

The Dynamics of Community Non-Compliance with Basic Water Supply Projects

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Water Research Commission
by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The provision of a basic water supply to the 21 million people without adequate water is a major national initiative undertaken by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry in terms of its White Paper on Water Supply and Sanitation. Water had been identified as one of the basic needs to be met by the first of five key programmes of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP).

Billions of rands have been committed to the water initiative which involves national, provincial and local levels of government as well as parastatals, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private firms. As time went by, problems emerged in the delivery of water, which was to be expected in a programme of this magnitude.

One of the problems was the failure of a too high proportion of rural community water supply schemes. The failure manifested in communities withholding payments which had been negotiated when the projects were initiated. The research was designed to study the reasons for this non-compliance from the perspective of community members.

One of the implementing agents of rural community water supply schemes is a non-governmental organisation, the Mvula Trust. The Mvula Trust was established in 1993 and has become an acknowledged leader in the field. The Mvula Trust operates within the policies of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry and has developed procedures based on sound national and international development experience as well as its own experience in community water supply. The Mvula Trust experienced similar problems as the other implementing agents in respect of rural community water schemes, estimating that approximately a third of its projects experience difficulties, primarily due to non-payment in terms of negotiated agreements. Mvula Trust agreed that its projects be used in the study and suggested projects in three provinces. In the end 22 rural community water projects undertaken by the Mvula Trust were studied. An additional two projects undertaken by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry were also studied. The DWAF projects displayed the same problems as the Mvula Trust projects. Of the total of 24 projects visited, four projects were included as model projects to provide some basis for comparison. Not all the 'problem' projects were entirely unsuccessful.

Six projects were visited in the Northern Province during August 1997, one of which was a model project. Eight projects were visited in the Eastern Cape during September 1997, two of which were undertaken by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry. Two of the Mvula Trust projects were model projects - one was a multi-village project. Ten projects in Kwazulu-Natal were visited during October 1997 of which one was a model project. Northern Province, Eastern Cape and Kwazulu-Natal are the poorest provinces in South Africa.

A research team comprising the project leader and a lady familiar with the language and customs of each province visited the villages in which the projects were situated unannounced. Conversations were conducted with ordinary villagers, village leaders and water committees on water matters, including the project. Men and women, individually and in groups, were spoken to. The research team was received in a friendly manner by the villagers who were all very willing to talk about water.

The results of the research pointed to problems with the conceptualisation of the national water rural community supply initiative. The water supply programme was designed to provide each household with 25 litres of clean water per person per day within 200 metres. This is intended to meet the basic water needs of the villagers and for which they are to pay operations and maintenance costs. In the projects studied here, agreements were negotiated with elected community representatives (who comprise a water committee) while community members were trained to manage the project as well as the ultimate water scheme. The research found that many communities already had their basic needs for water met, and wanted a higher level of service than the national water supply programme envisaged. The projects that were successful, were situated in villages with a dire need for water and who benefitted appreciably from the project. When the communities that felt that their basic need for water was already satisfied (even if it was not clean water), found that their expectations for a higher level of service (which they interpreted as a tap in their own yards) would not be met, they withdrew their payments. The collapse of water projects did not happen simply and directly. There were usually other problems during implementation which were the manifest reason for project failure, but which the water committee or community in general could not find enough enthusiasm to resolve, probably because they did not really need the water.

The second problem regarding the conceptualisation of the water delivery programme, is the assumption that community cohesiveness is a valid basis for the election of a water committee with whom outsiders can negotiate and conclude agreements. The research cast doubts on this assumption. In the cases where there did appear to be significant community cohesion, the cohesion itself was sometimes the last straw leading to the collapse of the project. In these cases, the community preferred to abandon the project rather than risk internal conflict over water matters.

Within the projects themselves, there were a number of reasons for project failure. These are: weak community leadership, lack of communication between the water committee and the community, lack of project management expertise, impatient and ill-advised engineering consultants, unequal benefits from the water scheme to community members, projects proceeding without contributions from all community members, no means of forcing community members to pay, multi-village schemes which are too difficult for water committees to manage, a low level of service, unwillingness to give money to fellow villagers, and the role played by organisations such as the South African National Civics Organisation (SANCO) and the ANC Youth League.

Affordability, although used as an excuse, did not appear to be the real reason for community non-compliance with projects.

The report recommends that the national water initiative be adjusted to provide for a higher level of service where communities feel their basic need for water has already been met. This would entail taps in each yard where the water source can support this. Users should pay towards the higher level of service as well as the operations and maintenance costs, preferably by prepayments. Projects should be undertaken with community consultation and include some kind of provision for the indigent.

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1. INTRODUCTION

A current major national initiative is the provision of basic water supply to ensure that everyone in South Africa has access to 25 litres of safe water per day within 200 metres of their home. Billions of rands have been committed to the aim of providing potable water to the 12 million people without it. The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, other government agencies, foreign donors, non-governmental organisations as well as hundreds of private companies are involved in this initiative as funders, implementing agents and construction firms. As the thrust began, problems emerged that retarded delivery. Some of these problems can be attributed to social and institutional factors.

The present study examines these social and institutional problems in order to improve the efficiency of delivery.

The accent is placed on the role of community dynamics related to problems in the supply of water to rural villages (in economic terms, the demand side of water delivery). The study is undertaken from a sociological perspective.

The primary manifestation of a problem is community non-compliance with the terms negotiated before the commencement of a water project. This usually means that communities stop paying what they had previously agreed to pay and, as a result, water supply is terminated, mostly due to the non-payment of Eskom's electricity account.

The study analyses rural community water supply projects implemented by the Mvula Trust in the three poorest provinces in South Africa - Northern Province, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.

2. ORGANISATION OF THE REPORT

The research procedure is discussed first. The purpose of the research - community non-compliance with basic water supply projects - means that community dynamics are central. As the research unfolded it became clear that community dynamics could not be analysed in isolation. Explanations for community dynamics often came from societal forces outside a particular community. Added to this, the work was undertaken from a sociological perspective. The report therefore proceeds with an overview of relevant social theory and the social forces current in the country. This is followed by a discussion of the national water policy and the procedures of the Mvula Trust. A background of each province prefaces an analysis of the dynamics of the projects studied in that province. The main report ends with a presentation of the results of the research and conclusions for the national water initiative. Summary reports of the village projects are presented in the Appendix.

3. RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The primary procedure was to visit a number of rural villages where water supply projects were known to have collapsed for social reasons. The dynamics that led to the collapse were investigated. In each province a successful 'model' project was also visited.

The projects visited were suggested by Mvula Trust staff, who helped with directions to each village. Officials of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry in the Eastern Cape suggested that two of their projects also be included in the study. The villages were then visited unannounced. A variety of ordinary villagers, mainly women - sometimes individually and sometimes in groups - in each settlement were approached on the pretext of inquiring about the state of their water supply. The research team was usually directed to other villagers and eventually to the water committee and other community structures. The research was warmly received in all the villages. The team was twice complimented on coming unannounced. In one case villagers said information would have been rehearsed if it was known someone was coming to inquire about water. In many cases, after it became known that we were inquiring about water, people made an effort to find us.

Everyone was very friendly and keen to talk about their water problems. Women were found to provide more reliable information about water and community perceptions than men, although they were often unwilling to speak in front of other people. (Women immediately said so when they did not know an answer, while men ventured an answer whether they knew or not). As a result the research team kept asking questions until enough consistent replies were forthcoming. In some cases community perceptions were clearly incorrect and very different to the information provided by project staff. This was not corrected in the community as it would have been beyond the scope of a research brief and, ultimately, interference in community affairs. (In exceptional circumstances information that could have solved an immediate project problem was relayed to project staff with the permission of the water committee). Summaries of the information from each village are provided in the Appendix at the end of the report. No attempt was made to compare official project information and village perceptions. It was not considered relevant whether community perceptions were accurate or not in unravelling the community dynamics surrounding failed projects. The research team (all women) comprised the project leader and a fieldworker familiar with the customs and language in each province. Most of the interviews were conducted in the vernacular.

Projects for study were selected with the kind assistance of staff from Mvula Trust, a major non-governmental trust which is dedicated to basic community water supply. Mvula Trust has developed a methodology based on sound national and international experience and is recognised as an accredited leader in the field. Staff of Mvula Trust welcomed the research as they were concerned about the high failure rate of projects which had been designed following recognised procedures. The failure rate was said to be upward of 30 per cent. There were also other advantages in visiting their projects: There were a large number of projects to choose from. Studying projects from one organisation meant that there was a common approach in all the projects which excluded extraneous variables which might have been introduced by different organisational approaches. It is nevertheless interesting that the two non-Mvula Trust projects displayed the same kind of community dynamics.

Considerations at the outset about a formal research methodology as well as research fatigue and community resistance to being 'researched' again, presented no problem at all. Villagers were very keen to talk when they were approached informally. Sometimes people approached us having heard we were asking about water. In one case a headman and his advisers waited at the exit to a village to speak to us after we had given up trying to find him. We found this especially true when there were severe problems in a project. We also encountered the syndrome of not relaying bad news. In one village the headman's wife told us it was fortunate we had come that day as that

very morning the problem had been solved and water was eventually flowing - which was the very opposite of the truth! In the few successful projects we visited, people reported their satisfaction with the project but became irritated at probing questions about the organisation of the project: they knew things worked well and that was all they needed to convey.

The research team sometimes arrived during unfolding events and had to resist attempts to be drawn into them. In some cases there was a change in the course of events after a village study was completed. This was not considered important as it was community dynamics that was the object of study.

Information was collected on the character of the village, history of the project, project organisation, water sources, community interaction with the project and perceptions of the future. Supplementary information was obtained from interviews with professionals working in water and related fields when this was considered useful.

4. RELEVANT SOCIAL THEORY

Sociology has been described as the scientific study of modern societal patterns. Over time these patterns have been documented and found to be similar in different times and places. The documented patterns are organised as the concepts which form sociological theory and provide a framework for explaining society (and, when they change or new patterns form, starting points for the development of new theory). Social phenomena seldom occur in a pure form in historical reality. This has led to the concept of an 'ideal type', which is a pure form conceptually constructed for the purpose of explanation. This section discusses a selection of concepts and ideal types from sociological theory that can help explain the dynamics in the communities studied.

Traditionality/modernity and the spatial periphery

Much has been written about traditional/modern as well as rural/ urban patterns of existence as though there is a continuum with traditional and rural on the one end and modern and urban on the other. Elements of such a typology would be the following:

TRADITIONAL/RURAL

Agriculture
Family/community orientation
Ascribed status
Autocracy
Family production and consumption
Tribal political control
Conservatism
Suspicion
Stability and continuity
Cultural orientation
Sparse settlement
Local identity
Patriarchal authority

MODERN/URBAN

Industry/commerce
Individualism
Achieved status
Democracy
Family consumption
Political parties
Innovation
Open-mindedness
Change and progress
Social rationality
Dense settlement
Cosmopolitan identity
Gender equality

Although this typology dominated thinking on lifestyles for a long time, it is no longer accepted. Societal experience has shown that modernisation does not mean that societies undergoing change relinquish their traditions or that there is no attachment to customs and ways of the past. Likewise traditional, rural societies adopt modern cultural elements that they can afford and enhance their lives (Dreyer, 1989:95-97). This has led to the idea of the spatial periphery where the attributes of the economic core play out unevenly. The people that are most vulnerable to economic change, possess the least resources, face the greatest social structural impediments to higher incomes, stable employment, social provision and political mobilisation are those in rural areas, in other words, in the periphery (Lobao, 1996). One of the most important aspects in this debate is the role of the community, which is often still thought to be associated with a traditional, rural lifestyle.

Community

The concept 'community' refers to an aggregate of people who have formed a sense of solidarity or shared identity on the grounds of a common characteristic such as residence, frequent social interaction, shared beliefs or close ties. These ties may be based on kinship, occupation, the experience of living together etc. as long as they are sufficiently important to provide the members of the group with common interests and goals. Some uses of the concept 'community' omit locality and argue that community interests ignore distance (for example, a community of scientists who might live across the world). Residence in the same area is important, however, in providing opportunities for interaction and working together for common goals. Even though technology helps overcome distance, other analysts find it useful to keep the idea of common residence and use another word for close-knit groups that lack this. Individuals do not necessarily only belong to one community, though one is probably more important than the others, while in some aspects of life, other identities may be more important than a sense of community (Peil, 1982:19).

The use of 'community' is not without problems, particularly in South Africa where it has been used for political purposes as a euphemism for 'race' and particularly the non-white races. It has often been pointed out that although communities exist, they cannot be assumed, and if they exist in one context, they cannot be assumed in another context. Claiming them in order to legitimise a social programme or in support of a plan of action does not create them. The boundaries of communities are symbolic and exist by virtue of people's belief in them. Communities can best be understood as an 'image of coherence', a cultural notion that people use in order to give a reality and form to their social actions and thought, although it is often romanticised. Communities are dynamic and in a constant state of flux, even when they are apparently most stable (Boonzaier and Sharp, 1988:29-39).

'Community' presents further problems as modern society has weakened the notion of people interacting and meeting all their needs within a definable locality. Besides locality bonds, people also have strong associational bonds that transcend geographic space and are often stronger. This is why sociologists tend to avoid the term 'community'. Friedman sees the term as virtually meaningless: On the one hand it is shorthand for a collection of so many different interests that an attempt to ascribe a commonality to them may hide more than it explains. And, if a weakness of voluntary interest organisation is shown to exist, the term 'community' may ascribe a cohesion and richness of associational life that is, at best, yet to emerge (Friedman, 1993:2).

Even though community has become disassociated from locality, the ideology of community remains strong. The desire to realise an idealised notion of community continues to inspire visions of a better life in the future (Worsley, 1987:238-272).

When people live closely together and show signs of community, outsiders often assume that there is social unity. Typically within the field of rural water supply, projects are negotiated with a 'community' on the basis of this assumed unity or solidarity.

Rural Rationality

It has also been pointed out that, however illogical the decisions of the rural poor may appear to outsiders, they are very rational when viewed from their circumstances and the resources at their disposal. The rural poor suffer longer and harder from their mistakes: the cost of risk is very high (See Korten, 1980.) This means that in terms of the rural/urban typology, rural people will adopt innovations that they can afford and have seen proven to enhance their lifestyle and not harm other aspects of their lives. This has led a leading writer on rural development to pose a question as the title of a book *Whose reality counts?* (Chambers, 1997). The implication of this is that the decisions of rural people must be assessed from the perspective of their circumstances which rarely happens when projects are conceptualised in an urban environment. Related to this is the principle of *Putting People First* in induced development (implying a concern for social organisation) which is the title of a book by a rural sociologist who specialises in water projects (Cernea, 1991:8).

Social Capital

A typical sociological approach to the explanation of social action would see the actor as socialised, and action as governed by social norms, rules and obligations. The virtue of this approach lies in its ability to explain the way action is shaped, constrained and redirected by the social context. A typical neo-economic approach would see the actor as having goals independently arrived at, as acting independently, and as being wholly self-interested. Its virtue lies in maximising utility. Both these approaches have defects. The concept of social capital arose in reaction to the absolutisation of these two approaches. 'Social capital' accepts the principle of purposeful action but also accounts for the actions of individuals in particular contexts and the development of social organisation. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making the achievement of certain ends possible that would not otherwise be the case. Unlike physical capital (i.e. machines and infrastructure) and human capital (i.e. skills and expertise), social capital inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors. Examples of social capital are trust and goodwill, the flow of information, strong and effective norms, social obligations, and informal networks (Coleman, 1988).

