

# Devices put livelihoods at risk in Dunoon



**By Thabo Lusithi and Manelisi James**

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## Introduction

“We need communities to be better organised to deal with water situations in their areas”



# Who are we?



## **Thabo Lusithi**

Thabo Lusithi has eight years of experience in the NGO sector, working at EMG and as the coordinator of the Western Cape Water Caucus. His focus has been on water and climate change, and network building. Thabo's experience has been built in facilitation, coordination and environmental awareness building. He sees his work as opening meeting spaces in different communities where it has been difficult for those communities to organise themselves. What strikes him most is the

vast knowledge that ordinary people are sitting with, which is not valued by decision makers.

## **Manelisi James**

Manelisi James lives in Dunoon where he works for the community-based advice office which helps local people with a variety of issues. The focus of his work is water rights and an awareness of these rights. He is also interested in looking for more efficient and effective ways of dealing with water wastage such as leaks. James believes that his activism is inspired by his love of history at school and what he calls true history that he learned outside school.



When James moved to Dunoon, the situation in the area awakened his activism. As he liked to read he started

gathering information on how the community can address the struggles they are facing. As he was doing this, a man walked towards him and they started chatting about the area's history and the challenges they are facing. This man introduced himself as Tex Dludla who grew up in rural KwaZulu Natal. This talk ended up in a decision to open up an advice office. These two activists started forming networks and building solidarity with other community members and outside people from the community. The difficulty they came across is that many people in the community believe that they should accept whatever the City is doing, because they believe it is a favour for the City to give them service delivery.

# Introducing our Change Project



In this case study we looked at water issues in Dunoon and what those issues mean for the community. Through our engagements with Dunoon residents we realised that people create their own work opportunities here, as work is scarce. Whichever street you walk down in Dunoon you will find small businesses; we believe Dunoon has more community businesses than any other community in Cape Town.

In Dunoon, like in many working class communities in Cape Town, the municipality has been installing water management devices for several years.

## **What is a water management device?**

*“A water management device (or WMD) is an electronic device that can be installed*

*on a household’s water meter. It can be programmed to allow a certain amount of water to flow to the household daily, after which it cuts the water off until the following day”* (EMG fact sheet on WMDs, available here: [http://www.emg.org.za/images/downloads/water\\_cl\\_ch/FactSheetWMD.pdf](http://www.emg.org.za/images/downloads/water_cl_ch/FactSheetWMD.pdf)).

In Cape Town the WMDs are programmed to give poor households 350 litres per day, and then cut off the flow.

We decided to look at the impact of the installation of the device on the entrepreneurial culture of this community. We especially wanted to see if the device had an impact on small businesses.

# Dunoon, Cape Town



Dunoon is a township just outside Cape Town, close to Table View and Killarney. This community is like any other township in South Africa. It is characterised by poverty, unemployment, high population density, and all sorts of other socio-economic issues. When you enter Dunoon you are greeted by filth and water running down the streets. You would also be amazed by the amount of people in the streets during the week. Dunoon is filled with unemployed youth and adults. This area also has people who are working on farms, mostly from the rural areas of the Eastern Cape and from other African countries. All of this means that this community is highly dependent on municipal services such as water, refuse, waste removal, sanitation etc.

Dunoon is not an old township in Cape Town but not new either, it was developed in 1997. The area is divided into five sections, namely sections 23, 24, 28, 29 and 31. Dunoon is also surrounded by informal settlements.

The many needs of this community pushed some people to become activists in the area. Manelisi James and Tex Dlodla established the advice office to assist the people of this community.

The residents of Dunoon come from many diverse backgrounds. Apart from South Africans, there are Zimbabweans, Congolese, Nigerians, Somalians and the different South African ethnic groups.

## Brief history of the Dunoon Advice Office

The Advice Office in Dunoon was started in 2007. James explains that they wanted the advice office to be a focal point for information sharing that would be accessible by all members of the community. There is a long history of advice offices in South African communities: “Community advice offices (CAOs) are small NPOs that offer free basic legal and human rights information, advice and services to people who are marginalised through poverty, social circumstances and geographical location” ([www.nadcao.org.za](http://www.nadcao.org.za)).

