

Social franchising principles do work: the business approach to removal and disposal of faecal sludge – from pilot to scale

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Abstract

Studies undertaken in South Africa have found that social franchising partnerships for the routine maintenance of infrastructure could alleviate and address many challenges in the management of water services. A three-year pilot project has drawn to a successful conclusion. This provided selected infrastructure maintenance services to approximately 400 schools in the Butterworth education district in the Eastern Cape province. Half a dozen franchisee microbusinesses were created, and of the order of three dozen previously unemployed people were taught workplace skills. Irish Aid funded the concept development, but the franchisees were paid from the normal schools operation and maintenance budgets. Despite difficulties arising directly from provincial education department inefficiencies, the pilot project has proven the value of social franchising partnerships for this kind of work – the department now has a model it can roll out to the rest of the more than 4,000 rural schools across the Eastern Cape. Many opportunities lie in applying the same approach to other operation and/or maintenance activities within the water and sanitation services delivery chain. The time is ripe to further develop the concept so that it can move up the technology ladder, expanding its range of competencies beyond its current tried and tested boundaries.