

Decentralizing water management: an analysis of stakeholder management of water in the Odzi sub-catchment area, Save Catchment Council

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ABSTRACT

The paper analyses the process of decentralization of water management to catchment and sub-catchment councils in the Save catchment area in general and Odzi sub-catchment in particular. The paper explores the different challenges being encountered by the new water institutions. The empowerment approach is used to examine the extent to which the formation of the new water institutions is enhancing the empowerment of different stakeholders in the management of water resources. The paper stresses the importance of proper representation of stakeholders on catchment and sub-catchment councils, the need for stakeholder involvement in catchment planning, the importance of financial resources in water management and the need for the government to stop land invasion by ruling party supporters.

Keywords: *stakeholder/s; empowerment; decision-making autonomy; self-reliance; participatory democracy*

INTRODUCTION

Close to 20 years after achieving national independence in 1980, the Government of Zimbabwe passed two laws aimed at guiding water reform in the country. These were the Water Act [Chapter 20: 24] and the Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA) Act [Chapter 20: 25]. The aim of the Water Act is to provide for the development and utilisation of Zimbabwe's water resources (Manzungu, 2001). The Water Act of 1998 also established stakeholder institutions, namely, catchment councils (CCs) and sub-catchment councils (SCCs), through whom stakeholders are supposed to be involved in the planning, development and use of water resources. By establishing stakeholder institutions, the Water Act aims at decentralizing water management to the users (WRMS, 2001). The ZINWA Act was meant to establish a national water authority and to provide for its functions (Manzungu, 2001). The Zimbabwe National Water Authority is expected to take over the management of water resources countrywide on a commercial basis as well as to provide technical support to the CCs (Chikozho, 2001). This article analyses stakeholder management of water resources in the Save catchment area in general and the Odzi sub-catchment area in particular.

The formation of multi-stakeholder institutions in the management of natural resources such as water, is a basically a shift from the centralised and state driven natural resources management regimes of the colonial period and the immediate post independence years towards decentralised and mainly community-based management strategy (Nemarundwe and Kodzanayi, 2001). The process of decentralizing natural resources management to stakeholders presents a number of challenges to the new stakeholder institutions. These challenges include proper representation of stakeholders on CCs and SCCs, lack of adequate financial resources, lack of proper catchment and sub-catchment planning, water permit application problems, ensuring that water users pay for the water they are using and political

interference in water management. Decentralization can be defined as a process that involves the legal transfer of authority and functions from central government to local institutions to plan and implement development activities and to manage resources at the local level (Manyurureni, 1995:19;). Decentralization is part of the overall thrust toward democratization because of its potential for empowering the public to govern itself (Rothchild, 1994).

The type of decentralization adopted by the government in Zimbabwe in the management of water resources is devolution. The process of devolution involves the creation or strengthening of sub-national institutions whose activities are in large part outside the direct control of the central government (Gasper, 1991:9). Local units or institutions of governance under this form of decentralization are largely autonomous and they constitute legal entities from central government (Manyurureni, 1995:14). Under devolution central government retains residual authority to indirectly control or supervise the activities of such units or institutions as the catchment and sub-catchment councils (Gasper, 1990:19; Makumbe, 1998).

Decentralization of the management of natural resources including water has been adopted in Zimbabwe mainly because excessive centralization of state power and authority has a debilitating effect on good government. It has been argued that decentralization have the potential of resulting in higher levels of participation in decision-making, development planning and implementation (Makumbe, 1998). Thus, decentralization, if properly implemented can lead to the empowerment of different stakeholders in the management of natural resources.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

This article uses the empowerment approach to analyse the extent to which the decentralization of the management of water resources is enhancing the empowerment of stakeholders or actors in water management. The empowerment approach helps to analyse the extent to which different stakeholders are involved in the actual decision-making and management of water resources. The ability of CC and SCCs in dealing with the challenges they are facing also demonstrates the level of their empowerment. Friedmann (1992:vii-viii) points out that an empowering approach is one that places emphasis on decision-making autonomy, local self-reliance and direct (participatory) democracy. Thus, decentralisation of any form must have as its end result the enhancement of decision-making autonomy, self-reliance and direct participatory democracy.

