Working and learning with stakeholders about multiple use water services in Bushbuckridge

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Executive summary

Providing water services for multiple uses, often requires a change in the way intermediate level institutions, such as local government, sector departments and NGOs, plan and implement water supply. Above all, it requires the capacity for integrated planning to meet people's multiple livelihoods needs, and the capacity to follow a participatory approach. Many intermediate level institutions currently lack such capacities.

In Bushbuckridge, South Africa, it has been tried to promote the multiple use approach among intermediate level institutions through a programme called SWELL (Securing Water to Enhance Local Livelihoods). A key element of the programme was to follow a multi-stakeholder approach, involving community structures and intermediate level agencies in bottom-up integrated planning for multiple uses, with the view to base the mus approach within local government reality, and to strengthen the capacity of the stakeholders involved. This report details the approach followed, and tries to evaluate the changes in capacity that have occurred.

An increase in understanding about multiple use services has been observed, as well as a positive attitude towards such services. Especially at field officer level, it is realised that current approaches of services delivery and ad-hoc planning do not lead to sustainable services or impacts in people's livelihoods. However, this realisation doesn't lead as of yet into changes in practices. One reason for that is that senior decision-makers haven't been fully involved in the programme as hoped. This means that field staff often do not get the mandate to take lessons learnt forward. It also implies that the call for improved cooperative governance remains a call only. Giving actual shape to this promising concept only happens on paper. But, it must be said that the consolidation of institutional responsibilities in local government help in taking away the institutional confusion which in the past has given rise to so much finger pointing. Accountability mechanisms between communities, their representative structures and service providers are poor, and haven't improved. The limited actual responsibility of community structures is a main reason for that.

Reflecting on the learning approach taken, future activities would need to seek a closer involvement of senior decisions makers, even though it is realised that this is difficult. Probably another important lesson has been the opportunity to link the findings from working at intermediate level with the engagement with national stakeholders. It is felt that the experiences from Bushbuckridge provide relevant practical limitations to implementing mus within local government. National agencies are in a position to support local authorities in this. Linking practical experiences to the national policy debate is therefore crucial.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Multiple use water services

People need water for both domestic and productive purposes as part of their livelihoods. However, in most parts of South Africa, the planning of water services planning has traditionally focussed on meeting basic domestic needs only. As a result, many services only partially meet people's need, limiting the impact on people's livelihoods and in many cases also affecting the sustainability of water services themselves.

In response to this, the so-called multiple use water services (mus) approach is proposed, which is defined as "*a participatory, integrated and poverty-reduction focused approach in poor rural and peri-urban areas, which takes people's multiple water needs as a starting point for providing integrated services, moving beyond the conventional sectoral barriers of the domestic and productive sectors*" (Van Koppen et al., 2006).

To operationalise this approach, Van Koppen et al. (2006) propose a framework of factors that need to be considered if the mus approach is to be successfully implemented at three, connected, institutional levels: national, intermediate, and community (see figure below). Sustained livelihoods at community level require a number of aspects to be accounted for - such as appropriate technology, financing mechanisms, and community institutions. These are supported by service providers at intermediate level[1]. The intermediate level support in turn relies on an enabling environment at national level, which consists of elements such as policy, financing and coordination.

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[1] The intermediate level is understood here as the set of actors, functions and roles that do operate in the realm between national and community levels. Key sets of intermediate-level actors typically include local government, sectoral line departments, local public and private service providers, irrigation committees, financiers, local NGOs and CBOs.
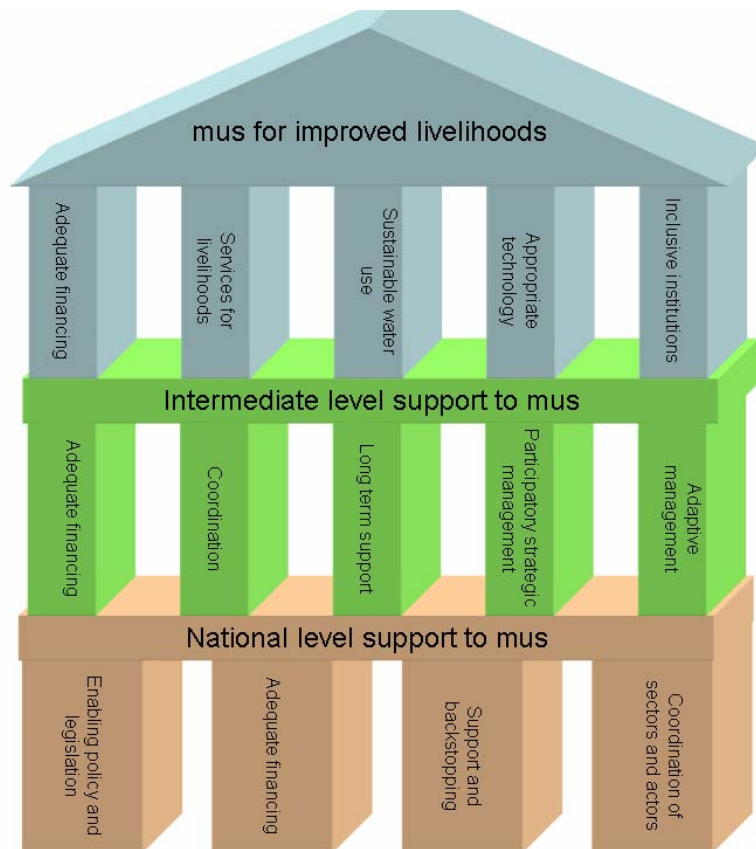
Figure 1: framework of principles for multiple use services (van Koppen et al., 2006)

This approach is currently being developed and tested in the action-research MUS (Multiple Use Systems) Project. This project aims both to develop knowledge on how such an approach can be followed, and to build the capacity of a range of stakeholders to follow such an approach. A key method of the project approach is working through so-called Learning Alliances (LAs) (Moriarty et al., 2005). The project aimed to work on the issue of multiple uses of water with multi-stakeholder platforms, both at intermediate and national level. These platforms would serve as an opportunity for joint development of knowledge on multiple uses, based on the members' experiences and needs. Besides, they would serve as space to strengthen the capacity of its members to take the mus approach forward.

