Caught in the Act: New Stakeholders, Decentralisation and Water Management Processes in Zimbabwe

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Sustainable Livelihoods in Southern Africa: Institutions, Governance and Policy Processes

Through work in southern Africa this research programme has explored the challenges of institutional, organisational and policy reform around land, water and wild resources. The case study sites have been in Zambezia Province, Mozambique, the Eastern Cape Wild Coast in South Africa and the lowveld area of southeastern Zimbabwe. Three broad themes have been explored:

- How do poor people gain access to and control over land, water and wild resources and through what institutional mechanisms?
- How do emerging institutional arrangements in the context of decentralisation affect poor people's access to land, water and wild resources? What institutional overlaps, complementarities and conflicts enable or limit access? What new governance arrangements are required to encourage a livelihoods approach?
- How do the livelihood concerns and contexts of poor people get represented in policy processes concerning land, water and wild resources in local, national and international arenas? What are the challenges for participation in the policy process?

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Summary

One of the responses to the global policy thrust of 'integrated water management' has been the establishment of catchment councils. Zimbabwe has not been an exception, and following the water reforms of the 1990s, a number of catchment councils were created. This paper looks at the functioning of the Save Catchment Council, and the institutional functioning of decentralised catchment management. With access to resources defined through the issuing of a permit, potentially many more water users can gain access to water resources for livelihoods than under the previous policy regime. But does this happen in practice? Despite the neat design of catchment approaches, their operation is very much based on who can negotiate most effectively. In practice, those who already have high levels of water access (in Zimbabwe, often larger-scale commercial farmers) are most likely to benefit, as they both dominate the council membership and are more effective at articulating their demands. Different conceptions of rights and entitlement to resources also affect how debates within catchment councils are carried out. The unequal playing field of water resource access and use, and the politics this inequality implies, therefore affect fundamentally the functioning of such new institutions, which are ostensibly designed to be participatory, inclusionary, and pro poor.

Introduction

Governance of water resources is a key global policy theme. Since the late 1990s, mainstreaming the concept of governance in water management has been led by the Global Water Partnership. The *Framework for Action* (FFA) document began this process by promoting a concept of integrated water resources management that 'promotes the coordinated development and management of water, land and related resources, in order to maximise the resultant economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems' (GWP 2000: 22). This approach sought to accelerate the devolution of responsibilities to water users and build transparent and accountable mechanisms for resource allocations (GWP 2000: 30).

Many southern Africa countries including South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe have had such an approach and bundle of ideas embedded within new policy structures and national plans in the sector. The Water Resources Management Strategy for Zimbabwe, for instance, entitles itself 'Towards Integrated Water Resources Management'. Mozambique's Water Policy states, '[Water's] allocation on a rational and sustainable basis requires an integrated management approach to maximise the benefits to the community both now and in the future …' (Republic of Mozambique 1995).

Regional networks such as the GWP regional Technical Advisory Committee and bilateral donors are also active in the uptake and

dissemination of ideas of water governance embedded in Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). Some donors within the region have also led the uptake of these ideas, including German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), which established an international IWRM Network that acted as an 'incentive for government and institutions to optimise water resources management'. Piloting began in southern Africa because of a perceived 'broad acceptance' by regional actors of IWRM concepts.'[1]

The emphasis on reordering the governance of water in the region is not surprising. All three key countries in the SLSA study have undergone rapid political change since the early 1990s. New political systems that are more inclusive and ostensibly representative have triggered demands for greater access to natural resources. In many ways the new policy frameworks reflect this situation. But it is important to ask whether the policy frameworks and their institutional vehicles, in practice allow a new, more inclusive system of resources governance to take place? Key questions addressed in this study include: How is policy is developing at national, sub-national and local levels? How are local narratives on resources access reflected in institutional structures? Which forms of participation are emerging and what are the formal and informal rules and 'events' governing access? What are the new structures and access by the poor to the resource? And how does IWRM 'fit' with wider decentralisation processes underway?

This study was conducted in Zimbabwe in the period 2000 to 2001. It focuses chiefly on the experience of water resource governance in one main river basin, the Save.

Zimbabwe's water resources

Water in Zimbabwe is becoming increasingly scarce largely due to the growing demands for domestic, agriculture, and industrial water needs (Chenje et al. 1998). This has also been compounded by rapid population increase. Surface water resources contribute over 90% to the country's water supply, of which rivers provide the largest proportion. However, river flows are annually and inter-annually variable due to rainfall variations. Surface water resources are supplemented by the building of dams. In 1998, there were 140 dams with a greater capacity of one million cubic metres, and 10,747 smaller ones providing more than five billion cubic metres of impounded water capacity (Chimowa and Nuget undated). Use of water varies from one dam to another, but it generally includes irrigation, commercial/industrial, domestic supply, power generation, and recreation.

[1] GTZ website May 2000. See also GTZ (2000a, 2000b).

Zimbabwe has a small number of wetlands that include floodplains, swamps, pans, and 'dambos'. Floodplains, swamps, and pans are not well developed. However, dambos are of great importance because they affect settlement patterns and are intensively used for cattle grazing, dry season agriculture, and water supply for domestic purposes. Groundwater is the main source of safe, reliable drinking water in rural areas.

Zimbabwe is divided into six hydrological zones, which represents the country's main river systems. The mean annual run-off for most parts of the country varies to a large extent both in time and space. Table 1 below shows the amount of surface run-off or mean annual run-off produced in these zones.

Table 1: Hydrological zones in Zimbabwe

Zone	Description	Area (km^2)	% of Zimbabwe's Area	Mean Annual Run-off (million cu m)	Mean Annual Run-off (mm)	% of Total Run-off	% of Co-efficient of Variation
A	Northwestern area draining into the Gwayi River, and small river draining directly into the Zambezi River. This zone also includes rivers draining into the Nata river and eventually into the Mkgadikgadi System in Botswana	102,560	26.7	1,756	17	8.8	130
B	The Southwestern catchment area of all rivers draining from Zimbabwe into the Limpopo	62,540	16.3	1,156	19	5.8	130
C	The northern catchment of rivers such as Mupfure, Munyati, Sanyati, and Manyame draining into the Zambezi	90,520	23.6	5,638	62	28.3	100
D	The Mazowe and Ruenya Rivers	36,710	9.6	4,133	133	20.3	90
E	The Save and Runde Catchment areas	84,550	22.0	5,954	70	29.9	90
F	Rivers draining eastwards from the Eastern Highlands, and into Mozambique. The major rivers are the Pungwe, Gairezi and Budzi rivers	7,300	1.9	1,272	174	6.4	60
Total		384,180	100	19,910	52	100	95

Source: Chenje et al. (1998: 221).

This paper focuses mainly on Zones E and F, where our case studies are located. The Eastern Highlands region, which is mainly Zone F, receives 1,200 to 2,000 millimetres (mm) of rainfall. The mean annual run-off for

this region ranges from 150 mm to 300 mm. Central Zimbabwe, which comprises the upper parts of hydrological zone E, has a moderate potential for run-off production, with mean annual run-off varying from 60 to 70 mm. The variability of flows from one year to another is apparent. The co-efficient of variation of annual flows ranges from 150 percent in the western part of Zimbabwe, to 100 percent in central Zimbabwe, to 60 percent in the Eastern Highlands. Thus, areas with low run-off have highly variable or unreliable flows, while well-watered areas have a moderate variability.

Seasonality of flows

Most of the rain in Zimbabwe falls from mid November to March. This also coincides with the period when the bulk of the run-off is recorded in all hydrological zones in Zimbabwe. The peak flow for all major rivers occurs around February and this is followed by a low flow season from late May to the beginning of November. Perennial rivers tend to occur in areas with mean annual rainfall greater than 800 mm. There are also few rivers that flow throughout the year due to contributions from groundwater.

Groundwater

The occurrence of ground water largely depends on the geology of a particular area. The rock formation found in Chiredzi is the karoo sequence. Groundwater is the most readily available and reliable water source, particularly in rural areas. An evaluation of groundwater conducted by Interconsult indicated that groundwater resources of Zimbabwe are suitable for the development of primary water supplies virtually everywhere by means of either dug wells or boreholes (Interconsult-NORAD 1985). Groundwater resources are mainly used for irrigation such as the Nyanyadzi, Mutema, and Musikavanhu irrigation schemes in the Save alluvial aquifer.

History of drought

Zimbabwe is a semi-arid country characterised by a dry winter season and mid-season drought during the rainy season. It is also prone to drought. The country has experienced severe droughts at least five times over the last 30 years. The impact of the drought in 1991-1992 was particularly severe and led to significant macro- and micro-level effects. The south and west of the country in particular were badly affected. One study estimates that household annual maize production dropped from an average of three tonnes in 1991 to less that half a tonne in 1992, with maize yields similarly dropping from over two tonnes per hectare (ha) in 1991 to 47 kilograms (kg) per ha in 1992. One of the most important coping mechanisms to compensate was the sale of livestock and, to a lesser extent, income from temporary local employment (Kinsey et al. 1998).

At a macro level, more than 40% of Zimbabwe's population was affected in 1992. Overall impact on the economy was substantial as GNP fell by up to 12% and inflation reached about 48% at the drought's height. At least 600,000 head of cattle had to be slaughtered due to shortage of browse and water. Impact on water availability was severe, causing 40% of water points to fail in rural areas and an overall fall in the level of the Kariba dam reservoir forcing substantial reductions in electricity generation.

Projected water scenario

UN population projections indicate that Zimbabwe's population will reach 19.6 million by 2025 and 26.7 million by 2050. It is also assumed that the amount of water potentially available for internal development in Zimbabwe is 8.5 cubic kilometres (cu km). This amount of water yield will be sufficient up to 2025, after that it will be necessary to find new sources of water. Assuming that Zimbabwe can utilise only 2.0 cu km of water from shared rivers, the absolute limit as regards water resources physically available to Zimbabwe would be reached by 2040.

This projected scenario would have the following possible (among others):

- reduced economic viability of water supply projects.
- reduced economic viability of water-dependent activities such as irrigation and industries.
- permanent water scarcity, and increased competition for water among sectors and sub-sectors, resulting in increased conflict, social unrest, and political disturbance.

However, this should be viewed as a 'worst case' scenario that serves the purpose of providing a framework for debate and discussions on water management.

History of water management and institutional development

The origins of institutional access to water in Zimbabwe are found in the political economy of the settler-colony. From the 1920s up to 1998, there existed a legal and administrative framework that governed the access to, and ownership, control and use of water in favour of sectional interests—namely commercial farming, and mining and manufacturing industries. The various pieces of colonial legislation, culminating in the 1976 Water Act saw Africans being legally denied access to, and use of, water for secondary purposes, such as irrigation.

Some of the basic principles enshrined in the Water Act (1976) are:

- All water, other than private water, is vested in the State and its use apart from primary purposes requires that a water right be granted to the user by the Water Court.

- During periods when there is insufficient water, the available water is distributed on the basis that water right holders who were allocated water earlier have to satisfy their needs first, before late water right holders can exercise their rights (priority is based on date of application for a water right), the 'first in right, first in time' principle.
- Water rights are granted in perpetuity and are attached to land. Thus, only individuals or persons with title deeds to land could apply for, and be granted, water rights.

The Water Act (1976) allowed owners, lessees, or occupiers of any land to construct wells or drill boreholes on the land. The amount of ground water abstracted was not controlled. However, the minister was empowered to declare groundwater control areas, in which case deepening or drilling boreholes with a depth greater than 15 metres required ministerial permission.

The administration of the Act was the responsibility of the Water Court, which was empowered to investigate the use of water granted in a right, and revise or cancel a water right for reasons of failure to beneficially use the right. The minister responsible for the Act was also empowered to declare catchments as public water control areas, where water rights could only be granted with his/her approval. In periods of water shortage the President was empowered to declare, for up to 12 months water shortage areas. In such areas, water rights can be suspended, or the amount of water allocated can be varied.

