

**Briefing Note on Innovative Practices to be considered by the  
Ministerial Consultations of the eighth special session of the  
Governing Council / Global Ministerial Environment Forum,  
Jeju, Republic of Korea, 29-31 March 2004**

**Development Cooperation Ireland support to the Government of South Africa Water  
Services Sector Support Programme (“Masibambane”).**

**1. Description of Initiative**

1.1 In 2001, the South African Government through the national Departments of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) and Provincial and Local Government (DPLG), South Africa Local Government Association (SALGA) and their provincial counterparts, municipalities and other representative structures, collaborated with the European Commission and Member States including France, Ireland, Netherlands and the United Kingdom to develop a **sector wide programme** for the water sector.

1.2 The **objective** of the programme is to provide basic water supply and sanitation services through a variety of activities including the support of strategic policy development, water and sanitation services provision to selected poor rural communities in three provinces (Limpopo Province, KwaZulu Natal and the Eastern Cape) and through institutional support to assist various levels of public sector institutions.

1.3 In line with its poverty reduction policy, the **Government target is to have 100% water supply and sanitation coverage** by 2008 and 2010 respectively. In 1994 there were an estimated 12 million persons without an adequate water supply in South Africa, while nearly 21 million were without adequate sanitation services. By 2003 the backlog had been reduced to 6.2 million for water and 17.3 million for sanitation.

1.4 The second phase of the Masibambane programme (2004-07) will see the EU contributing €50 million while **Ireland currently plans to contribute €9 million**. In implementing the programme the Government of South Africa makes strategic use of the capacity of local engineering companies as well as civil society organisations to both improve the management of existing infrastructure and extend infrastructure to previously unserved areas.

1.5 While sector wide programmes in the water sector are not new, Masibambane deserves recognition as a programme of best practice. The EC mid term review stated that “overall, the programme has been successful and is **exemplary in the region** and beyond. In particular, it is unique in proactively setting up a sector wide programme into which government and donor resources are pooled as opposed to trends where interventions are donor driven”.

1.6 Masibambane is driven by **strong political leadership and an enabling policy and budgetary framework**. The “Strategic Framework for Water Services”, approved by Cabinet in September 2003 provides a comprehensive summary of policy with respect to water services and provides a strategic framework, including financing costs, for its implementation over the next ten years. The water sector operates within a Medium-Term Financial Framework that sets out priorities, objectives and goals for the budget and gives three-year projections of financial resources to be made available for the sector. The MTEF allows annual reviews. It requires spending plans to be prioritised to ensure that the most important interventions are supported and ensures that spending projections are realistic.

1.7 **Decentralisation** of powers to local authorities is reinforced through effective monitoring and communications, progressive handover of infrastructure and appropriate institutional support.

1.8 In terms of the proposed GMEF discussion, Masibambane attempts to ensure that **water and sanitation are progressed simultaneously** recognising that water supply without improvements in sanitation or hygiene will not bring the expected health benefits.

1.9 A strong emphasis is placed on **cross sectoral coordination**. The Department Health oversees health and hygiene education which are particularly important in the context of greater numbers of people suffering from HIV/Aids. The Department of Education ensures that health and hygiene education as well as wider environmental issues such as the wise use of water are on the national curriculum and is responsible for adequate water and sanitation facilities to all schools. The Department of Housing and the Department of Public Works have an important responsibility to ensure that adequate provision is made for appropriate water and sanitation services in all new developments.

1.10 South Africa has adopted a policy of **Free Basic Water** ensuring that the poor are entitled to their minimum needs (25 litres per person per day) at no charge. Free Basic water is financed through a variety of mechanisms including an “Equitable Share” grant from central government as well as at municipal level from cross-subsidisation between consumers and from other sources of municipal revenue.

## **2. Mainstreaming / Sustainability**

2.1 The principles of Masibambane have been adopted into national planning processes such as the **Poverty Reduction Strategy through the Sector Wide Approach** and as the result of committed political leadership, an enabling policy framework, and a commitment to building effective institutions at all levels.

2.2 **Budget proposals** are prepared by each Department, negotiated with treasury and once final allocations are confirmed each Department or local authority submits its adjusted annual plans. Masibambane is a dynamic process and aims for performance based budgeting. Eventually grants to local authorities will be limited to a municipal infrastructure grant for capital works and a capacity building grant to finance capacity development.

2.3 **Sustainability** is addressed through a “ladder” of service levels beginning with a cross subsidised level of Free Basic access, progressive service levels and the application of the “user pays” principle. Donor support forms less than 25% of the finance of the programme and concentrates on capacity building rather than the construction of infrastructure.

## **3. Lessons Learned**

3.1 The Masibambane programme is innovative in that it illustrates many of the key ingredients for the sustainable delivery of water and sanitation services, including; a political champion, an appropriate policy and institutional framework, sector plans integrated within national development and budgetary frameworks as well as collaborative structures at all levels involving donors, private sector and civil society under the leadership of national government.

3.2 While water supply targets are being exceeded, the provision of sanitation services is not proceeding at the same pace, hence there is a need to continually emphasise the importance of adequate sanitation and particularly the need for education on hygiene practices. South Africa has a substantial economic and financial base compared to its regional neighbours and this allows it to set ambitious targets for exceeding the Millenium Development Goals through the application of cross-subsidies. Nevertheless it recognises that optimum levels of services are not immediately achievable and has put in place a strategy of providing sustainable basic services (i.e., a water ladder), which can be upgraded at later stages.