Decision-making autonomy refers to a process whereby the local people are able to make crucial choices through their institutions (without much external influence) and control the resources which can assist them in local development (Rowlands, 1996:87). This article examines the extent to which stakeholders represented on the catchment and sub-catchment councils make crucial decisions that enhance better water resources management. For decision-making autonomy to be effective in some instances, institutions must control financial and material resources. It is thus important to see how the new water user institutions have devised strategies to generate income and to acquire certain material resources so that they can fund and undertake water related development projects. The article will also look at the constraints faced by local institutions in trying to exercise their decision-making autonomy as a result of lack of material and financial resources.

Self-reliance refers to a process whereby an individual or an institution develops sufficient analytical, productive and organisational capacity to design and implement its own strategies which can improve the situation of either the individual or the institution and its members (Hartwig, 1999:58). There are several factors that determine the enhancement of self-reliance and these include the power to make decisions, the availability of financial resources and the availability of the right human resources that can help an institution to be productive and to design and implement its strategies. This article

analyses the ability of catchment and sub-catchment councils to undertake certain water development projects on their own for the benefit of all stakeholders in their areas.

Viera (1991:17) defines direct (participatory) democracy as a process based on the citizen's real participation in shaping society's projects and benefiting from their results. It is thus important to analyse the extent to which all interested stakeholders in water are participating in water related issues through the CCs and SCCs.

STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION IN THE SAVE CC AND ODZI SCC: MYTH OR REALITY

Stakeholders include all those who affect, and/or are affected by the policies, decisions and actions of the system; they include individuals, communities, social groups and institutions (Grimble et al, 1995). Stakeholders that are supposed to be involved in water management in Zimbabwe include Rural District Councils (RDCs), communal farmers, resettlement farmers, small-scale commercial farmers, indigenous commercial farmers, urban authorities, large scale mines, small-scale mines, industry and any other stakeholder group the CC may identify (GoZ, 2000). Prior to the passing of the 1998 Water Act, stakeholder participation in water resources was limited to those with water rights. Most of the communal and resettlement farmers were thus not involved in water resources management as the majority of them did not possess water rights (WRMS, 2001).

The Save catchment area covers three provinces, Manicaland, Mashonaland East and Masvingo. There are seven SCCs in the Save catchment area, namely Odzi, Upper Save, Lower Save, Macheke, Pungwe, Devure and Budzi. The Odzi sub-catchment area is in Manicaland Province and it spans over five districts, Nyanga, Makoni, Mutasa, Mutare and Chimanimani Rural Districts. The Save Catchment Council was formed in July 1999¹. The Odzi SCC was formed on the 8th of July 1999². The formation of SCCs in the Save Catchment area preceded that of the CC. The working group that was chaired by the Manicaland Provincial Administrator, which was responsible for setting up SCCs in the Save catchment area identified stakeholder organisations that would represent stakeholders in water issues on the SCCs and CCs. These stakeholder organisations were advised to present a list of nominations of representatives to the SCCs. The number of representatives for each stakeholder group that was finally agreed for the Odzi SCC was as follows:

Mutare City	1 representative
Redwing Mine	1 representative
Small-scale farmers	1 representative
Forest Industry	2 representatives
Commercial farmers Union (CFU)	2 representatives
Indigenous Commercial Farmers Union (ICFU)	1 representative
Traditional leadership	2 representatives
Irrigators (Small-scale)	2 representatives
Rural District Councils (RDCs)	2 representatives
Zimbabwe Farmers Union (ZFU)	2 representatives
ARDA	1 representative ³

The stakeholder representatives of the Odzi SCC held elections for the chairperson and the vice-chairpersons on the very same day it (the SCC) was formed. There were three contestants for the chairperson's position, two from the CFU and one from the ZFU. The chairperson of the CFU Eastern

¹ Minutes of the inaugural meeting of the Save CC held at 10.00 HRS on Friday 16th of July 1999 at the Wise Owl Motel, Mutare.

