

Water Operators' Partnerships in Africa

Case Study 3

GWOPA
Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance

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◀ **eThekweni Water and Sanitation,
City of Durban** (South Africa)

◀ **Bulawayo City Council** (Zimbabwe)

Key facts



Partners

eThekweni Water and Sanitation unit (EWS) of the eThekweni Municipality including Durban, South Africa and surrounding areas.

Engineering Services Department of Bulawayo City Council (BCC)
Zimbabwe.



Other Partners

Dabane Trust
Zimbabwe NGO.

Bosch Stemele
South African Engineering Consultants.

Various Bulawayo businesses and community groups.



Facilitator

The Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), World Vision and Department of Trade and Industry, South Africa.



Duration

The WOP was initiated in 2010 as part of the BOWSER project, but partnership activities are still continuing in 2014.



Cost

Total BOWSER cost was USD \$8.33 million approximately (2010–13) with USD \$7.22 million from AusAID and USD \$1.11 million from World Vision. WOP-specific costs difficult to isolate.



Approach

Rehabilitation and repair interventions, training and advice, public health and hygiene promotion campaigns and establishment of a call centre and Geographic Information System (GIS) facility.



Aims

i) To reduce vulnerability to waterborne diseases through improved sewerage, water supply systems, capacity building and hygiene promotion and ii) To put in place short, medium and long-term plans to secure investment and ensure sustainability.



Investment

- Infrastructure Development Bank of Zimbabwe invested USD \$ 6.23 million in Bulawayo water supply and wastewater projects between 2010 and 2013.
- Governments of Australia and Germany are jointly funding a USD \$10.00 million Water System Input Volume Programme between 2012 and 2014.
- UK Government Department for International Development pledged USD \$5.60 million in 2013–14 for new boreholes and sewage treatment plant rehabilitation.



Framework

The WOP was a component of the Bulawayo Water and Sanitation Emergency Response (BOWSER) programme, a coordinated international effort following the 2008–09 cholera outbreak.



Results

The BOWSER outcomes included better access to a functioning sewerage system and water supply services, enhanced water sanitation and hygiene practices and improved revenue collection. The Master Plan resulted in an improved planning framework.



Long-term Outlook

Political and economic environment is challenging and has an impact on access to investment; existing assets are deteriorating rapidly.



Success Factors

WOP partners were appropriately matched, had well-defined roles and worked with mutual respect. Good planning, NGO involvement, leadership style and community participation were also important.

Introduction

A water operators' partnership (WOP) is a collaboration between two or more water or sanitation operators, conducted on a not-for-profit basis, in the aim of developing their capacity. These partnerships are being used as a way of helping the world's public operators to sustainably deliver adequate water and sanitation for all.

This is one of a new set of Case Studies on WOPs in Africa, which follows a set of three Cases on WOPs in Asia published in 2012. The aim of the Case Studies series is to provide readable and accessible reports on WOPs in practice. The author has looked at how the partnerships were set up, implemented and monitored, the changes and improvements they brought about in the partner utilities, and their impact – both achieved and anticipated – on service delivery, future investment, and replication.

These studies were conducted by the Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance (GWOPA), hosted by UN-Habitat, under its obligation as the United Nations city agency to help the world meet the water and sanitation target of the Millennium Development Goals.

It also forms part of our remit to share and promote knowledge and understanding of water operator partnerships. By shedding light on how the partnerships are currently carried out and drawing lessons about what works and what doesn't, the Case Studies are meant to contribute to improved practice and wider adoption.

The WOPs presented here are not meant to be taken as prototypes or best practices, but as a sampling of the diversity of not for profit partnerships possible between water and sanitation operators. It is our fervent hope that they will inspire more operators to take up the practice, and also help financial supporters and facilitators build more effective partnerships.

Acknowledgements

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senior team in BCC, including Eng. Simela Dube, Director of Engineering Services and all BCC staff and citizens of Bulawayo who were unfailingly helpful and patient. Advisory Panel members Nancy Barnes and David Milnes receive special gratitude for their expert inputs and comments on drafts. Finally, Anke van Lenteren and Jared Farrell are to be thanked for their creative design.



The background

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country in Southern Africa with a population of about 12.6 million over 390,757 square kilometres. It borders South Africa, Botswana, Zambia and Mozambique. After the capital Harare, Bulawayo is the second largest city, with a growing population of over 1.5 million. Robert Mugabe has been President since 1980. The economy is based on minerals, tourism and agriculture. Zimbabwe has significant resources of gold and diamonds and one of the world's largest reserves of platinum. Tourist attractions include game parks and Victoria Falls.

Zimbabwe's economy is now in slow recovery after a decade of severe contraction from 1998 to 2008. The economy actually grew 5% in 2012, though 2013–14 forecasts are less encouraging. Serious economic problems remain, including a large external debt burden and massive unemployment. Zimbabwe's 1998–2002 involvement in the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was very costly. Chaotic land reforms have damaged the commercial farming sector – traditionally the source of exports, foreign exchange and the provider of 400,000 jobs – such that the country is now a net importer of food products. Until early 2009, the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe printed money to fund the budget deficit, eventually leading to hyperinflation. A Bulawayo engineer's monthly

salary in January 2009 could not buy a single banana and the Bank started printing Zimbabwe dollar notes in denominations up to 100 billion. Hyperinflation ended in 2009 with "dollarization" allowing currencies like the US dollar and South African rand to be used locally. That reduced inflation to about 10%, but it exposed structural weaknesses that still inhibit broad-based growth.

