

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report emanates from a project financed by the Water Research Commission (WRC).

The concept "Rapid Capacity Building" was probably born out of the crisis pertaining to ensuring access to healthy, clean water and sanitation for all communities. In response to an invitation of the Water Research Commission, this research project was designed to address the challenge of seeking for a model which made rapid capacity building possible for the management of water and waste services at community level.

A basic assumption was made that rapid capacity building would be possible once the core competencies for the task were known and these competencies could be instilled through ensuring optimum staff components and the necessary training of staff regarding these competencies. The objectives of the research project are the following:

1. To advise on the staffing levels and competencies required to perform the task efficiently
2. To determine the skills gap between skills level and competencies needed to effectively fulfil the task
3. To identify the priority areas to be address through training in order to make the largest impact in the shortest possible time
4. To develop a rapid capacity building (RCB) programme and test the programme

All of the objectives were met excepting to test the programme developed for rapid capacity building. To have stated such an objective was rather ambitious within the confines of the time and the funding available.

The research was conducted by means of semi-structured interviews with staff at a number of towns, a postal questionnaire which targeted staff responsible for water and waste management and maintenance, interviews with specialists in the field and a workshop with senior officials of district councils. The research showed that the question of capacity is a much wider issue than core competencies and optimum levels of staffing, although these also were of importance. What became clear is that optimum staffing levels and the training of staff to have the required competencies is a medium to long term aim and cannot be part of a rapid capacity building approach.

It became clear that the approach should rather be to consolidate and muster existing competencies and expertise and make these accessible to communities. The competencies required for management of water and waste services under normal circumstances are

rather basic and menial. A problem occurs when systems are faulty and need to be corrected and advanced expertise is required. These factors refer to technical capacity. In addition to technical capacity, communities require administrative capacity and financial capacity. These require competency and skills in managing water and waste systems and the staff needed in such a system as well as the ability to recover costs for financial sustainability. The capacities bring into play the ability of the community to pay for services, and where this is not possible, to seek for alternatives.

The model for rapid capacity building therefore focuses on the formation of a "hub" or a centre where all kinds of information are held such as contact information of experts and organisations in the area and guidelines for certain procedures. This centre needs to be established within the existing structures. The most appropriate location for such a centre would probably be a district council or a water board depending on which exists and which is best suited for the establishment of the centre. For the centre to function optimally, a communication system needs to be in place so that communities within the service area of the centre can have ready access to the centre. The ultimate vision of this system is to have all communities linked to the centre by computer.

The conclusions drawn based on this research are as follows:

