The Water Leaks Project

Empowering poor communities through sustainable practice
The extent of the problem

- South Africa is a dry country with rainfall varying over space and time
- Global Climate Change
- Unsustainable practices
- Poverty, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, crime, etc.
- Huge water leaks
- Legacy of Apartheid – no artisans, no education and knowledge
- Unaffordable water bills
- Consequences of non-payment
Mrs Zenzele’s story…

- 6-8 household members
- 1 person employed, entire household living on less than R1000/month
- House has a tap and toilet-cistern cracked and washer worn.
- No affordable plumbers available to fix leaks
- Costs for parts: washer, R2; cistern, R100
- Very poor knowledge of water and water issues:
  - Cannot read water bill
  - Does not know she received Free Basic Water
  - Does not know that SA is a dry country
  - Does not know where water in taps comes from

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Before leak fixing (Jan)</th>
<th>After Leak fixing (June)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monthly water charge</td>
<td><strong>R450</strong> (55kl)</td>
<td><strong>R20</strong> (13kl)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest on arrears</td>
<td>R107</td>
<td>R120</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total bill</td>
<td>R17050</td>
<td>R19250</td>
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The WLP is a civil society sustainable development initiative that aims to ensure that people living in poor urban households have access to a continuous, adequate, affordable and sustainable water supply.
Goals

To develop and implement a model for community-based water management at various locations within South Africa where:

1. residents feel a sense of ownership and control over the water they use,
2. little water is wasted or unaccounted for,
3. residents are able to afford the water they use, and
4. trained local artisans are able to maintain the infrastructure through fixing leaks.
Objectives

- To contribute to *employment creation* and increased income to poor urban households.
- To *reduce water consumption* and encourage water savings within municipalities.
- To *save money* at household and municipal level through reduced water loss and waste.
- To contribute to *community development* and to nurture *community based ‘water activists’*.
- To demonstrate effective *multistakeholder problem solving* in promoting water rights and water demand management.
Background and history

- Conceived and championed by EJ NF-Western Cape WC in 2003, representing CSOs working in the field of water and environmental justice.
- Proactive response to water wastage in a water-scarce country, unaffordable water bills, and high levels of poverty and unemployment.
- Very strong emphasis on multistakeholder involvement, including developing civil society’s relationship with Government.
Background and history (2)

- Envisaged as a 3 year multi-phase project:
  - **Phase 1:** develop and implement a pilot project in a localized area focusing on education and training, leak fixing, awareness-raising and the long-term sustainability of such efforts.
  - **Phase 2:** Replicate the initiative in other areas (locally, regionally and nationally), sharing and exchanging knowledge, best practices and lessons learnt through civil society networks.
  - **Phase 3:** Develop guidelines for future projects and policy recommendations for water services.
Methodology

- Evolved from within EJ NF-Western Cape Water Caucus - strong diverse collaborative CSO task-team (incl. NGO, CBO, network, trade-union bringing different skills, credibility and political savvy).
- Three pilot sites short listed - Harare, Khayelitsha chosen.
- Multi-stakeholder Steering Committee set up.
- Strategic decision to target government bodies for political support and funding.
- Fundraising from govt. began in early 2004 (DWAF; CoCT, others) – start-up funding received in January 2005 (DWAF); some funding from HBS for learning and networking
Achievements

- Trained 11 “water activists” in WDM and water-related issues and more recently in basic leak repair.
- Completed a community awareness raising campaign in Khayelitsha (posters, community meetings, research, theatre performances, community radio, demonstration leak fixing)
Achievements (2)

- Completed community research (at 100 households) – obtained very interesting info and offered useful info in return; confirmed importance and relevance of WLP.

- Raised profile of the initiative (World Water Day, Human Rights Day, Mayor’s office; Ministers, SAWC, press releases, radio interviews with local, regional and national stations; television broadcasts).

- Reflected on lessons learned from the process and activities.
Present activities

• Fundraising
• Continuing to build relationships with government stakeholders (Local Authority, DWAF and others)
• Profiling and networking (within civil society and at local, regional, national and international levels)
• Continuous learning
Lessons learnt

• Difficult to build relationships with government
  – Political changes and city restructuring
  – No recognition of civil society at operational level
  – No mechanism for engaging with civil society
  – No mechanism to fund civil society initiatives – all goes through tender to ‘service providers’

• City now planning to work in Harare, but not necessarily with us!

• Donor funding through govt hard for civil society to access
Lessons learnt (2)

- Importance of relationship building
- Willingness to reflect, take on new ideas, admit mistakes etc. Critical to strengthening the initiative
- Importance and strength of a diverse, committed civil society team
Thank you