In 1990, Zimbabwe had one of the best water supply and sanitation systems in Africa. But the Zimbabwe economic crisis and eventual melt-down had disastrous effects on the water supply and sanitation sector across the country including Bulawayo. Much of the Bulawayo water infrastructure, dating back to the 1940's, was no longer maintained because there were no spare parts and people could not pay their water bills. Some Bulawayo City Council staff migrated to work in South Africa. In the end, half of all treated water was being lost through leaks, system breakdowns meant piped water supplies were unavailable to many, sewage treatment plants stopped working, the sewerage system was blocked and raw sewage flooded the streets. There was a cholera epidemic in 2008 to 2009 with over 98,500 cases nationally and 4,000 lives lost, though few in Bulawayo itself.



Response to the water emergency in Bulawayo

The Task Force

To face up to the alarming combined possibility of cholera and a failed water supply and sanitation system, the Bulawayo Sewage Task Force was set up in 2008 by the Bulawayo City Council (BCC), two NGOs (World Vision Zimbabwe and Dabane Trust), together with a group of private businesses in the civil engineering and water-related fields. There was already a WASH Cluster¹ group including the above organizations working on water, sanitation and hygiene issues in Matabeleland South. World Vision agreed to seek funding from possible donors and this later led to an AusAID agreement to fund an emergency response programme.

The City Twinning Agreement

There has been a Twinning Agreement between eThekweni Municipality of South Africa (which includes the City of Durban) and the City of Bulawayo since 2002. It is financed on a shared basis with the cities paying for the travel costs of their own staff and the accommodation costs of visitors. It covers such things as economic development, cultural relations, sport and tourism. It aims to facilitate contacts and to promote communication and cooperation between various departments in the two cities.



¹ The Cluster Approach is a way of coordinating the humanitarian relief efforts of UN, NGO and other international organizations during emergencies along sector lines. The WASH Cluster is the grouping of water and sanitation sector actors, led by UNICEF.

The Water Operators' Partnership

In November 2009, using the framework of the city twinning, the BCC Director of Engineering Services approached eThekweni Water and Sanitation (EWS) for technical assistance on the water crisis. A team from EWS visited Bulawayo to assess the status of the water and sanitation systems. They found the drinking water system was precarious and the wastewater system had failed completely. As BCC lacked the necessary resources, policies and know-how to turn things around, EWS recommended a set of short, medium and long-term actions. EWS also agreed to a Memorandum of Understanding with the BCC Engineering Services Department. These recommendations and the Memorandum of Understanding were the basis of the WOP and the Bulawayo Water and Sanitation Emergency Response (BOWSER) programme.

BOWSER

The BOWSER programme began officially in April 2010, managed by a steering committee comprised of BCC, World Vision and Dabane Trust. In December 2010, with AusAID funding already agreed, a joint visit to EWS in Durban was made by BCC's Director of Engineering Services, World Vision and AusAID. The two WOP partners assessed capacity building needs and made plans for BCC to learn from the experience and expertise of EWS. Together with World Vision and the funding agency, the WOP partners then planned the BOWSER programme in detail, including the activities and a time-frame for implementation. It was agreed that BOWSER funding would cover the costs of flights and accommodation for incoming EWS staff under the WOP. There was also a 3-day retreat workshop outside Bulawayo when BCC, World Vision and Dabane Trust developed a Logical Planning Framework for BOWSER.

The Master Plan

Bosch Stemele, a civil engineering consultancy firm with a regional office in Durban and a contractor to EWS, visited Bulawayo at BCC request in June 2010. The need for a water and wastewater master plan for Bulawayo had already been identified and discussed by the WOP partners, BCC and EWS. The aim was to provide BCC with a short, medium and long-term framework for planning, funding (identifying sources of funds), rehabilitating, upgrading and renewing the water infrastructure in Bulawayo. The South African Government Department of Trade and Industry agreed in November 2010 to fund 55% of the cost of the Master Plan with 45% to come from BCC. An agreement was signed between BCC and Bosch Stemele in January 2011. EWS agreed to help guide and monitor the development of the Master Plan.

Operator partners

eThekweni Water and Sanitation (EWS)

eThekweni Municipality in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, includes the city of Durban and a wider area of villages, towns and tribal lands with a population of over 3.0 million. eThekweni Water and Sanitation (EWS) is the unit responsible for providing water and sanitation services in the municipality. The service area includes a variety of settlement types from urban to rural areas and informal settlements. EWS core values are customer focus, cost consciousness and a concern for its staff. EWS prides itself on its innovations. Initiatives such as free basic water, flow limiters, plastic-bodied water meters, polypropylene water piping, urine diversion toilets, the use of grey water for urban agriculture, condominial sewerage and a customer water debt repayment policy were first introduced to South Africa by EWS. Neil McLeod, EWS Head, received the 2013 IWA Development Award for pioneering innovative approaches to serving poor communities and fostering partnerships between stakeholders and service providers across Africa.

Engineering Services Department of BCC

The Engineering Services Department of Bulawayo City Council is responsible for providing water supply and sanitation services to the city's population. BCC is governed by an elected Council of 29 members headed by the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor for policy and broad decision-making. The administration has six departments headed by the Town Clerk. Within the Engineering Services Department there is a Water Supply and Sewerage Section. There were 716 staff positions and 518 employees in place in August 2013.



