

Services provision

Social franchising partnerships for water services – Lessons learnt

A new report available from the WRC records the success of a pilot initiative to operate and maintain the water and sanitation facilities of a selection of schools in the Eastern Cape through the social franchising model.

The Eastern Cape pilot

A new WRC report describes pilot-scale implementation of collaborative social franchising partnerships for the operation and/or maintenance of water services infrastructure owned by the public sector.

The pilot project took place in the Eastern Cape following a memorandum of understanding between Irish Aid, the Eastern Cape Department of Education, the WRC, the CSIR and private company Amanz'abantu Services. This committed the parties to embark on the pilot programme that would design and test a social franchising partnership model for the operation and maintenance of the water services infrastructure facilities at all schools in the Butterworth educational district.

In addition, due to the opportunity presented by severe under-expenditure on the schools pilot, the maintenance service was extended to household toilets, on behalf of the

Amathole District Municipality.

The WRC has over a number of years funded research into the application of social franchising partnership principles to the operation and maintenance of water services infrastructure.

These partnerships are suitable for communities with a large poor population needing infrastructure services, but who are also looking for employment and an opportunity to develop their entrepreneurial and technical skills. The water services franchising partnership model provides opportunity for linking 'local economic development' and job creation with the provision of basic municipal services.

Achievements of the pilot programme

Significant achievements of the pilot project include:

- Water and sanitation facilities have been serviced at 400 schools



The condition of some of the toilet facilities at the schools prior to the start of the pilot programme.

- Six emergent franchisee micro-entrepreneurs have been established and supported
- A training programme has been developed, consisting of a formal training course for all prospective franchisees selected, on-site monitoring, regular get-togethers, report backs and sharing of experiences, and ad-hoc training
- Operational methodologies for schools and household situations have been developed
- More than 20 sustainable jobs and more than 50 part-time informal employment opportunities have been created
- A public-private partnerships, supporting job creation and the establishment and nurturing of emergent micro-entrepreneurs, has been created
- The concept of social franchising partnerships for the operation and/or maintenance of water services infrastructure has been shown to work successfully

Furthermore, the programme continues to establish and support locally-based small enterprises for the provision of appropriate and locally-based service solutions. It is creating jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities, and upskilling rural people through facilitating workplace learning, in addition to improving school sanitation facilities.

Importantly, the learners (especially girls) at the 400 schools now have access to clean and hygienic toilets. In fact, the state of the sanitation facilities at the pilot schools has improved so much that the Eastern Cape Department of Education has requested that the programme be rolled out to a further three education districts, totaling 1 000 schools.

This service delivery success is being noticed by municipalities in the area that have responsibilities for water services facilities at household level, and it is therefore currently being explored how the franchise can provide services to these municipalities. It is envisaged that, once the system is working smoothly, franchisees will be able to offer their services to clinics, other public buildings, and the private sector.

Several lessons have been captured, and these are explained in detail in the final report.

Further reading:

To order the report, *Social franchising partnerships for operation and maintenance of water services: Lessons and experiences from an Eastern Cape pilot* (Report No. TT 564/13) contact Publications at Tel: (012) 330-0340, Email: orders@wrc.org.za, or Visit: www.wrc.org.za to download a free copy.