In addition, the management of water was vested in River Boards, which were based on the sub-hydrological zone and Intensive Conservation Areas. The main functions of River Boards were to supervise the day-to-day management of water and provided technical advice to commercial farmers on water issues and the application of water rights. In addition, they served as a commercial farming sector water watchdog. In terms of representation, river boards were composed of representatives from the commercial farming sector, town council, and manufacturing industries.

As a result of the 1976 Water Act, great inequalities continue to exist in the distribution of water in Zimbabwe, hindering sustainable economic and social development. Such inequities made the need for water re-allocation increasingly urgent, particularly given the drought-prone context of the country.

Water reforms in the 1990s

Water reforms in the 1990s have shifted fundamental principles and approaches to water management. These shifts include removing the 'priority date system', introducing the 'polluter pays' principle, and removing the concept of 'private water' as well as much of the differentiation between ground water and surface water. Furthermore, the preferential rights held by riparian owners had to be removed.

The recent politically charged debate on land reform put water sector reforms high on the agenda. In parallel to redressing colonial injustices in land allocation and distribution, so there was need to do the same with water. Water sector reforms 'sought to achieve an equitable distribution of water and sound management against a background of sound economic growth [for] the benefit of the whole country' (Matinenga 1999: 224).

It has also been argued that the water sector reforms were necessitated by the need to broaden the funding base for the water sector since government has been the major financier of water development projects in the context of a simultaneous increased demand on its resources and a sharp decline in allocations to the water sector (WRMS 1998: 1). Some argue that the debate on water reforms was a knee jerk reaction to the 1991-1992 drought, the worst in the country's history (Makarau 1999). The drought underscored the fragile nature of the water resource base and the need for a sustainable water resources management strategy that would be responsive to such an extreme event.

The water reform process of the 1990s began with the establishment of the Inter-Ministerial Committee in mid 1993, which reviewed the Water Act of 1976. The Inter-Ministerial Review Committee was composed of representatives from the Department of Agricultural, Technical and Extension Services (AGRITEX), Regional Water Authority, Department of Water Development, Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development, Zimbabwe Farmers Union, Commercial Farmers Union, an Administrative/Water Court Judge, and a retired judge of the Water Court. The Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Water Development chaired the Inter-Ministerial Review Committee.

One of the recommendations submitted to the Minister of Lands, Agriculture and Water Development was the enactment of a new Water Act (Government of Zimbabwe 1998, 2000). In addition, the review committee recommended establishing the Water Resources Management Strategy (WRMS),[2] housed in the ministry responsible for water development, to spearhead the reform. According to WRMS (1998), the government, through the water reform programme intended to:

- ensure equal access to water by all Zimbabweans
- improve the management of water resources

[2] The Government of Zimbabwe with the support of the Government of the Netherlands initiated the Water Resources Management Strategy in 1995. The inception phase from October 1995 to September 1996 established a core Technical Secretariat. The second phase of the Project, in October 1996 was started with the support from the Governments of Norway and Netherlands funding the Technical Department, and the Governments of United Kingdom and Germany funding the capacity building program in the Department of Water Development (WRMS 1998: 1)

- increase the protection of the environment
- improve the administration of the Water Act

A number of principles to guide the reforms were identified:

- The state would own all surface and underground water. Except for primary purposes (mainly for domestic uses such as cooking, drinking, and washing) any use of water would need the approval by the state.
- All people with an interest in the use of water would be involved in making decisions about its use and management.
- Water would be managed by catchment areas as rivers do not match political or administrative boundaries.
- Use and development of water resources would be carried out in a way that protects and sustains the environment.
- Water would be made available to all Zimbabweans regardless of race.
- People who use water would pay as well as those polluting the water.
- Water would be recognised as an economic good. This was the best way of achieving efficient and fair use, and of encouraging conservation and protection of water resources.
- The institutional restructuring exercise resulted in the transformation of the Department of Water Development into a statutory body, the Zimbabwe National Water Authority, (ZINWA). ZINWA would operate along commercial lines, generating its own resources for operation and maintenance. However, government would ensure that the poor and disadvantaged would continue to have fair access to water.

Objectives and principles of the reform

To achieve these objectives a number of changes to the 1976 Water Act were made:

- *The concept of private water was abolished.* All water is State water, since water belongs to the hydrological cycle thus it belonged to the whole nation. Water rights were no longer granted in perpetuity. Instead of a water right, a water permit would be issued to indicate that a person had legal licence to use but not to own the water. Permits were to be issued for a limited time sufficient to earn back money invested to develop facilities. Water rights that people held under the old Act would be changed to water permits within five years from the appointed date. Water permits would then be subject to renewal.
- *The concept of a priority date system related to the granting of water permits was removed.*
- *More representative assessors would be included at the Administrative Court.* All people with an interest in water would be involved in making decisions related to its management as part of the panel of assessors at the Administrative Court. Assessors would be communal, small-

scale and large-scale commercial farmers, members of AGRITEX and water engineers.

- *The polluter pays*. People who cause pollution of water would pay for expenses for removing the pollution.
- *The environment as a water user*. The environment was recognised as a legitimate user of water and provided an allocation for environmental purposes in order to assist in its preservation.
- *The new Act introduced stakeholder institutions*. It also gave them the responsibility to manage water at the lowest appropriate level. The establishment of Catchment and Sub-Catchment Councils was a major step in devolving water management to stakeholders and closely followed the principle of IWRM.
- *The Water Act (1998) established the Zimbabwe National Water Authority*. This parastatal was tasked with providing a framework for the development, management, utilisation and conservation of the country's water resources through a coordinated approach.
- *Water would be managed by catchment areas*. Catchment and Sub-Catchment Councils would be set up for all river systems and aquifers, and would be based on sub-hydrological zones. They include representatives from communal, small-scale commercial and large-scale commercial farms, mines, as well as representatives from industry, manufacturing and local authorities/municipalities. These would replace the River Boards and the Advisory Councils and be responsible for granting water permits.

Institutions in water management and the creation of ZINWA

The water sector was previously characterised by a multiplicity of institutions with diverse and divergent interests. In addition the various players operated from different ministries and departments:

- Central government institutions such as the Ministry of Rural Resources and Water Development through the Department of Water Development.
- Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing through the National Action Committee for the Integrated Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programme; Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Resettlement through the Department of Agricultural, Technical and Extension Services (AGRITEX); Ministry of Health and Child Welfare; Ministry of Environment and Tourism; Ministry of Finance; the National Economic Planning Commission.
- Quasi government/parastatal organisations such as the Agriculture and Rural Development Authority (ARDA), the Regional Water

Authority, the District Development Fund and Agriculture Finance Corporation (now Agribank).
- Local government institutions such as Urban and Rural District Councils that have a major role in terms of supplying water to their residents.
- Stakeholder institutions, which include Catchment Councils.
- Research organisations such as the University of Zimbabwe and the Institute of Water and Sanitation Development (IWSD).

The existence of many institutions dealing with water posed problems. For instance, operational policies differed from one organisation to another. These institutions existed in line ministries that were vertically integrated and did not have horizontal integration. Duplication of activities was widespread leading to inefficiency of the water sector as a whole.

The institutional set up was restructured to take into account the fact that government was no longer able to sustain the operations of the many institutions in the water sectors. The institutional restructuring exercise resulted in the transformation of the Department of Water Development into a statutory body, the Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA), which was tasked with several objectives:
- To improve institutional coordination in the water sector, recognising the existence of a multiplicity of institutions involved in water governance.
- To address Government's failure to sustain the operations of the many institutions in the water sector.
- To deal with the need for the sector to move towards self-sufficiency through internal revenue generation, thereby reducing its dependence on direct allocations from government.

In this context, the major task of ZINWA was to provide bulk raw and treated water to water users. In doing this it had to operate along commercial lines, generating its own resources for operations and maintenance of infrastructure. Figure 1 (next page) is the organogram of ZINWA.

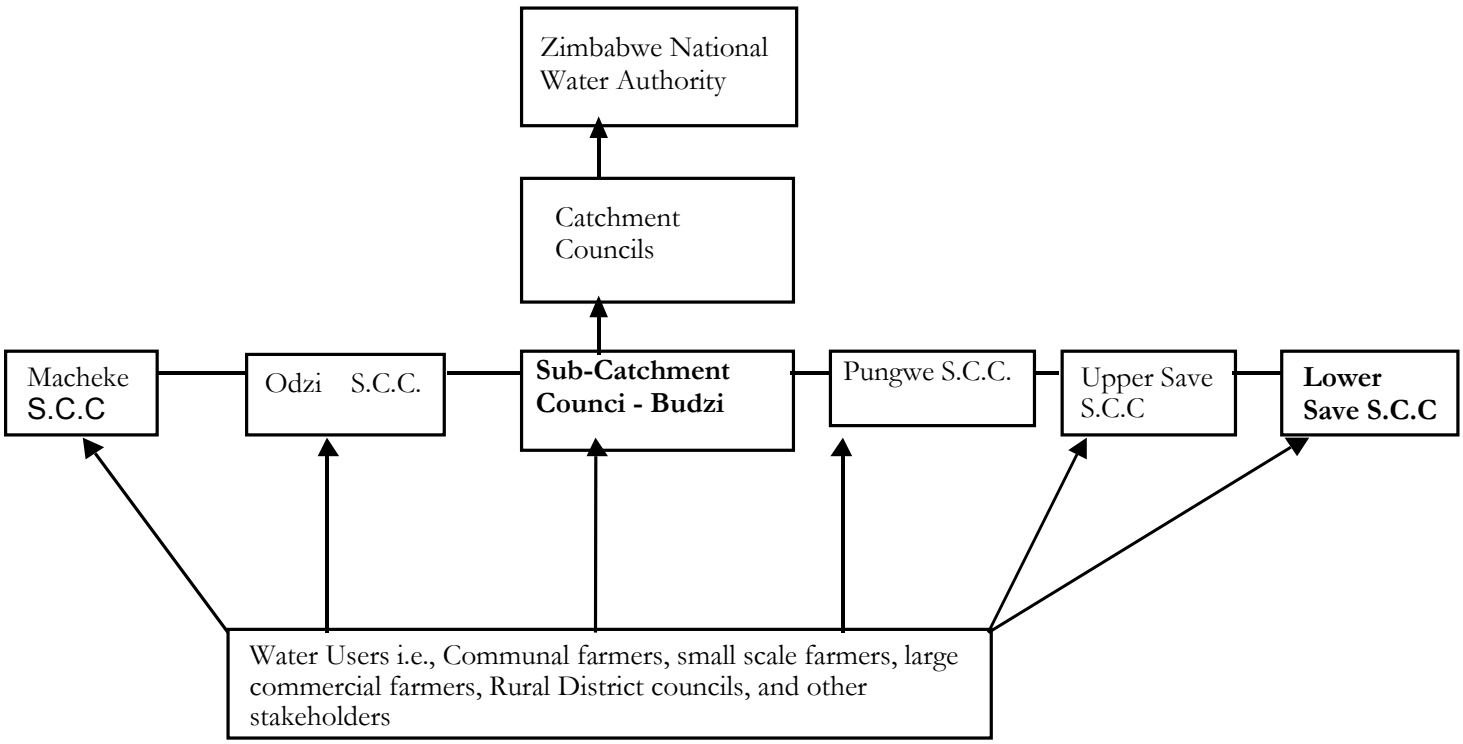
Functions of the Zimbabwe National Water Authority

ZINWA has functions at different levels:

- To advise the Minister on the formulation of national policies and standards on water resources planning, management and development, dam safety and borehole drilling, and water pricing.
- To assist and participate in or advise on any matter pertaining to the planning of the development, exploitation, protection and conservation of water resources.

- To promote an equitable, efficient and sustainable allocation and distribution of water resources
- To encourage and assist local authorities in the discharge of their functions under the Rural District Councils Act and Urban Councils Act, with regard to the development and management of water resources in areas under their jurisdiction and in particular the provision of potable water and the disposal of waste water
- To Provide technical assistance and advice to the Catchment Councils

Figure 1: Organisational structure for ZINWA, using Save Catchment Council as an example



Catchment councils

The Water Act of 1998 specifies the establishment of Catchment Councils. About seven Catchment Councils are being established in the major hydrological zones of the country. These councils are expected to oversee Sub-catchment Councils, and water user groups in their areas of jurisdiction. Sub-Catchment areas are based on sub-hydrological zone and on Intensive Conservation Area (ICAs).

