

## Public Participation in Water Demand Management

In the past few years Water Demand Management has created great waves within the water industry, the concept centered on the necessity for the country to use more efficiently and sustainably the currently available water resources. As part of the ongoing Water Demand Management initiatives taking place country wide, Emfuleni Municipality in association with the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry have launched a full scale leakage reduction project incorporating both technical and social interventions. The Water Services Unit of Emfuleni has struck while the iron is hot so to speak, and seized the opportunity to utilize Water Demand Management as a doorway through which to capacitate the diverse local communities within its boundaries with knowledge to decrease wastage of water in order to improve service delivery, whilst simultaneously creating much needed employment.



### WSA's at the Basic Plumbing and Leak Audit Training

For a substantial period of time Water Demand Management has been the domain of the Technocrats however this trend is changing. It is becoming increasingly pertinent for consumers to take responsibility and play their part in the fight against water loss. The support of the community is required to optimise the effectiveness of the technical interventions. To this end Emfuleni Municipality launched an all encompassing community awareness programme to ensure the cooperation of the communities in the area. The approach adopted utilizes fully the community strengths and assets restoring dignity within the local communities by decreasing the burden of poverty. The implementation of the Community Awareness and Public Participation Programme commenced at the beginning of September 2007.

The programme began with the employment of 51 Water Services Assessors who are primarily responsible for educating and promoting, within the local communities, Water conservation best practices as well as the municipal activities and vision for improving service delivery. Currently the activities central to the campaign include door to door education and

awareness, weekly clinic workshops, internal and external leak audits and basic leak fixing demonstrations for residents. Furthermore the campaign includes a full media spread of water conservation messages incorporating both radio and visual media utilizing the local service providers. Also included in the programme is a schools awareness campaign focusing on high school pupils as the future policy and decision makers of the country who require holistic, constructive information in order to make informed decisions.

As the funder of the second phase of the Emfuleni Water Loss Reduction Project, The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry has played a crucial role in ensuring that the country as a whole moves towards utilizing the available resources optimally and puts to practice the Water demand Management principles in order to ensure that every citizen has a basic supply of potable water. The development of skills and the transfer thereof has become vital in terms of the sustainability of the interventions undertaken and this component forms an integral part of the campaign. The shift in focus towards educating our communities will ensure that using water wisely will be carried through the generations as the responsibility of every individual. To date 10613 Households have been visited and educated while 2209 water related problems both internal and external have been identified by the WSA's. The most prominent problems appear to be tap and toilet leaks which not only reflects the poor quality of the fittings installed but also the lack of vigilance and care on the part of the consumers. Whilst one cannot ignore that this is partly due to the high rate of indigent community members within our municipalities, part of the problem is also lack of relevant education. Often times replacing a tap or cistern washer worth approximately 50c can save hundreds of rands worth of water. One of the primary objectives of the project is therefore to capacitate the communities to take ownership of their infrastructure and internal fittings and to aid the municipality in decreasing water loss.



**Leaking tap and toilet in Sharpeville**