areas he/she would vote for, depending on which area he/she was closest to and/or preferred. Each person would have one vote.

Follow-up meetings

The aim of the meetings in Fort Beaufort and at the Mpofu Training Centre on 23 November was to further discuss the constitution with smaller groups of stakeholders. Each meeting opened with a drama that brought together all participants around a shared activity. This was followed by an introduction from the steering committee, and a talk by Dr Tally Palmer (Institute for Water Research, Rhodes University), who had been instrumental in the development of the National Water Act.



Discussions at the Fort Beaufort meeting, attended mainly by commercial farmers, covered several important points:

- The make-up of the committee: there were discrepancies in the constitution about how many people would constitute the management committee, and which stakeholder groups they would represent. This was further complicated by the 60% vote allocation of the commercial irrigators.
- Questions around voting methods.
- The possible establishment of the management committee on the basis of sub-catchments.

The rural community members and poor farmers who attended the meeting at the Mpofu Training Centre indicated that they did not fully understand the principles behind the Water User Association. They asked for time to consult their communities. Discussion on the constitution and voting procedures was postponed to another meeting, set for 7 December.

It was agreed that before this meeting took place, the constitution should be translated into Xhosa and given to the communities in the Upper Kat, together with invitations for the next meeting. It was made clear that the translation was not a legal document, as certain terms may not have been correctly interpreted and conveyed. To avoid misunderstanding, a knowledgeable translator (Monde Ntshudu) held meetings and discussions with interested rural communities. All these preparations enabled the community stakeholders to participate actively and effectively in the 7 December meeting.

At the December meeting, attended by a full cross-section of stakeholders in the catchment, the voting procedures and voting sub-areas were finalised. A number of decisions were made:

- The proposal for the Kat River Valley Water User Association would be forwarded to the Minister of Water Affairs together with the proposed constitution, along with a record of what had been achieved to date.
- The main objective was to secure water usage for all people in the valley.
- The Environmental Reserve should be quantified.
- All stakeholders should be informed of the developments in the formation of the Water User Association.



The requirement that stakeholders should be informed of developments led the Kat River Valley Project to organise nine environmental awareness workshops in the Upper Kat communities in early 2000, as well as the ecological Reserve workshop.

Some stakeholders were becoming frustrated with the drawn out nature of the processes, but as Nicole Motteux noted: "The need to ensure that the WUA process actively involved stakeholders in the decision-making process resulted in a process with a defined goal but no certainty about when exactly the activity would end. This resulted in some stakeholders feeling frustrated and resenting the needs of those marginalised stakeholders, who required more knowledge and who needed to consult with their respective communities. However, with time, these frustrated stakeholders came to appreciate the constructive and sincere attitude that the marginalised stakeholders adopted. This resulted in a respect among the diverse stakeholders and an appreciation of cultural and economic differences" (Motteux, 2002, p. 297).

Questions about the constitution

These are commonly sought explanations about the Water User Association constitution.

Who is a Schedule 1 user in the context of the Kat?

A person who collects water for domestic use, for gardening and for watering stock.

Who is a water user in the context of the Kat?

The irrigators, the municipality and the citrus packing companies.

Why can't a Schedule 1 user be on the management committee?

Schedule 1 users were not on the Water User Association voters' roll, so they could not be members of the WUA. But they could vote for a representative on the management committee.

Some questions asked at the CF and WUA steering committee meeting of the 30 July 2001

Who is going to make sure that farmers don't lie about the size of the land that they are irrigating? (Exaggerating the size of the land could



mean having more voting power, and perhaps receiving greater water allocations.) The Water User Association steering committee will monitor farmers' claims. They have a good idea of who irrigates what. The Catchment Research Group does not have the funds to go to each farm to verify the allocation.

What about people who do not own land, but who have applied for land from the government? What about irrigation scheme people? How are they going to be charged?

Once the WUA is established, they will look into that.

What about the farmers above the Kat dam?

The constitution says that the Water User Association includes the whole of the Kat River Valley. Since these farmers are irrigators in the valley, they should be members. Also, they extract water from the rivers that flow into the dam.

Do the Seymour farmers above the dam also have water rights?

That will have to be determined by the Water User Association.

What about the water for the ecological Reserve?

The management committee will have to look at that.

This meeting and the village workshops allowed such issues to be brought to the fore and dealt with in good time. On the voting day, Schedule 1 users understood that they could only vote for a Schedule 1 representative, while water users understood why they were being allocated a certain number of votes. On the day, there were no significant grievances or disruptions.

Redrafting the constitution

After the December 1999 meeting, the Kat River Valley Project researchers wrote an overview report of the Water User Association process, including all documentation leading to the final constitution. This was ratified by the steering committee on 23 February 2000, and the constitution was submitted to DWAF in May 2000.

Soon afterwards DWAF informed the drafting team that the "Guide on the Transformation of Irrigation Boards and Certain Other Boards into Water User Associations" (Audie, 1999) had superseded the pro forma constitution as set out in Section 5 of the National Water Act, and that the constitution should be redrafted according to this new



guide. Ideally this should have been done through full stakeholder workshops. However, since the Kat River Valley Project had no budget for this, and there was no funding available elsewhere, the amendments were prepared by the steering committee, with assistance from the Catchment Research Group. The Amendments were presented back to the Catchment Forum by the CRG.

A draft of the amended constitution was agreed upon by the steering committee in early July 2000 and forwarded to DWAF. Over the next 14 months the constitution went back and forth between DWAF's Directorate of Catchment Management, the DWAF legal services department, regional DWAF, the Kat River Valley Project, and the steering committee. Clarifications and modifications of terminology and descriptions were made to ensure that the document was unambiguous and legally acceptable. The Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry finally ratified the constitution on 13 December 2001, exactly 26 months after the first meeting of stakeholders.

Amendments to the constitution

In July 2000 a constitution with new provisions, in keeping with the requirements of the National Water Act, was developed. The most important provisions of the amended constitution can be found in the "Guidebook for Voting" that was developed for the voting process. Here is a summary of some of the key points:

Voting sub-areas: Rather than two voting sub-areas, the Kat was divided into three – the Upper Kat, the Middle Kat, and the Lower Kat.

Membership: There would still be 10 members on the management committee, but the categories of membership and eligibility for membership and voting was clarified:

Each sub-area would have three representatives:

- A large-scale irrigator (farms irrigating more than five hectares).
- A small-scale irrigator (farms irrigating less than five hectares).
- Schedule 1 (domestic) users among others, people who are not provided with water for household use by a municipality. This is specifically for people who do not have communal or indwelling taps and use water directly from the river and thus have a stake in the availability of water in the system and the quality of that water).





The nine representatives (three categories from three sub-areas) would be augmented by one municipal nominee to make a committee of ten. All members on the committee would have equal voting power.

Eligibility for membership: Licensed water users, or users who were eligible to apply for a licence (people without title deeds, for example). This would include irrigators, industrial users and municipal service providers.

This point needed careful explanation in village communities. As domestic or Schedule 1 users drawing water from the river, they were not eligible to become members of the Water User Association because they did not draw water in bulk and pay for a bulk allocation. However, Schedule 1 users would have representation on the Management Committee of the WUA, and these representatives would have the same voting power on the committee as other representatives. Schedule 1 representatives were to be voted on to the committee by Schedule 1 users.

Voting allocations:

- 1 Small-scale irrigator representatives for a sub-area could only be voted for by small-scale irrigators in that sub-area. Voting would be on the basis of one vote per irrigated hectare, with a maximum of five votes.
- 2 Large-scale irrigator representatives for a sub-area could only be voted for by large-scale irrigators in that sub-area. Voting would be on the basis of one vote per irrigated five hectares, with a maximum of ten votes.
- 3 Schedule 1 representatives could be nominated or voted for by Schedule 1 users, on the basis of one vote per person.
- 4 The municipal representative would be nominated by the municipality.
- 5 The term of the management committee irrigator members would be for three years, while Schedule 1 representatives and the municipal nominee could only stand for one year.

In some ways, it was good that finalizing the document took so long. A constitution is an important legal document, and loopholes can have far-reaching ramifications. However, the considerable time taken did result in a loss of momentum in the social process. Eventually much of the constitution had to be workshopped again, because people had forgotten so many aspects of it. The time it took for the constitution to be gazetted also resulted in frustration and loss of faith in “promises”.



