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## Executive Summary

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### 1. Background to the original project and the rationale behind this consultancy

During the execution of WRC Project 1357, *Implementing and Testing the WRC Guidelines on Developing Sustainable Small Scale Farmer Irrigation in Rural Poor Communities*, attention was given to the development of a Training Package that can be given to prospective trainers or facilitators to use in the field when presenting training to smallholder farmers (ABET levels 1 & 2). The aim of this project was the development of a Training Material Package for use by trainers/facilitators to try and increase the accessibility of meaningful training and capacity building where small-scale irrigation forms part of integrated sustainable rural development initiatives.

The Training Package includes information such as the actual technical training content in Outcomes Based Education (OBE) format, the expected outcomes of the training as well as notes to trainers regarding important issues to consider throughout the training process itself. Appropriate procedures for introductions to training sessions are also considered. The package includes information on any potential equipment requirements, such as flip charts, paper, pens or other visual aids that may be required for presentation of specific training modules to assist the trainer in preparation for training sessions, as well as the actual technical training content. This "Training Package" consists of four (4) parts namely:

#### a. Facilitators guide on Farmer Training

The Facilitators guide (actual technical training material).

#### b. Training Tools

Visual material (transparencies), to be used by trainer/facilitator during the presentation of training, specifically the modules contained in Chapter 3 of the Facilitators guide.

#### c. Assessment Tools

The "memoranda" to be used for the assessment of training/learners' progress. (Contained in the Facilitators guide).

#### d. Audio-visual reference material

The training in the field by several Smallholder Farmer trainers, on DVD-ROM for reference purposes.

One of the initial objectives/aims of WRC Project 1357 were to eventually include this Facilitators guide in the curricula of all the Agricultural Colleges in South Africa.

The aim of this consultancy then, was to introduce the Facilitators guide to the relevant staff at all of the Agricultural Colleges in South Africa and to promote its value to them, in order to catalyse this process of inclusion into their curricula. This was achieved through a series of "road shows" during which each of the various Agricultural Colleges was visited and their staff introduced to the Guide and its value by means of an interactive presentation. This report serves to summarise the outcome of the visits to all of the 11 Agricultural Colleges in South Africa during the period July 2007 to March 2008, as well as the presentation of the Guide to the Principals of the Agricultural Colleges. During the College visits, the presentation of the Guide to the Principals of the Agricultural Colleges, the original WRC Project as well as the Facilitators guide (learning material itself), were introduced. The presentation to the Principals of the Agricultural Colleges was done during their quarterly APAC ("Association of Principals of Agricultural Colleges")-meeting which was held on 13 May 2008 at

Tompi Seleka College for Agriculture, Marble Hall. This presentation to the College Principals concluded the introduction to, and institutionalisation of the Facilitators guide (learning material) into the curricula, of the Agricultural Colleges of South Africa.

## **2. Summary of feedback received from Agricultural Colleges during College presentations/visits**

In total, 145 trainers who are responsible for Farmer Training at the 11 Colleges attended the presentations conducted over a period of 8 months and in total 176 Facilitators guides were disseminated among the farmer trainers at the Colleges visited.

The overall experience of visiting the 11 Agricultural Colleges in South Africa to promote the Facilitators guide to the farmer trainers at the Colleges was very positive and productive. The College personnel – both trainers and management – were very positive, responsive and grateful for receiving the material as well as being presented the material in such a personal, interactive manner. The support and assistance received from both the Principals of the Colleges as well as the Heads of the relevant Departments at the Colleges who were dealt with during the course of this consultancy, was extremely encouraging and commendable. It is evident that the Agricultural Colleges and especially the FET/Farmer Training units of the Colleges, are not used to this kind of attention and support from "outside". Apart from being greatly appreciative of the material itself, at all 11 Colleges visited they were also consistently extremely appreciative of the personal, interactive way in which the material was presented/disseminated to them. At one of the Colleges it was mentioned that "the WRC shows its faith in the value and worth of its own products by the way it promotes/presents these products and it proves their commitment to the upliftment and improvement of the quality of life of the citizens of South Africa".

It also became clear that the WRC is held in high esteem in general for the work the Commission has done and is doing specifically with regards to Agricultural Water Use Research. It regularly awarded me a great sense of pride and privilege to be representative of and associated with the WRC (especially in terms of Agricultural Water Use) during the course of this consultancy, as well as during the course of the original project itself.