When the advice office started they were funded by Black Sash. That funding lasted for three years. They set up a programme on organising the youth, to take them off the streets by getting them involved in sports and other extramural activities such as dancing. They also had a program for the elderly people, so that they weren't just sitting around; they organised to get them out of the community to interesting events and to do some exercise. They also supported people to start food gardens at the backs of their houses, and at some schools. There was a clinic close to the advice office, and soon James and Tex discovered that it was easy for diseases to



spread in that clinic. It was such a tiny space with many sick people close together. They organised for the community to protest outside that clinic, and then it was closed down. The Department of Health promised to build another clinic, and now they have the Dunoon Day Hospital. This was a victory for the advice office. The only downside was that the councillor became threatened by the advice office's work, and he wanted to force them out. The community came to their support, saying the councillor has no right to chase them out of that office. But it is challenging to have that conflict with the councillor. Another challenge is that they do not have funding at present. There is only an organisation called Mosaic based in Wynberg that is giving them money for stationery, and for workshop venues and catering. At the moment they are working as volunteers to keep the office open.

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## Background and History

“The installation of water management devices was believed by us activists from the Western Cape Water Caucus to target the so-called poor communities of Cape Town”



Environmental Monitoring Group is an NGO with links to Coalition for Environmental Justice and the South African Water Caucus. EMG is mandated to coordinate the Western Cape provincial water caucus. Thabo Lusithi is the current coordinator for the Western Cape Water Caucus. The Coalition for Environmental Justice is a network that is active in the

broader environmental justice movement that the Western Cape Water Caucus is also a part of. The South African Water Caucus is a network of NGOs, CBOs, Trade Unions and interested individuals, who are active in the water sector to bring about justice.



Dunoon is a community facing many struggles such as unemployment, waste in the streets and poor delivery of services by the City of Cape Town. When we decided to work in Dunoon it was as participants of a social learning course called 'Changing Practice'. This course was part of a WRC funded research project that EMG ran in partnership with SAWC, Rhodes University and Munnik and Associates. The project was exploring citizen monitoring of the National Water Resources Strategy 2 (NWRS2). The course was accredited by Rhodes University.

Since 2008/9 EMG and its partners have seen the municipality installing water management devices in certain communities in the name of saving water. SAMWU (South African Municipal Workers Union) was an organisation that opposed these devices from the beginning. Lance Veotte from SAMWU was the person who was making sure communities knew more about this device. Thabo remembers that in February 2009, some Mitchells Plain comrades along with Lance visited the EMG offices to chat about the installation of the water management devices in Wesbank, Mitchells Plain and Delft.

Issues raised at that meeting at the EMG office were:

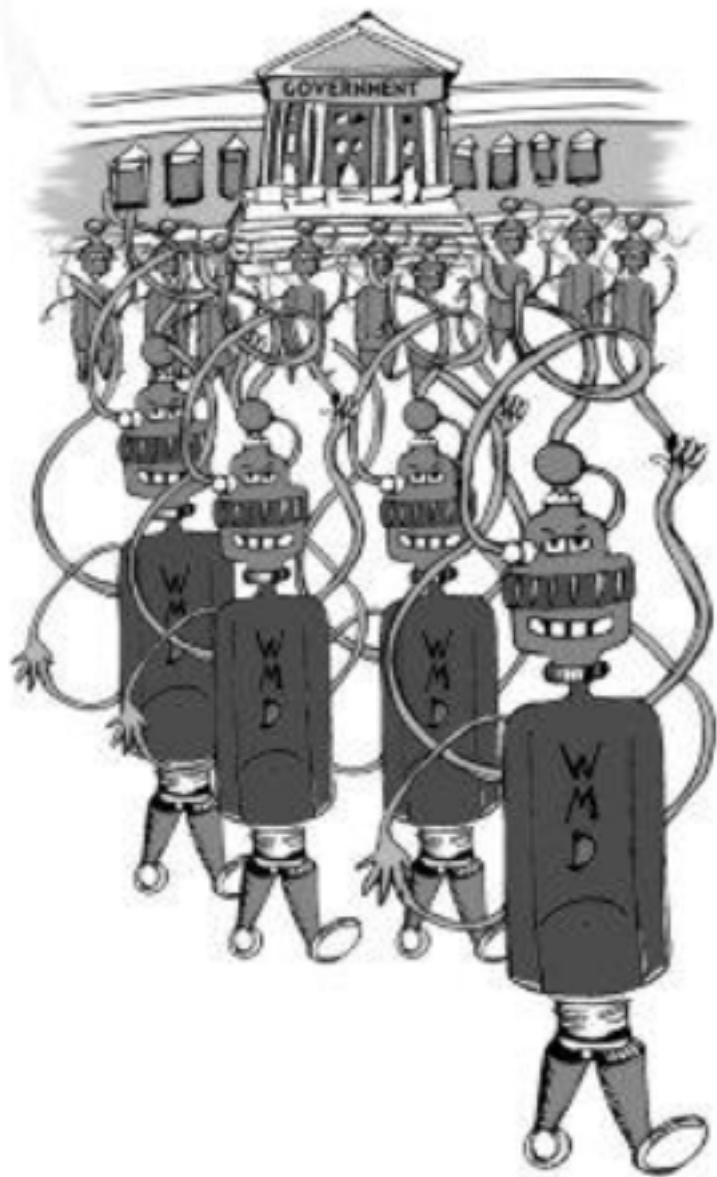
- the city did not consult the community and the households that had the devices installed.
- Not all water leaks were fixed as promised by the City of Cape Town and the consent forms were signed by children under the age of 18.