1.2 SWELL: a local expression of the mus approach

One of the countries where the MUS project has been working is South Africa, where the work was led by the NGO AWARD (Association for Water and Rural Development). It has been working on the issue of multiple use of water, and tried to adapt it to the local context of South Africa, and of the Bushbuckridge area in particular. In doing so, it has developed a methodology for participatory planning for integrated water services provision, called SWELL (Securing Water to Enhance Local Livelihoods). SWELL provides a comprehensive framework and set of tools for the participatory assessment of the role of water in people's livelihoods and the planning of water resources and water services to enhance people's livelihoods. For a more detail on the SWELL methodology and its implementation see Maluleke et al. (2005a; 2005b).

As in South Africa, local government has ultimate responsibility for water services provision, SWELL tries specifically to work within the local government framework. Those frameworks provide two crucial aspects to which SWELL aims to links: participation of communities in planning, and integrated planning. Local government is responsible for drawing up Integrated Development Plans (IDPs), which are supposed to integrate the various sector departmental plans with local priorities. These, in theory, provide an ideal framework for the kind of integration that mus seeks to achieve.

However, local governments in South Africa are new institutions, still developing their capacity, and cooperative governance, between sectors and across levels of government, is an ideal not being realised. This results in poor planning, as witnessed in weak IDPs. Moreover new institutions for water management were planned and not yet in place (Catchment Management Agencies).

SWELL tried to work within this reality of capacity constraints, and where possible to strengthen those. A process was therefore designed to facilitate that engages stakeholders actively in collecting information, analysing this information, defining problems and priorities, and planning actions to address these. This sets the scene for implementing the plans and then monitoring and evaluating to inform further planning. To undertake this approach a high level of communication and liaison with the various stakeholders has been necessary. Information collection and analysis was done collectively in carefully designed participatory processes. Thus the process itself sought to overcome the problems of departments and institutions working in isolation from each other, by building integration through collaborative problem identification and planning. SWELL saw it as critical that this be done on the basis of village realities, and thus a strong voice for villagers and their structures was built into the process. By thus bringing together villagers and intermediate level stakeholders in a structured platform, this came to follow the concepts and structures behind the LA approach.

This has resulted in various findings on, for example, the relation between multiple uses and access to water (Cousins et al., 2007) and the implications for vulnerability of users (Maluleke, 2007 forthcoming). This report aims to add to that, by focusing on the *process* of intermediate level[2] stakeholder engagement, and the resulting capacity building.

1.3 Objective and methodology

Specifically, the objective of this report is to capture how the intermediate level stakeholders have developed their understanding about the multiple use services approach through their engagement in the SWELL process.

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[2] In addition, also interactions were held at national level, particularly through two seminars (Cousins and Smits, 2005; Cousins and Smits, 2006). Lessons learnt from SWELL, but also from a range of other organisations working in the topic were brought together in these seminars, feeding into the national debate on multiple uses. The learning process at national level, is not further elaborated in this report.

To arrive at this report, the main methodology followed was the one of process documentation. At the start of the process we defined a number of change processes we considered important, for intermediate level stakeholders to start applying a multiple use approach. These included:
- The development of the understanding of the mus concept; an understanding of what mus is and its rationale is a first basis. Without such understanding, application remains far away.
- The development of institutional relationships; integrated approaches to water development are implied by mus. This required effective institutional relationships.
- The development of practices of mus; this would be the ultimate practice that is expected.
- Conscious learning; although not exclusively related to mus, it is of importance, as this can enable avoiding errors from the past, or learning from positive experiences.
- Accountability relations; multiple use services are in the end about being more demand-responsive to the water needs of the poor. Accountability relations are key.

These are all complex processes not easy to capture in single indicators. The kind of questions that stakeholders ask, the statements they make, their participation in events and proposals they put forward are all expressions of these five points. Therefore, we tried to document these in a structured way. All interactions with the intermediate level were to be documented through minutes of meetings and workshops and field diaries. In this documentation particular attention was given to the kinds of expressions that reveal changes in each of these 5 points, as mentioned above. While the process documentation did in fact not always happen consistently or coherently, it did provide a reference point for observation and for reflection. By revisiting a couple of years of process documentation and doing a joint reflection, we have tried to reconstruct the process and the change that occurred, supported by its documentation. Interviews with stakeholders have complemented these observations, and provided further validation.

The report starts by introducing an overview of the relevant stakeholders at intermediate level, as well as how their involvement was structured in SWELL. Then, we will assess the change that has been observed among the stakeholders for the identified change processes, mentioned above. On the basis of that, lessons learnt and next steps forward are formulated.

2 SWELL working at the intermediate level

This chapter sets out how the SWELL process developed at intermediate level. It starts by mapping the stakeholders we understand to be key players at the intermediate level in relation to integrated planning of water services. Then, a chronological overview is given of the activities undertaken in the SWELL process, broken down in its three main stages. For each stage a short description is given of the activities, the reflections upon the process as were done at the completion of each of the phases and the results and implications for the subsequent stage. These form the foundation for the analysis in the next chapter as to what extent the change process mentioned before have taken place.

