

*Be the Legacy* Dedicate 67 minutes to cleaning rivers and streams



# CLEAR RIVERS CAMPAIGN



*Nelson Mandela  
Centenary  
2018  
Be the Legacy*

WATER IS LIFE - SANITATION IS DIGNITY



**water & sanitation**

Department:  
Water and Sanitation  
**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**



## CLEAR RIVERS CAMPAIGN

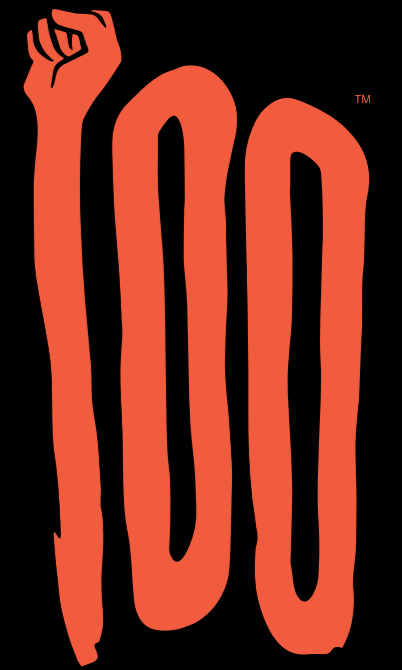
A campaign dedicated to Nelson Mandela

*When rivers run dry, it reminds all of us that water does not come from the tap.*

*It is for this reason that government, business and civil society initiated the Clear Rivers campaign in 2016.*

*The campaign calls on everyone to dedicate their 67 minutes of goodwill activities towards cleaning up streams, wetlands, dams, canals and any freshwater source.*

*Everyone is encouraged to participate in cleaning up our water ecosystems; on any day during Mandela Month.*



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## INTRODUCTION

South Africa is a water scarce country and named the 38th driest country in the world; with a rapidly increasing population.

South Africa's rainfall is unpredictable and common periods of drought limit the water resources even further. Rivers that used to flow throughout the year are now dry, while others flow only during rainy seasons. Years from now, the demand for water might exceed the amount of available water in our country. This means that we must use and share our water more effectively.

The health of the rivers in our country is threatened by excessive use of the water and the riverbanks. If we pollute the river in one place, we affect the condition of the river for a long distance downstream. A river performs functions such as the ability to clean itself, best, when it is healthy.

Therefore, active and responsible citizenry is encouraged across spectrum where people from all walks of life become participants in promoting healthy rivers. The relationship between communities and healthy rivers can never be overstated as it is community members who must take care of our rivers to ensure that they are not filtered with filthy litter.

The need for water security, particularly in the face of global climate change and a multitude of anthropogenic impacts affecting our rivers, calls for a national and unified approach to protect our rivers, wetlands and broader catchments.

In this way all people can benefit from the added-value products of healthy rivers and can have access to clean water for basic human needs.

It is for this reason that the Department of Water and Sanitation connects South Africans to their sources of water and the natural infrastructure that are crucial for a water secure future. This is done annually, when South Africans are called to clean up rivers and water ecosystems, as part of dedicating their 67 minutes of goodwill, during Mandela Month.

*“South Africa is a water scarce country and named the 38<sup>th</sup> driest country in the world”*

## BENEFITS OF HEALTHY RIVERS

In many places in South Africa rural people depend, for their livelihood, on products derived directly from rivers. As a result, their relationship with rivers is close and their need for healthy rivers, critical.

The benefits of the healthy rivers are however not only limited to the rural communities but also urban communities who use rivers for recreational practices such as fishing.

### Domestic Benefit

Communities benefit from clean and healthy rivers. Clean and fresh water assists communities in their daily activities including consumption, cooking and washing. The fish that live in healthy rivers can be used as an excellent food source. The dense, indigenous, riparian vegetation around healthy rivers also attracts animals and birds.

Communities and even livestock particularly in rural communities stand a better chance of an improved quality of life when our rivers are clean and healthy.

### Cultural Benefit

Communities use clean and healthy rivers to perform cultural rituals, for making sacrifices and for communicating with ancestors. Rivers serve as sacred places for different religious and spiritual practices such as worship and ceremonial cleansing, for example baptism. Fish is an excellent source of food.

### Economic Benefit

Different types of plants grow in and on the banks of our rivers. Some of the plants provide communities with building materials such as roofing for huts and or houses. Communities also use reeds and other wetland vegetation to make baskets, mats, curtain blinds and handbags. Wetland vegetation can help economic development if it is harvested in a sustainable way

*“Water does not come from a tap.”*



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## INDICATIONS OF CLEAN RIVERS

A river is healthy when the water is clean

A river is healthy when you can drink its water, swim in it and eat its fish without the fear of getting diseases or sick.

A river is healthy when there are healthy indigenous fish populations

A good indication that a river is clean and healthy is when there are different kinds of healthy fish living in it.

A river is healthy when there is a healthy riparian zone

The riparian zone is the area next to a river that helps the river to function as an ecosystem.

The roots of trees and plants in the riparian zone stabilises the river bank and prevent excess siltation, which occurs when soil and sand is washed into the river. The trees, plants and ground cover on the riverbank trap soil and waste materials before it enters the river.

The roots of plants also create safe areas where fish can breed, feed and hide. Wild animals and birds also hide in the trees and in the dense bushes found in the riparian zone. Therefore, destroying the riparian zone means disturbing the natural life cycle in this zone. A river is healthy when there is a healthy riparian zone.

*Everyone is encouraged to participate in cleaning up our water ecosystems; on any day during Mandela Month.*



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## RISKS POSED FOR RIVERS

### Waste disposal

Waste materials such as papers, plastics, diapers, empty cans and unwanted clothes and more, that are thrown into rivers, are not only unsightly but also unhealthy. The water quality in rivers is reduced when rivers are used as dumping areas for waste.