Embeddedness

New insights on the relationship between the economy and social relations have come from the argument of embeddedness. Conventional thinking holds that the economy in modern society is an increasingly separate, differentiated sphere where economic transactions are no longer defined

by social or kinship obligations but by rational calculations of individual gain. It is sometimes argued that the traditional situation is reversed: instead of economic life submerged in social relations, these relations become an epiphenomenon of the market. Granovetter (1992:53) argues that the level of embeddedness of economic behaviour is lower in non-market societies than is claimed and that it has changed less with modernisation than most analysts believe. Although social relations, rather than institutional arrangements or generalised morality are responsible for the production of trust, this is tempered by two factors. First, networks of social relations penetrate irregularly and in differing degrees in different sectors of economic life. Second, while social relations may be a necessary condition for trust and trustworthy behaviour, they are not sufficient to guarantee these and may even provide occasion and means for malfeasance and conflict on a scale larger than in their absence. The embeddedness approach to the problem of trust and order in economic life therefore threads a way between the over-socialised approach of generalised morality and the under-socialised approach of impersonal, institutional arrangements. (Granovetter, 1992: 53-81).

5. SOCIAL FORCES

The sudden **democratisation** of South Africa during the 1990s created a drive for change in every societal sector. This freedom led to a vibrant civil society with a plethora of new organisations and ideas. Each sector has surged ahead with its own transition without waiting for the transition in other sectors. New ideas constantly emerge in the public domain. This will all ultimately result in rapid national change but will also be uncomfortable as adjustments and readjustments will need to be made for the reason that events in one sector affect other sectors as well. Some of the forces of change that are important for this study are mentioned below.

Principles in the **National Constitution** adopted in 1996 guarantee men and women equal rights (Section 9). Everyone has right of access to sufficient water (Section 27). One of the objects of local government is to provide services to communities in a sustainable manner (Section 152). The institution, status and role of traditional leadership is recognised (Section 211). National legislation may provide for a role for traditional leadership as an institution at local level on matters affecting local communities (Section 212).

The Green Paper on **Local Government** (October 1997) notes that there is confusion with regard to the role and function of elected councillors and traditional leaders in respect of the delivery of services. There is a lack of effective communication between municipal councillors and traditional authorities. The Green Paper does not provide guidance on the issue of traditional leaders and states that consultations are underway. There is also a lack of funds for municipal services in rural areas.

In 1987 Eskom embarked on an **Electricity for All** programme. Electrification was seen as a key to entrepreneurial development, a boom in the appliance industry, improved health and reduced air pollution (Van Gass and Adams, 1997).

A **campaign of non-payment for services** in municipal areas arose as a political instrument to bring about political change. The poor quality of services and dismal administration created grounds for developing a culture of non-payment. In response to the non-payment of electricity accounts Eskom introduced a pre-paid metering system. The benefits to consumers include no

surprise bills or debts and the management of energy use within available resources. The benefits for the electricity supplier include payments up front, no accounting and collection administration as well as no cut-off and reconnection system (Van Gass and Adams, 1997).

The government's **land reform** policy seeks to redress injustices of the past which led to land insecurity, landlessness and poverty. The land restitution component involves returning land lost since 1913 because of racially discriminatory laws (or compensating victims). The land redistribution policy makes it possible for poor and disadvantaged people to buy land with the help of a grant (Department of Land Affairs, April 1997).

Civil society structures such as SANCO and the ANC Youth League have assumed a watchdog function over activities undertaken with public funds.

Competition between political parties results in their representatives making promises about the delivery of public services.

6. THE PROVISION OF WATER IN SOUTH AFRICA

6.1 Water White Paper

At the end of 1994 the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry published a White Paper on its water supply and sanitation policy. It provides a framework for government policy in providing access to an adequate supply of potable water to the 12 million people in the country without that access, and sanitation to the 21 million people without proper sanitation. Aspects of the government's water supply policy that have relevance for this report are presented below.

The relevant principles of the policy are the following:

- a. **Water development should be demand-driven and community-based.** Decision-making and control will be devolved as far as possible to accountable local structures. There is a reciprocal obligation on communities to accept responsibility for their own development and governance, with the assistance of the state.
- b. **Basic services are a human right.** This is interpreted as the right to a level of service adequate to provide a healthy environment. It does not imply the right of an individual or community to demand services at the expense of others.
- c. **'Some for all', rather than 'all for some'.** Priority in planning and allocation of public funds is given to those presently inadequately served.
- d. **Equitable regional allocation of development resources.**
- e. **Water has economic value.** Recognition is given to the scarcity of good quality water in South Africa.
- f. **The user pays.**

- g. **Integrated development.** Water development is not isolated from development in other sectors.
- h. **Environmental integrity.**

The policy provides that all communities in the country have the right of access to basic services and to the support they need to achieve this. In the long term the supply of services should be the responsibility of democratic local government. In the medium term the government will support local level institutional development as well as provide assistance for the physical development of water supply services. The short-term goal is to maintain service delivery.

The key to sustainable water development is the existence of functional, competent local government, although it is acknowledged this will not be likely for a long time to come. Through all this, it is central government's intention in all its functions (not only water supply) to put the community first, to ensure the transfer of control to the local level and to make the community the client.

The **basic service provision policy** is to ensure that all South Africans have access to basic water supply within seven years. Basic water supply is defined as 25 litres per person per day. This is considered to be the minimum required for direct consumption, for the preparation of food and for personal hygiene. It is not considered to be adequate for a full, healthy and productive life. The maximum distance which a person should have to carry water to his/her dwelling is 200 metres. The flow rate from the outlet should not be less than 10 litres per minute and the water should be available on a regular, daily basis. The supply should provide water security, meaning the availability of water 98 per cent of the time with not more than one week's interruption in supply per year. The quality of the water should be in accordance with currently accepted minimum standards with respect to health related chemical and microbial contaminants and be acceptable to consumers in respect of taste, colour and appearance. The desire of many communities to upgrade a basic service to provide for household connections should be taken into account during planning.

A key principle of the Reconstruction and Development Programme is that services should be provided and paid for in a manner which does not require ongoing government funds to keep them running. Water is a natural resource - considered by many to be a 'gift from God' - which as such should be free. The financial cost of water arises from the need to abstract it from a source, treat it and bring it to where it is required. The cost of water is made up of three basic components: initial capital costs, operation and maintenance costs and replacement costs. The basic policy of government is that services should be self-financed at a local and regional level. The only exception is poor communities that cannot afford basic services. Government may subsidise the cost of construction of basic minimum services, but not the operating, maintenance or replacement costs. The government will give high priority to financing infrastructure in rural areas. Basic minimum services may be subsidised by government, channelled through local communities although the implementing agent may be a water board or any other agent. If a community wishes to upgrade its water service to beyond the basic level, it must carry the extra costs although the Department of Water Affairs or any of its agents may assist the community to raise the extra finance.

The tariff policy provides that sound tariffs structures are essential for the rational and systematic collection of payments for services. The setting of tariffs and adoption of tariff systems are to be done by local communities in conjunction with service providers. In poor communities which are unable to afford the construction and operation costs of schemes provided by government, a social tariff covering only the operating expenses will be charged for the minimum level of service, which is a communal water source. For higher levels of service, the full cost of supply will be charged.

The White Paper notes that it is a common experience in many countries that there is consumer resistance resulting in non-payment when the consumer community has not been fully involved in development processes, choices of service levels or in setting tariffs. Resistance often occurs where the level of service does not meet the expectations of consumers. People are often prepared to pay a higher rate for a service which meets their expectations than a lower rate for a service which does not. Lower levels of service are therefore often less sustainable than higher levels. It is recognised that illegal connections, which deliver a higher and more expensive level of service than provided for by government assistance, do occur and are to the general detriment of users intended to benefit from the water supply schemes. These connections must be regularised in terms of payment policy.

It is also government policy that women play an appropriate role in the water sector. The membership of all statutory water bodies including local water committees should comprise at least 30 per cent women.

6.2 Mvula Trust Policy and Procedures

The Mvula Trust was registered as a non-profit trust in July 1993 to promote the supply of safe water and sanitation facilities for poor and disadvantaged South Africans within the policy of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry. The mandate of the Mvula Trust is to improve the health and welfare of disadvantaged rural and peri-urban South Africans through increased access to safe water and sanitation services. It sees its primary task as the provision of financial (grant and loan) and other support for basic water supply and sanitation development to poor and disadvantaged South Africans with inadequate access to such services.

There are other aspects of Mvula Trust water supply policies that have relevance for this study. All support is demand-driven. Its activities are based on 'communities' as its clients without defining what a community is. Long-term sustainability is the overriding criterion when critical choices need to be made. Sustainability includes the willingness and ability of these communities to pay for services. Other sources of funds cannot be substituted for the community contribution. Preference is given to services that have the lowest cost *per capita*. Costing will consider future demand and will be designed for individual yard connections. The Trust encourages households to install yard connections at their own cost. Effective operation, maintenance and repair are the responsibility of the beneficiaries.

The Trust supports moderate expenses for water committee members on condition that this is agreed by the community and budgeted as part of the overall costs.

A community is required to report to the Trust's regional agent if it has a problem with a service agency contracted to work on its project. A service agency must likewise report problems it encounters.

In practice this means that communities first establish water committees which approach the Mvula Trust with a proposal, usually compiled with the assistance of another agent such as an NGO or a consultant. The proposal is reviewed by staff and financial support approved by the Trustees. Until recently communities were required to contribute a part of the capital cost of a scheme (a minimum of 8 per cent) and to cover all operations and maintenance costs from their own resources. After approval of a project, funds are provided to water committees in tranches which they use to pay agents working for them to purchase materials and equipment, train water committee members and labourers and pay local labour costs. Mvula Trust field staff act as facilitators and monitors during the preparation and implementation phases. The Mvula Trust has no further contact with a community after completion of a project, beyond the payment of an incentive bonus (5 per cent of the capital cost of the project) after it has operated successfully for six months (2 per cent) and two years (3 per cent). This policy has since changed and communities are no longer required to pay for capital costs. They must, however, develop a water tariff collection system very early in the project cycle. The equivalent of a monthly water tariff is paid into a fund controlled by the water committee. By the time the project has been completed, the fund should be sufficient to cover the potentially high cost of an unexpected breakdown which may occur later.

Disbursements of funds by Mvula Trust to the project is dependent on the collection of tariffs according to the schedule agreed to by the water committee and the community before the project starts. The schedule will be project specific, but must satisfy the following conditions:

- * The funds collected must be deposited into an emergency maintenance fund account separate from the project account.
- * The emergency maintenance fund must be managed in such a way that the amount deposited each month can be verified.
- * Each household that will use the water supplied by the project must make some contribution, no matter how small.
- * The amount to be contributed by each household each month during the implementation of the project should be at least as great as that which each will be expected to contribute once the scheme is functioning.
- * The difference in level of contribution of each household should be as little as possible - in particular, those employed on the project should not have to pay more than others.

This approach ensures that there is a real demand for the project; that the water committee commands the respect of the community; that it gains experience during the project in running a tariff collection system, which includes dealing with defaulters; that community members fully understand the cost implication of the level of service they have chosen and become used to setting aside money every month; and, after the project is complete, that the monthly tariff only has to cover the operating costs of the scheme.

6.3 Mvula Trust Evaluation

During 1996 the Mvula Trust undertook an evaluation to determine its impact and effectiveness in terms of cost-efficiency, sustainability and community empowerment.

One report dealt with projects in **Northern Province and Mpumalanga** (ACER, 1996). The social and institutional findings of relevance to this research are the following:

- * Community expectations are underestimated as communities generally aspire to a higher minimum level of service, i.e. a tap in their own yard.
- * There is a need for a more intense level of involvement by Mvula Trust staff during the project process.
- * Training was carried out effectively. Training of water committees should, however, start as soon as possible, possibly even before project approval. This would prevent external agents, working at risk, forcing the pace of development without adequate community consultation.
- * The functioning of water schemes are complicated by being connected to government schemes or having government schemes nearby as operations and maintenance are then more complex and government schemes generally provide water free.
- * Rules and guidelines made by water committees are difficult to enforce.
- * Unwillingness to pay the 8 per cent contribution was related to previous negative experiences with community projects, desire to see tangible results first, water available from another sources, affordability, water supply seen as a government responsibility.
- * Unwillingness to pay operations and maintenance contributions seems related to expectations of a higher level of service, perceptions that not everyone contributed or benefits equally, reluctance to give money to fellow community members, reluctance to pay fellow residents for community service, misunderstanding of maintenance principles, expectations of central government and 'free' water.
- * Water committees are not necessarily formally constituted and rely on the drive of one or two members.

Success criteria appeared to be: well-defined projects developed from scratch in a single small community, traditional authority support, absence of power play between community structures, an honest and transparent water committee, community consultation through the project process.

The evaluation of seven projects in the **Eastern Cape** produced the following points (Land and Agriculture Policy Centre, 1996):

- * Committee members, even whole committees, leaving water committees after their training caused problems as their replacements were not trained.

- * While dynamic leaders were crucial in the establishment of projects, they sometimes dominated the committees and stifled the development of other committee members. Their departure from the committee would also be disastrous.
- * There is not necessarily a correlation between a sense of ownership of a water scheme and willingness to pay.
- * Problems with the implementation of water schemes can be a source of community conflict while in others the schemes facilitated harmony and built bridges between different groupings.
- * All the water committees were democratically elected. Water committees and communities did not participate in drawing up the budget.
- * On the whole, neither the community nor the water committee took ultimate responsibility for the implementation of water projects.

The evaluation of projects in **Kwazulu-Natal** produced the following points (Land and Agriculture Policy Centre, 1996):

- * There was a more successful project when the community ran the finances rather than the implementing agent or one committee member.
- * The water committee members are often unsure of their individual role in the project, the role of the committee and the role of the engineer.
- * Strong committee members inhibited others and decision making became centralised.
- * Water committees had a poor grasp of the financial aspects of the project.

7. INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

International experience with regard to the community dynamics of rural water supply points to the following (Whittington et al, 1990; Joyce, 1995; Altaf et al, 1992):

- * It is usual that people are not keen to pay for any kind of communal service.
- * Willingness to pay depends on the quality of the service.
- * Poor people are willing to pay significant amounts of money for an individually metered household water supply.
- * Individual service provision does not imply that community consultation is less important. It is equally if not more important than for a communal service.

- * Villages are not keen to assume responsibility or the provision of water. They feel that water schemes are best managed by a government agency and not by local political bodies, village water committees or private entrepreneurs. This is attributed to the complexity of community dynamics. Governments are seen to be neutral in service provision.

8. NORTHERN PROVINCE

8.1 Provincial Overview

Water resources

Northern Province is a dry province and is not able to meet its need for water from its own resources. The province is part of the Northern Water Region which comprises all the rivers which drain into the Limpopo River. The Limpopo drains the whole of the Northern Province as well as parts of Gauteng, North-West and Mpumalanga. This area is mainly covered by typical bushveld vegetation and has a number of mountain ranges - the Waterberg, Soutpansberg, Transvaal Drakenberg, Lebombo Mountains and the Magaliesberg (Basson, 1997).

Many villages in the old homelands received water from boreholes maintained by the old administrations. There was just enough water to meet basic needs. The boreholes were driven by diesel pumps. The government has continued to provide diesel free to these communities. This causes problems for new village water schemes that require payment.

Demography

According to the preliminary results of the 1996 census, the Northern Province has 10,9 per cent (4 128 000) of the population of South Africa. It comprises the old homelands of Lebowa, Gazankulu and Venda.

In 1995 approximately 18 per cent of South Africa's poor people lived in the Northern Province. When compared to the population figure for the province, this means that 77 per cent of the population of the province is poor when the poor are defined as those having an expenditure level of less than R301 per adult per month (World Bank, 1995).

Economic activities

Services followed by mining and quarrying, trade and catering, transport and communication and agriculture in that order are the main economic activities in the Northern Province (DBSA, 1995).

Local authority structures

The general trend in the province is that rural villages are run by traditional headmen (Kgosi in Sotho and Khosi in Venda). There are 194 chieftainships and 18 community authorities. They are recognised constitutionally. At the same time the new constitution gives authority to transitional local councils without taking away the powers to provide services given to traditional leaders by Act 38 of 1927. This has led to confusion as to who does what.

