

Ethekwini: R400m project to improve informal settlements

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Ethekwini Water and Sanitation (EWS) has installed 320 ablution containers in 81 settlements as part of a R400 million project.

The aim is to improve the living conditions of almost 800,000 people living in informal settlements.

According to a statement issued on Monday by the municipality, the head of eThekweni Water and Sanitation Neil Macloed said: "The project is targeting settlements already identified by the municipal housing department for future housing development."

Once the formal housing construction commences, the ablution containers will be relocated leaving the water and sewer pipeline infrastructure in place for use in the new developments.

Macleod added that the project is invaluable in terms of meeting the City's need for water provision, particularly in poorer areas. "Residents will benefit primarily from improved health as a result of having access to proper sanitation and safe drinking water," he says.

Another key element of the project is a vibrant small enterprise development programme. Eight emerging contractors are working on the project with four large contractors and a professional mentorship company.

In the statement, Lead Programme Manager of Aurecon, Evan Smith says: "If sustainable businesses can be created using large municipal projects of this nature to train entrepreneurs, the economic benefits will be maximised."

Smith points out that to date approximately 4000 jobs have been created by the project, with labour being drawn from local communities. Project requirements are locally sourced whenever possible in order to contribute to community upliftment in the area, he said .

A community liaison officer and a caretaker are appointed by eThekweni to ensure that ablution facilities are kept clean and in good condition. Both of these posts are filled by local community members.

The project has been so successful that the EWS has entered into a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Education, which will see EWS acting as an implementing agent for the department, by providing water and sanitation to schools. Ablution facilities are currently in the process of being up graded in ten rural schools in eThekweni.

Settlements that have benefitted from the project to date are located in and around areas such as Clermont, Ntuzuma and Umlazi.