The water sector in Zimbabwe

For water supply activities, BCC reports to the Ministry of Water Resources Development and Management. It also answers to the Zimbabwe National Water Authority which has primary responsibility for Zimbabwe's water resources. Zimbabwe has a new National Water Policy, published in March 2013, which sets out ideas for a recovery phase for the urban water and sanitation services sector and a number of policy principles and directives. The Government was aided by the World Bank and UNICEF in preparing the new water policy. It includes a proposal encouraging water service authorities such as BCC to contract water service providers – which could be private or mixed public-private entities – to provide water and sanitation services. The Minister announced in April 2013 that he was looking to overseas private investors to find a lasting solution to the water crisis. None, however, have yet come forward.





BOWSER partners

Besides the WOP partners, there were several partners and facilitators involved in BOWSER including:

World Vision

World Vision International is a Christian relief, development and advocacy NGO dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. It provides assistance to 100 million people worldwide (including 2.4 million children) and has 22,500 staff members working in 96 countries. World Vision Zimbabwe has been active since 1973 and works in 26 districts of the country.

Dabane Trust

Dabane Trust is a local NGO established in 1991 to alleviate the water and food security problems of people living in arid and semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe. Dabane Trust works with rural communities to develop simple and appropriate water abstraction systems. It supports low-cost sustainable food production systems and works closely with communities to develop their capacity and to promote local solutions.

AusAID

AusAID is the Australian Agency for International Development, the Australian Government agency responsible for managing Australia's overseas development cooperation programme. It is an

Executive Agency within the Department of Foreign Affairs and its fundamental purpose is to help people worldwide to overcome poverty. Australia classifies Zimbabwe as a "fragile state". Its substantial Zimbabwe aid programme, with a strong focus on water and sanitation, makes it the fourth largest donor after the USA, the United Kingdom and the European Union.

Bosch Stemele

Bosch Stemele is part of the Bosch Holdings group of companies, established in 1961. It is one of the leading, multi-disciplinary consulting, project engineering, construction and operational management firms in South Africa. The company has worked regularly for EWS and is well experienced in the field of urban water and sanitation.

Other Partners

These include the South African Department of Trade and Industry, which provided a grant to Bosch Stemele for 55% of the costs of the Master Plan, and a number of businesses in Bulawayo with water sector interests. These local companies actively worked with the community and helped gain support for the BOWSER programme. Community groups such as the Bulawayo Progressive Residents' Association were also active partners in BOWSER.





Partnership arrangements

This Water Operators' Partnership between EWS and BCC is different from the usual one-to-one WOP agreement between two peers with a funding agency or facilitator in the background. It emerged out of the urgency to address a water crisis, and built on the momentum of various partners that had already gathered to tackle it.

The WOP arrangements were based on:

- The 2002 Twin City Agreement between Bulawayo and eThekweni, including the City of Durban².
- The 2009 Memorandum of Understanding between EWS and the Engineering Services Department of BCC. This is important because it was the means for eThekweni Municipal Council to empower EWS to commit resources to support BCC. Such modalities are often essential when public sector agencies and public funds are involved.

² Bulawayo has a number of such agreements including a long-standing Twin City link with Aberdeen, Scotland and a new twinning Statement of Intent in 2013 with Siping City in China. The latter is of special interest because the Minister of Water Resources Development and Management has stated his ambition that the Siping twinning should centre on water infrastructure investment.

Additionally, the WOP partners had to interact with co-partners operating under agreements of different types including:

- Agreements signed in 2010 by World Vision with the BCC and Dabane Trust following the 3-day retreat to plan implementation of the BOWSER project. These agreements depended, in turn, on the agreements between AusAID and World Vision as the principal channel for donor funds.
- An agreement between Bosch Stemele and BCC in January 2011 on the Water and Wastewater Master Plan. The consultants already had an agreement with the South African Government's Department of Trade and Industry to cover 55% of the costs with the balance to be incurred by BCC.

Local businesses and community groups were also engaged in the implementation process under agreements and contracts of various kinds.

Implementing BOWSER

Objectives

It was agreed by the WOP Partners and the other organizations involved that the BOWSER overall goal would be to reduce vulnerability to waterborne diseases in Bulawayo through improved sewerage and water supply systems, improved customer care and financial sustainability.

BOWSER was designed to deliver four outcomes:

1. At least 450,000 residents having access to a functioning sewerage system;
2. At least 450,000 residents having access to a functioning water supply system;
3. Bulawayo residents and BCC staff utilising improved water, sanitation and hygiene practices;
4. BCC having increased financial sustainability in water provision and improved capacity to provide customer care.

The first two objectives were the intended technical outcomes while the second two were the planned social outcomes.

WOP Activities

Under the overall BOWSER project, EWS supported BCC with the following:

- Toolkit development and outreach based on the successful WASH education programme applied by EWS in eThekweni;
- Development of service level standards. EWS would share its departmental standards of service to help BCC ensure a high level of operation and to inform the public on service delivery expectations;
- Prepare and publish a Customer Service Charter. EWS would share a template based on its charter to support BCC in outlining its own vision and mission;
- Call centre design, and software (*Faultman*, developed originally for EWS) provision, training-of-trainers in “Callers’ Needs Assessment”, training manual provision and use of links for remote assistance;
- Assistance in Water Demand Management – non-revenue water (NRW), leak detection, water balances and the use of pressure reduction valves;

- Support in tariff-setting based on the EWS model, including advice on ring-fencing revenue from water and sanitation sales.

Several of these areas of collaboration are described further in the following sections.

Participatory Health and Hygiene Education

Given the urgency of the situation at the outset of BOWSER, it was important to mobilize the Hygiene Education component quickly. Trainers were ready to improvise at short notice and materials were designed as the programme was being rolled out.

