

**GOODBYE TO PROJECTS?
THE INSTITUTIONAL IMPACTS OF A LIVELIHOOD APPROACH ON
DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS**

RESEARCH PROJECT NO. R7908

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**A livelihoods-grounded audit of the
Sustainable Management of the
Usangu Wetland and its Catchment
project in Tanzania**

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BACKGROUND TO PROJECT AND WORKING PAPER SERIES

This paper is one in a series of working papers prepared under a research project entitled *Goodbye to Projects? The Institutional Impacts of a Livelihood Approach on development interventions*.

This is a collaborative project between the Bradford Centre for International Centre for Development¹ (BCID) with the Economic and Policy Research Centre (EPRC), Uganda; Khanya – managing rural change, South Africa; and, Mzumbe University (formerly the Institute for Development Management (IDM)), Tanzania. The project is supported by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) under their Economic and Social Research Programme (ESCOR).

Approaches to projects and development have undergone considerable change in the last decade with significant policy shifts on governance, gender, poverty eradication, and environmental issues. Most recently this has led to the adoption and promotion of the sustainable livelihood (SL) approach. The adoption of the SL approach presents challenges to development interventions including: the future of projects and programmes, and sector wide approaches (SWAPs) and direct budgetary support.

This project intends to undertake an innovative review of these issues. Central to this will be to question how a livelihood approach is actually being used in a range of development interventions. This will be used to identify and clarify the challenges to the design, appraisal and implementation of development interventions and changes required from the adoption of a livelihoods approach.

The research was conducted in two phases. The first phase consisted of general and country reviews on SL and development interventions. The second phase of the research involved the compilation of ten detailed case studies of development interventions in Uganda, Tanzania and South Africa. These case studies compare and contrast the implementation of a range of sector wide approaches, programmes and projects all developed with a livelihoods-orientation.

Each case study intervention was examined through what might be termed as a ‘sustainable livelihoods (SL)-grounded audit’, which uses sustainable livelihoods ‘principles’ as the basis. The results of this analysis offer useful guidance on the opportunities and challenges faced by development practitioners in operationalizing sustainable livelihoods approaches.

This paper ‘A livelihoods-grounded audit of the Sustainable Management of the Usangu Wetland Catchment (SMUWC) project in Tanzania’ is the eighth in the series of project working papers.

¹ Formerly Development and Project Planning Centre (DPPC)

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PROJECT WORKING PAPERS TO DATE

- 1. Annotated bibliography on livelihood approaches and development interventions.**
- 2. Appraisal of the use of livelihoods approaches in South Africa.**
- 3. Review of approaches to development interventions in Tanzania: From projects to livelihoods approaches.**
- 4. Review of development interventions and livelihoods approaches in Uganda**
- 5. A livelihoods-grounded audit of the Participatory Planning for District Development within Capacity 21 programme (Tanzakesho) in Tanzania**
- 6. A livelihoods-grounded audit of the Community-Based Planning (CBP) action research project in South Africa.**
- 7. A livelihoods-grounded audit of the Agricultural Sector Programme Support (ASPS) in Tanzania.**
- 8. A livelihoods-grounded audit of the Sustainable Management of the Usangu Wetland and its Catchment (SMUWC) project in Tanzania.**
- 9. A livelihoods-grounded audit of the Magu District Livelihoods and Food Security Project (MDLFSP) in Tanzania.**
- 10. A livelihoods-grounded audit of the Sexual Health and Rights Programme (SHARP!) in Lesotho and South Africa.**
- 11. A livelihoods-grounded audit of the Training for Environmental and Agricultural Management (TEAM) project in Lesotho.**
- 12. A livelihoods-grounded audit of the Sustainable Coastal Livelihoods Programme**

(SCLP) in South Africa.

13. A livelihoods-grounded audit of the Plan for the Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA) in Uganda

14. A livelihoods-grounded audit of the AIDS/STD programme in Uganda.

For more details on the project, this paper, and others in the series, please contact the UK or African co-ordinators:

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For more details on the project and copies of recent publications please consult the project's web site:

<http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/dppc/GTP/goodbye/html>

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1.0 The SL-grounded audit of development interventions

The cases studies in this research were chosen for inclusion following a first phase review of the use of livelihoods approaches in Tanzania, Uganda and Southern Africa. Data was collected using a number of methods including questionnaires, semi-structured individual and focus group interviews, collection and review of process documentation and workshop activity.

All ten case studies have been analysed according to what we term a ‘SL-grounded audit’ described below so that the emerging lessons can be compared. Each study is divided into two sections: the first a general introduction to the intervention; and the second, a structured response to a series of questions adapted from the SL-principles as defined by Carney (2002) in Box 1. SL principles are one element of sustainable livelihoods approaches. This research adopts these principles as a structuring tool and as means of pinpointing the practical implications of adopting a sustainable livelihoods approach to development.

Box 1. SLA principles defined by Carney (2002)

Sustainable livelihoods approaches: Progress and possibilities for change, p14-15, London: Department for International Development

Normative principles:

People-centred: sustainable poverty elimination requires respect for human freedom and choice. People- rather than the resources, facilities or services they use- are the priority concern. This may mean supporting resource management or good governance, for example but the underlying motivation of supporting livelihoods should determine the shape and purpose of action.