² Minutes of the inaugural meeting of the Odzi SCC held on Tuesday 8th July 1999 at Holiday Inn, Mutare.

³ Minutes of the inaugural meeting of the Odzi SCC held on 8th of July 1999 at Holiday Inn, Mutare.

District at that time won the chairperson's position after polling seven votes⁴. A member of the ZFU became the vice-chairperson since he polled six votes⁵. The other two votes were for the other member of the CFU. It is not clear why two people representing the CFU decided to contest for the position of chairperson of the Odzi SCC. The CFU representative who won the chairperson's position is a former chairperson of a River Board in the Vumba area of Manicaland. The whole exercise of setting up the SCC and electing office bearers was actually done in a hurry⁶. The stakeholder representatives might have been meeting for the first time but were promptly asked to elect office bearers.

The chairperson and the vice-chairperson of each SCC in the Save catchment area automatically became members of the Save CC as required by the law (GoZ, 2000). On the inaugural meeting of the Save CC the councillors elected the chairperson and vice-chairperson of the CC. The position was contested by the chairpersons of Macheke SCC, Odzi SCC and Upper Save SCC. The chairperson of Odzi SCC won the chairperson's position after polling six votes. The chairpersons of Macheke and Upper Save polled 4 votes each. The chairperson of Macheke SCC later won the position of the vice-chairperson after polling 12 votes.

A closer look at the composition of the Odzi SCC shows that the majority of communal and resettlement farmers lack proper representations on these two bodies. Since communal and resettlement farmers do not have proper representation on the Odzi SCC, it also means that they do not have proper representation on the Save CC. This is because of the manner in which the selection of stakeholder representatives on the Odzi SCC and other SCCs was done. The communal and the resettlement farmers are represented by the ZFU on the Odzi SCC and other SCCs in the Save catchment area⁷. This is despite the fact that some of the communal and resettlement farmers are not members of the ZFU. The fact that communal and resettlement farmer need more representatives since they are more in number were not taken into consideration. Moreover one of the ZFU representatives who was elected vice-chairperson was not from the Odzi sub-catchment area. He was in the Manicaland provincial executive of the ZFU. His area of residence is Rusape. This person served on the Odzi SCC from June 2000 to May 2001. He left his position after the Odzi SCC employed him as a training officer. The fact that someone who was not a resident of the Odzi sub-catchment area once represented stakeholders in this sub-catchment area raises a lot of questions about whether real stakeholder representation is taking place in all SCCs. This shows that no proper verification was done at the beginning in order to make sure that all representatives were from the Odzi sub-catchment area.

Information on the operations of the Odzi SCC to all communal and resettlement farmers is channeled through the ZFU structures and those who are not members might not get to know about certain water issues from the CC and SCC. One of the ZFU representatives on the Odzi SCC said it has been difficult for him to go round the SCC area to hold consultations with the people he represents on issues they want discussed by the SCC and CC. The ZFU is unable to provide resources for such an exercise. The only thing he does is to give feedback in their ZFU provincial meetings and advise other ZFU representatives from different districts to pass on the information to members in their districts. Issues that members of the ZFU want raised in the SCC meetings are also passed to the representatives in these meetings. As a result of this there is no constant contact between the grassroots and their SCC representatives.

⁴ Minutes of the inaugural meeting of the Save CC held on Friday 16th July at Wise Owl Motel, Mutare.

⁵ Minutes of the inaugural meeting of the Odzi SCC held on 8th of July 1999 at Holiday Inn, Mutare.

⁶ Interview with the Save CC manager on 18/09/01.

⁷ Interview with the Odzi SCC training officer.

