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SANITATION POLICY AND PREVENTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONTAMINATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract

Prior to 1994, 21 million people were without access to sanitation in South Africa. Progress towards the backlog elimination started after 1994, but was slow-paced. From 1994 until 2011, the sanitation backlog has been decreased by between 29.8 and 79.2 % from the 1994 levels, depending on the province. Mechanisms were created for implementation of sanitation projects, but this was marginally successful and risk of environmental pollution from sanitation persisted. The period between 2009 and present day seemed to have brought on a significant fast-tracking of sanitation project around South Africa. This coincides with the transfer of oversight and partial implementation responsibility to the Department of Human Settlement and the launch of the Rural Household Infrastructure Programme. It also originated from the integrated programmes which drew in input from all stakeholders at the national and local government levels. Limitations still exist in maintenance and sanitation skills' portfolio of some local municipalities, mainly in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo Province. However, the present status is still in partial conflict with government aims, legislation and policies. Novel tools such as the Technology Assessment and the Environmental Technology Assessment will have to be implemented in the sanitation decision-making and the novel strategies for skills development will have to be devised. If sufficient maintenance skills are developed in a local municipal area, then this will prevent negative environmental effects and results in lowered sanitation-related environmental contamination. Improvement in can be expected from the new national Department of Water Affairs and Sanitation.

Key words: environmental legislation, local government, policy implementation

Received: December 2013; Revised final: June, 2014; Accepted: June 2014

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