

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the problem

In South Africa, access to basic water and sanitation services and access to a safe environment are considered a basic human right (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 1996: Ch 2, Sections 24 and 27), and in terms of Section 152 of the Constitution, local government is also responsible for ensuring the provision of services and the promotion of a safe and healthy environment.

The White Paper on Water Supply and Sanitation Policy (DWAF, 2001) defines the minimum acceptable basic level of sanitation as:

- Appropriate health and hygiene awareness and behaviour;
- A system for disposing human excreta, waste water and refuse, which is acceptable and affordable to the users, safe, hygienic and easily acceptable and which does not have an unacceptable impact on the environment; and
- A toilet facility for each household.

Municipalities are required in terms of Section 73 of the Municipal Systems Act (No 32 of 2000) to prioritize the delivery of basic services to those communities in greatest need so to ensure that everyone has access to at least a basic level of municipal service. Communities living in informal settlements and who face the greatest health risk due to inadequate sanitation should therefore receive the highest priority in the delivery of basic municipal services.

Anna Tibaijuka, Chief of the UN Slum Programme, stated that:

there are two cities within one city – one part of the urban population that has all the benefits of urban living and the other part, the slums and squatter settlements where the poor often live under worse conditions than their rural relatives. (UN-HABITAT, 2006)

In the South African context, this can be illustrated in Cape Town where in 2006, 100% of residents living in formal housing had access to basic sanitation services, whilst only 36.5% of residents of informal settlements had access to basic sanitation services. The City of Cape Town (2006a: 7) has defined the basic level of sanitation service as toilets shared at less than five households per toilet.

According to the Informal Settlements Master Plan of 2007 until 2014, there are approximately 280 000 households in a total of 206 informal settlements in Cape Town. In order for the City of Cape Town to address the housing backlog effectively, the city needs to deliver approximately 20 000 houses per annum. The current rates of delivery are approximately 8 000 houses per annum (Sokupa & Hendricks, 2007). Until such time as the Department of Housing provides full waterborne sanitation services through the City's housing programme, residents of informal settlements, in the short to medium term are going to have access to a shared toilet, which will most likely be shared by more than five households (an emergency level of sanitation service), as the City of Cape Town has extended its deadline by when all residents will have access to a basic sanitation service from 2010 to 2012 (COCT,2007). The Directorate of Integrated Human Settlements Services has stated that City of Cape Town will not be able to meet the 2014 deadline for the upgrading to a minimum basic level of service to all informal settlements (Sokupa and Hendricks, 2007). Access to an emergency level of water and sanitation service will therefore remain a reality for households in most informal settlements for at least the next 6 years, and probably longer.

The challenge to provide basic municipal services to slum areas is not unique to the City of Cape Town, but is a growing problem to many cities throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. Recent research undertaken by UN-HABITAT has shown that the global slum population is growing. "... 37 percent of Africans live in cities, and by the year 2030 it is expected to rise by 53 percent" Sub-Saharan Africa has the largest proportion of urban residents living in slums "... 72 percent of urban African citizens.....of which 40 percent are under 19 years" (Tibaijuka, A. 2007).

The provision of infrastructure alone does not account for the provision of an improved, safer and more hygienic environment for its users. A badly managed sanitation facility is an environmental health risk, and it encourages inappropriate and unsafe sanitation practice. Internationally, local municipalities in developing countries have a poor track record for the provision of sustainable sanitation services, and in particular, the operation and maintenance of communal sanitation facilities in slum areas. Sohail, Cavill & Cotton (2005), identified "...lack of public sector resources, poor management, inefficiency, and unaccountability..." as the reasons for poor servicing of public infrastructure when investigating the sustainability of urban infrastructure in India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. In South Africa, calls for proper operation and maintenance (O&M) have been raised in various DWAF reports as an ongoing concern over the last few years.

Municipalities cannot claim to meet the sanitation backlog targets unless appropriate and effective management systems are in place to operate and maintain the basic sanitation facilities provided.

In addition to the provision of services, one of the core responsibilities of local government is to promote local economic development, (Constitution Section 152 (1)(c); White Paper on Local Government, Ch 2.3). Municipalities are responsible for promoting job creation and the local economy through the development of local policies and procedures conducive to local economic development. The White Paper on Local Government (Section B:Ch3.2.1) refers to targeted municipal procurement policies and adoption of labour-intensive construction methods as measures that municipalities can take to promote local economic development through the provision of municipal services.

The primary focus of municipalities in promoting the local economy is the provision of infrastructure and to provide quality and reliable municipal services. In terms of the White Paper on Local Government,

“.....local government is not directly responsible for creating jobs. Rather it is responsible for taking active steps to ensure the overall economic and social conditions of the locality are conducive to the creation of employment opportunities” (White Paper on Local Government, Section B, Ch 1.1)

The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) is the vehicle through which Government maximizes the job creation and skills development opportunities for the provision of municipal infrastructure projects through the use of labour intensive construction methods, the use of small, medium and micro enterprises (SMME) and small contractors, skills development opportunities and targeted employment for the unemployed. However, criticism of the EPWP by Claasen, Daswa & Dhliwayo (2007) was that there was a lack of an exit strategy for many of the participants in the programme. Once the infrastructure was in place, the employment opportunities cease. A need therefore exists to identify and develop longer term job opportunities beyond the delivery of infrastructure provided through the EPWP.