There used to be a tribal levy which was paid by each household head. Each community decided on the amount of the levy. During 1994 SANCO raised objections to the levy and advised people not to pay if they did not have services. (SANCO is not formally represented in government structures but has taken on the role of a public watchdog monitoring government activity). SANCO wanted to see the records of levy collection and expenditure on behalf of the community, which many tribal authorities could not produce. In some cases levies were misused. This led to a complaint from traditional leaders to the government. As a result some were recognised as such and paid a salary by the government. There are hundreds of 'unrecognised' traditional leaders. Many of the traditional leaders have no training but are expected to fulfil a function on behalf of government. It is these 'unqualified' leaders who cannot produce records, for example, that have been targeted by SANCO. Community authorities receive a small grant from government for running costs, excluding salaries. It is the duty of the Department of Local Government to foster good relations in communities but is unable to do so as there are as yet no clear guidelines from central government on the role of traditional leaders. There is currently a provincial commission of enquiry into traditional leaders (the Ralushai Commission of Enquiry).

Land claims

Many communities in Northern Province have registered land claims with the provincial land claims commissioner. In terms of the government's land reform policy which seeks to redress the injustices of apartheid, people are compensated for land lost due to racial laws if they were not justly and equitably compensated at the time. The policy hopes to promote greater equity in the distribution of land ownership and to provide secure tenure. The policy is executed in terms of a number of laws (e.g. The Restitution of Land Rights Act, No. 22 of 1994) and institutions such as the Commission on the Restitution of Land Rights and the Land Claims Court.

8.2 Community Water Supply Dynamics

Six projects were selected for study (see Appendix for village reports). Makotopong, Tisane, Mankosana and Kurante were selected as villages not making the negotiated contributions for water. Hwelereng was studied as it was unhappy about its level of service. Vhuthalu was included as a model project. With the exception of Mankosana they are all relatively isolated villages.

The primary reason for villages refusing to pay for water was a loss of trust in the water committee. This was probably due to weak leadership and a lack of communication with the community. Where there was a high level of trust, community pressure compelled the defaulters to comply, as in Vhuthalu.

Water committees had more power when there was a shortage of water. They were also able to secure community agreement on sanctions for non-payment. The case of Hwelereng was very interesting. Villagers that already had a high level of service free such as a tap in their own yards, were willing to contribute the same amount monthly as those that participated in the water project. This can be attributed to the leadership skills of the water committee chairman who is a professional agricultural extension officer. In Tisane where the water committee either did not understand or could not adequately explain the Eskom accounting system in order to convince the residents of the necessity to contribute regularly, the community stopped paying. What is also

interesting about Tisane is that the older generation in the village accepted the committees' incorrect assessment of the Eskom payment system and they placed the blame on Eskom. It was the younger generation that directed attention to the water committee itself.

The impact of the need for water on the lack of trust enjoyed by the water committee and other aggravating factors such as the lack of legitimate authority, was seen in Makotopong. The community strategised to collect money only for the immediate cost, namely the Eskom account. It did not trust the new water committee enough to give it money to be invested for emergencies. There was clearly no community solidarity in Makotopong able to call any authority figure or structure to account, which was aggravated by the lack of residential settlement legitimacy.

It did not seem to be important that there were other villages nearby that did not pay for water as long as the water committee could be trusted. There was prior community agreement, for example in Tisane, to pay for water but once things went wrong, villagers, including water committee members, questioned whether it had ever been necessary to pay.

In Mankosana the village was too large and spread out to be affected by community dynamics. The residents wanted water, were willing to pay for it and when the supply stopped for technical reasons, they stopped paying.

The case of Kurante which was seen by Mvula Trust staff as a problem because of non-payment, was also interesting. The community had contributed what was required to secure a water scheme. When water started flowing, there was still a reserve of money in the bank account. The community did not consider it necessary to contribute further as there was money to pay Eskom, the immediate direct expense. The community had already agreed that users would be responsible for a broken pipe or tap in their ward and consequently also for the cost of repair.

It was sometimes said that SANCO or the ANC Youth League were the reason people were not willing to pay for water. However, as SANCO has publicly taken on the role as public watchdog and the Youth League is known to be critical of traditional authority structures, their stance is not unreasonable. Their intervention can be seen as an effort to prevent the community from wasting precious resources. In a democracy this would be seen as healthy participation in civic matters and similar to an economist advising the public not to invest in a company with management problems as investors would run the risk of losing their money.

None of the villages appeared collectively unable to afford the water schemes. They were also all willing to make provision for the few indigent residents that were literally too poor to pay.

The fact that villages were still owing on the initial capital contribution required for the installation of their water schemes is probably due to water starting to flow without contributions having been paid. There was simply no perceived further necessity to pay.

9. EASTERN CAPE

9.1 Provincial Overview

Water resources

The project area forms part of the Eastern Coast Water Region which covers the area to the east and south-east of the Drakensberg. It comprises a number of relatively steep and fast flowing rivers which discharge directly into the sea. It includes part of the Eastern Cape as well as most of Kwazulu-Natal and represents the wettest part of South Africa where the highest unit runoffs occur. Ample groundwater occurs in the region for the support of rural and village supplies. Vegetation varies from grassveld to tree-covered landscape (Basson, 1997).

Officials at the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry say there have always been tariffs for the payment for water. The problem is the application of tariffs. Consumers in villages are not charged for capital costs. Meters were installed for private connections at houses, but few people paid. Previously this was administered by the Department of Public Works. In 1994 the function was transferred to the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry and officials are still busy computerising accounts. An audit during 1997 found most meters out of order. Officials have a dilemma in deciding whether the meters should be fixed at a high cost as water supply cannot be cut off. It is very difficult to cut off the supply in regional water schemes as then the water supply to everyone is cut off. There are differentiated tariffs and accounts amount to an average of R3 per month per household.

According to a consultant seconded to the Department, in the old Ciskei and Transkei the government took responsibility for social services where there was a tradition of free services. Over time operations and maintenance became expensive. The system was very paternalistic and there was no community involvement. Communities are very sceptical: In their experience government provided services don't work. One would have to improve services first and then try to persuade people to pay. In dry areas there is no alternative to large water schemes. In the Transkei there are large water supplies. Poor people have no money and there is a health risk. In the mountainous areas where the water quality is good, there are no health risks. A service provider must demonstrate in practice that it is to people's benefit to buy good water. If there are health problems, it is the children who are affected, not the adults who take the decisions.

Demography

Approximately 15,5 per cent or 5,9 million people live in the Eastern Cape according to the preliminary results of the 1996 census. The province includes the old homelands of Transkei and Ciskei.

In 1995 approximately 24 per cent of South Africa's poor people lived in the Eastern Cape. When compared to the population figure for the province, this means that 78 per cent of the population of the province is poor. In this case the poor are defined as those having an expenditure level of less than R301 per adult per month (World Bank, 1995).

Economic activities

Services, followed by manufacturing, trade and catering, finance and real estate, transport and communication and agriculture are the main economic activities in the Eastern Cape (DBSA, 1995).

Local authority structures

The Eastern Cape is beset by problems in respect of rural local government. ANC-PAC power dynamics complicate political decision-making. Local rural councils have a lack of capacity. There is an overall lack of high level skills.

9.2 Community Water Supply Dynamics

Eight projects were studied in the Eastern Cape. Six projects were Mvula Trust projects. They are the projects in Kuni, Amahleke, Ngcele 1 (which can be considered a model project), Shapile, Lower Gwadu and Qoqodala. Two projects were initiated by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, namely Gubevu and Sabelele.

Lack of community cohesiveness in Kuni caused problems from the outset. It is an emergency settlement area where leadership, land rights and settlement rights have yet not been sorted out. This was complicated by (or may even have created opportunities for) water committee mismanagement of community water contributions. However, the experience of other villages shows that strong community cohesiveness itself is not a sufficient condition for project success, and may even be a contributing factor towards project failure. Gubevu and Sabelele showed that community cohesiveness led to failure of the water project as a preference to community conflict which was beginning to manifest as a result of water project problems. Villagers preferred to return to their old water sources rather than risk community conflict over water.

The primary reason for the breakdown of the projects in Gubevu and Sabelele was the lack of prior agreement between the implementing agent and the community over water scheme structure and conditions of operation. In the case of Sabelele, each village (i.e. Upper Sabelele and Lower Sabelele) should also have had its own project.

Amahleke and Qoqodala provide an interesting comparison. Both are multi-village water schemes run by village committees and a large co-ordinating committee. Amahleke is a peri-urban area surrounded by other villages and towns connected to a bulk water supply where residents do not pay for their water. Qoqodala is in a relatively isolated and dry valley. The project does not work in Amahleke while it works very well in Qoqodala. An important factor in Qoqodala's favour is the energy provided by a young man who has made the development of his valley a personal mission. This has led to his election to higher office although he is not adequately remunerated for his efforts. He is also astute enough to stay in the background and guide others to take the lead. In Amahleke the elected water committee members are paid for their work and spend most of their time in each others company in the project office complaining about the lack of community interest. None of them appeared assertive enough to run a project of that size.

The model project at Ngcele 1 was led by an experienced leader as water committee chairman. He is a pensioner and is not remunerated for his work. He and the other water committee members personally collect water contributions from residents. The committee persuaded the community to accept sanctions for non-payment. The project was a success in spite of being closely surrounded by villages that received water free from government schemes.

Shapile as well as Lower Gwadu had been let down by engineering consultants. The water committees could not deal with the technical problems that arose in the water schemes and soon lost the trust of their communities when water did not flow as expected. This illustrates that even though water committee members might enjoy high personal esteem in their villages, residents do not trust them with their scarce resources when they do not meet expectations about delivery, irrespective of the cause of the delay. In other words, communities are not willing to share the burden they placed on their water committees.

Mvula Trust staff say half of their projects are problematic. Consultants complain about all the paperwork that is required and lose interest when larger, more lucrative projects come their way. There are also not enough consulting engineers in the Eastern Cape.

10. KWAZULU-NATAL

10.1 Provincial Overview

Water resources

The project area forms part of the Eastern Coast Water Region which comprises parts of Kwazulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape to the east and south-east of the Drakensberg. It comprises a number of relatively steep and fast flowing rivers which discharge directly into the sea. As such it is the wettest part of South Africa where the highest unit runoffs occur. Ample groundwater occurs for the support of rural and village supplies. Vegetation varies from grassveld to tree-covered landscape (Basson, 1997).

Many villages get water from boreholes driven by windmills. Local authorities are the primary providers. Local officials of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry accept that some kind of prepaying system such as that in respect of electricity, is inevitable.

Demography

Kwazulu-Natal accommodates 7,7 million people or 20,3 per cent of the national population according to the preliminary results of the 1996 census.

In 1995 approximately 21 per cent of South Africa's poor people lived in Kwazulu-Natal. When compared to the population figure for the province, this means that 53 per cent of the population of the province is poor when the poor are defined as those having an expenditure level of less than R301 per adult per month (World Bank, 1995).

Manufacturing followed by services, trade and catering, transport and communication, finance and real estate and agriculture in that order are the main economic activities in the province (DBSA, 1995).

Local government structures

Formal local government in Kwazulu-Natal is problematic. The amakosi (traditional leaders) are very influential and do not like the new democratic structures as they are seen to threaten their power.

10.2 Community Water Supply Dynamics

Ten projects were visited in Kwazulu-Natal. They are Mpelenyane, Imoyawethu, Phumzile, Hlanganisa, Umvunyane (a model project), Newstand, Dukuza, Kwadlamini, Draycott and Emmaus. (See project summaries in the Appendix). Some of the projects had a different name to that of the village or villages in which they were situated.

The overriding impression is the abundance of natural water and the contribution of impatient engineering consultants to the problems experienced by projects. This placed high demands on water committees who had to contend with communities that wanted their monetary contributions to add real value to their lives, rather than just provide some clean water. There was also a reluctance by water committees to stop the supply of water due to the fear of retaliation, although this worked well in Umvunyane. This was complicated by communities enjoying clean water before they had met their obligations to the project. This seemed a disincentive to continue paying as there was no unambiguous connection between payment and the supply of water.

Hurried and incorrect mapping caused problems in Phumzile, Newstand and Dukuza. When projects are negotiated with a community as a whole and significant sections of the community are left out, everyone is affronted. Vandalism occurred in Dukuza. In most cases the sections that were left out were those furthest from the main water source and most desirous of water. The people living in these sections were also those that had made their contributions promptly. It did not add to their faith in the water committee that the freeloaders with easier access to natural water could not be forced to pay for or be prevented from using project water. Although blame for these errors can be laid at the door of the consultants, the communities held their water committee accountable.

Similar community problems were encountered in Emmaus where a consultant advised the water committee to place the pump and filter in a river bed which was later washed away and then silted over by floods.

Weak or inappropriate leadership seemed to cause the problems in Mpelenyane and Imoyawethu. In Mpelenyane the prominent water committee members were drawn from the village elite with whom poor villagers could not form a rapport about money matters. Villagers wanted the committee to find a sponsor that did not require community contributions. In Imoyawethu the chairman was clearly not in control of matters. In both villages, natural water was close by.

The projects at Hlanganisa, Draycott and Kwadlamini highlighted another matter, that of the project going ahead without the required contributions being made. It may well be that if such a project goes ahead, the community does not see a clear relationship between payment for and the flow of water.

It is also interesting to speculate about the role of the inkosi (and his wife) and willingness to pay. In Draycott the inkosi encouraged villagers to pay for water while his wife was the treasurer of the water committee. Although she was independently elected to the water committee and everyone who was approached said there was complete acceptance of the inkosi in the village, Draycott was the only village where it was pertinently said that the RDP promised free water. It may be that the role of the inkosi and his wife provided freeloaders with a justification for not paying. Natural water is not as conveniently available in Draycott as in other villages.

The Umvunyane project which works very well, clearly helped a community with a serious water problem. The consultant performed his function well and the water committee obtained community approval to cut off the water supply when residents become tardy in paying. The committee is entirely transparent in their water transactions. It is interesting that even under these circumstances villagers did not trust individual water committee members sufficiently to give them contributions directly and preferred to take their payments to an office.

11. RESULTS

When studied from the reality of ordinary community members, the results of the research point to two categories of reasons for non-compliance with basic water supply projects. These are latent reasons on the societal level and manifest reasons on the community level.

11.1 Societal Level

Is water a popular priority? The key impression from the study of projects with payment problems is that the basic supply of water as envisaged by the White Paper on Water Supply and Sanitation is not considered to be a high priority by beneficiary communities. Their basic need for water has probably already been met. Many communities feel the national initiative does not provide a sufficient enough improvement on their traditional sources of supply to warrant a sustained commitment of scarce financial resources. If basic water supply enjoyed as high a priority as the government assumes, beneficiary communities could be expected to have overcome the hurdles presented by the projects. During their training, water committees receive guidance (also in manual form) on how to effectively respond to problems. These guidelines are easily ignored. In the model projects included in the study, there were serious problems of access to any supply of water, which provided communities with the impetus to overcome the hurdles. While there was a significant number of people in each village who were willing to pay the full cost of a basic supply of clean water to their village, there were as many others who felt that their traditional water sources were adequate enough. In most of the villages where people said they were too poor or unemployment was too high for them to be able to afford a community water scheme, there was a basic electricity supply paid for on the card system, indicating that affordability was not the reason. After projects collapsed, people with the financial ability followed the example of the project and had their own boreholes drilled to supply water directly into their houses.

Community solidarity/cohesion. Allied to the above, the second important impression is that the assumed community solidarity and cohesion inherent in the basic water supply initiative, is not a legitimate basis on which to negotiate and install water schemes. In some instances, community solidarity was the reason that water projects failed. These communities preferred to abandon water projects that had become a source of conflict in their village even if it meant carrying water long distances in searing summer heat. This indicates that clean water that is considered by many observers to be a basic need, has a lower priority than the higher social need of community harmony. The idea of community cohesion also presents contradictions in a democratising society where rural communities participate in the mainstream of political and national life and organisations emerge within them to play a watchdog role at the local level.

11.2 Community Level

A water project is a process comprising a number of linked stages over a long period of time which eventually culminates in a water scheme. Too little time has passed to realistically assess village water scheme failure. The projects that were studied collapsed during implementation or just after implementation. A number of weak links that resulted in project failure can be identified. Some of the links impacted on others and placed the project problems beyond the capacity of water committees.