Catchment councils' functions included preparing an outline plan for their river systems, determining applications and granting water permits, regulating and supervising the use of water, supervising the performance of functions by Sub-catchment Councils, and dealing with conflicts over water.

Sub-catchment Councils' functions include:

- Regulating and supervising the exercise of permits for the use of water including ground water within the area for which they established
- Reporting as required to the Catchment Councils on exercise of water permits within its areas
- Monitoring water flows and water use in accordance with the allocations made under the permits
- Assisting in the collection of data and participating in planning
- Collecting sub-catchments rates, fees and levies

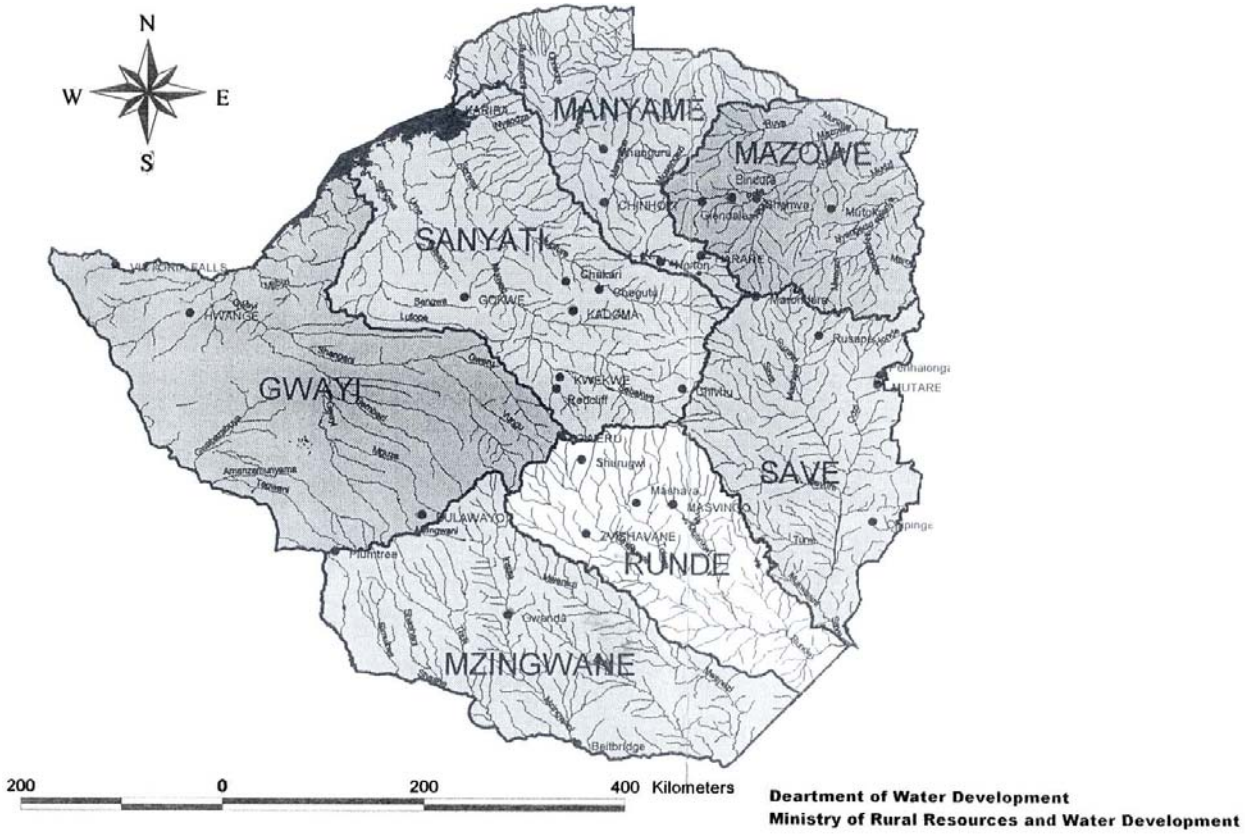
Catchment councils were established by an Act of Parliament as institutions that would be responsible for the management of water in a specified catchment. The logic for the creation and formation of catchment council is based on the river system of a particular area and is closely tied to the idea that basin-level integrated water resources management is the most efficient way of governing the resource. Thus an area with its own river system feeding, but not necessarily, into the major river of a particular area would form a catchment. For instance the rivers directly and indirectly flowing into Save River, would form Save Catchment.

To this extent, seven major rivers in Zimbabwe constituted the seven catchments, namely Gwayi, Manyame, Mazowe, Runde, Sanyati and Save. Below the catchment, there are sub-catchments comprising a collection of the rivers that form the catchment of an area within the major catchment. For instance, for Save Catchment, there are rivers that form sub-catchment of Save, namely, Budzi, Devure, Lower Save, Macheke, Upper Save, Odzi and Pungwe (see Map 1 below).

The boundaries of sub-catchment and catchment areas span administrative boundaries, and this has implications for water management. Catchment areas are managed by chairpersons and vice-chairpersons of the sub-catchment areas that comprise a catchment area. Chairpersons and vice-chairpersons of a sub-catchment area constitute a catchment council.

Sub-catchment areas are managed by representatives from commercial farming, communal farming, small-scale farming, Rural District Councils (RDCs), traditional leaders, industry, and both old and new resettlement schemes. These different stakeholders constitute a Sub-Catchment Council.

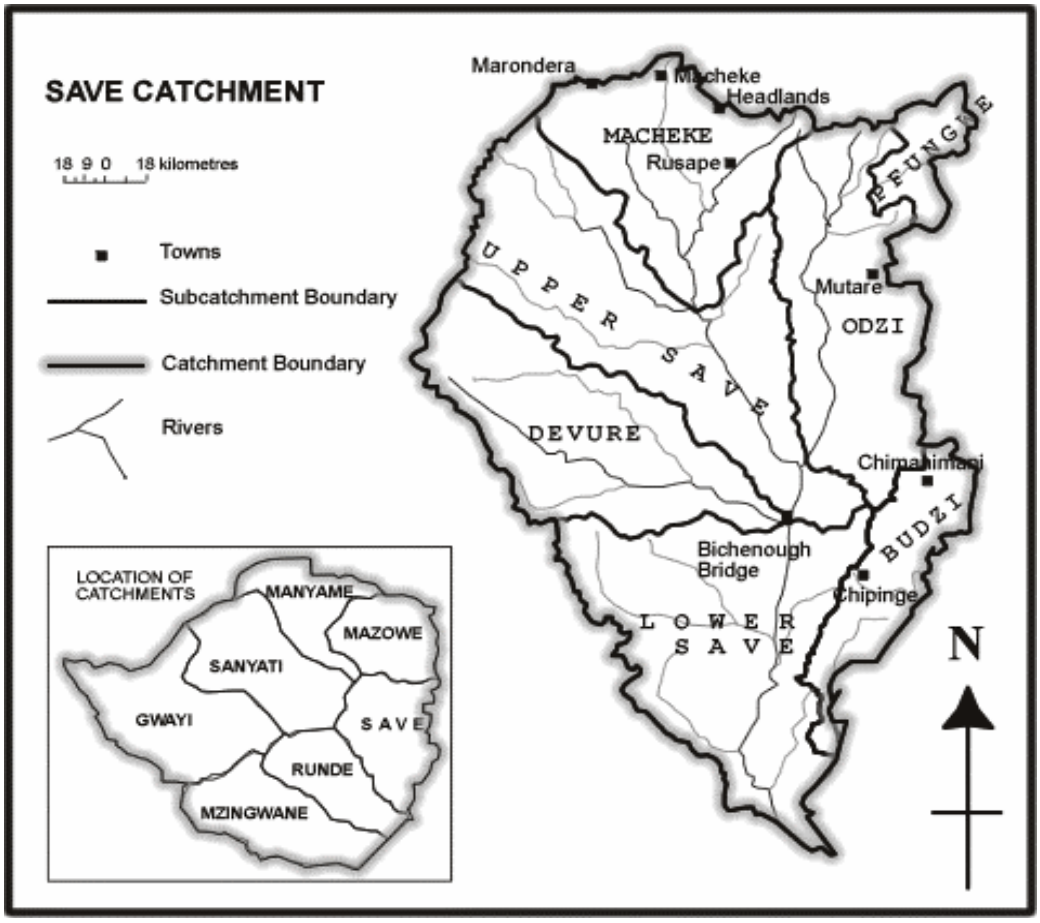
Map 1: Seven catchment councils of Zimbabwe



Establishment of Save Catchment Council

The Save Catchment Council was established in 1999, and is characterized by a diversity of water uses and users (Manzungu 2001). The catchment area covers parts of three provinces in Zimbabwe, namely Manicaland, Mashonaland East and Masvingo. There are seven sub-catchments that constitute Save Catchment which are Budzi, Devure, Lower Save, Macheke, Upper Save, Odzi and Pungwe (See Map 2 below).

Map 2: Save catchment area and its subdivision



Background to the case study areas

Background of Chipinge District

Chipinge district is located in the extreme south of Manicaland Province. It borders with Mozambique to the east and south, Chimanimani district to the North and Masvingo Province to the west. The district covers an area approximately 5,393 square kilometres (km^2) with a total population of approximately 420,000 and a population density of just under 80 people per km^2 in 2000. According to the 1992 Census, the district had a population density of just over 60 people per km^2, suggesting substantial recent in-migration. Increased population growth has strained the capacity of the district, particularly in communal areas, to expand food production, which has been exacerbated by frequently occurring droughts.

Settlement Pattern

The district capital is situated approximately 188 km south of Mutare, and just about 48 km from the border with Mozambique. Chipinge town has

a population of approximately 20,000 people. There are some business centres such as Checheche, Chibuwe, and Birchenough, which are located along the Save River, and are based around a local 'irrigation economy'.

Natural Regions

Chipinge District has all the five natural regions found in Zimbabwe. About 35% of the district falls under Natural Regions 1 and 2, the best agricultural land, making the district very agriculturally rich.

Table 2: Natural regions found in Chipinge District

Land Category	Natural Region and Area (Ha)						Total Area (Ha)
	I	IIa	IIb	III	IV	V	
LSCFA	138,621	--	2,609	6,286	7,626	24,337	179,479
SSCFA	4,822	--	815	2,578	1,015	2,942	12,172
Communal Area	7,962	--	11,787	27,125	112,863	134,720	294,457
Resettlement Area- Fast Track	9,837	--	6,148	3,714	--	30,000	49,699
Forest Land	2,549	--	--	--	--	--	2,549
Safari Area	--	--	--	1,250	6,641	18,209	261,000
Others (Urban and growth point)	7,000	--	--	--	--	2,843	9843
Total	170,791	--	21,359	40,953	128,145	213,051	574,299
Percentage	29.7	-	3.7	7.1	22.3	37.1	100

Large commercial farming accounts for more than 81% of the prime farming land found in Region 1. Communal areas, by contrast, account for only 5%. More than 37% of the total land is found in Region 5, which is the poorest agricultural land, found in most of the Save Valley. Regions 1 and 2 receive at least 1,000 mm of rain per year, while Regions 4 and 5 receive approximately 300 mm per year.

Economic activity

Agriculture dominates the economic activity of the district. The main crops grown are tea (on Tanganda Tea Estates dotted around the district), coffee, tobacco, maize, macadamia nuts, sugarcane, wheat, cotton, beans, and tomatoes (mainly on irrigation schemes in Region 5). There is also timber production, pig and sheep rearing, and dairy (Region 1). Irrigation schemes have boosted agricultural activity of the district. There are more than nine irrigation schemes in Chipinge (See Table 3)

Table 3: Average plot holding per person in Chipinge Communal Areas Irrigation Schemes

Irrigation Scheme	Plot Size
Mahenye	0.5
Mutema	0.1
Chibuwe	1.2
Chibuwe Youth	0.6
Musikavanhu	1.1
Maparadze	0.1
Mutandahwe	0.2
Vheneka	0.6
Tawona	0.7

In addition to communal irrigation schemes, ARDA has large irrigation schemes at Middle Save and Chisumbanje, which mainly grow cotton, wheat and maize.