Road-shows were gradually changed and improved over the course of the initiative in light of experience. The main features of the Participatory Health and Hygiene Education strategy were:

1. Posters printed and billboards erected on main roads in the worst affected areas.
2. Trainers trained to carry out activities in churches, health centres and schools.
3. Road-shows mounted with popular artists to deliver key messages and conduct competitions

4. Communication materials, based on those used by EWS in South Africa, modified to the local needs and environment.

The main PPHE messages were on:

- Health and Hygiene
- Sewer system care and maintenance
- Water conservation
- Payment of bills

Nine sites were used for the Poster Campaign and the aim was to make the posters as eye-catching and clear as possible. Effectiveness has not been formally evaluated but they certainly had some impact on what is largely a literate urban population.

Most of the trainers were health extension technicians, community health workers, school teachers and church youth group leaders. When early attempts to start up community health groups failed, trainers focussed on passing messages through existing groups of various kinds. The road-shows drew on Dabane Trust experience of clean-up campaigns. The road-shows were a mix of song, dance, music and drama. A theme-song containing

key messages was recorded on CD and issued to combi-taxi drivers with a request to play the CD to commuters. A pack of materials was provided by EWS and adapted from the Durban context for Bulawayo. There was little use of mass media such as radio and TV on grounds of cost-effectiveness.

Technical Activities

BOWSER also included civil rehabilitation works, including:

- Repairing or rehabilitating 11 sewage pumping stations on the western side of the city (benefitting low-income households in high-density neighbourhoods);
- Clearing of sewer sand traps (target: 45 traps) in the same western area;
- Clearing of blockages in sewer lines (target: 250 kilometres);
- Repairing or replacing sewerage outfall pipes (target: 800 metres);
- Rehabilitation of inlet works at the Magwegwe North wastewater treatment facility;
- Providing materials – pipes, fittings and valves – to repair leaks on the main Ncema WS line (target: 700 leaks);

- Replacing valves (target: 60 valves) on the Nyamandlovu well-field pipeline to reduce water losses;
- Rehabilitating chemical dosing and chlorination equipment at Ncema water treatment plant and rehabilitation of filtration beds and clarifiers (to be achieved through project savings).

Other BOWSER Activities that supported BCC's improvement included:

- Mapping the water and sewerage networks and training staff to use GIS systems;
- Supplying tools, fuel, heavy equipment and safety clothing;
- Training engineers, technicians and operators on water metering and maintenance of sewers and WS pipelines;
- Establishing a BCC call centre with appropriate security, hardware, software and an accurate customer information base;
- Improving BCC bill preparation and revenue collection systems;
- Linking BCC headquarters to 9 BCC District Offices with a Wider Area Network (WAN) including hardware, troubleshooting and support;



- Training BCC staff in customer relations and dealing with complaint calls;
- Arranging a shared back-up server for BCC at Harare City Council;
- Improving the management of BCC stores and work depots;
- Introducing improved and transparent procurement procedures including bid/tender evaluation and contract award;
- Facilitating residents' complaints reaching BCC and being acted upon.

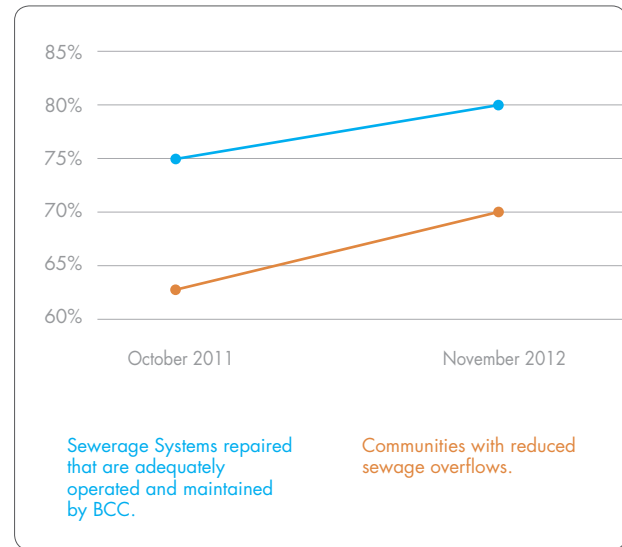
BOWSER outcomes

By the end of the BOWSER project almost all of the activities proposed had been delivered or were about to be completed. In a number of instances, project implementation targets were exceeded³.

Overall Aims

For the overall aim of reducing waterborne diseases, there was a 20% reduction during the project period in the incidence of diarrhoeal cases reported at BCC Health Clinics. Importantly, this drop also held for children under five years old. A strong downward trend in the incidence of cases began soon after the BOWSER work started in June 2010. Through 2011 and up to December 2012, the trend was sustained as the sewer system was gradually reactivated. This represents, as the End-of-Project Study says, “a significant health and economic benefit for the residents.”

Outcome 1: Improved Sewerage



The EOP Study reports that 78.3% of residents agree that BOWSER interventions have improved sewage collection and disposal in Bulawayo.

³ Drawn from the Bulawayo Emergency Water and Sanitation Response (BOWSER) Final Report, Technical End of Project (EOP) Study by John Gildea, Consultant, submitted by World Vision Zimbabwe to AusAID, February 2013, and the World Vision International AusAID NGO Project Report submitted to AusAID Zimbabwe Office, 2013

Outcome 2: Improved Water Supply



Outcome 3: Residents and council staff utilise improved water, sanitation and hygiene practices

Actual practice changes as a result of BOWSER were not measured, however the following outputs were delivered:

- Training needs analysis completed and five Participatory Health and Hygiene Education tools developed for use by the BCC staff.
- Programme of road-shows completed, posters developed and displayed on nine billboards.
- Information pamphlets developed and distributed.

