“NOT SO VIP”: USING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION TO ENSURE THE PROVISION OF SUSTAINABLE VIP LATRINES

Ngobeni L.N
1Department of Information Systems, Leslie Commerce Building, Upper Campus, University of Cape Town, RSA
*E-mail: ngblul001@myuct.ac.za

Worldwide, the provision of basic sanitation has proven to be a challenge that governments have failed to overcome and as a result, about 2.6 billion people in the world do not have access to basic sanitation. South Africa is one of the many African countries experiencing sanitation backlogs.

The provision of access to sanitation in South Africa is the responsibility of the local government. Due to the democratic nature of South African governance, local municipalities have to efficiently provide basic services and enable local communities to participate in the strategic decision-making of services provided. Public participation is therefore a legislative requirement.

In South Africa, the basic minimum acceptable level of sanitation is a lined Ventilated Improved Pit (VIP) latrine. When constructed and maintained correctly, VIPs latrines meet the acceptable minimum requirements for sanitation. Although the VIP latrine can be an ideal sanitation technology, it has become known as a sanitation solution for the poor. Additionally, some sanitation projects utilising VIP latrines have been unsuccessful as a result of insufficient buy-in, poor construction and design practices, or a combination of these. Successful projects have shown to use effective knowledge-transfer through public participation. Community engagement resulted in community development, overall health and hygiene improvement, and an increased sense of ownership.

The purpose of this study is to assess the public participation methods used in VIP latrine sanitation projects and the extent to which public participation has resulted in the provision of sustainable sanitation systems. The study will be a comparative assessment of two VIP sanitation projects implemented in the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality: one where the project was run by the municipality, and another that was run by an NGO. Data will collected through a desktop analysis and stakeholder engagement: interviews with NGO employees, local municipality officials and randomly selected community members. The comparative study will be two-fold: a Critical Systems assessment of the public participation methods used in each project; and a sustainability assessment of the VIP latrines, using the integrated assessment of sustainable development developed by Kranjc and Glavic (2004). The four sustainability criteria that will be assessed are (a) Technology and Operation (B) Health and Hygiene (c) Economy and Finance; and (d) Socio-cultural aspects. The extent to which effective public participation methods and knowledge-transfer can be used to enhance the sustainability of VIP latrines, will thus be established.

Keywords: Knowledge-transfer, Local Municipality, NGO, Public Participation, Sanitation, VIP latrine

Topic: Domestic and Municipal Water and Sanitation