



Institutional and social development package for water

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THE CHALLENGE IN the development sector post-1994 (following the first democratic elections) in South Africa has been to provide services to people within a context of enormous backlog and an institutional vacuum at local government level. The rural water and sanitation sector was no different from any other. A further task has been to find a home for *social* and *institutional* issues within an essentially technical environment, and to develop contractual documents for the scope of work.

This paper aims to present the Institutional and Social Development (ISD) Package for Water Supply Projects – an output of the *ISD Contract Design Project*, which is the result of over two years' collaborative work between national Government (Department of Water Affairs and Forestry) and a non-governmental organisation (Rural Development Services Network).

The ISD Contract Design Project had as its focus re-working all contractual documentation in the Department in order to ensure that ISD issues were sufficiently covered and prioritised along with technical issues. It was a difficult project in that much of the work had to be defined “for the first time” for the Department – and in an environment with little understanding of, and often hostile to, “soft” issues.

The *ISD Package*, the largest output of the ISD Contract Design Project, was intended to provide an approach, guidelines, formats, tools, contracting arrangements, and an outline of the scope of work through the project cycle to ensure water services sustainability with respect to institutional and social development interventions. It thus needed to address *what* needs to be done, *why* (sustainability outcomes) and suggestions of *how* to do the work.

What the ISD package set out to do

The *ISD Package* needed to provide, for implementing agents of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry and development practitioners, an understanding of institutional and social work. It needed to:

- locate ISD work within a vision for sustainable water supply and sanitation services,
- outline the ISD work through the project cycle, including sustainability outcomes,
- illustrate the links between technical, social, institutional and financial aspects,
- provide methodologies and guidelines towards operationalising the institutional aspects of the Water Services Act (Act 108 of 1997),
- provide guidelines for contracting ISD consultants, including categories and rates,

- provide methodological approaches for training and capacity building,
- assist with ensuring community participation and management,
- provide management models on water supply projects which would give equal priority to “soft” issues (including health and hygiene promotion), and
- evaluate and make recommendations to current Department of Water Affairs and Forestry contracting documents to ensure they could be used for ISD work.

What the project has achieved

The *ISD Package* was distributed in May 1999. It has fulfilled most of the intended outcomes, and has served a useful purpose in sensitizing an intrinsically technical environment to the need for an integrated developmental approach.

As a result of paradigm shifts that have taken place, the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry has recently allocated significant funds towards addressing social and institutional issues. There is greater emphasis on the need for process, capacity building at the local level, community involvement in decision making, and ensuring a democratic and responsive approach. ISD budgets in project business plans are no longer a percentage of the overall budget, but are rather calculated on the actual needs of the project – thorough feasibility studies around institutional capacity and socio-economic issues and comprehensive training and capacity building plans based on participative and integrated development principles are now required for fund approval. In addition, projects are required to identify sustainability outcomes and how these will be achieved.

In a nut-shell, water services (defined as water and sanitation in the Water Services Act) projects are no longer viewed as technical infrastructure projects, but as the delivery of water services based on community choice, affordability, willingness to pay and local level capacity to sustain the services.

Although the *ISD Package* focuses on ISD issues, it illustrates an integrated approach of all elements (technical, financial, environmental, socio-economic, institutional) towards achieving sustainability. For example, it illustrates a model for decision making concerning level of service choice, technology choice, tariffs and cost recovery systems, where all stakeholders participate (representing technical, community, institutional, economic, environmental and financial interests).

The Project is confident that it has communicated in a very precise way the ISD requirements on a water supply project.

Table 1. Contents of the ISD Package

Part 1	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose • Directory • Acronyms and Glossary
Part 2	Setting the Scene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision for Sustainability • ISD Interventions - a philosophy and approach, components, M&E, role players, etc, • Focus on Capacity Building and Training
Part 3	Project Feasibility and Business Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of the work • Instructions for the Contracting Agent • Generic Terms of Reference • Supporting Guides and Formats
Part 4	ISD from Design to Mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of the work • Instructions for the Contracting Agent • Generic Guides for preparing specific Terms and Reference
Part 5	Supporting documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documents outlining framework for institutional arrangements, and roles and responsibilities

It is now the responsibility of consultants (social and technical) working on Department of Water Affairs and Forestry rural projects to familiarize themselves with the contents of the Package. They can no longer describe ISD work as “woolly”, “unknown” or “soft”. The Package lays the basis for much greater contractual clarity as to what must be done to ensure a sustainable water supply project. The Table above indicates the contents of the Package.

The key sustainability outcomes the ISD Package supports are:

- role player participation and support,
- cost recovery and effective use of water services,
- water services authority (local government) support and improved regulatory context,
- water services provider able to fulfil its roles and responsibilities,
- efficient and effective operations and maintenance,
- improved health and hygiene behaviour, and
- increase in local economic activities.

A distribution strategy to ensure that every Implementing Agent in the country has a copy of the *ISD Package* has been developed. In addition the Package has been put onto the Internet and on CD ROM (in a slightly amended version).

An *Overview Version* (which includes extracts of the Package) was also developed for broad distribution within

the rural water and sanitation sector, and contains sufficient information for an in depth understanding of ISD issues, and their applicability within the water project cycle.

