

In South Africa, it is widely recognized that inadequate Operation & Maintenance (O&M) is a common and serious problem in basic services provision. It was estimated that 1,9 million people may revert back to the basic services backlog before 2010 as a consequence of inadequate operation and maintenance<sup>1</sup>, reflecting a moving target for addressing the basic water and sanitation backlog (DWAF, 2005). The backlog in informal settlements and poor rural areas provided with free basic services is particularly acute as there is no link between service charges and levels of operational services. In coming to terms with the scale of O&M requirements to sustain basic services, more municipalities are considering integrating community based procurement to provide inputs for O&M of basic water and sanitation services. While in South Africa there is general willingness to integrate pro-poor strategies and improve O&M of basic services, the specific challenges obstructing implementation at a local level called for further research. Research was conducted in partnership with four municipalities, spanning across urban to rural case study settings and covering the range of basic services technologies provided, expressly to inform the development of a guideline for integrating community-based procurement in O&M systems. Contained in a comprehensive report entitled **“Investigation into Unlocking and Integrating Community-based Procurement in Operation & Maintenance of Basic Services”** (Lagardien et al., 2009), key findings from the research culminated in a guideline framework, a structured process and tools for application by municipalities. Key findings underpinning guideline development were drawn from the research, summarized here to explain the basis for the approach set out in the Guideline.

➤ **Rationale for community-based procurement in O&M of basic services:**

- The localized nature of key O&M functions suggest a scale of community-based procurement that warrants investment in aligned local economic development strategies.
- Targeted investment can contribute to creating conditions for the economic viability of basic services provision, other than user charges to the account of poor people.
- National poverty alleviation budgets, such as the Equitable Share and Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), are accessible to municipalities for this purpose.
- Integrated Development Plans (IDP) and Water Services Development Plans (WSDP) are mechanisms for municipalities to obtain local development support and special grants from national departments, such as Department of Water Affairs (DWA) and the Department of Labour (DoL).

➤ **Identifying O&M tasks and specifying community-based opportunities:**

- Local level and daily functions such as caretaking, minor repairs, local monitoring and reporting are best suited to community-based services provision.
- Arrangements enabling community-based procurement for servicing those people who are not billed include the O&M of shared, rudimentary or emergency types of services.
- Service providers sourced from and based within the community of end-users are best placed to prevent, reduce and respond immediately to breakdowns, and improve communication and credibility at a local level.
- Each level of stakeholder has access to experience and specific details that inform the appropriate assignment of responsibilities into local, joint and municipal tasks.
- Local level insights clarify selection criteria on the basis of skills and experience, and inform

protocol processes at the interface between the community and municipality.

➤ **Setting up the interface for local monitoring and support structures:**

- Monitoring and support arrangements must be adapted to fit the requirements for local level

O&M tasks and functions to keep assets serviceable.

- While existing monitoring systems are based on reports of specific tasks and some requirements, in general community level intermediaries and end-users inputs are lacking.
- Communication flows function most effectively at the interface between stakeholders through monitoring and reporting in order to continuously inform O&M systems.

- As the flow of responsibilities, supervision and reporting is not immediately evident, it is useful to set out complementary oversight and reporting between the different levels of responsibility.

➤ **Facilitating institutional support for community-based O&M:**

- Disjuncture in collaboration across departments makes it difficult for local authorities to prioritize and integrate O&M into their overall planning and budgeting processes.
- Departments need to be better informed regarding the scale of development opportunities located in fulfilling O&M functions for basic services.
- Information that emanates from operational realities needs to be conveyed upwards to decision-making levels for the institution to plan, support and manage implementation effectively.
- Specific information for the operational requirements of each technology should be collated to convey knowledge of the asset base, staffing and material requirements and typical applications.
- Checklists to inform departments with regard to procurement, training, management and budget requirements can be developed.

This Guideline sets out to provide municipalities with a practical approach to improving their O&M

systems for basic water and sanitation services. As an understanding of key tasks, activities and associated procedures for cost effective O&M systems is a prerequisite for municipalities to take up community-based procurement opportunities, the guideline is based on series of structured activities engaging stakeholders in

- Identifying community-based opportunities in O&M
- Setting up appropriate mechanisms for monitoring implementation
- Integrating institutional support for a community-based approach to O&M.

The guideline is structured as follows:

- Section 1: **Background** outlines the framework of the guideline and a brief overview three stages.
- Section 2: **Introduction to the guideline** provides an introduction of the three stages of the guideline and related tools. In this section the purpose and outcomes of each of the three stages of the guideline are explained; and support tools related to each stage are outlined.
- Section 3: **Guideline application** provides a detail explanation of how to use the guideline; it outlines the sequence of stages and the stepwise use of the guideline.
- The **appendices** provide practical examples of the application of the guideline as a reference for the users of the guideline. Ultimately application of the Guideline will assist municipalities in planning for O&M systems that will keep basic services assets in a serviceable condition by moving away from seeing basic services delivery as infrastructure projects. Relatively neglected O&M functions will show up as opportunities for direct support of local livelihoods through community based procurement, at the same time improving proactive and preventative O&M at a local level.