



INTERNET ARTICLE

DWS hosts water services infrastructure development programme lesson sharing with municipalities in Mpumalanga

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The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) hosted a Water Services Infrastructure Development Programme lesson-sharing session with Water Services Authorities in Mpumalanga Province on 2-3 December 2024 in Mbombela.

The session, chaired by Ms. Dudu Sifunda, Head of Operations in Mpumalanga, and Mr. Masala Mulaudzi from DWS Head Office, was attended by municipal managers, technical directors, and water and sanitation managers from local and district municipalities.

The primary aim was to engage municipalities on project progress, share information and best practices, and collectively improve water and sanitation service delivery. It also provided a platform for municipalities to outline challenges, propose solutions, and learn from each other's experiences.

Mr. Masala Mulaudzi emphasized the significance of the session, stating: "The purpose is to discuss Water Services Authorities' project progress, challenges, and solutions; clarify DWS grant policies and frameworks; and review key aspects like the Blue, Green, and No Drop status in Mpumalanga. Additionally, this meeting aims to recognize the strong performers and address challenges to ensure improved water and sanitation services for our communities."

Day one focused on sharing essential information to enhance municipal project outcomes.

Ms. Mandisa Matiso presented a review of the financial and non-financial performance of Water Services Authorities over three years. She highlighted a critical concern: inadequate operations and maintenance (O&M) leading to rapid infrastructure deterioration. "Our major challenge is operations and maintenance, even as we implement projects," she noted.

Other topics included:

- Grant frameworks and DORA conditions.
- RBIG and BFI planning processes.
- Groundwater SOP, dashboard updates, and MIG project linkages to DWS initiatives.

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- Regulatory reports on Mpumalanga infrastructure.

Ms. Bila-Mupariwa, DWS Western Cape Provincial Head, facilitated a session on the Budget Facility for Infrastructure (BFI) Model, proposing future engagements where high-performing municipalities could share their success strategies.

The second day provided municipalities the platform to present their projects and challenges. Common issues raised included:

- Incomplete projects and lack of human resources.
- Vandalism, theft, and illegal connections.
- Ageing infrastructure and insufficient funding for O&M.
- Improper planning, inadequate revenue collection, and informal settlements.
- Insufficient bulk water supply and demands from multiple business forums.

Deputy Director-General Dr. Risimati Mathye emphasised the urgency of addressing these challenges. He called for a consolidated report highlighting an actionable plan to tackle over 110 identified issues, with recommendations focusing on:

- Water use efficiency and conservation/demand management.
- Comprehensive O&M plans.
- Enhanced planning processes and policy improvements.

"We need a clear plan for addressing operations and maintenance issues. Let's consolidate this report, elevate it to the Director-General and Minister, and ensure effective implementation," Dr. Mathye stated.

The DWS's commitment to collaboration and accountability aims to ensure the provision of sustainable and reliable water and sanitation services across Mpumalanga.

Themba Khoza

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