Weak community leadership. Even though water committees were democratically elected to perform a community function, they only enjoyed community support while the project showed visible progress. As soon as problems arose and water committee members could not respond to community criticism, they lost the trust of the community irrespective of their previous standing in the community. The loss of trust resulted in payments being withheld. Although basic water supply projects may be simple in modern terms, they are at the threshold of community manageability. In some villages the water committee even tried to enlist the aid of the research team to boost their credibility.

Lack of communication. In many communities there was clearly a lack of full and open communication about project matters. Water committees did not always think it necessary to share project experiences with their community or were not assertive enough to deal with community discussion. On the other hand, communities were not always interested in hearing about the problems. When the committee could not deliver, the community withdrew its trust and payments.

Expertise. The projects that worked well were lead by professional people with a wide frame of reference who were not themselves challenged by project matters. Their expertise in dealing with community affairs came from their occupations as teachers or extension officers, or experience as supervisors in previous jobs. In many villages the projects were beyond the capacity of local people.

Engineering consultants. Many projects were let down by consultants who did not spend enough time building a relationship with a community to assess their needs properly. Many did not visit projects often enough to provide effective guidance while others gave water committees wrong professional advice. Water committee members could not match the assertiveness of consultants and were intimidated into making payments that the consultants did not necessarily deserve.

Equity. When projects rely on community solidarity and are negotiated with community representatives, it is critical that the whole community benefits equally. By not ensuring that all villagers have equal access to benefits by, for example, not including all households on the project map, the whole village is affronted, not only the households that are omitted.

Lack of community contribution. Some villages were able to enjoy a clean water supply without having met their prior negotiated contribution commitment. This creates an environment for non-payment as there is no unambiguous relationship between payment and service similar to the experience of buying an item from a shop.

Voluntary payment. There was a lack of technical or social means to force people to pay for the water they use. This creates an environment for freeloading. Some water committees were unwilling to attempt any means of enforcing payment from fear of conflict and retaliation. However, all communities were willing to allow known indigent families access to free water.

Multi-village schemes. The larger the project, the greater the demands placed on leadership skills and expertise. This was especially true when projects were to provide water to more than one village each with its own unique community dynamics. The multi-village schemes that worked well, had projects which were run independently in constituent villages with a loose co-ordinating structure. This indicates that smaller projects serving a single community might be more successful.

Low level of service. In many instances the level of service provided by the water scheme did not meet the expectations of villagers. Many may have been taken in by promises and the prospects of employment on the project. When they later compared the clean water and carrying distance to their previous source of supply, they did not consider the improvement sufficient to warrant payment. They all wanted taps in their own yards.

Payment to fellow villagers. Although there were villages where water committee members successfully visited households to collect water contributions, there were many other villages where people resented giving money to individuals. They preferred to take their contributions to an office where payment was not made to a particular individual who could be accused of taking the money for himself. This may indicate that money is perceived as one matter that is still personal and private in a small village where little else is private, and that people cherish the control they have over it.

Role of community watchdog organisations. SANCO and the ANC Youth League were blamed for the failure of projects. Although their intervention might have been the last straw and seen to be destructive from a community solidarity point of view, these organisations have assumed a national watchdog role which is normal and valid in a modern democracy.

12. CONCLUSIONS

Based on an analysis of problem projects, the study showed a number of direct and indirect reasons for community non-compliance with basic water supply projects. The direct reasons on the community level and listed in Point 11.2 above, are probably less important than the indirect reasons located on the societal level (Point 11.1). The reasons for failure on a community level represent problems that water committees could readily have overcome if they needed to.

The indirect reasons for community non-compliance are found on the societal level and relate to the government's basic water supply policy, and consequently Mvula Trust's implementing policies. These policies seek to provide in communities' basic need for water. The research suggests that communities' basic water needs have already been met from traditional sources and that there is consequently no impetus to overcome project hurdles.

Furthermore, water policies appear to have been based on the assumption that there are fundamental differences between rural and urban communities. The most relevant difference for this research would be the notion that rural communities have cohesive social structures which enable implementing agencies to negotiate projects with community representatives in the expectation that the community will support them. The research bears out the recent literature on rural communities and international water project experience that this perceived cohesiveness and concomitant high levels of social capital cannot be relied upon. In fact, where it does exist, community cohesion may even be the cause of project failure as communities prefer to abandon projects that may cause community conflict. People on the periphery of the economy rationally consider costs and benefits just as other people do, perhaps more cautiously because they are poor and the cost of risk is higher. The story of how the man in Phumzile in Kwazulu-Natal introduced electricity to his village illustrates this. Many of the villagers that stopped paying for a water scheme, buy electricity to operate television sets and other modern appliances. There were also other indications of the changes in the core society playing out in the rural villages, for example many women chaired water committees ('because the government says women are equal') while creches and clinics were being built under the auspices of local development and health committees.

The research indicates that affordability is not an important factor in community non-compliance with basic water supply projects. Most villages have an adequate enough supply of water from traditional sources to meet their basic needs. They are willing to pay for a water scheme that offers a marked improvement in level of service. This is borne out by the high capital contributions many villagers made when their expectations of the project were high. When the perceived benefits did not meet their expectations, they wrote off their capital contribution and went back to traditional water sources.

This leads to the final conclusion that the national water initiative should be directed at a higher level of service, i.e. individual household connections for which households should pay on a cost recovery basis. The experience of electricity shows that a system of prepayment would work well. This should be properly negotiated with communities and would include ways of dealing with indigent families.

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INTERVIEWS

Mr Christoff Eloff, Department of Water Affairs, King William's Town.

Mr Greg Forsyth, CSIR official seconded to Department of Water Affairs, King William's Town.

Mr Ullie Glantz, European Union, King William's Town.

Ms Tertia Mavimbele, Northern Province of Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs, Pieterburg.

Mrs L.G. Mthethwa, assistant director of social empowerment, Kwazulu Natal Department of Local Government and Housing, Empangeni.

Mvula Trust staff in Johannesburg, Pietersburg, Bisho and Durban.

Mr Craig Perrit, Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, Durban.

Ms Bev Pretorius, Department of Water Affairs, King William's Town.

APPENDIX: VILLAGE REPORTS

1. NORTHERN PROVINCE

NP: Makotopong

Makotopong is a village of approximately 19 000 people near the tarred road some 30 km from Pieterburg on the way to Duiwelskloof. It is, as its name suggests, a stony place. The Makotopong Community Authority officially comprises two adjacent portions (A and B), which are occupied by residents and farmers resettled from the farm Roodewal in 1967. Portion A was a resettlement area of people who had acquired land at Roodewal from the Berliner Missionsgesellschaft and who were known as the Trustees of the Lutheran Native Association. Portion B was the resettlement area of a number of private black farmers who had also bought land from, inter alia, the Berliner Missionsgesellschaft at Roodewal (RSA Department of Land Affairs, April 1997).

Portion A is 'led' by Mr D.E. Phambane who presents himself as the head of the Makotopong Community Authority as elected in 1995. He occupies the office with two clerks. He has ten councillors who meet every fortnight. Residents of Portion A under the leadership of Mr Phambane (claiming to represent the Makotopong Lutheran Association) are now reclaiming the land they owned at Roodewal. The water supply to Makotopong A comes from boreholes which are maintained by the government. The water is free and the supply has never been interrupted. Many residents have taps in their own yards which is also available to people without taps. Water committee members report broken taps to the office which then relays the information to the agricultural office in Mankweng who sends someone to do repairs. Residents who want electricity pay for it by the pre-paid meter system. Until 1994 residents paid rental of R20 per house but, with the exception of a minority of old people, stopped paying after the election. The salaries of the chairman and two female clerks in the community authority office were paid by the government until 1994. From 1994 until 1996 the government paid half, intending the community to pay the other half, and since 1997 the government has not paid anything at all. (This is in line with government policy to subsidise salaries only if the community is willing to pay half). The three staff members are nevertheless at the office every day listening to and, as far as possible, resolving problems. Two of them say they live from pensions while the third has a husband who is employed. The community authority receives R2 000 from the government for running costs. Mr Phambane has lobbied the provincial government to recognise him as a fully fledged traditional leader in the place of his deceased brother. There is currently a provincial commission of enquiry on traditional leadership and his application will depend on the outcome of that enquiry.

Portion B comprises farm land which, in some cases, the farmers let to residential tenants seeking accommodation. Residents have never accepted the leadership of the tribal authority in Portion A although they use its services when it suits them. Residents likewise fetch water in Portion A when they need to. The water project in Portion B is located on the farm of a Mr Bopape who inherited the land from forebears who acquired title deeds as compensation for the land they lost at Roodewal. Mr Bopape says he has a register of 250 sites on his farm. There is no communication at all between him and the water committee. The water project was intended to provide water from Mr Bopape's borehole to his 'tenants', who, since 1994, under the direction of SANCO, have refused to pay him rent. Each household was originally required to contribute

R35 towards the capital cost of the project. The project went ahead even though many households had not paid up, and the 8 per cent capital contribution was not met. After money had disappeared from the bank account and fingers, from the local community police forum and SANCO (and later substantiated by a Mvula Trust official), were pointed at the original water committee, the community refused to pay at all and the project collapsed. Mvula Trust took the cheque book to pay creditors. There was not enough money left to pay all the labourers. The water committee resigned and a new one was elected. The people who had originally not made a contribution to the capital costs refused to do so after the project was installed as they said it was not necessary and the water committee would misuse the money. At the time of the research the project had just recovered after a delay of two years. The community decided among themselves to pay R2 per month per household which water committee members collect from each household. They were not willing to pay any more than the estimated direct running costs. (There are approximately 700 households). A new committee was elected and the research team found the operator, who works on a voluntary basis, on his rounds visiting households to collect contributions. He and the other water committee members want to be paid for their work. The operator had gained experience of a sprinkler irrigation system during previous employment. He complains about the engineering contractor not doing a proper job when installing the system: there was no supervision of the project and he (the operator) laid the pipes according to the technical drawing while no protector on the pump led to a burn-out during an electricity surge. The engineer also allegedly submitted accounts for work in respect of training that had not been done.

The water system is run by electric pump which is paid for by prepaid meter and costs approximately R600 per month. There are communal standpipes although some residents have made connections to their own houses at their own cost. Others have purchased a role of hose pipe and lead water from the communal taps to their houses to avoid carrying water.

The operator acknowledges that the R2 contributions are not sufficient, although it is a start. He feels that the amount can only be increased when the water committee wins the trust of the community. The community has asked SANCO, who is said to run the village, to give the new water committee a chance to sort things out. Mr Bopape is unhappy as the residents still don't pay him rent and he now also has to pay for water from his own borehole. He felt that only the 'tenants' on his farm should have benefited from the water project while others benefit as well. He is hoping the Department of Land Affairs will come to his assistance.

Mr Bopape says he and Mr Phambane agree on a number of matters such as schools, preschools and clinics. They do not agree on development matters as Portion B is situated on a private farm.

Synopsis: The water scheme experienced problems because of the complex local government and land ownership/restitution issues which has led to a lack of clear community leadership. The owner of the land on which the scheme is located claims not to have been consulted about the project and this seems to have complicated his legal right to rental income from his tenants. The project itself collapsed because of water committee mismanagement of funds. The community has now strategised to revive the scheme in the short term, because they need water.

NP: Hwelereng

Hwelereng is a village some 50 km from Pietersburg near Lebowagomo, reached by a few kilometres of very dusty gravel road from a small business centre. Most houses are built in the modern style and many people have electricity provided by prepaid meters. Most villagers also keep cattle which are herded by residents employed for the purpose and which suddenly crowd the village at dusk as they were returned to their respective owners for the night.

The village was selected for research as the villagers are unhappy with the level of service they receive. The Mvula Trust project became operational in November 1996.

For the purpose of this report, the village can crudely be divided into three sections. The households in the first section have long had standpipes in each yard. They were served by a Lebowa Government scheme which pumped water to a reservoir in the village and residents still use it free of charge. The second section gets water from standpipes in the street provided by the Mvula Trust project for which they pay R6 monthly. The water is gravity fed from a reservoir on the mountainside and is metered at a junction as it enters the village. There are approximately three standpipes per street block. The taps are locked and three keys per tap are kept by villagers evenly distributed in the area served by a tap. Other villagers in the block can fetch and return the key between 7 am and 10 am in the morning and late in the afternoon. This is done to prevent children playing in the water and wasting it. A young boy said it was his task to fetch water before and after school. Villagers previously fetched water from the reservoir and the project has brought water closer to their homes, although, they argue, not close enough. The third section mainly comprises new houses on the periphery of the village. These houses were not taken into account when the project was conceptualised and a plan drawn of the village. At that time there were only a few houses a short distance from the village, but many more have since been built which now extend right up to the main village.

The chairman of the water committee is an agricultural extension officer in government service. He says most people pay monthly. The people that cannot pay are excused by community consent. Monthly contributions, which include a payment for maintenance, are R6 per household. Some time before 1994 villagers contributed R25 which was paid into an account at the magistrate's office. When the water committee met Mvula Trust and they were advised to pay 8 per cent, another R60 was collected from each household. The houses in the first section still get water from the reservoir in the village which is not a stable supply. These houses will be linked into the Mvula project later. The villagers accept what the water committee tell them and are patient while the remaining problems are sorted out.

At the instigation of the Mvula Trust project all the households in the first and second sections paid R60. The households in section one who already had water in their own yards agreed because of the solidarity of the community. They were also told that their pipes would need to be replaced over time from project funds although this has not happened yet. They don't pay for the water and sometimes other residents in the village come and fetch water from them. A group of women who were asked how they could pay R60 seemingly for nothing, they replied that 'the R60 is not such a problem. We can't just decide for ourselves - we must agree with the community. We have forgotten about the money'. At first some of them did not want to pay the R60 but eventually everyone did. They are entirely happy with the state of affairs and trust their

community leaders. Another woman in the old section said their water pressure was less than in the project area while they see water being wasted in the new section due to leaking valves.

The water in the yards of the older houses is probably the reason that the householders in the project section also want water in their yards. Many people who were randomly asked, said they want water in their yards and are willing to pay for it. An old man added that he wanted a meter in his yard so that he only pays for the water he uses himself. A woman said she was concerned about the cleanliness of the water fetched by her children; if she had her own tap she could control it herself. At the time of the research, the water committee was preparing for the official opening of the project. Villagers were told that negotiations for a higher level of service could start thereafter. Everyone was willing to pay the cost of a pipe and tap to their yard themselves and many added that they will abide with what the community decides. The users of the project pay R6 per month for the water. They take the money to a water committee member who notes their payment. An old lady said the moment she gets her pension, she goes to pay her water contribution.

The acting headman of the village said they were very happy with the water committee. There was no one who did not pay. If a household was late in paying, it was visited by the water committee.

A member of the SANCO committee was critical of the project. He said the water committee did half a job by not providing for the households in the third section of the village. They are all served by one tap only. He was not happy with the way in which the water fund is handled and wants an auditor to check it. He referred to fraud in a housing project at Lebogwagomo and would be vigilant that nothing similar occurred here. He also complained of a lack of transparency in not being able to see the state of the water bank account. He believes villagers should only pay for service and not pay money to accumulate in a bank account.

Synopsis: Despite elements that might in other circumstances lead to a breakdown of the scheme such as lack of equity, a second capital contribution required later and a critical civic, good community leadership has resulted in a successful project. The community has been united for the common good and turned potential dissatisfaction into a drive for a higher level of service. There are sanctions for non-payment.

NP: Tisane

Tisane is a picturesque little village of some 450 sites 150 kilometres from Pietersburg towards Jane Furse in Nebo. It is set against a hill, which is really a pile of boulders, decorated with coral trees in full bloom. Many of the homesteads are built into the rock. The gravel road into the village passes over a river approximately a kilometre before the village where women were found washing clothes every day as the water project had collapsed. All household water is now fetched from the river and a fountain. The Mvula Trust project, which started in November 1996, relied on water pumped from two boreholes by electric pumps. The water was originally pumped to the reservoir by diesel engine which was supplied by the Lebowa Government although the water supply did not reach all the households. A second borehole and reservoir were built and the diesel pump was replaced by two electric motors. Most villagers have electricity in their houses supplied through a prepaid meter.