Preparing for the management committee elections

In mid-2000, the Kat River Valley Project came to an end. A motivation for funding was put through to DWAF requesting that the Catchment Research Group finalise the transformation process. Funding was approved in mid 2001 for a process whereby:

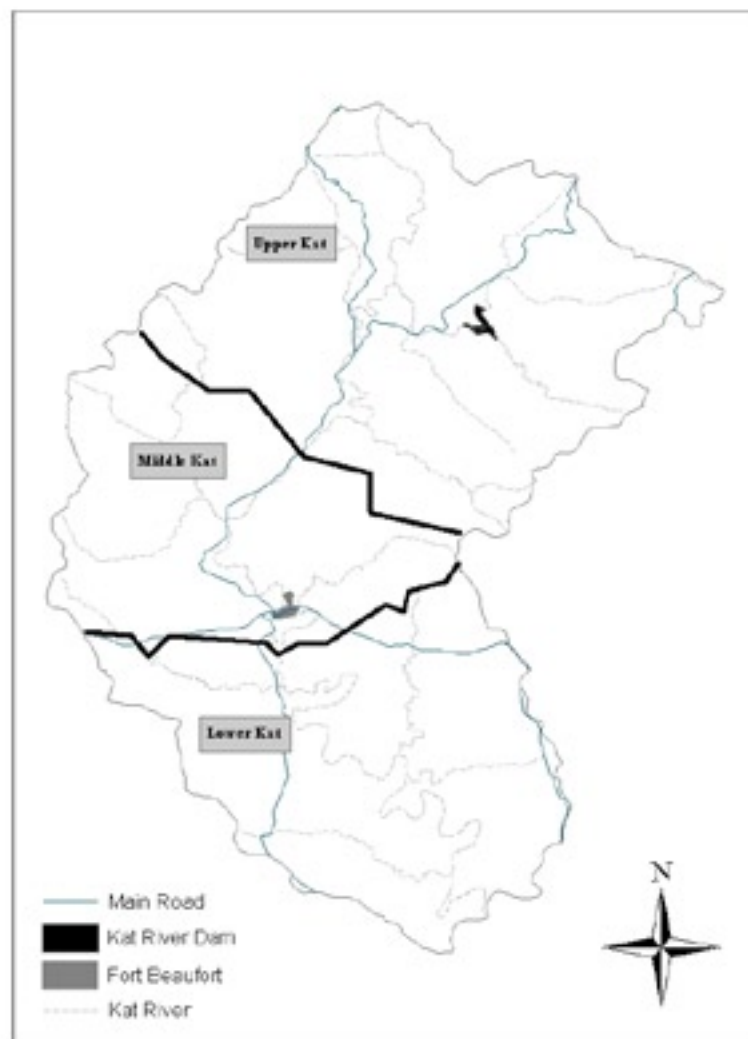
- A consultancy would draw up an action plan.
- The Catchment Research Group would facilitate the Water User Association voting process.
- The consultancy would facilitate the setting up of structures by the management committee.

On 30 July 2001, researchers from the Catchment Research Group met in Balfour with the Water User Association steering committee, together with the Kat River Valley Catchment Forum, which was by now well established. A major part of the day was devoted to determining the next phase in the WUA process. The WUA concept and process had to be re-introduced, since it was over a year since people had last discussed it.

The steps to voting in a Water User Association management committee were then agreed upon at a joint meeting of the Catchment Research Group, the steering committee, and the Catchment Forum. The following decisions were made:

- 24 October 2001 would be the day of voting for the management committee.
- Before that date, 12 workshops would be run in the middle and upper catchment. These workshops would reintroduce the WUA principles and process, and set out the practicalities of establishing the management committee.
- Catchment Forum members would be given nomination forms and registration forms to take back to their villages. These members would assist with the workshops in their villages and would be the custodians of the forms. They would be trained to answer queries. Posters asking people to nominate and register would be put up in each village, displaying the names of the Catchment Forum members.
- The deadline for nomination and registration would be the first week of October.
- Posters advertising the voting day (24 October) and the list of nominees would be printed by the Catchment Research Group and put up in each village.

- The irrigator registration lists would be handed to the WUA steering committee, which would verify the area of irrigated land that each farmer had registered.
- The number and location of voting stations in each sub-area was agreed upon.
- Catchment Forum members agreed to act as voting station helpers/marshals, and a list of 25 marshals was drawn up.
- Observers from DWAF would be invited.
- The results of the voting would be announced through posters and local media.





As part of the awareness process, a booklet was developed for use in workshops and for distribution in the catchment. Five hundred copies were printed in Xhosa and distributed at workshops and in villages. The booklet served two main purposes: to reintroduce the Water User Association to villagers and farmers, and to provide a clear step-by-step explanation of the most important points about the WUA and the voting process. The booklet explained the functions of the Water User Association, the breakdown of the WUA into sub-catchments, and the structure of the management committee about to be elected. Graphics were used to illustrate the voting process and to show how different groups and individuals could participate.

Misinterpretations and confusions

By early September 2001, eight Water User Association voting workshops had been run in the Middle and Upper Kat. Initial preparations for the voting day of 24 October had also been made. However, some confusion had arisen. A draft public notice of the ratification of the constitution had been sent to the steering committee by DWAF; it was therefore believed that the Minister would ratify the constitution before the proposed voting day. In fact, the Catchment Research Group learned that there was no assurance that the constitution would be accepted by voting day, or even by the end of the year. Without a ratified constitution, the election of a management committee would have no legal standing. There was also confusion about the roles of the Catchment Research Group and the consultancy once the management committee had been established. It was therefore decided to put the entire voting process on hold until the constitution had been gazetted.

This delay was of great concern for the Catchment Research Group researchers, who had tried hard over the years to be accountable to the communities. They were concerned that postponing the voting process would damage the trust that communities had developed in them. Catchment Forum members had also been put into an awkward position in relation to their communities.

The situation was addressed in the following way:

- A meeting was called with the Water User Association steering committee to inform them of the situation. The committee was supportive and backed a decision to continue with the process of registering irrigators and completing the community workshops.





- The Catchment Research Group apologised to the Catchment Forum about the postponement, and leaflets announcing the postponement and apologising for the situation were given to CF members for distribution to the communities. The CF members accepted the delay, and were willing to help in the distribution of leaflets.
- Letters of apology and explanation were sent to all who had attended workshops.

The final four community workshops were resumed in October and completed in early November.

The difficulty with registering farmers

Registering farmers for the election process was essential. If they did not register, they would not be allowed to vote for a representative. Also, the area of land that they irrigated (which translated into the number of votes each farmer was eligible for) had to be recorded and verified by the steering committee. By February 2002 farmers had already had five months to register, yet many of them had not done so. Members of the Catchment Research Group were sent out to the villages to motivate and assist the Catchment Forum members in the registration and nomination process. Later the Catchment Research Creative Group (CRCG) facilitators approached farmers directly.

The following report by one of the Xhosa-speaking practitioners shows the kinds of difficulties encountered:

"On Tuesday, I met Mr X and Mr Y (two Hertzog small-scale irrigators who had been central in the Catchment Forum). They were on their way to chop some wood and they say that the registration forms and nomination forms are at Mr Z's home. He was in Port Elizabeth. On Thursday I went back to Hertzog and Tamboekiesvlei and I met Mr Z, (a member of the WUA steering committee). He told me that they needed one candidate for HACOP (Hertzog Agricultural Cooperative). Fairbairn, Hertzog and Tamboekiesvlei (farmers) are not registered so I must come back on Friday because he is busy planting cabbages. On Friday he said that people are busy at a ceremony, and I must come back on Sunday. (On Sunday) he apologised and said he will do it, I must come back again."





Why was it so difficult to register farmers and nominate candidates in the Middle and Upper Kat? There were a number of contributing factors:

- Farmers often did not attend the community meetings at which the CF members reported back. CF representatives were either scared of approaching the farmers, or the farmers did not take the representatives seriously. This highlights the importance of taking into account differences in apparently homogenous communities. It became clear that there was a distinction between farmers and community members – the farmers tended to stay aloof from the rest of the community. To complicate matters, some community members were employed by the farmers. By contrast, members of cooperatives, who had less secure access to land, participated more strongly in the community component of the Water User Association establishment process.
- Many farmers did not attend the workshops. Some did not have the time, while others felt that they did not want to participate in workshops with other community members.
- Many farmers were reluctant to register to vote, fearing that registration would not help them – either they might have to start paying for their water use, or their water use might be taken away, or they might be prosecuted for some sort of illegal water use.
- Some of the Catchment Forum members did not report CF activities and decisions back to their communities. This seemed to be because they did not want to become political targets. In some cases community members were jealous of the CF members, thinking that the CF members were being employed, or had easier access to employment.

Farmers above the Kat Dam had not been involved in the earlier 1999 Water User Association open meetings, since, at the time, the focus had been on people using water released from the dam. However, in the process of drafting of the constitution, the area of operation of the Water User Association was defined as including the whole catchment. The Seymour farmers above the dam were users of the source streams, so they would eventually have to operate under licences/allocations issued through the Kat WUA. This meant that they, and the farmers along the Buxton and Fairbairn tributaries, were brought in only towards the end of the process.



Organising the voting process

The Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry ratified the constitution on 13 December 2001, which set the voting process into motion. On 21 January 2002 a second set of registration forms were sent out to the catchment for those who had not yet registered, together with nomination forms for new nominations. A workshop was held with the Catchment Forum where dates were finalised, final steps in the voting process were discussed, a final list of voting helpers drawn up, and posters and flyers were handed out for distribution in the villages. At this meeting some members of the CF discussed the difficulties they were experiencing in getting farmers to register. Some farmers had questions that the CF struggled to respond to. It was agreed that the CRCG facilitators would visit the villages with CF members to assist with registration.

The build-up to voting included the following activities:

- Meetings with the WUA steering committee.
- Final registration of farmers and final nominations for candidates on the management committee.
- Collection of registration and nomination forms.
- Collation of a voters' list to be sent to the WUA steering committee for verification.
- Printing of posters of nominees for each sub-area, and distribution in the catchment.
- Finalisation of voting venues. There would be four stations in the Upper Kat catchment, and one mobile station in the Middle Kat.
- Collection of ballot boxes from the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC).
- The printing of copies of the constitution for use and/or distribution on the voting day. Due to financial constraints only 75 copies were printed.
- Liaison with the voting helpers from the CF.
- Arrangement of transport in the catchment and setting up strategies of communication and action among the facilitators, who would be managing the voting stations on voting day.
- Organisation of accommodation and catering for facilitators and voting helpers on the night before the voting. This was necessary because voting would begin at 7am and there would not be sufficient time to collect 25 helpers on the morning of voting.
- Printing of ballot papers.