Empowering: change should result in an amplified voice opportunities and well-being for the poor.

Responsive and participatory: poor people must be key actors in identifying and addressing livelihood priorities. Outsiders need processes that enable them to listen and respond to the poor.

Sustainable: there are four key dimensions to sustainability-economic, institutional, social and environmental sustainability. All are important-a balance must be found between them.

Operational principles:

Multi-level and holistic: micro-level activity and outcomes should inform the development of policy and an effective governance environment. Macro- and meso-level structures should support people to build on their strengths.

Conducted in partnership: partnerships can be formed with poor people and their organisations, as well as with public and private sector. Partnerships should be transparent agreements based upon shared goals.

Disaggregated: it is vital to understand how assets, vulnerabilities, voice and livelihood strategies differ between disadvantaged groups as well as between men and women in these groups. Stakeholder and gender analysis are key tools.

Long-term and flexible: poverty reduction requires long-term commitment and a flexible approach to providing support.

Each case study follows the structure detailed below:

Description of the intervention: this includes a chronological description of the evolution of the particular intervention and details the main stakeholders and activities undertaken in implementation. Original logframes and planning documents have been reviewed where possible.

Impact: Assessment of the impact of interventions relates to the success or failure of an intervention to achieve the outputs or outcomes that were the main focus of the intervention. The effect of this is that our understanding of impact is somewhat limited and partial. The methodology used in this research project did not allow for significant impact assessment with intervention beneficiaries at the micro-level (although this was done on a small-scale in most of the case studies). This section also includes some assessment of the costs of the intervention balanced against the number of people who benefit from it.

Poor People as focus

Do, or did, the objectives of the intervention include a mention of people and their livelihoods?

How central is this to the intervention's objectives?

How much were household livelihoods a focus during implementation?

Participation

What type of participation was used at each stage of design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation?

How and when did this participation occur?

What incentives were there for people to participate?

Partnerships

What was the type of partnership and collaboration between these organisations at micro-meso-macro?

Who owned the project?

Holistic approach

How holistic was the analysis used in design?

How does the plan for the intervention fit into the broader development plan?

How does the intervention coordinate with other development interventions in the area?

Policy and institutional links

How integrated was the intervention with existing institutional structures?

What evidence is there that the intervention addressed linkages between policy at micro, meso and macro levels and across sectors?

Building on strengths

Does the intervention build on existing strengths at the different levels?

Dynamic and flexible

Did the objectives and activities of the intervention change to respond to a changing environment and/or demands?

What further interventions have arisen from the intervention? How did this take place?

Accountability/ responsiveness

How were those implementing the intervention accountable to the public and intervention's beneficiaries?

Who reports to who and what about?

Do beneficiaries (micro) or partners (meso) have an influence on the intervention and how?

Sustainability

Economic

Is the system able to be sustained financially?

Are the "technologies/services" economically viable for beneficiaries?

Social

Are vulnerable groups able to access and use effectively the systems of the intervention?

Are the institutions created/used by the intervention able to sustain themselves beyond the life of the intervention?

Environmental

Are the technologies/services environmentally beneficial?

Are the systems (meso level) beneficial/neutral?

Institutionally

Are the capacities and systems established in such a way so that the system will continue (beyond the life of the intervention)?

Will they continue to generate the outcomes envisaged?

Critical factors

What were critical factors affecting the performance of this intervention?

Comparing Cases

Each case study can be read as a stand-alone document as the SL-grounded audit is in itself a useful means of understanding the strengths and weaknesses of an intervention. However, the broader aim of this research is to compare lessons across all ten case studies in order to identify more generally the challenges and opportunities faced by development practitioners in operationalising a sustainable livelihoods approach.

2.0 SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF THE USANGU WETLAND AND ITS CATCHMENT (SMUWC)

2.1 Description of the intervention

The SMUWC project was intended to improve the management of water and other natural resources of the Usangu catchment, in order to improve the livelihoods of poor people within the catchment, and of downstream users.

As a result of multiple and often competing uses, the water resources in the catchment have become increasingly stressed. In particular the Great Ruaha River downstream of the wetland has, since the mid 90s, been drying up during the dry season. This is the most visible sign of changes but there is other evidence of changes in the availability of water throughout the catchment. A variety of reasons were put forward to explain these changes, most of them resulting in one-way or another from anthropogenic causes. Perhaps the most important driving force in the catchment is increasing population, arising both naturally and from in-migration.

At about the time that water shortages downstream of Usangu became visible, discussions were taking place between the Ministry of Water of the Government of Tanzania and the World Bank concerning the River Basin Management and Smallholder Irrigation Improvement Project (RBMSIIP). It was known even at this time that Usangu was an area of specific concern within the Rufiji basin, and the UK's Department of International Development (DFID, formerly ODA) was invited to support a specific project in Usangu, as part of the wider RBMSIIP initiative. In due course, therefore, DFID funded the project.