Small-scale irrigators are also not properly represented on the Odzi SCC. There are two representatives for small-scale irrigators and both of them are Marange Irrigation Scheme. One of the small-scale irrigator's representatives said he is on the Odzi SCC to represent Marange Irrigation Scheme irrigators only. He said he does not know about the one who should represent the other irrigation schemes that fall within the Odzi sub-catchment area. There are over twenty small-scale irrigation schemes in the Odzi sub-catchment area. As a result of this he has never met people from other schemes to discuss certain issues that can be presented before the Odzi SCC or to give feedback from the meetings. The small-scale irrigator's representatives said they do not know about the stakeholder group that should represent informal irrigators. If the situation about the representation of small-scale irrigators on the Odzi SCC remains as it is, it would therefore mean that other stakeholders are not participating in water management and would remain disempowered.

The Odzi SCC and other SCCs in the Save CC are facing a problem of some stakeholders who are refusing to be part of them. Small-scale irrigators from schemes Mutambara and Nyanyadzi said that they do not want anything to do with SCCs, CC and ZINWA. They said that the whole idea of setting up these structures is to make them pay for water that comes from God. The Nyanyadzi irrigators have since barred the chairperson of their Irrigation Management Committee from attending SCC meetings. They said they are capable of managing their scheme since they are the ones who constructed it. The irrigators in Mutambara and Nyanyadzi accused the government of passing laws such as the Water Act and ZINWA Act without consulting them. Those interviewed said the government now wants them to be part of a process they do not understand. If stakeholders at Nyanyadzi and Mutambara irrigations schemes refuse to participate in CC and SCC activities it then becomes difficult to say that there is real stakeholder participation in water management. It is also difficult to predict the course of action that will be taken by the Save CC and the Odzi SCC so as to make these irrigators participate in water related issues with other stakeholders.

The other issue that is drawing back stakeholder participation on the Odzi SCC is that of constant absenteeism from the monthly meetings by representatives of the forestry industry, mining, RDCs, Mutare City Council and Agriculture Rural Development Authority (ARDA). The representatives of these stakeholders did not attend the September SCC meeting. This has been described by other Odzi sub-catchment councillors as a major drawback since all the above are major stakeholders who should take an active role in the SCC activities. This shows that some stakeholders are treating the issue of water management as not very important to them.

The Odzi SCC meetings are also a cause for concern since most of the time, a few individuals make contributions during discussions. I had an opportunity of attending the September 2001 meeting. Two councillors I asked after the meeting about why they do not make contributions during the meetings said that they were still learning from people from those with experience in water management. If certain individuals dominate discussions and negotiations in stakeholder institutions, the whole issue about stakeholder participation will lose legitimacy (Edmunds and Wollenburg, 2001). All stakeholder representatives must be given the chance and opportunity to contribute freely on all issues in meetings.

CATCHMENT AND SUB-CATCHMENT PLANNING

The development of sub-catchment and catchment outline plans is one of the challenges confronting CCs and SCCs. The Odzi SCC and Save CC have made little progress towards the development of their outline plans. Plans for the catchment and sub-catchment should have inputs from all stakeholders. Stakeholder input in the development of sub-catchment and outline plans is very critical

as the plans should be truly representative (Nhidza, 2001). Since the formation of Save CC and SCCs, no consultations have been held so far as a step towards the development of sub-catchment and catchment outline plans. The Odzi SCC does not have a plan of its own which is based on extensive consultation of stakeholders in the sub-catchment areas. One of the ZINWA staff members said the only thing that is there is a list of projects that the SCCs want done in their areas. The issue of an outline plan for the Save Catchment area was first raised in the CC meeting of January 2000.

Each and every CC needs its own outline plan which has to be approved by the Minister of Rural Resources and Water Development. This plan is the one that has to be used in determining the number of water permits that can be granted in each catchment area. At the present moment the Save CC is only giving provisional water permits. The vice-chairperson of the CC said full permits could only be given after the CC has an approved catchment plan. The task to develop a catchment outline plan has been delegated to ZINWA by the Save CC. When the issue of a catchment plan was discussed in a CC meeting on the 24th of August 2001, some of the councillors were not sure about the contents of a catchment plan. One ZINWA staff in the Save catchment area said they are now in the process of developing the plan and they hope to complete it in December 2001. Since the Save CC does not have a catchment plan, former water rights have not yet been changed to water permits. ZINWA and SCCs are charging water users levies based on water rights.