The election: 12/13 April 2002

Commercial farmers and voting in the Lower Kat

The election process among large-scale farmers in the Middle and Lower Kat was straightforward. The large-scale irrigators in the Middle Kat held a meeting at which a representative was unanimously nominated and elected. A meeting of all the farmers in the Lower Kat was held at Klu Klu Mouth, and the various representatives were elected.

At a meeting of the Water User Association steering committee on 12 February 2002, it had been decided that an extensive awareness campaign in the Lower Kat would not be needed. The Lower Kat representative on the Steering Committee had kept the farmers well informed of developments in the WUA process. The only communities in the Lower Kat were farmers and farm workers. On all the farms, the farmers (as opposed to the municipality) provide their workers with piped water. They saw themselves as the water service providers for those living on their land. Therefore in the Lower Kat, the Schedule 1 representative would be one of the farm owners.



Voting day in the Lower Kat.



The municipality as water service provider

Throughout the country in 2001, Transitional Local Councils (TLCs) and Transitional Rural Councils (TRCs) were in the process of merging and restructuring into District Municipalities. The District Municipalities were now responsible for water service provision, formerly the responsibility of Water and Sanitation Services South Africa (WSSA). During this period of change, no one seemed to be prepared to take an interest in the Water User Association process. But since the WUA constitution required a nominee from the local council to be part of the management committee, repeated attempts were made to meet with staff in the local municipality. A meeting was finally achieved in late April 2002. After that, the municipality sent an assortment of representatives to WUA management committee meetings. At the time of writing there had been no firm commitment from the municipality to indicate that it took its membership of the WUA seriously. This is one of the main concerns of the WUA management committee as the municipality is one of the biggest water users in the catchment.

Small-scale, emerging farmers and schedule 1 users in the Upper and Middle Kat

The election of small-scale, emerging farmers and schedule 1 representatives in the Upper and Middle Kat was a far more complex process. One Catchment Research Group member and the five Catchment Research Creative Group facilitators managed the election in the Upper and Middle Kat. The day before the voting, all necessary equipment was transported to the catchment from Rhodes University. The rest of the day was spent visiting the villages. In each village the team drove around with a loudhailer, encouraging village members and farmers to vote the next day. The team and 25 helpers, together with caterers, spent the night in two houses rented from villagers in Hertzog. That evening, a meeting was held with the helpers, in which last minute issues and questions were dealt with.

The voting lasted from 7.00am to 6.30pm, to allow farmers and employed people as much opportunity to vote as possible. The mobile station made a circuit of the four villages of the Middle Kat twice during the course of the day. Each voting manager had a cellphone, allowing close communication to be maintained amongst the team. In the Upper Kat, one of the five managers drove from station to station, delivering food and extra ballot papers, and providing help

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as required. At each station, forms were available for observers to fill in, in which comments could be made, or irregularities reported. Ten forms were filled in, and no complaints were lodged. At 6.30pm, the voting managers and helpers were collected from their stations, the voting helpers were paid and transported back to their villages, and the ballot boxes sealed and stored in Fairbairn for the night.

Vote counting took place the next day in Fairbairn. All the candidates were invited to observe the counting. The turnout figures were as follows:

Area and user category	Number of voters
Upper Kat	
Schedule 1 users	661
Small-scale irrigators	101
Large-scale irrigators	59
Middle Kat	
Schedule 1 users	305
Small-scale irrigators	10

Posters showing the results of the voting were printed, and distributed in all the villages of the Middle and Upper Kat. The results were faxed to DWAF and the Water User Association steering committee members.

Assessing the election

On 5 May 2002, once the results of the elections had been announced, a reflection session was held with the Catchment Research Creative Group team. These are their reflections.

The role of the Catchment Forum in the WUA process

Negative:

Some Catchment Forum members were ineffective in telling their villages about the WUA process, registering farmers and encouraging nominations. A number of reasons were put forward:

- They were not paid to do so, so they took on no responsibility. For example, some of them did not bother putting up posters they had been given.
- Some CF members could not provide full answers to some of the questions put to them by their communities.



- Some CF members did not want to become targets in community meetings, so they preferred to keep quiet.
- Some of the CF members were not recognised as true representatives by their communities.

Positive:

Many of the CF members performed their tasks well. Through workshops, they became confident and felt that they could handle most water-related questions.

Build-up to the voting

Negative:

- Communities were apathetic about nomination and registration. They did not believe that the voting process was going to happen until they actually saw the posters in the villages announcing the candidates. By then it was too late for additional nominations.
- The constitution was not distributed widely enough.
- The Phillipton community did not nominate a candidate because they did not understand the constitution (This was the most remote village, and very few of its members attended the voting workshop that took place in Fairbairn, the nearest neighbouring village).
- Some people only found out about the election on voting day, despite the awareness campaign.
- People from Buxton and Upper Seymour did not feel part of the process because they had not been included in early phases of the WUA establishment.
- Some people appeared to have confused the WUA elections with municipal elections.

Positive:

- Most people understood the WUA process.
- People recognised the legitimacy of the WUA steering committee, respected the WUA's functions, and supported its objectives.
- The posters were effective because people knew whom the candidates were when they arrived to vote.

The loudhailer was effective, it gave people that final reminder, and it backed up what the CF members had been saying to the villagers.

Voting day

Negative:

- Transport was a problem. At the voting workshops in 2001, some villagers had requested that transport be provided on the voting day, or that a voting station should be set up in each village. However there were not sufficient funds to provide such services or more voting stations. Farmers were asked to help out with transport. Many did, but clearly this did not help everyone.
- Voting did not take place on a public holiday, so some people were working.
- Some people thought that the voting would take place over two days.

Positive:

It was a good thing that the voting stations stayed open after 5pm. Most farmers came to vote between 5 and 6:30 pm.



Village workshops preparing people for the establishment of the WUA management committee, in late 2001.

After the voting

Negative:

- It was not enough to put up posters in the villages announcing the successful candidates, because some people were illiterate. It would have been better to have reported back to the communities at community meetings.
- The posters were only in Xhosa. Some of them should have been in Afrikaans – particularly in Tamboekiesvlei, Hertzog and Blinkwater.



How effective and happy were the voting helpers from the CF?

Positive:

- "They were amazing."
- "They knew what they were doing."
- "All were encouraging people to come and vote."
- "They were dedicated."
- "They were enthusiastic."
- "They were happy to work until 7pm."
- "They shared the work well."

Negative:

The Seymour helpers were not happy with how much they were paid. On the other hand most of the other helpers were perfectly satisfied with the fee. Furthermore, the fee had been agreed upon by the CF beforehand.

Other reflections

- The use of Independent Electoral Commission ballot boxes was a good idea, it made people take the voting more seriously.
- Using cell phones for communication between the voting stations was very useful.
- Some of the observers complained that they were not paid.

Confusion had been caused by the postponement of the voting. When posters were put up in February encouraging nominations, some people ignored them, thinking that they were still the posters from the pre-October process.

Txolo (Jez) Jezi, CF representative for Fairbairn, and former manager of the LandCare project:

When you are in the Water User Association you no longer feel confused. You have a voice for your concerns, and you are heard. You can act because it is a legal body. It is very important that the Catchment Forum has a representative on this body, [it means] we are informed. I can't over emphasise the need to be informed. We also hear about things like chemicals and how they affect us, and we can tell people. The WUA binds the farmers to the law. They cannot do what they wish.



The WUA management committee today.

Developing the capacity to participate

The Kat River Valley process showed very clearly the link between getting people to participate and developing their capacity to participate. Measuring attendance at meetings is not necessarily a measure of actual participation, because some people do not have the confidence to speak, or may not even know that they have the right to voice their opinions. Perhaps they feel that if they participate, they will be exposing themselves to ridicule, or compromising what they already have. Many farmers felt that by registering as a water user, they might have to suddenly pay for that use. However, those farmers who attended the capacity building workshops did not have such fears.

According to one Catchment Research Creative Group facilitator, "The voting workshops were very important in dealing with many farmers' fears that they would have to pay to belong to the Water User Association. After the workshops they were far more willing to register. Unless people have developed an understanding around an issue, they do not see the reason to participate. For example, many people who had not attended the voting workshops commented that there was no reason to vote for a WUA management committee. As far as they were concerned, there was water in the river, and so a WUA was a waste of time."

There is a great deal of suspicion within communities. People are wary of promises – asking question such as: 'What's the use of voting if promises are not going to be kept?' Capacity building brings realistic understanding that replace groundless suspicions with concrete information.



Post-election developments

The DWAF contract required that the Catchment Research Group take the process up to the election of a Water User Association management committee. The process was then to be handed over to a consultant to develop capacity within the management committee and facilitate the development of a business plan.

The consultant was duly appointed. He attended four management committee meetings and then withdrew from the process, claiming that funding had come to an end. Neither the Catchment Research Group practitioners nor the management committee were satisfied with the manner in which he went about the facilitation. They felt that his attitude was that of an expert coming to teach the ignorant. They thought he was approaching the process from a rigid and generic training perspective, without attempting to familiarise himself with the complex context and history of the Kat River Valley. He was perceived as insensitive in relation to the spirit of trust and respect that had developed in the catchment, which set him in opposition to the CRG and to many people within the catchment.