Outcome 4: BCC has increased financial sustainability in water provision and improved capacity to provide customer care

The following outputs contributed to the increased financial sustainability of BCC:

- Hand-held meter readers supplied and staff trained.
- Steady increase in BCC average monthly revenue to August 2012.
- BCC has in place improved and more transparent procurement procedures.
- IT equipment procured and supplied.
- WAN/LAN network installed and customer call centre established.
- Customer call centre staff trained.

Impacts

As a combined result of the increased access to water and sewerage by Bulawayo residents and the hygiene education efforts, BOWSER has effectively reduced waterborne disease threats. Residents also have better awareness about the proper use of the sewerage system and household water management including water conservation.

The master plan

The objective of developing a water and sewerage Master Plan for BCC was “to provide the City of Bulawayo with a basis for planning, sourcing funding, and implementing renewal, remedial upgrading and other interventions aimed at improving the provision of potable water and wastewater conveyance and treatment.”

The Plan foresees a phased roll-out, and includes:

1. Actions that the City of Bulawayo could implement in the very short term to address its priority problems.
2. A 5-year action plan for improving water and wastewater services.
3. A plan with a 20-year horizon, aimed at creating and delivering viable and sustainable water and wastewater services in Bulawayo.

In addition to the planning and rehabilitation of water and wastewater infrastructure, the Master Plan also includes associated operational and maintenance requirements and institutional considerations, including efforts to move towards cost-recovery.

Master Plan Recommendations

The Master Plan is a substantial document and it would not be useful to attempt a summary here, however there are some aspects that deserve attention.

The Master Plan reviewed the existing and likely future water demand for Bulawayo under several scenarios. It estimates that the present demand of approximately 156.6 Million Litres per day will increase to 204 Million litres per day in 20 years and suggests that the Matebeleland Zambezi Water Project (MZWP), which has been under discussion since 1912 in the early colonial days, will be “a critical lifeline for Bulawayo’s water supply requirements.” In May 2013 construction of the Gwayi-Shangani dam, the first phase of the MZWP, finally began, however supplies are expected to take another 10 years before coming available in Bulawayo.

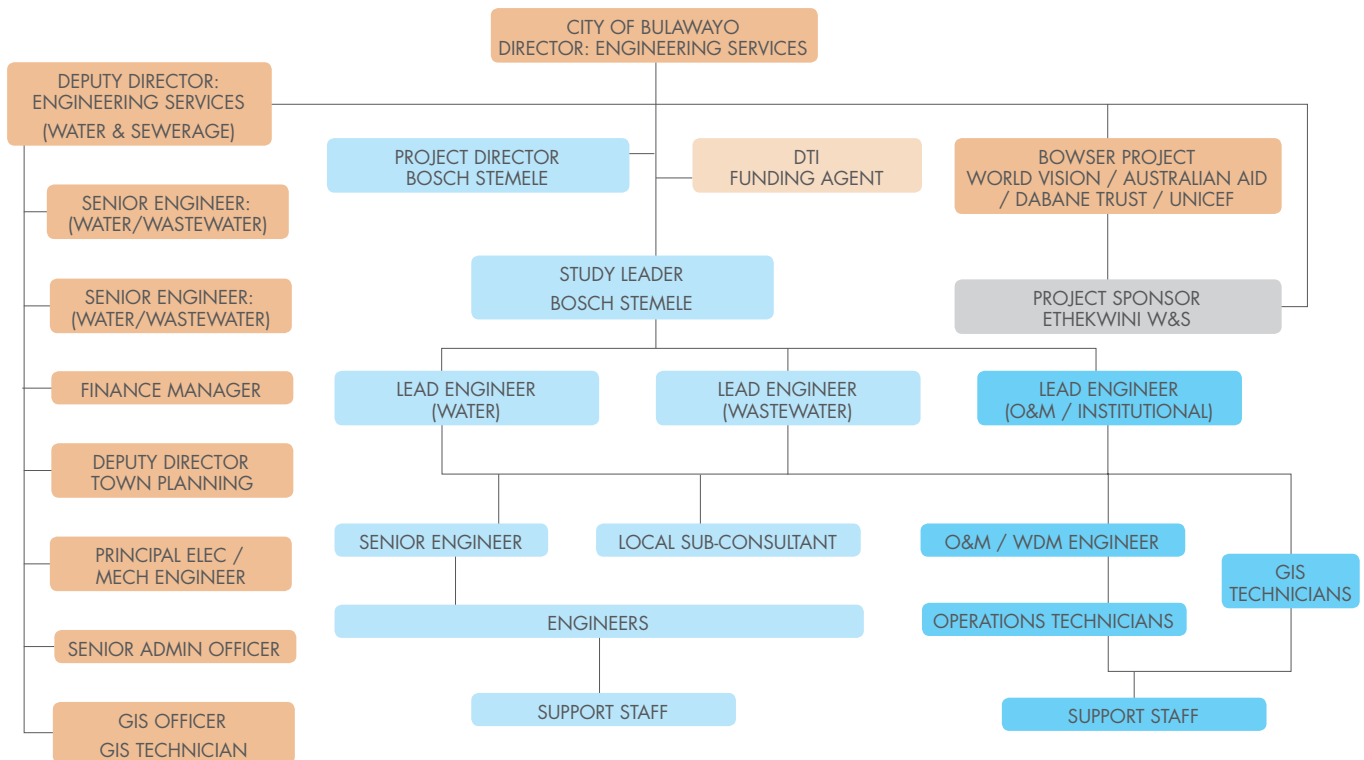
The Plan contains many recommendations on operational and institutional management, technical guidelines and standards, tariff policy and structures and billing and financial management. It also makes important proposals on organization structure, change management, salary review, performance management, gender mainstreaming and staff

retention. Clearly BCC will need help and support to address these matters. The hope is that EWS can support BCC in the implementation of these Master Plan components through a WOP.