There are plans to develop sugar cane production in the lowveld of Chipinge. To this end, 30,000 ha of land have been earmarked for fast track resettlement and already 6,000 hectares in Middle Save have been planned and demarcation or pegging has started. To complement the agricultural activity, there exists a small manufacturing industrial sector mainly involved in beer, milk processing, and confectionery.

Important to note is the fact the lowveld part, Region 4 and 5, of Chipinge District are found in Lower Save Sub-Catchment while the high to medium rainfall part, Region 1 to 3 of Chipinge district are located in Budzi Sub-Catchment Council. Thus irrigation of crops is the major agricultural activity found in Lower Save sub-catchment among White commercial and indigenous small-scale farmers. Table 3 above indicates the irrigation schemes found in the Lower Save Sub-Catchment Council of Chipinge District. However a more detailed analysis of irrigation schemes by district is found in Table 4 (next page)

Budzi and Lower Save Sub-Catchment Councils

Budzi and Lower Save two of the seven Sub-Catchment Councils which constitute the Save Catchment Council. Budzi SCC spans two Rural District Councils, Chimanimani and Chipinge, while Lower Save SCC covers 4 rural districts namely Chipinge, Chimanimani, Bikita, and Buhera. One of the major objectives of the Sub-Catchment Council is to bring together all stakeholders to manage water in a fair and just manner, affording every person equal access to water within a conservation framework.[3]

[3] Interview with Chairman Budzi Sub-catchment Council, 12/3/2002.

Table 4: District analysis of irrigation schemes in lower Save Sub-Catchment Council

Name of Irrigation Scheme	District
Mashoko	Buhera
Taona	Chipinge
Mutema	Chipinge
Chibuwe	Chipinge
Maunganidze	Chimanimani
Nyanyadzi	Chimanimani
Chinyamatuhwa	Buhera
Bonde	Buhera
Musikavanhu	Chipinge
Mahenye	Chipinge
Chibuwe Youth	Chipinge
Maparadze	Chipinge
Mutandahwe	Chipinge
Vheneka	Chipinge
Nenhowe	Chimanimani
Nembare	Buhera
Chisavanye	Chimanimani

In the past, water was accessible to the commercial sector, both agriculture and industry. The large commercial farming sector's water needs in the two Sub-Catchment Councils were represented by River Boards, while industry and urban residents were and are still represented by the water department of the Rural District Council. Small-scale irrigators were partially 'represented' by AGRITEX and subsistence communal farmers were not represented. The Sub-Catchment Councils replaced the river boards, which previously supervised the day-to-day management of water. River boards were based on the sub-hydrological zone and on Intensive Conservation Area (ICAs).

The institution of Sub-Catchment Councils sought to reverse sectoral involvement and management of water and put in place a broad based management concept that suited the new socio-political order. This new resource governance concept incorporated, among other things, decentralised and democratised management institutions and the principle of stakeholder participation. The idea was to have a more inclusive institutional structure with representation across the range of water users or stakeholders.

For both Budzi and Lower Save Sub-Catchment Councils, the following key water users were identified: commercial farmers, communal farmers, small-scale farmers, traditional leaders, private companies, resettled farmers and irrigators. Rural district councils that are found within the sub-catchment, and government departments – mainly AGRITEX and Natural Resources – and representatives from ZINWA also became members, through invitation. Further, with regard to Lower Save sub-

catchment, the commercialised government estates that are under the Agricultural Rural Development Authority (ARDA) constitute a key member in the use and management of water in the Sub-Catchment Council.

While the stakeholders mentioned above illustrate the broad composition of the two sub-catchments, there are important sub-catchment issues worth mentioning. For Lower Save sub-catchment, dam water is the dominant source of water and irrigated agriculture is the major agricultural activity. Thus, irrigators and related agricultural issues dominate the Lower Save Sub-Catchment Council. Administratively, stakeholders deal more directly with ZINWA than the Sub-Catchment Council precisely due to the fact that dams are under the direct management and control of ZINWA, and not the Sub-Catchment Council. On the hand, rivers are the main sources of water in Budzi sub-catchment and commercial farming dominates the agricultural activities in the sub-catchment. Consequently, commercial farmers and their related concerns dominate the Budzi Sub-Catchment Council. Due to the dominance of rivers in Budzi sub-catchment, stakeholders deal more with Sub-Catchment Council than with ZINWA.

Set against this backdrop, it is important to analyse the narratives that different stakeholders use in order to gain access to and use of water in the two Sub-Catchment Councils. While it is apparent that each group of water users has its own unique history, conceptualisations, interests and means of access to water, it is important to put into perspective and understand water dynamics that occur at Budzi and Lower Save Sub-Catchment Councils.

Water users' narratives on access to water

This section discusses production, exclusion, and cultural narratives on water in relation to several different groups, such as commercial farmers, small farmers and irrigators.

Narratives of production and exclusion

Commercial Farmers

The interests of commercial farmers mainly concern increasing agricultural productivity and the central role of water to this end. Commercial farmers in the Budzi sub-catchment engage in tea and coffee cultivation, macademia nut production, maize, tobacco, and cut flowers cultivation as well as ranching. Further, nearly all commercial farmers have (or had) water rights on rivers that flow through their farms. There are more that 500 water rights in Budzi sub-catchment, of which more than 90% belong to White commercial farmers. Some commercial

farmers have built dams to meet the water requirements of their agricultural enterprises. Many of these rights at the time of research were being converted into permits.

In Lower Save sub-catchment, White commercial farmers are mainly engaged in cultivating sugarcane, cotton, wheat, ranching and stocking of wildlife, most agricultural activity in this area was based on irrigation. As one commercial farmer stated, 'irrigation is the back-bone of agricultural activity in the Lowveld and the crops that we grow depend on irrigation and nothing else.'[4]

This was also expressed by another commercial farmer in Budzi sub-catchment area:

> *we need water to irrigate our crops. Most guys around here grow tea and coffee and they need water to irrigate. I have a 60 to 70 megalitre dam that I use for irrigation. If I don't irrigate, I am not doing business … Some of the water, I use it for ranching …When people invaded my farm, they went to the dam and broke it … water was flowing everywhere causing erosion … people were scooping fish. I don't understand why they are doing it.*[5]

Many commercial farmers viewed the access and use of water by communal farmers, particularly newly resettled farmers, as ending 'up in massive land degradation, siltation, and disappearance of rivers.'[6] To this end, the major concern with commercial farmers, Budzi and Lower Save Sub-Catchment Councils, and indeed the Save Catchment Council was with the growing of vertiver grass to curb environmental degradation caused by communal and newly resettled farmers.

The emphasis on vertiver grass is clearly illustrated in the Save Catchment Council reports of December 2001 and January 2002, which have nothing else but progress reports of vertiver grass programmes from the seven Sub-Catchment Councils and the logistics of transporting vertiver grass from one sub-catchment area to another.[7]

It was further recommended that, 'more vertiver grass should be made available in each respective sub-catchment in order to establish more vertiver nurseries at dams, water supply stations and other targeted points … Vertiver grass literature must be distributed to responsible persons.'[8] In addition, a commercial farmer in Lower Save sub-catchment noted,

> *Everyone, particularly communal and newly resettled farmers, in Lower Save sub-catchment should grow vertiver grass at the edges of their fields because it will*

[4] Interview with a commercial farmer, Middle Sabi July 2002.
[5] Interview with a commercial farmer 18/2/2002.
[6] Interview with a commercial farmer date? xxx.
[7] Minutes from Save Catchment Council Report for December 2001 and January 2002.
[8] Ibid.

hold back water, and that is better than building a dam … I am encouraging schools to get involved in promoting the growing of vertiver, the schoolchildren will take some to their homes. This will go a long way in promoting the growing of vertiver grass in this area.[9]

However, communal and small-scale farmers are critical of the vertiver grass programme citing the programme as undermining their need to understand the water sector reforms as a whole, their roles and responsibilities in the Sub-Catchment Council, and their increased access to water as described in the new Water Act. One small-scale farmer argued,

We are not refusing to grow vertiver grass. It is a good conservation programme, but the problem is, we do not irrigate using vertiver grass. I want water on my fields so that I can irrigate my crops because I am a farmer. Further, I want to know how the Sub-Catchment Council and ZINWA are going to help me do that. Vertiver grass discussions will come later.[10]

Water users from the agricultural industry, mainly tea, expressed similar commercial narratives about access to and use of water. Tanganda Tea Private Limited, which is the largest tea growing company in Zimbabwe, has six estates dotted around Chipinge district. With regards to water usage, the Director of Agriculture for Tanganda Tea Estates remarked, 'irrigation water plays a minor role in tea production.'[11] This view, on the surface, makes sense if one considers that most of the estates are located in high rainfall areas. However, if one considers the massive investment by Tanganda Tea Company in dam construction and irrigation technology and infrastructure on the respective tea estates, the logic of the assertion makes less sense.

In addition, if rainfall was adequate for tea production, why does the company have numerous water rights. Of the 41 water rights on Chipudzana River, 9 belong to Tanganda Tea Company, representing some 22% of the water rights on one river. Although most of the estates are situated on high rainfall areas, there is an obvious need to irrigate during periods of low rainfall and drought. This makes Tanganda Tea Company a major user of water, though they argue otherwise.

In addition, private companies view access to and use of water by the newly resettled farmers as 'theft'. One respondent from Tanganda Tea Company stated,

people who were settled upstream of Chipudzana River were stealing water and it is negatively impacting on us, downstream people. In addition, people are settled

[9] Interview with White commercial farmer, Middle Save, 5/7/2002.
[10] Interview with small-scale irrigation farmer, Middle Save, 5/7/2002.
[11] Interview with Managing Director – Agriculture, Ratelshoek Tea Estate, Tanganda Tea Company 19/2/2002.

on steep slopes and there is no conservation of the environment and this has caused the siltation of the Ratelshoek Dam.[12]

The conservation narrative was also enunciated by the representative from forestry, who noted the lack of conservation practices among the communal farmers and the newly resettled farmers in accessing water. He stressed the need to observe the 30-metre distance from the stream bank for the new water users.[13] With regards to access and use of water by the forestry industry, it was stated that the principles that guide the industry are defined by the world timber industry. Thus forest/timber products from plantations that pollute and destroy rivers are not marketed. The Environmental Officer at Charter Estate, Border Timbers, in Chimanimani reiterated this.[14] Further, both representatives of forestry noted that water plays a minor if not an insignificant role in their activities. The question then is, if water plays an insignificant role in forestry, what is their entrée into Budzi SCC?

In short, there are similarities in the narratives of access by commercial farmers in both Budzi and Lower Save Sub-Catchment Councils. Commercial and conservation interests underlined by a need to exclude communal, small-scale and newly resettled farmers inform the narratives of White commercial farmers and private companies. The different views on vertiver grass highlight the divergent interests of both parties.