Each household initially paid R50 for the water project and was required to pay R14 per month for operations and maintenance. The villagers that were unable to pay the R50 were employed on the project and paid their contribution from the wage they earned. Some complained that R14 was too much. It was then reduced to R10 but later again raised to R14 as not enough money was collected.

The two women who work at the community offices said the electricity bill for water was too high. It seemed there was a problem with the Eskom meter readings which resulted in an account of R1 500 for three weeks supply. Villagers do not mind paying R10 per month for water. They said most households have electricity for which a family of four pays approximately R50 per month by card to be able to iron and cook. There were also fridges and television sets in houses visited by the researcher. Many people paid the R14 per month for water as required but had stopped paying when others refused to pay.

The treasurer of the water committee, who lives within the headman's kraal, said she was elected at a community meeting she had not attended. However, she did not mind serving. Her immediate response to discussing the water problem was that water is not bought, it comes naturally. She showed her accounting system and said householders bring her the money. Her book revealed that 120 had paid R10 in November 1996. In May 1997 42 paid R14. She said approximately another ten paid R10 in May but that she had not issued them with receipts as they still owed R4. There are no other records of payment. She said villagers do not pay monthly, only when they have the money. Some are still owing money since November. She complained about exorbitant Eskom accounts and showed the accounts for the period. The accounts, addressed to the Tisane Development Forum, reflect a monthly account of approximately R400 which accumulated due to non-payment after which the electricity supply was terminated. (The accounts reflect R786,09 for the period 22/11/96-27/1/97; R432,51 for the period 27/1/97-28/2/97 including R11,81 interest on arrears; R436,29 for the period 28/2/97-1/4/97 including R15,59 interest on arrears; and R309,89 for the period 1/4/97-24/4/97 including R23,06 interest on arrears.) The treasurer said she had not formally been trained for her task as treasurer.

Another member of the water committee said the Eskom account comes in a lump sum every three to four months and is too high. He said adjacent villages get water free so why should Tisane pay? Residents of the other villages mock Tisane for paying. Some very poor residents in Tisane have paid for water while wealthy residents refuse to pay and then influence the others.

The chairman of the development forum to which the water committee is affiliated, who is otherwise unemployed (his wife is a school teacher), said their water problem was caused by Eskom issuing incorrect accounts. When the first account came, they paid it. But before they could pay again the electricity was cut off. He felt the accounts were too high. He also blamed the Youth League for dissuading villagers from paying. He referred to a rift between the development forum and the ANC over the water project although they co-operated on all the other village projects. He said he had been threatened at gun point to resign from the forum. He was planning to step down and suggest that a new forum committee be elected. The water project is the only one that requires villagers to pay regularly. The headman and two secretaries receive salaries from the government. Their local councillor is not helpful. The chairman said the project's technical advisors had suggested they ask villagers to pay R14 per month for books, transport to the bank, collection fees of approximately R250 per month, the operator's salary of R1 500 per month as well as electricity.

A regular visitor from Pretoria told the research team that it was never explained to the villagers that there is a cost attached to water. He had been watching CNN world news on television in a house within the chief's enclosure.

Numerous villagers told the researcher that Eskom was to blame for incorrect meter reading and exorbitant accounts that were getting larger and larger. Women washing clothes in the river said everyone could afford to pay for water but that some sections of the community influenced others not to pay. Some villagers felt that the water committee members were using the money for themselves. All the women preferred to wash clothes with tap water rather than use the river but there was nothing they could do to influence events. A school teacher repairing the fence around the school while his union was on strike, said a nephew or uncle of the headman had refused to pay the initial R50 which had led others to refuse to pay. This was later disputed by the development forum chairman who said all the headman's family had paid immediately.

The development forum chairman invited the research team to a community meeting which was convened for early the next morning to discuss the water problem. It was felt necessary to get feedback after the village meeting but to avoid the meeting itself and getting involved in community matters. We arrived four hours after the start of the meeting and found it in progress under trees in a village open space - men seated on one side and the women grouped a little further away from the chief who was chairman. We waited in the car for some time and when we were noticed, were invited to the meeting to be formally informed of the community decision. While the meeting was in progress young men stood at the periphery of the group with their backs to the solemn meeting laughing among themselves. They were later called to order by the older men dressed in suits for the occasion, which they ignored. (The development forum chairman later expressed his anger that the researchers were not in time for the meeting as it 'would have helped us.') It was announced at the meeting that the Department of Water Affairs had agreed to take back the original borehole that had a diesel pump and run it with diesel until the transitional local council (TLC) could take responsibility for the village's water supply. The community also agreed to carry on paying R14 per month for the other borehole served by electric pump. Many people had not known that the R14 was required for operations and maintenance (R10 for electricity and R4 for a contingency fund).

Synopsis: The village leaders or water committee members did not properly understand the purchase of electricity from Eskom on account and how unpaid accounts accumulate. An examination of the accounts showed that the accounts were fair, calculated monthly, and the electricity supply terminated after the accumulated account had not been paid for three months. The chairman of the development forum had previously worked in town and seemed to understand the accumulation of unpaid balances on accounts when this was discussed with him but was not assertive enough to explain this to the community. He could not deal with the difficulties that arose during the project or stand up to the criticism from the Youth League. The behaviour of the young men at the community meeting seemed to indicate a scepticism about traditional authority. The consistency of the incorrect information in the perceptions of the community about the water problems (i.e. 'Eskom's error'), showed how unassertive and uninformed leadership affected community decisions. In these circumstances it seems understandable that more modern community structures such as the Youth League should be critical of the water committee and caution residents against trusting the committee with their scarce resources.

NP: Vhutalu

Vhutalu is a small village perched high in the Venda hills reached by a uncomfortable winding dusty road and is some 70 km from Thohoyandou. The village comprises approximately 80 stands. The residents are very poor - most of them are sustained by pensions or from the sale of produce grown from the fertile soil.

The project is notable for its success. It became operational in 1995. The water is pumped by diesel engine from a borehole.

The villagers of Vhutalu used to fetch water from rivers down the steep slopes surrounding them. When it rained, it was very difficult, if not impossible, to carry water up the slippery muddy slopes to the village. Life centred around carrying water and wood to their homesteads. The villagers are highly appreciative of the water supply and are willing to pay more to have water taps in their own yards. They prevent children from playing around the taps or anyone even washing their hands under a tap. Villagers can take as much water as they like in adequate containers.

The chairlady of the water committee is a teacher at the local school and was born in the village. She explained that the community struggled with water until they heard of and applied for assistance to Mvula Trust. Each household initially contributed R160. The village was told they would need R19 000 to initiate the project - they collected R26 000. Selected residents were trained in bookkeeping, laying pipes and maintenance. Everyone who wanted to work on the project could do so. Part of labourers' wages were taken as their cash contribution. The committee was careful in its calculation of the money that would be needed to complete the project and made a point of being certain that they would not be short. It was initially suggested to them that each household pay R14 per month for operations and maintenance. The community itself decided residents could only afford R10 per month. This must be taken to the treasurer by the 10th day of each month. Households that are late in paying, must pay R30. It has occasionally happened (2/3 times) that a household was required to pay this fine, but otherwise everyone pays on time. In the words of the chairlady: 'The community is forced to pay. They know that is our law.' At the start of the project the community readily agreed on what needed to be done although there were a few that needed persuasion. Their consulting engineer advised against pipes in each yard as there is uncertainty about the strength of the borehole.

The chairlady's advice to other villages is to elect people who are strong and willing to work for the community. The community must then agree to pay monthly contributions to maintain the water supply.

The village is now co-operating with four surrounding villages to collect money for electricity.

Synopsis: A real need for water led the small closely knit community to accept the guidance of trustworthy leaders. The chairlady is a professional person, born in the village who is a reserved but capable leader. There are strong sanctions against non-payment which the whole village accepts.

NP: Mankosana

Mankosana is a widely dispersed village approximately 95 km from Pietersburg in the direction of Burgersfort. It comprises some 1 220 households and is closely surrounded by other villages through which gravel roads wind in all directions. Their water supply comes from boreholes and is pumped to two reservoirs in different parts of the settlement. The project collapsed in one section of the village.

A river, which was reduced to standing pools, runs alongside the village. Part of the village did get water although the pressure was very low. People who had the means to do so, connected their own pipes and relayed water to their stands. There were divisions in the community about the cause of the water breakdown in one part of the village. People in one section blamed the other section for using all the water before it reached them. Many reverted to using river water. The households that experienced the breakdown in supply, stopping paying.

Households were originally required to pay R61 and then R7 per month for operations and maintenance. A community meeting decided that R7 was too much and reduced it to R5 which villagers take to the community office each month. Water committee members receive remuneration for their services. All went well until May 1997 when the pump broke. The water committee bought a new pump and summoned a private mechanic to install it. He did not understand the machine. Until August they had been trying to find someone else to help them with the pump. A member of the water committee said they had the money to pay to have the system fixed but could not find someone able to do the work. Appeals to the Departments of Public Works and Water Affairs were met with the response that their need must be channelled through their TLC. The TLC ignored their requests for help. According to the water committee member their ward councillor lives in another village and does not like their headman 'so he doesn't like our whole village' and refused to assist them through the bureaucracy. The water committee member claimed the day before to have found another councillor in the TLC who is a water commissioner, and obtained the necessary signature to enable him to approach the government for assistance. He was unhappy that villagers who had their water supply interrupted had stopping paying as 'we need the money', but trusted matters would be rectified once the pump was fixed. He said the community was regularly informed of developments and asked to keep paying.

Synthesis: The long break in service due to technical problems can be attributed to the unresolved state of local government and conflict between traditional leadership and democratically elected councillors. The water committee coped well given their lack of experience although they had either not been successful in relaying the correct information about the breakdown in service to everyone in the community, or not been successful in persuading people that payments were necessary for repairs to be done. Residents were not willing to pay anything during the break in service: they expected results from their payments.

NP: Kurante

Kurante is a village of 225 households some 140 km from Pietersburg in an area known for droughts. A wide but dry river bed passes close to the village. The water project works successfully although the community is unhappy about the level of service. They want taps in their own yards.

The Mvula Trust project started with R10 contributions from each household in 1996. Late payers contributed R15.

The community gets its water from two boreholes: one served by a diesel pump paid for by the government and the other served by an electric pump provided by a Mvula Trust project completed in 1997. The water is pumped to one reservoir and gravity fed to standpipes. The diesel is provided free by the government. The operator is paid by the government while his assistant is paid by the community only when his services are required. The operator starts the pump every morning and then checks each of the 28 pipes by bicycle. When a pipe or tap breaks, the households served by that pipe/tap pay for it to be repaired. No one else may use a tap assigned to a group of houses. At the moment, due to the newness of the project, no one pays for water. The electricity account is paid for from the initial project fund. When the fund is depleted, the water committee will approach the community for contributions.

Previously water from the diesel pump operated borehole was supplemented by river water. Old people had to pay others to dig water out of the river for them. Now people have installed their own pipes to lead water off the main pipes to their own yards. An obviously poor lady said she would like to have a tap in her own yard but was concerned about how she would pay for repairs should it break.

The headmaster of the school has installed his own borehole from which he also leads water to his father across the road. The father estimates that he pays R30-R40 per month for electricity by prepaid meter. The headmaster followed the lead of the Mvula Trust project in having his own borehole drilled.

The operator acknowledges there are problems ahead. He knows that it is not desirable that people make their own connections. But, he says, people are people and they don't listen. For the time being everyone is happy.

Synthesis: Harmony over payments has been maintained by the water committee relenting to the community will in the short term. The water scheme is sustained by functioning in tandem with community preferences. There is also a sense of responsibility/ ownership for the water scheme as villagers know which particular tap they may use and that they must pay for repairs to that connection. The community was not forced into contributing more than is absolutely necessary and will probably come forward with contributions in an emergency. There is a sense of harsh circumstances without the water scheme.

2. EASTERN CAPE

EC: Gubevu

Gubevu is a village of approximately 600 households near Frankfort between King William's Town and Stutterheim. It is a small, neat village situated on a hill surrounded by other villages on hills and some 5 km from the tarred road. There is an informal dam in the village used by ducks and other livestock.

The water project was installed by the Department of Water Affairs in 1994. It is reliant on water from a bulk scheme pumped by a diesel engine to a reservoir and gravity fed to 25 standpipes in the village.

Before the project was installed, villagers used water from the river which is a long walk downhill or, if they have iron roofs, rainwater collected in tanks from roof run-offs. The clinic relies on rainwater collected in this manner. The clinic sisters interviewed did not live in the village. They have not noticed any water related ailments resulting from the use of river water. They are looking forward to the installation of sanitation in the village as evidently promised by the government. There are two creches in the village - the one is subsidised by the Department of Welfare and is well equipped and colourfully painted; the other run by volunteers and drab.

According to villagers, the project worked well when there was money to buy diesel. When the diesel was exhausted, R10 per household was collected for a new supply. However, they are now awaiting an application to the government to supply them with diesel as the village cannot afford the payments.

There is an operator in the village who was trained to run the pump and maintain the water supply system. He is otherwise unemployed and wants to be remunerated for his services. During the time that the villagers were willing to pay for diesel, he looked to pensioners to raise the R400 needed every two months or so to buy a 210 litre tank of diesel. There is a reportedly high level of unemployment in the village. The operator keeps the pump station immaculately clean but needs an assistant to be able to start the pump. He and the assistant reckon that R1 500 per month would be a fair wage for each of them as keeping the water system working is hard work. Their work to date has mostly been voluntary although the water committee gave the chief operator payments of R150 every six months or so as funds allowed. No initial capital contribution was made for the water project. The Department of Water Affairs supplied the materials while the Independent Development Trust paid for labour.

There is no chief or headman in the village and it is run by a residents association. There are no apparent divisions within the community. No one contributes money to any village organisation, not even to the residents association.

The vice-chairperson of the water committee is also acting chairperson of the residents association. She and her husband live in a large house in the centre of the village. Her husband works in town. There are photographs in their lounge of their children's graduation ceremonies at the University of Cape Town. They have no formal electricity or telecommunication and obtain household water from a rainwater run-off tank. They have installed their own generator to provide household electricity for their appliances which include a television set and music system.

They prefer their peaceful rural lifestyle to living in town.

The vice-chairperson explained that there are many poor people in the village who were unable to make any contribution at all towards the cost of diesel. However, there are also people known to be able to pay, but who refuse to do so. Friction arose in the community between the people who made contributions towards diesel and those who did not, but nevertheless used water. The community subsequently decided that in order to prevent conflict, and considering that other villages receive water free, no one was to pay for water. They have consequently applied to the

Department of Water Affairs to supply them with diesel as they see being done in neighbouring villages.

She acknowledges that in the long run, villagers will have to pay for water. However, this will not be solved until the surrounding villages also pay for operations and maintenance, including the wages of the operator. The community won't mind the really poor people receiving their water free but everyone with some income will have to pay. The government has now promised to install sanitation but she is fearful given the problem with the unwillingness to pay for water.

Synthesis: Villagers know that other villages do not pay for diesel in government-run water schemes. There was no prior community agreement on payment. To prevent conflict in the community, the water committee has not even tried to enforce payment.

EC: Sabelele

Sabelele was a presidential lead project conducted by the Department of Water Affairs to supply water to a small village where one of the struggle heroes spent his childhood. The project enjoyed a high profile, was opened by the Minister of Water Affairs and televised by SABC. It is reached after travelling along a long gravel road that winds through many villages in hilly countryside near Qamata in the Transkei. The project collapsed some two years after it was launched.

Sabelele actually comprises two villages - Upper Sabelele and Lower Sabelele - a few hundred metres apart on two hills. Each has its own headman. Lower Sabelele, which was the initial target village, got its water from a borehole and windmill which has become inoperative as the windmill was replaced by the diesel pump which is now silent due to a lack of diesel. Lower Sabelele is the larger village and comprises some 65 households.

