

**Water Points and Water Policies: Decentralisation and  
Community Management in Sangwe Communal Area,  
Zimbabwe**

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## Summary

This paper examines the institutions governing access to borehole water in two wards in Sangwe communal area in Chiredzi District, Zimbabwe. One ward has had a long history of external intervention, while the other ward has relatively few boreholes. The study examined the contrasting institutional dynamics that have evolved, particularly around borehole committees as a result of the community based approach to water management promoted in recent years. In both sites questions can be raised about the sustainability of such decentralised resource management institutions, particularly as many richer members of the 'community' have no investment in the community sources as they increasingly have access to private water supplies. This paper concludes with a discussion of the challenges of 'community' management approaches in the context of high levels of social and economic differentiation and options of private access to resources.



## Introduction

**Z**imbabwe has witnessed a wide range of interventions in the water sector, many driven by the experience of drought in the early 1990s. Developing effective groundwater sources has been a priority for government and many agencies engaged in the country. One of the most important strategies for groundwater exploitation has been the development of community-managed boreholes.

Emerging out of the 1980s UN Water Decade was a widespread emphasis in the 1990s on community-oriented management of these and similar forms of water sources. The idea – premised on the notion that communities provide a more appropriate form of management than government departments – became part of the raft of government legislation on water that Zimbabwe developed towards the end of the decade.

Whilst donors and others supporting these initiatives portrayed communities as homogenous and effectively managing their resources within a difficult external environment, in fact the picture of community management that emerges is rather more complicated. Instead of the somewhat streamlined version of reality in which homogenous communities take on the task of serving themselves with resources, this paper shows that interventions are frequently hostage to local political environments that both make Community-Based Management (CBM) far harder to realise in practice, and more inherently conflict-laden than is often assumed.



Complicating the process further, in parallel to resource management processes, there have been changes to the broader governance environment in Zimbabwe. An increasing emphasis on decentralised, district-led development has shifted major responsibility for developing water supplies from line ministries to Rural District Councils.

Focusing on Sangwe communal area in Chiredzi District, the paper examines the complex relationship between these wider decentralisation processes and the community management of boreholes. It examines in more detail, the issues of inter- and intra-community relationships that impact on assumptions about community management capacity. Emerging is a picture of complexity, in which communities are variously battered by external shocks and impacts, are engaged in complex external relations with their neighbours, and are only rarely able to command sufficient control over resources to manage successfully their community water points.

### **Policy background**

Decentralisation has its origins in a variety of policies and contexts. One school of thought refers to the transfer of responsibility for planning, management, and resource allocation to local level agencies (see Apthorpe and Conyers 1982; Conyers 1986; Makumbe 1996; Manor, 1999; Rondinelli et al. 1983). From a developmental – and particularly donor context – this transfer helps to overcome many of the perceived state failures to provide effective service delivery based on centralised provision. In tandem with this thinking, there is also an emphasis on the participation and empowerment at a local level (Brelt 1996).

In localising the decision-making environment, decentralised natural resource management was reasoned to improve efficiency, equity and sustainable resource use, principally by reducing the distance between decision-maker and beneficiary (Bwalya 1992). Not only ‘building in’ local interest in sustainable use of natural resources, decentralised management may also promote collective action by communities by giving them a ‘measure of control’ over the development activities that affect them (Apthorpe and Conyers 1982). This largely conventional view of the local environment is based on a fairly homogenous and benign view of local communities, where there are few fissures and division, and, above all, where the decision-making environment is unproblematic. This is rarely the case in practice.

### **Decentralisation in Zimbabwe**

Zimbabwe’s decentralisation process has been framed by the country’s wider post-Independence rural development policies. These policies sought to redress colonial disparities between large-scale commercial farming areas and communal areas, by fostering the participation of local people in development activities beneficial to them (Makumbe 1996). New institutions, infrastructure, and production and service

arrangements would help to promote growth and development in all rural sectors (ROZ 1983).<sup>1</sup> Initially inaugurated by the 1984 Prime Minister's Directive, the main stated objective of decentralisation was the following,

*To define the administrative structures at provincial and district level and the relationships and channels of communication between all the participants in development in provincial and district level in order to achieve the co-ordinated development of provinces and districts in Zimbabwe.*<sup>2</sup>

The Directive also entailed,

*the transfer of responsibility for planning, management and resource raising and allocation from the central government and its agencies to local units, that include inter alia, semi-autonomous public authorities, non governmental organisations, field units of central government ministries and agencies.*<sup>3</sup>

Thus decentralisation sought to bring about 'a comprehensive and more democratic system involving the local communities both horizontally and vertically in the process of planning and effecting their development ...' (ibid.). Ensuing legislative amendments, including the Provincial Councils Act (1985), the Rural District Councils Act (1988) and the Cooperative Societies Act (1989), aimed at creating local government and administrative structures at national and sub-national levels and paved the way for the amalgamation of formerly fragmented rural and urban councils into what became the current Rural District Councils (RDCs).

RDCs are divided into wards and subdivided into villages, with their respective Ward Development Committees (WADCO) and Village Development Committees (VIDCO). Each ward usually consists of six villages and each WADCO has two representatives from each village, with each village comprising around one hundred households. The functions of the WADCO and VIDCO are basically similar, but differ only in the degree of responsibility or the area of jurisdiction. As intensioned in the Act, the VIDCO became the basic unit of organisation for decentralised development in Zimbabwe.

### **Decentralisation and community resource management**

Within this broader process of decentralisation, a shift to community-based management of water points has taken place. The Integrated Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programme (IRWSSP) that emerged from the master planning era of the 1980's UN Water Decade, drove the development of community-based management, and focused on elements of 'community management' that were premised on willing and

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<sup>1</sup> Republic of Zimbabwe (1983) *Towards the Implementation of a National Rural Development Policy: Strategy Paper*. Harare.

<sup>2</sup> Republic of Zimbabwe (1984) *Provincial Councils and Administration in Zimbabwe: A Statement of Policy and a Directive by Prime Minister*, Harare, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Makumbe (1996).

effective social and institutional environments for community participation.

To take forward the IRWSSP the government established a National Action Committee (NAC) in 1985, whose subsequent Secretariat – the National Co-ordination Unit (NCU) – was formed in 1987. The latter had a strong mandate to develop an effective programme of decentralised domestic water supply development. Chaired by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural and Urban Development, the NCU co-ordinated and organised provincial-level activities in water supply and sanitation. Below the NCU were formed Provincial and then District Water and Sanitation Sub-Committees, the key functions of which are given in Table 1.

**Table 1: Functions of NAC organs**

Committee level	Key functions
<b>National Action Committee</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-ordinating the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the programme</li> <li>• Defining and clarifying policy</li> <li>• Advocacy</li> <li>• Sourcing of scarce resources</li> <li>• Advise government and donors on the programme</li> </ul>
<b>Provincial Water Supply and Sanitation Sub-Committee</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate training of technical departments participating in IRWSSPs</li> <li>• Facilitate planning and production of project proposals by RDCs</li> <li>• Linkage between national and district level</li> <li>• Monitoring and Evaluation of IRWSSPs at district level</li> <li>• Conflict resolution at district level</li> <li>• Work as a specialist team in capacity building at RDCs in IRWSSPs</li> <li>• Post and update the Provincial Development Committee on IRWSSP activities</li> </ul>
<b>District Water Supply and Sanitation Sub-Committee</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Own the programme</li> <li>• Chaired by the District Administrator</li> <li>• Take control of all activities</li> <li>• Prepare work plans for the programme</li> <li>• Disbursement of funds on approved activities</li> <li>• Monitoring and Evaluation</li> <li>• Preparing budgets</li> <li>• Promote human resource development</li> <li>• Training of councillors</li> </ul>
<b>Ward Development Committee and Village Development Committee</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Represent specific wards' developmental needs to council at district level</li> <li>• Communicate council decisions and programmes to ordinary villagers.</li> <li>• Carried out in conjunction with VIDCOs, through the Village Head, who reports to the Councillor about particular village developmental needs.</li> <li>• With particular reference to water, the Ward development committee through its chair, the councillor, represents a ward's water needs, ranging from the request for additional water points to seeking assistance in maintaining and repairing existing ones.</li> </ul>

This system led to the rapid development of water points in Zimbabwe, with some 15,000 new water points created by the late 1980s (Zawide 1989: 4). The system of maintenance for this burgeoning number of mainly hand-pump operated water points was a top-down 'three-tier' system. Under this arrangement, provision and maintenance of rural water supplies was carried out by the District Development Fund (DDF) forming part of the Ministry of Energy and Water Resources and Development. Under this system the DDF would field District Maintenance Teams, with pump minders responsible for a number of community water points and, at each point, would exist a caretaker.

