

# Maintaining infrastructure saves water and lives

By **Themba Khoza**

Water is life and the provision of quality water that meets the required standards is important for a healthy society.

In order to ensure the provision of safe and quality water to communities, it is important to have the right, effective and efficient infrastructure. This then calls for the water supply infrastructure to be always in good condition to deliver quality services, which in this case is clean quality water.

To effectively supply sustainable quality water to communities requires proper operations and maintenance of water supply and delivery infrastructure.

This prevents unnecessary breakdowns and ensures that infrastructure breakdown challenges are swiftly addressed thereby preventing communities

being denied the source of life. Water services authorities and providers must therefore prioritise operations and maintenance of their water supply infrastructure and invest accordingly.

Leaks waste lot of precious water and also compromises the water quality as they allow pollution to creep into the pipelines, therefore they must be identified early and repaired to ensure the reliable supply of quality water to communities.

Lack of operations and maintenance leads to regular infrastructure breakdowns and failures, which cost a lot of money to fix in an emergency. Lack of proper operations and maintenance leads to high levels of water losses, which translates to revenue losses for the water services authorities and providers.

Directly linked to operations and maintenance is the employment of

qualified personnel. The correct and suitable skills are required to ensure proper operations and the sustainable supply of quality water.

Having qualified personnel is important to prevent the pollution of water resources by making sure that waste water treatment plants are properly functioning and don't lead to sewer spillages.

Pollution does not only pose a threat to water quality but it also poses a threat to water supply security as it reduces the amount of water fit for use.

As much as proper operations and maintenance, and the appointment of qualified and suitable skills is critical, the public also has a role to play in ensuring the reliable supply of quality water to communities. Community members must prevent illegal connections and vandalism of the water supply infrastructure. The

public must also help to prevent sewer spillages and overflowing manholes by not putting foreign objects in the sewer systems.

SA is a water scarce country therefore we all have a role to play in ensuring reliable and sustainable quality water supply through our positive and responsible actions and behaviour.

As responsible citizens, we must report all bulk line leaks and other challenges to the relevant authorities and at the same time ensure that all the water and sanitation infrastructure in our households is working well. We can start by fixing all leaks, protecting and preventing infrastructure vandalism and become ambassadors of water conservation to ensure continuous and sustainable quality water supply to communities.

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