The diesel engine was said to have been donated to Lower Sabelele by the hero who grew up there. He then moved to Upper Sabelele and a pipe was laid to extend the water supply to Upper Sabelele as well. Pipes were laid under the guidance of a contractor who trained eight people to maintain the system which, by community decision based on cost, was later reduced to two people. It would provide welcome relief for the upper village which had to fetch water from a river previously and a stronger water supply for the lower village. After the launch of the project both villages became aware that they were expected to pay for the diesel to run the pump. They felt cheated as they thought that the delivery of water itself was a gift. Water soon ran out due to overuse and the limited capacity of the borehole. Tensions arose between the two villages about payment. The residents of Lower Sabelele felt that only they were entitled to use the limited water as the pump was a gift to them.

Individual villagers in each of the two villages blame the breakdown of the project on the unwillingness of the other village to contribute towards diesel. Some villagers see the pipe laying activity elsewhere in the valley as a sign that reliable water is eventually on the way. [This is not the case - the pipes will provide water to three other villages.]

The wife of the headman of Lower Sabelele says she (and one person from Upper Sabelele) is a member of a water committee for the whole district. There is a move to persuade everyone that they must pay for water. She thinks the Department of Water Affairs will provide water to each

household although it must be paid for. This is being seriously discussed now although villagers originally preferred to fetch water from the river above paying for piped water. The two Sabelele's were required to pay R10 per household per month when the project worked although it was only collected when the diesel was depleted.

A pensioner in Upper Sabelele said she paid children to fetch water from the river.

Later the headman of Lower Sabelele said the borehole does not have the capacity to provide both villages with water. This was exacerbated by the news coverage of the presidential project emphasising that women would no longer need to wash their clothes in the river. There was never enough water to do washing as well; it was only intended for drinking purposes. A number of boreholes had been drilled in the area fruitlessly which is why the windmill was removed from its borehole. Villagers agreed to pay R10 per month for diesel but expected the government to pay for maintenance. The two technicians trained for the project expected R300 per month each to do the maintenance work which put the project beyond the financial capacity of the two villages.

Everyone spoken to mentioned the fact that they did not want conflict over water. A group of villagers in Upper Sabelele with whom the problems were discussed, said the two villages should each have had their own project and water system from the outset. Doubts were also expressed about the reservoir as the grass around it was always green, indicating contents wasting into the ground.

Many people said they are tired of promises and have resigned themselves to using the river.

Synthesis: This was a relatively old Department of Water Affairs project and was not negotiated with the community beforehand. There was not adequate communication to and involvement of residents at the start of the project, especially regarding their role in paying for operations and maintenance. This was complicated by the shift in project beneficiaries and the lack of clear project governance. Both communities appeared to attach greater importance to avoiding conflict than to a good water supply.

EC: Kuni

Kuni is an informal settlement of approximately 700 households near the tarred road from King William's Town to Kidd's Beach. There is a permanent school in the village as well as a handful of permanent houses although most are informal structures on individual stands. Until 1996 residents fetched water from a river or one of the dams in the area. The current water project is a Mvula Trust project which relays water from a bulk water scheme and for which residents do not pay. There is a residents committee as well as a water committee in the village. The water committee that set up the project has asked that a new committee be elected as 'their job is done'.

There are seven taps from which residents take as much water as they require.

Households initially contributed R20 each towards the project. Of this R10 was to be used for capital construction and R10 for operations and maintenance. Most of the residents are unemployed and the main source of income comes from pensions the elderly receive.

There is clearly a lack of solidarity in the community and the chairman of the residents association, secretary of the water committee and water system operator gave different information while perceptions about the project in the community were also different. There was also not a clear distinction between the functions of the residents committee and the water committee. Community perceptions hold that the village cannot afford to pay for water. The chairman of the residents association said people were not willing to pay for water as there are not enough taps. One of the water committee members claimed that they were initially promised one tap per household for which a monthly contribution of R10 would be required. But as the initial capital contribution collected was only R2 000 instead of the required R9 500, fewer taps were installed.

Two plumbers were trained to effect repairs and they work voluntarily. One plumber ventured the information that he charges residents R100 to make a private connection to their houses. Residents have to supply the pipe and tap, he only charges for labour. He takes the R100 for his personal use as this is his only source of income. [Mvula Trust staff later said he has been given permission to do this by the project consulting engineer as all houses would eventually get individual connections which would be metered later.] Once in the past the pump burnt out - he fixed the pipes while the pump was repaired 'by the office at Needs Camp' (see later).

There is currently no functioning water committee to collect contributions. It is also not certain what has happened to the money the original water committee collected. The residents association had collected a site fee of R35 per household from all new settlers of which R20 was paid into the water account to be used for repairs, and R15 to be used for other community matters. The chairman of the initial water committee is said to be unable to give account to the community for the water funds. One of the plumbers trained for the project said that the actions of the chairman were the reason for the breakup of the water committee and no one else is willing to serve on the committee until the situation is resolved. The chairman makes excuses when he is called to a meeting to give account for his actions. In the words of the plumber who is also a water committee member: 'We are stuck. The community must fix things. We have no power to ask the chairman for the money. At the present moment we don't know the way forward. There are lots of other problems we don't want to talk about which relate to SANCO.' The village was said to be currently run by SANCO.

Someone else in the village explained that the original settlers at Kuni were people who were denied sites at Needs Camp, an informal settlement a few kilometres away, that originated during the 1980s. Eight old men had been to see Oupa Qoza, then ruler of the Ciskei, who in 1989 arranged that the homeland department of agriculture give them land on which to settle. They claim to have maps and title deeds to substantiate this. The land allocated to them was divided by a road. The residential settlement is situated on one side of the road while the rest of the land was used as pasturage. In recent times SANCO, apparently with support from their head office in East London, started allocating sites in the pasture section to the continual stream of new settlers. These settlers come and take water from the taps in the older settlement across the road. The new settlers have evidently been told that they cannot formally be helped with water where they live as they do not have formal rights to the land. The residents committee say they are currently in discussion with their local ward councillor and the Department of Land Affairs about their problems although they are also considering taking the matter directly to the provincial premier. They are trying to deal with the matter in a manner which does not lead to conflict.

Synopsis: The project collapsed because of unclear authority structures in the settlement itself as well as in regard to water matters. The current water committee believes that the previous committee misused community contributions. Although there is a strong community drive to revive the water scheme, this is complicated by land and settlement rights issues.

EC: Amahleke

The Amahleke project encompasses 13 villages in close proximity to each other and takes its name from the Amahleke village where the project office of the Amahleke Development Forum, which oversees the Mvula Trust project, is situated. The project area is near the road some 15 km from King William's Town on the way to Alice. Water has so far been installed in six of the villages since the project started in 1996. Previously villagers obtained water from rivers and dams shared with livestock and rainwater runoff tanks, while others obtained it from neighbouring villages or towns such as Dimbaza. Most residents have electricity in their homes which they pay for by card.

Six members were elected to water committees in each of the villages. One member of each village water committee comprises the steering committee for the whole project. Members of the steering committee congregate in the Amahleke project office every day. (They are paid to perform their function). The committee members readily concede serious problems with the project. They attribute this to various factors: unwillingness to pay for water, affordability, a power struggle between the ANC and PAC, perceptions that as the project belongs to the government it must be paid for by the government. Their solution is for the government to take over the management of the project with a full time government employee as manager. [The Mvula Trust project officer attributed the failure of the project to promises made by the local transitional rural council following a power struggle of some kind during which the local water committees collapsed. She attended a mass meeting of residents of all the comprising villages where the details of payment and necessity of regular community contributions were explained by the implementing engineers.]

Each household within the project area was required to pay a R10 initial contribution although many did not.

The research team visited five of the villages where water has been installed. Despite assurances from the steering committee that everyone in the project area was aware of their obligation to make regular contributions to operations and maintenance, no one in any of the villages - either committee members or regular villagers - could recall ever being told this. They all assumed that this was a government sponsored project. They complain that there are too few taps. Many said they were initially promised a tap in every street. There is sometimes a pressure problem resulting in water flowing slowly, although the supply itself has never stopped. Everyone consistently said they have never been asked to pay.

There were approximately 12 taps in Ubombo to serve 375 households. Pressure was sometimes a problem. Residents said they did not have to pay for their water. A pensioner said he had too many other demands on his income and would not pay even if required to do so although he wanted each house to have its own water. The chairman of the water committee said that residents are not required to pay for the service. Each household made an initial contribution of R10 which is enough. There should have been taps in every street as was initially promised.

Pressure was also a problem in **Zabalaza**, an informal settlement of 427 houses. Residents approached randomly said they has paid R10 initially and would only pay regular contributions if they had a tap in their own yards. There were prospects of a formal housing project. When houses have been built and they each have a tap in their own yard, they will discuss payment. They have never been asked to pay for service. Children played with the taps and wasted water and 'did not listen to discipline.' The chairman of the water committee said water pressure was a problem. They did not pay for service and had never been asked to do so. Water was previously obtained from Dimbaza.

Pressure was a problem in **Nomgwadla** although the situation is better than previously when residents had to fetch water from Dimbaza. Residents don't recall community meetings to discuss the water project and have never been asked to make service payments beyond the initial R10. To their knowledge payment has never been discussed at village meetings. They pay for electricity by card.

Water flow was irregular in **Madakene**. There is always water after dark. The supply often dwindles during the day; there was often none in the early morning. They have never discussed water in a community meeting and have not been asked to make regular contributions. A university student said the village was run by SANCO; there are no ANC/PAC politics in the village. The water committee chairman is in Amahleke every day. A male nurse ventured the information that they considered themselves a rural area and no rural areas pay for water - it comes from God. Until three years ago they got their water from a tanker which means that the current situation is a great improvement.

Mgqesha with approximately 400 sites only had four taps which were often broken and dry. Technicians are busy installing more taps. At the time of the research visit there was water wasting all over the road as was found in most of the other Amahleke villages. The chairman of the village committee said pipes often broke which were fixed after special collections were made in the village. He was adamant that the water received from the Mvula Trust project was not payable; only the engineering work was payable. He saw the logic of making monthly contributions and wanted more information from the research team to be able to take the matter to the village committee. He said development would only happen if people paid but this had never been discussed in the village. He sought advice from the researcher on how much each household should be asked to pay.

The research team returned to the steering committee to discuss the results of the research. The information was met with incredulity. They claimed that village committee members do not attend scheduled meetings but only make contact when they have complaints about the water supply. They were adamant that everyone is aware that contributions for service are required although they were vague about a system to collect payments. The chairman of the steering committee seemed uncomfortable with his role and showed a letter from an attorney objecting to the dissolution of the first steering committee. He did very little talking, leaving it to one of the female members.

Synopsis: It seems that there was inadequate communication about the project. The chairman of the Development Forum, which is also the co-ordinating water committee, and his committee did not appear assertive enough to co-ordinate a project of this size. The question can also be asked whether it is viable to initiate a community based water project benefitting so many

villages especially since the villages are so close to other settlements in the district where the government supplies water. Although socially distinct from each other, the villages could possibly be better described as a sprawling peri-urban settlement. One could argue that this kind of settlement is not suited to a village-based type of water scheme.

EC: Ngcele 1

Ngcele was regarded as a model project and was included in the study as a comparison. There are two villages close to each other called Ngcele 1 and Ngcele 2. Ngcele 2 is also sometimes called Nanda. There are approximately 350 households in Ngcele 1 that obtain water from an electric pump and a borehole relaying water to 20 taps. They have applied for water from the Sandie Dam as the borehole dries up when there is no rain. Previously villagers obtained their water from a river.

The project started after the Ngcele 1 community asked its Community Development Forum to approach Mvula Trust in 1994. There is no headman in the village. The chairman of the water committee is a schoolteacher. All the village structures are united in the forum and the villagers were said to 'think the same on all matters'. There is electricity (paid by card) as well as telephones in the village.

A water committee member, who is also the repair technician, said that no initial capital contribution was made. Labourers were paid for the construction work. R1 per month is collected from each household and paid into a bank account. This is done by water committee members who are responsible for specific sections of the village. Households who do not pay are 'forced' to do so by persuasion. Eskom terminates the power supply if the account of approximately R300 per month is not paid. The monthly contributions exceed the electricity account and accumulate in the bank. The technician previously worked as a construction team leader in Natal for 18 years and now derives an income by doing odd jobs around the village. His work on the water project is entirely voluntary. The Department of Water Affairs has agreed to upgrade their service so that each household has its own tap for which a flat rate will also be charged although each household must supply the necessary pipe and tap. Anyone breaking a tap must currently replace it at his own cost.

Villagers interviewed at random were very happy about the water supply. One of the women collecting water at a tap said she was from Ngcele 2. The water committee of Ngcele 1 allows residents of Ngcele 2, which is a very small village, to use water free of charge as they don't have their own. In Ngcele 2 itself, an old water committee member said that the committee had collapsed when its own water project collapsed. They had been paying R1 per month for a diesel driven system. The next village (Tyuyuzza) then came and helped themselves to Ngcele 2's water and refused to help pay for it as they said water is free and other villages don't pay. Ngcele 2 then also stopped paying and the government continued supplying diesel and oil and maintaining the system. The water supply is erratic and the water very hard. They have been promised water from Sandie Dam. They know that the residents of Ngcele 1 pay for the water. Ngcele 1 has an electric motor and an electrically driven system which must be paid for; a diesel system is paid for by the government.

Synopsis: Strong leadership, able to unite the community, and foresight not to ask villagers for high contributions are probably the reasons for the success of the project. Added to that are the labours of a water committee member who voluntarily repairs pipes and visits residents to collect contributions.

EC: Shapile

Shapile is a very old village some distance from the tarred road which turns off approximately 20 km from Engcobo in the Transkei. The project, financed through Mvula Trust, encountered problems before it could be implemented. There are a number of formal houses which receive water from run-off tanks collecting rainwater. Residents with the means to do so, have installed generators to supply electricity. The school has a solar energy unit. There are old telephone poles and old instruments in some houses although telephone communication ceased many years ago. A member of parliament in the old Transkei government now living in Umtata, initiated the project. Villagers paid an initial contribution of R50 per household. They are willing to contribute towards operations and maintenance although the running costs of the project have not yet been discussed.

Water was previously gravity fed from a reservoir filled by a windmill. The windmill did not deliver enough water for the whole village and the current project, which started in 1996, included a diesel pump and an extended pipe system. The windmill has now been disconnected and residents are worse off than they were before as they have to get all their water from a river shared with livestock.

Labourers were paid R15 per day under the guidance of a consulting engineer to lay pipes in areas not served by taps. As soon as the engine came into use, problems started. Old pipes burst and the engine itself broke down. No one in the village had been trained to do repairs. Some of the old pipes need to be replaced. Telephone calls and personal visits to the consultant in Umtata were to no avail.

The very articulate chairman of the water committee blames the consultant for the problems. He says the project has potential but has so far been useless and actually left them worse off. Over the last months, the consultant has been seen in the village but he avoids the water committee members and they feel he is not really interested in the project. Employees of the firm who are not technicians are sent to fetch cheques from the water committee but are not able to solve the technical problems. Recently the water committee refused to hand over a cheque until the system was fixed. The committee relented when the representative pleaded that he would have trouble with his superiors if he returned without a cheque.

The community blamed the water committee for depleting the bank account and not producing water. The water committee members are not believed when they report back at village meetings as the money has been used, pipes and an engine are visible but there is no water.

Synopsis: It seems as though the project engineer did not devote enough time to the project and was not able to help the committee over the teething problems. The lack of delivery has resulted in the community losing faith in the water committee and withholding their contributions

EC: Lower Gwadu

Lower Gwadu is a small village of approximately 250 households in a remote area of the Transkei, reached after travelling some 50 km on a difficult gravel road eastward from Idutywa towards the sea. There is no electricity or telecommunication. Water is fetched from a river a long way away from the village. After a successful application to Mvula Trust, work started during March 1996 and stopped at the end of 1996. The researcher's visit to the project in September 1997 revealed that foundations for a reservoir had been laid. A stack of bricks was situated next to the foundations while cement was stored in a building nearby. Water committee members initially insisted that work stopped due to a lack of materials.