The plan estimates a cost of more than US \$7.5 million over 2 to 4 years for implementing all

the operational and institutional management projects it prescribes. There will be major capacity development challenges and it is not clear from the Master Plan how these are to be met. There would be great advantages and probable cost savings in using the WOP approach, already successful with BOWSER.

BCC Water and Wastewater Master Plan Team Organization



What the partners say

"The extensive use of exchanges with eThekweni Water Services under the WOP were fundamental to success with BOWSER"

BCC Departmental Director, July 2013

"When we come out of this emergency, the real work starts on better management of our assets and we have to ensure the funds for that are ring-fenced."

Senior BCC engineer, July 2013

"One really important result of BOWSER was that it brought groups of people together from the complete spectrum of water sector stakeholders to work together."

Stephen Hussey, Director, Dabane Trust, July 2013

"Although the partnerships included organizations with rather different ideas, it worked well because the roles were clear, the planning was done jointly with stakeholders and the communities were genuinely involved. That also gave a sense of ownership."

BCC staff in wrap-up meeting, July 2013

"The City of Bulawayo is proud to be the first Zimbabwean municipality to launch a service call centre to increase communication with residents... (this) is an indication of our commitment in spearheading customer service standards and upholding the spirit of "ubuntu" in Bulawayo."

Councillor Thaba Patrick Moyo, Mayor of Bulawayo, November 2012





"In every aspect of the above civil works and supporting activities, the BOWSER project has been able to deliver almost always on time and assist the rebuilding of a stronger understanding and relationship between BCC and the city's residents."

John Gildea, End-of-Project Consultant, October 2012

"Particularly commendable was the willingness of some partners to invest time and money 'upfront' in advance of the flow of donor funds, either in response to the emergency or as a way of demonstrating an approach that would benefit the project. All parties were committed and prepared to be flexible."

Barry M. Jackson, Development Consultant, July 2012

"BOWSER achieved results well above many of its initial targets, with findings confirmed by an independent audit of both the technical and social components of its work"

AusAID 2013, quoted from AusAID web site.

Success factors

The WOP originated with the need to respond to a desperate water emergency in Bulawayo. The city twinning with eThekweni Municipality was already in place in the background but the WOP as such started with the call for help by the Engineering Services Department of BCC to EWS in late 2009. That call for help not only initiated the WOP but was also a key step in the development of the BOWSER emergency response programme. Apart from the Master Plan, all the WOP activities and inputs by EWS over the next 2 to 3 years were directed to achieving BOWSER objectives. BCC's Engineering Services Department was also engaged with several other partners working on BOWSER. This complexity makes it difficult to disentangle and evaluate the contributions of the WOP partners from those of the NGOs and others who contributed to BOWSER. It is not feasible and probably not useful to try to delineate WOP success factors separately from BOWSER success factors, so the following remarks are in fairly general terms.

EWS – A Well-Matched WOP Partner for BCC

As EWS is also based in the Southern Africa Region, it shares, to an extent, the BCC operating environment. This meant that some know-how was almost directly transferable, for example the call

centre design and training and the Participatory Health and Hygiene Education campaign materials. Again, because of its regional experience, EWS was well placed to oversee the production of the Master Plan by Bosch Stemele. EWS not only provided knowledge and technical support but has demonstrated its ability to serve as a source of guidance and advice for BCC.

Good Planning

In an emergency like that in Bulawayo in 2009, it is natural to focus on short-term immediate issues. However the logical framework planning that preceded BOWSER enabled the partners to balance the short-term needs against medium and long-term objectives. Development cooperation agencies know very well that careful pre-project planning does not always survive implementation, however, in this case, the partners did indeed follow the plans, with some necessary adaptations along the way.

NGO Involvement

World Vision and Dabane Trust are both experienced NGOs with first-rate facilitation skills. The NGOs brought crucial strengths to the partnership. World Vision, apart from its own financial contributions, acted as the main conduit

of donor funds, so avoiding some of the delays and bureaucracies that can beset bilateral aid. The NGO culture is different from and more flexible than local government culture. That proved to be an asset. Dabane Trust's acquisition of a jetting machine from Oxfam to get work going on sewer clearance was NGO networking in action!

Leadership Style and Community Involvement

The leadership style shown by World Vision was exemplary. It was based, as the Consultant reviewing the project observed, on a culture not of directing, but rather of guiding and helping others to take on responsibility. The past relationship between BCC and residents has not always been smooth. This can be seen from articles in local journals like the Residents' Forum with headlines such as: "Residents Demand Water", "Furore over Council Water Bills" (July 2012) and "Water shedding intensifies" (September 2012). In December 2010, the journal roundly criticized BCC for failures: "Council failed to stick to its promise that the repairs would be completed..." and "BCC also failed to find or implement a long-term solution to the city's perennial water problems..." However because BOWSER made such strong efforts to involve communities – and the NGO partners were such effective mediators – there is now a chance to build a better and more sustainable relationship between BCC and the communities it serves.