If a catchment plan that does not include the input of all stakeholders right down to the grassroots is developed, the whole issue of stakeholder involvement would have been missed by the Save CC and its SCCs. The Zimbabwe National Water Authority is supposed to only compile the inputs from the stakeholders into the catchment plan not to develop the catchment plan on behalf of the Save CC.

FINANCIAL ISSUES OF SAVE CC AND ODZI SCC

Financial resources constitute the lifeline of stakeholder institutions such as CCs and SCCs. The amount of financial resources at the disposal of the respective stakeholder institution indicates the potential to run its own affairs and the level to which it is independent of central government and other donors (Masuko, 1995:28). The availability of financial resources can in the long run, enhance institutional decision-making, self-reliance and participatory democracy (Friedmann, 1992:vii). Some of the local institutions in Zimbabwe have been severely affected by the policies of ERP to the extent that they are finding it difficult to develop their own independent sources of income within their localities (Kujinga; forthcoming). Catchment and sub-catchment councils have been formed during a difficult economic and political time which makes it difficult for them to develop their own independent sources of income that can enhance self-reliance, decision-making autonomy and participatory democracy.

Though the Save CC was inaugurated in July 1999, it was not able to hold meetings every month as required by the law due to the unavailability of funds for travelling and allowances for the councillors. As a result of lack of funds, no activities related to water development could be undertaken between July 1999 and May 2000. The Ministry of Rural Resources and Water Development and ZINWA are both not able to finance CCs due to their own limited financial positions. The Save CC later own secured funding from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) to sustain its operations and those of SCCs. Though this has been done, there is no guarantee that donor money will sustain the Save CC for a long time. Serious problems will emerge in the event of the donors stop providing money to the Save CC since it does not have its own reliable sources of income.

The Save CC requested for funding from SIDA for two phases, that is, the inception phase and the initial operational phase. The inception phase was intended to get the CCs and SCCs ready for full-scale implementation of their mandate in terms of the law. The Save CC was provided with a total of Z\$1 553 000 (US\$28 236) for the inception phase by SIDA. The funds provided were used to recruit a training officer and secretary, buy a vehicle, computer, printer, photocopier, two desks and chairs. The other Z\$402 360 (US\$7 316) was distributed to the seven SCCs⁸. After the completion of the inception phase in June 2000. SIDA has been funding the Save CC and the funding is due to cease in December 2001⁹. The Save CC further requested Z\$12 390 345 (US\$225 279) for the operational phase which was to last for 18 months, that is, from July 2000 to December 2001¹⁰. This money was granted and each SCC got its fair share of the funds.

The Odzi SCC got Z\$57 480 (US\$1 045) from the CC during the inception phase and more funding was made available under the operational phase. Since the operational phase began, most of the money of the Odzi SCC has been used to pay salaries for the sub-catchment manager, training officer, treasurer and metre readers, allowances for the chairperson and vice-chairperson and councillors. Between May and August 2001, the expenditure of Odzi SCC was Z\$376 266 (US\$6 840.50)¹¹. A SCC which does not have a reliable source of income uses this money. On the other hand Odzi SCC managed to collect Z\$43 925 (US\$798.63) in the form of levies between May and August 2001. If donor money ceases at the end of 2001, SCCs such as Odzi might face extreme difficulties in trying to sustain their operations.

Commercial farmers who had their farms invaded or ear marked for resettlement purposes have stopped paying levies to the Odzi SCC and to ZINWA. Irrigators at Nyanyadzi and Mutambara irrigation schemes have also rejected the issue of paying levies to the SCC and ZINWA outright. The farmers in these areas said no one has a right to charge them for the water they use since it is a God given natural resource. Nyanyadzi irrigators also asked a meeting with the President of Zimbabwe so that they can tell him that water does not belong to him but to God.