The three-tier system worked when there was fairly low demand and relative availability of funds. However, as the number of water point increased rapidly and funds dwindled, severe constraints emerged. Average allocations to the DDF for operation and maintenance of water points shrank from 120 Zimbabwean dollars (Z\$) per water point in 1988-1989 to Z\$47 in 1994-1995 (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Variation in maintenance allocation (Z\$) with number of hand pumps**

Year	No. of hand pumps	Transfer to DDF (Z\$'000) in real terms at 1990 prices	DDF allocation per pump in Z\$ at 1990 prices
1988/89	16467	1968	120
1989/90	17823	2224	125
1990/91	19423	2384	122
1991/92	20841	2138	103
1992/93	22178	2308	104
1993/94	24171	1909	79
1994/95	25405	1196	47

*Source:* DDF Water Division (1994).

The rapid expansion in numbers of water points and the ageing of existing pumps left many areas unable to meet simple maintenance requirements. One of the key problems lay in the role played by the pump minder, nominal employees of the DDF. Originally envisaged to have one per ward, as few as one per five wards in fact worked in many districts, leading to long down times.

Combined with the problems of low spare part availability and capacity to purchase as central government reduced the available maintenance allocations, there was a growing move to adopt community-based operation and maintenance during the 1990s. This move was based on the logic of management at the most appropriate level and the increasing perceptions that there should be a connection between wider democratic decentralisation under the RDCs and local-level service provision. In 1999 the NAC adopted Community-Based Management as an integral component of the IRWSS Programme (NAC 1999).



The National Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programme states that the concept of community based management of water

*implies the beneficiary communities are in control, have full authority and responsibility for the development of water and sanitation services. It states that the user community<sup>4</sup> shall take responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the facility and the attendant obligations such as raising resources for spares and upkeep.<sup>5</sup>*

Water points that were developed and managed by government and non-governmental organisations were handed over to user communities for management and development. Under this programme there would be training for Community Management and Community Financing – specifically the training of water point committee members and water and sanitation sub-committees – and the introduction of elements of cost recovery such that rural consumers contributed to the cost of rural water supply and sanitation, ‘thereby reducing the costs incurred by Government and enhancing local responsibility for service’ (NMPRWS 1985: 1).

## The study area

It is from this background that the study focuses on the experiences of community based management in Wards 1 and 4 of Sangwe Communal Area, Chiredzi District (see Map 1, next page).

Sangwe is located in the southeast lowveld, Natural Region V, characterised by low rainfall and high temperatures. Average rainfall is around 450 millimetres per year and varies markedly from one year to another, changing significantly the volume and pattern of surface flows in the area.

In Sangwe, groundwater is readily available as a reliable source of water. Availability is good in the upper 16-20 metres, but may be poor at lower depths.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, the sinking of boreholes has been commonplace in the area, as represented in Table 3 (see p. 8).

In addition to groundwater both the Save and Mkwazine rivers provide additional sources, as well as numerous natural springs and pools, particularly Gudo pools and Makeje springs. Water for livestock and watering of gardens is found in *mufuku*.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Community refers to a group of people sharing a water and sanitation facility.

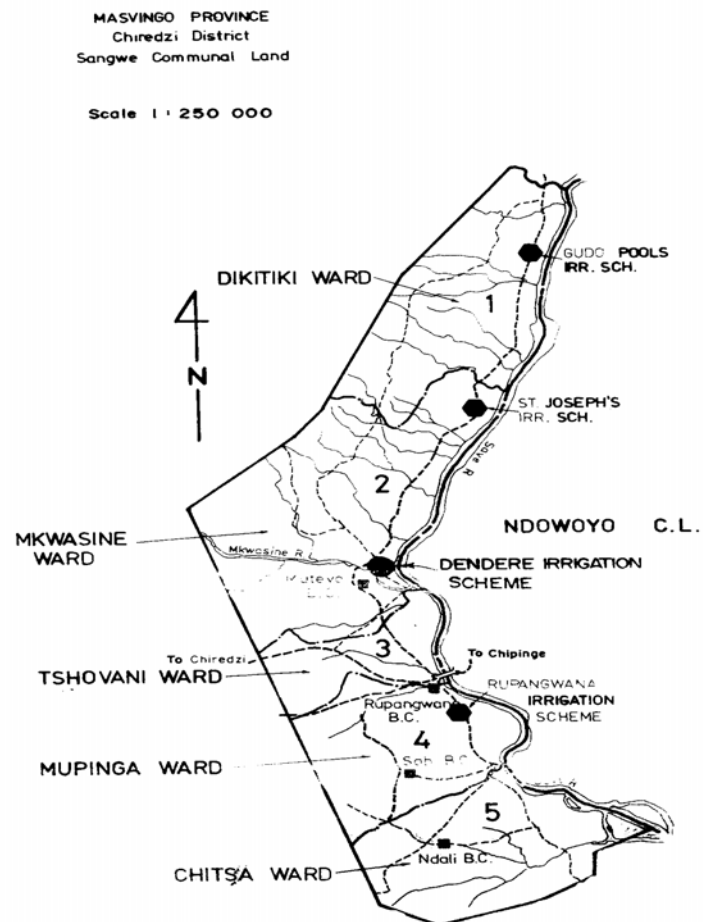
<sup>5</sup> NRWSSP (1999).

<sup>6</sup> Mudege and Sibanda (1999).

<sup>7</sup> *Mufuku* is a source of water found by digging in sand. *Mufuku* are commonly found close to riverbanks.

In the context of unreliable rainfall and, therefore, flows of surface water, groundwater development came to be regarded as the 'safe option' for communities in Sangwe.

Map 1: Sangwe Communal Area



**Table 3: Water supplies in Wards 1 to 5, Sangwe Communal Area**

Ward	House-holds	Pop-ulation	Pop-ulation	Current Water Supplies					Person Per SWU (2000)
				Bore Hole	Deep well	Shallow Well	Protected Springs	Piped supply	
<b>Ward 1/ Sikiti/ Gudo</b>	<b>July 1998</b>	<b>July 1998</b>	<b>2000</b>						
Dombo	162	971	995	2	0	0	0	0	100
Mangandife	177	1056	1082	4	0	0	0	0	54
Ndowoyo	111	573	587	1	0	0	0	0	117
Zvirodzo	260	1558	1597	3	0	0	0	0	106
Zororo	151	908	931	2	2	0	0	0	58
Faraindizvo	65	390	400	5	0	0	0	0	16
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>926</b>	<b>5456</b>	<b>5592</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Ward 4/Mupinga</b>									
Chindunduma	154	818	838	1	2	4	0	0	76
Hlanganani	161	854	875	2	0	2	0	0	88
Kesani	161	851	872	3	2	5	0	0	42
Kushinga	138	731	749	1	0	3	0	0	150
Tshutshekani	198	1046	1072	3	2	0	0	0	51
Twananani	164	868	890	6	0	1	0	0	30
Sibizapansi	140	739	757	4	1	1	0	0	33
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>1116</b>	<b>5907</b>	<b>6053</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>50</b>

*Source:* Chiredzi District Administration Office: Village-by-Village Current and Additional Water Supplies and Rehabilitation Papers (2000).<sup>8</sup>

## The institutional context in Sangwe

The institutional focus of water development in Chiredzi District has been diffused between a number of sometimes competing institutions, including both government departments and non-governmental organisations.<sup>9</sup> Table 4 (next page) provides an overview of the key departments that are involved in rural water supply and sanitation and summaries of their respective responsibilities, revealing the great complexity in which national policy is adopted and implemented.

The provision, development and maintenance of rural water points were the main tasks of the DDF working under the 'three-tier' system until the late 1990s. The District Administrator worked closely with the DDF and other line ministries such as Ministry of Health and Ministry of Water through the District Water Supply and Sanitation Sub-Committee, which effectively played a co-ordinating role.<sup>10</sup> In reality the co-ordination role was often far stronger and could extend to determining where and how water point allocation was made between different parts of a district.

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<sup>8</sup> The boreholes and deep wells were sunk by DDF; this does not represent other boreholes that were sunk by NGOs and individual households.