Local Authorities

Local authorities – namely Chipinge and Chimanimani Rural District Councils – are also key stakeholders. They view their roles 'as users of water, sellers of water, facilitators, and implementing agencies of water development in their respective areas.'[15] The Rural District Council gets water from government or council dams and boreholes, and then sells it to industries and residents. For residents staying in high-density suburbs of Chipinge, mainly Gaza Township, the cost of water is Z$348 per 10 cubic metres (m^3) of water, and, for anything in excess of 10 m^3, Z$40/$m^3$. For affluent suburbs, those people who stay in town and industries, the cost of water is Z$830 per 10 m^3 and thereafter, the charges will be Z$48/$m^3$.[16]

If, on average, people living in the high density pay Z$2,500 per month for domestic water and about 17,000 people stay in Gaza Township, we can estimate the total water revenue raised from this population to be over Z$42,500,000 per month. In addition the remaining 3,000 living in the medium and low density suburbs of Chipinge pay a monthly average

[12] Ibid.
[13] Interview with representative, Wattle Company, Chipinge 18/2/2002.
[14] Interview with representative, Charter Estate, Border Timbers, Chimanimani, 19/2/2002.
[15] Interview with Chief Executive Officer, Chimanimani Rural District Council.
[16] Interview with Chipinge Rural District Council Water Engineer 15/2/2002.

of Z$6,000, and thus contribute Z$18,000,000 per month. These estimates exclude water revenue raised from the industrial sector of Chipinge Town. However, Chipinge Rural District Council anticipates to pay ZINWA Z$80,000 per year, 2002, for the raw water and Z$17,000 for borehole water. From this backdrop, selling of water is big and brisk business for Chipinge Rural District Council at a time when government's role of financing local authorities has been greatly reduced, to the extent that they use commercial narratives of accessing and using of water.

Further, as the RDCs' role shifts from selling of water to facilitating and regulating water development in the district, so too are their narratives guiding access to and use of water. These guiding narratives are:

- To provide adequate and safe drinking water for domestic use within reasonable walking distance
- To rehabilitate existing water points including the provisions of headworks
- To establish ownership of water points and to develop a system of local management for sustainability
- To strengthen decentralized planning, management and coordination of rural water projects[17]

In addition, the RDC views itself as the agency responsible for ensuring district food self-sufficiency by establishing irrigation schemes in communal areas of the district.[18] From this backdrop, local authorities state that they have a right to access and use water to meet the developmental goals of the district. As a regulator of water, local authorities are seen as institutions to be consulted by NGOs involved in water. The Chief Executive Officer of Chipinge Rural District Council stated, 'NGOs come to council first if they have a water development project for the district. All water development activities come through the RDC.'[19]

Most of the above stakeholders and water user groups have a history of involvement and institutionalised access to water. Commercial farmers, private companies, and local authorities were previously members of Chipinge River Board. Thus most of the user groups' narratives of access to water were still influenced by the older narratives of the River Boards, many of which were couched in conservation/environmentalism and criminalising terms.

[17] Chipinge Rural District Council Development Plan, 2000.
[18] Chipinge Rural District Council (2001) 'Chipinge District Strategic Plan for 2001 to 2005', July.
[19] Interview with Chief Executive Officer, Chipinge Rural District Council 19/12/2001.

Cultural Narratives of Access to Water

The following section focuses on the narratives used by traditional leaders, communal farmers, small-scale farmers, and the newly resettled farmers in gaining access to and use of water. It is critical to contextualise the narratives within the socio-cultural history of the people; through understanding the context, we begin to reveal the factors that shaped these narratives.

Budzi Sub-Catchment Council covers Chimanimani and Chipinge Districts, which are largely occupied by the Ndau people. A small portion, especially in the southern part of Chipinge district, is occupied by the Shangaan people. The Ndau system of worship is based on the belief of a supreme being, Mwari. This supreme being is also known as Musikavanhu, creator of people. Other names that identify Mwari in Ndau culture are associated with the creation of the living world, particularly rain, water, land, soil, and crops that grow on it.

Mwari is not worshipped directly but through an elaborate system of ancestral spirits of the land (*midzimu yenyika*). Below the ancestral spirits, there exists spirits of dynasties, chiefs, clans, and families. Both the ancestral spirits and those below them are revered as powerful and influential spirits and are usually associated with known territories. It is important to note that ancestral spirits have the overall control of local spirits within a defined geographical area, under the jurisdiction of a chief. For instance, Chief Musikavanhu occupies a defined geographical area, with local spirits – namely the dynasty, clan and family spirits that are all under the control of the paramount spirit, the ancestral spirit. Both the local and ancestral spirits control all the natural resources as well as people within its territorial boundaries. The people include not just the living, but the dead and the unborn. The term, which captures this concept in Ndau culture, is '*nyika or ndau yedu*', which, translated into English, means 'our land'. The English translation is limited in that it solely refers to the geographical or physical space and fails to capture the religious aspects and qualities of the land.

Thus the Ndau concept and definition of land, meaning '*nyika*' posits a situation where access to natural resources – in this case water and land – is governed by one's acceptance as a member of the community by embracing the living socio-cultural and political structures, which are in turn legitimated by the local and ancestral spirits. The local and ancestral spirits are involved in the governance of natural resources. Traditional leaders controlled and managed the natural resources on behalf of the ancestral spirits, with whom they could consult and seek advice. Thus access to natural resources is gained and governed by one's acceptance as the member of the community, and willingness to respect the ancestral spirits of an area.

From this backdrop, water is viewed by the Ndau people as a God-given natural resource, just as the land on which it is found. Similarly, just as land forms a central element in the Ndau system of worship, so does water. Water is viewed as more than the physical form in which it is found. It attains a religious dimension and becomes that natural resource 'the people receive when ancestral spirits are approached to intercede for a successful rainy season', and that natural resource which 'ancestral spirits make available in certain rivers and springs even in the event of the mother of all droughts.'[20] Thus the custodian of water is the chief and his people, and the ultimate owners are the ancestral spirits. The corollary is that traditional leaders and communal farmers have access to water because it belongs to them and their ancestors. Summed up by a communal farmer, 'It is a God-ordained right for us to use water; water is necessary for growing crops, drinking and so on … Our livelihoods depend on water and we need water in order to live.'[21]

In short, communal farmers and traditional leaders have different conceptualisations of water from those of other actors. Their conceptualisation of water is inextricably linked with their system of worship and their cultural traditions. The narratives employed by communal farmers and traditional leaders are best described as 'cultural narratives of access to water'.

Narratives of Production

Small-scale farmers

Small-scale farmers came into being as a social group during the land alienation process of the colonial era. When land was classified as tribal trust land, native purchase areas, and large-scale commercial land, some African people were given the privilege of purchasing land and owning it privately under freehold or leasehold. The native purchase areas later became the small-scale commercial farms. It is from this historical fact that small-scale farmers came into being.

With specific reference to Chipinge and Chimanimani districts, small-scale farmers emerged from missionary activities that had the responsibility of 'civilizing and Christianising the natives' (see, for example, Alvord 1929). Missionaries in Chimanimani and Chipinge had vast tracks of land that they used to build churches, schools, and hospitals. Part of the land was given to 'natives who had received Christ'. This was the basis under which Chinyaduma and Gwenzi small scale farming areas were established.

In addition, the Africans that were given land in those areas would have abandoned their native religion and practices and then converted to

[20] Interview with Chief Dzingire 2/4/2002.
[21] Interview, Ndima Communal Area, Chimanimani 1/4/2002.

Christianity. The conversion to Christianity would also entail adoption of the attendant 'Western/modern cultural practices'. Once a person was converted to Christianity, and had adopted Western cultural practices, the person would also be required to adopt 'modern' methods of farming. The adoption of modern methods of agriculture was accompanied by farmers' training courses on completion of which small-scale farmers were awarded the Master Farmer Certificates.

Small-scale farmers stated that they wanted to have access to water to improve agricultural productivity. In addition, they wanted clean and safe water for domestic use. The narratives about water and ancestral spirits were dropped and ultimately rejected due to the conversion to Christianity. In addition, small-scale farmers had water rights based on the right to land. In short small-scale farmers gained access to water based on the agricultural production narratives.

However, it is important to point out that, while they used narratives of agricultural productivity, most small-scale farmers, despite conversion, acknowledged the existence of ancestral spirits in water governance.

The aforementioned narratives are largely true up to 1998. The year 1998-1999 marked a change in water legislation. The legislation sought to reverse ownership and use patterns of water and to include more stakeholders in water management. The changes in water legislation were accompanied by changes in narratives of gaining access to water as different stakeholders were positioning themselves to benefit from water reforms. The stakeholder positioning and narratives of access were greatly influenced by the land reforms. It is important to note that the land reform process gave birth to new water users, namely the war veterans and the newly resettled farmers.

For large-scale commercial farmers and private industries (mainly tea) there were no significant changes in their narratives. However, there was a strengthening of the conservation narratives, which was partly justified by the activities of the newly resettled farmers on acquired land. This was also confirmed by one observer:

> *As soon as the people are resettled on farms under this fast-track [resettlement] scheme, the first thing they do is to cut all the trees, for firewood, for poles used to build the houses. This is not good for the environment. There is need to inform the new farmers about the environment. AGRITEX is trying its best to have environmental awareness campaigns with new farmers.*[22]

Despite the fact that there is a Conservation and Environment Policy Document for Fast-Track Resettlement Schemes, its adoption in the programme is absent. However, these narratives were not used with a genuine concern for environmental protection, but as a continued

[22] Interview, Chipinge 4/4/2002.

justification for excluding new entrants in water management. They were also a commentary on the fast-track land reform. The term 'continuity with change' aptly describes the narratives used by commercial farmers in gaining access to and use of water.

Small-scale farmers, particularly those involved in tea growing, are widening their narratives to include meaningful and effective participation in water management, though still maintaining the agricultural productivity narrative. Small-scale farmers are increasingly aware of the existence of Budzi SCC as an institution that governs access to and management of water, and additionally they are calling for more information on how the Sub-Catchment Council operates, and how they can get involved and represent their interest in accessing and using water. Small-scale farmers' knowledge of Budzi SCC is largely regarding payments they have to make for water. This was noted by one small-scale farmer who stated, 'I came to know of Budzi SCC when I saw a young man on a motorcycle who had come with a receipt for water charges … which I knew nothing about' (see Picture 1 below).[23]

Picture 1: Mr. Dhlakama, a small-scale farmer, shows researchers ZINWA water receipts

Photo by S. Mtisi, 2002

[23] Interview with Mr. Dhlakama, Gwenzi.

Another small-scale farmer stated, 'Last year the levy was Z$200 and this year it is Z$2000. I don't know how it was raised and why? But whether I know it or I don't, I have to pay.'[24]

Further, an interview with a representative of Chinyaduma Farmers Cooperative revealed that they were not aware of the water sector reforms and the activities taking place at Budzi SCC. The representative stated that,

> *we as Chinyaduma Farmers' Coop don't know what is happening at Budzi, … we are forced to pay for water … we don't know why we are paying … we don't know what is going on … we want to use water in Chako Dam to irrigate our tea but we don't know what to do to get the water. I'm told that we should apply to Budzi, that's why I came here [Budzi SCC offices] to be get an explanation … We are not refusing to pay because there is nothing for free these days, but what we want to know is why we are paying and how can we have one small-scale farmer to get involved.*[25]

Similarly, communal farmers and traditional leaders have maintained their cultural narratives to gain access to water. There is still a belief that water should be accessed free of charge: 'Why pay for water and whose water is it anyway? … If you can show and prove to me that the water I am drinking is ZINWA water I will pay … This is our water from time immemorial.'[26]

A communal farmer from the same area noted, 'We don't irrigate our crops … so we don't pay. We receive enough rainfall for our crops … We still get water the way we used to.'[27]

In short, communal farmer attitudes and narratives are characterised by frequent refusal to pay—or disquiet in paying—which is largely due to their lack of knowledge and information of the water reforms. Despite the fact that some communal farmers despise the introduction of water charges in mediating access to water, some want to take an active role in the management of water.

Irrigators

Irrigated agriculture is common in the two sub-catchment areas, though there are significant differences in nature and extent. In Budzi sub-catchment area, particularly in Chimanimani, there exists traditional gravity-fed irrigation, commonly practised by communal farmers. Traditional gravity-fed irrigation involves a farmer digging a small ridge to

[24] Interview, Mundanda 16/2/2002.
[25] Interview, Budzi SCC Offices 2/4/2002.
[26] Interview, Ndima Communal Area 3/4/2002.
[27] Interview, Ndima Communal Area 3/4/2002.

abstract water from a river to his/her fields. Owing to the terrain and force of gravity, water flows from the abstraction point to the field. On more developed irrigation systems, canals are constructed from a river to the field edge, and water is then flooded onto the fields using pipes. The picture below illustrates this type of irrigation.

