

Focus on CSIR research in Improved sanitation infrastructure at schools

CSIR Built Environment
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Good physical infrastructure at schools enhances access to education, while inadequate and poorly maintained infrastructure excludes learners. In the Butterworth education district in the Eastern Cape, some 400 schools are benefiting from clean sanitation facilities thanks to a pilot micro-business intervention by the CSIR and its partners.

The majority of the 6 500 schools in the Eastern Cape is located in rural areas. Due to the lack of maintenance of the physical infrastructure, especially the water and sanitation facilities, countless learners at many rural schools are deprived of learning contact hours. Nearly all of these schools have pit latrines, very few of which are properly maintained.

A research and development programme, conceived and implemented by the CSIR in collaboration with the Water Research Commission (WRC), seeks to create partnerships that involve skills development and incentives principles similar to (but not the same as) those of commercial franchising, with the aim of assisting government to deliver and manage infrastructure services. In the programme, franchisee micro-businesses are nurtured and trained to undertake cleaning and maintenance services of small-scale water and sanitation facilities such as those owned by (and which must remain owned by) schools, clinics and municipalities.

Irish Aid, Ireland's government department which assists developing countries, committed itself to providing substantial research and development funding for three years' funding of the Butterworth schools pilot. This commitment is in

accordance with an agreement reached between Irish Aid, the CSIR, the WRC, the Eastern Cape Department of Education and the franchisor, Amanz'abantu Services (Pty) Ltd. The latter is an East London-based service provider with many years' experience of working alongside rural and developing communities and a footprint covering the whole of the Eastern Cape.

Under the guidance of Amanz'abantu, trainee franchisees have received appropriate training and assistance with setting up their businesses, and equipping them to start cleaning and maintenance of the sanitation facilities at the schools. This franchisor has thereafter continued

to provide structured learning in the form of on-the-job mentoring, and also further training as required – all funded by Irish Aid. These maintenance services provided by the empowered franchisees are paid for by the schools from their budgets in any event annually allocated for operation and maintenance of infrastructure.

The CSIR is providing policy, management, technical and other assistance necessary to facilitate the pilot programme. This work includes drafting terms of reference, advising on procurement processes, monitoring progress, and documenting experiences and the results.

SOUTH AFRICA - PROVINCES

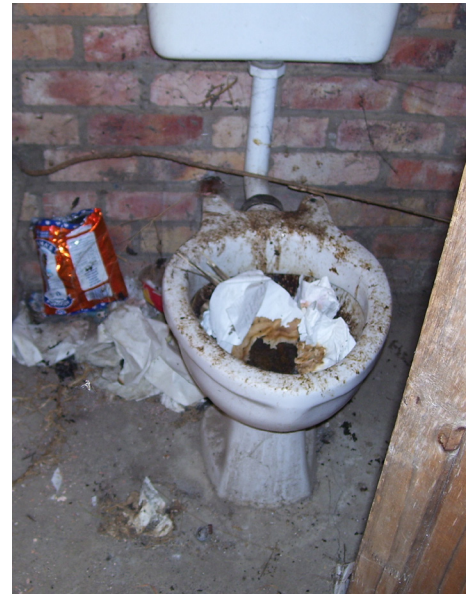


The pilot has demonstrated a number of benefits of the franchising partnership concept. First, the franchising partnership approach ensures quality control and service reliability. Second, it offers first-time entrepreneurs (mostly women in this case) the chance to set up sustainable micro-businesses which provide sustainable employment opportunities. Third, through facilitating workplace learning, it is upskilling rural people while providing them with employment – in some cases, the first formal job they have held in their lives. Fourth, it is improving the state of and usability of schools water and sanitation facilities, thereby greatly benefiting learners. In summary, through appropriate and locally-based solutions, it is providing much-needed maintenance services while creating jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities where they are greatly needed.

Service delivery has improved so much at the 400 schools that the Eastern Cape Department of Education has expressed the desire to roll the programme out to a further 1 000 schools in the province.

The CSIR and the WRC have published findings from progress with the research, and have disseminated these findings to government departments and professional organisations, with a view to replication of the franchising partnerships concept to the benefit of the operation and maintenance of other water and sanitation

infrastructure. Equipped with the skills to maintain specific types of infrastructure, the franchisees could expand into routine maintenance of infrastructure owned by health authorities and municipalities, for example. Conversely, public sector owners of infrastructure other than in the education field could, by using franchisees to maintain their smaller-scale infrastructure, overcome some of the operation and maintenance challenges that the majority of them currently face.



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