

# Executive summary

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Community consultation in the provision of water services is both a legislative obligation and a critical success factor. Legislation and policy require government to engage with communities in the provision of Water Services.

In order to inform/consult the public and obtain their participation and support, national departments such as DWAF and DPLG embarked on awareness campaigns and/or solicited public participation through meetings, leaflets and the mass media.

As far as could be established, no single comprehensive study has been done which provides a barometer of the general public's knowledge and understanding of the water services messages as communicated, and their involvement in, and preferences for, consultative processes. This study was undertaken to fill this gap. The study gives a 'reading' of the current state of knowledge and awareness amongst the South African public regarding five key water services knowledge areas. The analysis of the data furthermore identifies areas of strength and weakness with the view to developing recommendations for improvement.

For the purpose of this study, the term 'community consultation' was broadly defined to include all types of communication aimed at the general public, ranging from information dissemination to community participation.

The study limits itself to water services messages and it focuses on two major communication campaigns of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry that have dealt specifically with Water Services, Free Basic Water and Water and Sanitation Hygiene (WASH).

The literature review places community consultation regarding water services in the paradigm of development communication.

Outcomes sought in public communication campaigns are, typically, awareness, attitude change, or behavioural change. Although large amounts of money are spent on public communication campaigns, the outcomes/results/success of public communication campaigns are often not assessed – "many mass media campaigns proceed in the absence of a research foundation" (Rice & Atkin, 2000:125). There is often no evidence of how many members of the target public read the publications or listened to the radio messages, understood them, believed them, or changed their attitude or behaviour as a result of them. This will only become known through evaluation research.

This study follows the Macnamara model to evaluate the outcomes of key Water Services campaigns. Macnamara's Macro Model (1993), or as later versions became known, the Pyramid Model, presents in a pyramidal form three layers of a communication campaign, i.e. inputs, outputs and results. Each layer is associated with a set of evaluation parameters and an applicable evaluation research methodology. Qualitative methods were used to assess inputs and outputs of the major communication campaigns of Water Services. For example, in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted in order to determine what the South African public is expected to be aware of/know/understand/believe/practise in terms of key water services messages. In addition, case studies of 6 WSA community consultation projects were sourced to give an overview of inputs and outputs of water services community consultation from the perspective of municipalities.

In order to assess the results/outcomes of these water services campaigns, an innovative tool, the barometer instrument, was constructed.

Five key water services knowledge areas were identified from the literature review and the analysis of the interviews with stakeholders and the case studies. They are listed below: The indicators in brackets refer to the expected level of awareness:

- Free Basic Water (the general public should be **aware** of FBW and **understand** what it means)
- Basic water as a constitutional right (awareness and understanding)
- Responsibilities (awareness and behaviour)
- Health and hygiene (knowledge and behaviour)
- Institutional roles (knowledge)



Each knowledge area was associated with core messages from the major water services communication campaigns. A score of 2 points was allocated for knowledge/awareness/desired behaviour regarding the core messages of each of these five knowledge areas. A composite score out of a possible 10 therefore provides a barometer reading of the knowledge/awareness/desired behaviour of the sample universe regarding core messages of the major water services campaigns.

A quantitative survey was undertaken from 10/11/2006 until 8/12/2006 to test the knowledge and understanding of the general public of South Africa on a number of water services messages on which they were consulted during the past five years. (The survey questions were included in the AC Nielsen Omnibus Survey. The sample comprised an area-stratified, probability sample of 2456 urban and 795 rural respondents. The sample universe was adult (16+) South Africans.)

The following are key barometer results:

- The national average WS barometer score was 5.759 out of a possible 10.
- Figure 1 below shows how the national average WS barometer score is made up of a sum of the scores for each of the knowledge areas.

