



Developing capacity for effective water governance in South Africa

Watercourse Newsletter #2

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Editorial

The last three months have seen mixed signals emanating from the Department for Water Affairs & Forestry (DWAF) concerning the direction of institutional realignment set out in South Africa's water laws.

Many stakeholders have expressed concern about the continuing uncertainty over the future of Catchment Management Agencies (CMAs), their degree of independence from DWAF, and their relationship with Catchment Management Strategies and Water User Associations.

Against this background, examples of good practice in implementation become important. We hope that the work outlined in this newsletter will serve to highlight two such examples.

With the support of Watercourse and other programmes, staff from the Inkomati Catchment Management Agency (ICMA) working in the Inkomati Water Management Area (IWMA), and from the DWAF regional office working in the Mvoti catchment in KwaZulu-Natal, are beginning to develop valuable dialogue processes with their stakeholders, showing how the National Water Resources Strategy can be made to work in practice.

While there is still some way to travel in both cases, the take-home message is

to look at what is working and to build on these and other cases where the new institutional arrangements set out in the National Water Act are beginning to prove themselves.

When it comes to implementation, even the best top down policies need to learn from bottom up examples of good practice.

Watercourse – background

The Watercourse programme is designed to support the implementation of the National Water Resources Strategy. It aims to do this by building capacity and working with stakeholders to develop the required water governance arrangements. There is a particular focus on:

- co-operative governance – the arrangements whereby multiple water stakeholders, including those at national, provincial, local and community levels, learn to work together effectively;
- adaptive governance – the process through which water stakeholders adapt their priorities and actions as they discover the benefits of working together co-operatively, and as they prepare for future uncertainties, particularly those brought about by climate change.

The programme, which started in May 2007, is targeting two 'pathfinder' Water Management Areas – the Inkomati in Mpumalanga and the Mvoti to Umzimkulu in KwaZulu Natal.

Watercourse is also working with the Department for Water Affairs & Forestry nationally to look at how the lessons from the two pathfinder WMAs can be shared and applied more widely.



Watercourse in the Inkomati

Developing a stakeholder vision for the Inkomati Water Management Area

On 16th – 18th October the first IWMA 'Future Search' workshop successfully took place at the Crocodile Inn, Nelspruit.

Facilitated by Cinnabar consultants John Goss & Dumisani Ncala, the workshop brought together approximately 60 stakeholders from across the IWMA to review the history of water use in the Inkomati, map current trends and practices and agree on a vision for the future.

The workshop represented an important step towards developing a common understanding of the pressures facing the catchment and agreeing equitable and sustainable ways of sharing the catchment's precious water resources.

An important and widely appreciated feature of the workshop was that

stakeholders experienced working through a participative process to produce a shared vision, rather than being consulted on someone else's.

All of the following nine key elements of this shared vision were agreed:

- All stakeholders actively working together – improved stakeholder co-operation
- Quality of river and ecosystems improved - less pollution – greater environmental awareness
- Equitable distribution of water to all stakeholders
- Improved infrastructure for water distribution
- Capacity and skills development – emerging farmers becoming commercial- empowerment
- Recognition of the role and importance of the ICMA
- Improved governance and compliance with legislation
- Improved gender balance
- Job creation through tourism

This vision will be used to help shape the Inkomati Catchment Management Strategy (ICMS) and will be further tested and refined in each of the IWMA's five sub-catchments.

Supporting the development of the ICMS through a 'master planning' process

On 10th August and again on 27th November members of the ICMA and DWAF (Pretoria), together with consultants working for them on key projects, met to look at how their activities could be better co-ordinated.

Using a process of social learning these meetings shaped a 'master planning' process that will enable better integration between diverse strands of work, avoid stakeholder fatigue, and be used to underpin the development of the ICMS.

First day of the Inkomati Catchment Management Agency (ICMA) staff development programme

On 28th November fifteen staff from the ICMA attended the first day of this development programme, which will span eight workshops spread over 18 months and be used to build staff skills and confidence in a range of practices underpinning integrated water resources management (IWRM).

Facilitated by John Colvin, Mark Everard and Dumisani Ncala, the day introduced key themes of the programme, including ecosystems thinking, empowerment and learning styles, and communication and facilitation skills.

The response from participants was enthusiastic, and prepares the ground for the second staff development day, which will be held on 26th February 2008.



Watercourse in KwaZulu Natal

Second meeting of the Mvoti dialogue steering group

A second meeting of the steering group took place on 5th November and focused on enabling participants to better understand the purpose and functions of Water User Associations and their potential relationships with provincial and municipal planning processes.

The steering group agreed that, to be effective, the Mvoti dialogue would need to engage with a wider cross-section of stakeholders before beginning to shape

options for future institutional arrangements. It was therefore agreed to convene an interactive workshop involving between 40 and 50 stakeholders, to be held on 3rd March 2008.

Second day of the DWAF KZN staff development programme

A smaller group of eight DWAF KZN staff attended the second day of this development programme, held on 4th December and again facilitated by Sam Chimbuya, Mark Everard and John Colvin.

Participants explored differences between a government and community-driven approach to water services delivery, worked on the development of their facilitation skills with particular attention to different types of power, and deepened their understanding of the ecosystems services approach to catchment planning and valuation.

The third staff development day will be held on 29th February 2008.



Watercourse nationally

DWAF institutional realignment

On 29th October John Colvin attended the DWAF Institutional Realignment Workshop at the invitation of the Minister, Lindiwe Hendricks. The purpose of the workshop was to help shape a single, coherent model underpinning future institutional realignment, taking into account the findings from recent reviews by the National

Water Advisory Council and the consultancy XybanetX.

Three models of institutional realignment were presented at the workshop, which concluded with three key agreements:

- a shared commitment to Catchment Management Agency development – this was a common feature of all three models;
- common agreement on the need for the accelerated transformation of the DWAF national and regional offices in order to properly resource the new CMAs (people and systems);
- common agreement that between them, the three models presented at the workshop hold the key to this transformation, but that further work is needed to combine the best of all three.

Following the workshop John Colvin submitted a report to the Minister with recommendations for a set of institutional arrangements combining the best features of all three models.

Water for Growth & Development

John Colvin has also been invited to act as an external advisor to the Water for Growth & Development (WfGD) initiative. This is a DWAF initiative underpinned by EU funding through the Masibambane III programme.

On 9th November John attended a water sector workshop to help brainstorm a core narrative by which WfGD can tell the story of how it will add value to current policy and implementation work across DWAF.

Key to this narrative is the idea that WfGD will be used to stimulate:

- sector policy and strategy reviews;
- the alignment of sector planning processes to growth and development strategies, most notably at provincial level;
- a sharing and learning process, highlighting and disseminating examples of emerging good practice, and enabling learning in real time how to apply good practice in different environments.

The Watercourse Newsletter is co-edited by Dr John Colvin (Open University) and Dr Mark Everard (Environment Agency) with contributions from Sam Chimbuya (Khanya-aid), John Goss and Dumisani Ncala (Cinnabar) and Geraldine Klarenberg (Mvula Trust).

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