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WATER INFORMATION NETWORK
- SOUTH AFRICA -

"Making knowlege work for us"

LESSON
SERIES

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WATER FOR FOOD SECURITY

Elizabeth Morwaswi & Agricultural
Cooperatives in Sekhukhune District



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



WATER
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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
THE ROLE OF WATER IN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT	4
THE CONCEPT OF AGRICULTURAL CO-OPERATIVES	5
ELIZABETH MORWASWI: AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES IN SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT	6
IMPACTS & LESSONS LEARNT	10
CONCLUSION	11

Content Development and Editing

Juliet Mwale - Water Research Commission

Ngoako Ramonetha - Department of Water & Sanitation: Sector Collaboration & Inter-Governmental Relations (IGR)

Perpetua Mphahlele - Department of Water & Sanitation: Limpopo Provincial Operations

Mokgadi Maeko - Department of Water & Sanitation: Limpopo Provincial Operations

Compiled by:

Juliet Mwale - Water Research Commission

1 INTRODUCTION

The *efficient, sustainable and beneficial use of water* is a key principle and aspect of the National Water Act, 1998 (Act No. 36 of 1998), and this has necessitated the water sector's progression from supplying clean, reliable and safe water to the recognition of the potential for water to contribute to people's wider well-being and livelihoods, i.e. water for sustainable growth and development (DWS).

This premise is further acknowledged in the 2003 Strategic Framework for Water Services (SFWS), which recognises that water for small scale multiple uses is necessary for the reduction of poverty and the improvement of livelihoods. It supports the provision of water for Economic development and sustainable livelihoods.

The National Water Act (NWA) fully embodies the principles of Integrated Water resources Management (IWRM), and is operationalised through the National Water Resources Strategy.

One of the principles of Integrated Water resources Management (IWRM), states that "Women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water" (GWP, 2006).

This role extends to agricultural water management, as women continue to play key role in agricultural food production and consequently food security, particularly in developing countries. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO, 2011) estimates that

on average, women comprise 43% of the agricultural labour force in developing countries. As the South African water sector leader, the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) strives to ensure that the National Water Act and all related legislative principles are effectively implemented, ensuring equity in access, and efficiency and effectiveness in the management and use of the country's water resources.

The Department has taken cognisance of the role women play in water management, poverty alleviation, and sustainable livelihoods.

In order to celebrate and appreciate the hard work of women, the Department introduced the "Women in Water Awards", which aim to honour the remarkable women who have made a mark in the country's water sector. The awards further encourage communities to learn and share good water management practice.

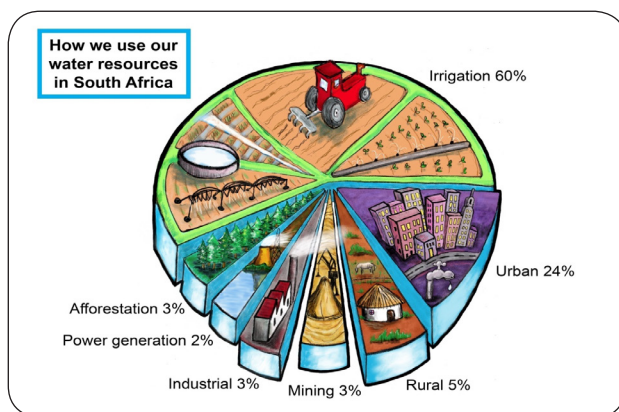
In 2013, the Department honoured Ms Elizabeth Morwaswi, with the first position award, for her outstanding contribution to water conservation, food security and sustainable livelihoods in Limpopo province. Her involvement in educating communities about water conservation is of particular note to the department as it sees this as being a very important aspect of water resources management.

This document tells the story of Ms Morwaswi's activities and the impact thereof.

2 — THE ROLE OF WATER IN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Today's agriculture sector faces a series of challenges, including producing more food of better quality while using less water, providing rural communities with resources and opportunities to live healthy and productive lives, and to contribute to the local and national economy. Water therefore plays an important role in achieving food security.