Observations and recommendations

Continuing the WOP

Although BOWSER formally ended on February 28th 2013, EWS still has plenty to offer BCC as a partner. Compared with many other WOPs there was little in the way of staff secondment or study tours to the expert partner. This should be remedied in the future if funds are available and the WOP is continued. During the last year a new agreement was signed between EWS and BCC emphasizing the transfer of technology and with a focus on the need for continued support in the areas of water and sanitation.

Sustainability

The sustainability of BOWSER achievements depends on several factors. Bulawayo has a local economy that has declined sharply, an aging water infrastructure and an unresolved water resources problem. Some help is available – AusAID and German Development Cooperation are jointly funding a USD \$10.00 million Water System Input Volume Programme over 2012–14 and the UK Department for international Development has pledged USD \$5.60 million for new boreholes, sewage treatment plant rehabilitation and more during 2013 and 2014. GIZ is also providing some project management support. But these measures will only slow down the decline of the assets and service provision levels. To survive in the long-term,

BCC, like many utilities in this boat, has to find ways of investing in the infrastructure, financing good maintenance and managing its expenditure efficiently. The partnership has brought about a slight positive trend in revenue collection however an urgent task for BCC now is to set out a definitive water tariff strategy to sustainably recover at least its operation and maintenance costs. EWS support to BCC implementation of an improved water tariff strategy would be one very good objective for a next-step WOP, if funding is available.

