

## Water Research Commission



Above: Female Entrepreneur in Ga-Mokgotho MUS provided water tanks. Below: 1 of 95 community water standpipes installed by MUS Project in Ga-Mokgotho. Photos: Supplied

# Tsogang provides a helping hand

**The backbone of this project is the partnerships forged with various stakeholders and the community**

### Ndavhe Ramakuella

**B**ehind the success of the community-driven multiple use of water and rural livelihoods, the name Tsogang Water and Sanitation reverberates across Limpopo, especially in the past two decades. They have been instrumental in training communities to understand the value of projects that come their way and how to maximise on the technical and financial help that is offered.

Tsogang have worked with the Water Research Commission (WRC) appointed partners, International Water Management Institute (IWMI), in Sekhukhune and Vhembe districts, where they have done in-depth studies on multiple water usage for communities. One such recent project has been at Ga-Mokgotho, where a dialogue was held recently to evaluate the impact of this project in the community.

Kenny Phasha, head of Tsogang, walks about with the comfort of one who has the trust of everyone involved in the projects they have implemented in Ha-Gumbu, Tshakhuma, Khalavha, Ga-Moela, Phiring and Ga-Mokgotho. "The work we did at Ga-Mokgotho was to rebuild the source catchment, improve the intake and repair the existing fence at source one and two. We also replaced damaged pipes with quality HDPE pipes, replaced damaged control valves and extended reticulation. Overall, we provided water management and technical training to improve sustainability," said Phasha.

He said their technical work at Ga-Mokgotho was done together with the communities. They produced draft designs to operationalise the multiple water use

water services (MUS), as they have done in four other areas.

"Ga-Mokgotho has about 4 345 households within sections called Segabeng, Nkoting, Sethokgeng and Lekgwareng. The village does not use any bulk water supply, but plugs directly from the natural wells that yield high capacity from the mountains. Water resources are protected, with an intake pipeline connecting water to a 220-kilolitre brick reservoir, linked to two cast iron reservoirs of 50 and 30 kilolitres for reticulation purpose."

"Work done at the sources was spring eye protection, as well as building a separation box, followed by water storage development. Fifteen homesteads were given JoJo tanks that they are using mostly for their orchard and vegetable gardens, drinking and cooking. They have also developed standpipes and we have allowed communities to construct these standpipes on their own, under our supervision. We have also assisted in building animal drinking troughs."

Phasha emphasised that the backbone of this project is the partnership they have forged with various stakeholders to assist the community in the long run. One such partner whom they do not want excluded is the Sekhukhune District Municipality (SDM). They are partially involved in this project; operation and maintenance are carried out by the community with the help of the local MUS committee.

"In addition, the district municipality helped to conduct water quality tests and the results came out as good, for both

human consumption and other multiple uses. Routine check-ups are done by the district to ensure that communities use good, potable water to avoid sickness. The working relationship between the community, Tsogang and Sekhukhune District Municipality is very good," Phasha said.

Itumeleng Modiba, a co-worker of Phasha's, added: "We needed to use the example that would attract other stakeholders, as we have done with the SDM. We now know that there is improved water availability, the system is available, and the quality of water remains high. We have also noted that through this partnership that water unlocks opportunities. We however still note that there is a requirement for more storage, extension to places like the atchar factory, as well as providing more cattle troughs in the area."

What has also emerged from the Ga-Mokgotho project and projects elsewhere is that the model of community participatory planning, including community-led construction, works well.

"The scope of work was implemented in six months using community labour from Ga-Mokgotho and experts for activities that require skills and knowledge. Workers were recruited from the community using a legal entity called close co-operatives in the village to manage the implementation at local level and provide stipends with the help of Tsogang's supervision," said Modiba.

The communities dislike professional

contractors appointed by the authorities, who implement projects without the communities' knowledge. They feel that it is better when workers are recruited from participating communities, and when there is rigorous consultation and understanding of community needs. This is an area that Tsogang specialises in. For example, the 225-kilolitre brick reservoir in Ga-Mokgotho was built in 2007 using Philemon Mokgotho, a local builder, who is readily available to assist should there be any problem.

Eric Kgotsoke, the chairperson of the MUS Forum and of the SDM Innovation Forum, said there was greater benefit in working with Tsogang in the project, especially regarding future sustainability of projects in the area.

"We have been encouraged to register close corporations and to start working on projects, since there is water and a means of getting that water to our projects. We have identified 10 hectares of land and are busy with a business plan to develop and sustain and big vegetable garden," said Kgotsoke.

A summary of the costs to increase the availability of water in the village that includes refurbishing the existing water infrastructure, supporting community water innovations and initiatives, connecting water to other services such as home-stand gardens, livestock, irrigation, community development centres and small businesses amounted to R367 864.

Materials that were used in the project were procured in Limpopo province using suppliers from the nearby towns of Burgersfort, Jane Furse and Polokwane. Purchasing outside the province only happened when materials could not be procured in Limpopo. There was also close accountability with the WRC's procurement unit, to make sure that everything was above board.

Where there is water there is life. Tsogang is making that a reality through its intervention and the system of partnership it has used with the WRC, IWMI and other partners it has brought together in this water sector.

