

Minutes

Meeting of the Working Group, The Water Dialogues- South Africa
16 November, 2007, Mvula Trust Offices, Pretoria

Present: Hameda Deedat (SA Water Caucus); Jean Pierre Mas (JOWAM); Laila Smith (Mvula Trust); Jessica Wilson (Environmental Monitoring Group); Neil Macleod (eThekweni Municipality); Mary Galvin (WD-SA Coordinator); Sandile Mbanjwa (Mohale City Municipality); Jeff Rudin (South African Municipal Workers' Union); Barry Jackson (DBSA); Marie Brisley (DWAF); Erin Raab (recorder)

Apologies: William Moraka (SA Local Government Association); Kathy Eales (Water Research Commission); Bheki Ngubo (Department of Water Affairs and Forestry); Jay Bhagwan (Water Research Commission); Juliet Mwale (Water Information Network); Tony Sanders (Water and Sanitation Services, SA); Nolene Morris (Bloem Water)

1. Welcome and Apologies

Neil Macleod agreed to chair and welcomed everyone.

2. Acceptance of Agenda

Changes to the agenda were requested, they included:

- Present on CWMF under section 7
- Jessica added an item about alternate approach to process recording

3. Approval of Minutes (29 August 2007, Salt Rock)

Changes to the minutes of 29 August for record and/or publication on the website were:

- Removal of section two for the website
- Pg 5 – not “international working group”
- Pg 6 – remove section on the selection process for the website. Keep criteria, three paragraphs after ‘behaviour’ starting with Mary...down to ‘lack of interest’. Also correct typo “Stephen agreed that Stephen there...”
- Pg 6 – Hameda raised a concern with being classified a ‘freelance consultant’ as she is representing civil society and is not salaried, nor being compensated by any organisation for this work.

The minutes were unanimously accepted as amended above.

4. Matters Arising

Sandile Mbanjwa clarified that he will be participating on behalf of the municipality and not SALGA.

4.1 Timeline and fundraising

WD aims to be prepared to take its work to the Istanbul World Water Forum (5th), which will be held in March 2009. Mary outlined a proposed timeline:

- February 2008: the first phase of case studies are expected to end and the new round beginning.
- March 2008: the WG will have a dialogue about the final reports from the pilot case studies, and look at the preliminary data gathered from the phase two case studies (similar to the Salt Rock meeting about the pilots).
- April/ May 2008: the WG will meet to look at all case reports and will aim to draw out points so that they can be brought to the WD Forum.
- May/ June 2008: Forum followed by community report-backs in which community researchers, or representatives of WD-SA, return to each of the four or so communities in the area and tell them about what we found in their area. Then they send representatives to a central meeting of stakeholders in the case study area (a sort of local dialogue).
- October 2008: a final forum looking at process of WD-SA overall as well as to strategise around further advocacy. The final step will be to take the advocacy forward.

Since WD-SA is seeking additional funding, the WG discussed the extension of its commitment past October 2008. It was agreed that this will depend on personal willingness and commitments and that the full WG needs to discuss the matter.

ACTION: Mary to request Ann Harper to facilitate a session in which WG members consider their commitment and long-term vision for WD.

4.2 Revised Budget

Jessica circulated the revised WD-SA budget, mostly a re-allocation of line items based on the revised timeline from October 2007 to October 2008. She went through each line item. Some changes included:

- Change of administrator to full time. WG members recognised the importance of Ruby's work to keeping the project running smoothly. For the record, Mary stated that WG members' commitment to WD-SA includes not poaching its staff members!
- Cut budget on Forum from 2 days to 1 without jeopardising the process.
- Case study research budget increased

- From the exchange rate gain, extra funds for recruitment
- Exchange visits to other countries were cut.
- Contingency was cut to zero – budget has no leeway.

Jessica and Mary emphasised this budget does not keep WD-SA running until early 2009. However a funding proposal has been submitted to DWAF/ Masibambane.

WG members supported the revised timeline and budget as circulated and presented. It was noted that WD-SA cannot request any additional funds from Irish Aid at this stage, but may be able to do so at the end of the financial year. It was suggested that WD-SA approach the Water Research Commission to fund a case study.

ACTION:

Mary to submit a request for an extension as per the agreed timeline and a reallocation of budget items to IrishAid. She would also note the implications of receiving possible additional funding.

? Jean-Pierre will still be proposing with this budget to other agencies, even if not other activities are developed, due to the fact there is no contingency.