The first phase of SMUWC was a 2.5-year project intended to investigate the reasons for the reduction in water resources in the catchment, and to build capacity amongst stakeholders to develop a plan for the sustainable management of its resources. It began in September 1998, and was completed in April 2001. It was followed by an extension phase of 1 year. The objectives of the extension phase were to build on the achievements of the first phase, and also to find new sources of funding support.

A logframe for the project was produced at the time of the design, in 1997. The goal and purpose defined at this time remained valid throughout the first phase of the project (partly because changes to either of these requires high-level approval from the funding agency). The goal was:

“Sustainable utilisation of water and other renewable natural resources of the Usangu wetland and its catchment for the maintenance and improvement of rural livelihoods”,

whilst the purpose was:

“Local capacity to manage the Usangu wetland and its catchment sustainably developed for the social, economic and environmental benefit of stakeholders, particularly the poor, and including downstream users”.

The outputs expected from Phase 1 were revised formally, at the time of the Inception Report (this could be done at the project level), and then remained valid for the remainder of the Phase. They were defined as follows:

1. Understanding of the hydrological behaviour and water quality functions of the Usangu wetland and its catchment
2. Assessment of land resource utilisation, biodiversity and environmental impacts of management options in the Usangu wetland and its catchment.
3. Improvement in local peoples' ability to manage their land, water and other resources
4. Increase of capacity to develop an integrated environmental management strategy.

For the extension phase, the purpose was defined as:

“Processes which support the sustainable management of natural resources strengthened at central, basin and local levels”,

whilst the outputs were:

1. Policy making processes at central to local levels informed and strengthened through access to knowledge, and improved stakeholder linkages and co-ordination
2. Processes of decentralisation advanced at district levels, in particular community led planning and environmental management
3. Processes for inter-community and inter-district cooperation and coordination over natural resources further strengthened in Kimani catchment
4. Strategy process for the management of Usangu's resources advanced
5. Seek continued support to project beyond March 2001 (at all levels)

Activities

The activities carried out by the project can broadly be divided into two categories:

- scientific and technical investigations, aimed at delivering outputs 1 & 2 during the initial phase
- institutional development and capacity building, directed towards outputs 3 & 4 of the initial phase, and all of the outputs of the extension phase.

The scientific and technical investigations covered the range of hydrological and land use issues in the catchment, and included many highly specialised inputs, such as irrigation, water chemistry, swamp vegetation and microbiology, fisheries, range resources and livestock. Many of these investigations were led by expatriate specialists, though local Tanzanian expertise also made a considerable contribution, and they were supported by a significant amount of equipment.

Institutional development and capacity-building activities were initially directed towards five pilot villages, taken to be representative of the range of agro-climatic conditions in the catchment. In these villages a programme of participatory mapping techniques were carried out with the villagers, both to establish a base line of resource availability in these villages, and to better understand the processes of resource management. This initial phase of work provided the basis for widening the institutional development activities into a major programme of village government training, as well as supporting the

establishment of a district level facilitation team (Warmishi). In addition, the Sub-Catchment Resource Management Programme (SRMP) aimed at piloting integrated resource use in a sub-catchment was initiated in the Kimani sub-catchment. On the water management side, the project provided support to a Water Managers Group, comprising key water managers and support staff in the catchment. The institutional development programme was led by a combination of Tanzanian and expatriate specialists, and was further intensified during the project's extension phase.

The project also initiated and supported a process of negotiating a management strategy for Usangu, based on the key steps of: understanding the issues; agreeing on a vision for Usangu; developing a management strategy.

The range of activities described was started during phase 1, and continued through to the end of the extension phase. However, the majority of the technical activities were completed by the end of Phase 1, and the extension phase therefore focussed on institutional development and the process of negotiating a management strategy. A particular emphasis during the extension phase was an intensive programme of dissemination of the findings from phase 1, aimed at stakeholders at the macro level (central government ministries) and meso level (region, catchment).

SMUWC was designed and indeed implemented according to current concepts of a "process" project. It was a project in that it involved the investment of capital resources over a defined period to achieve specified outputs and outcomes. It was a process project in that the project plan was not defined in advance but was rather intended to evolve through interaction between the stakeholders. The project was funded by DFID according to its standard procedures.

The initial project concept was refined through a design (preparatory) phase, carried out by independent consultants directly contracted and reporting to DFID. The output of this design phase was the Project Memorandum (March 1997), which set out the overall rationale and scope of the project. The project memorandum was built round:

- A logical framework (which was subsequently revised at several points during project implementation)

and separate annexes summarising:

- Hydrology
- Environmental resources
- The institutional framework
- Financial and economic analysis
- Social analysis.

The system for monitoring and evaluation was not set out prior to project implementation. However the initial logical framework did suggest the types of indicators that would be appropriate at the various levels of the project's objectives. No particular method of involving other stakeholders in the definition or measurement of achievements was suggested during the project's preparatory phase, though such involvement was

implied through the process approaches, which it was assumed that the project would adopt.