It struck us as activists from the Western Cape Water Caucus that the installation of these devices was targeting the so called poor communities of Cape Town, but not the rich communities that could pay for the water they use. This amounts to unequal treatment by the City of Cape Town, in relation to a precious resource that will be scarce for everyone if it continues to be badly managed.

# Early research into WMDs (water management devices)

The water caucus member organisations sat down and came to the conclusion that they needed to know more about the water management device that are being installed in Cape Town communities. Those organisations included EMG, WESSA and SAMWU. In late 2009 a research project started in Atlantis and Mitchells Plain. These communities were hot spots of water management device installation. The research confirmed the issues raised by SAMWU. The researchers also heard worrying stories from Atlantis and Mitchells Plain where most of the households had not received their monthly water allocation. In some houses it was more than 6 months since people had received water. Common issues were:

- they didn't have water for months and not all water leaks were fixed;
- people did not receive proper education on the water management devices before they were installed;
- in Mitchells Plain it was noticed that many new developed houses came with



*WMDs are a piece of technology that create distance between government and citizens.*

Illustration by Meg Jordi

the water management device installed or attached.

At the time of that early research in 2009 we learnt that the installation of water management devices had spread to other communities in Cape Town. These communities included Dunoon, Makhaza, Gugulethu and others. In some of these communities we started to make links as we were not able to include them all in our initial research scope. In early 2011 EMG hosted a water leaks workshop at the

Masakhane library in Khayelitsha. For this workshop we invited communities that were active in water service issues, community issues and members of networks linked to the Environmental Monitoring Group. This was a very interactive workshop around billing, meter reading and water leaks, with community members sharing their household and community issues on water. Participants in the workshop learnt how to read bills as they were asked to bring their own household bills. The workshop concluded by asking community members from different communities to organise and mobilise around water issues in their area and set up meetings with councillors. The broader community also requested EMG's assistance. That led up to us as EMG to start working with the Makhaza community around their water issues.

# Let's get to know the water management device a bit better



Some people call the WMDs *amafudo*, which means tortoises, because ‘they hide inside their shells and you can’t see them properly’.

The information below comes from the City of Cape Town website, see here: <http://www.capetown.gov.za/Family%20and%20home/Residential-utility-services/Residential-water-and-sanitation-services/Water-management-devices>.

This explains (from the City’s perspective) how the water management device works and the benefits for an indigent household of having the water management device.

“This is how your water management device will generally work:

- It switches on at a fixed time each morning (e.g. 4 am).

- It generally restricts your water to 350 litres a day and 10.5 kilolitres a month – although a different amount can be agreed between you and the City.
- It switches off when the household has used its daily water quota.
- It resets the next morning to release the daily amount.
- Any amount not used is carried over to the next day during that calendar month.

It’s very important to understand that if you do choose to install a WMD, you won’t be able to use more water than your daily limit

in one day. If you use all your water and run out, you will have to wait until the next day.

If you are indigent, a water management device can assist you in the following ways:

- The device helps you manage your water consumption and provides you with a daily allocation of free water (or a greater amount by agreement).
- Qualifying indigent households are provided with an additional allocation of 4.5 kl water per month free of charge (in addition to the 6 kl allocation of free water provided to all households).
- The device allows you to limit or completely avoid all water and sanitation charges.
- Council will fix or replace all faulty plumbing in your house free of charge (once-off repairs).
- Council will write off all your water and sewerage arrears – no limit (once-off).
- Council will install the WMD free of charge.