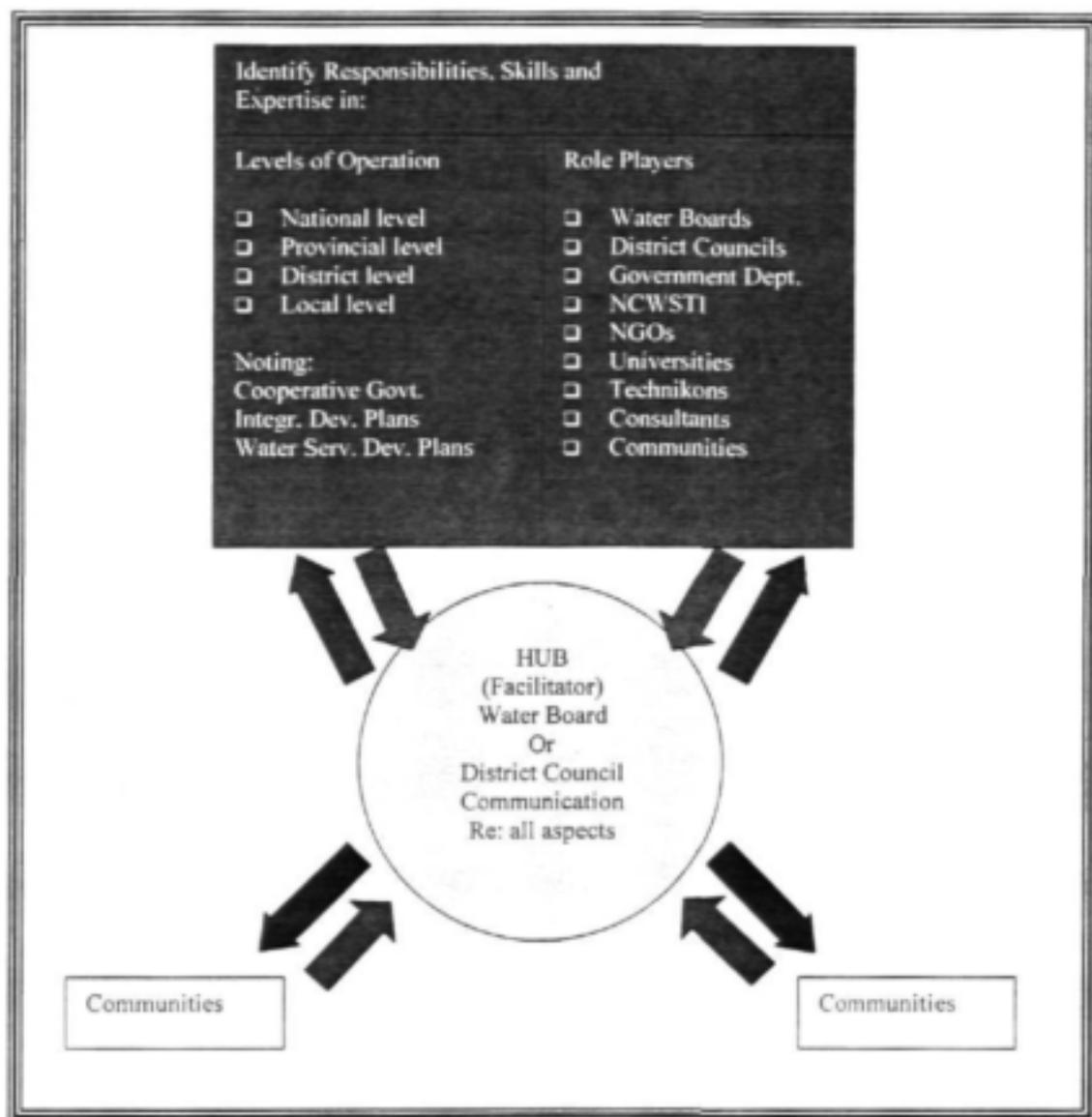
1. It is clear that **training and education is only one factor in building capacity**. Building capacity **also includes the ability to access funding, technology, administrative resources, equipment, information, support and collaborative partnerships**. Though training and education forms an important basis for capacity building, it is clear that this alone may only frustrate if it is not accompanied by the other factors named above.
2. Capacity building involves ensuring that the system exhibits the necessary **managerial/administrative, technical and financial abilities** for the task or function that has to be fulfilled.
3. In terms of rapid capacity building, it is concluded that education and training cannot be seen as providing short-term or rapid results. Rapid capacity building is possible in terms of two scenarios. One is to simply provide the required capacity, using existing external expertise, consultants and the like. This is a high cost, low risk option with a high probability for success. The other is to empower the communities to build their own capacity. This represents a low cost, high risk option, which will not deliver at the speed required under the present critical conditions pertaining to water and waste services.
4. A third scenario appears to be appropriate for the situation prevailing in the Eastern Cape. This entails a combination of the above two scenarios. In the short term, **existing expertise and consultants can be mustered to provide information** needed at community level to manage and maintain water and waste services. The information could also include the **establishing of databases and guidelines** to handle any given situation that may occur at community level. **Existing human resources can also be pooled** so that teams may be available to provide support with regard to all aspects of managing and maintaining of water and waste services at community level.

Simultaneously, but independantly of the short term action, the **medium- to long term activities** of education and training can be launched. This requires not only education and training with regard to the specific requirements for water and waste services management and maintenance, but also **follow-up action** and addressing broader issues concerning **community governance, community economics and civil society**.

This can be realised through an education and training programme aimed specifically at water and waste services management, in combination with a community development process which addresses issues of governance, building a local economy and strengthening civil society.