Likewise, participatory methods were not outlined during project design (and indeed were noticeably absent at that stage). Participatory methods were a major part of the community development and institutional activities during implementation of the project, though they were functional in nature, rather than interactive.

Apart from the reference to livelihoods in the project's goal, livelihoods approaches were not explicitly applied during the project's design phase, and only at a specific point during project implementation, through the livelihoods study. The findings of that study indirectly informed some of the actions and approaches subsequently taken by the project. This work also raised interesting questions about the operation of local institutions, and the range of institutional capacity that exists at the local level. In particular it contrasted "bureaucratic" institutions (such as village governments) with "socially embedded" institutions, such as cultural groups, local associations, village choirs etc, many of which have functions far beyond their original purpose. This raises further issues about what is meant by existing capacity, and how interventions such as SMUWC can best recognise existing capacity, and support its development.

Stakeholders

The project originated from concerns over water availability, both in the catchment and downstream. The key stakeholder at the outset was therefore the Ministry of Water, represented both at the macro level by the Project Co-ordinator, who was also the project co-ordinator for the RBMSIIP Project, and at the meso level by the Rufiji Basin Water Officer, who has the responsibility for allocating the water of the Rufiji to its various users. As the perspective of the project widened to comprise an integrated assessment of natural resources in the catchment, local government, which has the responsibility for resources other than water, also became a key stakeholder, represented at the meso level by the regional and district administrations, and at the micro level by ward, village and hamlet governments.

There were also many other stakeholders with an interest in the project – other government ministries, government agencies (especially the National Parks Authority and the Electricity Supply Company) regional administrations, other complementary or competing projects, and other interest groups, for example local, national or international NGOs.

An association of UK-based and Tanzanian consultants implemented the project. The consultants' core team were based at Mbarali, the largest district within the catchment. The team worked directly with the district administration, and reported on day-to-day matters to the District Executive Director (DED). Formal reporting was to the Project Co-ordinator in the Ministry of Water.

Beneficiaries

As indicated in the project's purpose, the beneficiaries of the project were intended to be "stakeholders, particularly the poor, and including downstream users". Local people manage the resources of the catchment to support their livelihoods in a number of ways, including rainfed and irrigated farming, pastoralism, timber products, fishing and hunting. Key downstream "beneficiaries" include the National Park, and the hydroelectric system.

Costs

The total cost of the project was \$5 million, over the period of three and half years. The intensive nature of the scientific and technical investigations resulted in very high costs for this part of the project, of the order of \$3million over two and a half years. Scientific investigations effectively ceased at this point, and the balance of the costs were therefore directed at institutional development and capacity building, amounting to around \$2 million over three and half years.

The annual costs of running the district level planning team are estimated at \$12000. The costs of other institutions established or strengthened under the project, such as SRMP and the Water Managers' Group would be of the same order of magnitude, indicating a total cost for running the institutional systems resulting from the project of about \$25000.

2.2 Impact

The review of the project carried out for the Project Completion Report found that by the end of phase I significant progress had been made. A clearer, common understanding of key issues had been established. However, the process of developing local capacity to manage the catchment sustainably was still in the very early stages. The project recognised the need to build local capacity in decentralised planning in line with local government reform processes, but this was necessarily a slow process. The various associations for resource management initiated and supported by the project provided a forum for agreement among different water user groups, and mechanisms to resolve conflict.

This progress was continued during the extension phase, and the Project Completion Report found a fair degree of success in achieving the purpose of this phase. It noted that information was available in an accessible form, and that awareness and knowledge had been created, but this needed to be an ongoing process. The various institutions supported by the project to improve resource management were functioning, but were still weak, and need continued support and facilitation to reach their potential. The project was not able to institutionalise these components effectively in government structures.

In relation to the outputs expected from the first phase, the project was widely acknowledged to have been very successful in increasing understanding of the natural resource systems of the catchment, and in communicating these findings to stakeholders. As many of the issues were complex, and the project's findings did not always fit with the economic, social and political aims of certain key stakeholders, it was controversial throughout its existence. It was nevertheless widely accepted as providing the authoritative voice on resource management issues in the catchment. The process of

using the information as a basis for institutional development and capacity building was in the early stages when the funding agency discontinued the project due to changes in funding policy and approach.

Overall, the Project Completion Report found that the project performed well in delivering the outputs expected from the extension phase, but the success of the capacity-building components was finely balanced. The CBOs appeared likely to continue, but without ongoing support they were not likely to expand their roles in natural resource management. The various institutions initiated by the project all needed support and facilitation to continue and to grow in their roles.

The project was judged to be reasonably successful in achieving its outcomes and outputs. In particular it was successful in establishing a sound baseline of knowledge and information relating to resource availability and management in the catchment. This success was due to the project's ability to field a well-resourced team of specialists to undertake the necessary studies, and the fact that they were given sufficient time (two and a half years), to carry through the programme. It should also be noted that the team were predominantly non-nationals, which meant that they were able to stand outside the existing controversies related to resource management, and to put forward explanations unrelated to the interests of particular stakeholder groups.