Agriculture is allocated the largest portion of South Africa's available fresh water, with about 60% going to irrigation (NWRS II):



Proportional water use per main economic sector in SA

In the agricultural sector, about 8.5 million people are directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture for employment and income (GCIS; 2001). The sector contributes about 3% to Gross Domestic Products and 7% to formal employment. The agricultural sector is made up of commercial

farmers and subsistence farmers and about 1.3 million ha is irrigated. The New Growth Path (NGP) has set a target of 300 000 households in smallholder schemes by 2020 and 145 000 jobs to be created in agro-processing by 2020 (DED; 2010). Irrigated agriculture is the largest single user of water in South Africa (60%) and it has a huge potential socio-economic impact in rural communities. Water is the major limiting factor in the growth of this sector and poor water quality has a negative impact on agricultural exports and associated foreign income (NWRS II).

Irrigation enables greater agricultural production than is achieved with rainfed agriculture. The additional food production obtained with irrigation is essential for food security. Increased food production from irrigated agriculture can confer nutritional benefits for farmers, their families and the local population (through increased food supplies). Irrigation can enable multiple cropping, which can smooth seasonal shortfalls in food supply and encourage the production of crops that contribute towards a more varied and nutritious diet. Improved nutrition can enhance quality of life, reduce illness, increase labour productivity, and improve the performance of children at school. Irrigated agriculture can also benefit the urban poor by keeping food prices low despite growing demand from increasing populations.

3 — THE CONCEPT OF AGRICULTURAL CO-OPERATIVES

An agricultural co-operative; also known as a farmers' co-op; is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their mutual economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise organised and operated on co-operative principles (Department of Trade and Industry). An agricultural co-operative is a co-operative that produces processes or markets agricultural products and supplies agricultural inputs and services to its members.

The Characteristics of an Agricultural Co-operative are:

- Association of persons
- Voluntary basis
- Mutual or common economic, social and cultural needs
- Jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise
- Co-operative principles

There are various levels of Agricultural Co-operatives:

- i. **Primary agricultural co-operatives:** these are where all the members are individuals. The purpose of a primary agricultural cooperative is to provide employment or services to its members and to promote community development.
- ii. **Secondary agricultural co-operatives:** these have two or more primary co-operatives, including juristic persons. The

members are primarily agricultural co-operatives. The purpose of a secondary co-operative is to provide services to its members relating to the sector in which they are active.

- iii. **Tertiary agricultural co-operatives:** these are comprised of two or more secondary co-operatives, including juristic persons. The purpose is to advocate the interests of the member co-operatives to government bodies, the private sector and other stakeholders. Another name for a tertiary agricultural co-operative is an apex organisation. These co-ops exist at a provincial level.

Agricultural co-operatives may be organised according to function, such as production, supply, service, agricultural marketing, and purchasing cooperatives

According to the South African Integrated Strategy on the Development and Promotion of Co-operatives (2012-2022) (DTI, 2012), in international studies reveal that countries which have created an environment conducive to promoting co-operatives, by developing legislative instruments, supportive programmes and delivery institutions, grow rapidly and contribute positively to economic development, employment creation, economic ownership by local communities, and human resource development. Canada, Spain, Kenya, Italy, India and Bangladesh have proven to be successful in the development of co-operatives. Best practice from these countries were drawn to inform the South African Strategy.

Agricultural cooperatives comprise about 25% of all cooperatives in South Africa, (DTI, 2012). The promulgation of the new Co-operatives Act, No. 14 of 2005, facilitated a boom in the registration of new co-operatives never seen before in South Africa. The main reason that can be attributed to this boom is that of an enabling environment through legislation, support measures and procurement from all spheres of government. Unlike the previous legislation, this new legislation promotes co-operatives across all sectors of the economy (DTI, 2012).

3.1 Women in Agricultural Cooperatives in South Africa

Many small-scale, women-centered, agricultural cooperatives have emerged in developing countries to fulfill livelihood needs by pooling resources, establishing economies of scale, and creating greater collective bargaining power for resources, land rights, and market

access. One such [urban agriculture](#) project is Abalimi Bezekhaya, in Cape Town, South Africa, which provides training, manure, set-up and maintenance of an irrigation system, and R150 (\$15 USD) to each participant. Most of the participants are women. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_and_food_security)

The South African Integrated Strategy on the Development and Promotion of Co-operatives states that the majority of the new cooperatives that have emerged since the promulgation of the new Co-operatives Act, No. 14 of 2005, are black woman-owned.

It goes without saying, therefore, that women play a central and pivotal role the establishment, management, and sustenance of agricultural cooperatives in South Africa, and therefore to communities food security and financial income.