All these events are affecting the ability of the Odzi SCC to collect more levies that can help in its day-to-day operations. The Odzi SCC charges levies of Z\$5 (US\$0.09) per megalitre for abstraction and Z\$2 (US\$0.04) per megalitre for storage. These charges are the same which used to be charged by the former River Boards in the Odzi sub-catchment¹². On top of these levies, water users have also to pay ZINWA levy which is Z\$40 (US\$0.73/megalitre) for abstraction from a river and Z\$270 (US\$4.90) per megalitre for abstraction from a storage dam.

WATER PERMIT APPLICATION

The process of applying for a water permit is now easier and faster as the applications are made to the CC and not to the Water Court as was the case with water rights under the 1976 Water Act. If one wants to use water from a certain water source he/she is supposed to collect two application forms from ZINWA upon payment of Z\$2000.00. Some of the CC councillors complained that this application fee is too high for the communal farmers. One of the forms will be filled in by an AGRITEX official.

⁸ Save CC, Inception phase budget proposal, May 2000.

⁹ This was said by the chairperson of the Save CC during a meeting of the Odzi SCC on 14/09/011.

¹⁰ Minutes of the Save CC meeting held on 29/09/00 at ZINWA offices.

¹¹ Odzi SCC quarterly statement for May to August 2001.

¹² Circular by the Odzi SCC chairperson to all water right holders in zones EC1 to EO5, FM1 and FM2.

ZINWA officials will go and inspect the area where the water will be taken and then make their own recommendations. If ZINWA staff approves the methods of abstraction in their report, the applications together with the ZINWA report are referred to the CC which will have the final say.

The Save CC has not been dealing with new application for water permits. The vice chairperson of the CC said they want to first clear the applications that had been lodged with the Water Court before the passing of the 1998 Water Act. The applications for water permits from the Water Court are still coming to ZINWA offices. By September 2001, fifty-seven applications had been referred to the Save CC from the Water Court and 51 of these were approved by the CC. One of the Save CC councillors expressed fear that if they first deal with applications from the water court they might give more permits to white people who had applied to the water court for water rights. The idea of dealing with applications from the water court first has since been overridden by the catchment manager who directed his staff to issue new applicants with provisional water if they approve their applications. By September 2001, ZINWA had received 19 new applications and of these 14 were approved. The catchment manager did the approvals.

The move taken by the catchment manager to override the decision of the CC can be seen as a hindrance to the process of decentralization though the CC should be criticized for dealing applications referred from the water court. There is nothing wrong about granting new application permits. The only problem is that the Water Act of 1998 gives the catchment manager powers to override certain decisions made by the CC such as granting of water permits or extending them without the latter's approval. This might also cause friction between the catchment manager and the CC. Such a friction might difficult to resolve since the catchment manager is not answerable to the CC but to ZINWA (Chikozho, 2001). The Water Act thus tries to empower CCs to grant permits on the one hand but takes away that power with the other hand.

POLITICAL INTERFERENCE IN STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT OF WATER

The on going commercial farm invasions by former fighters of the war of liberation and other ruling party supporters have had a negative effect on the management of water by the Odzi SCC and the Save CC. The land invaders settled on farms where there are dams and canals. On a number of farms in the Old Mutare area the land invaders and some resettled farmers have been accused by the Odzi SCC for vandalising canals and using water without paying for it. The chairperson of the Odzi SCC was asked in a meeting on the 14th of September about what form of action to take against the invaders. He replied saying that he was not the President of Zimbabwe. He advised the commercial farmers to report all vandalism of canals and illegal abstraction of water to the police though he said was aware that no action would be taken against the land invaders.

The training officer of the Odzi SCC said that members of the ruling party in some areas have denied him to hold meetings in certain areas as he was suspected of having a political agenda. In Zimunya communal lands, the training officer was asked to go and get a clearance letter from the ZANU PF Manicaland provincial offices. The people in the area are said to be afraid of opposition parties as the parliamentary sit in the area was won by a candidate from the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) political party. This training officer who has been denied the right to hold meeting in some areas is the one on whom the Odzi SCC is relying on with regards to make people aware of the water reform process and to make them understand the importance of stakeholder participation and paying for water.

