

**Sustainability of donor-funded rural water supply and sanitation  
projects in Mbire district, Zimbabwe**

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The achievement of lasting and sustainable impacts is a major challenge for donors and agencies implementing/supporting water supply and sanitation project in developing countries including Zimbabwe. Progress in achieving Millennium Development Goals with respect to water and sanitation is off track in Zimbabwe. A study was carried to assess the sustainability of donor-funded rural sanitation 1 water supply and projects in Mbire district, Zimbabwe. The study assessed the level of community participation, quality of implementation, reliability of the systems and sustainability of the projects. Study methods included questionnaires, focus group discussions, interviews and field observations. The quality of implementation was deemed to be good and participation of the communities in project idea initiation and choice of technology was found to be very low. Reliability of the systems was found to be very high with 97% of the boreholes in all the three wards functional. Financial mechanisms were very poor with communities not willing to pay for operation and maintenance. The study concluded that the projects are potentially sustainable. Poor financial mechanisms for effective borehole maintenance, poor quality of construction and lack of community participation in project planning were found to be potential threats to sustainability of the projects. This calls for responsible authorities to put in place mechanisms to ensure sustainability of the projects. Implementers of rural water supply and sanitation projects should elicit the true nature of demand for a service, and create demand prior to interventions as this will improve sustainability of the projects.