2.1 Identifying stakeholders

At the first stage of developing the SWELL process the team planned to invite key stakeholders into the planning process, and to keep them involved in strategic points of it. Therefore, a stakeholder analysis was done, as shown below.
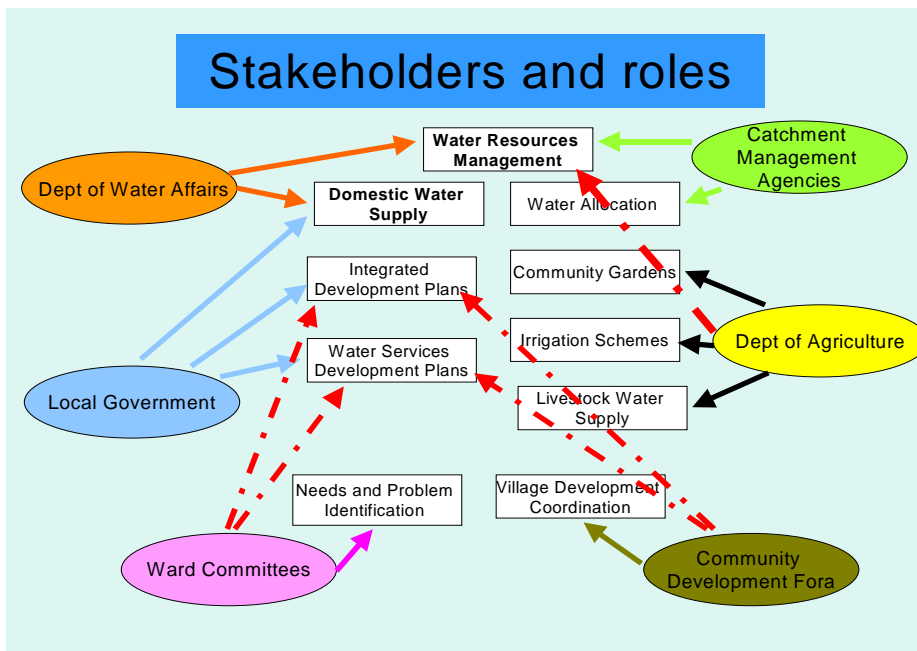
Figure 2: Stakeholders overlapping roles

Table 1: SWELL Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholders groups	Role/responsibility in planning for mus
Local Government: • Water Service Authority (District Municipality) • Water Service Providers (Local Municipality) • Local Economic Development (LED)	• Decision making role in planning for water services • Responsible for water provision and management • Local and District municipalities are responsible for LED – water for small business development
Sector Departments	• All these sectors are concerned with water provision (water

Key sectors involved in planning for water services include: • Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) • Department of Agriculture (DoA) • Department of Health and Social Development (DoH)	security) for different and specific uses at village level: • Domestic uses (DWAF) • Livestock (DoA) • Water for food security (DoH) • They are also key actors in planning for water services, in the Steering Committee for the Integrated Development Plan
Ward and village level structures • Water committees • Community Development Forums • Ward committee • Local government Regional Manager	• Water committees are the main institutions for water management at village level • CDFs are responsible for development planning, and have political support • The Regional Manager, CDF and Ward committee represent the Ward (clusters of villages and lowest municipal planning level) in the planning for water services in the IDP

These institutions and structures have subsequently been engaging in different ways in the process, as will be elaborated below.

2.2   Challenges expected in working at the intermediate level

Before embarking on the SWELL process, we expected a broad spectrum of challenges at the intermediate level that we would have to deal with.

- *Complexity of concepts.* Multiple use services are complex and require that people develop a holistic understanding. If people are not able to see connections and relationships between various components and elements they are unlikely to be able to implement mus.
- *Unfamiliarity with democratic processes.* People are not empowered to operate in a democratic, participatory way and they do not understand their rights and responsibilities.
- *Acceptance of new roles and responsibilities is demanding.* The roles and responsibilities for implementing integrated water management depart markedly from those required by the past system. This requires a considerable amount of transformation at various levels in the sector.
- *Institutional support structures not in place.* Integrated development requires that a range of local and regional institutional structures are in place and able to perform certain functions. When the SWELL work started this was not yet the case.

These challenges implied that strengthening of capacities would have to be carefully developed. The process would have to be reiterative, that sought to build and deepen capacity over time. Moreover that theoretical and practical engagement, in the real context of peoples work and lives was important, so that the learning would be around the stakeholders' direct areas of responsibility, and that there would be more applicability. This resulted in a process as described in the next section.

2.3   Processes of engagement

SWELL has itself been developed over time, and in interaction with stakeholders and on reflection on experience, and as funding resources were obtained to continue work. Three distinct stages can be distinguished. These are summarised below in Table 2, and then elaborated in more detail.

Table 2: Summary of stages of SWELL

SWELL stage: focus and timing	Name of village	Stakeholders and engagement
Stage 1: Pilot study 2003/2004	Utah	Municipality, DWAF, DoA, Bushbuckridge Water Board, Utah CDF and Water Committee, local health NGO, private game lodge. Bi-lateral meetings; an orientation workshop; training village and team members in village assessment; additional senior staff also participate in collective analysis of outcomes

Lessons informing the next stage:
• Good level of interest from all, but we need to find more synergy. Two elements are needed to further develop SWELL:
  o Better understanding by stakeholders of each other as institutions, their planning cycles, processes and work practices
  o Work at the level of the ward, not only village, for this is the lowest level of local government planning		

Stage 2: Water and Livelihoods Assessment 2004/2005	Delani, Seville A Thorndale, Gottenburg, Hlalakahle and Seville C	Local Municipality, District Municipality, (officials and councillor), DWAF, DoA, DoH, Ward Committee, Village CDF and Water Committees. Over the 2 years a number of bi-lateral meetings were held prior to village assessments, and after the collective analysis and planning workshops. Those who joined the assessment team were trained and undertook village assessments. A few for the second time.
Lessons informing the next stage: • Uneven skills in assessment team members drawn from stakeholders. A tension arises between high quality process and the value of having stakeholders participate, who are bringing different attributes, but are often not good facilitators though. In some cases the appropriate official not allocated, in some communities power dynamics playing out. Municipality involvement limited due to capacity problems. There is new interaction between stakeholders, good collective analysis, and new kinds of plans being developed. • Follow-through is weak, leading to more bi-laterals, some with promise but ultimately budgets 'allocated" not forthcoming. • Funds for more process are up but ward committee and municipality do want all the villages in the ward assessed, but with external funding. • Attempts to highlight gender and HIV/Aids do not make headway. • Opportunity to complete villages arises, with a focus on "the most vulnerable" – which is agreed upon, and leads to inclusion of new stakeholders. It is decided to run the workshop in the local language, XiTsonga (previous ones were in English)		
Stage 3: Mainstreaming Vulnerabilities 2005/2006	Dixie, Hluvukani, Lephong and Seville B	Home Based Care (HBC) workers, CDFs, DoA, DoH (Community Development Officers), DWAF.
Lessons to take forward into future work: • The vulnerability focus added to water and livelihoods adds a really useful dimension that highlights how more coherence is needed not only in approaches to water, but to poverty programmes. Overlaps in roles are again noted. • Learning is happening amongst participants, and is leading to some better communication, coordination and action locally. This is not enough to influence institutional behaviours sufficiently. • The process is entirely dependent on AWARD facilitation and funding – it does not carry any momentum of its own, nor has it succeeded in being incorporated into existing frameworks and processes		