After the consultant's departure, the Water User Association committee minuted the following comment on 20 February 2003: "Mr X had done what he had set out to do although he had not completed his training for which he had received full payment. The further training required for the drawing up of the business plan, Mr X is not qualified to do this and therefore his services are no longer required." The management committee then drew up a list of their training needs, and approached the Department of Labour and other institutions for assistance. Assistance was not given, so the business plan was not completed. The current project, funded by the WRC, will finally lead to the development of a business plan as part of the catchment management plan.

Other issues that the Management Committee has contended with include:

- The Nkonkobe Municipality kept sending different representatives. Each time a new person was sent, he or she had to be introduced to the background and function of the WUA. This proved disruptive.
- The constitution required that at least one woman be included in the Management Committee, but no women had been elected. To solve the problem, the municipality sent

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two representatives, a man and a woman, to some of the meetings.

- Some of the members of the management committee required training in management skills.
- In the first half of 2003, the management committee met four times. The meetings were not attended by the small-scale irrigator and Schedule 1 representatives from the Upper Kat – these two representatives had been involved in managing a LandCare project in the Middle and Upper Kat. Nor did municipal representatives attend the meetings.
- Some farmers in the Lower Kat had expanded their citrus orchards, but were not prioritised for allocations. These farmers are looking into schemes for trading water rights with the irrigators of the Upper Kat. One possibility was a partnership whereby the Lower Kat farmers provide support in the Upper Kat.
- The management committee was keen to take over the management of the Kat Dam and approached DWAF about this. DWAF's response was that taking over the operation of the dam would be allowed once the management committee has a business plan in place and the Reserve has been determined and water rights allocated.
- The business plan for the WUA is being drafted as part of a Catchment Management Plan. The focus of this plan is on the ecological Reserve determination and on strategies for water allocation. The CRG from Rhodes University is again involved in supporting this process.
- Funding was requested and received from the WRC to support the Reserve determination and the development of the business plan

Assessments of the WUA and its future

Jerry Ntsebeza, WUA small-scale irrigator representative, Upper Kat:
Now we have a Water User Association with a constitution and committee. Even so, some farmers ignore it. But they are beginning to see that it is important to be a member, especially now we are busy with workshops to see what role water allocations will play, and we are busy with registration. Rhodes is still there, DWAF is still there – they take control of the releasing of the dam even now there are more stakeholders that need to be involved. Municipality is there, but only sometimes [although] they are supposed to be there all the time.



I think some farmers ignore the Water User Association because they are worried about paying for water. They need to be controlled in terms of weirs, height of weirs, irrigating and looking after the Reserve. And there are other problems. Transport is difficult. We struggle with report writing, especially the financial report. We need to know the ecological Reserve and the volume of the dam before we can allocate water.

But we are doing well; there is no need for big changes. We just need some more time and more money to go around to all the farmers and explain to them. We need more workshops to explain more. At first when we held workshops, the farmers ran away. Now they see the importance, they see they need workshops again. And not just the community farmers... the citrus farmers too.

An organisation like the WUA works well only if everybody is involved. If everybody is involved, everybody will know and respect the river, they will know what the WUA is for. Right now not everyone is involved. Even the municipality does not take it seriously and yet they are the ones that are supposed to take it the most seriously. Because if you think of a better life for all, nothing is going to be developed without water. It has to be taken as number one.

Llewellyn Roberts, vice chair of WUA, large-scale irrigator representative, Middle Kat:

The DWAF representative asks a lot of us. I tried to point out to him that we are not being paid to do this. We have been here since the beginning trying to make this thing work.

The irrigation farmers have a bone of contention with the guys that don't pay, because they don't pay their rates and they get away with it. If the government is willing to write the money off, that should be added up. We all believe in righting the wrongs of the past, but there is a strong feeling in the Middle Kat and Lower Kat that water is being poached.

There is a lot of discussion and debate. At the moment there is no conflict. It is a very interesting situation. We have got all these guys who got land for nothing, they've had their debt written off – this is correcting the past. Then there are guys who did not get incorporated into the Ciskei and know that their water is secure if they pay. And then others have developed citrus on cheap land where their water is not secure and they need water to secure their expansion.

Things have run pretty well. We have had such good seasons. The Water User Association is just working on calculating rates and releasing water.



Nothing has really been done by the WUA except through the Catchment Forum, which has accessed funds to do LandCare rehabilitation work on soil erosion. We have done nothing, but we have carried on farming.

Monde Ntshudu, CRG interpreter and facilitator:

There are big challenges coming up. Because the Water User Association has relied on the CRG to do a lot of things. At the moment everyone seems to be friendly and compromising with other users, but once the Catchment Plan is implemented, one may see a different response. I think some groups will say, "You have been getting water all these years. It is our turn now. You must reduce or stay the same." The disadvantaged communities may get more land, then their demand for water will be more. At the moment I don't think anyone foresees this. I heard that some Lower Kat farmers are asking if they can buy the water that Upper Kat farmers are currently not using. The farmers in the Upper Kat have no problem at the moment, but when the opportunity comes for them to irrigate, they won't want to give up water. What will happen if some farmer has signed away their water for three or four years and then they want water because the government has given them land? People may have agreed but don't understand the repercussions. These things need to be made clear and cleared up.

One thing I know is that the level of involvement is not the same. When I talk about involvement I mean participation. We can't just put stakeholders together and say they are the same, because that is not true. Disadvantaged people need to be briefed, we have to capacitate them with the same knowledge that others have, so that when we bring them all together, the process will be fair. You can see this in the Kat River. Sometimes at meetings some people don't know the bolts and nuts. They say "fine" when decisions are going in a certain direction, when in fact they don't understand what is going on. DWAF seems to struggle to get involved. We need to get DWAF's commitment ensured.

And then there is the commitment of stakeholders. Some stakeholders are committed, while others don't really feel that it is necessary. I tell stakeholders that if they are not committed to the whole process, they should step down and nominate someone else.

My one worry is that people, especially people who used to use water for free, do not take seriously the need to participate now. It is not only the small-scale farmers who don't take participation seriously. And then when people are not informed they say they were not given the chance to participate even though their representatives should come to meetings. When the Catchment Plan is implemented we will get a lot of aggression and comments about participation.



My other worry is that when the CRG pulls out the whole thing may collapse, because the one or two people in the Water User Association that can take it forward may end up being passive. I think we can deal with this by giving people tasks, getting them involved and getting them to know that this is their Water User Association process. They must be on time for Water User Association meetings, open meetings by themselves, give introductions, give the agenda, not hand over to the CRG or to DWAF. We should be worried if the chairman thinks, 'If I am not here on time it does not matter, as I am just here to participate.' They need to know it is their process and nobody else's.

What kind of institutional animal?

During each of the interviews with CF and WUA members, people were asked to liken the institution to which they belonged to an animal: both as the institution was at the time and as they would like it to be in the future. The answers to these questions give insight into the way members viewed their institutions and the qualities they would like their institutions to have.

If you think of the WUA as an animal, what kind of animal is it in your mind?

Monde Ntshudu, CRG interpreter and facilitator:

I think of a python. Because the python only really goes to hunt after a very long time. Only if it is very hungry. If it is fine it doesn't go hunt. The Water User Association only acts if something is a burning issue, but if it is not affecting them personally they don't really mind.

Llewellyn Roberts, vice chair of WUA, large-scale irrigator representative, Middle Kat:

A dairy cow that they forgot to milk. It is waiting to be milked.

Jerry Ntsebeza, WUA representative for small-scale farmers in the Upper Kat:

Elephant. It is not fast but very important. Without water, South Africa would not exist. Everything relies on water.



If you think of the WUA in the future, what kind of animal would you like it to be?

Monde Ntshudu:

A lion. A lion, especially the lioness when it has babies, it protects the territory. It does not wait for the problem to come closer, it attacks the problem before it comes. So if the Water User Association can foresee the problem coming, it should act before it is too big.

Llewellyn Roberts:

A faithful dog, a boerboel, a snarling boerboel.

Jerry Ntsebeza:

Not an animal, but a tree. Tree has roots which is the community; the trunk which is the committee; and the branches and leaves which are the results of the Water User Association. A living tree.

4. THE SISONKE LANDCARE PROJECT⁹

LandCare in South Africa

LandCare is an ethic of land stewardship whereby land users voluntarily manage their land in a sustainable manner. This is the philosophy behind the Australian LandCare movement that was initiated in 1988 in response to problems of land degradation in rural Australia (Higgins and Lockie, 2002). Wilson describes LandCare in Australia as “arguably the most innovative rural programme in advanced economies” (Wilson, 2004 p. 481). LandCare in Australia became a social movement in which LandCare groups, made up of private landholders, gained increasing autonomy over the governance of local land resource issues. Self-help and community empowerment are the underlying principles of Australian LandCare.

LandCare was adopted by the National Department of Agriculture (NDA) in South Africa as a means to combat the land degradation that is prevalent in the former black rural areas that were the creation of the apartheid government. LandCare South Africa is defined as “a community-based and government supported sustainable land management programme. The LandCare programme offers practical assistance to effect land conservation activities that are identified, implemented and monitored mainly by the farming community” (NDA, 2000).



⁹ Adapted from Rowntree, in press.



LandCare South Africa is modelled on the Australian system, but in practice the South African and Australian systems have important differences. Firstly, funding for LandCare in South Africa comes largely from poverty relief and is almost exclusively granted to communities living in the former bantustan areas. Thus it is a programme aimed at marginalised economies, not advanced ones. Secondly, funding is primarily channelled into activities that provide short-term employment as a means of poverty relief, so that on-ground works are favoured over longer-term community empowerment. Thirdly, although promoted as a community-based programme, most LandCare projects are strongly guided by the Department of Agriculture, with the community acting as little more than a workforce. Nevertheless, there are exciting possibilities for LandCare in South Africa to guide marginalised communities towards a self-sustaining movement of land stewardship.