4 ELIZABETH MORWASWI: AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES IN SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT

Elizabeth Morwaswi has played pivotal role in the Sekhukhune District of Limpopo province through her skills in agricultural business development and management, and water conservation and demand management, which have ultimately led to development and poverty alleviation in the areas she has worked.

She is the founder of the following projects:

- Ikageng Ga Masha Primary Cooperative
- Leikamamos Secondary Cooperative
- Namolelang Basadi Adopt a Canal
- Ope la Kwena Adopt a River.

- Ngwanamanthe Youth Primary Cooperative
- Thlakantshong Agri Cooperative

4.1 The beginning

The beginning of Elizabeth Morwaswi's journey dates back to 1984 in Strykraal. The village then had ownership of a scheme under Agricultural Marketing Services, a government initiated program. Each person was allocated 1.2 hectares for farming purposes. Government withdrew then around 1987 and the scheme became dysfunctional.

Ms Morwaswi influenced the formation of a committee to spearhead the resuscitation of the scheme using the community members' own funds. She was elected the chairperson of that committee, and the scheme was brought back on track, with Ms Morwaswi operating the pump machine. The community contributed towards seeds and pipe repairs and they harvested a lot in that year.

Seeing this success story Department of Agriculture intervened in 2000 through Human Empowerment Program named Umbrella Body. Many diverse community initiated projects were supported to form committees and the chairpersons of each committee formed part of the Umbrella Body. Mrs. Morwaswi was the chairperson of that committee as well.

To test the strength of the Umbrella Body, government provided them with seeds, which yielded more than 100 bags of mealies.

i. Ikageng Ga Masha Primary Cooperative

In 2005 Ikageng Ga Masha was registered as a Cooperative, located in Fetakgomo Local Municipality Ward 7, in Sekhukhune District. The project was initiated in 2004, initially covering 23 hectares, and later increasing to 300 hectares, with the support of the Department of Agriculture which provided it with infrastructure and seeds.

Sekhukhune area is water stressed area, and with this in mind, the project utilises an economical and water conserving drip irrigation system called Pivot, as well as strategic sprinkling.

The project consisted of 23 members, with 19 females and 4 men. 13 youths participated in the project, contributing to almost 60% of the project members.

The developmental potential and magnitude of the project was noted by a number of stakeholders who consequently supported the project, as follows:

- In 2007, Fetakgomo Local Municipality noted that the project area was unprotected and the project was suffering loss with animals eating crops. It then offered to build a fence around the project area and provided them with a van as well as poles to support the tomato plants.
- Atok mine, located in the area, also went on board to support the project with a marketing stall, store room building, office and toilet.
- Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) provided the project with a tractor and a plough.

In 2008 the project planted all sorts of vegetables: onions, spinach, beetroot, butternut and potatoes. Their buyers included SPAR, Fruit and Veg, McCain, Simba and street vendors.

In 2009, the project won R100, 000.00 in the Women in Water Awards of the then Department of Water Affairs. The winnings contributed towards procurement of the following:

- Disc plough
- Electricity installation.
- Office equipments
- Debushing 3 hectares the other area for project extension.
- Project beneficiaries' wages.
- Protective clothing for beneficiaries.

A key highlight of the Ikageng Ga Masha project has been the job creation (consequently contributing to poverty alleviation & income generation), with the following jobs created in 2012:

- 2 water pump operators.
- 2 securities.
- 1 administrator.
- 1 auditor.
- 4 pest controllers
- 1 tractor drive
- 20 women hired on contract basis for ploughing purposes.

ii. LEIKAMAMOS Secondary Cooperative

The vision and potential of the project grew even bigger with the winning of the DWA award and Mrs. Morwaswi initiated the formation of a Secondary Cooperative which was named LEIKAMAMOS which happened to be the mother-body of the following primary Cooperatives: Lengwai, Ikageng, Mabotswane and Strykraal.

Key highlights & achievements of LEIKAMAMOS, include the following:

- The new Cooperative LEIKAMAMOS attracted international attention, with its efficient water use and utilization of three different efficient irrigation systems (centre pivot; sprinkler and drip) attracting a visit by a group of students from New England University representing the Australia, Kenya, Tchad, Burkinafaso, Ethopia, Sudan, Nigeria, Benin, Ivory Coast, Zimbabwe, and Egypt. The students were impressed with the theory and practical education that the project presented.

