

COMMUNITY ORGANISATION, SYSTEMS AND APPROACHES TO PERI URBAN WATER SUPPLY WITH REFERENCE TO CHIPATA COMPOUND, LUSAKA

The Practice

This case study summarises the benefits of legal community organisational structures and systems in improving management of water supply in low income communities. The purpose of establishing these structures/system was to improve water service delivery in the community and institute a sustainable management system in an environment where traditional service providers were failing.

Management

The water supply system implemented by the community consists of a groundwater supply to overhead tanks which is then reticulated to 39 community taps. The system only serves Chipata and does not draw from the main Lusaka Water and Sewerage Company (LWSC) supply. The system was developed with assistance from Care International who improved/strengthened community management arrangements and developed community capacity for participating actively in development activities.

The (RDC based) community management system which serves a broader function than just water supply was introduced to the Chipata community by an NGO - Care International; in consultation with the LWSC and Lusaka City Council. The LWSC has since encompassed the results of this initiative in their peri-urban policy and established a peri-urban unit to work with communities and NGOs in other areas of Lusaka (see separate case study summary). The leadership of Care in development of the approach was crucial.

Resident Development Committees

After the change of Government in 1991, a National Steering Committee was established comprising of selected Council Directors, and chaired by the Ministry Of Local Government and Housing. The National Steering Committee was given the task of developing a number of initiatives **to promote and facilitate the process of community development**. One initiative was the development of an RDC constitution. This was later adopted by all Councils, and used as a model for further refinement by individual RDC's. Parallel to this was the establishment of a steering committee by CARE with membership from other NGO's and Lusaka City Council. The steering committee further developed the RDC constitution into the one that is presently being used in Lusaka. RDCs are legal entities registered under the Societies Act

The now completed water system is wholly owned and managed by the Residents' Development Committee (RDC) on behalf of the residents of Chipata, with support from Lusaka City Council. The project involved extensive contributions from community based organisations in terms of organising and educating residents as well as contributing to the design of construction, operations and maintenance.

Process and Approach

The community structures established for managing the water programme, are generic systems used for communication by several organisations working with the community and for community decision making. These are embodied in a constitution drawn up for the community and institutionalised through registration of the RDC under the Societies Act. The roles and responsibilities of the community are described as in the following Table.

Roles and Responsibilities of Community Institutions

ZDC Zone Development Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grassroots connection with residents - primary point for encouraging participation. • Primary point of accountability of RDC structure to residents. • Co-ordinate implementation of water project at zone level. • Carry out appraisals and consult with zone residents to come up with future zone-level projects. • Gather ideas with zone residents to take to the Forum of Zone Representatives for future compound level projects.
FZR Forum of Zone Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make compound policy decisions. • Receive reports from RDC and review progress of compound-wide projects, give input, and evaluate. • Periodically hold meetings that are open to other residents who are not members of ZDC's, e.g. leaders from other CBO's such as churches, associations, etc. • Compound-wide meeting of representatives to bring ideas from the grassroots, to make decisions on major projects to undertake in the future.
RDC Residents Development Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ordinating major compound projects on a day-to-day, week-to-week basis, and providing leadership to ZDC's in taking on development roles. • Reporting to the Forum of Zone Representatives. • Representing the compound with outside agencies.

In May 1995, planning meetings were held with key stakeholders, including the Assistant Director and Chief Housing Officer of the Housing and Social Services Department of Lusaka City Council, Peri-Urban Officer for Lusaka Water and Sewerage Company and members of the community. These meetings were crucial to ensure clear lines of communication and joint ownership among the key agencies from the beginning.

The next step was to convene several 'compound-wide meetings' of over 50 key organisations and leaders, and all other interested parties, to give broad assent to how the water project should proceed. Analysis of problems related to effect of limited access to water on different consumers was carried out and followed up demarcation of zones to present to a compound-wide meeting. The rationale for dividing the compound into zones was that zone-level meetings would allow more people to be reached and drawn into the process. These zones would become units for organisation, construction, operations and maintenance of the future water project.

The zone demarcations were presented to a compound-wide meeting, which decided on the level of contributions and elected three people to be members of a Water Working Group (WWG). The WWG became a focal point for participation of the residents, and received training, took part in planning, helped with compound zoning and siting of boreholes, and became the leader of zone-level meetings, reporting back periodically to compound-wide meetings. The WWG also developed and presented the project plan to the community and decided on capital contributions and monthly user fees. This was then discussed with and accepted at a compound wide meeting.

At a later compound wide meeting, the community institution model in Table 1. was proposed, showing how zone-level meetings would lead to election of Zone Development Committees (ZDC), a Forum of Zone Representatives (FZR), and then into a Residents' Development Committee (RDC).

Impact

- *Consumers.* Communities now have access to a reliable source of clean water throughout the compound which is managed by their own representatives.
- *LWSC.* From the perspective of the LWSC, the official agency responsible for service provision, Chipata provides a successful example of a sustainable community managed stand-alone peri-urban water supply. Chipata provides little

demands on the LWSC and is largely self sufficient with the full expectation of improved sustainability over time.

- *RDC*. By 1998 the percentage of families paying the RDC had reached 61%. This clearly demonstrates that the RDC, the actual service provider, is able to manage the system and that households are willing to pay.

Constraints

Experience with Chipata, Kamanga and other compounds has shown that in the early stages, RDC's need support to overcome problems posed by lack of experience. There have been examples of political interference where the politician sees the RDC as an influential body and a possible power base.

The viability of community organisations such as RDCs, is threatened by high turnover of members which could be due to the extent of voluntary work expected of committee members and the mobility of informal settlement residents. High mobility and large numbers of tenants could affect the viability of the RDC, and raise questions as to whether the RDC represents the interests of temporary residents.

Sustainability

It remains to be seen how effectively the RDC will continue to function and how it will react to crises once Care, the supporting NGO leaves. The LCC and the LWSC will remain as advisors on social and technical issues and Care has already withdrawn from direct operations, suggesting that this transition may be made smoothly.

Outstanding Issues

- The extent to which the RDC members will continue to be willing and able to operate in executive roles without payment. Experience from other compounds indicates that voluntarism is more sustainable for executive roles than for routine functionary (operation and maintenance) roles.
- The RDC's relationship to the utility. The RDC may use the private sector, rather than the utility, to provide technical inputs and may eventually hand over the system for utility management on a city wide basis. The current reforms in the sector may change the ownership and management arrangements for community water supplies in the long term.

Lessons learned/ conclusions

- Reformed utilities may make progress in providing water services but in reality they will not be able to address all needs in the medium term single handedly. The role of NGOS will remain important for some time to come.
- The RDC can be seen as a means to an effective and sustainable water supply system and ii) the water system as 'mobilising' overall development.
- Elections at all levels have increased participation, and instilled a sense of ownership, improving the likelihood of consumers paying for the service.
- A regular flow of information, transparency and accountability gave a high degree of knowledge and confidence to the community of any actions taken by the RDC.