4.3 Case study dilemma

Mary raised concern about the cost of the second round of case studies. She explained that for the first round of case studies she provided researchers with an estimate of the scope of work and how much money WD-SA could pay. They took on the work, but as the work unfolded there was dissatisfaction that the job demanded more time than anticipated. A major learning from the first round was that each case needs a team leader.

The Management Committee advised Mary to give the terms of reference to proposed team leaders for the second round and ask for a quote for the case. This has resulted in WD-SA having a good group of team leaders, but their estimated budget is far above budget (around R300,000 for Johannesburg and R450 000 for Chris Hani). Mary said that this is partly due to the team leader role costed at a WD-SA's "specialist in the field" rate as well as their time doing research.

A discussion was held about the true costs of the case studies and the potential trade-off between quality research and cutting budgets. It was decided the budget needed to be brought down somewhat from the quotes given, but brought up from the R150,000 it was originally allocated.

ACTION: Jessica to increase budget to be submitted to Masibambane.

Mary to discuss quotes with team leaders about what WD-SA will "get" at different levels of funding (eg, if R250,000 what changes?) and potential ways of bringing down costs (such as not paying the specialist price for non-team leaders and ensuring the team leaders spends their time on research and quality assurance rather than administration).

Laila suggested that WD-SA be in touch with academics that have graduate students doing research: would there be a big difference in quality if the graduate students were hired instead of highly-paid consultants? Mary responded that all of the team leaders for the next round were drawn from universities and were using graduate students in some way.

5. Research Section

5.1.1 Research status report

Mary outlined the status of the pilot case studies:

- Bushbuckridge: The report was received, but Mary has asked the team for additional work and Ann Mayher to rewrite it since it was written in consultant rather than article style and did not follow the advised format.
- Ilembe: Glen Robbins is conducting additional research, supported by Werner Zybrands (finance consultant) who has been working at Siza Water's offices doing an in depth review of documents. A strong report is expected.
- Ugu: Additional work is being undertaken including a community workshop with a CBO, follow-up interviews with senior officials, and meeting with PDG for more detailed benchmarking data. Mary is playing a direct role in this work and is revisiting the budget to how the case will be drawn together.

5.1.2 Next phase of three case studies

Mary indicated that steps had been taken to initiate the next three cases including preparation of CDs with background documentation, letters of introduction, and community brochures in necessary languages. Carole Baekey will make the necessary alterations to the pro-forma research contract once the budget and negotiations with Susan Booysen and Victor Munnik (Johannesburg), Anne Mayer (Maluti), and Jane Burt (Chris Hani) are complete. This depends on the resolution of the budget dilemma discussed earlier. In Johannesburg we will engage with and add to existing research on delivery under the management contract by Jean-Pierre and Laila Smith. In Chris Hani, we will be comparing concurrent institutional approaches, eg CBO provision and private sector provision in Queenstown. In Maluti, we will look at how the institutional approach changed historically.

5.2 WG process to engage with research (mentor sign up, next cases)

To expand our geographical coverage, WD-SA could take on a case in Limpopo (Mophani, Tzaneen Local Municipality). There are opportunities for cooperation with local NGOs in conducting research since IrishAid is currently focusing much of its funding on NGOs in Limpopo. Mary suggested that we consider adding this case in the event that we obtain DWAF funding.

Otherwise, Mary said that six cases will be sufficient for WD-SA's research aims and that we can then focus on testing the findings with a range of desktop studies.

uThukela and Cape Town were suggested. The institutional model in uThukela needs to be considered; even though politics do play a large part, WD-SA needs to consider this institutional model for consistency and comparability.

Jeff suggested the final round include Cape Town's outsourcing of its bucket system. He feels most of the work has been done but has not been written up and will not be written up unless WD-SA does so. Most of the information would be readily available and WD-SA could do a 'telephone top' study by engaging with the researchers who conducted the fieldwork.

ACTION: These options to be discussed further at the next WG meeting.

5.3 Feedback and Input into Contextual Analysis

Mary gave a brief background to the contextual analysis document: the importance of context was repeatedly referred to by the academic panel internationally and by the WD-SA WG. Mary drafted an outline, with changes and additions from the WG, and then it was circulated to other national WGs for comment. At the last international meeting in London, representatives discussed it in depth, agreed on its importance, and decided it should focus on the parts most needed (national profile, history of watsan sector and financing for each country) in preparation for the November meeting in Bali.