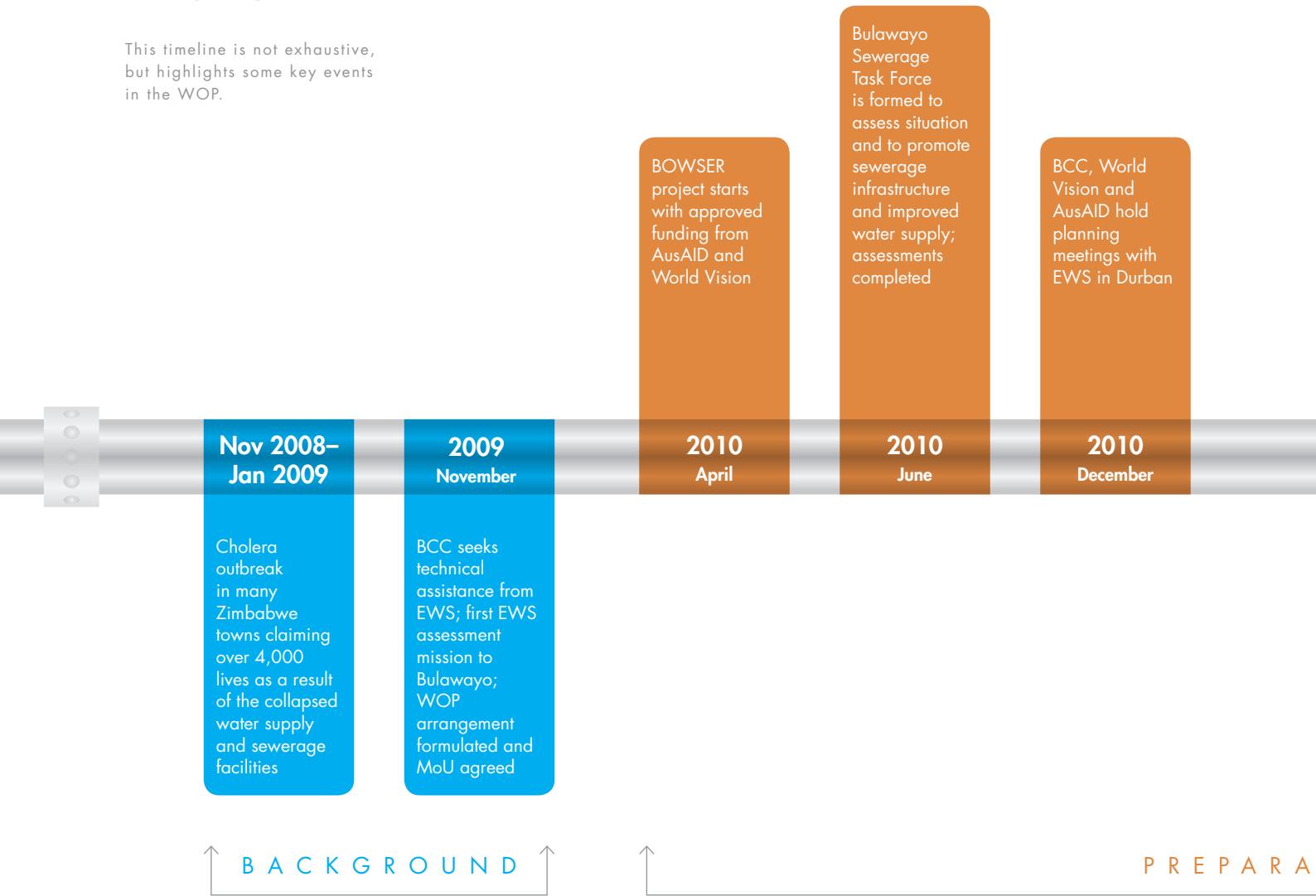
Replicability and the Role of NGOs

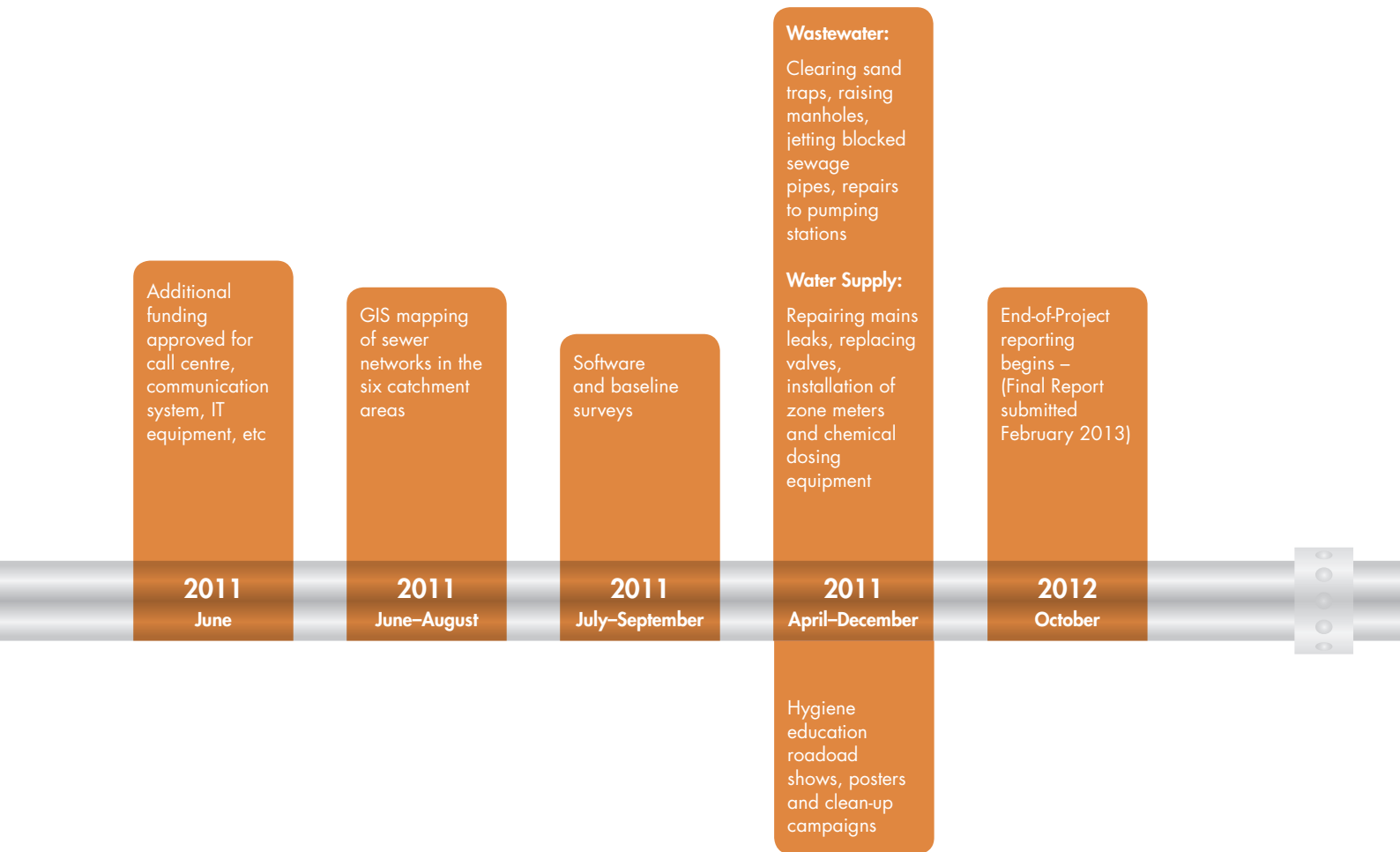
There are many lessons to be learned from the way in which World Vision and Dabane Trust contributed to the partnership. WOP partners, existing and potential, should notice the flexibility, closeness to communities, facilitation and networking skills that the two NGOs brought with them. The added value of NGOs in WOPs is particularly clear when looking at the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). For example, the improvements in public health expected under the current set of MDGs cannot be had by new and rehabilitated infrastructure alone. They require social and behavioural change, especially with regard to sanitation. Such changes are much more likely to be achieved if NGOs and community groups can be brought in to support WOPs.



Timeline

This timeline is not exhaustive, but highlights some key events in the WOP.





TION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Key references

1. City of Bulawayo – Water and Wastewater Master Plan, Bosch Stemele Consultants, 2012 (Summary)
2. Bulawayo Emergency Water and Sanitation Response (BOWSER) Final Report, Technical End of Project (EOP) Study submitted by World Vision Zimbabwe to AusAID, February 2013, John Gildea, Consultant
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5. Government of Zimbabwe, National Water Policy, Ministry of Water Resources Development and Management, March 2013 (supported by World Bank, UNICEF et al)
6. Various Issues of “Residents’ Forum” and “Residents’ Bulletin”, Bulawayo Progressive Residents’ Association, 2009–12

Water Operators' Partnerships (WOPs) are peer support relationships between two or more water or sanitation operators, carried out on a not-for-profit basis in the objective of capacity development. This is one of a series of four impact-oriented case studies conducted on WOPs in Africa. It is intended for water and sanitation service providers, governments, development banks, donors, WOPs facilitators and all who are interested in gaining a better understanding of this solidarity-based approach to helping public operators improve their capacity to sustainably deliver water and sanitation services for all.



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