Whilst the time was sufficient for the technical investigations and knowledge building, the project was much too short to allow effective institutional development and capacity building. As the Project Completion Report made clear, many of the institutions initiated by the project were making reasonable progress at the time it was closed down, but they needed a significant amount of further support if they were to become truly effective.

Capacity-building was a major component of the project, and one of its defined outputs. The capacity-building activities did not start until the project was well established, and a good understanding of the catchment had been gained. It then focussed primarily on developing capacity at the village level, through a training programme for village governments. Other formal programmes were carried out for district officials across the catchment. There were also capacity-building initiatives with Ministry of Water officials.

In particular, the project put considerable effort in to the creation and effective working of three institutions working at the interface of the micro and meso levels:

- the District Planning Team (“Warmishi”)
- the Sub-Catchment Resource Management Plan (SRMP)
- the Water Managers Group

The first two of these have been formally evaluated. In the case of the district planning team, the evaluation found that the capacity of local government officials had been raised at both district and sub-district (ward) levels, but raised doubts about the sustainability of the team once project support was withdrawn.

The evaluation of SRMP raised similar doubts about its sustainability, and about the viability of forming an “Apex Body”, representing all the villages and resource user groups in the sub-catchment. However, the Apex Body was formally constituted in March 2002, received training in September 2002, and held its bi-annual meeting in November 2002.

The Water Managers’ Group continued in existence beyond the end of the SMUWC project, with support from the Rufiji Basin Water Office. It meets on a regular basis, the most recent meeting being in December 2002.

The DED, however, was unsure whether capacity had been increased by the project. She noted that project staff were quite separate from local government staff, and that by implication much of the capacity-building was directed at the project staff. She also noted that some of the tangible benefits of the traditional approaches to capacity-building (such as overseas study trips) had been proposed but had never taken place, and that this had resulted in demotivation. Certainly buying-in to and benefiting from project involvement was a constant issue for local government staff, never fully resolved.

Cost-effectiveness

Current estimates put the total population living in or affected by the natural resources of the catchment at 500 000. The project therefore cost around \$10 per head, in terms of capital investment. The institutional systems established by the project would cost around \$0.05 per head per annum.

2.3 Poor People as focus

SMUWC was identified as a project in the mid-90s, formally designed in 1997, and implemented from late 1998 to early 2001. This coincides with the period when sustainable livelihoods concepts were starting to be widely discussed and used. The project itself was not conceived as a livelihoods project but there are many points of relevance to sustainable livelihoods approaches in its design and implementation.

In spite of the fact that SMUWC was not conceived as a livelihoods project, the project’s goal specifically mentioned (rural) livelihoods, and the concept of livelihoods is also implicit in the project purpose. None of the project design documentation took the analysis of livelihoods further, for example with reference to capital or vulnerability, but the overall goal of improving livelihoods was central to the project’s objectives.

During implementation, livelihoods concepts were specifically incorporated into the project’s approach through the commissioning of a study into household livelihoods in the catchment. This study, together with a subsidiary study on conflict resolution, raised the importance of labour constraints in resource management, and noted the significance of socially-embedded institutions and mechanisms for resolving conflicts.

The DED was also appreciative of the efforts of the project to improve livelihoods, though in this case her interpretation of the concept of livelihoods was somewhat restrictive. She assessed the success of the project particularly in relation to its efforts to

assist local people to plan, reflecting the somewhat formal relationship between local people and local government, rather than taking a broad view of the way the project assisted local people across the whole range of their livelihood activities.

2.4 Participation

The process of project design took place mainly between the funding agency and the Government of Tanzania, and did not involve the participation of a significant range of stakeholders. DFID fielded a three-man design team, which was in the field for about a month, and which reported in March 1997. This team included a UK consultant who had good local knowledge and contacts, and who knew the local language. It was therefore assumed that he, in particular, would be able to look after much of the stakeholder participation needed for the project design.

The main contact throughout this period was with the Project Co-ordinator of the RBMSIIP project, from the MoW. It was always acknowledged that the overall project was a World Bank project, and SMUWC was a “bolt-on”, designed mainly with Government officials. DFID provided a UK member of the World Bank Scoping Mission for RBMSIIP. The World Bank project handled most of the agency contacts and stakeholder participation in the early days of the project.

During implementation, participation became a major activity of the project. This was particularly through the community engagement programme, which sought to support people from pilot villages throughout the catchment in the establishment of institutions, which would allow them to plan and manage their own development at the local level. Participation was also fostered at the macro and meso levels during this stage, for example by the establishment of a project steering committee, which represented many of the major stakeholders in the catchment. However the participation undertaken was largely driven by the needs of the project to deliver its outputs, therefore it was functional in nature, rather than generating real ownership of the project by the participants.

Payment of material incentives for participation (daily and travel allowances) is an issue throughout Tanzania, as donor-funded projects compete in a market place for buy-in by key stakeholders and beneficiaries. SMUWC applied government rates for the involvement of government staff, thereby operating at the same level as other projects. At the micro level, the project paid only actual costs for participants. This regularly caused problems due to the existence of a UNICEF project operating in the same areas, which was paying comparatively large daily allowances.

