

MSB III Mid-Term Review

Free Basic Water **2**

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Free Basic Water

The Water Services Strategic Framework (2003) set out the goal of promoting access to an appropriate, acceptable, safe and affordable basic water supply and sanitation service through the implementation of a “free basic water policy in all water services authorities.” The free basic water concept was initiated in 2007 with the objective of accelerating the implementation of Free Basic Water in 36 targeted municipalities and to share the benefits, good practice and lessons learnt from the programme with all municipalities. The FBW Strategy and Infrastructure Plan (SIP) was an inter-governmental programme and was part of the IGRFA agreement between sector departments and municipalities.

Achievements in the provision of free basic water can be summarized as follows:

- From a national perspective, 85.62% of households in South Africa receive FBW. 85.87% of the targeted poor households receive free basic water (see table 1 below);
- Information received from the interviews indicate that this quarter recorded an increase of 0.15% in the total number of households receiving FBW (85.62% of total households), with some changes recorded in number of people served in the EC, KZN, NC and NW, which sum up to an increase of 19 482 households. (See table 2 below);
- A total increase of 10.92% in the total number of poor households receiving FBW was recorded this quarter (85.87% total poor households served);
- The latest report on free basic water indicates that only four (4) WSAs, out of a national total of 169, are still not serving free basic water to any of its population.

Table 1: National overview of FBW

National FBW Overview Household Perspective		
Households	Total	Poor
Total	13,028,214	5,790,922
Served	11,155,207	4,972,599
Percentage served	85.62%	85.87%

Source: DWAF FBS website, 31 March 2009

Table 2/...

Table 2: Total households served with FBW

Total Household served by Free Basic Water										
Prov.	Total Population served									
	Jun 2008	%	Sept 2008	%	December 2008	%	March 2009	%	Number Served	% Served
EC	1,124,968	71.67%	1,179,670	73.67%	1,179,670	73.67%	1,179,973	73.69%	303	0.02%
FS	738,220	92.75%	738,181	92.75%	738,181	92.75%	738,181	92.75%	0	0%
GP	2,977,318	88.54%	2,988,083	88.17%	2,988,083	88.17%	2,988,084	88.17%	0	0%
KZN	1,972,514	82.39%	2,017,793	82.20%	2,017,793	82.20%	2,020,682	82.32%	2,889	0.12%
LP	1,018,703	80.83%	1,018,076	80.82%	1,018,076	80.82%	1,018,076	80.82%	0	0%
MP	821,552	90.88%	821,878	90.88%	821,878	90.88%	821,875	90.88%	-3	0%
NC	244,452	92.26%	244,747	92.23%	244,747	92.23%	251,104	94.63%	6,357	2.4%
NW	768,578	82.11%	759,547	82.03%	761,567	82.25%	771,503	83.33%	9,936	1.08%
WC	1,366,017	95.36%	1,365,730	95.36%	1,365,730	95.36%	1,365,730	95.36%	0	0%
Total	11,032,322	85.39%	11,133,705	85.46%	11,135,725	85.47%	11,155,207	85.62%	19,482	0.15%

Source: DWAF FBS website, 31 March 2009

These statistics indicate that substantial success has been achieved nationally in terms of providing free basic water services to households in poor communities. However, a few questions must be raised in relation to this information:

- What data capture and reporting systems are being used as a basis for these results?
- Do these results take into consideration those people who are rejoining the backlog queue (i.e. those people officially served, but for whom water services have failed in the operation and maintenance phase)?

In order to address these concerns, the following is recommended:

- As the FBW process was an inter-governmental initiative, the roles of different government departments should be clearly defined to facilitate a coordinated reporting process/system;
- In order to ensure the accuracy of the information captured, the reporting systems should be based on regularly updated information that confirms whether or not free basic water is currently being supplied to consumers.