1.2 Research Purpose Statement

The research proposes to apply a people-centred development approach to identify linkages between improved sanitation service delivery to slums on the one hand, and the need to create

locally-based job creation opportunities in areas of extreme poverty and high unemployment on the other, in response to a particular problem identified by the Water Services Informal Settlements Department of the City of Cape Town.

The Khayelitsha Ablution Blocks are public ablution facilities for the residents of the informal settlements within the Khayelitsha area, a suburb in the City of Cape Town. Initially the ablution blocks were managed by the Sports and Recreation Department who appointed a local contractor to clean the facilities. However with time, the contract was terminated, and the ablution blocks fell into a state of disrepair. The Water Services Informal Settlements Department has recently taken over responsibility for the management of the facilities and has undertaken a programme to refurbish the ablution blocks. However, the refurbished ablution blocks remain locked and unused until such time that there is community buy-in and support for the care of the facilities.

In view of the above context and in response to a request from representatives from the Water Services Informal Settlements Department, the purpose of the research has been formulated into the following statement:

To investigate whether there are any local community-based opportunities for the procurement of some of the operation and maintenance tasks required for the delivery of sustainable sanitation services to the recently refurbished Khayelitsha ablution facilities.

1.3 Methodology

In the South African local government context, Theron and Wetmore (2005), motivates for the use of Participatory Action Research (PAR) as the most appropriate methodology for conducting research, as it aligns itself with the developmental local government approach. An approach which prioritizes the linkages between development, service delivery and local citizen participation (Mogale, 2005) and is manifested in programmes such as the RDP and the IDP. Public participation, capacity building and empowerment are regarded as the key requirements for the provision of sustainable services. The White Paper on Local Government (Section B (3.3)) advocates the use of PAR as one of the tools for public participation.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a research methodology where key stakeholders participate as co-researchers in the identification and analysis of a problematic situation in order to change and improve it. A form of applied research that is conducted in response to a real

problem identified by the stakeholders conducting the research. During PAR, participants are empowered through the data collection, analysis and decision making processes. PAR is based on a cyclical process of enquiry that is based on lessons learnt from previous iterative steps of problem identification, planning, implementation and evaluation of the outcomes.(Babbie and Mouton, 2004).

1.4 Research Objectives

In order to achieve the overall objective of identifying local community-based opportunities for the procurement of some of the operation and maintenance tasks required for the provision of basic sanitation services to the Khayelitsha Ablution Blocks using a PAR approach, the research was divided into three components.

The objective of the first stage of the research project was to obtain a community perspective on the current situation pertaining to the operation and maintenance of shared sanitation facilities at selected informal settlements within the City of Cape Town. In addition, sanitation practice and awareness of O&M responsibilities will be assessed at a household level.

The objective of the second stage of the research was to obtain an understanding of the operation and maintenance requirements of shared basic sanitation services in the informal settlements within the City of Cape Town so that the approach identified for the O&M of the Khayelitsha Ablution Blocks could be aligned and integrated with the current service provision arrangements.

The objective of the final stage of the research project was to identify locally based opportunities for some of the operation and maintenance tasks of the Khayelitsha Ablution Blocks that had the support and buy-in from the community and key stakeholders involved in the provision of basic sanitation services and was aligned with the current service provision arrangements of the Water Services Informal Settlements Department. In addition, key issues for the provision of safe and reliable basic sanitation services to the residents utilizing the ablution facilities would be identified and recommended for inclusion in the operation and maintenance plan for the facilities.

The first two stages will primarily give insight to the problem for the researcher, and it will also supplement the local knowledge of the co-researchers through the validation and analysis of the data collected. The data was used by the Research Group to plan for the focus group

discussions held in the third stage of the research. Through the “conscientisation” of this information (Theron and Wetmore, 2005), the decision making and planning capacity at a municipal level that is required to deal with the outputs of the third stage of the research, was increased.

The initial stages of the research are also necessary as there is no documentation by the City of Cape Town on the current operation and maintenance of sanitation services to informal settlements.

1.5 Delimitation

The research was limited to identifying the tasks required for the operation and maintenance of shared sanitation facilities at the case study sites. Health and hygiene awareness and the disposal and management of grey water or solid waste that are included in the broad definition of basic sanitation services as defined in the White Paper on Basic Household Sanitation (DWAf, 2001) and the City of Cape Town’s Water Services Development Plans, were excluded from this research.

1.6 Assumptions

The City of Cape Town will not be able to address the basic sanitation backlog within the current budget and timeframes. The emergency level of sanitation service provided by the City of Cape Town will remain in place until such time as the formal housing backlog has been met.

1.7 Relevance of research

Although this research focuses on a particular sanitation technology at a single site within the City of Cape Town, it is anticipated that the participatory process followed and the lessons acquired could be applied to improving basic sanitation service delivery to other sanitation technology options within the City of Cape Town, as well as to other municipalities in South Africa.