The project made little attempt to establish extensive M&E systems, except in specific technical areas such as hydrology (rainfall, and river flows). The development of participatory monitoring systems had not therefore become an issue by the time the project finished.

2.5 Partnerships

The partners in the project included:

- RBMSIIP

- the Rufiji Basin Water Office
- The Project Steering Committee
- Mbarali District Council
- Other districts containing part of the catchment
- Wards, villages and local resource users.

The key partnership in the project was between the Ministry of Water, the district and village administrations and the project team. The Ministry of Water were active at two levels:

- At the centre, through the Project Co-ordinator
- At the catchment level, through the Rufiji Basin Water Officer, who has responsibility for stewardship of the basin's water resources under the Water Act.

In principle, local government represents the interests of local people at the district and village level.

The project had relatively close working relationships with both these partners, though there were inevitable tensions relating to resources, priorities, and work programmes.

In addition a project steering committee was established, representing local or regional offices of government agencies and other institutional stakeholders. The committee took some time to become active but it gradually developed in its role and was, by the end of the project, in a position to provide some degree of ownership and co-ordination across the range of these institutions.

The DED, though appreciative of the project's efforts overall, commented that it was project staff who took the lead, and it was they who prepared plans, which were then presented for discussion with the other partners. The project therefore provided for a co-ordinated partnership, and was never fully owned by the other partners (with the possible exception of the Ministry of Water) throughout its duration.

2.6 Holistic approach

Right from the earliest stages of project design, SMUWC was conceived as an integrated project, both in terms of integrating across natural resource sectors and also in attempting to integrate social and institutional dimensions into the overall approach.

Although it was originally identified as a result of perceived water problems, it was quickly understood that it was impossible to treat these issues in isolation, and that they had to be seen in a wider context of land and water resources, and the relationships between them. This was reflected in the range of inputs at the design stage, and in the Project Memorandum (design document), which comprised sections on natural resources, hydrology, social analysis, institutional analysis and economics. The project implementation team comprised specialists and inputs across the whole range of natural resources from hydrologists and water resource specialists to land capability and range experts, as well as staff covering such issues as biodiversity, fisheries, and livestock.

Integration with human, institutional and social factors was also an important element of the project, from design through to implementation. A large part of the project team worked on these aspects, and there were continuing attempts to develop multidisciplinary approaches to the issues, through joint field trips, regular meetings and brainstorming, workshops, and other mechanisms.

Integration with on-going developments (notably RBMSIIP) and with other appropriate interventions in the catchment was undertaken where feasible. A key issue in implementation was the presence of a competing project, funded through the Rufiji Basin Development Authority (the RUBADA project). The RUBADA project worked from different basic interpretations about the linkages of problems, cause and effect in the catchment². For various reasons it enjoyed the support of many key stakeholders in the catchment. A major part of SMUWC's efforts in its early stages was therefore devoted to negotiations and relationships with the RUBADA project, and the differences between them were never fully resolved throughout the life of the project.

At the meso and micro level, there was some evidence of successful cross-sectoral integration resulting from the project's activities. This was particularly noted by the DED, who was administering a system which was traditionally sectoral and bureaucratic in its approach to local issues. She found the support provided by the project of some value in breaking down traditional sectoral barriers between departments at the district level.

2.7 Policy and institutional links

Although working closely with existing institutional structures at several points, the project did stand outside these structures, and was never fully integrated with them. As the March 2002 Project Report notes "another major limitation was the absence of formal counterpart provisions, even part-time...This had the dual effect of limiting understanding of what was being done, and of the results, and limiting development of local capacity to take the various processes and activities forward into the future. This clearly undermined the project's sustainability".

SMUWC was designed according to the wisdom of the time. It was therefore desired that the project should achieve, in order of priority:

1. A defined level of benefits to an identifiable group of people (micro-level)
2. Tools and lessons for river basin management, at the operational level (meso-level)
3. Contribution to policy making (macro-level)

By the time the first phase of the project was completed, the order of priorities of these objectives had been completely reversed by the funding agency. The potential contribution of the project to national policy making was the main criterion for DFID's qualified support for an extension phase.

² The RUBADA project put forward the theory that the shortage of water in the catchment was primarily due to the impacts of pastoralism, rather than the increasing use of water for irrigation.

From its outset, the project was conceived as part of the RBMSIIP project, and indeed it made significant contributions to RBMSIIP at various points. In addition, as implementation began to take place, the project's work in participatory planning at the district and village level resulted in its active engagement in the developing local government reform process. It was also complementary to, and involved in, developments in wetland management in Tanzania.

At the time the project started, RBMSIIP was undertaking a revision of the water policy for the Government, and the SMUWC team was explicitly invited to make a contribution to this process. However this invitation came early in the project, before detailed lessons could be drawn from the situation in Usangu.

