

Framework for local government to implement integrated water resource management linked to water service delivery

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Abstract

The Water Services Act (No. 8 of 1997) of South Africa states that water service delivery is the responsibility of local government as Water Services Authorities. The principal legal responsibility is to complete a Water Services Development Plan (WSDP) every 5 years with annual review. The WSDP encapsulates all the responsibilities and tasks required in water service delivery. However, it does not spell out local government's role in water resource protection or its responsibilities as far as integrated water resource management is concerned. It is well known in South Africa that there is a challenging level of inadequate capacity in technical and administrative skills in local government to adequately fulfil water service delivery. This paper highlights the consequences of this incapacity for municipalities and their difficulties in fulfilling their responsibilities as service providers. A framework is provided within which improvements can be brought about, with guidance on how to engage in the practice of integrated water resource management (IWRM) in the context of the legal framework for water services. The additional tasks and changes required to practise IWRM are set in the context of the WSDP. The framework provides a guide for a municipality to first accomplish an adequate WSDP, and then to gradually implement IWRM. A discussion on the skills needed to accomplish, firstly, a comprehensive WSDP, and secondly, IWRM, is included.

Keywords: local government mandates, water service delivery, water service planning, integrated water resource management, skills and training needs, water resource management, solid waste management