The Sisonke LandCare project

In the Kat Valley the combination of a dry and variable climate, together with inappropriate grazing practices, has led to widespread sheet erosion and local pockets of intense gully (donga) erosion on the footslope areas. The gully systems promote rapid surface runoff, reduce the available soil moisture on the lands and carry large quantities of sediment into the rivers, where it blocks bridges and culverts, causing flooding of crossings and increasing damage to bridge structures. Hillslope erosion is therefore a problem that impacts on the quality of the water resource provided by the Kat River. There is an urgent need to address both the gully erosion itself and the grazing practices that are the primary cause of the erosion.

One of the first activities of the newly formed Catchment Forum was an action-planning workshop at which participants put forward their priorities for catchment activities. Many participants identified donga erosion as a priority. In response, the Catchment Forum, together with researchers from Rhodes University, put together a proposal to National LandCare to address erosion in the catchment. The proposal was workshopped with Forum members from 18 villages.

The proposal put a strong emphasis on training in on-ground works, grazing management and project management. It was proposed that the first two years of the project be devoted to putting control structures in the land around each participating village. The third



(final) year was planned for improved grazing management and sustainable structures that would allow the project to endure after LandCare funds came to an end.

The proposal was submitted in October 2000, and the Department of Agriculture gave the go-ahead for the project in June 2002, although funding was only made available in September 2002. The project was extended for a second year, but not for a third year as anticipated. In all, a total of R1 500 000 was received for the project.

A four-person management team ran the project, made up of paid community members. This team reported to a LandCare steering Committee. This consisted of the seven members of the Catchment Forum committee, two representatives from the consultant acting as financial administrator, and one representative from the CRG (the implementing agency), the Department of Agriculture (regional LandCare coordinator) and Nkonkobe Municipality.

CF members look back on the LandCare project

Nomapelo Nkonto, CF secretary:

It was decided that the first project that the Catchment Forum would look at is dongas. That was the LandCare project, its name was Sisonke, meaning 'all of us'. Because this was new to most of the communities we had to organise workshops in villages where the LandCare was going to take place. For the first time we ran workshops without the help of Rhodes, because there were funds available to organise workshops ourselves. In the workshops, which were held in all the villages, we explained how villages are going to be involved and the employment opportunities. Some village



people were not interested in what we were saying about the importance of LandCare, they just wanted to work. Even under those circumstances we continued with workshops. We worked in villages very well, up until the money for LandCare was finished.

Chris Mgwali, CF member:

The main Catchment Forum activity which united the CF and also the Kat River villages beyond Ntilini was LandCare. It opened job opportunities as well as educating people, because they learnt a lot doing it. What I have noticed is that because of LandCare the sacred pools are much deeper because of fixing the dongas. We prevented water from washing sediment into the river to some extent.

Txolo (Jez) Jezi, CF representative for Fairbairn, and former manager of the LandCare project:

The Catchment Forum became much more independent through the LandCare project, with only minor interventions from Rhodes. It was a test to see if the CF could do something. And the Catchment Forum gained a lot from that programme. First and foremost there was interaction between villages. We learnt to share ideas and teach each other, learning through interaction. First learn from each other and second, learn about the environment and learn to consider it as well. Another thing was that the management was done by sharing. We did not act until we had consulted with the steering committee. We presented a monthly report and financial report, and discussed how to deal with problems. Everything was transparent.

Luyanda Nkayi, CF chairman:

One of the Catchment Forum's biggest achievements was LandCare. We had a tour along the catchment to look at the problems, and we came up with the proposal which we sent to the Department of Agriculture where we identified erosion as a problem. We waited one year, two years for the proposal to be approved. We requested funding for three years but only got for two.

It worked very well in the villages. We employed more than a thousand people in a rotational way. Each group worked two weeks and another group for two weeks. It had a huge impact in upgrading the economy in the area, as some people have been able to establish small businesses.

Andile Ndindwa, CF member:

Even people who did not know the Catchment Forum saw that it managed



LandCare very well. People always came to work, they were always on time and they always worked the whole day. When people came to get paid there was never a complaint, they always got paid on a set date. Before working in a village, management would call a community meeting and tell everyone what LandCare was and why they were doing it. So everyone knew about soil erosion and fixing dongas, and that made them more dedicated.

Monde Ntshudu, CRG interpreter and facilitator, Rhodes representative for LandCare:

The Catchment Forum needed to do something practical for the villages because people saw it was not bringing employment. It needed to do something related to the environment, and this is where the LandCare project came in. It changed the way communities viewed the Catchment Forum. They recognised it and became interested. Then there was a good working relationships between communities and the CF. Since the arrival of LandCare, if a meeting is called, people come in big numbers. The LandCare project created job opportunities in the community and it was welcomed.

The main challenge of the LandCare project was that it is not sustainable. People did not see its long-term benefits, how it improved their fields and their environment. Because of LandCare they could have had more grazing fields. They did not view it this way. They only viewed it in terms of jobs. They never took care of the sites after the project.

Evaluation of the Sisonke LandCare project

Three questions can be asked to evaluate the success of the Sisonke LandCare project:

- Were the LandCare activities effective in addressing land degradation?
- Did LandCare bring other secondary benefits to the participating communities?
- Has LandCare played a role in promoting an ethic of ICM?

Were the LandCare activities effective in addressing land degradation?

Erosion control structures were installed in some of the worst eroded areas in the vicinity of 19 villages. Field visits showed clear evidence of sediment trapping and improved vegetation growth in many areas. The most impressive results are seen in the areas that were fenced to keep out livestock. One can conclude therefore that there has been at least a short-term improvement in *veld* condition apparent at the LandCare sites. The success of rehabilitation measures can be related to the severity of the initial erosion, with re-growth and stabilization being most evident in the least eroded sites.

Although sites were established in 19 villages, this represents a very small percentage of the total degraded area. It is a demonstration of what can be achieved, but is unlikely to have had a significant impact on overall catchment sediment yield, or on land productivity. Because funding was not made available for the full three years of the project, nothing was done to address the problem of overgrazing over the wider catchment area. Plans for the future use and management of these areas are needed.

Did LandCare bring other secondary benefits to the participating communities?

The LandCare project brought significant short-term employment opportunities to an area where the unemployment figures exceed 80%. Over the 18 months in which the project was active, some 100 people were employed at any one time. Each worker was employed for R35 per day for a two-week period, thus spreading the benefits among as many people as possible. Although the additional income per person was small, it did bring in cash to meet the short-term needs of a large number of families. It certainly increased the circulation of cash and helped local businesses in the area, as the combined income to workers was around R70 000 per month. In addition, equipment such as wheelbarrows and shovels remained in the area after the end of the project.

The project also provided skills training to many people. The management team and the forum members on the steering committee all gained in management skills and confidence. More formal training in project management was provided through short courses at Rhodes University. Workers gained skills in building erosion

control structures and fencing. Workshops held in each village prior to the start of LandCare activities taught participants about basic environmental awareness.

Has LandCare played a role in promoting an ethic of integrated catchment management (ICM)?

Perhaps the most important and lasting outcome of the Sisonke LandCare project was the growth and skills development of Catchment Forum members. LandCare provided the CF with the finance to address an identified problem; this was the first project that the CF tackled together. It brought together a number of different communities and helped to build a spirit of cooperation, so the capacity of the CF to undertake multi-village projects and to interact with outside bodies greatly increased. The CF has since been asked to make contributions to developing the local municipality's Integrated Development Plan. They also worked with the local DWAF Working for Water project, which provided advice on suitable seeds for rehabilitation. The LandCare project thus helped the Catchment Forum to become a more coherent body with a sense of achievement, and a more forward looking approach to tackling catchment problems. Individual members of the CF who were involved in the LandCare project have become strong community leaders initiating and lobbying for other developments in their area. CF members in Fairbairn managed to get taps installed in their area and have recently been given a grant from the Department of Social Welfare for an agricultural project for the youth.



Shortcomings of the project

From the start, pressures of timing and financial constraints beset the project. Due to delays in initial funding well beyond the start of the financial year, two years of funding had to be spent over an 18-month period. Moreover, the funding was stopped after two years, which meant that the third year work, which was focused on achieving long-term sustainability, could not be carried out. This seems to be because funding was linked to the National Poverty Relief Programme, which prioritised job creation rather than education and long-term planning. There was also initial reluctance by the government officials to accept the Catchment Forum members as the project managers.

The Sisonke LandCare project differed from many projects supported by the Department of Agriculture in that it was not initiated by the Department, but by the Catchment Forum and Rhodes University. The Department of Agriculture appeared to be only partially committed to it in terms of providing support such as extension services. At the same time there was hardly any involvement by Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, as land degradation was not seen to be a water resource issue. The CF was held up by the Catchment Management Directorate at DWAF national office as an example of a proactive, grass roots initiative, but at a regional level there was little support.

The project was effective in building social capacity within the Catchment Forum, but there is still a long way to go before the CF can be self-sufficient. Unlike Australian LandCare the scope for voluntary participation is limited. There is little spare money or time to spend on transport to meetings, communications or tools. There is no culture of voluntary work in the catchment, so that action happens if there is an externally funded project, and stops when project funding stops. This mentality was reinforced by the Department of Agriculture's insistence that most of the funding went into job creation rather than capacity building, environmental awareness and long-term sustainability.

