

# Exit Strategies for the Resettlement of Drought Prone Populations

## Research Brief

**Key words:** Refugees, Water Services and Sanitation, Exit Strategies, Sustainability, Community Mobilisation

Throughout the world well drilling in drought prone areas creates unnatural settlements which have a high dependency on the water supply. A number of agencies in Africa have been working with displaced populations to restart communities in home areas or in new areas and as part of this have dug many new wells. However, these communities can easily become dependent on the new water supply and therefore vulnerable to its breakdown.

This creates a challenge for leaving locally sustainable systems. Handover of maintenance from the external agency to local communities and local government is often difficult and it is at this point that much of the gains of the agency can be undone. Agencies use a variety of participatory approaches, village level maintenance structures, standardised pumps to fit government recommendations, organisation of spares supply and training of local government teams.

As part of a multi-agency team, funded by DFID, Gamos carried out research comparing and contrasting recent variations on these approaches. A thematic comparison of three case studies in Africa was undertaken for the practical objective of identifying common elements of a successful exit strategy for resettlement programmes that have introduced new water supplies.



Organisation	Care	World Relief	Concern Universal
Country	Mozambique	Mozambique	Malawi
Province/Area	Inhambane	Gaza	Central and Southern
Number of Wells	170	163	172
Start Date	1993	1993	1992
Average Depth	60m	63m	53m
Average Dynamic Water Level	50m	46m	35m

Since the Rio Earth Summit, sustainability has been a prime criterion in development projects. Historically, the water services and sanitation sector did not have a good record in achieving sustainable projects. Many broke down or fell into disuse once the external support came to an end. The participatory approach, more appropriate technology choice, better provision for spare parts and the equipping of communities for operation and maintenance and financial management have led to significant improvements in recent years.

The Guidance Manual on Water Supply and Sanitation supplies, DFID 1999



## Methodology

In each case about 15 village communities were visited. For each community there were both focus groups discussions and individual interviews resulting in a total of 305 usable responses (average of 7 per community). Interviews were kept as open discussions allowing the communities to define the important factors alongside the framework created from the literature. The data from the pump user and key informant interviews, and observations were coded and analysed. Given the nature of the data, non-parametric tests were applied to identify possible relationships, i.e. Mann-Whitney test for significant differences, and Spearman's correlations. These relationships were then used to highlight those important links to pump availability and ownership. These relationships were further investigated using the qualitative data gathered during the interviews.

## Analysis

In summary, the data suggests that where a local community has been mobilised to repair their own pump, the downtime is reduced (compared to a more central approach) but the frequency of breakage increases. Thus the total reliability of the pump is not necessarily increased by localisation of the repair process.

Using the results to investigate social factors, confidence in local technical competence is found to have the strongest relationship with the sustainability of the system. Participation of the wider community and organisation both contribute to competence but are not the defining factors. Good technical training is necessary to create sustainable systems. Another defining element to the process of repairing the pump is the availability of spares. Furthermore social-mobilisation is valuable in itself as a prelude to community problem solving and future development activities

## Recommendations

The report makes the following recommendations:

- Agencies that have been involved with water supplies during emergency or resettlement programmes should have planned exit strategies regardless of their entry strategies. A planned exit strategy can enhance sustainability.
- Donor agencies should be prepared to fund follow up work after an emergency or resettlement programme. Strategic inputs to a planned exit strategy can be a cost effective mechanism for creating sustainable water assets in an area.
- Donor agencies should create policies which link departments concerned with emergency work with those for longer term development so that it is clear which department should fund the necessary exit strategies.
- Agencies should note that a key factor in creating a sustainable water supply is to have adequate technical and management competence within the locality.
- Agencies wishing to exit an area must acknowledge that some ongoing technical support is required.
- Exit strategies for sustainability should include the following practical elements:-
  - Social profiling in order to know in advance of potential conflicts within the community.
  - Work with existing structures if they exist.
  - Training of the community selected committee in technical, management, financial and health skills with sufficient emphasis on technical skills to ensure a competent repair process
  - Work with the government and other agencies to ensure a supply chain of spares. Preferably the supply chain should result in spares being available to the community from a local retailer.
  - Capacity building of local government or private enterprise, to form a group that can undertake more difficult repairs on an ongoing basis after the agency has exited.

The full report is available to read at:  
[www.exitstrategies.info/](http://www.exitstrategies.info/)

For more information on Gamos and its activities please visit:  
[www.gamos.org](http://www.gamos.org)



This document is an output from a project funded by the UK Department for International Development for the benefit of developing countries. The views expressed are not necessarily those of DFID



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