<sup>9</sup> These include Plan International, the Lutheran World Federation, Christian Care, Save the Children, Red Barna and Africare.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Assistant District Administrator, Chiredzi District 8/10/2001.

**Table 4: Government departments and responsibilities in rural water supply and sanitation**

<b>Government Department</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall responsibility for national co-ordination and management.</li> <li>• Plays a key role in the development of district and provincial plans</li> <li>• Chairmanship of the National Action Committee</li> </ul>
District Development Fund – is the technical arm of the MLGRUD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical responsibilities for developing primary water supplies i.e., drilling of boreholes</li> <li>• Maintenance of all rural water supplies</li> </ul>
Ministry of Energy and Water Resources and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide technical advice</li> <li>• Site water points</li> <li>• Drill boreholes</li> <li>• Planning of water related activities</li> </ul>
Ministry of Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health education and rural sanitation</li> <li>• Promotion of spring protection</li> </ul>
Ministry of Community Development and Women Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivating and mobilising the people for planning and implementing water supply and sanitation activities</li> </ul>
Ministry of Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negotiating for funds with bilateral\donor agencies</li> <li>• Disbursement of funds</li> </ul>
Local Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operation and maintenance of piped water supplies</li> </ul>
District Water and Sanitation Sub-Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-ordinated the district water issues</li> </ul>
Local Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play an increasingly role in planning supplies, maintenance and recurrent financing of their own supplies with support from DDF</li> </ul>

Working under the committee, the DDF assumed full responsibility to run the district’s water needs and was involved in all stages from identification of community water needs, siting, procurement of resources, drilling and well sinking, fitting, construction of headworks, as well as the rehabilitation of existing water points.<sup>11</sup> Pump minders and village pump minders (VPMs) carried out maintenance of water points at ward and village levels, respectively.

Problems of over-stretched institutions and failure to respond to demands for maintenance were reflected in the experience of the study area. Frequently communities found that there were long and frustrating periods of non-functioning pumps:

*It took up to four months for the borehole to be repaired by DDF once it was reported that it had broken down. As required, we gave the councillor and the pump minder the report of the breakdown, and they said, “We heard your case but we will wait for the monthly meeting in Chiredzi and then report the case to Council and DDF”. After that it took four, and sometimes five months, for us to see the borehole repaired. It seems as if DDF needed to hold a series of*

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with DDF Chiredzi District Officer 20/11/2001.

*meetings to understand that we wanted water, and then another monthly meeting to decide what was needed, another monthly meeting to buy the necessary equipment, and another monthly meeting to decide who will come and repair the borehole. Then another monthly meeting to get the person to Gudo and actually repair the borehole ... But here we need water on a daily basis.<sup>12</sup>*

From the perspective of the DDF in Chiredzi many wider constraints existed over and above the lack of funds and over-stretched capacity, including the general lack of transport and, when available even, lack of fuel.<sup>13</sup>

In the case study area, a pump minder serviced at least two wards. The width of ward one is more than 30 kilometres, making bicycles – the transport with which pump minders were equipped – virtually useless. Table 5 below shows the number of wards, villages and water points serviced by a pump minder, and reveals the limits to their capacity.

**Table 5: Wards, villages and water points serviced by pump minders in Wards 1 & 4**

Pump Minder	Wards Serviced by the Pump Minder	Total Number of Villages	Total Number of Water Points (DDF Water Points)
1	4 and 5	12	41
2	1 and 2	12	32

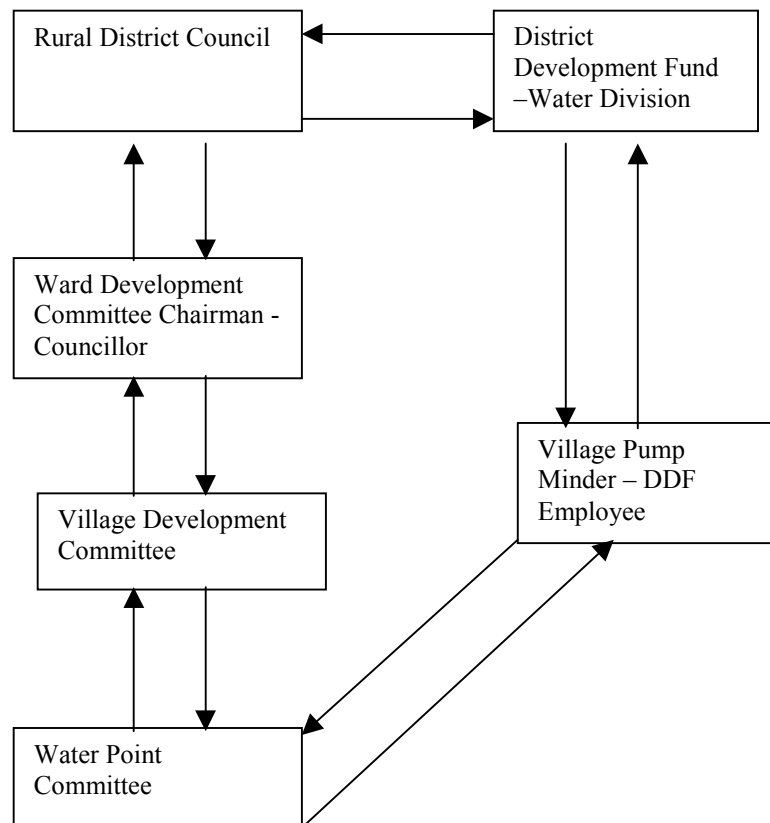
Figure 1 (next page) depicts the links between various different institutions involved in water management. These institutions functioned, in theory, through the chairman of the water point committee, who would inform the councillor and the village pump minder about their water problems. At various meetings with the councillor people would also present their water-related problems, including requests for more boreholes. The Councillor would present the water problems to the Rural District Council at a full council meeting and the Chairperson of the Integrated Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programme and the representative of the Water Division of the DDF would respond to the water problems. In addition the WPC would present its boreholes difficulties to the village pump minder, who, in turn, would inform the district maintenance team (DMT). The DMT would also be informed about such problems at the monthly RDC meeting, at which decisions were made and would filter back to the communities through their respective councillors or pump minders.

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with woman in Gudo 10/1/2002.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with official at Chiredzi DDF Offices 18/10/2001.

**Figure 1: Institutional links, 1984 to late 1990s**



The DDF was mainly responsible for siting and construction of boreholes and repair and maintenance through its Village Pump Minders. Although the Village Pump Minders were based in a village, they were not able to repair major breakdowns without getting the necessary tools and parts from the Water Division of the DDF at district level. They could only attend to minor problems. In the case of minor mechanical breakdowns, village pump minders could liaise directly with the Water Point Committee. In the event that the case presented to the DDF by the Councillor required major maintenance or repair, the DDF would instruct the Village Pump Minder in the respective area to collect the necessary equipment from the district or ward and then repair the borehole.

With decentralisation, the management of the district’s integrated rural water supply and sanitation programme became located within the structures of the Rural District Council, which chaired the programme. The IRWSS sub-committee is composed of sector ministries, which includes local government, the Water Division of the DDF, health, the Rural District Council, and AGRITEX. The Chairperson of the IRWSSP deals with issues of rural water supply and sanitation issues, and can also approach donors for the provision of more water sources for the district.

The RDC meetings also provide a forum where Ward Councillors are given information relating to water and sanitation, such as cholera outbreaks and are given necessary water treatment chemicals. This information is relayed to the respective ward through various meetings that the councillor holds with the community. Also, it is at the RDC meetings that councillors appeal for funds for the establishment of more boreholes in their respective wards.

The power to adopt the CBM concept rests with the rural district development committee, and is not dictated by the RDC.<sup>14</sup> However, the National Action Committee organises workshops to sensitise the Provincial and District Water Supply and Sanitation Sub-Committees and the Council Executive about the CBM concept. In many ways, the decentralisation process is designed to ensure the creation of a conducive environment for the participation and empowerment of Rural District Councils, NGOs and local communities.