5. CATCHMENT FORUM MEMBERS ASSESS THE CF AND ITS FUTURE

The LandCare project came to an end in February 2004. The LandCare steering committee and management team proposed that an evaluation be done of the project, which would include an evaluation workshop for the Catchment Forum at the same time. At the evaluation workshop the CF reflected on its history, looking back on achievements and identifying issues and challenges of the present. Some comments were:

"It is many years and hard work... [we are] stronger now than 1996."

"Rhodes was like a parent and LandCare is like a child growing up."

"I can't believe we were part of the whole process."

From this position of strength, Catchment Forum members clarified the roles and responsibilities of the different bodies associated with the CF and the Sisonke LandCare project. It was agreed at this workshop that the CF should develop a constitution, thus further formalising its role as an important stakeholder in IWRM in the Kat River Valley. The NGO that ran the workshop, Spirals Trust, offered to run future workshops on developing a constitution, if funding could be found for these workshops. To date no funding has been forthcoming.

In 2005, a year after the end of the Sisonke project, new developments were taking place in the catchment. The Water Research Commission provided funding to the Kat River Water User Association to develop a stakeholder-driven catchment management plan that could be used to guide licensing for water allocation. This is a departure from the normal practice whereby DWAF oversees such procedures. The Catchment Forum has representatives on the WUA and is a stakeholder group in its own right. The Sisonke LandCare project certainly helped to build their capacity to have a voice, although CF members and the communities that they represent continue to be marginalised.

If capacity can be built sufficiently, the Catchment Forum may be the best available catalyst in the valley to bring about truly integrated catchment management. Currently, with the help of practitioners, Jane Burt and Monde Ntshudu working on a voluntary basis, the CF is exploring other options of funding for the organisation, mainly to continue the LandCare project and other action projects.



Luyanda Nkayi, CF chairman:

We managed to drive the LandCare project successfully with Rhodes assisting in some ways. We managed to go to the local municipality to link their Integrated Development Plan (IDP) to our action plan which included erosion, contamination of water, and use of land. We got some Catchment Forum members involved in the Water User Association so they could discuss issues that affect the catchment with the WUA. And we have built strong relationships with Rhodes University, and the Department of Agriculture, and even the municipality. Our problems are lack of skills, and lack of resources like computers and fax machines. We rely on Rhodes for such resources.

Then there are problems in the catchment itself. In Balfour the erosion is still a problem and a lot of land is not being used. It needs fencing and irrigation systems. There is a problem with river water being contaminated. Not all areas have tap water. Then there is also the toilet problem – the pit system contaminates water in the ground. During the dry season the soil absorbs human waste, but during the summer season it contaminates groundwater. We have raised this point with the municipality.

Management and leadership skills are lacking in the Catchment Forum. The few skills are held by only a few people. We lose members, because people leave the area to look for jobs. We recruit new members, but sometimes that causes problems when new members do not have a background. Some get involved because they think they will get employed and leave when this does not happen. Fortunately there are some committed members in the CF who carry on taking it forward. I think the focus for the future should be to train members and we need to train people from different parts of the catchment. We need to lobby. To be a whistle-blower for government departments. We need to engage all departments so we can address issues with government.

Monde Ntshudu, CRG interpreter and facilitator:

After the LandCare project came to an end, the Catchment Forum is having good dreams that in two to three years' time DWAF will fund us, we will be funded by an international organisation, dreaming that Rhodes students would write proposals and look for funds for them. Dreaming of a nice constitution of the CF that would allow them to open a bank account. Dreaming about a mission statement. Until we woke them up and said, hey guys, you say you have things happening but they are actually in your dreams, you are losing more and more villages in the catchment. The reason for losing villages is that we had a CF committee and all of the members relied on the committee to drive action plans, but the committee did not really function. The result is more villages were stepping down because the leaders did not show an interest. In order to address this



situation maybe we need new blood. The committee has been there since the establishment of the CF and they are interested in other things now. We need to get more people in the steering committee but not lose all the old ones with knowledge.

One of the strengths of the Catchment Forum is that it has networks. It has people it can rely on. People prepared to help it grow. Another strength is that all villages are represented there, not just two or three people. But there are weaknesses. The CF actually is not addressing the main issues that it faces. I mean issues from within, like disorganisation... no proper communication. They don't have a vision, they really don't know where they are going.

Chris Mgwali, CF representative for Hertzog village:

Of course there are problems with the Catchment Forum. If the members get jobs they say it is difficult for them to meet, or they don't meet at all. It is hard to keep motivating people, keep them interested in what the CF is doing. I think the focus should be on the Upper Kat – emerging farmers must be able to get and use the water. So the CF could focus on fixing the furrows. Also it should find a way to stop children swimming in the river because this river has a history of drowning children especially during floods. Maybe make sure children have a swimming pool in every village so they don't go to the river. And we need to stop fires that affect the river. And finally, we should finish the LandCare work, even if we have to get funding, not through Department of Agriculture, but from other sources.

Txolo (Jez) Jezi, CF representative for Fairbairn, and former manager of the LandCare project:

The real problem with an organisation like the Catchment Forum is leadership. People are so passive... they don't want to speak their views. The only way we can address this is to keep them busy and make them do projects, help them a little bit, but they must do it themselves. It is like driving a car – slowly, slowly they take things on. They need more programmes to run and then slowly they will learn. We need an organised leadership for the CF, organised with different people who have different roles and are kept busy.

And then illiteracy is a problem. Not illiteracy itself, but lack of exposure to different ideas. I was born here, but it was only when I went to Fort Hare that I became the person I am. People only depend on local knowledge. We need outreach programmes to show people how things are done elsewhere. One method is to take people to things that are working, different projects. If I have a project to run, how am I going to know, unless I go somewhere and see how to do it?



The Catchment Forum only became popular because of something else, LandCare, so that tells us we need other programmes through the CF that involve the community. Programmes like the second phase of the LandCare project, removing cactus, things like that. Poverty alleviation projects such as poultry, piggeries... job creation projects. If the CF can run a separate agricultural programme and get a small plot in HACOP (Hertzog Agricultural Cooperative) – then people will use land under the banner of the CF.

My aspiration is to take young people from the Kat Valley and develop them, even if it is only four to five people. Take them for schooling, even if it is informal education... maybe scholarships at Rhodes, for one or two years. But if you take people to educational institutions like Rhodes, will they come back?

Mcebisi Dike, CF representative for Gonzana:

One of the things that the Catchment Forum should look at is continuity... today you see this member, tomorrow you see another one. The other weakness is the CF has no funds to organise their own workshops and meetings and yet it has not asked for funding. It is not an organised or registered organisation. There is an office that has been given but we need funds for a telephone or a computer. I think the CF committee should employ someone to drive all its activities. It should focus on some practical projects. For example it is difficult for us to get out of this village when there are floods, especially for children, so if a bridge can be built over the gullies it will be easier. The other focus should be the removal of cactus.

Nomapelo Nkonto, CF secretary:

It is not easy working with people, as we found there were different behaviours in different villages. But the Catchment Forum was successful and every workshop in all villages ran smoothly. But one of the weaknesses I observed about the CF is that there is no good working relationship in the committee. People are delegated to do their tasks, but some people do and some people don't. It is difficult to move forward under that situation. For example, after the LandCare project was finished there were some funds left in our bank. I heard the funds would be released by the Department of Agriculture but I don't know what happened up until today, even though I'm a steering committee member. We need to bring back the unity of strength that we used to have. Right now if we were offered a project, nothing would move. We need to have a meeting or workshop with only the CF committee and to look at our weaknesses before calling the whole Catchment Forum or blaming other representatives. And we need something practical that will interest people in participating. At the moment there are no activities, so people do not know what to do.

If you think of the CF as it is now, what kind of animal would it be?

Nomapelo Nkonto, CF secretary:

The CF is an *inkomo*, a cow. I breastfeed from it. There are lots of things that I gained from it, lots of things that I learned. It was not easy to stand up and speak but now I can do that freely.

Mcebisi Dike, CF representative for Gonzana:

A jackal. A jackal lives a very difficult life; it lives on meat only. When she goes to hunt she is in danger and her puppies are also in danger because she has to leave them behind. I would say the Catchment Forum is the jackal and the puppies are the communities.

Monde Ntshudu, CRG interpreter and facilitator:

A duck. Whatever we do with the forum they never really improve. You say this today, they understand. You ask them tomorrow, they don't know.

Luyanda Nkayi, CF chairman:

A lion. Because of the problem with relevant departments that don't want to be part of the Catchment Forum. Maybe they are scared because the CF is strong. It is strong but there are a few problems.

Txolo (Jez) Jezi, CF representative for Fairbairn, and former manager of the LandCare project:

A duck. A duck can go into the water but it will come out dry again. Whereas a pig, you clean it, an hour later it wallows in mud, you are not sure if you did your homework. Are we inculcating something or not? It is a leadership thing.

Chris Mgwali, CF representative for Hertzog:

A sheep. A sheep does not cry. A sheep will wait for its owner. A sheep is almost like a wheelbarrow, if you don't come and pick it up it will never move. If you put it there it is still there tomorrow. *Igusha* has got money, there is a potential. You can sell the sheep, you can sell the skin. There is potential around here but we need to initiate things in order for the CF to be active. I don't know why the CF seeks funds on a short-term basis. In Umtata I saw there was an electricity plant there. I don't know why we don't request something like that which is a long-term thing. We ask for very small things. We need bigger ideas.

If you think of what you want the CF to become, what kind of animal will it be?