Besides contribution to water policy, the project made a direct contribution to policy development, and linkages between macro, meso and micro levels at various points. Through the Sub-Catchment Resource Management Programme (SRMP) the project demonstrated a sub-catchment approach to natural resource management. The Ministry of Water is funding further similar pilots, and this seems set to be incorporated in ministry policy. At district level the project gave active support in developing understanding of and processes for local government reform. Other districts have also shown interest in developing "Warmishi type" processes. The project also demonstrated the value of local experiences in policy making, and the importance of flexibility in policy implementation to adapt to local circumstances.

2.8 Building on strengths

The project was conceived in response to a perceived problem – shortage of water in the Usangu catchment. Fundamentally, therefore, it was not built on existing strengths, but to address an issue. It was always, therefore, likely to have difficulties in fully incorporating a livelihoods approach, since the interests and concerns of the stakeholders, notably the poor living in the catchment, would not necessarily be similarly focussed around issues of water availability.

With that reservation, the project was able to build on certain strengths. At the macro level, the project complemented the on-going work of the RBMSIIP project in relation to water policy and capitalised on the widespread but informal interest at central government level on the management of natural resources and wetlands. (As noted above, however, there were also problems to be overcome resulting from the RUBADA project, with its divergent analysis and competing claims for support amongst the stakeholders.)

At the meso level, too, the project built on the strengths provided by the existing approach to river basin management in Tanzania. It worked throughout closely with the Rufiji Basin Water Office (RBWO), and was able to develop institutional approaches (the SRMP, and the Water Managers' Group) which arose naturally from the work of RBWO, and which were indeed taken on by it when the project closed.

There were few existing strengths at local government level to support the integrated resource management approach adopted by the project when implementation started. Indeed a major part of the capacity-building activities of the project were directed towards developing the strengths of Warmishi at the district level, and of the village governments. Although this process is in line with government policy and the reform of local government, its sustainability beyond the end of the project remains doubtful.

Work carried out during the project emphasised the importance of existing “socially embedded” institutions in resource management. The project was not, however, able to fully capitalise on this knowledge and it remains more generally an area in which further work is required.

2.9 Dynamic and flexible

The project objectives were modified at the time of the Inception Phase. It had previously been assumed that the project would be responsible for developing a strategic plan for the catchment. This objective was dropped in favour of twin objectives of acquiring knowledge and building capacity in stakeholders so that they could themselves develop and own the strategic plan.

At the time of the mid-term review there were some other, relatively minor, changes to the activities and direction of the community engagement programme, which took account of the experience that had been gained in the first part of the project.

As Phase 1 came to its conclusion, there was considerable discussion on what further support should be given to the process. It was always acknowledged that a significant period would be required for the development of a strategic plan by stakeholders. However, the priorities of the funding agency had changed during Phase 1, and it wished to transfer its focus to activities focussed specifically on poverty reduction and to direct budgetary support. Eventually, it was agreed that one further year’s funding should be provided by DFID, with the explicit aim that other funding would be sought for support beyond that. The extension phase continued to focus on knowledge dissemination and capacity-building, at central, basin and local level.

The DED, from the perspective of her local responsibility and constraints, felt that there was only limited ability for the project to change. This reflects the fact that the project was conceived in response to a particular set of circumstances, as perceived by one set of stakeholders, whereas the DED and her local government colleagues were faced by a different set of circumstances and priorities, and were looking for assistance to be provided in different ways than that determined for the project.

As a result of the continuing interest of WWF in the on-going work in Usangu, the Tanzanian office of WWF initiated the “Great Ruaha River Catchment Programme” (GRRCP) with a Stakeholders and Planning Workshop (WWFTPO, 2001) in Dec 2001, towards the end of the extension phase. Support for this activity was provided through WWF-UK.

The participants at the workshop, which included SMUWC and many of the other stakeholders with whom SMUWC was working, agreed on the following vision: “natural resources sustainably managed and utilised in the Great Ruaha River Catchment for the benefit of its people and the environment”. It can be seen that this vision is very close to SMUWC’s goal, though the vision does not make explicit mention of livelihoods.

The workshop undertook a problem analysis, from which an objectives analysis and planning matrix was developed. It was agreed to form a task force to co-ordinate/facilitate the networking of activities, monitoring/progress review and evaluation of the programme, and that WWF would facilitate the task force.

2.10 Accountability/ responsiveness

Although reporting to the Project Co-ordinator in the Ministry of Water, and working closely with the local District Executive Director, the project team intentionally kept some distance from existing Government structures. This was to allow freedom of manoeuvre in a complex institutional situation in which vested interests played an important role. It was not, for example, clear at the start of the project as to which institution should properly take the lead in developing the strategic plan for the catchment, and the project team therefore thought it better not to be tied too closely with a particular institution. This had inevitable impacts on accountability, since no formal stakeholder felt exclusive ownership of the work coming out of the project.

The project reported on a formal basis to the project co-ordinator and the DFID project officer, through a system of quarterly reports, and through Inception, Interim and Final Reports. These reports were also submitted to the Project Steering Committee. The quarterly reports presented progress to that date, and the programme for the coming quarter, using the logframe as the basis of reporting. The project also instituted a system of monthly management meetings with district staff, at which each partner was able to discuss project progress in a more informal fashion. The project steering committee eventually developed sufficiently to provide a measure of effective feedback and guidance to the project’ direction, but the district management group was never confident enough to do this.

