



INTERNET ARTICLE

DWS strengthens its operational muscles and enhance excellence

23 July 2015

The Department of Water and Sanitation's (DWS) operational capability is set to sky rocket following the launch of the National Integrated Water Information System (NIWIS).

The good news was told to members of the audience during the official launch of the NIWIS at an event held at the Centre for Scientific Innovation and Research (CSIR) in Pretoria on Tuesday, 21 July 2015.

DWS' Deputy Director-General (DDG), Ms Matlakala Motloun, speaking on behalf of Director-General (DG) Margaret-Ann Diedricks, hailed the NIWIS and described it as being a "very important tool to revolutionise and enhance service delivery within the department".

DWS' key objectives are to meet basic service delivery challenges by addressing water and sanitation provision, foster water research, improve technology and innovation in the water sector, create and maintain sustainable water infrastructure, regulate the scarce water resources and encourage collaboration with the private sector and communities. "None of this can be achieved without the provision of credible and timely information," she added.

DDG Motloun said NIWIS is going to make the availability of requisite information to decision makers easier and on time. "The system will also standardize information delivery including ensuring the improvement in efficiency and the information will be accessible anytime. The purpose of NIWIS is to enable the department fulfill its mandate of protection, use, development, conservation, management and control of water resources by providing easy access to timely water related information", DDG Motloun added.

The reason behind the move is that the Department of Water and Sanitation comprises of many business/functional units with various needs/requirements. However, these units have for a long time been operating in silos. Moreover, the departmental data/ information is housed in various and isolated data systems managed by these functions.



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

The department has also made notable achievements in the ICT domain including rapid transformation in the data and information landscape as well as technologies used by the different business units in DWS.

“While we acknowledge technological transformation at the business unit level, on the other hand, we face challenges at the corporate level including the following: systems have grown independently of one another, guided by the needs of each business unit. Data and information are stored in silos and in different formats making it difficult for information sharing for decision making and water management, Limited means of analysing information for decision making because reporting formats are rigid with limited spatial representation, inconsistent data quality and turnaround times in the data sources”, she noted

Fragmentation causes lack of a single version of the truth and to get a departmental view of information requires multiple enquiries and development of new reports which are not often consistent.

Other benefits of NIWIS include: centralized web based repository of requisite information to decision makers and water managers, consistent look and feel dashboards providing dynamic displays of critical information for reporting and quick decision making; it allows users to drill down and query the most basic data available from the national level to the lowest water management area, and, offers user-friendly and easy access to information whenever and wherever needed.

Unlike most of the legacy systems which require specialist skills, NIWIS has been designed to provide instant and easy access to information for the non-specialist user.

NIWIS is an integrated information system with reliable and accessible information obtained using various data sources from different business/functional units within the DWS and the water sector. The department notes that the objective of informing stakeholders about the system is to build awareness of the system and to introduce it to its stakeholders.

The NIWIS project was conceptualised to meet the objectives of serving as a single extensive, integrated, accessible water information system.

Initial training has been provided to selected regional champions and CMAs on the use of the system. However, additional training is planned for the rest of the internal stakeholders in phases. The need for change management has also been identified and the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) will also assist in this regard.

Ike Motsapi & Velly Maribe