The shift from central government to decentralised, local authority-based provision has left the institutional landscape in Chiredzi District, particularly Sangwe Communal Area, strewn with institutions created through decentralisation. This has resulted in the overlaying of new political and administrative forms on the old, leading to a scramble for responsibilities and control over the 'new institutions' among different government departments, non-governmental organisations and local authorities. As key sectors try to identify and establish their roles and responsibilities within the decentralisation process, the ensuing conflict and power struggles make development of this critical resource more problematic. As one council official noted,

*while in the past the office of the DA was happy to control water provision and development in a district as drought stricken as Chiredzi, one should not fail to see the political interest in that. Through the office of the DA, central government, which is synonymous with the ruling party, may provide water to wards and villages that voted for the ruling party. In this light, one may unwillingly hand over responsibilities for water development to the next office. The office of the District Administrator may still want to maintain a co-ordinating role for political ends.<sup>15</sup>*

A District Administrator's view was,

*there were initial problems with the decentralisation process ... people cannot change overnight, change management is what was needed ... but at the end it is proper that the Rural District Council should be responsible for the provision of water.<sup>16</sup>*

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with a Chiredzi District Council Official. 8/10/2001.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Assistant District Administrator for Chiredzi District. 8/10/2001.

In short, the institutional complexity and conflict outlined above meant that some sectors did not fully participate in the implementation of the decentralisation process and community-based management of water resources fearing that they would lose the benefits enjoyed prior to decentralisation. Past responsibilities and benefits helped some government departments establish political and administrative authority over people.

Under RDC control, the DDF now has to bid for tenders to the council to drill boreholes in the district, whereas previously the DDF had received money from donors and government in order to drill boreholes. From a DDF perspective,

*We have to battle it out with private companies. Sometimes the Council gives private companies the contract, sometimes DDF gets the contract. Its now competition ... But DDF has the technical expertise and has been working in the district for a long time and we feel we should get more of the contracts.<sup>17</sup>*

In this context of institutional conflict and scramble for responsibilities and control, it was extremely difficult for the decentralisation programme to progress smoothly:

*From July to December 1997, the DWSSC was faced with irreconcilable differences over, in general, the concept of decentralisation and the ignorance of the Rural District Council of the IRWSS programme resulting in a war over resources, like vehicles, distribution of resources like cement, etc., and funds for travel and subsistence. The conflict was so pronounced that the programme came to a halt up until March 1998.<sup>18</sup>*

## **Community-based management in Wards 1 and 4**

The implementation of community-based management of water was initiated by the Chiredzi District Water Supply and Sanitation Sub-Committee, comprising the DDF, sector ministries, and Chiredzi Rural District Council, and chaired by the District Administrator. This committee held several meetings with people in Ward 1 and 4, informing them about the change in policy, between 1996 and 1998. People were told,

*...DDF is slowly moving out and communities should be able to manage water points. We were also told that we should select people, particularly women, who will be trained by DDF in borehole monitoring and maintenance.<sup>19</sup>*

The training ran for two weeks, covering a rudimentary overview of borehole parts, use of tools, proper use of boreholes, problem identification, and repair and maintenance. Some hygiene and sanitation

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with a DDF official, Chiredzi 11/10/2001.

<sup>18</sup> Minutes, Chiredzi Rural District Council IRWSSP Report for the Period July 1997 to December 1998, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Interview at Machoka Village, Ward 4, 9/11/2001.



training was also provided. Villagers were able to recount vivid details of the training even though it had taken place many years ago. One woman stated, ‘We were taught that if you hear this sound, “nge nge nge” you know the borehole has some problems. You normally put grease if you hear that sound.’<sup>20</sup>

Most crucially, the training was expected to instil the concept of community-based management, in order to ‘sensitise’ villagers to their new roles. As one ward councillor stated, ‘... people who attended the training by DDF, and the one by Red Barna, were told that they were going to own the boreholes and form water point committees that would oversee the day-to-day running of borehole.’<sup>21</sup> This was the key message that represented a major shift from centralised government provision to localised community ownership and responsibility.

## Water point committee

The key new institution was the Water Point Committee. These committees would ensure the transfer of control of water management from central government and donors to communities. Committees were composed from people within a borehole catchment area, and could either be formed at pre-siting or transfer stage. The former refers to the fact that when a community borehole is being sunk in a village, the community will agree on the siting of the borehole. Once the community has identified an area for a borehole to be sunk, it is at that stage that the water point committee will be set up. The latter case refers to instances where communities were given the borehole by either government or non-governmental organisations when the borehole was already operational.

In common with other forms of CBM elsewhere in the region, the structure of the committee was fairly generic, with a chairperson, secretary, caretakers, treasurer, and committee members. The specific roles and functions of these positions are outlined in Table 6 (next page).

In addition village health workers (to assist in hygiene promotion activities), Kraal Heads and Councillors would also play an envisaged role in CBM. In general WPCs were responsible for the reporting of pump breakdowns to the councillor or the DDF village pump mechanic, general operation and maintenance, maintaining water point records, enforcing committee rules and collecting money. The *sabhuku* (headman) also played a legitimising and rule-enforcement role: monitoring elections that are held at his residence; helping in calling for water point meetings, which, in most cases, take place at his homestead; assisting in the selection of people who will attend training in borehole maintenance and repair; and assisting in the collection of water point fees.

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<sup>20</sup> Interview, Gudo 29/1/2002.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Councillor, Ward 1, 21/1/02.

**Table 6: Roles and responsibilities of WPC members**

Position	Roles and Responsibilities
Chairperson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organising meetings</li> <li>• Chairing meetings</li> <li>• Co-ordinating activities of the WPC</li> </ul>
Secretary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking minutes to present to donors or RDC or DDF</li> <li>• Keeping of tools</li> <li>• Taking and keeping of meter readings</li> <li>• Measuring of depth of boreholes</li> </ul>
Caretakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring the borehole to see if it is still working</li> <li>• S/he works closely with the pump minder</li> <li>• Reporting of borehole problems</li> <li>• General maintenance; e.g., greasing</li> <li>• Rule enforcement; i.e., denying people access to the borehole if they breached the rules such as non-payment of borehole contributions</li> </ul>
Treasurer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handling of borehole finances</li> <li>• Collection of money</li> </ul>
Committee Members (where they occur)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Called people for meetings</li> <li>• Ensuring that people adhere to rules</li> <li>• Checking of borehole problems</li> </ul>

Local councillors were also envisaged to have key roles, in addition to the *sabhuku*. These responsibilities would include dissemination of water-related information – including, for instance, information about a cholera outbreak from an RDC meeting – and would pass on the information. She or he might also seek water funding from donors through the RDC for the sinking, repairing and maintenance of boreholes, and could also resolve water conflict at individual member or inter-village level.

The blueprint of assigned roles presents an orderly picture of responsibility, action-led tasking, and overall co-ordination. The reality is that roles are flexible, and their nature and success in practice depends greatly on the individuals who assume them. Some *sabhuku* who are not politically connected to the ruling ZANU-PF party have in effect been reduced to virtual observer status, and water point meetings are convened at the water point instead of the *sabhuku* homestead. Committee members call for meetings instead of the *sabhuku*, and rule enforcement is undertaken by caretakers and councillors. The case of a *sabhuku* in Ward 4 illustrates the politicisation of roles. When asked why he had no role, in spite of stated policy on the matter, he responded that the problem stretched far back:

*I have been campaigning for a different candidate for ZANU-PF primary elections with the Councillor. It has been like that for many years. Since I have been campaigning for a different candidate, this has been viewed as a crime. Unfortunately, the candidate that I have been rallying behind continually lost to*

*the Councillor's candidate. Since it has been viewed as a crime, I have been excluded in all those issues. The Councillor says to the people, 'its me who sourced for the boreholes', so they work with him more closely than myself. I have nothing to do with it.*

### Community payment for water

The most significant shift inherent in the CBM policy is the increased burden of responsibility shouldered financially by communities. Assisted by the *sabhuku* and councillor, the WPC requests the community to contribute money towards the maintenance of a borehole and towards items including the purchase of grease, rods, and other spare parts. The community also pays for the pump minder if there is a major breakdown that the community-trained mechanic cannot handle.

Unsurprisingly given the poverty of many households in Sangwe, the failure of people to contribute the agreed monthly water fee was the most commonly cited problem. Most WPC members interviewed said that they were not or had not collected water point fees from their respective communities. Where the committees were collecting the water point fees, not all households contributed. The example in Box 1 below illustrates some of the main challenges to the system of collection.