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## The Changing Practice Project in Dunoon



Thabo explains: Through our engagement in the Western Cape Water Caucus we have made links with the advice office based in Dunoon. This link with the advice office was not new, it was there before this research on water management devices. Tex Dlundla, the advice office co-founder, came to water caucus meetings and shared the issues they are facing in their community such as: housing, littering, flooding when it rains, lack of recreational

facilities and water issues (water leaks, billing and meters). As EMG we had not yet worked closely in Dunoon, and this project offered that opportunity.

The activists from the advice office quickly realised that there were urgent interventions needed in the area. Many residents in Dunoon struggled to understand how the City of Cape Town works, as many of them were new to the

metro. The advice office activists started knocking on the doors of organisations that they heard of, such as Black Sash, which played a great role in establishing the advice office. The journey proved to be challenging as the activists shared with Thabo one day while sitting in their office.

Below are some observations taken from one of Thabo's site visits:

*"It was 2014 in October when I visited the area and the weather was not hot nor cold it was just pleasant that particular day. I finally decided to drive to Dunoon and not ask to be driven this time around. I remember being happy and nervous at the same time as I was not sure what to expect on the roads also I was not confident about the direction. Just imagine I've been going to Dunoon for years now. I remember coming from the N7 taking the off ramp to Plattekloof and being greeted by this huge tank of the refinery that is owned by Chevron, now owned by Caltex. Seeing this refinery just took me back to a conversation I had with Tex Dlodla from Dunoon about how the smoke and dust affects them during the night in Dunoon, and I could feel the mood changing in me immediately. I continued driving until I arrived in Dunoon where I was welcomed by taxi mini buses just stopping at anytime*

*and anywhere, that's what disturbed my Chevron moment. First thing you will notice is the amount of people in the streets, the piles and piles of garbage on the side walk, water creating a soapy and greasy carpet on the road. Luckily I was driving (and feeling so un-activist) but I truly did feel glad. Other observations would be the unbelievable architecture of the houses. NO! They are not beautiful,*



*they are incredible small. You would also see that there are no spaces in between houses and most of these houses have a business run in their property. This is done to generate income through rent because most of these shops are owned by foreigners.*

*People here are opening businesses left, right and centre but ironically most of them sell the same stuff. At every corner there is a car wash. It is the same in my community where I come from, as the car wash business is what puts the bread on the table, but they do use a lot of water. And if the City of Cape Town gets its way on installing the water management devices these businesses - and the families that they feed - are in trouble.*

*“Scrap mamas scrap...” that’s men on the bakkie calling people to come and sell their metal and steel. Some men pushing trolleys with loads of these scrap materials going straight to the scrap yard (I took a moment to ask them why they are not selling to these guys with a bakkie “they make money off us but I’m going straight to the white man” they responded.) I realised that people here are responding to economic limitations, hence they now find any means to create small enterprises, which are not recognised by government. I look at Tex Dlodla and Manelisi James and said ‘the Department of Social Enterprise should be called to a meeting’, and both agreed.*

*I took a walk to 31 section of the area and realised that some houses don’t have meters. James laughed and said ‘people*

*removed them, and I also did in my house’. I quickly realised that these devices are not welcomed in our communities. As we walked we realised that public consultation is key in addressing some of the issues our communities are facing, if only the City of Cape Town could recognise that.”*



# What we did in Dunoon



In order to first introduce the Changing Practice project, we hosted a Western Cape Water Caucus meeting at the resource centre. We then hosted a planning meeting in the area to find possible ways of engaging with the community after we had heard what was said in the WCWC meeting. From there, we started working with people who had an interest in the project. Those people had their own water issues ranging from

having a water management device, to being a car wash owner, or just a concerned community member.

Then we started to have public meetings in Dunoon. The first meeting happened at the resource centre, where it was agreed that 31 Section had the highest number of devices installed, and that we should focus our research there. The next meeting happened in 31 Section, where we heard the background story of how the

installations had taken place. At this meeting we invited people from outside Dunoon to share their own stories as well.

We also did community interviews with car wash business owners, salon owners and property owners. We read a lot of research papers and some policy documents.

