

Case study n°3

Moving from the MDG Water Supply Infrastructure Service Delivery Indicator to a Sustainable Water Supply Delivery Indicator in Support of the SDG process

Country: South Africa

Level: National

SDG Addressed: SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation



Summary

The objective of the case study is to show how South African standards – (SABS 241), which are based on the WHO Guidelines for drinking water quality - have been used to develop revised indicators that track both the provision of infrastructure and the sustainability of the services for the provision of water supply. This allowed the shift from indicators supporting the Millennium Development Goals to indicators supporting the Sustainable Development Goals. This is directly in support of SDG 6 “achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all” The agencies involved were Department of Water and Sanitation and the South African Department for Statistics.

The approach chosen by the Department of Water and Sanitation was to critically review their monitoring and evaluation processes, specifically with regards to distinguishing between monitoring water services facility implementation (the infrastructure provided) and the sustainable operation of the facility (which is based on the stipulated basic service delivery supply standard of a minimum flow rate of 10 litres per minute and available when needed at 98% assurance of supply). A new indicator was developed known as “Stability of Supply”, which involved the Statistics South Africa General Household Survey (GHSs) instrument (2009) that monitored the impact.

Background

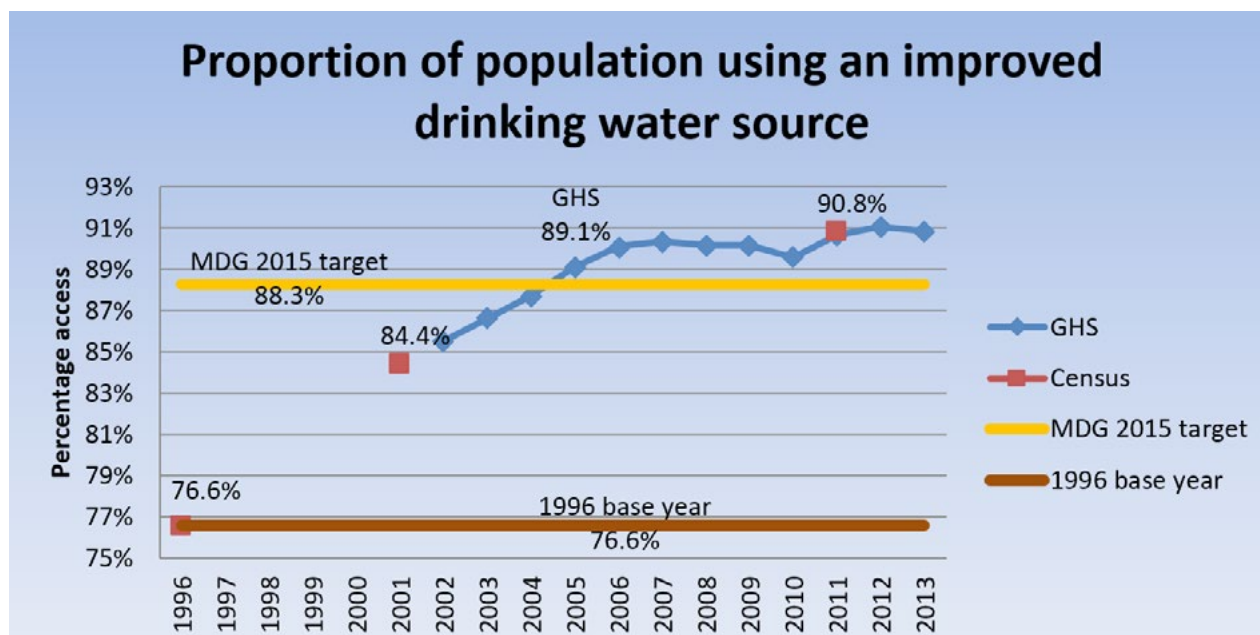
Water Service delivery in South Africa started to “flat line” in 2006 - 2007, and to understand why no progress was being made in addressing the backlogs, improved service delivery indicators had to be developed. The full suite of revised indicators would effectively track both the provision of infrastructure and sustainability of the service.

Strategy

National standards and measures to conserve water, the Water Services Act 1997 and the Strategic Framework for Water Services 2003, set out standards (SABS 241) which are in accordance with the WHO, Guidelines for drinking water quality, fourth edition. One of the main principles was to ensure that water services will be available at least 350 days of the year without interruptions of longer than 48 hours per incident.

To address the sustainable operation of the infrastructure DWS developed a new indicator called “Stability of Supply”, which consisted of questions based on delivery of water services. Once the responses were received they were analysed and trends were monitored in subsequent GHS surveys (post 2009). The GHS survey instrument covers 30 000 Households. To obtain a more accurate benchmark the questions were also included in the 2011 National Census.

See drinking service delivery trend graph below:



Results and impact

The percentage of households which had stable municipal water supply was 76.3% and access to a basic tap water supply (within 200m of Household) was 83.8%. Based on the results DWS developed a new composite indicator called “Reliability of Supply” with regards to access to basic water services provision. The method of computation was to multiply “Stability of Supply” (76.3%) by “Access to Basic Water Supply” (83.8%). The Reliability of Supply Indicator for South Africa was 64%. The “Access to Basic Water Supply” indicator correlates directly with the SDG definition of Access to Basic Water Supply (with a distance filter of 200m, not 100m). This implies that although 95% of the infrastructure for basic services had been provided, only 64% was operational. (It seemed that 10% of the schemes had become dysfunctional and most of the financial expenditure continued to be directed to new schemes and not the rehabilitation and upkeep of existing schemes – which explained the flat lining trend in the graph).

Results of the worrying service delivery trends were presented to Government, explaining the dynamics of why service delivery had slowed to virtually zero. In 2014 a national election took place and these results directly influenced government policy. The latest Government Medium Term Strategic Framework (2014 to 2019) has 12 key outcomes, and outcome 9, states that “90% of all Households must have access to a sustainable and reliable water supply by 2019”.

Challenges and lessons learned

Proving the necessity of incorporating the new indicators into the national framework was a challenge especially while using a survey instrument to refine and measure the correct indicators in order to explain virtually zero service delivery which made an impact on the Government policy.

Potential for Replication

This methodology is replicable in all environments and other contexts (electricity for example).

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