

# THE BATHO PELE PRINCIPLES

## History

Batho Pele has its roots in a series of policies and legislative frameworks. These policies and legislative frameworks have been categorized into three themes namely: those that are overarching or transversal, those that deal with access to information and those that deal with transformation of service delivery.

### Overarching/transversal legislative frameworks:

- The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 (as amended).

Section 32 of the Constitution provides for the universal right of access to information held by the State to facilitate the exercise or protection of any right by citizens. E.g. the right to access public services in an equitable, convenient and cost-effective manner.

- The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service of 1995 (WPTPS)
- Public Service Regulations of 1999 and 2001

These two legislative frameworks seek to transform a culture of Public Service delivery from prescribing service packages to citizens, to putting citizens at the centre of service delivery. Accordingly, all government departments both national and provincial are compelled to align their service delivery mandates and service delivery improvement plans with the overall service delivery priorities of the government based on the needs of the citizens.

They call for the setting up of service standards, defining outputs and targets, and benchmarking performance indicators against international standards. Similarly, it also calls for the introduction of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and structures to measure progress on a continuous basis. Other requirements include:

1. The alignment of staffing plans, human resources development processes and organisational capacity building with the needs of citizens;
2. The development of financial plans that link budgets directly to service needs and personnel plans;

3. Identifying and entering into partnership agreements with the private sector, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) which will provide more effective forms of service delivery;
4. The development, particularly through training, of a culture of customer care and sensitivity towards the diversity of citizens in terms of race, gender and disability;

### **Access to information**

These legislative frameworks are intended to give effect to the Constitutional right of the citizen to have access to any information held by the State and binds government institutions to have information available and regularly updated to meet the changing needs of the citizens. They include:

- Open Democracy Act of 2000
- Promotion of Access to Information Act of 2000
- Electronic Communications and Transactions Bill of 2002
- E-Government Strategy of 2001

The legislative prescripts promote the harnessing of innovative IT based solutions to make service as well as information on services within and across government departments more accessible in an integrated manner, particularly to people in under-serviced areas. These include e-government services, electronic communications and transactions with public/private bodies, institutions and citizens and development of electronic transactions services, which are responsive to the needs of citizens and consumers.

### **Transforming Public Service Delivery**

These legislative prescripts provide for the progressive increase of access to public services and promote efficient administration and good governance in the public sector. They include:

- White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery of 1997
- Promotion of Administration Justice Act (AJA) of 2000
- Public Finance Management Act of 1999

These legislative prescripts also cover the creation of a culture of accountability, openness and transparency in public administration. The AJA prescribes that in order to give effect to the right to procedurally fair administrative action, the public should be consulted. It also emphasizes the citizens' rights to redress. PFMA emphasises accountability in public administration and advocates value for money in procurement of goods and services within the public service. In this regard the Act prohibits fruitless, wasteful and unauthorised use of public funds.

## **Definition**

Batho Pele, a Sotho translation for 'People First', is an initiative to get public servants to be service orientated, to strive for excellence in service delivery and to commit to continuous service delivery improvement. It is a simple and transparent mechanism, which allows citizens to hold public servants accountable for the level of services they deliver (Batho Pele Handbook - A Service Delivery Improvement Guide).

Batho Pele is not an "add-on" activity. It is a way of delivering services by putting citizens at the centre of public service planning and operations. It is a major departure from a dispensation, which excluded the majority of South Africans from government machinery to the one that seeks to include all citizens for the achievement of a better-life-for-all through services, products, and programmes of a democratic dispensation.

## **Vision & mission**

Visions and missions exist to instil a sense of common purpose and energise members of an organisation towards action. Batho Pele vision and mission emanated from the realisation that government should transform service delivery mechanisms to meet the needs of citizens. In this context the following vision and mission statements were developed to energise the transformation efforts of public servants:

### **Vision**

"To continually improve the lives of the People of South Africa by a transformed public service, which is representative, coherent, transparent, efficient, effective, accountable and responsive to the needs of all"

### **Mission**

"The creation of a people-centred and a people-driven public service that is characterised by equity, quality, timeousness and a strong code of ethics."

## **Belief set**

In order for the revitalization of Batho Pele to succeed, organizational culture has to be changed to accommodate Batho Pele as a way of life. This means that departments should take stock of their values, as well as behaviours and attitudes of employees. Departments would then be able to take necessary steps to prepare public servants for the revitalized Batho Pele Culture of responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness in delivering services to the public.

The New Belief Set namely "we belong, we care, we serve" clearly captures the revitalized Batho Pele culture. The Belief Set is intended to endorse the eight Batho Pele Principles. A belief set is a value system, which serves as a relatively permanent ideal that should influence and shape the general nature of public servants' behaviour. For it to have maximal impact, a Belief Set should be an integral part of any service delivery operations, strategic planning and implementation strategy of all programmes and not an "add-on".

**We belong** - Public servants are social-beings whose needs should be recognised and fulfilled. This recognition of needs will instil a sense of belonging to the public service family. We belong because we are recognized and rewarded for living Batho Pele. Citizens who feel satisfied, will certainly develop a spirit of patriotism towards the country and will also feel a sense of belonging. In practical terms, this part of the belief set underscores the importance of the human resources function. It is their responsibility to ensure that practices, processes, systems such as conditions of service, rewards and recognition as well as training and development among others, foster a sense of belonging among public servants.

Furthermore, this Belief Set is also about:

- Encouraging a spirit, culture and practice of collaboration, teamwork and collegiality among all public servants thereby fostering effective intergovernmental relations.
- Building a learning Public Service.
- Fostering partnerships with the recipients and beneficiaries of public services and thus ensuring that the public service is responsive to people's needs in line with the notion of "Putting People First".