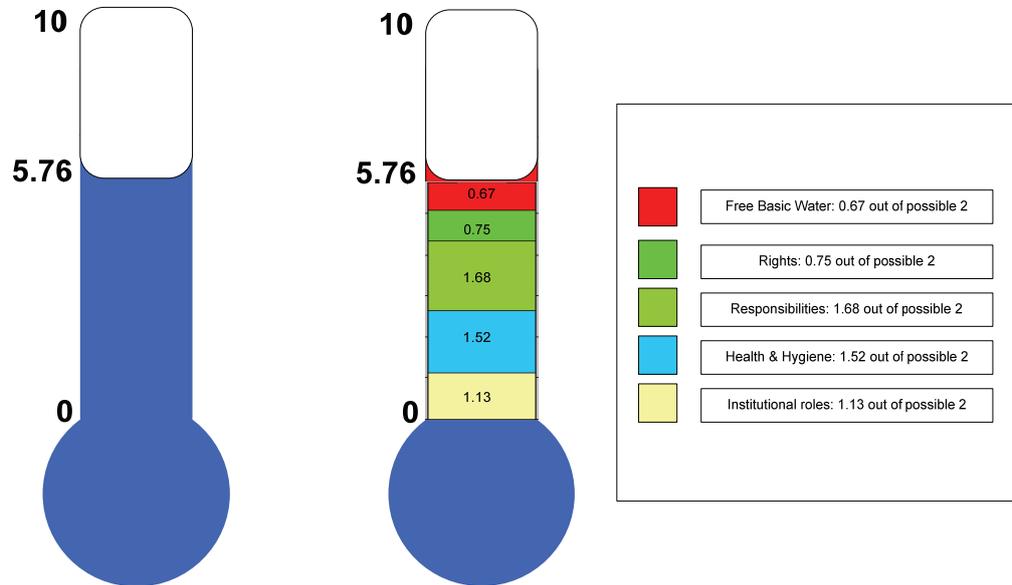


Figure 1

- Standing on its own, the result is a reliable indicator of the knowledge/awareness/behaviour that was tested. However, without a baseline, or a definite expected outcome (e.g. 1+ out of a possible 2 for FBW), the score cannot evaluate the effectiveness of water services community consultation as good, average or disappointing. Various role players will give their own interpretation of the results, based on the knowledge/awareness/behaviour that they expect from the adult South African population.
- Responsibilities scored higher than Rights: people have better knowledge of their responsibilities than their rights.
- The highest scores occurred in the areas of Responsibilities and Health and Hygiene. Although it is difficult to say whether people accurately reported behaviour, South Africans seem to be at least aware of their responsibility to pay for water in excess of 6000 litres/month and to report broken infrastructure that directly affects them. This is also the case with answers on Health and Hygiene received from respondents. Most respondents scored at least one point for being aware that you should wash your hands after you have been to the toilet. Only 2.1% said that 'it is not important to wash your hands.'
- South African adults scored the lowest in the areas Free Basic Water and Constitutional Rights, because 59% said that they have never heard of Free Basic Water and 45% said they have never heard of the Constitution.

For each of the knowledge areas, the main results are as follows:

- Free Basic Water
  - ▣ 40.8% of the adult population have heard of FBW; 59.2% have not.
  - ▣ Awareness of Free Basic Water is the lowest amongst the rural population and lower LSMs<sup>1</sup>
  - ▣ The age group 35-49 is the best informed
  - ▣ 25.7% of the adult population, who have heard of FBW, believe that it means that water is for free – as much as you want.
  - ▣ Composite barometer scores cross-tabulated with the meanings of FBW, show that knowledge of the exact amount of FBW that households receive per month correlates with high barometer scores.
  - ▣ LSM groups access information from a variety of sources. It is therefore correct to distribute Free Basic Services messages through a variety of communication channels.
  - ▣ 38.1% of respondents who answered 'Water is for free – as much as I want' said the source for their information was school/college/evening classes, etc.
  
- Constitutional rights
  - ▣ 54.4% of the adult population have heard about the Constitution; 45.6% have not. 57% of rural adults have not heard of the Constitution.
  - ▣ 93% of people who have heard of the Constitution believe that, constitutionally, everyone has the right to a flush toilet, and 95% believe that everyone has the right to a tap inside their home.
  - ▣ There is a correlation between respondents who have heard of the Constitution and of Free Basic Water and respondents who have not heard of either.
  
- Responsibilities
  - ▣ 25% of people, who have the responsibility to pay for water and sanitation, admit that they do not pay their account every month for some or other reason. Non-payment correlates with the lower LSM groups, indicating that people in the lower LSM groups should be educated and encouraged to bring their consumption down to an affordable amount.
  - ▣ Urban people in the lower LSM groups are less likely to report broken infrastructure than people in the higher LSM groups.
  - ▣ Responsible behaviour amongst the urban population correlates with higher composite barometer scores.

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<sup>1</sup> The Living Standards Measure (LSM) has been developed by the South African Advertising Research Foundation. It is built around a set of 29 household variables, e.g. sewing machine, flush toilet in/outside house, traditional hut, electric stove. There are 10 LSM groups. In terms of the Living Standard Measure Group 1 has the lowest living standard, whereas Group 10 has the highest.



