

The evidence from this study indicates that women have not fared as well as we would have hoped, especially in terms of increasing the extent of exclusive female ownership of farmland. However, land reform seems to have unintentionally brought men and women together as joint owners of land...

The requirements of this sub-programme were very different to those of SLAG. It placed demands on would-be beneficiaries for a large share of own contribution in the form of finances, capital and labour as opposed to simply earning below a certain income. According to some of those respondents participating in qualitative discussions and interviews, the implication, in many cases, was for less wealthy applicants to include household and family members in the agreements so that resources could be pooled to meet the application requirements.

When the Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy (PLAS) replaced LRAD several years later, similar demands were placed on would-be applicants, who used similar strategies to ensure acceptance of their application. While not specifically addressing gender imbalances with regard to land ownership, these redistribution programmes have definitely resulted in co-ownership arrangements. Co-ownership might simply be a strategy to overcome the contractual requirements of the land reform sub-programmes, but it does give female partners legal standing with regard to the ownership of property.

### Conclusion

The evidence from this study indicates that women have not fared as well as we would have hoped, especially in terms of increasing the extent of exclusive female ownership of farmland. However, land reform seems to have unintentionally brought men and women together as joint owners of land, thereby enabling women to have a legal share in the ownership of farmland.

Future research should look at why the transformation towards exclusively female-owned farms remains slight, especially in North West and KwaZulu-Natal. Research should investigate the stories behind the need for co-ownership and the implications of co-ownership. ■

*Authors: Tim Hart, senior research manager, Economic Performance and Development (EPD), HSRC; Margaret Chandia, master's intern, EPD, HSRC; Dr Peter Jacobs, chief research specialist, EPD, HSRC.*

# Our dry land: alternative models for water schemes in remote rural areas

## Lessons from Namibia and South Africa

The severe drought experienced in southern Africa is a wake-up call for governments to rethink rural water schemes in remote areas.

*Selma Karuaihe* et al. studied rural water access and management approaches in Namibia and South Africa and suggest greater involvement of communities in water schemes.

**W**ater scarcity is a major problem for Namibia and South Africa, as both countries are classified as 'water stressed' based on their per capita water availability, which is below the threshold of 1 000-1 666 m<sup>3</sup> per person per year.

Water provision in these countries has traditionally relied on specific approaches to water supply, limiting the potential for expansion. This makes efforts towards managing water demand more necessary and critical. This is aggravated by the fact that water demand outstrips supply, which is currently a challenge in both countries.

Valuable lessons are emerging from an ongoing study by the HSRC and the University of Namibia on access to, and the management of, rural water in South Africa and Namibia.

Water scarcity remains one of the main challenges to socio-economic development in these countries. Rural communities carry the brunt of limited reliable water



sources, worsened by a lack of both infrastructural maintenance and efficient management at local authorities and community levels.

## Water scarcity remains one of the main challenges to socio-economic development

As a result, both countries have prioritised water provision in the face of backlogs – a priority that forms part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) targets on water.

## The rural situation needs government intervention through the introduction of targeted pro-poor rural water policies and regulations

Progress towards the MDG targets on water access in both countries shows that while more than 90% of the urban population had improved access to water by 2013, the situation remains very different for rural communities. The

rural situation needs government intervention through the review and introduction of relevant and targeted pro-poor rural water policies and regulations.

### **Water institutional arrangements in South Africa**

The Department of Water and Sanitation is the custodian of water resources and responsible for infrastructure development and maintenance, while the respective district and/or local municipalities are responsible for water provision in rural communities in South Africa.

In the past, community-based management (CBM) models have been operating in various parts of the country, especially in rural areas. These common models include full municipal provision; community based provision; local municipal-owned utilities; water boards; integrated regional water utilities; and private sector involvement.

A review of these models shows that CBM programmes were, and continue to be, effective in addressing access to water, even where district or local municipalities are responsible for water provision. Currently, some municipalities allow community involvement through water portfolio committees or water forums, where community needs can be identified and addressed.

### **Water institutional arrangements in Namibia**

In Namibia, the Directorate of Rural Water Supply (DRWS) in the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development (MAWRD) is responsible for water provision to rural communities. In 1997, the government introduced institutional reforms through a CBM programme, giving communities responsibilities to manage rural water points while government was responsible for major repairs.



Findings from community-managed programmes show potential benefits in terms of improved access, social cohesion, capacity building and sense of ownership

In terms of institutional arrangements, all rural communities are required to establish water point associations (WPA). A water point committee (WPC) is elected, consisting of the chair, secretary, treasurer, water point caretakers and two additional members.

These local structures are recognised at all government levels and form part of the regional water boards that operate through the DRWS. The two main sources of rural water supply in Namibia are boreholes and a water pipeline scheme. In both systems, rural communities are responsible for managing the water points through the WPA, where they make financial contributions to access the water points.

## Findings from the study

### **Limitations of the supply-side approach in the face of water scarcity**

Limitations of the supply-side approach of water provision, combined with infrastructure maintenance at the local and regional authority levels in both countries, call for increased participation of communities in the management of their water services. This sometimes leads to water shortages, aggravated by excess demand for water and socio-economic challenges of poverty and high unemployment rates, which affect the sustainability of the current water provisions in both countries. This requires a closer look and further research to unpack the challenges.

In Namibia, although communities are still responsible for rural water management, monetary contributions for water access is a challenge that threatens the effectiveness and efficiency of the CBM programme. This is aggravated by socio-economic factors of low income, high unemployment and poverty rates in rural communities. As a result, the Namibian government is reconsidering the introduction of water subsidies for water operations in future.

### **Issues of cost recovery**

Despite the positive results from the reform on water management, the issue of cost recovery of rural water supply places a high burden on municipalities and water users. Therefore, the micro impact of rural water supply on rural livelihoods needs to be carefully assessed. Experiences from case studies have shown some benefits through partnership between a bulk water provider, the local municipality and communities.

### **Potential benefits of community involvement in rural water management**

Although there are mixed experiences from community management of rural water schemes in both countries, the benefits from CBM programmes outweigh the costs associated with them. This is true in situations where communities have taken initiatives to manage their own water resources, and are willing to contribute financially and otherwise towards the success of their schemes despite the prevailing challenges. Findings from community-managed programmes show potential benefits in terms of improved access, social cohesion, capacity building and sense of ownership. Since the water legislations allow for such arrangements, partnerships between communities, governments and bulk water providers should be encouraged to ease the burden of rural water provision in both countries.

### **Suggestions for going forward**

The authors recommend that existing water policies and regulations be updated to make provision for rural water issues. Both countries therefore need to design rural water policies and frameworks that are aligned to the needs of communities and national priorities to ensure effective implementation at community level.

There should be careful consideration of whether communities can afford to pay for water provision for sustainable access to water; it is important to identify the main challenges affecting water provision in both countries and to use the lessons learnt to design best practice models in consultation with communities.

Encouragement and support for those communities involved in water projects is an ongoing requirement. To that end, constrained local authorities should form and develop partnerships with respective stakeholders and communities. ■

*This project is funded by the National Research Foundation (NRF) and the Namibian Commission on Research, Science and Technology (NCRST).*

*For further reading, go to <http://bit.ly/1PJn7cX>.*

*Authors: Dr Selma Karuaihe, senior research manager, Economic Performance and Development (EPD), HSRC; Maria Molokomme, master's intern, EPD, HSRC; Jabulani Mathebula, former master's intern, EPD, HSRC; and Lineo Sakoane, PhD intern, EPD, HSRC.*