2.3.1 Stage one: Pilot study in Utah

One of the predecessors of the MUS project, was a project called WHiRL (Water, Households, in Rural Livelihoods). Within this project, the first ideas of a multiple use approach were developed, even though it wasn't called as such at the time. It was felt that integrated planning would be key to a holistic approach to water development. It was agreed between to pilot such a planning approach in one village, where we had been conducting research for WHiRL anyway. As we were seeking an integrated and holistic approach to water, we wanted to have the active participation of all the stakeholders who have a role to play in this regard in the village. These were a mix of government, non-government or private sector organisations. Over a three-month period we made contact with people in the institutions we had identified, seeking the right people to talk to, and informing them of the project's intentions. We wrote a short information sheet to send or leave with people.

We then held a workshop to which all were invited to allow for a collective interaction and planning on participation in the village process: the stakeholder orientation workshop. After this workshop we continued to communicate progress to those who had not come to the workshop or were not actively participating, and participation increased as we went along.

It was noted by people that this was the first time:
- that the different stakeholders worked together in one process – which excited everyone;
- that water was looked at in a more holistic way; and
- that this led to a collective analysis, new understandings, and high motivation

There were also some concrete plans agreed upon to be implemented, based on the joint analysis. Specifically, DWAF undertook to replace a borehole pump that was stolen, if the committee would set in place security arrangements. A neighbouring game lodge undertook to bring electricity to the pump, and AWARD to give training to the committee.

There was a request to AWARD that this approach be developed so that it can be incorporated into local government Integrated Development Plans, and the processes that lead into their development.

Reflections at the time
The orientation workshop for stakeholders was not as well attended as we hoped: people came from 4 out of the 8 organisations invited. Of those, two committed to participate for two weeks of training and village assessment. As these were departmental staff, this was an important commitment, and was enough to be able to implement the project successful. It would also have strengthened the team's interactions to have had a better understanding of the various departmental as well as local government work processes and plans regarding this village or area.

Results
In the months since the workshop, despite follow up, various constraints frustrated progress. A review workshop held in January 2004 reported: "*The committee has organised arrangements for securing a new pump. DWAF has applied for a replacement but procurement procedures are slow. Electrification awaits the pump details and placement.*"

The group agreed to more regular meetings and a communication strategy to build on the collective analysis for continued interaction and coordination. AWARD was actively seeking funding for taking the approach and building it into IDP planning and implementation, which we obtained in early 2004.

2.3.2   Stage two: Village Water and Livelihoods Assessments in Ward 16

In follow-up to that, the second stage focused more at the ward level, trying to cover more villages.

To start of this stage, meetings were held with each stakeholder to re-iterate, or to introduce them to the concepts of mus within the context of the SWELL programme and to seek their commitment to participation and agree on their specific roles and possible contributions. (See table below). After that a two-week training session was held with stakeholders.

Initial village field work was also under taken with the participation of some of the key stakeholders. Village assessments and village analysis of outcomes were held in 6 villages. Feedback sessions (village synthesis workshops) were held with each village on which an assessment was carried out. These provided a number of opportunities, i.e. villagers visualised their current situation, were also able to engage with the outcomes (endorsement/rejection of outcomes) and tried to find solutions for identified problems.

Following these village feedback sessions, a three-day ward synthesis workshop was held with all stakeholders for collective analysis of the village assessments and for planning. Plans were collectively drawn for intervention in ward 16.

At a second workshop with all stakeholders AWARD was given the mandate to convene and facilitate this multi-stakeholder platform on a quarterly basis. The purpose is to learn - primarily through reflection from monitoring progress of implementation. This we regard as the intermediate level Learning Alliance.

Table 3: Summary of the SWELL process in stage two

Different steps of SWELL process	Whom to involve?	Roles and contribution
Introduction to project and concepts To introduce and discuss the project and the involvement of the stakeholder in it	All key stakeholders, in separate meetings	AWARD identify stakeholders, set up and hold meetings
Training and assessment: Trainees were introduced to the mus related concepts and equipped to undertake a "Water and Livelihood Assessment"	- District and local municipalities field workers - Ward committee - Community development officers from sector departments (DWAF, DoA, DoH)	Designated officials participated in the training and field assessments
Data analysis and village level synthesis: To prepare for and hold participatory village Water and Livelihood Assessments, and village level	Village structures and community members (Village level synthesis)	- Data analysis and facilitation - Villagers were identifying and prioritizing their

analysis of outcomes		water related issues and analyze them from a mus perspective.
Ward synthesis: All local and intermediate stakeholders analyze assessment outcomes, and agree on objectives, plans and roles	Various stakeholders (from villager level institutions to municipality level decision makers)	- Facilitation - Collective analysis - Setting of objectives, strategies and agreeing on plans and responsibilities for taking this forward
Integration into plans: Follow-up of plans for their integration in the municipal IDP and sectoral development plans (plans for DWAF, DoA, etc)	Local municipal councillor DWAF and DoA officials	Advocate the inclusion of proposed projects in plans

Reflection at the time

The planning aspect of SWELL has set an important foundation, but this is only the beginning. The barriers to an integrated approach were not overcome through this round of work, but will require ongoing iterations of planning, implementation, monitoring, learning and new plans and actions. A slower and more iterative process that takes people through a more thorough process of awareness-raising might be ideal – but the tensions of replicability and how much time people are willing to spend constrain this. Perhaps this can be more coherently built into the preparatory steps, into training and also into the synthesis, planning and then the monitoring, as well as into the implementation aspects of the various projects. Having learning support materials for this would be helpful. The SWELL team would like to develop these for its future work, and for sharing with other practitioners.

For all the work that went into preparation and seeking to identify the right people to engage at the right level, we still did not get it right in all cases, especially the sector departments. Those within the institutions were not always able to judge it appropriately – and so adjustments have been necessary. Also along the way new stakeholders were identified and brought in. Keeping an eye on expanding or adapting the stakeholder list is important.