We struggled to meet with the municipal officials in charge of Dunoon, who are based in Table View. We used the planning meetings with the broader research team as a reflective and strategising space.

We met a lot of challenges along the way, mostly due to community politics. There is more detail about what we learnt about community organising below (see pg. 28).

Our approach was informed by the lack of information sharing between community members, and lack of engagement with the municipality. Hence we decided to hold a lot of public meetings, to assist the community to gain back the spirit and practice of community meetings.

# Stories from Dunoon

From one of our meetings in Dunoon it was decided that we should have a public meeting at section 31 where many of these devices are installed. People that we spoke to really didn't want to be named due to what they have ended up doing due to frustration caused by the lack of response from the municipality. For the purpose of these stories we have changed names. Below we will share 3 stories: from a household, a saloon and a car wash.



## *Nomsa's house*

Nomsa has been staying in Dunoon for more than 5 years now. She was visited by people from the municipality who wanted to install the device and she didn't agree to the device being installed. But the municipality finally had its way and managed to install the device at her house. The device worked well for some time, but

it started to give her problems as she stopped receiving her promised 350 litres per day. As she was working it was not easy for her to follow up on these issues. When the municipality installed the device they offered her contact details, to report any difficulty she had with the device. With these contacts they included an SMS number and a toll free line. She made use of these contacts with no response at all. She chose to get leave from work and physically go to the municipal office where once again didn't get any assistance, just a promise. The toll free line is only free for landlines, which are scarce in our communities these days. This meant that she had to use her cell phone to get hold of the municipality. One time she got through but as she was holding and the operator was ready to take her complaint, her airtime was finished. Yes..! The municipality offered to install a landline at community facilities for people to use when such cases occur. But the municipality has a habit of not communicating such projects, as people are not aware of this initiative. This lack of response led Nomsa to hire a plumber to bypass her device so that she could have running water again. To date, no municipal

employee has visited her or come to fix the problem she had.



### *The car wash*

Mziwoxolo and Thembani decided to open a car wash business near the children's park in Mnandi street. They needed this to provide an income for their families. They chose this practice because it is easy to start and does not need a large amount of capital, it only uses water. Dunoon is an impoverished community and unemployment is very high. To run their car wash, they had to ask permission to get water from the nearby informal settlement. They use 20L buckets to fetch water, because the City Park decided to remove a tap without notice. This takes time and sometimes they lose customers, and as a result they end up fetching up to five buckets of water, more than they usually need. They said that fetching water is not

an easy thing to do. Mziwoxolo and Thembani said they were happy about their business because at least they are able to put bread on the table for their families. They were worried that one day the municipality will close their business as it is on the pavement.



They had a lot to say about the City Park. They said the City Park should reinstall the tap, so that they can access water easily and help to water the palm trees in the children's park. In order to run their business they have to rely on the cars that are passing by and they have to keep their relationship good with the informal settlement in order to get water. They also need to speak to the local car owners and taxi owners and municipality to support them in order to access water without fear.



### *The hair salon*

Steven is a Nigerian and he has been in Dunoon since 2011. He decided to open his salon in front the house that he is renting and he needed water to run his business in order for him to put bread on the table for his family. Many of the households have water management devices (WMDs) and due to the fact that these devices are not functioning effectively, this affects the community as they cannot get a reliable water supply. To run his business he had to connect the pipe from the landlord's house and he had to connect a wire for power supply for heating water. He had to hire a welder to cover the drain with a piece of flat iron so that it does not get blocked by the dirty things that are thrown negligently by the people. It did not end there, as he had to build a corrugated shack and buy burglar

bars in order to secure his business. Steven said connecting water and electricity is not an easy thing to do as there is a high cost involved. He said he is very happy about his business as it is not easy for foreign nationals to get employment. Steven was worried about the installation of a water management device as it will affect his business. Steven also had a lot say about the municipality. He said the municipality should fix leaks and educate people about water wastage and pollution. There is a need to engage councillors to have a space for small businesses to operate in the township setting. In order to access water Steven has to rely on his landlord and to persuade members of the community not to throw dirty things in the drain. He also needs to speak to community leaders.



These stories are not only experienced by these 3 people; many people in the

community feel similar. A spiritual healer shared with us that she had no meter at her house since a truck ran over her meter. She said she called the municipality because she didn't have water after that incident, but they never came to fix it. She approached a young man who by-passed the device and restored her water, and to this day no one from the municipality has come. Her worry is that the municipality doesn't monitor the infrastructure they install, hence she doesn't blame those who don't want the device to be installed in their household.