#### Box 1: Porusingazi community borehole in Ward 1, Gudo

*The problem with our borehole is that the stand has rust, so it was producing a squeaky sound. We also needed longer rods, bolts and pipes. We asked each member to contribute Z\$100 each for the pipes, bolts and rods, and Z\$20 each for grease. In addition, the money would also go towards the payment of the pump mechanic. The total cost for the rods, pipes and bolts was Z\$15,000 in 2000. I thought we could raise the money because the borehole serves five villages, namely Porusingazi with 240 households, Kurimbwa with 33, Munda approximately 270, Manjira about 100, and Gunguo about 30.*

*But the money that I counted with the Treasurer was about Z\$3,600, meaning that about 30 had contributed the Z\$120. This was too low considering that we wanted Z\$15,000 for the equipment only. The money that we raised was only sufficient for grease. I tried to persuade people to contribute, but to no avail. The other problem is that if a part costs Z\$15,000 today, a week later it would have doubled.*

*Some of the reason [people did not contribute] you could see it. You go to a household and you see that they are suffering to make ends meet. Some people did not have even a chicken at their place, some are widows, some are elderly, some have a plenty of AIDS orphans that they are looking after. Most of them are not working. In that case I just greet and go and do not mention that I have come to ask them for borehole contributions. In my village, I greeted nearly everyone!*

*[Also] some of the villagers using Porusingazi borehole come from other villages, that is Kurimbwa, Munda, Manjira, and Gunguo. These people would simple switch to another borehole or go to Save River and not contribute. They would deny that they use our borehole. This was, however an excuse, they did not have money.*

*Source: Headman Porusingazi.*

One villager in Chibememe village stated that the main reason for the breakdown of their borehole – Zororo-Chibememe borehole – was the lack of adequate contributions from the user-community to buy parts and pay the pump mechanic. This was exacerbated by the non-compliance of other members to contribute. The villager stated,

*When it is time for contributions, the people from Chibememe contribute and those of Zororo do not. The little money we contribute is not enough to buy the necessary parts for the borehole to work. That is why you see our borehole not working and people fetching water from Save River ...*<sup>22</sup>

A majority of the people in Gudo and Mupinga are unemployed. Most of their incomes come from remittances from relatives, particularly husbands who are working in Triangle, Mkwazine, Chiredzi, and Save Valley Conservancy. Remittances for the majority of people in Ward 4 come from relatives working in South Africa. For those who are self employed in Gudo, most of their income comes from ferrying people across the Save River during the rainy season, and the selling of firewood to the nearby Chisumbanje and Checheche Growth Points. In addition, some work as contract workers on ARDA Estates and as casual labourers on commercial farms surrounding Sangwe Communal Area. These are mainly employed during the cotton-picking and wheat harvesting season. Thus the common thread that ties the sources of income for people in Ward 1 and Ward 4, is seasonality and intermittent income streams.

The ‘community’ described in the CBM blueprint in fact has a complex financial situation, which makes regular payments very difficult for a range of households. In lieu of financial contributions, people are requested to contribute labour during the repairing or maintenance process. *Sabhuku* Porusingazi noted,

*I move around asking people in my village for the water point fees and telling them that if you don't have money, we want your labour on such and such a day. Come repairing day, you have the whole village coming and willing to contribute their labour. The question is who will raise the money needed for buying the spare parts and paying the pump mechanic?*<sup>23</sup>

In Ward 1, this critical lack of income was also stressed by the Councillor:

*This community does not have money or an income to depend on. The community suffered greatly during the 1992 drought. Many lost cattle and are failing to restock; yet this place is not suitable for cultivating crops. It's for cattle and wildlife.*<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Interview with a villager, Chibememe village.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with *Sabhuku* Porusingazi, Zvirodzo Village, Gudo 31/1/2002.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Councillor Ward 1, 12/12/2001.

In other instances, communities withheld their financial contributions to the water point committee because of concerns over the managing of funds. These ‘constitutional’ issues, although part of the CBM design concept, in fact were rarely addressed. None of the water points in Ward 1 and Ward 4 had a constitution. Consequently, some people in the two wards feared that water point committees would misuse their contributions. Given this financially precarious environment and lack of effective governance of the boreholes in Ward 1 and 4 of Sangwe Communal Area many of the boreholes that were communally ‘owned’ had broken down completely, such as that in the Picture 1 below.

**Picture 1: Defunct community managed borehole in Ward 1, Zvirodzo Village**



Source: S. Mtisi, 2002

Closely associated with the financing issue is politics of control and ownership. When ownership loses its definition the struggle for control militates against effective community management. In Sangwe, the conflict between Chibememe and Tagurana Community illustrates this problem (see Box 2, next page).

The politics of borehole management illustrated in Box 2 is as much about definition of community as it is the relationships between communities themselves. The term ‘community’, and its extension ‘community water point’, are variously defined and interpreted in Sangwe, and each definition and interpretation is associated with a unique set of rules governing access to water. The traditional notion of ‘community’ denotes a group of people who live in the same geographical area, share a common history, cultural heritage, and fall under the same chieftainship. In addition, these groups of people share

### Box 2: Chibememe versus Tagurana Communities

A borehole was sunk at a central point for between Chibememe and Tagurana Community by Red Barna in 1995. Chibememe village is composed of 50 households, while Tagurana has approximately 40 households. The central point that was identified by Red Barna was in Chibememe area. When Red Barna left, the communities contested ownership and control of the borehole.

The Chibememe Community argued that the borehole belonged to them because it was sunk in their area. The Tagurana Community argued that it (also) belonged to both of them since it was meant to benefit the two villages. The latter continued using the borehole on that basis. However, when the borehole first broke down, the Chibememe Community asked for contributions for the borehole repair from Tagurana Community. Tagurana people refused, stating that since they had argued that the borehole belonged to them, it was their (Chibememe community) responsibility to see to it that the borehole was repaired. Chibememe community sourced some funds and had the borehole repaired.

Once it was repaired the Tagurana Community went and fetched water from the borehole. This relationship went on for a long time to the extent that Chibememe community was denying access to water to people from Tagurana. People from Tagurana resorted to water collection from the Save River. In 2000 the borehole developed some a major fault and the Chibememe community refused to contribute or to source funds for borehole repairs, questioning why they should labour while the Tagurana community 'enjoyed the fruits' of their labour. The borehole has subsequently ceased to function for about two years.

common interests and control of natural resources. It is in this context, that people in Ward 1 are commonly referred to as *vanhu vekwaGudo*, meaning people of Gudo (Gudo is the paramount chief).<sup>25</sup>

From this backdrop, access to natural resources is open to members of Gudo community, meaning all the people who fall under the jurisdiction and chieftainship of Gudo. With particular reference to water, members of the Gudo community have unfettered access to the resource. However, there are traditional rules that govern access to water and breaching these rules is believed to cause the spring to dry up. Generally, people observed the rules based on custom and they were generally applied to natural springs.

With the advent of decentralisation and community management of water, the term 'community' and 'water point community' assumed a new meaning. 'Community' in this case refers to a group of people sharing a water and sanitation facility (NAC 1999: 8). Thus, a borehole drilled in Chibememe or Musindo village, becomes a Chibememe or Musindo community borehole. As a result, access to water is limited to people residing in the respective villages. Further, with community based

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Chief Gudo.

management, access may further be limited to people who have contributed water point fees.

The advent of CBM therefore brought about a new definition of 'community', defined by its proximity to the water point and ability to pay for water. It discarded the traditional definition of 'community' that was characterised by the commonalities of history, culture, tradition, chieftainship, and ancestral spirits. As result some villagers in Ward 1 argued that they would fetch water wherever it was found on the basis that 'water is for everyone', implying the Gudo people as a community, and that 'everyone in Gudo should have access to this God-given resource'. Consequently, after the extension of the traditional notion of community from natural springs to boreholes, many villagers have not contributed to water point fees, and fetch water at any borehole they want.

In Sangwe the link between the relationship of social capital issues described above and the quality of the natural capital derived from the boreholes – the water itself – is of major significance for management. Groundwater in Sangwe is saline generally, but some areas are far more saline than others. When boreholes have been sunk around very salty water areas and the community stated that it was undrinkable, there was no motivation for the community to manage the water source. As well is unpalatability, salty water rapidly corrodes the iron rods and other parts, increasing the frequency of breakdowns. The former treasurer of Maonye Water Point Committee described the difficulty that more frequent repair had caused:

*Moanye community borehole has very salty water which damages rods and other metal parts. The borehole frequently broke down and I asked people for money in order to repair the borehole. As the borehole frequently broke, I frequently asked people for contributions. The people felt that I was now stealing their money under the pretext of borehole breakdown. They argued that the borehole was not completely repaired stating that, "if it were completely repaired it would not break often". The community started talking about me stealing the water point money and I thought it was best for me to leave the issue of the borehole alone because it was tarnishing my image.<sup>26</sup>*

Multiple sources of water have made the management of boreholes harder for committees to achieve. In Ward 4 there are many community boreholes and deep wells. If a borehole develops slight problems, people rarely seek to maintain or repair of the borehole, and instead shift to another borehole close by. Participants in a group discussion at Machoka stated unanimously, 'In Ward 4 there is no water problem, boreholes are plenty. If one breaks down, we just move to the next one.'<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Ex-Treasurer of Maonye Village, Ward 1, 13/12/2001.