In principle it was correct to involve officials in the assessment team. In this way they could work in a cross-departmental team, could learn and could also contribute their knowledge. Being paid officials, this seemed the place to build capacity for replication and for sustainability. Officials and community members were vocal on how they do not work together in the normal course of events, and were excited at this new process. However in a number of cases the skills and energy were simply not sufficient to make them effective team members. Working with more locally-based people from care groups and village structures should be explored in further work.

Where capacity to facilitate such integrative processes should reside is not yet clear. For upscaling and sustainability it makes sense that this be based in local government, but perhaps it also needs to be in government sector departments, and in the village based structures, as already it is clear that the demands and expectations of local government are unrealistic. However it may prove to be the case an independent NGO with credibility needs to play this role for some time to come;

which is of concern, as the number of NGOs in South Africa is extremely limited. It may well be the answer lies in working with the many emerging Community Based Organisations (CBOs) such as home-based care organisations and with the sector officials, with local government playing the convening role, rather than actively facilitating the processes we are developing. These are questions we take into the next stages of the work.

At village level it was very difficult to specifically raise issues of HIV/AIDS and of gender. Yet we say that vulnerability is important, and it can clearly get lost in the overall planning for water. It is not easy to see how to bring these out or practically address them.

There are tensions and conflicts between stakeholders, currently starkly between local government and the DoA, and also between different village leaders when there is the prospect of allocation of resources amongst villages. As a village said in one workshop "*development is political, and politics stops development*". Having the conflicts out in the open makes it possible to work with them. But, conflict management skills are needed to facilitate these processes that seek integration and coordination. For now having them articulated in the multi-stakeholder platform makes it possible to identify them, and agree on strategies to overcome them. Thus some direct actions were agreed, for example, writing letters to the municipality and DWAF about inconsistent attendance of their officials, and the taking up of a problem with the Ward Committee on communication and decision making.

Results
The group developed an integrated problem tree, and went on to agree on objectives, strategies, activities and projects for taking this forward into action. While participants were very positive and found working together in such a participatory and inclusive way exciting, the project plans that emerged tended to separate out responsibilities again. This was reflected in how responsibilities for plans were allocated at the end of the planning, and how the IDP reflects the Ward 16 analysis and plans. This indicates the importance of the challenges highlighted earlier, and that a long-term iterative learning process is required to enable a deep level of understanding, and appreciation of the positive impacts of mus. This will need to take place over the coming few years, which we see happening through working with the Learning Alliance at intermediate level, in the context of monitoring the implementation of the plans. Quick results are unlikely when one is seeking to change paradigms of people and institutions.

2.3.3   Stage three: Mainstreaming Vulnerabilities

Through the latter half of 2005 the SWELL programme undertook water and livelihoods assessments in 4 of the remaining 5 villages of Ward 16 that had not had participatory assessments before: Seville B, Dixie, Lephong and Hluvakani. This time the team sought to add a focus to that of water and livelihoods: who are the most vulnerable in communities, and what their needs may be, and how these are being and could be responded to. This meant an adaptation of the methodology, and including new stakeholders in the process: the Department of Health and Social Development, and Home-Based Caregivers and related structures. Meetings were held to discuss this next phase and its focus, and these meetings were followed up with phone calls, and finally formal letters, to confirm participation and arrangements.

Regarding village meetings it was agreed that all structures should be invited to the meeting, so that there would be a board picture of how the whole project is unfolding, and that there be agreement about who would be representing the village in the workshop. The representative could be from any structure, but should be someone active and who has participated in previous SWELL workshops. The team also met with the Induna (traditional leader).

A workshop was held with the stakeholders that run straight on from preparation and planning into doing the village assessments. Those that attended from stakeholders were:
- Department of Water Affairs and Forestry
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Health and Social Development
- Bushbuckridge Local Municipality
- Community Development Fora members from villages
- Hluvukani Home Based Caregivers

A two-day workshop was then held with the home-based care givers supervisors who were part of the 10 day workshop, plus additional village based Care Givers, who then formed part of the assessment team for household interviews.

Reflections at the time
The role of water committees from DWAF point of view is negligible: to report illegal connections and problems. But, the reality is that their roles are not very clear to people. The past few years have seen many changes and it is still not settled. Their actual capacity to be effective varies, but it is often weak. To be a member of a structure like a water committee, gives status to community members, and is linked to local power dynamics.

The Ward Committee is largely made up of men. These structures are sites of political power. The Ward Councillor selects them. Ward Councillors are selected by the party, not by people. The Ward Councillor selects a CDF, and emphasizes that it must be 50% women, but he does not translate this into the structure he is closest to, the Ward Committee. Is the structure being valued and used by local govt? It does not look like it. Structures are formed, but without people understanding, just because they are told to. This creates confusion.

In the workshop each organisation looked at programmes they offer, and what selection criteria they use, and how their programmes relate to water, and who do they partner with, so as to find out whether and how a focus on the most vulnerable is working. It looked all beautiful. A representative of the Department of Social Department said for example: "*we do it in partnership with CDF, DWAF, etc*." But, the reality was very different, and there was not a lot of coordination and communication, or understanding of each others programmes. After the workshop many participants expressed that this was an eye-opening event, and that they need to work in a more coordinated and integrated way. SWELL broke the 'rules of the game" by bringing people together. One finds a great deal of common ground with the lower levels of officials, but getting the senior levels is very rare.

There are supposed to be a series of structures for IDPs. The fora are there, but what happens in them is not clear. People were quite clear about what there roles and responsibilities are in relation

to policy and water – problems lie in interaction between different levels of organisations, and between sectors (e.g. water and agriculture). Engagement with communities seemed to take place in a whole lot of different ways. A lot of false assumptions are made about what happens at a community/ward level, and how this is transferred via Ward Councillors on the IDP Steering Committee into planning proceedings (especially the identification of needs, the setting of prioritise, selection of projects, and allocation of budgets).