There is a lot of uncertainty amongst Dunoon residents - some believe that the installation of the devices has been concluded by the municipality and no more devices will be installed in the future. What led to that conclusion we are not sure, we still need to go further with our research to better understand the intentions of the municipality in this community and in terms of overall roll-out.

# The City of Cape Town: debt and privatisation

The following excerpt comes from an interview conducted with a City of Cape Town official by Londeka Mahlanza, while doing her Honours research:

*The Municipal authorities acknowledge the fact that mistakes were made in the past. “In some areas our contractors may push targets and they may not spend as much time with the household explaining the project the way they should. Furthermore, they only get paid for successful installations.”*

Londeka did this interview in 2014. Just reading this response by the official, it highlights the huge problem with how they go about treating people in the communities of Cape Town. How can a municipality, a custodian of the constitution, give away their responsibility of assuring the citizens of Cape Town the right to water, to a private contractor? And yet again, setting up a situation where the contractors will cut corners by saying they will be paid per device installed. This is unacceptable on the part of the City of Cape Town. The Western Cape Water

Caucus resolved that they will take on the City of Cape Town with regards to this money centered approach to dealing with water.

We spoke to a City plumber who was open about the fact that he was very unhappy with the privatisation of water meters. He said that people find it difficult to get hold of the City to reconnect them, and that it is even more difficult because these meters are maintained by a private company.

The Dunoon people we have spoken to have made it clear that they think the City of Cape Town only serves those with money, and they as poor people are left fighting one another.

In 2012, we facilitated the Makhaza dialogues, between City of Cape Town officials, elected officials, Coalition for Environmental Justice, EMG and the community members of Makhaza. This dialogue was set up to help us as civil society understand how the City works and how a dialogue could be a response to climate change and water scarcity. We also hoped it would help to close the huge

gap between the City of Cape Town and the citizens of Cape Town. We wanted to co-create a solution to our water issues, especially the installation of WMDs, as well as to explore a new form of protest through dialogue. The City and elected officials sabotaged this initiative by being non-transparent and withdrawing from the dialogue. We believe that this was a failed chance to have a great working relationship.

During these Makhaza dialogues, one of the City officials brought our attention to their credit control policy. As it was explained to us, the policy allows the City of Cape Town to fix household leaks, **without** installing the device, to freeze the debt for six months, and monitor the household's water consumption. The Makhaza community members were ready and willing to pilot this in their households, but this didn't happen, because the City withdrew and would not communicate with us any more. Now, people are forced to have the device installed in their household even if they do not sign the educational pamphlet that gives consent to the City contractor to install the device. This is the case in Mitchells Plain, Dunoon and Makhaza. The Dunoon community is calling for the forceful removal of the water management devices and to bypass them,

as has been done in other areas they have visited through the advice office networks. The advice office still proves to be the vehicle of change in Dunoon.



# 4

## What do we argue?

Municipalities must understand that people run informal businesses and use their household water for that, so if they limit household water they limit businesses.



Civil society and municipal officials discuss water management devices at an EMG seminar

### **Lack of transparency leads to lack of trust**

In Dunoon, there is a deep lack of clarity about the installation of the devices, as there was no information shared with the household property owners. If the municipality chooses to continue operating without transparency, openness or engagement with communities, in Dunoon and in other communities, the mistrust will

grow bigger. It is important for the municipality to build trust with all communities, not only with rich communities. This sentiment has grown within the water caucus as we have noticed this rollout of devices happening in so-called poor communities only. Building trust with citizens will assist the municipality to have resilience to climate change and other disasters. People are not rejecting the municipal interventions

because they don't agree with them politically, or because they do not want to be responsible citizens. They reject them because there is no engagement or discussion between the two stakeholders. Municipal interventions, such as this of installation of water management devices, are often impressive on marketing pamphlets. They promise to fix leaks, scrap the debt or write off the debt. This is exciting for people who are stressed by their water debt, but in reality things are not working very well in most of the households that were attracted by these promises.

