



Celebrating World Toilet Day – Eastern Cape, Joe Gqabi District Municipality. Linking municipal officials to water and sanitation management



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WIN-SA aims to capture the innovative work of people tackling real service delivery challenges. It also aims to stimulate learning and sharing around these challenges to support creative solutions. Most importantly, WIN-SA strengthens peer-to-peer learning within the water sector.

On 16 November, the Water Research Commission (WRC) in collaboration with the Water Information Network-South Africa (WIN-SA), Department of Water and Sanitation and Amanz'abantu visited Joe Gqabi District Municipality (JGDM) in the Eastern Cape Province, Aliwal North to share and exchange knowledge on sanitation management as part of the World Toilet Day 2017 celebration.



Mr Mcebisi Nonjola, Manager in the office of the Municipal Manager, JGDM

According to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG6), everyone should have access to water and sanitation as part of Agenda 2030. This compels sanitation institutions, agencies, research centres, government departments and key community service delivery points to collaborate more in making practical knowledge accessible to all those who need it in order to make sanitation access possible.

Among others, the workshop aimed to share strategies and guidelines relating to school sanitation management practices and share knowledge on existing the guidelines available to enable municipal officials to work with schools.

The JGDM which is previously known as uKhahlamba District Municipality, it is a Category C Municipality located within the Eastern Cape Province. The Municipality borders the Free State Province and the country of Lesotho to the north. It is situated approximately 34km north of Queenstown and its

northern border is formed by the Orange River, which also forms the southern boundary of the Free State. It consists of three local municipalities of Elundini, Walter Sisulu and Senqu with Aliwal North being the main commercial and tourism centre. JGDM is one of the Water Service Authorities in the Eastern Cape Province.

Joe Gqabi District Municipal Infrastructure

While presenting an overview of the Municipality's infrastructure, Mr Sicelo Pongoma, Manager for Water Services Authority at JGDM said, "The biggest challenge is that municipal networks of water and sanitation at JGDM are old in the main urban centres while the newer townships and peri-urban areas have newer infrastructure. There is a dedicated potable water network that services homes, industries and businesses, with infrastructure for fire-fighting".

"As with all urban infrastructure bases, the water supply and sanitation systems have their own challenges, particularly as JGDM has towns classified as nodes of economic and social attraction for people in the rural neighbourhood", Pongoma further explained.

"The system is exposed to high demand and therefore requires a high investment rate in operations, maintenance and renewal. The age profile of the infrastructure is generally aged in the urban nodes with ages of at least 50 years. The maintenance of good functionality requires very capable and sufficient staff resources, more so than new infrastructure", notes Pongoma.

While delivering the opening remarks, Mr Mcebisi Nonjola, Manager at the Office of the Municipal Manager said, "Collaborations between water and sanitation institutions is necessary, especially as it has become urgent that we learn

from one another and strengthen the relationships. The District Municipalities cannot do it alone. Currently, JGDM is already facing severe sanitation challenges. However, there are a number of interesting new water and sanitation projects under way such as the installation of prepaid water meters”.

Nonjola further added, “Capacity challenges are among the problems experienced by Joe Gabi municipality, like all rural municipalities, water and sanitation experts do not want to stay long in rural municipalities, this poses a challenge in getting the problems solved. Other challenges are emanating from the sceptic tanks, at least 5 households are connected to one sceptic tank”.



Mr Jean Olivier, Deputy Director for Infrastructure
-Department of Basic Education

Commenting on JGDM's wastewater management Nonjola added, “Some of the challenges we experience here relate to sewer spillages that occur across the municipality due to the old infrastructure and vandalism. Furthermore, there are leaking septic tanks in Ugie leading to threat to public and environmental health. We also experience some challenges when it comes to Emptying of VIP toilets in Maclear, Mt Fletcher and Rossouw. Safe storage and disposal of Ventilated Improved (VIP) toilets and faecal sludge”.

School sanitation

Some of the schools in the Eastern Cape Province, like many other provinces, face severe sanitation challenges such as a huge backlog in the installation of learner's toilets. “In some cases, schools prefer to prioritise the building of classrooms over toilets. Schools face high levels of vandalism of infrastructure.” said Mr Jean Olivier, Deputy Director for Infrastructure for the Department of Basic Education in Eastern Cape.

Mr Oliver Ive, the Managing Director for Amanz'abantu spoke at length about his organisation that is actively involved in the Eastern Cape and has done a lot to improve sanitation management at schools. For example, in 2013 the Butterworth Schools Sanitation & Water Pilot Project was successfully initiated by the WRC, with partners Irish Aid, Eastern Cape Department of Education, CSIR and Amanz'abantu.

According to Ive through this project, emergent locally-based micro-entrepreneurs have been trained and mentored to undertake the routine servicing of water and sanitation facilities at all schools of the Butterworth Education District. The project made use of the 'Social Franchising System' concept developed in the project. Around 400 schools have been serviced and 6 emergent franchisee micro-entrepreneurs have been established and nurtured, with around 25 sustainable jobs created. In addition, the school learners have benefited substantially – especially the girl learners, who for probably the first time in their school career now have access to a clean and hygienic toilet.

As the way-forward, Pongoma said, “We are committed to making use of information that is out there and some of it can be implemented without really stressing about huge budgets. We need to start developing a program that can include specific focus based on our water and sanitation “hotspots” and the program over the whole year”.