WG members including Kathy, Jessica, Jeff, Jean-Pierre, Laila and Marie gave input on the outline. With Erin's assistance, Mary prepared bullet points for the three sections. She requested comments/discussion on these points to gain feedback and additional input, to highlight different understandings of points (WG members have differing positions that need to be reflected), and to flag points for further discussion. It was noted that a suggestion was made at the August 2007 WG meeting for a session on financing and contracts.

For the document as a whole, the group agreed that:

- The WG needs to decide and agree on what it believes, topic-wise, should be in the contextual analysis, then the writers can focus on brevity (a 3-5 page document was suggested, although others did not believe that was possible given the scope of information needed).
- Perception vs. fact: We need to put down as much factually and then be clear when move on to perception.
- The WG wants to develop this document for its own purposes first (if we cannot agree on the context ourselves then there will be more conflict later in discussions given the diversity of views).
- The document should focus on South Africa's difference from rest of the world (i.e. other developing countries have serious donor problems, while South Africa struggles to get our constitution to work and to deal with historic baggage). However, it should not be limited to this, but also detail the context within which the actual case studies are occurring.

Section-specific input included:

5.3.1 History of Watsan in SA

Overall comments for this section included:

- This should contextualise SA within the rest of the world (SA has taken a very different route than other countries, standard not the same as Europe 95% collection, SA took a route but rest of European world not taking same route).
- Writers should be aware, and flag in the document, that while it is important to indicate existing standards, the official standards are subject to questions (that is why we are here).
- It is important to emphasize the great effect inequality has on everything in SA. We have the highest level of inequality in the world when the Gini Coefficient is applied to water use – and highest or second highest when applied to income. Laila referred to a quote by former DG housing (William Kobick) – ‘the old dispensation was when...’

More text-specific changes requested were:

A. Under “Access”

- The issue of non-payment needs to be re-worded
- It should include an indication of the scale of the problem (what does access mean?)
 - not about access to a point, it’s about maintaining access
 - distinguish b/w access and provision
 - who can’t get to it 1) can’t afford; 2) there but not maintained or quality is low
 - In implementation there is a focus on spending and infrastructure provision (instead of maintenance, etc.), and people still lack access
 - paint picture of how different areas have different dynamics, VIP toilets, not going into detail of RDP but that it’s seen in that context
- The document should explain certain South African terms, e.g.: “township”

B. Under “Legislation/policy”

- A question was raised about how much to include as there is a large quantity of relevant legislation. Should the information be included as an appendix or should we just extract key things? (In the midst of putting it together, everything seems equally important).
- The section on infrastructure should be moved to another section
- It should be noted in the document that while there is brilliant policy, there is also difficulty in the implementation; the policies are an issue because can’t implement them properly in all cases.

- The following issues should be explained: Rights-based approach, FBW, the fact that there was a total policy overhaul but there is a complete dichotomy in approaches to water resources and water services
 - As above, policy is there but not necessarily being implemented (question of success of implementation)

C. Under “Institutional change”

- WSA/WSP significant difference from rest of world and should be explained
- Should include: DWAF role, transfer to LG, people still lack access
- There is currently no mention of Mvula, no mention of section 78 (need a statement about why it’s important, pace and repetition of LG transition – created major difficulties)
- The change in LG, water affairs, dismantling of homelands should be included
 - (decentralisation is in doc but it is not very obvious...explain how took it away from some and gave it to others), DM facing many challenges – Two processes at same time – dismantling homelands, forming LG, LM and DM, (need to spell out situation)
 - Reference could be made to the strategic framework document (changing role of water affairs – providers, regulators, etc.)
 - 280 LM, only 140 have water services responsibilities – no one knows (160 WSAs)
 - Complications made by water boards
- Some members felt the document should include the fact the issue often-mentioned about communities not being involved with digging their own (wells, latrines, etc.) or being involved with the solutions. It was felt that the government/NGOs cannot keep giving everything free to communities as this causes problems. The main points were:
 - Have to change context if expect people to stop sitting and waiting to be served...but need to deal with larger political problems
 - State approach of subsidising the poor has caused a passivity at the community level that inhibits the communities from taking an active role, problem especially in rural areas where municipalities don’t have capacity.

