

6. Social Cluster

The areas included within the Social Cluster are:

- Primary Health Care;
- Municipal Health or Environmental Health;
- Cemeteries and Crematoria;
- Community Facilities and Services;
- Safety & Security;
- Disaster Management.

Key concerns for all the areas within the Social Cluster are, shortages of staff, shortages of adequate facilities, equipment, poor information systems, insufficient funding and fragmented services.

6.1 Primary and Municipal Health Services

Primary and municipal health has historically been fragmented with three different institutions, Buffalo City, Eastern Cape Province and the ADM, providing health services. Whilst primary and municipal health remains fragmented in terms of provision of services, some clarity has been obtained with respect to powers and functions.

The National Health Act (2003) now clearly defines powers and functions in relation to provision of Health Services. Municipal Health Services (Environmental Health) are a Competency of Category A (Metropolitan) Municipalities and Category C (District) Municipalities. Municipal Health Services are defined as water quality monitoring, food control, waste management, health surveillance of premises, surveillance and prevention of communicable disease (excluding immunizations), vector control, environmental pollution control, disposal of the dead and chemical safety. This excludes port health, malaria control and control of hazardous substances.

Category B Municipalities are therefore not expected to render Municipal Health Services unless they enter into a service level agreement with a Category C Municipality and have the capacity to render such services.

The provision of health services, falling outside the above Municipal Health Service definition, is assigned to Provincial and National Health Departments. Specifically Primary Health Care (PHC), traditionally provided by clinics, now falls under the competency of Provincial Departments of Health.

The Eastern Cape Department of Health has reversed its decision of decentralising Primary Health Care services to District Municipalities in favour of Provincialising PHC services in all E.C Provincial Districts except for the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality jurisdiction area. As of 01 July 2006 BCM has signed a Partnership Performance Service Level Agreement with Province for the delivery of PHC services by BCM on an agency basis on behalf of Province however the subsidy does not cover the full expenses of performing the function.

ADM Council has also adopted a resolution to opt for an internal mechanism for the delivery of MHS in its area of jurisdiction after commissioning a Section 78 assessment in terms of the Municipal Systems Act and is presently engaged in taking the necessary steps to implement the decision.

BCM faces many challenges with respect to PHC, aside from the institutional challenges described above. Primary health care services remain inadequate and inequitable; problems include:

- shortage of staff
- shortage of adequate facilities
- shortage of funds for chronic medication
- high levels of poverty mean that residents are unable to afford to travel to clinics to receive services or participate in health awareness campaigns.

Initiatives to deal with the challenges include the establishment of Community Health Committees, roll-out of Health Campaigns and the extension of mobile clinic services.

A critical issue for the health sector remains the HIV/AIDS pandemic. BCM clinics and personnel assist, according to the available resources, with VCT (Voluntary Counselling and Testing), Prevention, Home Based Care, Nutritional Support, PMTCT (Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission). Patients are referred to accredited sites for Anti-retroviral treatment and training is provided to communities on HIV/AIDS issues. BCM also participates in the HIV/AIDS inter-sectoral fora and the Amathole District Aids Council.

It remains important for the health sector to be fully capacitated and resourced in order to provide comprehensive prevention, treatment and support to those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.

6.2 Community Facilities and Services

The huge inequalities and fragmentation of South Africa's past apartheid cities and towns still prevail in Buffalo City despite the progressive legislation in the country.

The poor are still isolated from facilities and services. A concerted effort to demonstrate the principles of equity, integration and sustainable development is still critical. To this effect a programme has to be designed which will focus on the provision of community facilities and services in the poorest areas of Buffalo City in order to improve the accessibility and quality of these services and improve the life of these communities.

Previously disadvantaged areas in Buffalo City were politically and administratively separated from cities and towns. This resulted in insufficient capital investment in these areas. One of the ways in which the resultant legacy could be addressed is by ensuring that communities in these areas are not only consulted in development projects in their areas but also participate in the design, investment and implementation of projects that seek to address their identified needs.

People living in the previously disadvantaged areas in Buffalo City are disadvantaged by an environment that ignores their socio-economic circumstances and that there are poor linkages to other areas where higher order facilities and services might be effectively obtained. To address this problem Buffalo City must ensure that all citizens have access to at least a minimum level of service. Accessibility is not only about making services available but also about making services easy and convenient to use.

In view of the above, development in Buffalo City has to address this backlog with its central mandate to develop service delivery capacity to meet the basic needs of communities.