The style of reporting changed significantly from Phase 1 to the extension phase. During phase 1 the reports were quite formal and written in English. During the extension phase, they were written in a more direct and readable style, and were presented in both English and Swahili.

An aspect of specific interest in this regard was the role of the media, particular the press. Usangu was a focus of national interest over a long period, and the project received a significant amount of unfavourable press coverage early on. Following this, efforts were made to engage journalists in the process, and a seminar/training week was held for a group of journalists from a number of newspapers. This was successful, in that it resulted in an increase in the coverage of the issues in Usangu. It might therefore be said that the

project became accountable to a wider audience through this mechanism, though of course it also raises a number of issues about the role of the press in such situations.

The project worked within the Government system, at local and national levels, and was therefore accountable in the way any public service operation is in a democratic system. The same is true in respect of the UK public sector and indeed there was correspondence between the public and the Secretary of State concerning the project.

2.11 Sustainability

Economic

An economic analysis had been carried out at the time of the project design (though this was later shown to have a fundamental flaw). In the implementation of the project the emphasis was on social and environmental issues, and the institutional framework for addressing those issues. Very little attention was paid by the project to economic issues, although these were an important factor in, for example, the irrigated rice sector in the catchment.

The systems established by the project offer an improved approach to the existing services, which should be provided by local government (support for village, ward and district level plans). They are based on an integrated, inter-sectoral approach by district staff but do not require additional staff. To that extent they should be as financially viable as the existing systems.

Social

The project attempted to address the issues and concerns of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, notably pastoralists, women and the very poor. Nevertheless it was never able to overcome the difficulties of incorporating these concerns into the systems of resource management whose development it was supporting. The livelihoods analysis carried out by the project emphasized the continuing difficulties of participation in decision-making by such groups, due to lack of access caused by mobility constraints, labour shortages and lack of resources.

Environmental

The project was focused on the management of natural resources. As such, its environmental impact was intended to be beneficial, at all levels.

Institutionally

The DED noted that, at the local level, some of the institutional developments facilitated by the project would continue, for example the setting up of irrigators' groups. She was also appreciative of the relatively limited assets provided by the project (such as office space and equipment), which would remain after its completion.

2.12 Critical factors

The key issue in relation to SMUWC's performance is that it originated from a perceived "problem" (the drying up of the wetland, and shortage of water in the river downstream). It was quickly realised that the water shortage could not be viewed in isolation, and that it was therefore necessary to take a holistic view of resource availability and management in the catchment. Nevertheless this context for the project remained a dominant influence on the way it was implemented, and how its stakeholders perceived it. Its findings were always likely to be controversial, and to be unpopular with stakeholders whose interests were threatened. Therefore its institutional and capacity-building initiatives were also likely to receive a mixed level of support.

A further important factor in its overall performance was its relatively short duration. At the design stage, it was always understood that the process of institutional development and capacity-building would take a significant time, and the first phase was intended to be the precursor of a much longer period of support. In the event, the project was terminated after three and a half years and much of the institutional development was still in its early stages.

Although not specifically a livelihoods project, SMUWC applied many of the livelihoods principles in its design and implementation. Thus, it quickly developed a primary focus on poor people, and the way they manage natural resources to support their livelihoods. During its implementation it was participatory in nature and flexible in response, within the constraints set by the project format, and the need to achieve specified outputs. It had some success in working across the macro-meso-micro levels, particularly during the extension phase in which this was a specific objective. It was, by its nature, holistic and integrative in its format, and aimed at achieving sustainability in all its dimensions.

Perhaps the most interesting issue in relation to SMUWC and livelihoods is how such projects can build on existing capacities and strengths. Fundamentally it arose from a "weakness" (lack of water), and initially it was difficult for stakeholders not to see it as a mechanism for addressing this weakness and the problems that resulted from it. As the project went on, it was possible to start defining strengths and seeing how these might be supported, however one of the advantages of livelihoods approaches is to make this an explicit part of the project process from the start.

Appendix 2.1

Data sources

The following data sources were used in the preparation of this case study:

Abbott V (2002) SMUWC Project Completion Report

Bidya S, 2001. Personal Communication

Bidya was the District Executive Director during project implementation.

Cleaver F.D. (2001) Rural Livelihoods – SMUWC Report

DFID, 1997. SMUWC Project Memorandum

Forrester K and Madundo I.S (2002) Evaluation of Warmishi

Forrester K (2001) Evaluation Of SRMP

Harvey J, 2001. Personal Communication

Harvey was the DFID project officer during the design phase.

Mutayoba W, 2001. Personal Communication

Mutayoba was the RBMSIIP project co-ordinator for the project.

Salmon J, 2001. Personal Communication

Salmon was the DFID project officer during project implementation

SMUWC, 2002. Project Report

World Wide Fund for Nature Tanzania Programme Office (WWFTPO), 2001.
Proceedings of the Stakeholders and Planning Workshop for Great Ruaha River
Catchment Programme held at VETA Mbeya 3-6 December, 2001