D. Under “LG capacity”

- While there was no disagreement that municipalities have a problem with capacity, some felt the document needs to reference the fact that some of the capacity is available outside of the municipalities (private sector) (can go on to explain the situation in how municipalities outsourced b/c – have resources if policies were different)
- In addition to technical skills, there is a lack of soft-side of capacity – relationships / customer relations / social facilitation - the ability to hear when users are not happy with services (managing local political process)

- Whole role of CBOs being disregarded by municipalities as an option for service delivery, or to play social facilitation role, or to develop understanding.

5.3.2 Municipal Financing

WG members suggested the following be included under this section:

- Cross-subsidisation
 - Should address issue of wealth (there are different approaches)
 - What is actually be spent on equitable share, etc.
 - needs to be counter-posed with what else money is being spent on
 - Equitable share should be shared across participants and should be unconditional so not controlled at national level
- Capacity building grants – grants through LG to put in systems
- Macroeconomic factors and what is driving government / priorities

5.3.3 Current Situation

The following comments were received on this section:

- National profile should be moved up
- There should be a balance in document between the reality of water scarcity with profligous water use (irrigation farmers, wealthy, golf courses) – capture inequalities in situation
 - water scarcity and inequality should set context
- DWAF stats not necessarily true (move away from exact) – fewer numbers, more trends
- It should be mentioned that the government is, in some ways, chasing a moving target
 - We have neighbors (influx of immigrants – turning into backlogs for municipalities) - think almost done and then have more backlogs and more informal settlements
 - Policy to eradicate backlogs but have immigration (internal and intl)
 - Backlog numbers (served more people than the backlog in 94, but number still the same)
- What about sanitation? (the assumptions used are going to change numbers)
 - A footnote should be included about it not being factual, moving target, etc.
 - Take out figures of towns

- On pg 5 – Sometimes words are ideologically loaded and should find different ways of expressing views – (human capital) human capacity or human skills

ACTION: Everyone has two weeks to put in comments about everything and then Mary will arbitrate (some say this some say that)

ACTION: Mary to present contextual analysis in Bali, being clear that it is a work in progress. Mary to use 'track changes mode' to incorporate the suggested changes for WG review. Additional sections will be circulated for comment when a draft is available.

6. Process Section

6.1 Process recording plans

Mary reported that she spoke with Ann Harper about the final process report. Ann is not comfortable preparing the entire document since she has become part of the process, and suggested that it requires someone who can comment on the process as well as her facilitation.

ACTION: Mary to seek an appropriate person to co-author the final process report with Ann Harper.

Laila suggested capturing the WD-SA process through video, which would be enduring and would allow WD-SA to share its experiences internationally. This could require the videographer to go back and interview people from the beginning as well as to capture meetings and events from this stage.

ACTION: Jessica to incorporate a process video into the budget being submitted to DWAF.

6.2 International/ national outputs

Mary said that the International Secretariat requests updates and information to put into its report to DFID each quarter. She discussed the way in which this is done with the WG.

ACTION: Mary to request that the DFID report note that WD-SA activities are funded by IrishAid.

7. Communications and Advocacy

7.1 Selection of WG representatives to liaise with IWG sub-group

The International Secretariat requested that WD-SA provide a representative to liaise with the IWG sub-group on advocacy. Jessica said that this provided a prime opportunity to look at national-international advocacy and their relationship, for which there is insufficient time at IWG meetings.

ACTION: Laila to represent WD-SA with Jeff as the alternate.

7.2 Webpage: comments, photo of WG, approval of May and August minutes for website

The designer has prepared a couple of options for our new homepage, but it needs WG feedback.

ACTION: Mary to send out the draft webpage URL via email for additional comment by WG members.

The May minutes were never officially approved to be put on the website.

ACTION: Mary to circulate May minutes, proposing sections that may need to be removed for public posting on the website (references to internal decision-making process with names, etc.). WG members to review minutes and reply.

8. Reports

Jessica reported back on the WD-SA presentation to the City Water Manager's Forum (CWMF) the previous evening. As done for the Municipal Services Project conference, Mary provided an overview, and Jean-Pierre, Jessica, and William presented on their sector's involvement in WD-SA. Jessica reported that the presentation went well and interesting questions were raised. She noted that the nine members present were all men until a woman arrived representing Johannesburg. Although there did not seem to be much openness or dialogue to begin with, members became more open after the WD-SA input. It seemed people were interested in what WD-SA is doing and already understand that not all issues SA faces can be solved through current practice. With a main goal being to improve water delivery, WD-SA raised the question of contextual issues and the importance of looking outside specific partnerships.