Mcebisi Dike, CF representative for Gonzana:

A goat. A goat loves her babies a lot and is very kind to her babies. She does not want to see them hungry and she makes sure that they always have food. She dearly, dearly loves them.

Monde Ntshudu, CRG interpreter and facilitator:

A jackal. Because a jackal has plans and learns its lesson. There is a story that says a jackal and a wolf, they were able to get through a fence of a farm and they started eating sheep. And the jackal who is wise, eats and keeps going back to the hole in the fence to check his size for himself. So the jackal has a plan and makes sure it achieves its plans. We don't want a Catchment Forum that just keeps dreaming but never does something to get there.

Luyanda Nkayi, CF chairman:

A sheep. In every season during each year you can get something from the sheep except the meat. The wool can ensure that the sheep is living a positive life. You can sell that wool and buy medicines to keep the sheep well. It is sustainable.

Txolo (Jez) Jezi, CF representative for Fairbairn, and former manager of the LandCare project:

An ant. Look down at ants, they are moving, they are happy, they know when to work. They know when to rest. An ant is a busy insect. I'd like to see movement, things happen in the Kat, knowing when to rest and when to put their emphasis on things.

Chris Mgwali, CF representative for Hertzog:

It must not be a donkey – it is a hard worker but it still relies on Rhodes. A jackal. He makes a plan. If the jackal is out of food today, surely tomorrow he will make a plan.

6. LESSONS FROM THE KAT EXPERIENCE

The best intentions in the world to seek participatory outcomes are no protection against producing work that is not empowering and does not enable change in the way people manage water resources in their day-to-day lives. In fact participatory tools can be applied in a top down manner. It is for these reasons that I find it vital to give careful consideration to the orientation that underpins the research (Motteux, 2003, pg 341).

The research activities in the Kat were undertaken from a perspective of social research which measures good research by outcomes related to empowerment and social change (Fien and Hillcoat, 1996). Such a perspective calls for a strong commitment to self-reflection on the part of the researcher-practitioner, as well as group reflection and team reflection.

The vision and understanding of Nicole Motteux (practitioner and project leader), Kate Rowntree (project leader), Jane Burt (practitioner) and Alistair McMaster (practitioner) strongly influenced the way in which the Catchment Forum and Water User Association developed. They tried to involve CF members and communities in every single decision that was made. Thus stakeholders were not only asked to participate in meetings, they were the ones to decide whether a meeting was necessary. Stakeholders were not just given resources; they were encouraged to develop resources. Long after Motteux left the project, this ethic continued to inform the way things were conducted in the Kat River Valley through the work of other researchers.

The critical researcher and the participatory ethic

In naming, identifying, and explaining we are also drawing forth and transforming... we could almost say 'creating'... provided we understand that we are not creating from a vacuum, but from that which already existed before (Bhaskar, 1989). Likewise, and this is particularly true in social science research, that which we would research, is also transforming and even creating us. "The arrow goes both ways. (Haraway, 2003)."

(from Sisitka, H; Price, L., Burt, J., Neluvhalani, E., 2003)



A researcher is not an objective implementer, but a human individual. The researcher is as much a part of the process of social change as are those being researched. The critical researcher is an activist – an educator who is also being educated. The only ‘givens’ are the researcher’s continuous questions: “What is my approach, what is my motivation, who is benefiting?” This ethic places the researcher in a difficult position with regard to funders and policymakers, who prefer to see implementation done according to certain steps and rules. The critical researcher/ practitioner focuses on process, while legislation, policy and funders tend to focus on product. These different focuses can to be viewed as a creative tensions rather than opposing positions in research and implementation.

Lessons for sustainability

DWAF and other IWRM agencies are rightly concerned about the sustainability of the groups that they have set up. An important factor in sustainability is the nature of the commitment of supporting partners. Perseverance is necessary. Catchment Research Group researchers from Rhodes University have been supporting the Kat Water User Association and Catchment Forum for seven years, and they are *still* in a supporting role. Long-term commitment requires both continuity and change of roles, and in this respect we can look at the lessons learnt so far.

The Catchment Research Group was able to maintain continuity, largely due to the following factors:

- Although the support has been provided under different research projects and contracts, and with different researchers, these were all under the *same project leader*.
- The various practitioners all worked within the *same ethic of participation* and followed a similar approach of action research.
- The projects have mostly involved the *same set of Xhosa facilitators* (the CRCG). Their long-term involvement created a strong bond with the people they worked with.

The nature of the support changed as the groups developed. At first the Catchment Forum was totally dependent on the Catchment Research Group for facilitation and direction, as well as for financial, logistical and administrative support, whereas these days the CF largely supports itself in these areas when it has the resources to

do so. Current CRG support is less direct. CRG practitioners keep an overview of the CF process and provide guidance when needed. As somewhat neutral partners, they sometimes get called in to assist with conflict resolution. The CRG also assists in linking the CF with other institutions, for example the recent link with the Spirals Trust, an NGO which facilitated an evaluation of the CF and LandCare.

Regarding the Water User Association, the CRG practitioners played a strong role in the development of the WUA's constitution and the establishment of its management committee. Once the committee had been established and a consultant was working with its training needs, the CRG took a more distanced, although highly interested, stance. Since then the CRG has once again become more involved.

Catchment Research Group practitioners have seen themselves, and have been seen by the Catchment Forum and Water User Association, as partners. The practitioners have acknowledged their research agendas, and their subjectivity. In return, people in the Kat have willingly accepted the skills, tools, contacts and various other forms of support that the practitioners provided.

Summary of lessons learned about sustainability:

- As a practitioner, be careful of initiating a group process, especially if it is linked to long-term issues like water management, unless you are prepared to put in some years of work.
- If your energy and resources are limited, rather work with smaller groups, or devote fewer resources, but over a longer period of time.
- Be very careful of cutting off from a group abruptly – rather modify or reduce the form of support. When the CRG handed over the WUA process to a consultant, the WUA members felt that they had been abandoned.
- Be prepared to do a lot more work than you are paid for. Funders do not fund the endless hours spent on thinking through ways of ensuring that information is shared in a way that is relevant to context; or the many meetings and discussions that will need to be initiated and telephone calls that will be made to all and sundry.

Lessons for capacity building

Capacity building is *not* about giving people lectures, once-off knowledge transfer sessions or training courses. It is a slow and continuous context-specific process. The extent to which people's capacity develops depends very much on the long-term, sustained and responsive support provided by facilitators and practitioners.

Practical lessons for practitioners

The power of a venue:

A venue can play an important role in how a people participate. An expensive venue may have connotations of sophistication that could alienate certain people. However, a sophisticated venue may also convey to the participant that their process is being taken seriously, and therefore it is worth participating seriously.

For example, the shared workshop between the Kat River Catchment Forum and the Mtata Catchment Forum was held at Hobbiton on Hogsback, a youth camp where participants had to share rooms. This venue was chosen rather than a local hotel, since it was much cheaper, it had a relaxed atmosphere, and there was plenty of space for workshops and breakaway groups. On their arrival, some members of the Mtata CF declared that the accommodation was beneath them, and demanded to be put up in a hotel. This attitude of superiority left the Kat CF members bewildered and it undermined their confidence. This in turn affected the exchange that followed.

Transport:

The problem of transport affected every group initiative in the Kat, particularly because taxis services in the area are sporadic. No meeting could be held without the support of a fleet of vehicles from Rhodes. Even when the Catchment Forum began to independently initiate its own meetings and actions, the CRG was requested to assist with transport.

Work around local events:

Workshops come second to local events. Saturdays and Sundays were not options for workshops, since this was when traditional functions usually took place. Practitioners also learned to avoid organising workshops around pension and paydays, and during the orange-picking season.

Some short bits of advice

- Have more than one plan – sometimes the workshop will not always happen.



- Posters don't always work – many people are illiterate.
- Don't expect people to be volunteers. In many cases people feel that if their community is benefiting from their time and labour, they must be rewarded for it.
- You can't please everybody, and often one person's gain is another person's loss.
- Don't rush things – what seems to be going slowly for you may be full-speed ahead for others. The practitioners in the Kat found that new concepts, like interpretation of aerial photographs, or the Ecological Reserve were only understood after repeated workshopping and explanation.
- Don't assume that people in rural areas have all the time in the world to attend workshops and do interviews. It is a tough job to sustain oneself with little financial support. And farmers very rarely have a lot of time to spare. The fact that people see water resource management as a process worth supporting should be respected and nurtured. You can be sure that urban people would not be as generous with their time or as willing to see the protection of the water resource as their problem!

Preparing people for workshops:

In some cases, members of the Catchment Research Creative Group went around to the Catchment Forum representatives in each village and helped them to prepare for a workshop. Representatives often needed to confer with their communities before meetings, to find out what people in the villages really wanted. Pre-workshops have also been held to ensure that people understand what is expected from them and how they can contribute. Such preparation was particularly necessary if important decisions were to be made in workshops.

Capacity building does not require highly trained experts (although practitioners should have some experience and understanding of the process of learning). It depends more on dedicated facilitators who are sensitive to local issues and needs, and who are learning as much as the people they are helping. If the facilitators are honest about their strengths and limitations, they will bring in the help of outside experts as the situation requires.

Capacity building is really about learning through doing. It happens in small ways – learning the importance of sharing, learning how to read a map, or how to use a map to develop plans. Learning happens best through specific activities. For example during the LandCare process, the management and steering committees realised that they needed to learn management skills. A training course was designed by the Rhodes University Department of Management so that the

participants were immediately able to apply the skills they had learned. The capacity building was designed in response to specific needs, so it was effective. In contrast, a “generic” training course was given to the WUA management committee by the consultant. The course did not respond to the direct needs of the group, and for the commercial farmers (some of whom manage complex export businesses), the course was a waste of time.