It also became evident that there is a dire need among the Farmer Trainers at the Agricultural Colleges for more guidance and similar learning materials on the most basic levels – albeit ABET or whatever label needs to be attached to it. There exists a huge gap within the market regarding the availability of proper, accurate learning material on the lowest, most simple levels of language and communication, which is the general level on which most smallholder farmer training in South Africa needs to be conducted. It remains a rhetorical question why the recognition and acknowledgement of the dire need for proper ABET-level Unit Standards – especially within the Agriculture Sector – remains unaddressed? Even the College Farmer Trainers have accepted their fate of being at the mercy of sympathetic others (such as the WRC) to develop learning materials on ABET-levels which they can use, as the majority of the trainers at the Colleges do not have the capacity both in terms of time and resources to develop such materials themselves.

A suggestion or request which was uttered by most of the Colleges' trainers was that the learning material itself should also be available in PDF-format in some electronic version, be it on CD-Rom or DVD-Rom, or on the WRC website on the internet. According to the trainers, this would make their task of incorporating the learning material into their existing curricula and materials much easier.

The Colleges' farmer trainers in general also expressed their sincere gratitude for the Facilitators guide, especially the Development Context and the Water Management modules contained in the Guide. According to them, it is very hard to find learning material developed on this level (ABET) which covers these topics – and these topics are the most difficult to convey within a farmer training environment.

It was the general opinion of the trainers at the Colleges that they would have to use the Guide first and practically apply its content in the field before they will really be able to understand as well as

judge its real value. They will do so and provide feedback to the WRC. Should the need for more in-depth training on the Facilitators guide and its use (in terms of a relatively novel training/learning approach) be evident, this will be communicated to the WRC in writing by the Colleges.

### **3. Summary of Feedback Received during APAC (College Principals) Meeting presentation**

The Principals of the Agricultural Colleges expressed their sincere gratitude towards the WRC for the learning material and also the work the WRC does to enable them and their personnel to do their job. They feel that the topics addressed within all the WRC learning material development projects are extremely relevant and that there is a definite need among the Colleges for materials covering these topics.

The APAC-meeting felt that some form of information sharing system – in the form of an e-mail forum maybe? – should be put in place by which the Colleges can be kept up to date regarding the progress of these WRC projects and also about possible future projects of a similar nature which the WRC might embark on. All those present agreed that a system of information dissemination of this nature regarding the WRC projects will ensure that the Principals of the Colleges will understand what it is all about when their staff might be seconded or invited to attend WRC project meetings or workshops, and that it would then be easier for them to motivate and release such staff members for this purpose. It was also mentioned that a communication system – (referred to as a “WRC News e-Forum”) – would go a long way in ensuring that the relevant staff of the Colleges become and stay involved in these processes in order to enrich the projects’ outcomes.

There was a desperate request for the *Rainwater Harvesting and Homestead Food Production* learning materials to be made available to the Colleges as soon as possible – even if only in a draft format – which the Colleges could maybe use already and thereby assist the relevant project teams with the actual testing and evaluation of the material.

Furthermore the issue of accreditation and Unit Standard alignment of learning material was raised by the meeting. It was the opinion of the APAC-meeting that even within the proposed new system of the Quality Council on Trades and Occupations (QCTO), which is only expected to become operational by 2010, the Unit Standard guidelines for the development of learning material will still be relevant and required, especially with regards to the Core and Elective competencies of a learning field. Therefore, according to the APAC-meeting members in attendance, it was suggested that the status quo should be maintained with regards to the new learning material developed within the WRC projects – that is in terms of Unit Standard alignment of such learning material.

### **4. Insights Gained and Lessons learnt: points to consider for similar/future WRC projects**

In terms of current and future similar learning material development projects of the WRC, the following points of consideration should be taken into account based on the experiences gained during the course of this consultancy:

1. All finalised learning material packages should be “marketed” and disseminated among the Colleges/end users in a similar hands-on, interactive manner as was done during the course of this consultancy;
2. All learning material must also be made available electronically in PDF-format; (for this purpose, it might be a consideration to introduce a “Learning Material Library” on the WRC website from where all learning material developed by the WRC can be accessed and downloaded);
3. As far as possible, all learning material development project teams must also include as many as possible representatives (ideally farmer trainers) from the Colleges as project team members.
4. The College Principals requested that some kind of information sharing system (e-forum) be formed by which the Colleges can be informed on the progress of these and possible future projects of the WRC;

5. It was suggested by the APAC-meeting that the status quo should be maintained with regards to the new learning material developed within the WRC projects – that is in terms of Unit Standard alignment of such learning material.