- Another contribution was training of youth in Strykraal, initiated by the AgriSETA. 27 youths from poverty stricken families were identified and trained on food security matters and business management skills. The youth gained the knowledge and were also provided with stipend as additional benefit.
- The success of the LEIKAMAMOS project led the Department of Agriculture to appoint a strategic partner Arthur Greyton to develop the 300 hectares allocated by the chief for the development of the village. 210 people benefitted including 27 security guard jobs for the cooperatives.
- More than 1500 people benefitted taking home an income of R5000 after profit from the project. Bags of wheat were produced and sold to NTK Landbou (Pty) Ltd in Sekhukhune.

iii. Namolelang Basadi Project

Mrs Morwaswi took the initiative to organise the women in Strykraal to form the Namolelang Basadi Adopt Canal Farming cooperative, consisting of 26 members. Further to that she advised the women regarding food security and poverty alleviation. The women were advised to visit the chief and request land allocation for them to be able to grow vegetables so that they can sustain themselves and their families. The project was allocated 10hectors and registered as a cooperative at Fetakgomo Local Municipality.

The project was officially launched by the municipality and entered into the Local Economic Development Database of the municipality.

The women spend three days a week cleaning and checking the canal to remove impurities and spend two days on the production activities.

iv. Ope la Kwena Adopt a River

This project is located in Tswaing village in Makhuduthamaga LM. A river canal passes through the village, and the community depend on this water.

However, there were very levels of river pollution by the community, who threw various objects in the river, thereby endangering people's lives.

A Cooperative comprising 12 women and one man took it upon themselves to start cleaning the canal and saving the lives of the community people of Tswaing.

v. Ngwanamanthe Youth Primary Cooperative

Ngwana Mathe Youth Primary Cooperative is a vegetable project started in 2005 by seven female youth members. It is a registered cooperative specialising in vegetable production, operating on 10 hectares of land.

Elizabeth has supported the project through skills capacity development support and has been playing an oversight role in seeing to it that the project gets exposure to various Governmental initiatives. Through her support the project won Department of Water and Sanitation Women in Water awards in 2012. Mrs. Morwaswi still continues to support the projects and assist in marketing of their produce. The project is growing big and her support to the project cannot be left unnoticed.

The project has a big earth dam that is carries about 30500 litres of water, which is used for irrigation purposes. The dam is covered in plastic to prevent water evaporating.

The project is committed to the water use efficiency in a sense that they are using drip irrigation system to irrigate their crops. Drip irrigation system save water as every single drop of water that comes out goes to the root of the plant. Its moisture does not evaporate easily because it goes deeper into the soil therefore it reduces our time to irrigate, we irrigate twice a week instead of the whole week.

This project aimed at youth development, community upliftment and poverty alleviation. There are seasonal workers that are hired during planting, weeding and harvesting thereby reducing unemployment rate.

The group also conduct operation and maintenance and they have been trained to operate and maintain the drip pipes and the whole reticulation systems and taps. Leakages are detected and controlled everyday through monitoring of the system on regular bases, identification of problems and rectifying those problems through repairs.

Highlights of the project include the following:

- The project is now in the planting process of onion and cabbages.
- 16 youth have been employed to assist with planting thereby empowering them and reducing rate of unemployment as said. They are paid on monthly basis. The money has been generated from the cabbage, butternut and beetroot produce. The profit amounted to R80.000. The amount is utilised to pay electricity, security, tractor driver and additional labour. The security and the tractor drivers are paid R2.500. The project is contributing to reduction of

unemployment in the Local Municipality as they have employment permanent tractor driver and night security.

- 270 000 seedlings have been planted. The project is anticipating making a profit of R220.000.
- The youth has been earmarked by Mass Mart seeing their passion and realising that they are youth making a difference in the community. Mass Mart planned to run Youth Empowerment workshops to teach them farming and efficient water usage for farming (as they are utilising drip system from irrigation) as well as community development.
- The project has received a vendor number and has entered competitive marketing. It will be selling its produce to Mass Mart, PicknPay, Spar and Fruit Spot after harvesting.
- The project has the following future plans:
- Hire additional youth labour as permanent workers for planting, spraying of fertilisers (manuring) and harvesting.
- Earn a permanent sustainable salary for sustainability and to show other youth that they can create jobs at their age.
- Owning of a nursery to supply the whole community with seedlings.
- Community building. Educate the youth regarding small business enterprise, water use efficiency and self-sustainability.