Summary of lessons learned about capacity building:

- Rather than spending large amounts of money on corporate-style courses and sophisticated resources, invest in low-key, long-term and needs-based capacity building.
- This can best be achieved through small groups of local practitioners, who have a long-term commitment to a process. The CRG invested in the development of the CRCG Xhosa facilitators group for several years. One member of this group was the key facilitator for the Catchment Forum Sisonke LandCare project.

Capacity building need not involve consultants, especially consultants who charge exorbitant rates, spend a few months (or even days) running a capacity building exercise, and then leave never to be seen again. For the same amount of money, one local and dedicated person can provide ongoing and relevant support year after year. It is better for funders to invest in such people.

Lessons for a needs-based approach to IWRM

At the workshop with the Mtata and Kat River Catchment Forums, Eiman Karar (then director of DWAF National Catchment Management) emphasised that the National Water Act should be seen as *enabling* sound water management rather than *imposing* it.

In the Kat River Valley, the research began slowly, in two villages which had expressed a need to communicate and mobilise action. The time was 1997-1998, just prior to the NWA being formalised, and DWAF was talking about decentralising and democratising IWRM. The researcher (Nicole Motteux), recognising that certain aspects of the thinking embedded in the Act would support local needs, shared the new DWAF ideas with Kat communities. Thus the Catchment Forum and Water User Association started by using the new legislation to address their own needs.



This decentralising and democratising approach was one of the strengths of the Kat River Valley project. It is clearly distinguishable from the more top-down approaches that DWAF has subsequently used elsewhere, which has been to establish a structure (be it a WUA or CF) before the people themselves express a need for it or have worked out how best it will function. In such cases DWAF then has had to provide the newly established Catchment Forum with 'something to do' so that it remains active. In these circumstances DWAF rather than the members define the purpose of the CF or WUA. This in turn affects who is able or prepared to participate and how they participate.

While it is not always helpful to take an oppositional or mutually exclusive view of these two approaches, we can comment on lesson learned so far. In our experience the top-down approach tends to be overly concerned with representivity. Because it does not emerge from a direct involvement with people in the catchment, emphasis is usually placed on the 'model' of IWRM rather than the context within which local people live and work. The usual procedure for establishing a Catchment Forum in this way is as follows: a meeting is called, people attend voluntarily, and CF members are selected according to the areas represented. The CF is then a body of diverse people with little common purpose, besides the fact that they all came to a meeting about WRM. There may be a lot of members from different areas and interest groups but there is a danger that their motivation and level of involvement in WRM will remain superficial. They will probably rely on DWAF to articulate their role and purpose for them.

Steve Biko, in his book *I write what I like*, comments that just because you are represented, it doesn't necessarily mean you will be listened to. He was writing about how well-meaning white people during apartheid were addressing the problems of South Africa via multiracial organisations, but his comments could equally apply to addressing water management in South Africa today:

The integration they talk of is first of all artificial in that it is a response to a conscious manoeuvre rather than to the dictates of the inner soul.... People forming the integrated complex have been extracted from various segregated societies with their inbuilt complexes of superiority and inferiority and these continue to manifest themselves even in the 'nonracial' set-up of the integrated complex. I am not claiming that segregation



is necessarily the natural order; however given the facts of the situation where a group experiences privilege at the expense of others, then it becomes obvious that a hastily arranged integration cannot be the solution to the problem. It is rather like expecting the slave to work together with the slave-son's master to remove all the conditions leading to the former's enslavement.

(Biko, 1978, 20)

In the Kat the Catchment Forum started small, with only 15 villages, and even now the only stakeholders represented on it are local communities. According to the members' purposes and needs, the CF has developed partnerships with other stakeholders such as municipalities and small-scale farmers and the Working for Water programme. Since being granted funding for a LandCare project, the CF has become more widely known, and all villages that have been affected by the LandCare project now have representatives on the CF.

There has also been a growing understanding amongst members of the Catchment Forum that if they are to become sustainable beyond the LandCare project, they have to develop themselves more fully as a catchment-based organisation. This has led to their encouraging other villages from the Lower Kat to become members and approaching other stakeholders besides village communities. Because of the history of the CF their 'recruitment' continues to be based on addressing stakeholders' needs. The CF matured according to a growing understanding of its role in the Kat River catchment, and its members now build the capacity of other stakeholders.

The following story illustrates this growth in maturity. One of the first concerns of the Kat Catchment Forum was for a bridge to be built over the river in the village of Fairbairn. The existing bridge often flooded, making it difficult for people to cross, and there had been some drownings. With the assistance of Nicole Motteux, of the Catchment Research Group, the CF was able to get a new bridge built. Local people were employed to build the bridge, and at the same time they obtained certificates for the training they received in the process.

Two years later the village of Cathcartvale identified a similar need. This village did not have a representative on the Catchment Forum.



The villagers approached a researcher from the Catchment Research Group to help them get a bridge built. The researcher referred them to the Catchment Forum. Cathcartvale now has a representative on the CF, and its new bridge has been constructed.

The process of participatory IWRM is not always straightforward and guidelines can lead to superficial or token participation. Again Steve Biko, writing in a slightly different context, reflects this well:

What we want is not black visibility but real black participation. In other words it does not help us to see several quiet black faces in a multiracial student gathering which ultimately concentrates on what the white students believe are the needs of black students. Because of our sheer bargaining power as an organisation we can manage in fact to bring about a more meaningful contact between various colour groups in the student world.
(Biko, 1978, p5)

Summary of lessons learned about needs-based approaches:

- It is more useful for organisations to emerge from a shared, common identified need of a few stakeholders than to establish more broadly representative organisations for the sake of fitting into an institutional structure. An organisation that is based on the true needs of a group of people, however small, will be more likely to end up being representative of the needs of a catchment than an organisation that is concerned with representivity.
- Decentralisation is unavoidably about handing over power to those who have not had power. We need to be careful that we don't use ideals such as 'representivity' to keep power just out of reach, or under the control of a small group, while the rest of the people are left only with the power to listen.

Lessons about policy imperatives and bureaucratic delays

The Kat River Water User Association and Catchment Forum were formed at a time of great change in South Africa. The new NWA had just been enacted, and nobody, from DWAF in Pretoria to rural communities in the Kat, had any clear idea about how water management should work. Catchment Research Group practitioners were trying to find their way through the minefield of differing opinions and general

confusion that follows any major shift in ideology and policy. Ways of doing things were changing constantly at DWAF national level and this had a direct effect on local implementation. Often local catchment inhabitants became confused and despondent because of the continuous need to re-think things, or re-understand new policies and structures. The constant changes also made practitioners' work a lot harder. They would start off working within and understanding one structure then have to suddenly shift – and find the time and resources to assist communities to shift with them.

Practitioners and communities were also caught between the urgent pressures from DWAF National to implement policy and the delays – also by DWAF National – to finalise processes. This is exactly what happened with the delay in accepting the Water User Association constitution. A project with tight time schedules would suddenly come to a halt as participants waited for DWAF National to fulfil its role. This often put Catchment Research Group practitioners in the frustrating situation of having encouraged participation only to see it losing momentum.

Summary of lessons learned about policies and bureaucracy

- Acknowledge that all change takes time and that everyone needs time to adjust to the new ways of doing things.
- Those who have developed frameworks for action should bear in mind that any changes to those frameworks have huge impacts on work on the ground. Months and months of work may need to be redone if processes and structures are suddenly changed.
- Set realistic timeframes that take into consideration DWAF's own capacity to respond to initiatives. Keep the momentum by encouraging a certain amount of action to go ahead while stakeholders wait for responses from DWAF.
- Bureaucratic delays can kill enthusiastic participation and lead to stakeholders losing faith in the process before it has really got off the ground. So it is important to forewarn practitioners and participants that they may have to expect long waits.
- Be careful of seeing your ideals and frameworks as more important than the the reality in which you work. Change is a collective activity which means that you are not in control of what will change or the pace at which change will take place.



There are factors and circumstance that you may not have even considered which may hinder activities or lead you to question your original ideas. It is best to be as flexible as possible keeping in mind that people and the environment are far more complex than any ideal or framework.

And Today.....

The Water management organisations in the Kat River Catchment are currently facing a challenging time. The Catchment Forum has no funding to meet, let alone implement a project, and is losing members. The Water User Association is dealing with the difficult and complex task of putting together a catchment management plan. Many members are fatigued from being involved in such a long process, having to deal with countless changes and still feeling no closer to a workable system. Practitioners are also feeling challenged by difficult questions both within the social and scientific realms of WRM.

Seven years ago this work began with great hope. We now find ourselves pulled between two forces, the need to respond to the context of the Kat River Catchment and the necessity to do this within structures and processes that are identified from the top and are often over-ambitious considering the context that we are trying to support. We are all finding out that managing water democratically is harder than any of us imagined. What does democracy mean in action? What does participation mean? How do we realistically manage such a precious resource as water for the benefit of all? What do we gain and what do we lose? There are some difficult questions that need to be asked about the way in which WRM and *participation* is unfolding in South Africa. We are bravely attempting to find the words to ask them. For the moment, we can only offer you our story, our journey and our reflections as one way in which all of us are trying to care for a river called the Kat, one of many rivers in South Africa.

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