Picture 2: Flood Irrigation at Chibuwe Irrigation Scheme

For irrigators the need for access to and use of water is couched in subsistence and productive terms. A communal farmer in Chimanimani noted, 'I need water to irrigate my crops so that I will be able to feed my family and sell the remainder in order to raise money for my children's education.'[28]

This was similarly reported by members of Chibuwe Irrigation Scheme, who unanimously stated that their membership of the irrigation scheme was driven by the desire to grow crops for sale throughout the year. One member summed up by stating, 'My profession is farming and irrigation is central to my profession. Just like any other profession, I should grow enough to earn a decent income.'[29]

The irrigators – large-scale commercial farmers, small-scale commercial farmers, and members of irrigation schemes – shared narratives of production in explaining their access to and use of water. This was evident in the fact that agricultural productivity of the lowveld, where irrigation activity of Lower Save sub-catchment is mainly found, is largely dependent on irrigation. Members of irrigation schemes unanimously noted that irrigation had opened income opportunities to the farmers who on average produced a maximum of 2,500 kilograms of beans per hectare and a minimum of 1,500 kilograms per season. The price of beans per kilogram increased from Z$19 in 1999 to Z$55 in 2001.[30] Based on these figures, the maximum and minimum amount that could be earned per hectare per season is approximately Z$137,500 and Z$82,500 respectively.

War veterans

A significant addition to the growing number of water users are war veterans found on newly-resettled schemes. The recent salience of the war veterans should be viewed in the context of political developments in Zimbabwe during the late 1990s. The 1990s witnessed the ascendancy of war veterans as an organised political pressure group, which demanded, among other things, compensation for their role in the 1970s war of liberation and land. While their roles, activities, agitation and narratives surrounding access to land are pronounced, the same cannot be said of water. There is markedly softer rhetoric and less militant approach on

[28] Interview with a communal farmer, Chimanimani 20/1/2002.
[29] Interview with Chibuwe Irrigation Scheme Member 18/6/2002.
[30] Interview with Agritex Officer Musikavanhu Irrigation Scheme 23/03/2002.

issues of access to water. Commenting on the seeming lack of interest by war veterans on water issues one informant stated,

> *water is a complicated natural resource … it is fluid and fugitive … one would not expect water invasions, characterised by dam invasions, river invasions and so on. The war veterans need to tackle it from a completely different angle. The politicians have not seen that angle, so nor are the war veterans. I see it more in terms of its management than the water invasions you asked about. This is totally different from the land invasion style.*[31]

Despite the fact that the statement above is largely true, there are instances of newly-resettled farmers and war veterans gaining access to water from dams on the farms where they are resettling. It is in such instances that narratives of access to land have been extended to water. The Chairperson of Zimbabwe National Wealth Recovery Matsiyo Project, an association of 105 newly resettled farmers at Wolfscrag farm, stated,

> *we do not want to steal this dam from him (a commercial farmer), but to share with him the water, just as we are sharing the farm. We just want to share the water between him and us. There is enough water in the dam for all of us …*[32]

What is evident in narratives of access to and use of water is that there were significant changes from the late 1990s onwards among small-scale farmers, communal farmers, war veterans and the newly resettled farmers. While commercial farmers and private companies reiterated and reinforced environment and conservation narratives, the latter group composed of small-scale farmers, communal farmers and newly resettled farmers expressed the desire for more information in order to understand the water reforms and the how they could take an active and effective role in water management. Such narratives can aptly be described as 'narratives of involvement', that is, this group of water users raised issues, concerns, reasons, and justifications for getting involved and effectively participating in gaining access to and use of water.

Institutional access to water among water user groups

From the 1920s up to 1998, there existed a legal and administrative framework that governed the access to, and ownership, control, and use of water in favour of sectional interests – namely commercial farming, and mining and manufacturing industries. Communal people were legally denied access to, and use of, water for secondary purposes, such as irrigation. Colonial legislation, culminating in the 1976 Water Act,

[31] Informant refused to be identified.
[32] Interview with Chairman and First Secretary of Zimbabwe National Wealth Recovery, Matsiyo Project 1/4/2002.

provided legal clothing to indirect and direct denial of the right of Africans to access water. The indirect denial was characterised by the tying together of land and water rights. This is evident in the 1976 Water Act, which gave riparian rights to landowners. Thus, only individuals or persons with title deeds to land could apply for, and be granted water rights. Since communal people did not have title deeds to land it was thus impossible for them to have water rights.

Direct denial of access to water was evident in the colonial government's concerted effort at establishing legislation that alienated Africans from fertile land, close to water sources, and their physical resettlement on Native Reserves. Native Reserves, later called communal areas, where Africans were resettled often had poor water sources and low and erratic rainfall.

Since communal farmers did not have water rights, on the basis that they did not have land rights, they were viewed as having no stake and interest in water management issues by the colonial administration. This fact was starkly expressed in colonial legislation on both land and water, which legally denied communal farmers access to modern institutions involved in water management. In addition, communal farmers were a disjointed group with no formal organisation to represent their interests in water management. They were denied access to the River Boards because they had no water rights. Membership of river boards was based on both land and water rights. This situation existed for more than one and a half decades after independence.

Although communal farmers were denied access to water through modern institutions, they had their own traditional institutions that governed access to and use of water. These traditional institutions were—and still are—based on 'traditional or cultural narratives'. Traditional institutions, namely family and traditional leadership, are the central institutions in 'traditional or cultural narratives' used in gaining access to and use of water.

On the premise that water is 'God-given' and belongs to ancestral spirits and thus to the community, there are no formal institutional routes used in gaining access to water. Water belongs to everyone and can be used for domestic and agricultural purposes. Agricultural purposes include irrigating small gardens and fields. However, in accessing water for domestic purposes there are rules that are informally agreed upon governing access to water. These informal rules are largely based on the sacred nature of water. With specific reference to natural springs these rules include, *inter alia*:

- people are not allowed to wash and/or bathe at the water source
- no livestock is allowed to drink at the water source
- no building using cement
- no putting in metal or plastic pipes

- in some cases no use of modern utensils, such as a metal bowls in fetching water
- no improper behaviour, including sexual activity, at or near or the natural spring.

Breaching of any of the aforementioned traditional rules would cause the ancestral spirits, which manifest themselves in snakes or bees, to chase the offender. The chasing of the offender normally occurs if the crime is a minor one, like bathing at the spring. In the event of using modern materials at the spring, it is stated that the natural spring will dry up.

In addition to these traditional rules, there are guidelines that govern the proper operation of the natural spring. It was stated that, in order for the spring to continual provide water through out the year, the chief, the headman, and the community should conduct annual traditional ceremonies to appease the ancestral spirit of the land. The water or natural spring appeasement ceremonies can be held together with the rainmaking ceremony. Failure to carry out such ancestral appeasement ceremonies would normally result in misfortune, such as drought or the disappearance of people. When asked about the latter case, the respondents stated,

> *people normally disappear at natural springs or at rivers, those who will witness the disappearance will tell you that they had seen* njuzu *(mermaid). In the event of such disappearance, the people will not mourn. However, the Chief or a traditional healer, will conduct some rituals begging forgiveness from the traditional water spirits. If the ancestral spirits forgive, the person will be found and he or she will become a traditional healer.*[33]

In short, access to water through traditional institutions and the associated narratives, gives water a transcendental quality that links the livelihoods and religious aspects of communal people in the two sub-catchment areas. Given this background, colonial legislation and resultant institutions limited access to water by Africans (both communal and small-scale farmers). This limitation was compounded by the establishment of modern institutions governing access to and use of water. Further, the introduction of modern institutional routes to water was a new phenomenon for both small-scale and communal farmers.

Small-scale farmers

Historically, small-scale farmers had access to Native Purchase Land and thus had title deeds to their land. Title deeds to land made it possible for small-scale farmers to have water rights. Despite the fact that small-scale farmers had water and land rights, they were not represented on the River Boards. While there was an effort to introduce small-scale farmers to 'modern agriculture' that is, 'to be made just like White commercial

[33] Interview with Headman Dzingire 2/4/2002.

farmers'[34] there was no effort to include them on the River Boards, just like White commercial farmers. This fact notwithstanding, small-scale farmers could access the River Boards when applying for a water right.

What emerged from the case study was that there are two types of small-scale farmers. One group, 'makorwa', was converted to Christianity and is found in Chinyaduma, Mount Selinda Mission Farm and Gwenzi areas. This group denounced the traditional system of worship, traditional narratives and associated institutional routes to water. Yet, they had limited access to the modern institution surrounding access to and governance of water. This was the case despite the fact that they had adopted modern agricultural methods and its associated narratives. In short, their institutional route to water, both modern and traditional, was limited for two main reasons. Firstly, they had rejected the traditional conceptual thinking of water so traditional routes were closed for them. Secondly, modern institutions were limited because they were denied formal representation on River Boards.

The second group was composed of small-scale farmers who bought land in Native Purchase Areas and who were not necessarily converted Christians. This group acknowledged and accepted traditional narratives surrounding access to and use of water, and thus could use traditional institutional routes. In addition, they acknowledged and accepted the existence of the River Board and Administrative Court, and similarly used this institutional route in gaining access to water. These small-scale farmers used different institutional routes depending on their perception of their situation and which route would be in their best interest. A farmer in this group would use the traditional route and narratives when the farmer perceived that the situation demanded the traditional viewpoint and that he or she would benefit by using traditional institutional route. By the same token, the farmer would navigate modern institutions if he or she perceived there to be benefits that would accrue from that route.

War veterans

War veterans and the newly-resettled farmers are a new and emerging group of water users, and have no history of institutional access to water. They have to be calculating, enterprising and innovative in finding institutional routes to water. This largely emanates from the fact that the emotive and politically-charged debates about land, land redistribution, and associated narratives of access to land were not extended to water. While there is an elaborate array of political institutions governing access to land, from the farm level (for example, the base commanders and seven member committees) to the district level (for example, the district land committee) (Chaumba, Scoones and Wolmer 2003), there apparently are not any similar structures governing access to water. Thus there is a tendency by the war veterans and newly-resettled farmers to use some of

[34] Interview, Mundanda 16/2/2002.

the institutions that play a central role in land allocation in applying for water permits.

Box 1: Applying for water permits for newly resettled farmers

We are 105 people resettled here, at Wolfscrag Farm. We came here because we need land. After that, we cultivated our crops. We sat as a committee to decide about the dam that is on the farm. We want to establish an irrigation scheme, and we are thinking of irrigating 60 hectares. We went and spoke to Mr. Trevor Gifford about the dam. We told him that, we do not want to steal this dam from him but to share with him the water, just as we are sharing the farm. We just want to share the water between him and us. There is enough water in the dam for all of us.

After that we went to Chipinge Rural District Council to get confirmation that we are residing on the farm and we are members of the Matsiyo Project. We got letter of confirmation and then we went to Budzi Sub-Catchment Council where we paid Z$2000 for the Water Permit Application. After we paid the application fee, I was told by people at Budzi Sub-Catchment Council to go and inform Mr. Trevor Gifford that we want to get water from the dam. Whether or not he accepts that does not matter to me, what matters is that I have informed him.

We also approached AGRITEX to come and take a look and see how we can draw matter for irrigation. We are still in the process of applying.

Source: Interview, resettled farmer

Commercial farmers and Private Companies/RDC

Commercial farmers and private companies have a history of institutional access to water, based on the historical link between land and water rights. Individuals or persons with title deeds to land, were granted water rights. These individuals and persons with water rights could form a River Board, which would be tasked with the day to day running and management of water in a catchment area. In addition, the river board gave technical advice to commercial farmers on water issues and the application of water rights. The River Boards were composed of representatives from the commercial farming sector, private companies, manufacturing and mining industries and the Rural District Council, in effect representing White commercial interests in both agriculture and industry. To this extent, they provided an institutional route to gaining access to water for White commercial interests.