<sup>27</sup> Participants in a Focus Group Discussion, Machoka Primary School, Ward 4, 18/11/2001.

### **Box 3: Musindo and Machoka village case studies**

#### **Musindo Village in Ward 1, Gudo**

Musindo Village has approximately forty households. One community borehole was sunk by Red Barna in 1994 to provide clean water for the community, where the majority were fetching water from the Save River. During that time one household had its own deep well. But from 1996 to 2001, more than 15 households dug their own deep wells by hand. The rise in individual deep wells in Musindo Village is largely attributed to a local man who used to work for Ashtech, a borehole drilling company, who was retrenched and now lives in the village. The man charges Z\$10,000 to sink a borehole. With additional costs, such as buying a rope, a bucket and iron stands, the total cost of having an individual borehole is approximately Z\$17, 000. Most of the people who were members of the Musindo Water Point Committee now have their own deep wells and are no longer interested in the community-owned borehole, failing to attend meetings or contribute to repairs.

#### **Collapse of Machoka Gardens deep well project in Ward 4**

Machoka deep well was constructed by Plan International in 1989. The NGO contributed financially to the deep well, while the community contributed its labour. The deep well was going to be used for irrigating vegetables for the project members, some 76-strong from six villages. There was a membership fee of Z\$100, but terms were accepted; Z\$20 was the deposit and the balance was spread over time. Water from the deep well was used for both domestic and irrigation purposes. Water for domestic purposes was for the whole community, while people who were in the gardening project could irrigate crops, including rape, beans, and tomatoes. The vegetables grown were both for domestic consumption and trading.

For three years the project progressed well, but when people started to realise their profits and the advantages of the deep well, they started sinking their own and establishing gardens at their respective homes. Other gardening projects were later established in Ward 4, and some members of Machoka Gardens Project joined the new gardening project because they were aware of the potential benefits. Most members, 'moved out' of the Machoka Gardens project, but did not resign. They became dormant members. They rarely attended meetings, but if they heard that Plan International was coming they would attend. They 'remained' in the project because they reasoned that they may later get benefits from Plan International, and if they resigned they feared losing out.

Of all the 76 members, only two are currently active and face major problems of maintaining the deep well. In the past the community was not asked to contribute money for borehole repair because the members of the gardening project had the financial resources to cover the costs. When asked how the two surviving members would pay for future repairs they stated, 'Its no problem, we will move to the next borehole. In fact the school borehole is less than 10 metres away from the Machoka Deep well'.

*Sources:* Interviews with key informants.



As illustrated in Box 3 above, the trend towards the development of individual boreholes and deep wells has also hampered the success of CBM in both wards. In both wards, it is often the richer households who develop their own boreholes and deep wells, which leaves the poor to manage a community-owned water point and all the financial commitments that entails. By a perverse turn of events, therefore, this trend is leaving those least equipped to cope with the greatest management burden.

The neglect of community water points is also accompanied by the capture of communal sources by the most politically connected and powerful community members. This is illustrated by the case of Mr. Pikelele, who converted to individual use a community borehole originally sunk by the Lutheran World Federation. The NGO had requested people to form groups of ten, who in turn identified a central point for the borehole. With other members of the community, Mr. Pikelele identified a site in his homestead and later erected a fence surrounding his homestead, including the borehole. In the mid 1990s he became MP for Chiredzi South and the people with whom he formed the original group felt it both difficult and dangerous to question him about the appropriation of the community borehole.

This issue of micro control and assumed ownership is contrasted to the blurring of boundaries and margins of control at the community boundary. Whilst CBM traditionally regards access to water as confined to the community surrounding a water point, in fact in Sangwe the boundaries of the boreholes 'catchment area' are often unclear. Even though a borehole may be located in one village, neighbouring villages can have access to it, and particularly so by villagers sharing the boundary of two villages. In Ward 1, where schools and clinics are located in one village, people from other villages who will be visiting the two service centres, are allowed access to water in the village close to the clinic and school.

During periods of water scarcity, especially the dry season, people from villages where there is no water are allowed to access water from a borehole with water. Similarly, if a neighbouring village's borehole breaks down, access is provided for water collection. Nevertheless, in other instances rules of access are stringently enforced. If the boreholes in two villages are functioning, villagers from one village are denied access to water in another village. One respondent asked, literally, 'why come to our borehole if theirs is working?'

In addition, if a borehole breaks down in one village, and there is a need to collect money for repairs, some individuals may delay contributing and instead resort to using a borehole in another village. In the event, water point committee members of a non-functioning borehole will go to the members of water point committee of a functioning borehole and inform the latter committee, invariably causing the exclusion of non-payers from borehole use. Those who completely fail to pay the required money for

borehole repairs will be listed by the caretaker of a water point, and be denied access to water in the future. In lieu of cash payment, payment in kind through labour contribution will be accepted instead.

This situation – of intra- and inter-communal relationships to water points, the behaviour of key individuals, and of the resource itself in terms of temporal availability and quality – has cumulatively causes great fluidity in borehole ‘boundaries’ with major contraction and expansion at different times. When the community water point is functioning, the catchment community of a water point may expand, but if it is malfunctioning and there is need to contribute financially towards the maintenance and repairing of the borehole, the community contracts. Consequently, there will be insufficient people to raise the necessary funds for the maintenance and repairing of the borehole. This is compounded by the negotiated rules of access that are loosened to include other unfortunate members. The longer term process of building ownership and community capacity to management even in favourable community circumstance was frequently reported to be hurried and piecemeal. Many respondents criticised the training as a ‘one-off’ event with no follow-ups and refresher courses. Moreover the training programmes were organised by former pump mechanics working under the DDF, whose interest may not always have lain in imparting the full knowledge necessary to maintain and repair the pump.

This helps to explain the complaints from village pump minders about the elementary nature of the training that made them incapable of repairing boreholes. Thus communities were then forced to hire experienced pump mechanics that they failed to pay. Communities complain that having received free training, VPMs should not charge for servicing or repairing boreholes in any case, with frequent experiences of difficult negotiation over payments (see Box 4 below).

**Box 4: Mr. Mushoperi, a DDF Trained Pump Mechanic.**

*I agree that I was trained for free but nowadays, there is nothing for free. People should learn to pay. I cannot travel 10 kilometres to repair a community borehole, using my bicycle, only to be told that I cannot be paid because I was trained for free. Who will pay if my bicycle needs a new tyre? The fact that I came to repair a borehole means that I would have left my other work, like going to my field. I cannot leave my field and move around repairing their boreholes, while they go to their fields. I also want to work for my family. Water point committees should pay us, because DDF paid us a small amount on the number of boreholes that we repaired. Now we are no longer DDF employees, we were retrenched a long time ago.*

In extreme cases, where a pump mechanic is not paid after repairing a community borehole, he or she may resort to removing a part from the borehole, rendering it unusable to force the community to pay for his services. Consequently, the conflict between pump mechanics and communities has left many community boreholes out of action. The loss to migration for work elsewhere of trained VPMs is also a problem.

At a broader policy-institutional level, the governance of ‘committee development’ has been patchy at best. Many water point committees have been formed well after the borehole has been sunk and used and, in some cases, no training was received in CBM principles. Frequently, targets that were set for implementing and training communities on the broad aspects of CBM were not met (see Table 6 below), and it was commonly reported that the major reason was lack of funds.

**Table 7: Chiredzi District targets for implementing CBM**

Activity	Target	Achievement in 2000
Launching of CBM	15	5
Training of Hand Pump Mechanics	154	88
Community CBM Mobilisation	15	5
Awareness meetings on CBM	4	4
Hygiene Education Training for EHTS	20	15
Rehabilitation	15	0
Procurement of village kits	104	40

Source: Chiredzi Rural District Council (2000) ‘End of year report for the IRWSSP’.