Results
It was agreed that more communication and efforts at coordination were needed between departments, both in relation to water provision for different purposes, and regarding poverty focused programmes. The critical role of the CDF was recognised in identifying "the poorest", and that clarity on what different programmes meant by this was not given. It was also felt that monitoring is critical, but that who monitors and how is not a simple question. It was also noted that CDFs would be probably changing in membership due to local government elections, and this changing membership needs to be also taken into account. Local level officials felt they could work together more given their improved understanding of each other, but that problems lie at more senior levels of programme identification. AWARD was recognised as "breaking the rules" of working separately, and was recognised as not having responsibility or authority, but as being *Mohlohloteri* (an enabler). AWARD undertook to hold follow-up meetings with departments, and to try to continue to facilitate a collective forum.

3 Monitoring change – what have we observed?

Having seen how the process evolved, the reflections that were done along the way, and the results that were achieved, this section tries to analyse how change has happened in terms of capacity of intermediate level stakeholders to follow a mus approach. The earlier mentioned change process serve as point of reference for this.

3.1 Development of understanding of mus concepts and principles

In the area there have been many examples of how water technology is provided for only to cater for one purpose and not for others. The Department of Agriculture (veterinary services) constructed dams with the sole purpose to provide water for livestock, not more than that. At village level there are conflicts between livestock farmers and gardeners regarding who has rightful use of the water or whom the resource belongs to. Rain Water Harvesting (RWH) tanks were provided to harvest runoff water from households' yards for gardening. The Department is surprised that these are not only used for this purpose, but that households use these for storing water for other purposes as such as brick-making.

But, things are changing now, in terms of people's understanding. In the various workshops and field processes undertaken various statements were made which reflected participants coming to new understanding that reflects aspects of mus concepts. A few are taken captured in the box below.

Box 1: Quotes from participants at the SWELL workshop October 2005

"There is a realisation that issues of water provision are not a one department show."(DWAF official)

"The link between water and livelihoods was a key lesson. I realized that water is not only for drinking so other uses must also be prioritized" (Department of Agriculture official)

"It was also important to be clear about selection criteria for the most poor, before I attended the SWELL workshop we never used to differentiate who is poor and who is really poor, now I understand the importance of understanding who is really poor"(Department of Agriculture official)

"I got to understand that water is important for different activities and uses, for both people and livestock"(Department of Social Development official)

"I never use to think there was anything wrong with using tap water for irrigation" (Home based care coordinator /chief care giver)

"I thought *Mati I ya mehe ntsena* (water belongs to me alone) and could get it anytime and anyhow, even by force, so now I know that the water committee was not trying to be funny when they refuse me or other people to have private connections" (CDF representative from Dixie village)

"It was important to get to understand the links between water sources, water uses and infrastructure."(Care Giver from Lephong village)

"It is important to meet with different stakeholders because you get to understand what others are doing and how we can all plan together in a coordinated way. Water problems cat not only be solved by "fixing"; planning is also very important… a platform for people to talk and plan together."(Department of Social Development official)

These comments came after being introduced to concepts of water in livelihoods and a multiple uses approach to water, and then undertaking village assessments together. We found that people often moved from the first level of insight into the need for a more holistic approach to pointing fingers at each other, rather than taking responsibility for what needed to be done at village level. Through collective discussions, this position later changed into officials stopping being defensive, and started considering and realising the importance of working together.

Each institutional stakeholder may be aware that water is used by villagers for multiple purposes, but each use is seen separately by the responsible sector. Each sector understands its water use but not how much is needed when including all other needs from other institutions or players. This lack of quantification means that the implications for planning are not thought through.

While some level of understanding was developed amongst stakeholders who participated in SWELL, the question that remained was how do they begin to work together? For this there needs to be a platform or mechanism to enable that. Traditionally, the different institutions in Bushbuckridge do not really undertake collective planning other than for some specific events; as a result it is a challenge for the officials involved in the SWELL processes to initiate this at institutional level. (See next section for more on this)

SWELL sought engagement by senior level decision makers and field level official as well as local community leadership. Recognising that senior people would have limited time to participated, the team engaged with senior people in meetings prior to the village processes, and invited them to synthesis workshops, and held follow up meetings in some cases. However it is our observation that those who have been part of the SWELL processes do see the links between the inability of single use systems to meet needs for multiple uses and how that affects the functioning of infrastructure, but that the ultimate decision-makers (managers) within these institutions have not understood this, not being part of the in-depth process. It is a significant paradigm shift. Moreover at institutional level, the preoccupation is with reduction of services delivery backlogs, and this has political pressure behind it. Infrastructure development is seen as the solution for water services problems in Bushbuckridge, and other solutions are not yet embedded within the operations of the various institutions and thus are not being considered. Current SWELL partners can and should be in a position to illustrate how mus planning can contribute dealing with the backlogs, however the officials who have reached some understanding do not have decision-making power and can only make suggestions to their seniors.

3.2 Development of institutional relationships (cooperative governance)

The interaction between different institutions was highlighted in the workshops, in the village assessments, and most strongly in the SWELL synthesis workshops, where results of the village assessments were jointly analysed. There is a history of no absolute clarity with regards to responsibility for boreholes in villages. This is not surprising given the long-drawn-out process of institutional change which is still not finalised, in which new municipal structures were created with a direct responsibility for water services provision. Some boreholes used to belong to the Department of Agriculture and some to DWAF; lately there are those that are under the municipality. All these boreholes are meant to be the responsibility of the local municipality since it is now the water services provider. DWAF no longer provides water services directly, it is however responsible for fixing all boreholes that used to be under its authority. There are times when, in the case of a breakdown, one of the three institutions will attend to the case and realise that it is not their responsibility. The institutions have no clear mechanism for reporting to the relevant authority which should take the responsibility. Although on paper the local municipality is the ultimate authority, it still has not been institutionalised within the three players.

This is not necessarily understood in the same way however. Thus a municipal official said in a workshop (Feb 2006) *"The only lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities of stakeholders is at the community level. At the service providers level these roles and responsibilities are well understood and implemented- the problem is that village structures are different to more formal structures in the type and level of community capacity and understanding of effectiveness of different community structures"*. However, once discussion went on to talk of uses other than domestic uses this position did not hold, and was not the consensus of the group at the workshop.