6.3 Crematoria and Cemeteries

The Aids pandemic is posing challenges to all municipalities in South Africa. The mortality rate in Buffalo City has reached unprecedented levels. The life span of victims especially in the poor population groups is very low as they cannot afford healthy food, medicines and stress-free lifestyle that is necessary to keep their immune system in good condition. This has put a very serious pressure on Buffalo City's existing cemetery facilities.

In urban and peri-urban areas, Buffalo City is rapidly running out of grave sites and is under tremendous strain to develop new sites. Suitable land within 12km of residential areas is a challenge to get and this poses a problem with regards to accessibility of cemeteries. In order to sustain the existing cemeteries new cemeteries By-laws were promulgated which permit the burial of more than one body in a grave.

Poverty is also a problem facing cemetery providers. There is an observable increase in the number of pauper burials in Buffalo City because poor families deliberately do not come to claim their deceased from government mortuaries whilst some opt to make use of council indigent policy.

Council is in the process of upgrading the existing crematorium in Cambridge, East London. A serious education drive needs to be implemented in order to change the cultural beliefs regarding alternative burial methods.

A new cemetery environment has still to be established which would align cemetery design, planning and development with the Buffalo City strategic goals and objectives. Aspects to be looked at includes:

- a) Cemeteries that meet sustainable, technical and environmental criteria are needed in order to contribute to a sustainable Buffalo City.
- b) Cemeteries accommodating Buffalo City's diverse cultural requirements, their functioning as significant public spaces as well as places ensuring that needs are provided for all in order to reflect a dignified city.
- c) Building civil society and private sector partnerships in cemetery development and management.
- d) Giving special attention to the indigent, respecting the needs of bereavement at burial, protecting cemeteries as public property and ensuring safe working conditions for employees working in cemeteries.
- e) An effort has to be made to ensure that the Cemetery Division is performance oriented to provide service excellence and to be customer focused.

6.4 Safety and Security, Fire & Rescue Services

Crime remains a critical issue for BCM, in terms of its impact on the quality of life of residents and on economic growth. The Quality of Life Survey carried out in Buffalo City in 2001 states that over 30% of the people surveyed had been the victims of crime against property, 14% had suffered violent crime, with people living in informal housing areas more likely to be victims of such crime.

The primary function of the Traffic Departments and Buffalo City Law Enforcement is the enforcement of traffic laws and Municipal by-laws. However, by virtue of the officers' appointment as Peace Officers, they are actively involved in law enforcement (which is the function of the South African Police Services).

As in the rest of the Republic of South Africa, law enforcement in Buffalo City is extremely fragmented with various law enforcement agencies operating, to a large extent, within their own functional areas. There is some cooperation at operational levels, although it is affected by different operational procedures, non-compatible equipment and command structures.

Whilst some progress has been made with the extension of services and facilities, BCM traffic and law enforcement remain primarily focused in the urban areas. The shortage of personnel, facilities and equipment hamper the extension of services.

BCM also provides Fire and Emergency Services. These services are mainly located within the urban areas, resulting in considerable time delays when responding to emergencies in the rural areas. Again, the shortage of personnel and equipment is hampering the extension of services to all areas of the municipality. Further challenges exist in obtaining land in rural areas for the establishment of Fire Stations.

6.5 Disaster Management

Disasters occur as a result of a complex interrelationship of underlying causes, dynamic pressures, unsafe conditions and trigger-events, and often result in widespread human, economic and environmental losses.

Disaster management services for Buffalo City include risk and vulnerability assessments, prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response and relief, and recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

The Buffalo City Disaster Management Centre has few staff, minimal equipment and limited funds. This situation limits the impact of the service, with the Centre tending to focus where the demand is the greatest.

On the whole, BCM tends to be reactive rather than proactive and thus, the Municipality is working towards establishing disaster management as an integrated multi-level, multi-sectoral function.

The Disaster Management Act requires all Municipal departments and entities to conduct disaster risk assessments for their respective areas of responsibility and to prepare prevention, mitigation, response and recovery plans.

The opportunities and activities being undertaken to make this goal a reality include:

- formulation of a **Buffalo City Disaster Management Framework Plan**;
- empowerment of ward councillors & committees with respect to disaster management in their areas;
- alignment of BCM sector plans with the Buffalo City Disaster Management Framework Plan;
- building partnerships with organisations having similar goals and objectives;
- sourcing additional funding from a variety of sources.