Between July and December 1998, of the 44 planned training workshops to be held with Village Community Workers to inform them about the decentralisation programme and community-based water management, none took place.<sup>28</sup>

The problems are familiar. With particular reference to the Ministry of National Affairs’ failure to meet its targets for training communities in CBM, a respondent noted,

*... the officers responsible for training were not given travel and subsistence allowances, and some still have outstanding claims. In addition, they had transport as well as fuel problems. So they failed to travel to communities to do training workshops.*<sup>29</sup>

The influence of external institutions added to local-level complexity. The narratives of water provision carried by intervening NGOs were firmly rooted in a public health perspective; major NGOs present included Red Barna, World Vision, the Lutheran World Federation, and Plan International. Most had direct control and management of their water programmes, with communities playing a peripheral role. Communities tended to identify water points with the source of funding, so it is common to hear people referring to boreholes as ‘*mipitsi ye Plan*,’<sup>30</sup> or ‘DDF borehole’, ‘Red Barna borehole’, or the ‘Lutheran Borehole.’

<sup>28</sup> Chiredzi Rural District Council (1998) ‘End of the year report for IRWSSP’.

<sup>29</sup> Interview, IRWSS Programme Office, Chiredzi District 5/10/2001.

<sup>30</sup> Literally meaning, ‘these boreholes belong to Plan International’.

The non-involvement of communities in water point management under these programmes resulted in communities' reluctance to contribute towards the maintenance of the facilities, and a lack of community initiative to construct new water points. This also bred a 'dependency syndrome, which made it impossible for communities to develop initiatives in the maintenance, repairing and the general monitoring of boreholes', according to a local councillor.<sup>31</sup> For local government, both the DDF and the RDC stated that NGOs came with their different approaches to rural water supply and sanitation, including, in the case of Plan a focus on 'foster children', whereas stated government policy in communal areas is to provide a protected water supply within 500 metres.<sup>32</sup> As an IRWSSP district official noted,

*... the confusion arises when a Plan International borehole for the child is located less than 50 metres from a community borehole ... this makes it virtually impossible to enforce CBM principles when they have the option of getting water from a Plan International child's borehole.<sup>33</sup>*

These different NGO approaches also provided political space for elected officials to exploit, leading to uneven provision across the district:

*... it has become clear that based on the ward calculation, the majority of the Chiredzi wards have got a higher supply of boreholes and deep wells than required according to the IRWSSP Service Level Phase 1, aiming at a supply of water facilities guaranteeing an average of 50 people per shallow well unit. In spite of this, there is no guarantee yet that all the VIDCOs within the wards have been equally supplied.<sup>34</sup>*

The picture portrayed in Table 8 (next page) is true with regards to boreholes drilled by the DDF and excludes boreholes that were sunk by NGOs, private companies and other stakeholders. A more comprehensive coverage of the number of water points per ward is contained in the Village Based Consultative Inventory conducted in 1998 which indicates that there are more water points, both protected and unprotected, in Ward 4 than Ward 1. The two data sources indicate that in some cases the number of water points in a Ward 1 were overestimated and there is less variability in the number of boreholes in Ward 4.

The politicisation of siting is underlined by the reasons people in Ward 1 give to explain their lack of adequate boreholes:

*If you look at the composition of the Rural District Council, you will understand the politics of water provision in this area. The council is composed mainly of*

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Councillor, Ward 1, 12/12/2001.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Chiredzi District Chairperson of IRWSSP, Chiredzi 8/10/2001

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Chiredzi District VBCI.96: Present Situation in Chiredzi Communal Lands/Resettlement/SSCF wards.

*Shangaans, particularly from Ward 4 area. Very few Ndau's from Gudo are in the Council. So Shangaans will channel most of the water projects from donors to their area...there are no people from Ward 1 who occupy positions of influence, so no one will represent Ward 1 when donors come. In addition, all the MPs for Chiredzi South have emerged from Shangaans in Ward 4 and during primary elections Ward 1 has always fielded a losing candidate.<sup>35</sup>*

**Table 8: Water points in Ward 1 and 4 as reported in two different data sources**

Ward	Village Based Consultative Inventory				Ministry			
	Boreholes		Deep Wells		Boreholes		Deep Wells	
	Protected	Shallow	Protected	Shallow	Protected	Shallow	Protected	Shallow
<b>Ward 1 Villages</b>								
Dombo	2	1	0	0	3	0	0	0
Mangandife	3	0	1	1	4	0	0	0
Ndowoyo	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Zvirodzo	2	0	0	0	2	1	0	0
Zororo	1	1	0	0	4	0	2	0
Faraindizvo	0	1	0	0	4	1	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Ward 4 Villages</b>								
Chindunduma	2	0	0	2	1	0	2	1
Hlanganani	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Kesani	2	1	1	1	3	0	2	0
Kushinga	2	0	0	0	1	0	2	0
Tshutshekani	1	2	0	1	2	1	3	0
Twananani	6	1	0	0	5	1	0	0
Sibizapanzi	4	0	1	0	7	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>

Source: Chiredzi District VBCL.96. Present Situation in Chiredzi Communal Lands/Resettlement/SSCF wards Report.

Moreover, the Councillor for Ward 4 was the campaign manager for the current Member of Parliament for Chiredzi South, while the Councillor for Ward 1, was also contesting to be a Member of Parliament.

The village headman in Ward 1 also pointed out that their lack of adequate boreholes has been like a curse: ‘The name Gudo has become like a curse for us. We have become like the proverbial baboon which is always the villain in traditional Shona folklore.’<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, there are numerous boreholes in Ward 4, which prompted one respondent in that ward to state, ‘we have many boreholes and we do not have water problems.’<sup>37</sup> Participants in a focus group discussion at Sibizapanzi village attributed this to the ‘fulfilment of promises made during primary election campaigns.’<sup>38</sup> When asked why Ward 4 has many

<sup>35</sup> Interviewee, Gudo 08/01/2002.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Headman, Zvirodzo Village, Ward 1, 22/01/2002 (Ward 1 is also commonly referred to as *Gudo*. In Shona is called *gudo* means baboon).

<sup>37</sup> Interview, Ward 4, 10/10/2001.

<sup>38</sup> Focus Group Discussion with villagers in Sibizapanzi, Ward 4, 7/11/2001.

water points, the councillor for the ward was also quick to point out that it signified his success in the job.

The provision of boreholes based on political connections that are flavoured by ethnicity becomes apparent. Ward 4 – which is largely dominated by Shangaans and has a history of political access and links to Chiredzi Rural District Council and the local Members of Parliament – is benefiting from these political links. Water, particularly the provision of boreholes, is emerging as the political trophy for supporters in Ward 4. In addition, the councilor and MP seem to be using their political clout to source funds to maintain community boreholes. Quite possibly the political environment in Sangwe Communal Area may have led to the over reporting of the number of boreholes in Ward 1.

The compounding effects of the politics of water provision adversely affect CBM. The availability of many boreholes in Ward 4 provides many options for fetching water, and reduces the impetus towards a logic of collective action to maintain and manage a small number of water points for communal use. In addition, when required, the Councillor can be counted upon to source funds for maintenance and repair. When a borehole breaks down, the community can easily switch to another borehole that is close by, or ask the Councillor or a Member of Parliament to use their political leverage. Private companies have also become involved, which, through the Malilangwe Trust Neighbour Outreach Programme, provided cement and bricks, and paid people who were involved in rehabilitating community boreholes in Ward 4.<sup>39</sup>

For Ward 1, the lack of political connections has made it difficult for the Councillor to source funds. In addition the absence of NGOs from the mid 1990s onwards and the unwillingness of private companies like the Save Conservancy Trust to assist communities in Ward 1 has contributed to the failure of CBM.

For some respondents the problems of political involvement go deeper and hint at mismanagement of monies intended for the sector. One respondent asked, ‘how can community based management of water work when people at Council are busy using the money meant to popularise the concept elsewhere? ... Most of the money was used in paying Council employees.’<sup>40</sup> A sum of Z\$1.5 million for CBM released in May 2000 was not properly reconciled, with a lack of clarity on what work had actually been carried out.<sup>41</sup>

The tension between the roles of local leaders and the newly elected officials over water management has been a final, but increasingly important, arena of contestation. The redundancy of traditional leaders

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<sup>39</sup> Interview with Chief Tshovani, Mr. Macheke and Mr. Chauke, Chizvirizvi Resettlement Scheme 9/12/2001.

