

Sustainable water and sanitation services

Rural people are at the core of their own development (For instance, they should be actively involved in the planning, designing, implementation and monitoring of water and sanitation services).

Problem statement:

In this post apartheid era South Africa still faces backlogs where an estimated 13.4 million population has no access to basic sanitation and water services. It is indicated that one of the biggest problems is that funds are invested nearly entirely on the infrastructure and not on the people side - for management and maintenance. It is stated that while there might be 100% coverage of backlogs, a large proportion of the systems end up being dysfunctional, and that this will increase dramatically each year, and will eventually lead to a radical drop year to year.

Our approach

Our work encourages the implementation, as well as investing in the optimisation and standardization, of locally appropriate and affordable technologies and suitable levels of services through continuous community consultation, thus reducing the need for new services and ensuring regular and enhanced O&M (i.e. reducing leaks and water wastage, waste reduction).

Applying a people centred approach (PCA) enhances the sustainability of service delivery. Through action research Policy Unit applies human rights and sustainable livelihoods frameworks as pillars of PCA to investigate the extent to which women, ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged or excluded groups are part of the decision-making processes and through national policies and development programmes sensitive to the needs, interests and participation of these sectors of society. PU also facilitates participation of users in selection of most appropriate technology options.

Technology options are guided by the principles, that ensure:- *human health* -access to sanitation service must contribute to the improvement in human health and must not create conditions that are harmful to human health); *affordability* -sanitation services must be affordable to the users; this consideration is very important when delivering sanitation services to the poor households); *environmental sustainability* -sanitation services should not have negative impacts on the environment such as pollution of water sources from disposal of untreated human excreta and wastewater) and; *institutional appropriateness* – sanitation service delivery should be managed at the lowest appropriate level. Households and the beneficiary communities should be involved in all decision-making processes on the selection of sanitation technology options, operation and maintenance of the sanitation facilities. Current programmes are taking place in Eastern Cape; KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo provinces where an investigation is conducted on existence of bottlenecks in the operation and maintenance of Mvula Trust- established projects (that were handed over to the municipalities). The aim is to make recommendations (in the form of a strategy document) to the local government to apply people centered development in their water and sanitation service delivery process.