

**REPORT ON THE LHDA ANNUAL STAKEHOLDERS' CONFERENCE**  
**HELD ON THE 20<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2006**  
**AT THE MASERU SUN HOTEL**

## **1 BACKGROUND**

The annual stakeholders conference is a critical item in the Balanced Score Card jointly compiled by the stakeholders during the previous transformation of LHDA. First conference was held in June 1998, and annually in subsequent years save for 1999.

Participation to assess progress of LHDA initially extended to many sectors including representation from the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), the major financiers including World Bank and the Development Bank of Southern Africa, local institutions, Lesotho Government Ministries, and stakeholders from South Africa.

As the various components of the Project were completed, the number of agencies represented at the conference tapered off until the year 2004, when participation became very localized, and focused mainly on affected communities and local institutions. In 2005, over one hundred participants attended the conference ranging from affected communities, NGOs, Government Ministries and Parastatals, to students and lecturers (Sociology Department) from the National University of Lesotho.

## **2 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OF THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

There are two main objectives; *firstly*, to report back to the stakeholders how LHDA has delivered on its obligations and what credible plan it has developed for addressing issues in the subsequent year.

*Secondly*, the conference serves as a forum for receiving feedback from stakeholders, especially affected communities on how they perceive and experience the services provided by LHDA in order to enable the organization to improve where found short.

## **3 PARTICIPANTS**

The 2006 conference was special for basically two reasons. First, it marked successful completion of Phase 1 of the Project. Second, it coincided with 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) Treaty.

As a result, participation had been extended beyond local institutions to include regional and international organizations such as the World Bank, Panel of Experts (POE), Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), European Investment Bank (EIB), Trans Caledon Tunnel Authority (TCTA), Department of Water Affairs (DWAF) in South Africa, etc. The conference attracted more than 150 participants.

## 4 KEY FINDINGS

### 4.1 Ratings

The ratings over the years show fluctuations as reflected in the table below. The 2006 score of 86% - only one point below the highest ever achieved by LHDA, and 14 points higher than last year's rating - has been positively influenced by a number of factors. If anything, the tremendous improvement in rating is indicative of a mature dialogue between LHDA and the stakeholders, as well as the achievement of relative success by LHDA in the advancement of the cause of community participation in projects that affect them.

Year	Rating
2000	82%
2001	73%
2002	80%
2003	69%
2004	87%
2005	72%
<b>2006</b>	<b>86%</b>

### 4.2 Issues raised by participants

- ❑ Inadequate training of affected communities in income generation ventures.
- ❑ Frequent turnover of LHDA staff dealing with communities, and issues around handover.
- ❑ Poor relations between tourists and villagers; for example, stone throwing and trashing.
- ❑ Delayed, or at worst lack of response to complaints. Such complaints include cracked houses as a result of LHWP operations, poor drainage facilities along some LHWP roads that result in heavy soil erosion on arable land, etc.
- ❑ Inadequate follow-up on issues affecting communities.
- ❑ There is still room for improvement on compensation delivery.

### 4.3 A Summary of Presentations

Presentations were made by representatives of affected communities from Operation Branches of Katse, Mohale and 'Muela. Noteworthy is that unlike in previous conferences where the affected communities relied heavily on Non-governmental Organizations to act as their mouth-piece, the situation had changed to the better in this year's conference. Communities proved beyond reasonable doubt that they had come of age, and were in full control of their destiny. They had their own agenda that they so remarkably pursued, at times arguing fiercely with some members of the NGOs on how they perceived LHDA services. Issues raised by communities are covered under 4.2 above, and 6 below.

A presentation by the World Bank (WB) Mission hailed the Project as a success story. The following were highlighted as key lessons learned:

- Develop environmentally sound Water Resources Management policy and law.
- Complete full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) early, prior to or in conjunction with feasibility studies.
- Integrate communities early in the planning and decision making process.
- Minimize and mitigate impacts, and compensate to and/or resettle fairly all the impacted communities – upstream and downstream.
- Offset for critically endangered species – e.g., Maluti Minnow.
- Adopt uniform methods and approaches.
- Design flexible and multipurpose dams.
- Use Instream Flow Requirements (IFR) policy to guide reservoir operations.
- Monitor regularly and review and adapt policy to new knowledge and changes over time.

In summary, the World Bank Mission presentation described the LHWP as a world class project, with exemplary engineering feat, and substantial economic benefits. The WB Mission further praised the LHWP for its exemplary response to corruption. In conclusion, the Mission observed that only construction work was completed, but the legacy of the project was going to remain for many years to come.

## 5 CONCLUSION

The stakeholders' conference is a good forum to receive feedback from stakeholders. While it is acknowledged that the ratings might not be completely objective, nonetheless they do provide some indication of how affected communities and households experience the Project.

The forum also is an information dissemination tool that helps LHDA to clarify misconceptions about its roles and responsibilities.

## 6 RECOMMENDATIONS

At the end of the conference, participants recommended for consideration by LHDA, a list of points, broadly classified under six main categories:

### a) Technical Assistance Units & related issues

- i. Auditing of Cooperatives should be on time.
- ii. Cooperatives Department should be urged to speed up registration of coops at Mohale.
- iii. LHDA should consider incorporating Local Government within its programmes.
- iv. Further training on income generation ventures is encouraged to the affected communities.

### b) Compensation & related issues

- i. Compensation payments should be on time.
- ii. Responses to complaints/queries should also be on time.
- iii. Some of the fields taken by LHDA should be resurveyed in order to facilitate redistribution to other people.
- iv. Rehabilitation of some of the land used during construction should be effected. Alternatively, LHDA should compensate land that is beyond rehabilitation.

### c) Anticorruption & related issues

- i. LHDA vehicles should be marked clearly for ease of identification.
- ii. Corruption should be eradicated by all means. Control measures put in place should be known to all so as to assist where corruption is observed.

**d) Emergency rescue services**

- i. Where the services of water divers are required, LHDA should seek assistance from LDF. LHDA should however, consider sponsoring the said divers with appropriate equipment.
- ii. Snow removal equipment should be repaired, so that it is ready for use in times of need.

**e) Welfare & related issues**

- i. Honoraria for CALCS should be increased from M52/sitting to M100/sitting.
- ii. Managers should personally visit the communities.
- iii. CALC for 'Muela should be reinstated.

**f) General issues**

- i. Where the score is low, LHDA should take note and act accordingly.
- ii. Rental cost for LHDA houses should be revised to accommodate low income GoL staff.
- iii. Implementation of zoning plan should be effected to encourage potential tourism developers.

**7 WAY FORWARD**

The issues raised by the conference will be closely monitored by LHDA and regular progress reports on implementation submitted.

More effort will be spent on preparation for the next conference in an effort to improve relations with stakeholders overall.

END