### **Poor communication is made worse because of outsourcing**

The stories we heard in Dunoos show that it's hard to get hold of the municipality to fix problems concerning the water management device. The problem with the municipality not responding on time to calls from communities is primarily caused by outsourcing of the installation and maintenance of the device. This happens when the municipality signs its responsibility over to profit driven contractors who are paid to install and maintain the devices. In Thabo's community it was difficult to get hold of the municipality to come and fix burst

devices due to leading problems. It took them the whole weekend to try to get the problem fixed. The municipality should own its own interventions, not contract them out to people who are paid through installation.

People need ways of putting bread on their tables, including the contractors; this means that they will install as many devices as possible, and education will be neglected in the process.

### **Water saving efforts should not target poor communities**

For us to all save water we want to see interventions that cut across the City with no class preference. As water gets more scarce due to climate change, we do not want to see poor communities having their access to water restricted even more.

### **Communities are stronger when they are organised**

We need communities to organise themselves to be better prepared to deal with water challenges in their areas. Communities should start visiting other communities to build solidarity and get new ideas about how to respond. Organised communities could also make it

easier for the municipality to work with them, and for the community to keep the municipality accountable.

### **Policy recommendations**

In the National Water Resources Strategy 2, which is a policy developed by the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) to manage water resources and also to allocate it to different water users (like industry, agriculture and households), there is a section around water demand management and conservation. This is what they call it when they are trying to make sure that no one uses too much water, and trying to get people to save water. But we haven't looked in detail and analysed the policy as it becomes difficult to read policies.

Our research in Dunoon shows that municipal demand management and conservation interventions are not equally distributed in the metro. It is not equally distributed in that the municipal demand management technology is targeting poor households. It is not fair that it is only poor people that should be made to save water; it should be across the board. We also acknowledge that the NWRS2 is mainly looking at resources (that means the rivers and the dams) and less on services (which

is water from the tap) with the intention to include services more in the future. We will use our case study to motivate the policy makers to include services, and will be contributing to guidelines about how municipalities should do their job in detail.

There is another policy that is being reviewed by national DWS now: it is the review of the Norms and Standards. These Norms and Standards give more details about the standards of the service municipalities should deliver. We want to see something in the norms and standards that speak in detail about the requirements for consultation and participation, so that municipalities have to really listen and respond to community concerns. We want guidelines for municipalities so that they have to justify why they do outsourcing sometimes – they can't just do outsourcing without a proper explanation. We want to say that leak fixing and free basic water should not be conditional on accepting something punitive like the device.

Both policies – NWRS2 and Norms and Standards - do not yet recognise water for multiple uses, such as food growing etc. Municipalities must understand that people run informal businesses and use their household water for that, so if they limit household water they limit

businesses. It is time for water policies to recognise the impact of unemployment and the high cost of living.

### **Summary of policy recommendations**

1. We support the proposed integration of services into the next iteration of the national water resources strategy.
2. The revised national water resources and services strategy should specify no targeting of poor households with punitive water demand management
3. Norms and standards for water and sanitation services should include detailed requirements for consultation and participation
4. Norms and Standards for water and sanitation services should require that municipalities provide public justification for outsourcing
5. Leak fixing and debt relief should not be conditional on accepting water management devices or other water restricting technology
6. Water management policies need to recognise water for multiple uses, including for livelihood activities, small informal businesses and food growing in urban areas.

# Challenges with organising in communities: the closing down of spaces



We also identified why it is hard for communities to mobilise themselves. The Masincedisane advice office has been operating for more than 8 years. The Western Cape Water Caucus has been working with the advice office for 6 years. When we moved our change project meetings to the advice office, the meetings were poorly attended. We did not understand why because previous meetings were well attended with a lot of participation. On one particular day we

called a meeting and no one came besides the project initiators and the community organisers. We had a deep conversation about this situation and decided to investigate. We were told that the local councillor feels that the advice office is doing what the councillor is supposed to be doing. A few years ago, the advice office won a battle against the councillor about a local clinic that was not functioning properly. This clinic had no ventilators and was too small to cater for

all the people in Dunoon. The advice office mobilised the community around these issues.

The councillor ignored the communities requests and showed no interest in engaging with people but because the community mobilisation was so strong the clinic was eventually closed down and a new clinic was built. That's when the tension grew between the councillor and the advice office. Now people are very cautious to be associated with the advice office as no one wants to be seen to be against the councillor, as this has repercussions. For example, one person shared with us that ever since he started coming to the advice office he struggles to get assistance from the councillor. This situation is not unique to Dunoon alone but occurs in other areas too. In Kraaifontein people even mentioned that for them to meet they need to get an endorsement from a 'political heavyweight' to say that the politician agrees with the particular meeting. One way around this local control of meetings is to hold meetings in another community.