The case of Chipinge River Board

River Boards remained functional in water management up to 1998, when the Law establishing the Zimbabwe National Water Authority was passed, marking a new dispensation in water management in Zimbabwe.

With the advent of the Water Act of 1998, the Chipinge River Board came to be known as Budzi Sub-Catchment Council. The functions of Budzi Sub-Catchment Council include, among others:

- To regulate and supervise the exercise of permits for the use of water including ground water within the area for which it was established
- To monitor water flows and water use in accordance with allocations made under permits
- To ensure that such water measuring devices as may be required to enable the Sub-Catchment Council to discharge its functions are in place and operating
- To promote catchment protection in accordance with the Water (Catchment Council) Regulations of 2000.
- To ensure that anyone discharging waste water into the river has a permit
- To report as required to the Catchment Council on exercise of water permits its area
- To assist in the collection of data and participate in planning
- To collect sub-catchment rates, fees and levies.

In addition, the Act provided for the opening up of Budzi Sub-Catchment Council to all water users and stakeholders to participate in the management of water in Budzi catchment. This is also true for Lower Save Sub-Catchment Council. The extent to which Budzi and Lower Save Sub-Catchment Councils have indeed 'opened up and all water user groups are effectively taking a role and participating in the management of water in the sub-catchment' is the focus of the next section.

Representation of water user groups

The Sub-Catchment Councils consist of elected representatives from all the stakeholder groups. Both Budzi and Lower Save Sub-Catchment Council have 15 representatives from all water user groups, which is maximum allowed number (see Table 5, next page). However, there were interested groups that were invited to Budzi SCC namely, AGRITEX, Natural Resources Board and Chipinge and Chimanimani Rural District Councils. With regards to Lower Save, of the four Rural District Councils covered by the sub-catchment, only Chipinge Rural District Council is currently represented. These various and diverse stakeholders elect a Chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson who coordinate the SCC activities and also represent the SCC at the Catchment level.

Table 5: Representatives in Budzi and Lower Save Sub-Catchment Councils

Budzi SCC	Representative
Water User Group	
Traditional Leaders	2
Communal farmers	1
Commercial farmers	2
Small-scale farmers	1
Rural District Councils	2
Forestry Industries	1
AGRITEX	1
NRB	1
ARDA	1
Small-scale irrigators	1
Zimbabwe Farmers Union	1

Lower Save SCC	Representative
Water User Group	
Traditional Leaders	2
Communal Farmers	1
Commercial Farmers	2
Small-Scale Farmers	0
Irrigation Schemes	2
ARDA	2
Private Sector	2
Indigenous Commercial Farmers Union	1
Rural District Councils	4
ZINWA	1

Participation

One of the key elements in water sector reforms in Zimbabwe is to ensure participation of different water user groups from sub-catchment to catchment level. To this extent, the two Sub-Catchment Councils have similar approaches of ensuring participation. Firstly, the two Sub-Catchment Councils established the position of Outreach Officer who is tasked with informing people about the functions of the Sub-Catchment Council. Additional roles and responsibilities of the Outreach Officer include, *inter alia*;

- Taking water meter readings
- The collection of water levies from people
- Listing of all water sources in the catchment
- Ensuring that communities observed conservation practices
- Holding meetings with water user groups and informing them about the Sub-Catchment Council

However, it is important to note that for Budzi SCC, the Outreach Officer was previously the Water Meter Reader, whose main job was the collection of water meter readings and the distribution of water bills or receipts. Thus the need to include an outreach component was borne out of the need to make different water users, particularly, communal farmers, irrigators, and small-scale and newly resettled farmers – the 'new water users' – become aware of the Sub-Catchment Councils. In addition, the outreach programmes were meant to involve and educate the new water users about their role in water management.

When the Outreach Officer of Budzi SCC was asked about his main duties, he stated, 'my main duties are to make sure that people pay their

levies … I have a motorcycle that I use to move around and give people their receipts. I make sure people pay for water.'[35]

What emerges from the this comment is the SCC's pre-occupation with making people pay for water rather than making people aware of the broad water sector reforms, particularly, communal and small-scale farmers' role in its management. This is compounded by the fact that the outreach programme, as currently conceived by both Sub-Catchment Councils, is not aimed at educating the new stakeholders, mainly communal, small-scale and newly resettled farmers about their roles and responsibilities within the Sub-Catchment Council. Rather, the outreach programme is viewed as a vehicle of justifying why the new stakeholders should pay for water and not as an education and consciousness-raising programme aimed at making water user groups get involved and participate effectively in the management of water. Despite the approach of the outreach programme, there is no clear explanation to new stakeholders as to why they are paying for water and what is the basis of the new water charges.

Added to this situation are the practical difficulties encountered by one outreach officer in trying to cover all the water users in a sub-catchment, taking into account that the sub-catchment areas in Budzi and Lower Save cover two and four Rural District Councils respectively. As one respondent noted, 'one outreach or training officer is not enough to reach all the farmers considering the sizes of the sub-catchment areas. It will take some time.'[36]

With particular reference to Lower Save sub-catchment, there appears to be a lack of information about the general activities of the Sub-Catchment Council for farmers in irrigation schemes, and for small-scale and communal farmers. This is exacerbated by the fact that most of the water found in Lower Save sub-catchment, is agreement water which is directly managed by ZINWA. Thus, farmers directly engage with ZINWA rather than the Sub-Catchment Council. This is illustrated by the case of Chibuwe Irrigation Scheme:

> *We had problems with the supply of water from Save River to the irrigation scheme. This was mainly due to the fact that during Cyclone Eline the side of the river where our engines are located had sand dunes, thus water did not flow to where the engines are. As a result, there was no water being pumped into the canals and then to our fields. Since the water we are using is dam water, over which ZINWA has direct control, we went directly to the local ZINWA office with our problems. We went to ZINWA because we paid our money to ZINWA so that it will provide us with water. The agreement was that ZINWA will provide water to the field edge, and that is why we went to ZINWA so that it will fulfil part of its agreement, to provide water to the field edge. We did not go to Lower Save Sub-Catchment Council because it does not deal with*

[35] Interview with Outreach Officer Budzi Sub-Catchment Council, 12/3/2002.
[36] Interview Zimbabwe Farmers Union representative, Chipinge 18/2/2002.

agreement water. ZINWA is the one we are dealing with because we paid our water levies to ZINWA.[37]

Further, the lack of participation of small-scale farmers in Lower Save sub-catchment is worsened by the fact that most of the small-scale farmers undertaking irrigated agriculture are under ARDA estates, which means that they pay water charges to ARDA. ARDA deals directly deals with ZINWA and Sub-Catchment Councils and not the small-scale farmers under its jurisdiction. The ex-Chairperson of Lower Save Sub-Catchment Council and Manager of ARDA Rusitu stated,

ZINWA charges a blanket water charge to ARDA estates, and ARDA in turn charges the settler farmers. Most ARDA estates will include electricity charge when charging water levies to settler farmers.[38]

Institutional access to water therefore depends on the type of water an individual farmer is using. For river water, a user goes to the Sub-Catchment Council, while for dam water (known in catchment council parlance as 'agreement water'), the farmer goes to ZINWA. Given this institutional complexity, people are not aware of which institutions to consult over their water needs, which excludes many users from a participation in water management. This was clearly put forward by the current Chairperson of Lower Save Sub-Catchment Council:

The truth is that people in Lower Save sub-catchment do not know what is going on with regards to water reforms. First, they still consult their respective Rural District Councils about water issues. Secondly, they do not know the difference [between] ZINWA and Sub-Catchment Councils, they think it's one and the same thing.[39]

Even for those who are willing to pay for water, the institutional complexity discourages them, as they are referred from one institution to another, as illustrated by one small-scale farmer from Nyanyadzi:

These things about water are now confusing. I wanted to take water from Nyanyadzi and start some sort of irrigation in my field. I asked people about the process of applying for water. The majority of the people I asked were not clear about the process. So, I decided to take a bus to Chimanimani Rural District Council, which is 120 km away. I thought since they are the ones who deal with our needs, I would do it there and finish at once. When I went to Chimanimani Rural District Council, I was told to go to Lower Save Sub-Catchment Council offices in Chipangayi. I was shocked because I did not know about these developments. I was also informed that Nyanyadzi falls under Lower Save sub-catchment, but for any other needs besides water, I

[37] Interview,, Member of Chibuwe Irrigation Scheme.
[38] Interview with Ex-Chairperson of Lower Save Sub-Catchment Council and Manager ARDA, Rusitu 28/03/2002.
[39] Interview with Councillor, 27/7/2002.

> *should continue going to Chimanimani. That aside, I scheduled another visit to Chipangayi to see officials of Lower Save Sub-Catchment Council. I took another bus from Nyanyadzi to Chipangayi, which is another 120 km. When I got to Lower Save Sub-Catchment Council offices with my concern, I was shocked again to hear that the water I want to abstract is agreement water, which falls directly under ZINWA and not the Sub-Catchment Council. I was advised to go to Mutare, which is another 120 km from Nyanyadzi. I decided when I get back home, I am not going anywhere because I will also be referred to another office, 120 km away. I was paying bus fare to and from all these places. Transport is expensive these days, I cannot afford it. I decided to get the water from the river and wait and see who will prosecute me.*[40]

From the corollary of the above case, the new institutional complexity has an adverse impact on representation and participation. Much of this complexity is compounded by the different processes of decentralisation. Firstly, the Rural District Councils were created during local government decentralisation, with a mandate to implement and oversee local level development activities in all areas under their jurisdiction. Secondly, catchment and Sub-Catchment Councils and the Zimbabwe National Water Authority and its local level offices are decentralised institutions created specifically for water management in a given local hydrological zone. ZINWA was to provide technical assistance to the catchment and Sub-Catchment Councils. Further, ZINWA was to manage dams constructed by the then Department of Water. The effect of these different decentralisation processes, with independent developmental objectives, was to create an institutionally complex environment for new stakeholders who wished to gain access to water, to understand and position themselves to effectively participate and play a role in water management within the Sub-Catchment Council.

In a similar vein, the establishment of Catchment and Sub-Catchment Councils with their hydrological boundaries added another complexity that inhibits participation of all stakeholders from the different corners of the sub-catchment. Hydrological boundaries were overlain across political and administrative boundaries. The decentralisation process created villages, wards and Rural District Councils. When the latter were formed, Rural District Councils became the focal administrative points where stakeholders met and discussed their various district development issues. In addition, complaints and problems were channelled to the local authority, particularly by communal people. By contrast, the decentralisation process surrounding water reforms shifted the focal point to Catchment and Sub-Catchment Council—under the IWRM paradigm. Thus people who were used to reporting to their RDCs were instead made to report water issues to a Sub-Catchment Council, which may or may not be in their 'district' or area, perhaps forcing people to travel long distances to report water issues, seek information and apply for permits.

[40] Interview with small-scale farmer, Nyanyadzi 30/7/2002.

This difficulty was stated by the Chief Executive Officer of Chimanimani Rural District Council:

> *people are not aware of where to go with their water queries … naturally most people come to the Rural District Council because it is their local authority … We constantly tell people that water issues in some parts of Chimanimani, which is from the Skyline Junction, town area, Rusitu, Ndima and the surrounding areas report to Budzi Sub-Catchment Council which is in Chipinge district. The other parts, Nyanyadzi and Cashel areas report to different Sub-Catchment Councils. You see, it's complicated.*[41]

Similar observations were made by the council chairman of Chipinge Rural District Council who noted that the hydrological and political boundaries confuse people over institutional responsibility for water issues. Some parts of Chipinge District report to Budzi Sub-Catchment Council while the part that is in the lowveld report to Lower Save Sub-Catchment Council.