5. A two-pronged approach as referred to in #4 requires an **inter-sectoral approach**. This means that relevant government departments, other government authorities at different levels, commerce and industry (i.e. the private sector), consultants (in training and engineering) and tertiary educational institutions need to be brought together to address the issue not only of capacity building for the management of water and waste services, but of the basic structure and systems required for healthy, functioning communities.
6. **At district level** it is necessary to **establish a centre which channels all the existing expertise, other capacities and guidelines to the communities**. This also requires the establishing of an **effective communication system** between the centre, the existing resources and the communities the centre serves.
7. At community level the minimum staff complement needs to be established, with clusters of communities under the mentorship of an expert or a team of experts. As was shown by the case study, a small staff complement is required, but of people who are able and skilled to fulfill their function. It would appear that a town clerk, a computer typist/operator, an administration clerk and a technical assistant will suffice in most smaller communities, more specifically the rural villages. These are the people who would need to be in direct contact and communication with the centre and the mentorship.
8. Whilst this short term action is taken as a form of rapid capacity building, the medium- to long term action of education and training needs to be initiated. This needs to be carried out continuously by consultants who are skilled at transferring knowledge and can follow up to support learning and the development of skills by supervising the application of the new knowledge.
9. Some of what has been mentioned is already being done. What appears necessary is that the attempts need to be **less fragmented and better coordinated**. In addition it needs to be ensured that the **combination of a short term strategy with a medium- to long term strategy** are well synchronised. This, and much more, can be achieved by the **establishment of support centres in each district**, referred to in the document as a "hub" or "**WATER AND WASTE MANAGEMENT SUPPORT COORDINATION CENTRE**". This needs to be a lively, vibrant facility that constantly updates information on existing data, knowledge and documentation, develops guidelines, ensures the establishment of

an effective communication system and serves as a link between the communities and the resources.



**Recommendations based on the conclusions are:**

1. This research project should be followed up by a **second phase of piloting the model as described in this document**. The Amatola district has been suggested as a possibility for the application of the model. The main reasons for this is that: (i) the district has settlements representing all types which are found in the Eastern Cape; (ii) the District Council is well established and would be able to participate meaningfully in such a venture; and, (iii) a water board has been established in the district which can be drawn into the process. This possibility needs to be followed-up as soon as possible. The necessary funding for the piloting process will have to be made available.
2. Part of the piloting of the model should include **clarifying which** of the water board, acting as a water services provider, or the district council, acting as water services authorities and/or water services providers (see Par. 3.14), **is most suitable for the establishment of the centre**. The major advantage of the water board is that it specialises in water services and have already adopted a support and mentoring strategy which can be compatible with the strategy proposed by the model. The advantage of the **district council is that it operates on a more inter-sectoral basis which is a basic principle underlying the rapid capacity building model**, but is not so in the case of the water board.
3. A centre needs to be established which needs to be supported by consultants to ensure that the model is implemented correctly and can learn first hand from the implementation process so that the model can be refined for dissemination.
4. The **centre** needs to be **staffed by a competent communicator** with a good computer literacy level and an ability to organise the data and information regarding the resources so that it is accessible in a user-friendly fashion. Basic knowledge of water and waste systems and services is preferable.
5. Once the centre is established, one of its first tasks would be to **record all relevant information of resources and to arrange for guidelines to be drafted**. Another task would be to look into the most effective and practical way in which to **establish a communication system** between the centre and the communities it serves.
6. The centre needs to **coordinate the short-, medium and long term strategies of capacity building** to ensure that the strategies are complementary and mutually supportive.
7. The **competency levels of the staff at community level needs to be assessed, as well as the staffing levels**. This is necessary so that a strategy can be devised by which the correct staffing levels can be achieved and the staff can be optimally trained. The implication is probably that a number of people may have to be re-deployed for which a training and education programme will also be required. A further implication is that, in some cases, new staff will have to be recruited and appointed. These people will probably also come from the communities where the new staff have to be stationed. **The communities need to be involved to the extent that they take ownership of the process.**