When considering how poverty programming was taking place (SWELL workshop 10-21 October 2005) the different stakeholders claimed in their presentations to be working in partnership with other sectors. However from discussions it soon became most apparent that this only happens in theory. It was also interesting to note how the different stakeholders would frantically take notes when a particular stakeholder group was presenting their different programs, as a way of capturing and "understanding what the others are doing".

Within various SWELL workshops there was acknowledgement of what each sector could contribute to collective planning, but the problem faced was on how to embed this aspect of working together in the actual processes for each institution. On the one hand the practicality of doing this is the problem that stands in the way for implementation of the mus approach – there are structural issues of where decisions get made, within as well as between sectors and levels. On the other, there is an unwillingness to acknowledge that there is really a problem: institutions seek to be seen to fulfil their obligation for "cooperative governance" and the need to avoid duplication of efforts by different institutions. This leads to a tendency to "shift blame" and departments point fingers at each other. The local municipality complains about sector departments' Heads of Department not attending the IDP steering committee meeting. Yet many of the actors seem to have a superficial understanding of what is entailed to achieve integration. An IDP process, for example, is seen as something that can be quickly done, that does not depend on an in-depth planned process.

There are other problems with where decisions are made. People have reported that <u>within</u> an institution, the basis of decision making and understanding of roles is often problematic, let alone between institutions. Thus agricultural extension officers complain they are not consulted when projects are brought to villages, for these are frequently identified at provincial level. An example was that of providing fish farming packs for poor households which failed in the area due to lack of consideration by provincial department of the water situation in the area and the hot climatic conditions.

After discussions, some of the sectors did see the significance of involving one another in activities. For example, the Department of Social Development did realise that in their wanting to provide water for backyard gardening, they need to consult with DWAF. DWAF, however, does not see itself as an institution that can provide water resource status information for planning by other institutions, for example to inform the drilling of boreholes. This then limits what could be a meaningful collaboration. The Department of Social Development has attempted to involve counterparts from other departments in its activities e.g. Community Development Workers from Social Development do attempt to involve DoA extension officers and Municipal Community Liaison Officers. The limitation they are experiencing is that officers in each department are only answerable to their seniors who usually do not see this as an important exercise. Senior management has not shown any changes in attitude with regards to working together. Seniors underrate platforms that allow staff to sit with their own counterparts and share.

Thus while change in recognition for the need for institutional cooperation was recognised by SWELL partners, it was not at a sufficiently high level to significantly impact on institutional practices, and personal practices are limited by those of the institution.

3.3 Changes in practice: ownership of mus

The act of multiple water uses is not a new thing in the villages, and the assessments show that households utilise domestic water for productive activities. This is currently in an opportunistic rather than a planned way however. Unless alternative sources become available, and while choice remains limited, a planned approach cannot be expected form village level, in a context where authority and responsibility is given to the municipality and to sector departments, and not to local level structures.

SWELL process has just managed to gain recognition for a mus approach as a platform for collective planning. As explained above the real change in understanding has been at too junior a level to effect institutional changes in practice. Thus it is too soon to attribute activities in villages to this process. However, as an outcome of the Ward 16 Synthesis process, DWAF has gone out to actively assess the status of boreholes in the area. New tanks have been provided in some villages where they did not have them. Momentum for minimising isolated planning was built, as people were positive and excited about sharing with and hearing from each other. Field officers report informally that they are communicating more, and on a better understanding of each others roles and programmes.

Out of village processes, the attitude is that villagers are prepared to manage their water services systems – whether this will be institutionalised remains to be seen as the local municipality decided finally on their institutional arrangements, which may or may not include a formal role for village structures.

3.4   Conscious learning

The SWELL processes provided a platform for officials to undertake village assessment processes jointly and with villagers. Contributions by these officials showed that there was a better understanding of village context when these were combined. This however is not followed up by these officials in their own institutions with regards to how they approach problem solving. Related to this is that there is not enough personnel within these institutions to carry out these activities, on top of that they are expected to provide output in a short space of time by their seniors who are not so very interested or even understand the need for learning or problem solving processes.

The interaction between field staff of various institutions provided them opportunities for learning from each other, which they articulated and valued, and try to keep alive, although this has not been fully incorporated institutionally as an activity that should happen.

The local municipality does not see learning as a means to reaching its deliver goals. The tendency seems to be towards isolated *unintegrated* activities for solving problems, i.e. to deal with unauthorised connections, install prepaid meters and install more infrastructure in general. The municipality does not seek to look at what the causes of the problem are and address those. Their priority remains backlog reduction, and the means to this end, in their view, does not involve learning, but infrastructure development. "*The municipality is not trying to learn lessons; we are trying to provide services*", as one official said.

Sector departments also sit with valuable information from their own activities. It is hardly utilised because strategic decisions are not made locally, but provincially. The municipality will not use it because that is not what their priorities are. Again, the learning that is happening is only by individuals not embedded in institutional strategic direction.

At village level, communities will want to have a new reservoir installed without making a link to whether there is enough water to fill it up. As such technical information is not provided it does not form part of decision-making by villagers – a lack of information also limits what learning can take place.

3.5   Relationships of accountability

SWELL provided a platform through which villagers could directly address officials about their problems, as opposed to the councillor doing this on their behalf. The Ward Synthesis process provided insights to both communities and government institutions on the richness that can be harnessed from fully involving communities in identifying their priority needs. The holistic plans that came out of the ward synthesis process had the potential to address most problems in Ward 16. This potential was not realised as plans were then not allocated a budget and implemented. It

is instructive that in seeking to follow up on why this was not happening, when it had been announced, proved to take us into a messy web of decision making that it was not possible for us to track.

Accountability does not seem to be a focus of Bushbuckridge institutions. This may also be linked to institutions and communities themselves not being very clear of their roles. It is difficult to demand accountability if an unfulfilled obligation is not pinned down to a specific institution or individual or understood process. An outcome of the SWELL process was the Ward Committee writing a letter to a number of government officials, including the municipal manager and heads of sector departments, demanding responses with regards to plans that were made during the ward synthesis process. Although this sis not lead to a response, the willingness to demand accountability is an important step – the question then becomes how to channel this into effective means.

