

Sanitation and Health for All Experiences of The Mvula Trust

Introduction

Municipalities are under pressure to meet tough delivery targets in line with local, provincial and national objectives. In tandem with these targets comes increased funding for sanitation improvement, primarily through the Municipal Infrastructure Grant. A core challenge for municipalities is how to scale up delivery in ways that are developmental and sustainable. The Mvula Trust is playing a vital role in supporting municipalities – marrying the lessons of its own rich project delivery experience, with streamlined implementation approaches which speak to current municipal realities.

Mvula offers a range of services and implementation approaches that speak to local needs and dynamics. This document highlights some of the work Mvula does with municipalities and communities to promote and support better sanitation for all.

The changing context of sanitation improvement

In the mid-1990s Mvula pioneered a community-management approach to basic sanitation improvement. Supported by Mvula, village-level committees took the lead in implementing sanitation improvement projects. They managed project finances, ordered materials, recruited and trained builders, supervised construction, and led household health and hygiene education activities. National government provided a limited household subsidy. Committees mobilised residents to contribute time, money or materials to make up the cost of a complete toilet. This approach delivered good quality toilets. And the added benefits included skills developed in communities; user education programmes which strengthened good hygiene behaviour and simple toilet maintenance; and better management of waste.

Municipalities now have full responsibility for service delivery and development management. This has led to changes in Mvula's role in sanitation improvement. Project planning and implementation occurs through municipal programmes, and ward committees are the key structures where decisions are undertaken. Mvula is no longer a developer, but a service provider to local government.

Promoting participatory governance and local economic development

Mvula's approach and commitment to people-centred development remains unchanged, however:

- Inclusiveness, through participatory decision-making, to ensure that local needs and priorities shape project planning, management and implementation.
- Accountability, through elected committees that oversee implementation and wise use of resources, under the direction of ward councillors.
- Training, skills' development and mentoring to equip local residents to drive project activities and gain experience in implementation and management.
- Maximising income generating opportunities for local residents, service providers and suppliers, to ensure that project funds boost local economies.

Building community skills in Kwa-Zulu Natal

In a growing number of projects local residents are being recruited and trained as Community Development Facilitators (CDFs) to coordinate village projects. This enables local residents to gain practical experience, and cuts project support costs – leaving more money for sanitation improvement on the ground.

Mvula's Durban Office pioneered the deployment of CDFs in its sanitation projects. CDFs receive on-the-job training to support Project Steering Committees to run projects. Their responsibilities include training Committee members in basic financial administration, overseeing procurement, liaising with local block makers, assigning community builders to sites, coordinating local health and hygiene promotion, and monitoring progress. This approach uses ward structures to identify and recruit CDFs.

Mvula's approach to sanitation improvement

Safe, hygienic and attractive toilets are the most obvious outcome of successful sanitation projects. To date, local builders on projects managed by Mvula have constructed more than 70 000 toilets. The majority are ventilated improved pit (VIP) toilets, using a range of designs and materials.

But toilets alone are not enough – people and their practices are just as important. Therefore, essential to sanitation improvement is providing information to households to strengthen links between good sanitation, safe drinking water and sound hygiene.

Equally, users need information on how to keep their toilets working well. This information promotes sustainability, and clarifies the respective roles and responsibilities of the household and the municipality. User education takes place through a combination of inputs at community meetings and house-to-house visits. Hygiene promotion events are run at schools, and links are made with HIV / AIDS home-based care groups to build understanding of the importance of good hygiene and sanitation for strong immune functioning.

Supporting integrated municipal sanitation delivery

Close alignment of infrastructure, health and social development components is essential for effective sanitation improvement. Increasingly, Mvula is being called on to assist municipalities plan and coordinate their sanitation programmes, and support integrated sanitation development.

Building strong municipal programmes in North West

In the North West Mvula has earned considerable respect among municipalities for its role in successfully managing sanitation projects in nearly 200 villages.

This close working relationship has been taken further, with Mvula driving new Sanitation Forums in three District Municipality water services authorities and four Local Municipalities. These Forums, which report to the Municipal Mayoral Committees, promote coordination between various municipal role players, monitor implementation, and play a key role in shaping municipal sanitation policies and strategies. In this way Mvula is assisting each municipality to interpret and apply

national policy through practical service delivery programmes which align with its integrated development plan (IDP) and which maximise community participation.

Supporting strategy development in Ukhahlamba

Mvula has been contracted to assist the Ukhahlamba District Municipality (Eastern Cape) develop a sanitation strategy to strengthen its IDP, and guide its programmes over the next decade. Building on close consultation with ward councillors and other role players, key components of the strategy address eradication of bucket toilets, acceleration of toilet delivery in rural villages, a municipal policy framework and implementation strategy for farm dweller sanitation, and the servicing of urban settlements. The strategy seeks to align planning and service delivery in four Local Municipalities, and provide practical mechanisms for the District Municipality (the water services authority) to shape and sustain delivery of affordable services.

Key features of the strategy include:

- Close alignment with broader IDP objectives and rural development programmes.
- Assisting the water services authority to refine its service delivery frameworks and implementation strategies.
- Using a range of approaches, technologies and designs to meet the needs of specific settlements.
- Building the capacity and systems of the District Municipality to manage sanitation improvement in-house.
- Promoting the use of emerging contractors in service delivery and support.

Supporting innovation in Alfred Nzo

The Alfred Nzo District Municipality (Eastern Cape) has divided its rural sanitation programme into five zones, and set up local builders' manufacturing yards in each zone to produce toilet components – primarily cement blocks and floor slabs. By decentralising supply, these yards cut costs, create local jobs, and reduce construction bottlenecks caused by local suppliers not able to meet demand and service remote areas.

In Kokstad Mvula has been appointed as a Sanitation Zone Manager to run the manufacturing yard, oversee local transport contractors, and manage project implementation throughout the zone. This approach combines sound community development principles, localised implementation planning, and accelerated construction.

Sanitation in schools

Schools' sanitation is the responsibility of Provincial Education. Nonetheless, with Mvula's help, a growing number of municipalities are including schools in their village sanitation projects to ensure that bad school toilets don't undermine efforts to improve the living standards of all their constituents. An extensive evaluation of Mvula's schools programme in 2002 indicated impact went beyond dignity and safety to include a marked decrease in diarrhoea-related illnesses.

Mvula's range of experience in schools' sanitation has come through implementation over many years, the drafting of a national strategy for the National Sanitation Task Team, and as part of integrated development projects funded by the National

Development Agency (NDA) and the Eastern Cape Department of Education. In addition to construction, Mvula addresses operation and maintenance, training teachers in class-based health and hygiene promotion, and SMME development.

Technical innovations

Wedge blocks for pit lining

The Mvula Trust has adapted and refined a simple wedge-shaped block to cut the cost of lining a toilet pit substantially. Using wedge-shaped (trapezoidal) blocks, round pits can be lined quickly and without mortaring. This saves time, and the blocks can be made on-site, which reduces breakages.

Dealing with full pits

Mvula has developed an Archloo toilet structure which can be moved when the pit is full. It has also tested affordable ways of desludging pit toilets using simple technologies, such as the UN Habitat's "Vacutug" (a small vacuum tanker that can navigate narrow alleys).

Conclusion

Over the past decade The Mvula Trust has made a profound contribution to sanitation improvement in South Africa. Its approaches shape government policy and municipal practice, and it has a wealth of experience in supporting rural infrastructure delivery and human development. It offers guidelines, tools and training, and insights into the needs of municipalities and the communities they serve.

For more information

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