### Agricultural practices

Bad agricultural practices along rivers lead to poor river health.

Farming on steep slopes of rivers or removing plants and trees that grow along riverbanks for agriculture and gardens are examples of bad agricultural practices. These practices destroy the riparian vegetation and impair important river functions. If there is no riparian vegetation it is easier for sand, soil and other unwanted materials to enter the river, resulting in poor river health.

### Riparian vegetation use

Rural communities use trees and plants for firewood, for building fences, furniture, and for medicinal or healing purposes. River health deteriorates when trees are cut down and plants grow along the riverbank. Such activities disturb the riparian zone, leaving it with fewer trees and plants. Alien plants invade and flourish in disturbed riparian zones. .

### Fishing practices

Fishing is one way of providing food for families. We can also sell the fish. When we catch fish with shade nets, traps, gill nets or seine nets, we are involved in unsustainable fishing practices. The small fish cannot escape from the shade nets to grow larger and to breed. This leads to fewer or no fish in the river. We must practice sustainable fishing methods. This means that we adjust our fishing activities.

### Livestock grazing

Overgrazing increases the rate of erosion and the amount of sand and soil in the river. The land becomes bare and has no vegetation that protects the soil from being washed into the river when it rains. Healthy riparian vegetation reduces the possibility of flooding during rainy seasons. Overgrazing happens when too many livestock feed in the same area for a long time. This damages the land cover and does not give the grass and plants time to grow again.

### Household practices

Although washing and bathing are not the main polluters of river systems, some detergents that are used to wash cars and clothes, contain chemicals that can make rivers unhealthy. Communities should make use of soaps that are environmentally friendly. Communities should make use of soaps that are environmentally friendly.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE CAMPAIGN

The objective of the Clear Rivers Campaign is to undertake a collaborative effort and actively engage communities as well as promoting and creating ongoing awareness and education on protecting our water resources.

Fostering volunteerism among communities is actively encouraged as part of a proactive approach to protecting our rivers, streams, wetlands and other water ecosystems, given the drought that still persist in large parts of the country.

The envisaged outcomes of the campaign seek to ensure the following:

- Environmentally conscious communities;
- Pollution free rivers;
- Responsible citizens who take care of their rivers.

## CLEAR RIVERS CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

There are several activities involved for the event.

- Stakeholder engagement with corporate South Africa, in a bid to find partners and participants of this volunteer initiative;
- Sector mobilisation;
- Communication activities that will include advocacy on the need to protect freshwater ecosystems;
- Awareness and educational activities;
- Clearing campaigns that will see community volunteer activities in a bid to clear up pollution from dams, rivers, wetlands, streams and across the freshwater ecosystem.
- SHARE (Campaign Toolkit)
  - o Access to campaign collateral that individuals, corporates, schools and other organisations can download for their own use. Collateral proposed:
  - o Facebook, Twitter, Email signature, Web banner/s, posters, Podcast/s – possible interviews with relevant stakeholders, Blogs;
  - o Water dialogues on water conservation, water demand management, protecting water ecosystems and related topics.

## APPROACH TO PROFILING THE CAMPAIGN IN THE MEDIA

During the roll out of this campaign, communication will be implemented on various communication platforms including print, broadcast, online and social media. In addition to adverts, media engagements including media briefings and interviews will be held.

The Department will work with partners in local government, private sector as well as in communities in elevating advocacy for clean rivers

### Key Messages

- Know where your water comes from.
- We have a responsibility to conserve and protect rivers, dams, wetlands and the environment.
- Let us clean up rivers, wetlands, streams and all freshwater ecosystems.
- Report pollution of rivers and fresh water ecosystems to the DWS Hotline on 0800 200 200.

## PUBLIC EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN COMMUNITIES

This campaign will have a focus on creating awareness with communities living along rivers and in close proximity of water ecosystems. This will assist in ensuring a long term intervention as communities are able to decrease their own pollution activities as well as play a watch-dog role in preventing others from polluting in rivers..

### Format of activations

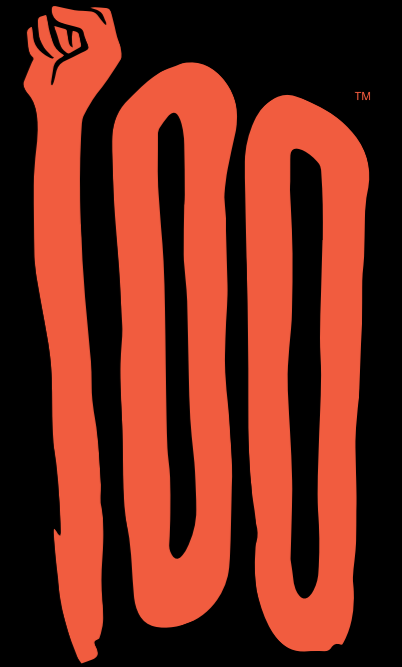
- Interactive door to door awareness activities with communities living in close proximity of rivers and other types of fresh water ecosystems;
- Gauging the level of awareness about river pollution;
- Solutions to be received from communities on addressing river pollution.

### Advantages of activations:

- Raise the profile of river pollution with the public;
- Create platforms for the public in order to share concerns and discuss possible interventions;
- Provide the public with information on how to respond to incidences of river pollution.

## ONGOING ACTIVITIES

- To encourage the public, partners and stakeholders to have a new orientation around the country's inland waterways, fresh water ecosystems and rivers;
- To continuously provide campaign messages, educational materials and approaches on the website for downloading;
- To allow communities to register their community activities and events on river clean up's on the website of the Department;
- Take and share photographs and other media from communities who are actively involved in anti-pollution activities.



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