

Lower Olifants Community Health Risks and Opportunities

Learning how communities in the Lower Olifants catchment battle environmental pollution for a healthier tomorrow



Communities living near the Olifants River face environmental pollution risks and their health may be threatened.

FEEDBACK:

We have spent some time with you talking about the problems you have with water and pollution in your community, and are now telling you some of the things we have found. Because science takes a long time to do we only have preliminary results but we will give you final results in April 2014. We are busy doing tests and analysis at the moment, but we wanted to give you some feedback so long, so that you know we are still working on the project!

Preliminary water findings in Mozambique:

| Tests and analysis | Preliminary result | You need to worry | Do not worry, but keep-up your good practices |
|----------------------------|--|---|--|
| Testing for chemicals | Results so far show that there are no bad chemicals in the water that poses a health concern | |  |
| Testing for <i>E. coli</i> | Massingir Dam where there are few people – water quality acceptable | |  |
| | Massinger Dam where there are many people, for example where boats dock – water not so good. |  | |
| | Hand dug wells – high risk of water pollution (high counts of <i>E. Coli</i>) |  | |

What should you do?

People should not use the river water for domestic purposes unless they boil the water, add chlorine tablets, or use a filtration system before drinking it. We also tested water that was obtained from springs or small streams in the region. These sources seem to provide better quality water, with little risk of infection for those that drink it. It would be better to use these alternative sources for domestic purposes rather than the polluted river water. Also, with regards to hand dug wells, people need to protect the water better – look out for rubbish and animals!

Social research preliminary findings:

The team visited with the District Administration Officer, Mrs Dorah Esturah, as well as local Councillor Ngobeni Chief Zita in Canhane. Our preliminary analysis has revealed three major points of concern: Firstly, Massingir Dam is being polluted by locals through livelihood activities such as farming and fishing. People also tend to pollute the dam with all kinds of rubbish including dead animals, household waste and human excrement. Secondly, low levels of education of the local population could be a contributing factor to the pollution of water sources. Thirdly, the local population is highly vulnerable to flooding which can cause further pollution of the water sources.

Our preliminary assessment is that the limited options available to the communities in terms of waste removal limit their choices when it comes to dumping waste in or near the dam. This is an issue that links to a broader context relating to poor service delivery and infrastructure in the villages, low levels of education and a historical legacy of war.

Project Timeline

Apr 2012-Jan 2013

- Project conceptualisation
- Case-study selection



Feb 2013

- Project introduction
- Data Collection



March 2013

- Data analysis on data from households surveys



Currently (May 2013)

- Community feedback
- Water samples



December 2013

- Water risk assessment
- Air quality check



April 2014

- Final report & feedback