What had not been anticipated

- Cost – The ISD Contract Design Project, and attendant Sustainability Orientation Project (which focused on sharing ideas and experiences with Regional staff, and running induction programmes with them and implementing agents on the contents of the *ISD Package*), has cost the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry and funders (British and Danish) in the region of 2,4 million r and (£240 000, May 1999). Built into that amount is a year of consultation and conceptualisation, and significant re-writing of sections of the Package as the Department honed its own thinking through the course of the Project. (It was initially expected to cost in the region of 1,5 million rand.).
- Time – It has taken over two years to record and document the work (after initial estimates of 12 – 18 months).
- The difficulty of ensuring adequate co-ordination and building on existing experience – in instances time was spent “re-inventing wheels”. There were concerted attempts to avoid this.
- Applicability to a broad range of regional contexts – This was perhaps one of the most difficult challenges faced. In an attempt to ensure cross regional applicability, the *ISD Package* is generic in nature and does not address regional specificity’s.
- Difficulties in ensuring broad participation and workable solutions – Whilst the Project was responding to expressed needs at project level and included participatory processes with a “regional reference group” and stakeholders involved in project implementation, it tended to become Head Office driven with products that may be feasible in an “ideal world” rather than applicable to “on the ground” practical conditions. Ensuring the participation of role players and stakeholders at every step of the way proved extremely difficult and time consuming.
- Shifting national priorities – As a result of funding cuts, and an increasing emphasis on the need for sustainability, the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry shifted its focus from “green fields” projects to “turnaround” projects. The *ISD Package* was designed with “green fields” projects in mind, and the challenge now is to ensure applicability for “retrofit”, and to perhaps bring out a companion volume / supporting guide for this.
- Resistance from “technical” people – The familiar accusation of ISD holding back project implementation has been a constant impediment. However, the *ISD Package* has proved itself an important advocacy tool (both in terms of giving guidance to the scope of work,

and in promoting the importance of ISD work for sustainability).

What the project might have done differently

In retrospect the following would have been useful –

- Stronger interdisciplinary (social and technical) links on the Project Management Team. This was new work, and everyone was on a learning curve. There was an attempt to define processes in a generic form before there were agreements on broader processes. Perhaps this was an attempt to define the work too precisely? The use of a less taxing format than that determined by a *generic Terms of Reference* might have better served the purpose. The format is understood by engineers ie. a communication tool chosen for a particular audience, but it has not been without its consequences.
- The Project was often working without indicators or agreements on outcomes across disciplines within the Department. Much work would have been expedited had clear monitoring and evaluation indicators been present at the start of the ISD Contract Design Project. The format chosen for the *ISD Package* encouraged a *process* approach. The Package is thus a management tool and a reference manual. It is a comprehensive document outlining the work in detail. What it does not do is focus practitioners on *essentials*.
- A clearer perspective on area level / programmatic ISD aspects would have been useful – The focus on the water project level, without a clearer vision of a programmatic approach, meant a lack of clarity as to how the water project (and thus project interventions required) relates to the broader development picture within an area. Consequently, a section of the Package which addresses integrated social development remains unwritten. However, this is to still to be addressed as a parallel process to initiatives which are developing area strategies and local government water services development plans (as required by the Act).
- Greater use of case studies, and ensuring a cross section of regional examples would have enhanced the Package.
- More emphasis on financial and economic aspects from an earlier stage in the Project would have assisted with interdisciplinary linkages.
- A more substantial review of existing participatory methodologies would have given a more comprehensive participatory approach for water supply projects.

What is still to be done

The process of consultation around developing the Package, and attempting to ensure its usefulness, has brought up additional areas of work required:

- An Institutional Arrangements Version of the *ISD Package* is required. This would look specifically at the South African Water Services Act, the way in which water services authorities are expected to interact with water services providers, and roles and responsibilities.

This version will contain extracted documents such as the Guidelines towards identifying Water Services Provider Options, Generic Organogram of Water Supply Institutions, Guidelines towards preparing the Institutional Framework (for the project business plan), and the Generic Guide for the Water Services Provider. It will draw on case studies to illustrate institutional challenges common to many local governments, with guidelines towards developing institutional options. It will also need to contain clarity on what is meant by an “area” or “programmatic” approach to water services (ie. one level above the local project) where a water services authority may interact with a number of water services providers in its area of jurisdiction; and where planning and training can be approached and implemented “programmatically”.

- Guidelines are still required with respect to the following:
- Mentoring,
- Transfer of schemes from national government to local government (and water boards in the case of regional schemes),
- Monitoring (particularly in terms of which ISD aspects should be monitored at what points, and how to monitor ISD progress),
- Integration of sectoral development initiatives, and
- Contractually linking outputs to payment.

By way of conclusion: possible application

Since the *ISD Package* is produced as a generic guide, it has applicability to any rural water services project, whereby it can be made project specific. It is designed to assist implementing agents, donor organisations, non-governmental organisations, development agencies, community facilitators, technical personnel, organisational development specialists and trainers in the water and sanitation sector, as well as local government, to develop effective and sustainable water supply and sanitation projects.

In terms of the two versions: The *Overview Version* of the *ISD Package* highlights content which provides an overall development philosophy and approach to institutional and social development issues within water and sanitation programmes. The *ISD Package* provides a conceptual framework for addressing ISD issues and sustainability whereby community participation and governance, sustainable institutions, sanitation, health and hygiene promotion, entrepreneurial development, and integrated sectoral development are addressed.

The *ISD Package* also includes tools that can be applied in other contexts. For example, a Training and Capacity Building Framework, Guidelines towards conducting a Training and Capacity Building Needs Assessment, Training Plan Formats, Formats for Terms of Reference for ISD work, participatory methodologies for health and hygiene awareness, etc.

We believe that the applicability of this Package is relevant not only to the water and sanitation sector, but to

all development sectors involved in the delivery of services to rural communities.

How to get hold of the ISD package

The Package is available on the Internet at the following web site address:?

Alternatively, you could e-mail Ms Lulu Xaba at:?
or write to her at the address for the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry below (c/o LIDS).

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