

## Sanitation

### A framework for sanitation governance in South Africa

**A new practical guide for implementing good sanitation governance in municipalities is now available from the Water Research Commission (WRC).**

#### Background

Several sanitation studies conducted by different institutions have identified poor sanitation governance as a stumbling block to the achievement of universal access to basic sanitation services for all South African households. The participatory local governance envisaged in the 1996 Constitution of South Africa and local government policy and legislation have generally been neglected by municipalities in exchange for supply-driven sanitation service delivery approaches.

While supply-driven approaches to water and sanitation delivery have dominated the development sector for many decades, this method of service delivery is not preferred. This is because this method has led in some instances to lack of accountability, inefficiency, non-responsiveness to demands of poor households and environmental unsustainable sanitation systems.

In response to these failures, international development agencies have adopted a demand-responsive approach. This creates an enabling environment for the involvement of poor households in decision-making processes on the selection of water and sanitation technologies, as well as service levels.

The Back-to-Basics programme for change launched by the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) in 2014 advocates for a responsive, caring and accountable local government. This strategy also acknowledges the importance of bold leadership and political will in this regard.

#### Factbox: What is good sanitation governance?

Good sanitation governance refers to the manner in which sanitation services are planned, managed and regulated within a set of political, legal, social and economic systems to ensure sustainable services. Good sanitation governance is underpinned by the principles of participation, accountability, transparency and fairness.

#### The new sanitation framework

The new framework for sanitation governance is to provide municipalities with a guide for the implementation of good sanitation governance through the investment in building municipal capability, accountability to the citizens and stakeholders and responsiveness to the needs of their customers, especially poor households and other vulnerable communities.

The framework document focuses on the implementation of sanitation governance at the local government level, and does not address aspects of provincial government oversight and national government monitoring and regulatory aspects.

The framework is informed by the Capability, Accountability and Responsiveness dimensions of the government framework developed by the UK-DFID and South African local government policy and legislation involving good governance.

Elements of good sanitation governance practice identified from the in-depth assessment of sanitation governance in five selected case study municipalities were taken into consideration in the development of indicators of good sanitation governance. The target users of the framework document include water services authorities and water services providers.

The five case study municipalities which were selected demonstrate that good water and sanitation governance can be achieved where there is committed strategic leadership and competent officials.

All the case study municipalities had built a good relationship with their communities, they had established effective communication channels and functional platforms for engaging their local communities in all decision-making processes on sanitation service delivery. They also kept local communities informed of progress towards the eradication of basic sanitation backlogs using different communication channels.

It is believed that the three dimensions of good governance (capability, accountability and responsiveness) will go a long way towards helping municipalities to achieve sustainable sanitation service delivery and eliminate the problem of sanitation-related service delivery protests which have become the norm in poor communities.

## Recommendations

The WRC study also makes the following recommendations to address identified policy gaps to entrench good sanitation governance and deepen democracy at the local government level:

- Dedicated resources should be allocated to empower citizens and civil society to hold municipal councillors and officials accountable for their decisions and actions.
- National government should support municipalities to establish community radio stations as effective communication channels that are accessible to all communities, especially the poor.
- All key municipal documents must be translated into major local languages so that all citizens can have access to municipal information.
- An appropriate independent body with legal power (municipal ombudsman) should be established to enable customers to report municipalities who fail to respond to customer complaints or provide unacceptable municipal basic services.
- Provincial government must allocated dedicated human and financial resources to perform its oversight role over municipalities.

- All municipalities must be assisted to post all key municipal documents on municipal websites and to ensure free access to the Internet for indigent communities.
- The minimum competency requirements for technical municipal officials should be enforced to ensure municipal capability to implement good sanitation governance.

## Conclusions

The South African local government is in a good position to implement good governance because the Constitution and local government policy and legislation make provision for the implementation of good governance as part-and-parcel of people-centred development.

The sanitation governance framework by the study will assist the municipalities to improve sanitation governance. It serves as a simple tool for implementing good sanitation governance in municipalities as it is aligned with the requirements of the South African local government policy and legislative framework for good governance.

### Further reading:

To obtain the report, *A framework for sanitation governance in South African municipalities* (WRC Report No. TT 629/15), contact Publications at Tel: (012) 330-0340; Fax: (012) 331-2565; Email: [orders@wrc.org.za](mailto:orders@wrc.org.za) or Visit: [www.wrc.org.za](http://www.wrc.org.za) to download a free copy.