After their election, the water committee collected R20 per household which was deposited in a bank account. Construction started under the direction of an engineering consultant and the bank account was soon depleted. Towards the end of 1996 the chairman and other members of the committee became concerned that the foundations of the reservoir were not being built in the manner of other reservoirs in their experience. The labourers doing the work were new to construction and had been trained for the task by the consultant. The water committee instructed the workers to stop until the engineer could inspect the work. They were concerned that the reservoir might break once filled with water. There was in any case not enough money in the bank account to pay the workers. In the meantime disbursements were made for the project and deposited in the bank account while the committee attempted to collect more money from villagers as the disbursement was not enough to complete the project. By September 1997 the engineer had not yet visited the village. The committee complained that they had meetings with the villagers to explain the situation but could not convince them to contribute more money as there was money in the bank but no progress with the project. The community no longer trusts them and is not willing to discuss monthly operations and maintenance payments. Committee members later explained that the consultant was to blame for the breakdown of the project by staying away and they had no way of contacting him. They would not be able to collect more money from the community and money would have to come from an outside source if the project was to be completed, hence their initial explanation that a lack of materials was the cause of the project breakdown. The researcher relayed the situation to Mvula Trust who immediately arranged that the engineer visit the project and certify the foundations.

Synopsis: After the cautious water committee became concerned about the quality of construction and stopped the work, lack of interest from the project engineer caused a permanent delay. The good intentions of the water committee which felt that if the reservoir collapsed later because of poor workmanship, the village would lose an opportunity to ever get water, caused the community to lose faith in them because of what they saw as non-delivery.

EC: Qoqodala

Qoqodala is a successful multi-village project financed by Mvula Trust and completed in 1996. It is located in a wide, dry valley surrounded by mountains between Queenstown and Lady Frere. There are no telephones or electricity in the valley.

Each household contributed R20 initially. Households pay between 60c and R7 per month depending on the circumstances in their villages determined by the residents of each village itself.

Each village has its own water committee, reservoir and pump. In some villages the diesel pump is also used for other purposes, such as supplying water to a creche. Each village has a technician who was trained to maintain the water system. Some of the technicians are paid, others are not, depending on the financial capacity of the particular village. Unemployment is said to be very high. Technicians often leave to take up employment in town as a result of their training on the project which in turn results in problems for the project.

The project traces its origins back to 1989 when the Qoqodala Development Forum set about finding ways of dealing with their water shortage. They first approached the Transkei Military Council and came into contact with various NGOs until they landed in the hands of Mvula Trust. Water was the Forum's first long-term project. There were various other successful short-term projects in which they were assisted by the various NGOs with whom they came into contact. A Qoqodala Co-ordinating Committee for Water Projects was formed.

The Co-ordinating Committee comprises a representative from each of the eleven village water committees. Each village has its own project and separate water system. The Co-ordinating Committee meets regularly and provides support to the village water committees. The committee resolves conflict between villages, within village water committees and provides advice on water matters. One of the major problems the committee has to deal with, is villagers who can but do not want to pay for water. The water comes from 18 boreholes and one spring. When a village does not pay its diesel account, the flow of water stops. The Co-ordinating Committee does not assist with diesel payments but provides water committees with advice on how to persuade villagers to contribute. They are looking at various ways, even legal means, of forcing villagers to pay, although they are sympathetic to indigent cases.

The Co-ordinating Committee has a chairman who presides at meetings and oversees its activities. However, most of the work is done by a dynamic young co-ordinator. The co-ordinator is also the local member of the Transitional Rural Council as well as the District Council. His development work in the area earned him the positions although he says that these connections don't help his development work much. There is too much bureaucracy and the problems of local government are still too complex and unresolved. The Co-ordinating Committee must find ways of resolving its own problems if it wants anything done. One of their main problems is the power struggle between traditional leaders and the development committees. In almost every village within the jurisdiction of the Qoqodala Development Forum, there is tension between the headman and village committees such as the health committee and public works committee. The headmen feel these committees detract from their powers. In one village the headman tried to undermine the water committee by saying that said he could not drink strange water, i.e. project supplied water. He refused to make a contribution towards the water service and tried to persuade his subjects to only use river water. The Co-ordinating Committee helped the local water committee strategise and relied on the majority of the villagers wanting and being willing to pay for water. Now the headman also pays. The conflict between civic and traditional leaders at village level also exist at TRC and District level.

Synopsis: The success of this multi-village project is due to a number of factors: a dire need for water, a dynamic co-ordinator with an established reputation for community work, and the decentralisation of water delivery so that each village has its own separate water scheme and water governance.

3. KWAZULU-NATAL

KN: Mpelenyane

The village of Mpelenyane is situated some 60 km from Mtubatuba and is reached through the Hluhluwe Umfolozi Game Reserve. There are approximately 130 households in the village that draw water from the two rivers on either side of the village - the White Mpelenyane River and the Black Mpelenyane River - which they share with livestock. Some residents have electricity in their homes paid for through a prepaid meter.

The project started in 1993. It was intended to pump water to a reservoir by electric motor. A water committee was elected at a community meeting that was well attended. Villagers saw the first signs of activity in 1995. Pipes were laid and taps installed. A reservoir was built but the project is still waiting for a pump.

Most of the community members, none of whom spoke English, complained about the water committee not holding meetings or inviting them to meetings. One complained that a windmill driven borehole delivered salty water because the borehole had not been dug deep enough. The water committee keeps asking them for money which the committee may be keeping for itself. Many of the villagers spoke of sponsors and sponsorships which was not initially intelligible. An old lady said the community does not have a problem with the water committee but with money, as most are unemployed. She said there are too few households to pay the required amount. Others said they heard of the outbreak of cholera in Gauteng on the radio during October and are now very worried about sharing their water source with livestock.

The busy committee members dressed in suits, three of whom were eventually found at a meeting at the school about the new Schools Act, were all very assertive people who spoke fluent English. They explained that there had been another non-water project in the village which was entirely sponsored. The community felt that the water project should also have been sponsored without any community contribution. Residents kept nagging the committee to find another sponsor as there are community project sponsors that do not ask for community contributions.

Synopsis: There does not seem to be adequate communication between the strong, erudite water committee members most of whom live in modern houses and drive their own cars and poor, unemployed villagers. This is complicated by the knowledge that other sponsors help villages without requiring community contributions. There is lots of natural water in the area.

KN: Imoyawethu

The water project in the village of Hlabanyati takes its name from the co-ordinating committee of four women's crops co-operatives (i.e. Nethemba, Zama-impilu, Mandlayinkosi and Nkosingisize) whose committee members also serve on the water committee. The village is situated 2-3 km further along the gravel road from Mpelenyane, some 60 km from Mtubatuba. There are approximately 200 households.

The project started in 1993. Villagers are supposed to pay R60 per year. Their initial contribution was R10. The water comes from a spring and is pumped through a sand filter and

then gravity fed to standpipes. The filter became blocked and a community member fitted a pipe to bypass the filter which means that the water supply is no longer purified. The pressure is low and water only flow in the mornings.

Ordinary villagers said they can't afford payments and, in any case, water comes from God. They say there are regular community meetings to inspire people to pay. Before the project started all households paid their R10 but after water flowed they saw no necessity to pay further. On one occasion the water committee stopped the flow of water to pressurise people to pay but then those who had paid, complained. Now no one pays.

The chairman of the water committee said one of the problems was that the induna lives far away where there is no water problem. The chairman did not appear very assertive. The committee has unsuccessfully tried to enlist his assistance in persuading villagers to pay. Some are willing to pay but were dissuaded by the others. They used project water but can't answer why they won't pay. There is no money in the bank account to fix the filter. Two young men from one household were found filling a truck loaded with water containers at the bridge over a river less than a kilometre from the village.

Synopsis: The community sees no need to pay for water. The committee does not appear to be very strong and cannot see a way of denying non-payers access to water. There is lots of natural water in the area.

KN: Phumzile

Phumzile has a meaning related to 'rescue' and is the name of a project at the village of Maphophoma, approximately 15 km from Nongoma. There are some 280 households.

The residents collect water from a river, harvest rainwater and buy water from government employees illegally using government vehicles for the purpose. The project was completed in 1996. The system was meant to work by pumping water from the river to a reservoir by electric motor. There is much anger in the village at the lack of ability to provide villagers with water. Besides their initial contribution, villagers are required to pay R180 per year or R15 per month. Many of the villagers who paid what was required of them in full are still very angry and say the water committee has used their money. When they try to discuss matters with the water committee they are told to pay more money to get water. Some people who did not pay had two taps near their houses while many payers had no taps nearby. The water scheme ran for nine months with every cent coming in going to Eskom. It then stopped when there was no more money to pay for electricity. Eskom is still owed some R1 500.

A member of the committee explained that the map drawn when the project was planned left out a whole section of the village which was far from the river. The engineer had drawn the map on his own without checking with the community. When he discovered his error, he called the omitted section Phase 2 which would get water later even though more of the omitted villagers had paid their initial contribution than those near the river. Those who don't pay can offer no reason for not paying and the committee had no way of preventing them from taking water. Now, people say there is no need to pay as there is no water.

Another water committee member who is a teacher at the local school and plays an important role in village affairs, referred to a number of problems with the project. The village comprises three sections. The section nearest the river which is also the largest (109 households) was included on the map while the section furthest from the river was not included. It was the households near the river that are especially reluctant to pay saying they have the river and don't need water although they took water from the scheme when it was available. The first engineer working on the project had to be replaced due to non-performance. The engineer supervising construction promised labourers too high wages which the labourers held the committee accountable for. The engineer eventually sorted the problem out with the community. Although the project agreement said that the engineer was employed by the community, he was paid directly by Mvula Trust and received money for work he had not done. The initial community contribution went to Mvula Trust and the repayment to the community which was intended to be used for a sports centre for children, was not returned. The project was never officially opened. The committee was told it was the first water project in the Nongoma area and the committee had planned to invite dignitaries to the opening. The inkosi received a tap inside his yard which caused many people to grumble.

The water committee member said many of the problems were explained to the community. The committee had decided to be completely transparent when things started going wrong and even revealed the names of the villagers who were not paying. This led to an uproar when the payers heard how many were not paying and they all then decided not to pay either. The inkosi who is a very young man, declined to get involved. He paid all his water dues and is now drilling his own borehole. The committee felt that he did not associate sufficiently with community initiatives. A mining house offered to build two creches and a school in the village but the inkosi stopped them and asked for cars instead. The mine then withdrew. There is also a problem with the men who work in town. Many men won't contribute as they say their wives can fetch water from the river. The wives want the water scheme as it makes their life easier but don't have the money to pay for it. The committee does not have the power to stop non-payers from taking water. Every time there is a village meeting to discuss water, the payers demand that the non-payers are punished. The non-payers openly challenged the committee to say what it would do to them if they did not pay. The committee is reluctant to act as it is scared the non-payers will then damage the scheme. He says everyone has money to pay as most of the villagers have Eskom electricity in their houses, paid for by card, which costs more than water. He concedes that the water committee also made mistakes: They should only have pumped for a few hours every day to save electricity. There are a few villagers who are obviously too poor to pay and the committee agreed early on that they may take water free.

The water committee member reflected about the future and a way out of the problem. The committee has suggested that if enough money is collected they will appoint supervisors to prevent non-payers from using taps, but this relies on having money to start off with. The initial work was not properly supervised so there were lots of pipe breakages which will also need money to repair. The water committee has not been trained well enough to do the repairs. He had three suggestions to overcome the impasse. There should be a prepaid payment system for individual connections although a prepaid community system might also work. Traditional communities don't understand accounts and the practice of paying after a service has been delivered. In the second place, a way must be found of punishing non-payers. Lastly, a sponsor must be found to enable them to start afresh. In explaining his reason to start afresh, he said time was required to win the village over. People think they are paying for water. They may be more

willing to pay when they realise they are paying for a service. There were currently negotiations with the town clerk of Nongoma which might lead to a reconnection for a short while to encourage villagers to pay. Individual yard connections might also persuade villagers to pay. He had personally approached Eskom in 1987 to bring electricity to the village. At the time he tried to interest the rest of village in electricity but heard that the power lines would harm the cattle and antagonise the ancestors. His was the first household to install electricity. As time went by and others saw his benefit, they came one by one and asked him to help them get electricity as well. Now almost everyone has electricity. He has done a lot of soul searching about the project. He initially went from house to house trying to persuade people to pay until he felt he might personally be an obstacle. He then tried to withdraw from the committee but the community objected. The area is very water rich and the committee has even considered selling water to surrounding drier villages; their water tanks are very large.

This water committee member has already paid R2 800 to participate in the water scheme, which he feels was money wasted. He built two tanks of his own which he now pays illegal water vendors R120 to fill. He is considering drilling his own borehole.

Synopsis: The project lost substantial trust from the community by engineering errors, especially in omitting a large section of the community from the map. Then it became evident that a few villagers were subsidising the rest. The water scheme clearly does not add enough convenience value to the majority of households to justify committing scarce resources to it. There is lots of natural water.

KN: Hlanganisa

Hlanganisa is a new project serving four villages (Qoqoda, Bangamaya, Ehlabatini and Mememe) 15 km from Nongoma.

Water had just started flowing although residents are behind in their capital contributions. Villagers previously fetched water from the river and harvest rainwater.

The project started after social workers visited the village, saw the water problems and suggested the villagers approach Mvula Trust. Each of the four villages elected a water committee of which two members serve on a project co-ordinating committee. Each village decided how much residents would pay and the payments differ between villages. One villager said she paid R86 initially but did not yet know how much she would need to pay monthly. The first Eskom account has not yet been received. There is still R16 947 outstanding in community capital contributions for the whole project. Money is still owed to the engineer. Community meetings are held where people are asked to go to the home of a committee member and pay if they have money. Water committee members found it difficult to tell people they must pay. Everyone agreed to pay at the community meetings but then disappeared. Since water has started to flow more people have come forward with their contributions. The induna lives far away but comes to community water meetings as an ordinary villager. He has paid all his dues.

The chairman of the co-ordinating committee is confident that over time everyone will pay especially once they have experienced the convenience of clean water close by. The committee has not yet come to a decision about the poor people who are unable to pay. He agrees that the

slow rate of payment so far is a concern. People said their mothers used to get water from the river. When people saw the clean water the project produced, they were keen to use it although they had not paid. There is some R4 000 in the bank account which will be used to pay Eskom.

People have indicated that they want taps in their own yards. They say this will enable them to control children playing in and wasting the water. The project co-ordinating committee has already overcome a blocked sand filter and someone has now been trained to clean the filter.

Synopsis: Villagers are not convinced that the water scheme will materially add to their lives. They prefer to have their own yard connections. The chairman of the co-ordinating committee as well as the two chairmen of village committees were old men who did not seem very assertive. The project started without all the capital contributions being paid.

KN: Umvunyane

Umvunyane is the name given to a water scheme in the village of Smashwini on the Umvunyane River. The village comprises some 450 households approximately 15 km by road from Emondlo and 35 km from Vryheid. The project was included as it is regarded as a model project.

The project came into operation in 1996 after three men from the village approached Mvula Trust for help with their water problem. The village is relatively isolated in an arid region. Previously villagers obtained water from the wide Umvunyane River which does not flow consistently. In dry periods they dug into the sand of the river bed to scoop out water. The water scheme involves two boreholes from where water is pumped by prepaid electric pump to two reservoirs. There are taps in every street. Most houses have electricity which is prepaid by card.

The engineer assigned to the project drew a map of the village with the residents. The community elected a water committee to run the project. The chairman is a retired mineworker and the vice-chairman a school principal. A local shopkeeper gave the committee a large room next to his shop to serve as an office. Two committee members, who work voluntarily, sit in the office every day to collect water fees. They keep a register of every household and issue receipts. The receipt books and register as well as the project manual lie on the table for scrutiny by anyone who is interested.