Further, the small-scale farmer in Nyanyadzi indicated the financial costs that are involved in trying to gain access to the decentralised water institutions. Thus, the cost of travel may inhibit a lot of communal and small-scale farmers to participate in water management, indirectly limiting participation to rich people who can afford the transport costs. Traditional leaders, and representatives of communal and small-scale farmers on Budzi Sub-Catchment Council also echoed the problem of transport. Their main concern was the fact that the transport allowance that they receive from the Sub-Catchment Council is inadequate to cater for their travel to attend meetings. This is clearly illustrated by the case of a traditional leader described in Box 2 (next page).

What emerges from the case below is a reiteration of the limits to representation and participation due to prohibitive transport costs. The issue of travel and subsistence allowances was raised at both Catchment and Sub-Catchment Council meetings. Initially there were no transport and subsistence allowances paid to representatives of water users. When the representatives were given transport and subsistence allowances of Z$500, the money was not enough to cover a return trip for people who were staying far from Chipinge town. The representatives that were mainly affected by inadequate travel and subsistence allowances were those from Chimanimani and Rusitu, particularly representatives of traditional leaders, small-scale and commercial farmers and the Chimanimani Rural District Council. The attendance of these stakeholders has been erratic and they unanimously argued that the travel allowances are inadequate and thus are unable to add their own savings to their cost of travelling.

[41] Interview with CEO Chimanimani RDC, 19/2/2002.

Box 2: Transport and Subsistence Allowances Case

Interviewer: I understand that you don't normally attend meetings at Budzi Sub-Catchment Council. What do you say about this?

Headman Dzingire: Yes, I don't attend all meetings. I attend when I have my own business to do in town. To come solely for Budzi Subcatchment council business, no, I refuse.

Interviewer: Why?

Headman Dzingire: Who will pay for my transport cost?

Interviewer: Are you not given bus fare by Budzi Sub-Catchment Council?

Headman Dzingire: Let me tell you the whole issue about transport and money. At first we were not given any money for bus fare. We went to attend the meetings when we have our own business to do in town. We pushed for transport allowances, and then we were recently given Z$500. Every representative was given this Z$500. This amount was to cater for both transport and food. I came from Rusitu, and the bus fare is Z$280 from my place to Chipinge, and another Z$280 to go back. If you miss the bus and get a 'lift', the fare for the 'lift' is even more. My question is, who will pay the Z$60 difference? This money is not even adequate for transport, so what about food? Do I have to travel from my home to starve in the name of Sub-Catchment Council meeting? No! If they want me there, let them give me enough money for transport and food. This is the main reason why people from Chimanimani, particularly myself, do not attend these meetings. They even want to expel Chief Ndima from Budzi Sub-Catchment Council for being absent. How can he come when he is not given enough money to attend? What is the logic in giving everybody Z$500 for transport, when some stay behind the building? What do they need it for? If they want Chief Ndima to come they should give him enough money for transport. What is better to come to Budzi using your money or staying home and cultivating your fields?

Source: Interview with Headman Dzingire.

While the cost of attendance has limited participation of some members, it is stipulated that a representative who fails to attend three meetings will be dismissed from council. Based on the stipulation, the two traditional leaders and a representative of commercial farmers from Chimanimani, were recommended to leave based on the fact that they missed more than three meetings. While the representative of commercial farmers subsequently left the Budzi Sub-Catchment Council, the two traditional leaders are still on the Budzi Sub-Catchment Council. One official of Budzi Sub-Catchment Council explained the failure of dismissing them was on the basis that 'the two Chiefs had raised valid concerns about transport costs and had to be dealt with differently.'[42] However, an ex-

[42] Interview with an official from Budzi Sub-Catchment Council 12/3/2002.

representative of Chimanimani RDC on Budzi Sub-Catchment Council noted,

> *the chairperson considered the effect of expelling the two traditional leaders. Politically, this is not the right time to do such things, it may have been interpreted as an affront to the ruling party who are closely aligned to traditional leaders. Secondly, the people under Chief Ndima and Headman Dzingire were not going to participate in any Budzi sub-catchment activities. Traditional leaders are still very powerful in this area. It was going to give Budzi Sub-Catchment Council a lot of problems.*[43]

Whilst physical attendance is one aspect of participation, there is a need to move beyond physical presence. There is a need to analyse the actual discussion of water issues among the water user groups in articulating respective groups' interests. The extent to which the 'new water user groups' – mainly communal farmers, small-scale farmers and resettled farmers – are articulating their interests is debatable. This is largely because the new entrants do not have adequate information about the water reform, are not well organised as interest groups, lack the experience in debating and articulating water issues, and are incapacitated by the language used in conducting Sub-Catchment Council business.

The information that is disseminated to communal, small-scale and newly resettled farmers by the Sub-Catchment Council consists largely of justifications for paying for water. There is no information about the broad water reforms, particularly issues relating to people's role in water management, issues of participation and representation, or making the Sub-Catchment Council downwardly accountable. On the contrary, White commercial farmers and private companies are well versed in the water reforms to the extent that some commercial farmers carry the 1998 Water Act to Sub-Catchment Council meetings and constantly refer to it in their debates. This was also evidenced in interviews with White commercial farmers and representatives of private companies.

In addition, some of them, 'particularly newly resettled farmers are completely new to farming and do not know the importance of water.'[44] This makes the new entrants an uncoordinated group and renders their representation and participation an individual enterprise.

Further, communal, resettled, and small-scale farmers are not organised sufficiently to represent their interests and shape the debate in Budzi Sub-Catchment Council. The evidence that Budzi Sub-Catchment Council still focuses much of its debate on conservation and stream bank cultivation, as was previously the case, may indicate the interests of one group of water users, the commercial farmers. The local Zimbabwe Farmers' Union representative stated, 'when commercial farmers knew

[43] Interview with former representative of Chimanimani RDC.
[44] Interview with Zimbabwe Farmers Union representative, Chipinge 18/2/2002

that the policy was changing, they quickly grabbed the process because they knew the importance of water. They were also better organised than other farmers.'[45]

The use of English in meetings limits the participation of many communal, resettled and small-scale farmers. Some of the key informants suggested that the Water Act, the ZINWA Act, and associated literature on water reforms should be written in local languages. This process would greatly contribute to the understanding of water reforms and the effective participation of communal, small-scale and resettled farmers. Commenting on how the White Commercial farmers speak during meetings, one representative noted that, 'these White farmers speak through the nose. You don't understand what they say. It is difficult.'[46]

Water reforms and livelihood implications

While Rural District Councils' authority is evidently clear with regards to management and development of water in urban centres and communal areas respectively, its role in managing water at growth points or rural service centres that fall within its jurisdiction is not clearly defined. It appears that ZINWA is charging residents and businesses at growth points for domestic water. Yet, the new Water Act distinguishes between primary and secondary water, with the former covering domestic water, for which, legally, there is no charge. However, there exists a section that covers Clear Water Prices, with the General Rate Consumer charges. Thus what is not clear is the differentiation between primary water and clear water, and the logic of charging for the latter, if it is purely for domestic consumption.

Increasingly the financial logic of ZINWA levies is extending to all groundwater sources as well. In recent months ZINWA has charged all SCCs with logging all boreholes and major access point to groundwater, with a view to future charging. Increasingly there is a blurring of the domestic water – primary usage – and commercial usage. This 'grey area' – as described by a donor representative close to the reform process – is cause for future concern, not least when it comes to charging the burgeoning numbers of newly resettled farmers.

During research, there was little evidence of new water tariffs being applied beyond small-scale farmers in communal areas. However, that is not to say that the reforms will not face future problems. The governance of new institutional structures as the key vehicles for reforms – at least in the Budzi and Lower Save cases – appears to have been poor. A lack of confidence in the reasoning and actual benefit to be derived from the

[45] Ibid.
[46] Interview, 2/4/2002.

new structures may prove as difficult a barrier to overcome in the future as non-payment for water.

Conclusion

There are important crosscutting narratives involved in accessing water in Zimbabwe under the new Water Act. These narratives reflect both the current political environment and intrinsic changes to access rules, particularly surrounding the shift from rights to permits as a basis for apportionment of water.

Access to the resource is still defined legally through the issuing of a permit (with the approval of the Catchment Council). There are however, significant financial changes to water access bought about by the new tariff system. This institutes a system of payment and collection at the sub-catchment level (as in the case of Budzi) for water use over and above a basic water requirement, which remains free.

There are significant rights issues surrounding the different conceptions of the resource and entitlement to access, based not on water rights *per se*, but on rights to participate, and institutional barriers to the exercise of these rights. Whilst these barriers have provoked a concerted popular challenge to the new Water Act, at a local level, they represent strong counter narratives that may make collection of payments difficult in the long term and, with poor revenue streams, increasingly un-viable institutions. Although presently small-scale farmers' payments make up only a relatively small proportion of total fees collected, in the future, changes to land tenure and occupation in Zimbabwe will challenge the new institutions of management to address these 'small-scale' narratives, particularly if they are reinforced by wider social and economic political narratives.

The structure of management is supposed to be self-supporting based on revenue streams from water tariffs. Whilst the Save Catchment remains supported by an external donor, in the long-term its viability will be based on obtaining a range of funds, from large bulk revenues paid by major commercial users, to collection of far more dispersed, small-scale revenues across a far wider geographical area. This in itself will have significant consequences for the institutional functioning of SCCs at a local level. One possible direction that might be followed is to institute Water Users Associations at a local level in order to help organise the revenue collection process more effectively and to channel information from above and demands, queries, and grievances from below.

Presently, participation at a sub-catchment level is determined by the type of users based in that sub-catchment area. This arrangement both affects the capacity of the sub-catchment to carry out tasks (such as revenue

raising, etc) and the overall final composition of the catchment council. In predominantly commercial areas (where previously River Boards were more active) the commercial and White sector will predominate. Given their greater technical knowledge derived from the earlier River Board era, and their overall capacity to attend meetings, greater coherence in managing at a sub-catchment level might be expected. This also, in part, defines the final composition of the Sub-Catchment Councils and, in the long-term, the major input into wider catchment management processes.

The role of Rural District Councils on the Sub-Catchment Councils will be important in the future—more generally reflecting the occasional dissonance between decentralisations based on parallel administration versus resources. At present the role of RDCs is slight on the SCCs. Nevertheless, they are the principal development agents at the local level, with cross-cutting committees and council meetings that have major bearing on decisions important to water management, including responsibility for enforcing local regulations on land-use. The view of some council members is that the ZINWA system is extracting revenues from Rural Districts without any investment returning to that district, in classic top-down fashion. Whilst at present the Catchment Councils can claim that they are at the stage of formation, in the near future the 'water tax' as it appears to some, may generate greater interest and involvement from both councillors and the RDCs. There will be increasing clamour for evidence of development spending as well as revenue-raising for the purposes of institution-building.

One of the key areas of responsibility in which the RDCs will almost inevitably have a long-term role is in enforcing payments where small-scale commercial and communal farmers are unwilling to pay tariffs and where 'new lands' encroach on 'environmentally sensitive' areas. It is possible that the RDCs – through the ZFU and the role of councillors – may even become a forum for competing narratives on access to water, with the restated 'environmental conservation' narratives being countered by land and water access narratives.

The emerging catchment council process in Zimbabwe therefore presents a fascinating insight into the links between policy discourse on water management processes on the one hand, and the local narratives on access to natural capital, including land, water, and wildlife. It also presents a case where resource ownership relations are in flux whilst a key resource – water – is increasingly commodified and represented as an economic good, despite many competing local-level narratives on what constitutes ownership and how the resources itself is intrinsically valued.

The picture emerging suggests that an 'integrated' water resource management paradigm, is a complex and contested concept when applied locally within diverse user-based environments. Resource governance issues may be bound up closely with existing and new narratives on water and access to other forms of natural capital as well as with past political

and economic legacies, the influence of which is found in contemporary policy directions. Removing the 'segmented approaches' of past water management models, and trying to bring broader concepts of management and governance to the fore, in fact instils greater decision making complexity on a broader (though possibly less technically adept) set of managers than in the past. The clear need is for far greater support to the institutional environment, and the knowledge-based and functional strength of participation in these new institutions.

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