- The youth would like to develop to be great business entrepreneurs as previously black disadvantaged women. They would like to turn the Region around and to change perceptions regarding women youth as they are full time in farming and making a difference.

vi. The Present: Thlakantshong Agri Cooperative.

Presently Mrs. Morwaswi has extended her good work to other municipalities which seemed to be lacking interest on efficient utilization of water for economic development purposes. She identified a group of street vendors in LepelleNkumbi municipality, and then the idea of growing vegetables on their own and selling them for profit based on the skills she acquired in her experience. She identified four keen women who at present have registered a cooperative called **Thlakantshong Agri Cooperative**.

The women are funding the project from their own pockets, starting the project from a zero financial base. They have acquired 5 hectares of land, and in two months managed to plough, and plant 1500 tomatoes, 2000 cabbages, and 5000 butternut. Five jobs have been created in 5 months. The women are very confident that the project will be another major success story.

5 IMPACTS & LESSONS LEARNT

As earlier mentioned, the work of Elizabeth Morwaswi has had a major impact on food security and poverty alleviation in Sekhukhune District. Her impact has been in terms of skills and knowledge passed on, which is evidenced through the growth of the cooperatives she

helped form and manage and new ones cropping up.

Her impact has been in the following:

- Business management skills
- Facilitation skills and leadership skills

- Administration skills
- Project management skills
- Capacity building
- Problem solving skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Marketing skills
- Soil fertility management skills
- Knowledge management.
- Negotiation skills
- Job creation
- Water Conservation
- Food security
- Learnership through teaching others
- Knowledge sharing and skills transfer

The success of the projects led by Ms Morwaswi has attracted lot of attention, including that of the media. Livingland TV aired a programme on the Ikageng ga-Masha project, and as earlier mentioned, overseas students have visited some of her projects.

Ms Morwaswi also shared her experience at the 2014 National Water and Sanitation Summit (1-2 August 2014).

Some of the challenges faced in her initiatives include political interferences, and disputes over land and finances.

Key lessons learnt from her vast experience in small scale agricultural cooperatives:

- Government support communities when they come up with initiatives themselves and own projects in that regard showing sense of responsibility and accountability.
- Support from stakeholders is possible when you show commitment to the project and when there is evidence for potential for growth.
- For a project to thrive, communities need to be visionary and have self and group determination.
- The team must be able to be self-sustained and utilize limited resources for project investment and growth.
- Dispute over finances and profit hinders projects growth and should be mitigated and all costs for projects to thrive. Mitigation here refers to communities making sure that proper management of resources are in place, transparency and efficient utilisation of resources are kept in mind by the managers of the project. Employment strategy to be in place to avoid the disputes over who is to be employed or not. The project in that sense will be able to circumvent nepotism dominating the project management to the detrimental effect and rendering the project ineffective in making sure that larger and diverse members of the communities benefit from the project.

6

CONCLUSION

The role of water in food security and poverty alleviation cannot be overemphasised. Elizabeth Morwaswi's projects have had a major impact on the livelihoods and wellbeing of the communities.

The success of any agricultural activity depends on the availability and efficient usage of available water resources. Despite Sekhukhune District being a water scarce area, Elizabeth's initiatives have made the best of the situation by employing water efficient irrigation methods.

She is a role model in her community and it is hoped that the impact she has made can continue to improve the communities' livelihoods.



The WIN-SA lesson series aims to capture the innovative work of people tackling real service delivery challenges. It also aims to stimulate learning and sharing around these challenges to support creative solutions. To achieve this, the lessons series is supported by ancillary learning opportunities facilitated by WIN-SA to strengthen people-to-people learning.

To find out more about these and other WIN-SA services go to the WIN-SA portal at www.win-sa.org.za or contact the Network directly.

This document hopes to encourage ongoing discussion, debate and lesson sharing. To comment, make additions or give further input, please visit www.win-sa.org.za or send an email to info@win-sa.org.za.

Our mission is to ensure the body of knowledge in the sector is well managed, readily accessible and applied, leading to improved decision-making and performance, especially of local government.

Address: 491 18th Avenue, Rietfontein, Pretoria

Postal Address: Private Bag X03, Gezina, 0031

Tel: (012) 330 0340 Fax: (012) 331 2565

E-mail: info@win-sa.org.za

Website: www.win-sa.org.za