The two lady water committee members in the office explained that the villagers originally made a capital contribution of R50 and now pay R5 per month. The money was first collected from each household by a water committee member but this led to complaints that the committee members were taking the money for themselves. Villagers now bring their monthly contributions to the office. If a household goes into arrears for four to five months, a letter is written reminding them to pay. If too many households are simultaneously in arrears, the water committee closes the valves at the two reservoirs and no one gets water. The system works as the payers then pressurise the non-payers to get their payments up to date. The project did initially experience problems in getting everyone to pay. It was then that the water committee decided on the strategy of closing the valves. At community meetings villagers are regularly reminded of the consequences of not paying. There are some families known to be unable to pay and they are allowed to take water free. The taps are opened from 3-6 pm every day. There is a cash reserve in the bank. The committee was due to meet Mvula Trust within days to discuss more boreholes

and water connections to each yard. The community decided against individual yard meters although each household is willing to pay for its own pipes and pay a higher monthly contribution on a flat rate basis. The water scheme electricity payment is currently approximately R250 per month.

The two ladies attribute the success in persuading everyone to pay to their previous deprivation without water. They had to dig for river water which was dirty and shared with livestock. The committee is called on from time to time to advise other communities on how to run a successful water project. Their primary advice is to avoid politics; for villagers to keep their political views to themselves and to elect a committee that will devote itself to water matters only. The induna lives in the village. He contributes himself and persuades others to pay.

Synopsis: The community elected a strong committee in view of its dire need for reliable water. The water committee is completely transparent in its bookkeeping and stops the water supply as soon as villagers lag in their payments.

KN: Newstand

Newstand is a small village on the side of a hill on the road from Bergville to Mont-aux-Sources. There are 314 households. There are some old handpumps on boreholes, although they don't all work, which are used for drinking water. Villagers take washing water from natural springs which they share with livestock.

Villagers were required to make a capital contribution of R110. All the pipes and taps were installed by July 1996 although the scheme never worked. Many households have electricity paid for by card.

Villagers expressed extreme anger at the water committee members, even calling them dogs. The project engineer was called a crook. There were a number of problems. The engineer who mapped the village did so without consulting the community and left out a large section high against the hill. When pipes were laid it became apparent that many people who lived there and had paid their full capital contribution, would not get water. Villagers spoke of a quarrel in the committee over the matter which caused the committee not to work together. When villagers themselves confronted the engineer he replied that the map did not allow for water higher on the hill - they would have to wait for a later phase of the project. Some villagers were told that water pipes would not work higher up, which they thought was unacceptable as the water supply was to be driven by electric pumps.

Villagers also complained that the water committee did not listen to their complaints. They were just told to pay more money to ensure water. At first they were required to pay R60 and later another R50. Many said they had not paid at all as they did not trust the committee. Others asked the research team whether their refusal to pay the additional R50 was the reason that the scheme had failed. They had never heard why the additional R50 was required. Whenever they inquire of the water committee they are just told to pay up. Many villagers referred to two community meetings held to discuss the problem where they were too scared to speak out. They admitted that they had not understood or accepted what the water committee told them but preferred to be quiet. Another villager said the whole water committee had not even attended the

first meeting where villagers had complained about their unproductive contributions. At the second meeting again only attended by some committee members, villagers were told the first R60 only paid for pipes. The committee was not willing to discuss the project further and tried to persuade the meeting to talk about 'our life here.' A lady in the upper section had paid the full R110 when she heard she would not be getting water close to her house. According to her, the water committee keeps asking for more money and insisting that those who have not paid, do so before anyone will see water. The water committee cannot give details or answer their questions. She says no one accepts the argument that pipes cannot be laid in the upper section as the water will be pumped by an electric motor.

In reply to a question about why villagers don't call the water committee to account, one resident replied that they suspect the committee has taken the money for themselves because they don't come out with any information. The committee has not said how much money has been used or how much is over. He does not trust the committee. According to another resident, on one occasion the committee told the community to wait for the engineer to explain. When he came he said the plan did not allow for taps in the upper section. He also said: 'I see everyone has water.' The villager complained that the community elected the water committee 'but now they can't answer.'

A lady found drawing water from a spring, said she had not paid at all because she had not attended the community meetings. She will pay at another community meeting as she does not trust people to just give money to anyone. She will pay where everyone can see she is paying.

There is no inkosi in the village. He lives far away.

Two lady members of the water committee separately explained the situation from their perspective. One said that the 8 per cent capital contribution required from the village amounted to R32 000. Residents contributed R14 000 in labour and cash. Another R18 000 is still required. At the start of the project the water committee and the engineer calculated that each household would need to contribute R60. This was later found to be too little and households were asked to contribute another R50. This was explained at a community meeting. Villagers said they understood, but when they left the meeting, they complained and refused to pay. Pipes have been laid in the major part of the village. The pump must still be installed. There are old reservoirs that were to be used although they are not located high enough to gravity feed water to the upper part of the village. For now, the committee wants the project to continue. Later they will find sponsors to build a reservoir higher up the hill. Money was collected from the people in the upper section as the engineer had told them tanks would be built high on the hill. The other committee member said it had been explained to the residents in the upper section, as the engineer had informed the committee, that the slope is too steep to feed water. Money was not returned to these villagers as they will also use scheme water even if they have to fetch it further away. She referred to the 'mistake', saying that the water committee is not at all happy, but must accept the situation. The water committee is trying to persuade the community to complete their payments. There is a slow trickle of money coming in. Many agree to pay at meetings but later say they have no money. When asked to pay some people say they have paid a lot of money already but don't see what the water committee has done with their money. There are many unemployed people but even those who are employed refuse to pay. There are many pensioners who would like to pay 'but do not because there are too many needs.' They have tried

to explain to the community that reservoirs will be built higher in the village later. The committee must now just wait for the village to pay the rest of the money before the project can proceed.

Synopsis: The water committee lost the trust of the community due to the under-calculation of the initial capital contribution and the omission of a large part of the village from the scheme. The community was let down by the consultant and the water committee was unable to deal with the situation.

KN: Dukuza

Dukuza is a very large settlement on both sides of the tarred road between Bergville and Mont-aux-Sources. The settlement sprawls along the banks of the Woodstock Dam and is surrounded by a wide flowing river. There are approximately 3 000 homesteads and an estimated population of 8 000 people. Residents get water from a number of handpumps on boreholes.

Villagers were required to pay R75 per household to make up the 8 per cent contribution of R100 000. Pipes have been laid in every street, also through large tracts of unoccupied land. At the same time large parts of the settlement were missed due to an inaccurately drawn map. The map was drawn without consulting the water committee. All the residents spoken to referred to the 'missed' sections.

Many people have paid their contribution although not enough money has been collected for the project to continue. As one resident put it: There is lots of water. We are surrounded by the dam. Water comes off the mountain. There is lots of underground water. The dam also supplies Johannesburg with water.

When the project started, the engineers told residents that each house would have its own water. When construction started in 1996 residents were told they would have to pay extra for individual yard connections. The engineers also undertook to find another sponsor to fund service to the areas omitted from the map, but have not returned.

The chairman of the water committee said contributions are trickling in although many refuse to pay as they don't see water. The water committee is not happy with standpipes as only individual yard connections will ensure that pipes are not broken. As it is, many pipes have been vandalised due to impatience with the project. He referred to people in adjacent villages that ripped pipes out of the ground when they were required to pay for water. Negotiations are now underway with the local services board to take over the project and run it on an individually metered basis. If this does not materialise, the water committee will compile a list of who has paid and lock taps for non-payers. This must still be communicated to the village.

Another water committee member spoke of the reasons for residents refusing to pay for water. Some claimed they had no money. When pensioners were asked for money at the pension pay-out point, they said they could not pay as they had to take their pension money home first for their ancestors to see. But then they were seen spending money on other goods before they got home.

Synopsis: Community expectations of water were disappointed by engineering consultants not meeting their needs. The committee lost the trust of the community due to expectations of

individual connections. There is an abundance of water in the area and residents expect real value for money, which the project does not provide.

KN: Kwadlamini

Kwadlamini is a village approximately 35 km from Estcourt in the foothills of the Drakensberg. It comprises some 700 households.

Villagers were required to make an initial capital contribution of R106 and then pay R5 50 monthly. The 8 per cent capital contribution has not been paid and the water committee is still trying to collect it.

The villagers had been discussing ways of getting a consistent supply of water since 1989. The current project started in 1996 and came into operation in May 1997. There are three old handpumps of which one is broken. At the time of our visit the water scheme had been out of operation for 4 days. It could not be ascertained what was wrong and the water committee was due to meet to discuss the problem later in the week. We saw the Eskom accounts since the project started (approximately R250 per month) and they had been paid promptly and were completely up to date.

Water committee members said that capital contributions were slow in coming in as there were too few taps and people wanted water at their houses. They would pay up if there were more taps.

Synopsis: Villagers are paying enough monthly contributions to ensure that the electricity account is paid. They do not want to pay for the infrastructure until there are more taps. The water scheme provides easier access to water than they had before but still does not improve their quality of life enough to warrant a commitment of scarce resources.

KN: Draycott

Draycott is situated 25 km west of Estcourt in a dry valley. It comprises some 800 households.

A board at the entrance to the village refers to Phase 2 of the water supply scheme although no water has flowed yet. Residents fetch water from four handpumps of which two do not work. Others walk to a river some distance away.

Villagers said the project had collapsed as the water committee is inactive. Many have not paid any money and said the project has stood still for a year.

Two female water committee members found working on a road building project said the project started in 1995. Phase 1, which costed R333 000, employed people to lay pipes and install taps to relay water by electric pumps from natural springs to the village. A reservoir was built against a distant hill. A site was prepared for a second reservoir. During Phase 2, which was to cost more than R1 million, the second reservoir was completed and more pipes and taps were laid. Villagers were required to make a contribution of R25 per household for Phase 1 and R30 for

Phase 2. Monthly contributions have not started yet. The committee members said that although the initial household contributions were not high, it is not easy for the community to pay as most people are unemployed. They cannot be forced to pay. The committee has decided to form small committees around each tap which will only allow payers to use water. They have asked Mvula Trust to find someone to pressurise the community to pay. The committee cannot pressurise the community to pay as they will think the committee members want the money for themselves. If someone from outside comes, the community will know the committee is telling the truth. Regular community meetings are held at which the chairman, a school teacher, explains the need for payment, but neither he nor the rest of the water committee are believed by anyone. Many villagers say the RDP promised that basic services would be free. Some villagers are willing to pay but say they are not willing to subsidise non-payers. Others think they will get water free as they see the pipes being laid without them having paid. The committee members preach about payment at every opportunity and issue receipts for all money that comes in. In response to probing, the women said that even though many men worked away and controlled the household income, women had discretion over what their husbands gave them and could choose to pay for water. They are not inhibited by their husbands.

Their inkosi lives in the village and has called many meetings to encourage villagers to pay. The two committee members said everyone respected the chief and his involvement was not an obstacle.

The inkosi's wife is the treasurer of the water committee. She said 256 of the 800 households have paid their capital contribution in full. The problem is that during the election they were told that everything would be free. The RDP would give water free. She also fetches water from a hand pump. While many villagers use electricity paid for by prepaid card, she pays monthly by account. The project engineer has promised that water will come, and she hopes that people will pay up once they see the water. Many people are unemployed. Pensioners have paid their contribution. Her husband, the inkosi, does not receive money from the community. He gets R1 400 per month from the government. She says she and her husband do not experience any rejection or non-acceptance in the village.

Synopsis: People blame the committee for the slowness of the project to justify their non-payment. The committee blames the RDP for promising water free. No evidence was forthcoming that the inkosi's involvement in the water committee was detrimental to payment. Although there is no obvious connection between the inkosi's role and non-payment, it is conceivable that he is not associated with RDP initiatives. The project commenced without the capital contribution collected.

KN: Emmaus

Emmaus is a widely dispersed village that grew around a Lutheran mission between Winterton and Cathedral Peak. The main source of employment is the hospital. There was originally one water project run by a committee. The project soon divided into three phases, each phase run by a separate committee with an informal co-ordinating committee representing all three. The phases later became unrelated water schemes although they are still called 'phases.' This report concentrates on Phase 1, the project serving the people in the immediate vicinity of the mission

where there are 185 households. The project was encouraged by the induna who lives in the village.

Villagers in Phase I get water from springs and handpumps. One hand pump is in the school grounds and only intended for school use. A limited number of residents get water from the Mission. The Joint Services Board installed pipes relaying water from a natural spring on a mountain without any cost to residents in Phase 3. The residents of Phase 2 have no formal water.

None of the villagers approached directly knew anything about a water project. We were eventually referred to two people 'who are trying to get us water,' and represent the remnants of the water committee. The chairman is a local businessman who walks on crutches due to a permanent spinal injury he incurred while living in Durban, and a retired lady teacher.

The project in Phase 1 was initiated in 1994. A capital contribution of R16 800 was required in respect of a R296 000 scheme. Villagers should have paid R120 each but a community meeting suggested that each household only be asked to pay R50 to start with as most are unemployed. The rest was to be paid later as villagers were able. Everyone expressed their willingness to pay. Approximately 80 per cent of the households paid their R50. An engineer employed by a parastatal organisation, who built a very good relationship with the committee and villagers, designed a scheme in which a weir was built across the Nhlambabantwana River as well as a pump house and filter plant in the river bed. Pipes were laid and a first reservoir built. Before the second reservoir could be built, a flood washed away the pump house and filtration plant. The damage was estimated at R117 000. Mvula Trust advanced the water committee R86 000 for repairs. Some trenches were dug three times. The community was asked to contribute another R70 per household, although part of it was in labour. The engineer was at first doubtful about the continued viability of the scheme, but sat down with the committee and together they drafted a plan of action. Eventually the project was completed in full.

After the flood the community became disillusioned. Residents thought the project was a flop. They demanded that their contributions be returned to them. The chairman and treasurer were targeted and found it difficult to live in the village. When the chairman took his family to Durban for a holiday, the community said he had run away. Two 100 metre rolls of pipe were stolen. After the additional R86 000 was received, the village worked together to complete the project. Water flowed for three months but residents refused to make the monthly contributions of R12 (R7 for the Eskom account and R5 for the supervisors). They had been asked to pay the R12 even if they had not completed their capital contribution. Residents became very critical of the scheme. The engineer was owed R18 000 but people wanted that money to be used to pay Eskom. Eskom then cut off the power supply. The chairman claims that there is still some R22 000 credit due to the project which he can claim from Mvula Trust. He was not willing to do this as it would indicate to the community that there is an endless supply of money available and that they don't need to contribute towards running costs. A number of unsuccessful community meetings were held (also attended by an external mediator) to try to reach an agreement between the community and the water committee.

Other events also caused problems. After the scheme came into operation, there was a rain storm which discoloured the water coming through the taps. The community response was that the filter did not work and that they were getting nothing better than dirty river water. After further rains

the pump house was flooded and filled with mud and the motor had to be repaired a number of times. The project had initially been conceived during a drought. The engineer had then found that the river was a perennial source of water and thought it well-suited for the scheme. Later there were community complaints that the pump station was situated a few metres below a cattle dip and that the dip overflow also contaminated the water.

The chairman despairs that events would have taken a different course if the community had raised objections about the use of the river at the outset. He said it is a general problem with rural communities that they regard river water as dirty because it is shared with animals. At a community meeting, residents said they would apply to another organisation to help them get clean water. A project that should have been in operation within six months, eventually took two years to complete. He also complains that the RDP promised people services without having to pay. He wonders what the villagers, who are now all filling in application forms for telephones, will do when they discover how much a telephone service costs.

As some point during their water tribulation, the Joint Services Board suggested to the committee that it be allowed to provide an engineer for the project. This led to a clash with the JSB as the committee had formed a strong bond with the initial engineer. The chairman became disillusioned and describes himself as being lost between the community, the project and competition between sponsoring organisations, government bodies and services boards. He says there are now local councillors who are unhappy if other people are found doing 'local government work'. If he were to continue with the project he would feel he is trying to be a councillor. He has therefore withdrawn and left water matters to be sorted out by the new local government structures.

Synopsis: Although the water committee chairman is fiercely loyal to the project engineer that befriended them, it seems as though the engineer himself created problems by his recommendation to use river water and place the pump and filter in the river bed which were washed away and, after rebuilding, silted by heavy rains. The community lost trust in the scheme and saw no point in contributing further. Attempts by the JSB to rescue the project confused the water committee as they interpreted JSB intervention as competition to their engineer.