This showed us that when communities start to organise themselves they run the risk of being seen as problematic and are alienated from political structures. This

closing down of spaces for communities to learn and to organise for change becomes very difficult to navigate. Government departments also close down spaces by excluding civil society organisations from certain consultative meetings. We often have to argue for our inclusion in meetings.

# 5

## Conclusions

The impact of the device installation in Dunoon has caused people to mistrust the municipality



Thabo says: When I went to Dunoon to speak to people about water issues, I was sure that the water management device would be at the top on their list. Maybe I was wrong to have this preconception? What does that mean for my research then? Yes, the Dunoon community members who come to Water Caucus meetings always share the issues from

their area, and the device always comes up. But that did not necessarily mean that others in the community area shared the same sentiments as the Dunoon water caucus members.

However, after a meeting in Dunoon in early February 2015, it was confirmed that these sentiments were widely held. People shared their worry and concern around the

installation of devices in Dunoon. People were still unclear about why these devices were installed in their area, and why particular houses were targeted but not others.

There are people with high water debt; the highest one we heard of in the meeting was R17000. This was relatively low compared to numbers we heard in Makhaza, where an average highly indebted household owed the municipality R80000. These amounts are still huge for any household in the townships, especially those who are faced with unemployment. It will be extremely hard for the municipality to get this money back in their coffers.

The municipality needs to be visible in communities and run advice clinics for people; they need to run workshops to help people understand why they need to pay for water and the importance of saving it. The route that the municipality took to deal with these issues, in the form of installing devices without adequate consultation, causes mistrust and anger from the community towards the municipality.

People are calling for a debt write off, fixing of leaks, meaningful water education

and no device installation. Water leaks fixing and meaningful water education shouldn't be conditional on accepting a device. They should be a municipal function and service to the people. It is time for the municipality to agree to meet with communities who want to talk about the device and other water issues. They need to sit down with communities to help them understand the municipal interventions, and not just carry out this function through political leaders.

The impact of the device installation in Dunoon has caused people to mistrust the municipality, as they just install randomly without any community consent. This installation process has caused anxiety in the area as people are not sure when it will be installed in their household and if they will be able to help each other when one runs out of their allocation. Small businesses are very worried that if this installation carries on they might lose their businesses. People are calling for information sharing and open dialogue with the municipality, rather than the continued implementation of policies that are not people centered.



# Ongoing engagements

We have been engaging with national DWS about this case study, and the other case studies developed through the Changing Practice course. It was agreed that the national office will mandate the regional office to set up a meeting between the WCWC and City of Cape Town to look at what is raised by the case study on water management devices. We have raised concerns about water for livelihoods and we were asked to be part of national meetings that look at this issue.

On the 11th of October 2016, there was a meeting between the Western Cape Water Caucus, DWS officials and the City of Cape Town at the municipal office in Goodwood. This meeting was made possible due to the intervention of DWS officials as a direct result of the national engagement between SAWC and DWS.

At the meeting in Goodwood, the case study was presented to the people present, which included Dunoon residents, DWS officials from both regional and national offices, EMG and WCWC members from Khayelitsha. The case study author gave a presentation, with the members of the different communities



echoing the findings. The city official responded to the presentation by dismissing our report that there were people living without water for days and months due to the devices. His tune changed when people present in the meeting started to tell their very own stories about having no water, and it was suggested that we have a site visit to Dunoon, for the city official to see what is happening on the ground, as he was pressing for evidence.

In the meeting the municipality seemed to be interested in fixing the cases presented to them but did not look at the system as a whole. The device is an issue itself but the process leading to a household having a device is very problematic. The issues of devices still continue in our communities even now.

# References

For more information on water management devices, see EMG fact sheet on water management devices:

[http://www.emg.org.za/images/downloads/water\\_cl\\_ch/FactSheetWMD.pdf](http://www.emg.org.za/images/downloads/water_cl_ch/FactSheetWMD.pdf)

For more information on Community Advice Offices: [www.nadcao.org.za](http://www.nadcao.org.za)

City of Cape Town:

<http://www.capetown.gov.za/Family%20and%20home/residential-utility-services/residential-water-and-sanitation-services/water-management-devices>

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