

# The Kraaipan Community-Managed Sanitation Project

## Introduction

Kraaipan is part of the Kraaipan-Setlagole-Madibogo Tribal Authority, approximately 70 km south-west of Mafikeng in the North West Province. It was part of the former Bophuthatswana Homeland and, as such, had received a government water scheme. The consultants for this scheme had submitted an application to The Mvula Trust for funding of a sanitation project with the view that they would manage the project and supply the services to the communities. Some initial funding had been obtained, and the consultant had employed builders to construct demonstration toilets in the three communities.

An initial community meeting in October 1996 revealed that only the Kraaipan community was really interested in the project, and they were invited to submit a new project application to The Mvula Trust. The application was successful, and they chose the consultant who had managed the water project to assist them.

This was not a successful choice. The consultant was very supply-driven, did not understand the demand-responsive approach and had very didactic training methods. This became clear during a community meeting where only Tswana was being spoken. In response to a question on the benefits of a Ventilated Improved Pit (VIP), a committee member could only respond in English, because she had learned the benefits by heart, but did not understand what they meant. If this was the case, how was she going to communicate the concepts to householders in the village?

At this point, the community-based committee questioned the wisdom of their choice of consultant. After nearly a year of lack of progress, the committee asked whether they could dismiss the consultant and proceed on their own. The Mvula Trust agreed to this, with



*A corrugated-iron VIP*

immediate benefits.

The committee's first action was to switch the bank account from Mafikeng to Delarayville. The consultant had chosen Mafikeng because it was convenient for him, whereas Delarayville was where the community shopped. The committee also negotiated with the Delarayville hardware store, and arranged bulk deliveries with no transport charges.

Progress was rapid, and even budget cuts by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) in 1998 did not hinder this. They simply reduced the household subsidy from R600 to R350, so that the entire community within the project area could receive toilets.

At this point a meeting was held between all the communities undertaking sanitation projects in

the North West Province, and the District Municipalities. The committees felt that their efforts were being undermined by the officials and councillors, who continued to promote waterborne sanitation even when the communities realised it was not unattainable.

In the meeting, when the councillors realised that all they were being asked was to support what the communities already supported, there was a rapid change of heart. From then on the municipalities present fully endorsed the programme. Again, the results were immediately beneficial. Two incidents stand out.

In the first, the Bophirima District Municipality, during a Business Plan meeting, accepted without question the proposed new list of villages to be added to the programme, as presented by The Mvula Trust. The villages had witnessed the sanitation programme in the neighbouring villages, and wanted it extended to their communities. They had approached the existing sanitation committee, who had referred them to The Trust. The Trust then presented these names to the Municipality, explaining the process by which the names had been obtained. Owing to the workshop and subsequent meetings, the Municipality understood the process, supported the demand-responsive approach, and had no hesitation endorsing the list – even though they had not been involved in drawing it up.

The second incident took place during a presentation to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Water Affairs and Forestry in June 2001, at which Jacobeth Mabeo,

sanitation committee member from Kraaipan, made a presentation. Ms Mabeo more than held her own against the Members of Parliament, who were questioning the demand-responsive approach. And support came from an unexpected corner. One of the officials who had been present at the initial workshop in the North West had been subsequently elected as an MP, and now sat on the Portfolio Committee. In the original workshop he had been extremely sceptical of the demand-responsive approach and the promotion of dry sanitation. In the Portfolio Committee, however, he urged his colleagues to adopt this approach. He had listened to communities and

understood the constraints faced by both the municipalities and households. He realised this approach made sense.

By June 2001, more than 800 VIP latrines had been constructed, with an extra 20 to 30 requests reaching the sanitation committee every

month. Furthermore, the sanitation committee had taken the project outside their community, and were now raising awareness and training people in VIP construction and financial management in several communities in the surrounding area.

### **Reasons for success**

According to Jacobeth Mabeo, the reason for the success of the project was that they had put their faith in the ability of the community to manage the project themselves, and were supported in their endeavours. From The Trust's side, the importance of strong leadership, as represented by Jacobeth Mabeo, was equally important.



*Community members examine two newly built VIPs*

To make a demand-responsive approach work, outside professionals must defer to the local knowledge of the community. This was something the consultant failed to understand, but which The Mvula Trust promotes.

Projects need strong leadership. In the end it is the strength of individuals on committees that makes or breaks projects. People like Jacobeth Mabeo represent the type of person who ultimately makes a project successful. They are strong and confident in their commitment to community-based management. And they are not intimidated by those in power. It is people like her in whom our faith is well placed in terms of sustainable development.

The Mvula Trust Case Study Series includes case studies and stories of The Mvula Trust projects and experiences in the field of community-managed water supply and sanitation.



**For more information on the project , contact:**

Dikago Mathule  
The Mvula Trust Rustenburg  
office

Tel: 014 592 3603

Fax: 014 594 2842

Email:

[dikagom@freemail.absa.co.za](mailto:dikagom@freemail.absa.co.za)