

## SECTOR OVERVIEW

### 1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE NISSC AND MPCC INITIATIVE

#### MULTI-PURPOSE COMMUNITY CENTRES (MPCCS)

**In South Africa, Multi-purpose Community Centres (MPCCs) have been identified as the primary vehicle for the implementation of development communication and information programmes, as these are capable of offering a wide range of services that communities can use for their own empowerment.**

The provision of services and information in an integrated and decentralised fashion seeks to address particular historical, social and economic factors, which characterised freedom of access to information and citizen participation in South Africa. These include socio-economic problems such as poverty, high unemployment, low standards of living (people living below the poverty line), poor access to basic services, remote settlement patterns, lack of access to technology and information, poor health services, insufficient education and skills, poor infrastructure, etc.

Within this context, a familiar feature of accessing information and services in South Africa involves the frustration of being referred from place to place and office to office when trying to access government services. This leads to an understandable despondency and a lack of confidence in the Government's ability to deliver quality services. This phenomenon is exacerbated in rural areas where distances are vast and the cost of travelling to urban centres to access services is high. This places a great strain on the incomes of those citizens who can least afford it. Early in 1999 the GCIS started the process of networking with national and provincial communication counterparts to establish a decentralised and more effective communication system.

However, when President Thabo Mbeki assumed office in 1999, the focus shifted towards a one-stop, integrated government information and service delivery system, an idea he had long supported as Deputy President. Accessing government services and the range of information products provided by government, with the possibility of communicating with the government at one locality, would be of significant value to the ordinary citizen. In addition, such a process of accessing services would allow for an improvement in the quality of service delivery in line with the *Batho Pele* principles guiding government delivery. These principles speak of 'people-centred' governance, and they place a high premium on client satisfaction and redress.

This project involves stakeholders from local, provincial and national government, with local municipalities being the primary implementing agencies. An MPCC is also the ideal vehicle for fostering public/private partnerships. Participation by communities, business and NGOs is critical to the sustainability and success of the centres.

#### NATIONAL INTER-SECTORAL STEERING COMMITTEE (NISSC)

This advisory and monitoring committee was formed in June 1999, and comprises 20 representatives of national government departments, eight parastatals and three NGOs, four research agencies and tertiary institutions, the private sector and other stakeholders with various degrees of MPCC interests and involvement.

The NISSC is a 'think-tank' committee that facilitates inter-sectoral co-operation and sharing of resources for the establishment of MPCCs. The NISSC, therefore, deals with the coordination and management issues of the MPCC project. This committee is responsible for the overall design and steering of the project from a national perspective, to ensure that the interests of all members and communities are met. The identification of an interaction with other potential partners, both local and international, are also key responsibilities of the committee.

To date, the GCIS has acted as a secretariat for the NISSC, and has also covered administrative

and meeting costs. The NISSC has depended largely on participants volunteering their time to drive this initiative. MPCCs are funded in a similar way, as funding takes place through collaborative arrangements. Each government department that offers its services *via* an MPCC funds this through their individual line-function budgets. To date, the costs involved in launching MPCCs and the associated community events, have been carried largely through partnerships between the community, the GCIS and the respective Premiers' Offices. In addition, a major partnership has been forged with the Department of Public Works who funded the refurbishment and, in some locations, the construction of new premises for MPCCs. Income raised through the payment of rentals and services for the use of facilities at the MPCC contribute to the funding of the day-to-day MPCC operations.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Achievements to date include the following:

- ▼ buy-in, by various stakeholders from government, the private sector, NGOs and academic institutions
- ▼ ownership and acceptance of the project by provincial government structures
- ▼ ownership and acceptance by community structures
- ▼ 14 MPCCs established
- ▼ a multitude of government services brought to rural and under-serviced communities
- ▼ functional and implementation communication strategies in place
- ▼ development communication becoming the popular paradigm for public communication.

### SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES

- ▼ Communication: Gaps in the reporting process of representatives on the NISSC have led to political principals being uninformed about the MPCC process resulting, in some cases, in poor coordination and integration of government programmes.

- ▼ Representation: Incorrect representation from relevant components of government departments and at the appropriate level of seniority on the NISSC and Provincial Inter-sectoral Steering Committee (PISSC) structures.
- ▼ Problems in the coordination of roll-out and implementation plans of various national and provincial departments.
- ▼ Service delivery: Difficulty in maintaining consistency in the provision of services by departments after the MPCC has been established.
- ▼ Resource allocation: Encouraging departments operating in MPCCs to re-allocate resources towards such centres. In some cases officials do not have computers, furniture, vehicles, etc. They cannot operate effectively because of the lack of basic resources.
- ▼ Financial Administrative procedures: Problems experienced in handling non-government funds; financial administrative procedures and systems for handling non-government funding are lacking.
- ▼ Donor funding: Negotiating for the availability of donor funding.
- ▼ Partnerships: Facilitating partnerships with civil society for the MPCC initiative.

### CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

A number of success factors have been identified, such as the following:

- ▼ effective stakeholder management
- ▼ effective maintenance and management of Information Technology (IT) systems and communication technologies in the rural areas
- ▼ resources to implement solutions and roll-out timeously
- ▼ funding
- ▼ government department buy-in into the integrated service delivery model offered by the MPCC
- ▼ ongoing support for managers and operators within these centres.

The world is in the midst of a new and critical