It is important to note that IDP process, which is supposed to enable citizen participation, is structured such that ordinary villagers have no space to interact. These processes are usually carried out in some venue far from the reach of rural poor and travelling arrangements are never made for ordinary citizens to make it to the venue. Public participation platforms are largely limited to Mayoral Imbizos[3], and through CDF-Ward Committee project listing, which is taken up by the Ward Councillor into the Integrated Development Planning process. Municipal consultations happen through the Ward councillor. The process becomes quite questionable, given that these councillors are politicians therefore discuss things that favour their ideology and avoid other things.

In a discussion on accountability in SWELL workshop (Oct 2005) participants agreed that monitoring is key to accountability – and it became clear that who can monitor what, through what means, raised possibilities but not clear answers. As one village committee members said

"Yes I understand all this but can I go back to my village and start monitoring? But do we have the right to question and hold people accountable? Now that I have attended this workshop who am I to go and start questioning people? People will think I'm crazy and dismiss me"

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[3] Mayoral Imbizo – a process by which the Executive Mayor embarks on a process of meeting with communities to listen to their voices, take project proposals from these villages for integration into the IDP

4 Lessons learnt and way forward

The SWELL process aimed to strengthen the integrated planning of water services, so as to better meet people's livelihoods needs. A key issue in that, is the strengthening of the capacity of intermediate level stakeholders, especially local government, staff of sector departments at decentralised levels and the organised community structures (such as ward committees and others), in following such an approach. Involving these stakeholders in the process was considered to be a key vehicle for achieving such strengthened capacity in a sustainable manner. At the same time, the involvement of the stakeholders was expected to contribute to the further development of the multiple use services concept itself, by basing it within the reality of local government implementation.

Through the process, definitely a change has been seen in stakeholders' understanding of the multiple use services concept, and in principle, a positive view to the issue. However, this is still far from being turned into the practice in terms of three dimensions:
- the actual approach to services delivery
- the relationship between different institutions for integrated planning
- the relationship between the communities, their representative structures and the actual services providers.

On the first account, the preoccupation with quick backlog reduction remains predominant, without a closer look into issues of sustainability of services and the impact of services provision on poverty alleviation. This will ultimately defeat the implementation of a mus approach in Bushbuckridge unless we can succeed in illustrating how mus can contribute dealing with the backlogs. Water services providers as institutions will only believe in mus if they can see its direct impacts on their preoccupations. Local municipality should be able to see and appreciate supply of water beyond just domestic. This can also help exposing the fact that more than just one water resource should be developed to cater for a specific need. For ensuring understanding of mus concepts, water services providers and other providers of services that are dependant on water, should be able to have an understanding of available water resources and their allocation.

Having the local municipality be responsible for all water services-related activities, and in the position to integrate and coordinate activities, is a step in the right direction. It provides a position through which only one institution is actively working on these problems without duplicating or acting against others. Through the process, the new distribution of roles and responsibilities between institutions has been clarified further. Despite that, finger pointing between agencies is common. One reason for that is that often within institutions responsibilities are not clear. This may result in field staff often not being informed about certain initiatives, whereas at field staff level, approximation between staff of different agencies is happening more. In addition, there is an instrumentalist view towards the mechanisms that should enable integration, particularly the IDP. This is dealt with as if it were a tick-box exercise, and not an in-depth planning process, where different sectoral perspectives can be brought together.

Finally, it must be noted that the current structures at community and ward level are not functioning as effective platforms for participation. Water committees, for example, do not have

any real role apart from reporting problems with water services. Planning bodies such as ward committees are often politicised and the most vulnerable community members often remain excluded. The learning process hasn't been able to make any change in that, although it raised the awareness on the need for monitoring, for example, as one ways of increasing the accountability between community members, its representative bodies and service providers. However, with unclear responsibilities, accountability is difficult to enforce.

Given the fact that the process' main impact has been at the level of creating awareness and understanding, does this mean that the learning has failed? Part of the answer to that question is that these kinds of change processes take a long time, and that strengthened capacity cannot be expected within the time frame that was followed. Secondly, an important learning was on the side of the SWELL team, and even the broader sector in South Africa. The SWELL process showed the actual limitations of how IDPs are being followed at local government level. It also revealed that without very specific guidance in national guidelines on "how to do mus", local governments are not likely to give it due attention. Therefore, it has been important that this experience has been fed into the work undertaken with national level agencies, such as the two national learning seminars. These have enabled these practical experiences being brought forward and considered in the national policy debate on multiple use services. Hopefully, that will help in developing the guidelines for local government on following a mus approach.

At the same time, the process has given further insights in the potential scope of these learning processes. It was noted that there was active and enthusiastic participation by field officers and junior staff. However, as their senior officers hadn't been part of the learning process, these are not promoting the application of the ideas brought forward, sticking to the conventional ways of water services development. This implies for future learning activities the need to involve senior decision makers, even though we realise that they are not likely to set aside the required time and efforts for this. This will remain a challenge.

A second component of improvement in the learning has been around the implementation of the plans developed through SWELL. The fact that SWELL did not lead to implementation of projects may have undermined the achievement of the learning we sought. Although it was acknowledged that planning together was very important, and that learning happened during discussions, translating this into practice did not happen because plans were not implemented, and thus the full cycle for learning has not been completed. There is little that can be done to enforce such implementation. But the fact that it didn't happen, in itself showed the difficulty between appreciating new lessons learnt in theory, and putting these into practice.

Finally, the above has implications for the following phases of the SWELL programme. The team took time to capture the findings of the village assessments and stakeholder interactions: capturing the data, reflecting and writing up papers for consolidating learning. This has led to planning a next phase of seeking to create a stronger partnership for taking the work forward, to address the concern of who is participating in whose process, of where ownership lies for these processes. The next phase therefore starts with an evaluation with each stakeholder of AWARD and its role, in general and in relation to SWELL, including at the most senior level. The responses will then be used in a collective reflection and planning session, before seeking to take SWELL into the next level of implementation, which we believe requires a closer incorporation into stakeholders

own processes in order to be implemented at scale. Our assessment is that it will require a more senior level of interaction and support of the SWELL approach if it is to overcome the obstacles it has faced of going beyond assessment and first level planning, into incorporation of outcomes into plans and then into implementation.

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