**We care** - Public servants should be courteous when providing services to the public by listening to their problems, apologising when necessary, and serving people with a smile. We care because we are devoted to doing a job to the end, ensuring that we deliver beyond customer expectations. Public servants should respect all citizens irrespective of background, gender, colour or creed.

**We serve** - In order to have a sense of service; the public service should develop service standards, provide information, seek service delivery solutions and go beyond the call of duty -. We serve by delivering quality services and making citizens look forward to receiving world-class integrated service delivery. This could be achieved by:

- Anticipating customer needs through the introduction of regular customer surveys on the type of services citizens would want to receive.
- Offering integrated service delivery through institutions like MPCCs and other innovative forms of service delivery in communities.
- Going beyond the call of duty even under difficult circumstances where there are limited resources.

**BATHO PELE PRINCIPLES ARE AS FOLLOWS:**

# **Principles**

Eight Batho Pele principles were developed to serve as acceptable policy and legislative framework regarding service delivery in the public service. These principles are aligned with the Constitutional ideals of:

- Promoting and maintaining high standards of professional ethics;
- Providing service impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias;
- Utilising resources efficiently and effectively;
- Responding to people's needs; the citizens are encouraged to participate in policy-making; and
- Rendering an accountable, transparent, and development-oriented public administration

## **The Batho Pele principles are as follows:**

### **1. Consultation**

There are many ways to consult users of services including conducting customer surveys, interviews with individual users, consultation with groups, and holding meetings with consumer representative bodies, NGOs and CBOs. Often, more than one method of consultation will be necessary to ensure comprehensiveness and representativeness. Consultation is a powerful tool that enriches and shapes government policies such as the Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) and its implementation in Local Government sphere.

### **2. Setting service standards**

This principle reinforces the need for benchmarks to constantly measure the extent to which citizens are satisfied with the service or products they receive from departments. It also plays a critical role in the development of service delivery improvement plans to ensure a better life for all South Africans. Citizens should be involved in the development of service standards.

Required are standards that are precise and measurable so that users can judge for themselves whether or not they are receiving what was promised. Some standards will cover processes, such as the length of time taken to authorise a housing claim, to issue a passport or identity document, or even to respond to letters.

To achieve the goal of making South Africa globally competitive, standards should be benchmarked (where applicable) against those used internationally, taking into account South Africa's current level of development.

### 3. **Increasing access**

One of the prime aims of Batho Pele is to provide a framework for making decisions about delivering public services to the many South Africans who do not have access to them. Batho Pele also aims to rectify the inequalities in the distribution of existing services. Examples of initiatives by government to improve access to services include such platforms as the Gateway, Multi-Purpose Community Centres and Call Centres.

Access to information and services empowers citizens and creates value for money, quality services. It reduces unnecessary expenditure for the citizens.

### 4. **Ensuring courtesy**

This goes beyond a polite smile, 'please' and 'thank you'. It requires service providers to empathize with the citizens and treat them with as much consideration and respect, as they would like for themselves.

The public service is committed to continuous, honest and transparent communication with the citizens. This involves communication of services, products, information and problems, which may hamper or delay the efficient delivery of services to promised standards. If applied properly, the principle will help demystify the negative perceptions that the citizens in general have about the attitude of the public servants.

### 5. **Providing information**

As a requirement, available information about services should be at the point of delivery, but for users who are far from the point of delivery, other arrangements will be needed. In line with the definition of customer in this document, managers and employees should regularly seek to make information about the organisation, and all other service delivery related matters available to fellow staff members.

## 6. Openness and transparency

A key aspect of openness and transparency is that the public should know more about the way national, provincial and local government institutions operate, how well they utilise the resources they consume, and who is in charge. It is anticipated that the public will take advantage of this principle and make suggestions for improvement of service delivery mechanisms, and to even make government employees accountable and responsible by raising queries with them.

## 7. Redress

This principle emphasises a need to identify quickly and accurately when services are falling below the promised standard and to have procedures in place to remedy the situation. This should be done at the individual transactional level with the public, as well as at the organisational level, in relation to the entire service delivery programme.

Public servants are encouraged to welcome complaints as an opportunity to improve service, and to deal with complaints so that weaknesses can be remedied quickly for the good of the citizen.

## 8. Value for money

Many improvements that the public would like to see often require no additional resources and can sometimes even reduce costs. Failure to give a member of the public a simple, satisfactory explanation to an enquiry may for example, result in an incorrectly completed application form, which will cost time to rectify.

### Objectives

Batho Pele Strategy on service delivery is developed to meet the following strategic objectives:

- To introduce a new approach to service delivery which puts people at the centre of planning and delivering services;
- To improve the face of service delivery by fostering new attitudes such as increased commitment, personal sacrifice, dedication;
- To improve the image of the Public Service;

It has been noted that many public servants have not yet internalised Batho Pele as part of their day-to-day operation while providing services to members of the public. In order to deal with this, the Department of Public Service and Administration has developed a " Batho Pele revitalisation strategy" whose aim it is to inculcate the Batho Pele culture among the public servants and improve service delivery in the public service.

9. **Encouraging Innovation and Rewarding Excellence**

**“National and Provincial Departments must ensure that an environment conducive to the delivery of services is created to enhance their staff’s capacity to deliver good services.**

Organisations need to show that staff commitment, energy and skills are being harnessed to tackle inefficient, outdated and bureaucratic practices to simplify procedures and to identify new and better ways of delivering services.

10. **Service Delivery Impact**

This principle calls for a holistic approach to the implementation of Batho Pele. It is all about demonstrating to what extent through the sum total of all their Batho Pele initiatives organizations are achieving the aims of Batho Pele.