

Recharge Techniques and Water Conservation in East Africa

Report of meeting in Nairobi ON 14 Sep 2006

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Purpose: **Upscaling sand dam construction: the businesses wise approach**

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Thus meeting was to discuss an alternative approach to become more involved in sand dam construction. The work done in Kitui in the last 2-3 years has given us good insights in the generic issues for upscaling of sand dam construction and we have developed a number of tools that we can be used in sand dam feasibility studies and for construction projects as well as for training purposed. The current A4A project and the new ADAPTS project will further complement this. The initial idea was to share this information with large donor agencies and seek their funding for upscaling activities. Although most organizations like UNICEF, UNEP and the WB-WSP acknowledge the importance and confirm the upscaling opportunities, it appears difficult to translate that into concrete action. The nature of these large public sector agencies with their complicated project preparation procedures and strict procurement rules, does not allow for a quick and adequate response to challenging new initiatives

Also the recent DVD has broadened the attention to the subject but not resulted in concrete request to us for further actions. Also the presentation of our program and of the DVD in the 4th WWF in Mexico has not given any concrete response for action.

This meeting was organized to explore the option to market the sand dam construction more as a product and approach potential clients (both from the public and private sector) with clearly defined options (and cost) for sand dam planning, design and construction. This business wise approach will be based on an analysis of the market, potential clients and products that we can offer.

Market. We all feel that there is huge market for sand dam construction as small scale, low cost, community based and maintenance friendly structures that provide a substantial amount of water in dry areas. It is a solution that provides a positive response to current topics such as impacts of climate change (adaptation strategy, risk mitigation), the (acknowledged) need for more storage and the ambitious targets set by the MDG and other WSS programs. Being small scale and community based, investments in sand dams are sustainable, allow broader rural development activities (than drinking water supply alone) and are flexible in size, depending on the number of dams built. The multipurpose character of sand dams provides also a good basis for small credit programs which receive high attention these days (wife of the Dutch crown prince, Bangladeshi Nobel Prize winner). Besides our conviction that there is a market for sand dams, we also know that many dry regions in Kenya and Ethiopia are suitable for the construction of sand dams.

Products The made a first assessment of the type of products and services we can offer :

- **feasibility studies** for sand dam construction projects in a water shed: number of dams, appr location and distance between the dams, main design characteristic, volume of water stored, guidelines for community involvement and establishment of sand dam management groups, estimate of the cost and of the socio-economic benefits, checklist for detailed design
- **pilot projects** to construct a small number of dams (3-5) in a water shed to demonstrate its functioning, determine detailed design characteristics and

construction manual and to train local community groups or NGO's. The selling point for pilot projects is that we built not only 3-5 dams but also provide the tools to the Client (NGO) to construct a larger number of them in the same watershed with the local community

- **training (capacity development)** on different subjects related to sand dam construction such as site selection and dam design, construction of dams, establishment of sand dam management groups, maintenance and management of dams (including monitoring)etc.

Clients. Given the flexibility of the project size, we may target a wide range of potential clients:

- private companies that provide funds for rural development activities, e.g. as part of their societal responsibility policy or through their sponsoring of charity programs
- large insurance companies may have a special interest because of the drought preparedness of sand dams, reducing the substantial socio-economic cost of impacts of droughts. Risk management is the core business of insurance companies.
- Large trust or foundations
- Large NGO's that fund RWS programs through local NGO's and community groups. A pilot project will help these NGO's to make their financing program more sustainable and effective.
- Funding agencies and Government funds, if they are able to make funds available at short notice and not through complicated procurement procedures.

Business plan. We have brainstormed about the business development that would be needed to reach the point that we can offer these products and services to client. We should make a business plan and go through the regular steps in doing that. Pieter knows a website that is helpful guiding the process and has also checklists. Albert will check with Acacia since they are working on a new business plan for the coming years

Marketing Our marketing should be client oriented. We should first assess why clients would finance dam construction and develop our marketing material to address this. Clients are usually not interested in how the product is made but what the product means to them. Also the cost is not the main issue. We target clients who have sufficient funds and not after a cheap offer. An NGO who wants just to built a few dams is not our target.

Examples::

- For an international NGO that wants to finance a large number of dams, we can show that our feasibility study and/or pilot project increases the effectiveness of this investment while it represents only a fraction of the total investment cost
- to companies, trusts and foundations we could focus on the direct impact of the dams and the visibility of the result to their own company (in house) or to the public at large through photo's, dvd/video of the construction, interviews with the community, visits they can make to the village etc

What entity? we have discussed the options to establish a company, NGO or foundation for this purpose, but decided that this has not the first priority. Setting up a new entity takes time and money and has little added values at the short run. We will start as a consortium and present our selves as a consortium, group or initiative. Contracts can be signed by Earth Water or Acacia as long as we have clear internal agreement on money spending and money flow. Advantage is also that we can market through our existing (well known) names in stead of having to put a new name in the market.

Name and logo Pieter came with an intriguing name: **Dam It**. A logo is also important and should reflect the following issues: a dam, upscaling and the multi purpose use. Suggestions and trials are welcomed

Consortium members. We have started this discussion as Acacia, SASOL and Earth Water, but we should in later stage decide about the final composition of the consortium (IVM?, Water Watch? Partner in Ethiopia?)

How to proceed? We have not decided on a detailed road map yet. First we will share the results of this meeting with the other colleagues and have their response. Problem is that everybody is busy and has little time to invest in this initiative. Some steps for the coming month are:

- Response from all of you on this meeting report
- Suggestion on the name and ideas for the logo
- Gecheruw will make an overview of legal options for future entity
- Pieter will give the name of the web site for the business plan

If we are serious, there would be a formal follow up meeting needed with all partners. We should try to that early next year and try to have Albert, Arjen en Jeroen in Nairobi at the same time. We could combine this with a full progress and planning meeting on the running and new projects (A4A, ADAPTS, GEF). I suggest having this meeting in the Earth Water office.

Opportunities Finally, some of the opportunities for "DAM-IT" that we have already identified are

- large Kenyan companies have shown interest to finance sand dams.
- The Horn of Africa Task Force (American Army) is interested in a pilot in Djibouti
- Sand dam construction will be an important technology in the Ethiopian Groundwater Assessment Program (EGRAP) in which Acacia is involved
- Pilots under ADAPTS
- The SWIS-RE proposal for Ethiopia submitted by RAIN/EHRA with Acacia/SASOI as partners

Albert

16 November 2006