<sup>40</sup> Chiredzi Rural District Council Official 10/10/2001.

<sup>41</sup> Chiredzi Rural District Council (2000) ‘Minutes of the IRWSSP half-year planning and evaluation workshop’, Bikita Training Centre, 25-28 July.

was partly the intention of the State when VIDCOs and WADCOS were created in the mid 1980s, partly in the name of modernisation and partly in an attempt to marginalise alternative centres of authority. However, the State has also wanted to bolster traditional institutions for the purposes of legitimacy (Tshuma 1997).

Given the alignment of communities to traditional authorities in communal areas, particularly in natural resources management, government sought in the later 1990s to empower traditional leaders through incorporation within state structures, thus ensuring the political control of rural areas. This process culminated in the Traditional Leaders Act of 1998, which gave traditional leaders power to oversee management of natural resources, including water. From the perception of the people there is ambiguity:

*Sabhuku's have been given too much power. They now rule from social, spiritual to natural resources problems, which may be a problem if you invest too much power in one individual. They dictate pace without consultation ... The past structure of Councillors had people with education and could communicate with donors and at council. Now communication is down. This traditional structure based on inheritance may force people to be led by someone with no education and development will be impeded.<sup>42</sup>*

Channelling issues and grievances regarding natural resources is now increasingly complicated. One respondent noted, 'it seems as if the powers vested in the VIDCO and WADCO are now with the *sabhuku* ... some people channel their grievances through the *sabhuku* but others can now report directly to the Councillor.'<sup>43</sup>

In addition, village and ward assemblies are not yet popular. Most people in the case study area do not know of their existence and those who do know, do not accept and recognise them.

Initial decentralisation processes of local governance sought to exclude and undermine traditional institutions by creating local government structures that were far removed from the communities that they purported to empower. Yet, traditional institutions were still highly regarded and their legitimacy in local level governance, particularly in issues relating to natural resources, was also undisputed. Their exclusion sent signals to the failure of the concept of decentralisation and community based management of water.

Paradoxically, the apparent co-optation of traditional institutions into state structures through the Traditional Leaders Act, may jeopardise the success of the decentralisation and community based management of natural resources as some people view the process as a political ploy to control rural areas rather than a genuine act of effecting local level

<sup>42</sup> Interview, Machoka Village, Ward 4, 11/11/2001.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

traditional management of resources. Also, some traditional leaders are likely to resist their co-optation into state structures as it may also mean being co-opted into the ruling party structures. A traditional leader in Ward 1 noted, 'we are just being used by the Government to do its dirty job ... They called me when they were distributing land and I just went, but I didn't like it.'<sup>44</sup>

## Conclusion

The concept and application of community-based management in Sangwe is embedded in the politics of development at a local level. Competing narratives about ownership, rights to access, the political relationship to service provision, and the informal and formal roles played by different institutions create an environment that challenges the basic tenets of CBM. The provision of an effective service can become hostage to local political patronage in the less than benign environment that can exist between neighbouring communities. Consequently, some cases are more successful than others (see Box 5 below).

Water governance, however, is not a simple competitive process whereby the resource is a 'political asset' that local politicians can wield in response to votes. The complex meanings attached to water beyond the simple idea that it is a livelihood asset can render the relationships between communities, households, and different water points complex and beyond the realm of simple 'material understandings' of natural resources.

The case study has shown how understanding the reality behind policy facades, misconceptions about community capacities and roles, and the various competing and overlapping institutional relationships at a local level is essential to ensuring that new programming in water is more power-conscious, but also better able to adjust to the complex, heterogeneous nature of the 'community environment'.

At a basic level, almost all water provision involves politics to varying degrees. The very process of shifting policy perspectives and approaches at the national level through legislation and policy development shuffles the institutional array at subsequent, lower levels. This changing array challenges established access routes to power and influence, and affects the balance between competing claims to legitimacy, whether in group affiliation, financial control, or in terms of party alignment. Addressing political aspects in water provision will ensure a more informed milieu in which to establish forms of community management that are adjusted and adjustable to local environments. This requires both the creation of a more effective demand-supply interface between communities and local

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<sup>44</sup> Interview with a Traditional Leader in Ward 1, 20/1/2002.



political leaders, as well as better informed local political actors, whether informal (traditional leaders) or formal (Councillors and MPs).

Finally, it also requires the creation of local institutional structures between communities – perhaps the bundling together of water point committees at some level – in order to facilitate and strengthen the demand side and to better address and represent the problems of access to water for the poor in communal areas such as Sangwe.

### **Box 5: Successful community boreholes**

#### **Case 1: Gambura Community Borehole**

Gambura borehole was established by the DDF in 1983 to specifically provide safe water to pupils and teachers at Zungudza primary school. In addition, the water was also used for watering school gardens. With time, the borehole also came to be used by some members from the surrounding villages, namely Gambura, Mahlasera, Maonye, and Gunguo. Thus the catchment area of the borehole extended to cover part of the four villages. The main reason given by the communities for fetching water at the school borehole are that it is relatively near, the borehole functions all the time, the quality of water is good, and it is well managed. With the introduction of CBM, the school saw it fit to include members of the community in the management of the borehole. Two community members were chosen to represent the various communities that fetch water from the borehole. Despite the involvement of community members, it seems that the management of the borehole rests with the school. The school takes the initiative in the maintenance of hygiene at the borehole. The water from the borehole is used mainly for drinking and watering gardens where students grow various agricultural products. The produce is sold to the community and nearby growth points. The revenue raised from the sale of produce is invested in borehole repair and maintenance. Initially, most of the villagers in the four villages that were using the borehole were not contributing money to the water point committee. Later, the school authorities decided that in order for the community to pay for water and to reduce problems of collecting money for borehole repair and maintenance, they would increase the building fee paid by school children. Thus, part of the money paid by parents as building fees would go towards the maintenance of the borehole. This solved the problems associated with the collection of money from the four villages using the Gambura borehole. In addition, teachers who are generally respected by the villagers did rule enforcement at the borehole. In cases of a major breakdown, teachers at Zungudza primary school would contribute money that will be used in repairing the borehole. This has seen the effective functioning and community management of the borehole.

#### **Case 2: Zvirodzo - Porusingazi Community Borehole**

Redd Barna sank the Zvirodzo-Porusingazi borehole in 1995 to cater for families under Headman Porusingazi. The villagers largely depended on Save River, and thus the borehole was sunk with the view to providing safe and clean drinking water for the villagers. A water point committee was set up to manage the borehole and is composed of the following people:

- Chairperson – Mrs. Mangwandi
- Vice-Chairperson – Mrs. Porusingazi
- Secretary – Mr. J. Porusingazi

- Treasurer – Mrs. Muteka
- Committee Member – Mr. Hlangano
- Water Point Guard – Mr. Mushoperi

(... continued ...)

The relative success of the community borehole has been attributed to the co-operation of the villagers and the effectiveness of the committee members. The chairperson of the water point noted that the sense of having a functioning water point instils a sense of responsibility among the community members and thus helps in the proper use of the borehole and the adherence to water point rules and regulations. In addition, it was stated that Redd Barna left behind a lot of spare parts and tools for repairing and maintenance. In case of a breakdown, they just get some spare parts from the storeroom and replace the broken down ones. Also, it was noted that Redd Barna trained several members of the community in borehole maintenance and repair. In addition, the water point guard is an ex-DDF pump mechanic and thus he can repair the borehole for a minimal fee. What is also important to note is that people who use the community borehole are largely from the Porusingazi extended family. Thus it is easy to enforce rules and collect the water point fee. There appears to be little conflict of interest because the rules that govern familial relations are extended to borehole management. Headman Porusingazi is the remaining elder of the previous generation who is central in ensuring the observance of rules and regulations that govern both their custom and the water point.

What emanates from the cases of successful community management of water points cited above is partly the ability of the community members to contribute financially towards the maintenance and repair of the community borehole. In the case of Gambura community borehole, the inclusion of teachers in borehole management ensures a reliable source of water point fees. In addition, teachers have the administrative experience to plan, co-ordinate, organise and manage meetings. This is illustrated by increasing the building fund for pupils at the school in order to ensure that communities using the borehole contribute towards its maintenance and repair. Further, teachers like headman are respected members of the community, and thus can enforce rules and regulation that govern access and use of water points.

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