If the farm invasions continue, it will be difficult for SCCs and CCs to manage water properly as the invaders might be very difficult to control. Some of the invaders might continue using water without paying for it. This will then affect the ability of SCCs and ZINWA to collect levies. Commercial farmers

on the invaded farms might also become reluctant to pay their levies as they will not be sure about what will happen to their farms in future.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The need for all stakeholders, particularly the communal and resettlement farmers to participate in decision-making over water management is of paramount importance (Sithole, unpublished). Real stakeholder participation of the communal and resettlement farmers in the management of natural resources such as water reveals the success of any process of decentralizing the management of resources to the users. The fact that there is no proper representation of communal and resettlement farmers on the Odzi SCC and Save CC shows that real democracy in the management of water resources is far from being achieved. The stakeholders that do not have proper representation on new water institutions are thus still far from being empowered.

There is still a great need for awareness to be done so that the rural people understand what stakeholders are and what stakeholder participation is. This should be followed by better methods of choosing SCC stakeholder representatives. The representatives must know the people they represent as well. The case of representatives of small-scale irrigators on the Odzi SCC show that they (the representatives) do not know the stakeholders they are representing on the SCC.

The refusal by stakeholders in Nyanyadzi and Mutambara irrigation schemes to be part of SCCs show that some stakeholders do not understand the need to participate in water management issues under the new system and do not feel the need to participate on an equal footing with other stakeholders. The stakeholder representatives who are no longer attending Odzi SCC meetings might hold a similar belief. These might have their own valid reasons of not attending the meetings. This also raises questions about how the meetings are conducted and the issues discussed in the meetings. Some stakeholders withdraw participation as a form of protest (Edmunds and Wollenburg, 2001). The Odzi SCC has to find out why some stakeholders are withdrawing their participation.

Sub-catchment and catchment planning must begin at the grassroots. The catchment plan must not be the brainchild of ZINWA but of the stakeholders of Save catchment. If all the stakeholders in the different sub-catchment areas are going to contribute to the catchment plan, this will prove to be real participatory democracy and decision-making autonomy (Viera, 1991).

The government of Zimbabwe should be criticized for decentralizing water management to CCs and SCCs without providing the necessary financial and material resources. Decentralizing of functions to institutions such as CCs and SCCs by a government without providing the necessary financial and material resources can be interpreted as shifting problem areas from the center to the local level (Kujinga, forthcoming). One wonders how the government expected CCs and SCCs to function without initial resources. SIDA should be commended for providing funds to the Save CC, which it used for some of its operations and distributed some to the seven SCCs. Donor funding, is going to cease one day. It is now that the Save CC, Odzi SCC and other SCCs have to explore reliable ways of generating income. Self-reliance should be the ultimate goal of these institutions. If self-reliance is achieved by the Save CC and the Odzi SCC, they could also be able to achieve decision-making autonomy and participatory democracy.

The processing and approval of water permits at the catchment level must be seen as a noble idea as the process is now easy and faster. Applications, which are being referred from the water court to the Save CC, must be processed together with new applications. The CC does not know when the water court will stop referring applications to them. New applicants cannot be made to wait for the backlog to be cleared.

The government should stop the on going commercial farm invasions as these will undermine the functions of CCs and SCCs. If the invasions go on unchecked, CCs and SCCs might be rendered useless and powerless in some areas. The invaders can simply view the CCs and SCCs as opposition institutions and can persecute their members.

There is more that still needs to be done to make stakeholder institution a reality. Stakeholders without proper representation on SCCs and CCs must be properly represented. Extensive stakeholder consultations must be done prior to the production of catchment plans. There is a great need for CCs and SCCs to explore ways and strategies of generating income for themselves as donor money can be stopped anytime.

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