

The right to water and sanitation must be protected from vandalism

SOUTH Africa faces critical challenges in respect of vandalism and theft of water infrastructure, as well as theft of electrical copper cables.

Energy and water generation are an integral part in ensuring the sustainable management of communities, but there is a heavy price to pay for achieving equity and redistribution of water resources.

As this sabotage continues unabated, water security for the future and the country's economic prosperity and development priorities, is uncertain.

Besides trampling on other people's rights, we are plunging the goals of our developmental state into disarray from which it may take us decades to recover.

It is true that vandalism and theft happen throughout the country, but in rural areas - because the infrastructure is in close proximity to homes - the chances of vandalism are high.

In an urban context, the crime is more organised, and there is easy access to infrastructure.

From an ordinary perspective, the root cause of the problem includes the inability of politicians to deliver on promises, which results in a rise in protests.

The fact is: there is a market for goods like cables and valves,

Issues at Stake

To address vandalism and theft of infrastructure in South Africa, the solution is to work together, writes **KHULEKANI NGCOBO**

and relating to this are business opportunities, such as water deliveries (water tanker tenders). Vandalising infrastructure is good for some businesses!

Some of the forms of theft and vandalism include illegal connections, often in response to frustration at the level of service delivery.

Our water resources are under immense pressure; there is a need to deal decisively with the destruction of water infrastructure.

Any strategies to plan, manage, protect and control the use of water resources will not yield positive results if we do not work together to deal with the malicious destruction of infrastructure.

Vandalising water infrastructure is a huge setback for service delivery.

This does not only disrupt water

supply to communities, but also affects the financial well-being of the department, as well as the relevant stakeholders in the water sector, particularly municipalities.

The reality that escapes the vandals who destroy and steal from water infrastructure, is the cost of putting in place this infrastructure - it comes with a hefty price tag.

It literally takes years and years of committing financial resources to restore them to their original state.

Additionally, these criminal activities generally result in reduce access to a suitable quantity and quality of water to users broadly. This, in turn, affects the sanitation services, with associated impacts on public health and personal dignity.

To assist in dealing with this rising pandemic, municipalities should collaborate with law enforcement agencies, install CCTVs and erect concrete manholes that cannot be stolen.

Also, delegation of powers to municipal law enforcement agencies, robust community engagement, naming and shaming, working with scrap metal buyers and conducting research and measurement regarding theft and vandalism will be of great benefit.

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