Neil explained that the CWMF was born from the original city manager's forum where they decided water is an important and complicated enough issue its managers should hold its own meetings. There is now one at each tier – district and local – this allows constituents as well as organisations like WD-SA to access decision makers and speak with them. It is supposed to serve as a clearinghouse for information and learning; most members are coming from a technical background.

In response to Jeff's query, Mary added that CWMF members were aware of WD-SA, but largely due to her previous meeting with Rolfe and his circulating the WD-SA brochure at its last meeting. It was noted that SALGA and DWAF attend the CWMF as 'permanent members'. Mary and Jessica felt they made a solid connection with the Joburg representative.

ACTION: Mary and DWAF representatives to set up a meeting between WD-SA and DWAF to discuss how our findings will be taken into DWAF processes.

8.1 Coordinator's Report (including financial report)

The Coordinator's Report was tabled and accepted.

8.2 IWG Report: issues to discuss and Bali Agenda

Jessica, Mary and Jeff jointly reported back on the International Research Meeting held in London.

Mary found the IWG meeting to be incredibly useful as it pertained to how to move between data and analysis. Afterwards, Richard Francis helped Mary in designing a practical plan for WD-SA data analysis. All national dialogues received direct support from the academic review panel. Second, Hillary gave a useful and interesting presentation on practical advocacy based on what countries/IWG needs to do to get work heard by the right people. Finally, this meeting gave a vibrant sense of what is happening and how the different countries are solving and working through challenges. It was also interesting to see the different ways of reporting problems, as it was very culturally dependent and many were not as straightforward as WD-SA in identifying and reporting problems.

Jessica reported that the Philippines has gathered representatives and key people to do a roundtable discussion, and have decided not to pursue field research (only desktop) yet. This approach seems to be working; the rate-rebasing issue in the country was hugely controversial and WD was able to hold a roundtable on the topic. Having this discussion brought Manila Water, a private sector company that had previously withdrawn, back to the table. The Philippines also shared insights into local financing and unique ways of local financing.

Jeff gave comment on what was learned from Richard Francis and his research in Ghana. In Ghana there were two different privatised companies, one successful and the other a disaster. This opened up discussion and awareness about the different manifestations of 'private sector' operations. The successful company had access and better staffing; the failed company was run by someone who had been a manager within the public sector his whole life but when came to running privatised company, did not know how to manage. Jeff felt this case highlighted the large number of complexities and variables even within privatised companies in same country and facing the same challenges.

Jean-Pierre voiced a concern about Item 5 in the notes. He feels many people on the IWG are anti-PPP and some of the comments were unfounded. He said that, if these were true comments, it may be that the international academic panel is uninformed. Mary said that their report was a personal summary of points and that it is important to consider the original inputs.

ACTION: Jean Pierre to email Mary his points of concern and information for her to take forward to the International Working Group.

9. Other Issues

9.1 Nominations for an international private sector representative on the IWG

The private sector representative on the IWG comes from Thames Water, which is no longer working internationally and is leaving Thames for a position with Coca-Cola. The IWG has established criteria and is gathering nominations for a new international private sector representative. The WG agreed to support Jean-Pierre's nomination.

9.2 Per-diems for international meetings

Jessica clarified that the IS covers costs of travel to the meeting, accommodation, and food. There is no additional per-diem or covering incidentals.

9.3 Representation of WD-SA at IWG

The group had a discussion about the relationship between national and international WD and an individual's role as representative of WD-SA. Hamedra wanted to establish an understanding about the fact that if anyone is communicating with international, then they should be coming with positions from WG.

It was agreed that, if someone goes to the IWG meeting, the positions they take should be representative of the national WG – not their own individual position: issues need to be taken all through national process before international. However individuals may express their own views so long as they are very clear the views are not those of the WG.

9.4 Case Study follow up actions

Sandile raised the issue of WD-SA's impact on communities and said that there is a moral responsibility to take action when our research uncovers serious issues. It was recommended that we need to find a way to push a statement to the WSAs about the research in order to feel we have taken action (some members of the WG felt the reportback should cover that issue, but it may be useful to ensure something is sent in writing to the WSA as well).

10. Closing and date of next meeting: 11 and 12 March 2008

The objective will be to discuss final pilot reports and phase two data. Neil to chair and Ann Harper to facilitate.