

Launch of the Strategy to accelerate Sanitation Delivery in the Free State
Speech by Mrs Lindiwe Hendricks, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry
Indaba Auditorium, Bram Fischer Building, Mangaung Municipality, Bloemfontein
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Honourable Premier
MECs
Honourable Mayors and Councillors
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

1. Introduction

I am delighted to be in the Free State today to launch the strategy that will guide accelerated delivery to meet the sanitation targets. Sanitation remains one of the main development challenges, not only in our country but internationally. These challenges have resulted in the provision of sanitation being placed high on the global agenda and the United Nations set targets known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which includes halving the proportion of people who have no access to basic sanitation. Other Millennium Development Goals include reducing by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water, and halving poverty and hunger by 2015.

There is a strong link between socio-economic development and providing access to decent sanitation and clean water. And in order to create a better life for our people the ANC Government has focused on these critical areas of delivery, and has set South Africa's sanitation targets higher than those of the Millennium Development Goals. We have committed ourselves to clearing the sanitation backlog by 2010, eradicating all bucket sanitation systems in established settlements by December 2007, clearing the clinic sanitation backlog by 2007 and ensuring that all school's have adequate sanitation. To achieve these important targets sanitation is being prioritised by my department. In particular it is important that whilst we have made considerable strides in the delivery of water, sanitation delivery is still lagging behind and needs to be speeded up.

Not having universal access to basic sanitation by our people negates the efforts made by our Government to rid the country of poverty. The rural poor are particularly affected by lack of sanitation, as they make up approximately 75% of the backlog. It is for this reason that the Government must have ambitious targets for reducing the sanitation backlog, as the rural poor have waited for too long and there is now an urgency to provide this service. Today I am sending a message to say: Sanitation is one of our National priorities and should be regarded as such!

2. Prioritisation of Sanitation Delivery

Ladies and Gentlemen, municipalities operate within a multi-sector environment, and are the vehicle for delivery of a number of critical services. Consequently, there are a number of demands placed on them, and there is the potential for low prioritisation of some programmes particularly in situations where the municipality does not have sufficient capacity or adequate skills. Unfortunately it is often sanitation that is affected by low prioritisation

In the last two years, my Department held Water Summits in all nine Provinces and a National one last year. In all of these summits, sanitation consistently came up as one of the key challenges. Further consultation was done through the Presidential Imbizos and Project Consolidate programmes, and this led to my Department having a very good understanding of challenges facing municipalities in delivering water and sanitation programmes. Some of the challenges faced by Municipalities range from lack of adequate technical capacity to plan, implement and project-manage delivery. This has resulted in low expenditure patterns in the MIG programme which is of concern to all. For example, in the current financial year only R1,2 billion out of the Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG) for the water services budget is set aside for the implementation of sanitation, and this year only R400 million was allocated for bucket eradication. To achieve our sanitation targets we have estimated that R3 billion is required per

year for the next four years, and that delivery should increase from the 300 000 units that we are targeting this year to one million toilets per annum in order to meet the 2010 target.

Our understanding of the challenges faced by municipalities led to the development of a support programme for Local Government by my Department and this programme seeks to address challenges that have been identified. Furthermore, institutional structures such as National and Provincial Sanitation Task Teams have been established to drive and provide strategic direction in the delivery of sanitation.

The Strategy that we are launching today is a critical part of this process as it will guide all key stakeholders in the province to achieve our sanitation targets in a manner that is sustainable, efficient and cost effective. Through co-operation between National, Provincial and Local government, as well as interaction with communities, I believe we can achieve this goal.

Programme Director, in launching this strategy we must note the urgency for our municipalities to improve on sanitation delivery, as 15 million people (32% of the national population) still do not have access to basic sanitation. And one of the most serious issues that we need to address is the eradication of buckets, as about 151 660 of the people without access to basic sanitation are still using bucket sanitation system.

From April to September this year a total of 74 188 households were served with sanitation and in the same period 41 680 buckets were eradicated. The Mpumalanga Province recently announced that they have cleared their entire bucket sanitation backlog in established settlements. The Free State Province still has challenges in bucket eradication and has the highest number of buckets in townships, which stands at 97 474.

Premier, I therefore appreciate your participation in today's event and your commitment to addressing this backlog. I also acknowledge the effort taken by provincial leadership in making sanitation delivery a priority and for their dedication and support in the delivery of water and sanitation. The support that the Regional Office of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry enjoys in this Province is not only well appreciated but has also yielded good results on the ground.

In the Free State, since 1994 to date, 696 173 people have been provided with sanitation facilities and 27 463 buckets removed. In this current financial year R67 million has been allocated for sanitation and R145 million allocated for bucket eradication. I am challenging the Free State Province to eradicate all their buckets before December 2007, as Mpumalanga has done.

3. Sustainable Delivery

Ladies and Gentlemen, in proceeding with a rapid roll out of sanitation services we need to ensure the delivery is sustainable. A recent nation-wide sanitation sustainability audit done by my Department has shown that past programmes have been inconsistent in their approach, especially on service levels, funding criteria, and operating responsibility. This has resulted in service delivery being slow and often below standard, thus making only a limited impact on our huge basic sanitation backlog. This study shows that in essence, 8% of completed sanitation projects are failing and a further 20% have sustainability problems. This research shows that in the process of delivery, attention also needs to be paid to the quality of the service we are providing. My Department, as a regulator has a responsibility to work with you in ensuring that service standards are not compromised.

The bucket eradication programme must therefore be implemented with caution. The bucket system must be replaced by appropriate sanitation systems that will take into account affordability, operations and maintenance and the availability of the water resource. The state of existing infrastructure is of concern to my Department and we cannot allow failure of infrastructure resulting in pollution and water quality problems, which we have witnessed recently in some areas.

Water quality data indicates that certain sewage treatment works are not compliant with the legislative authorisation and that some plants have even discharged sewerage into our scarce and vulnerable water

resources. This is unacceptable, as it pollutes water that we need for drinking, proper health and hygiene, growth of the economy and for the maintenance of our environment.

As the Sector Leader one of our responsibilities is to ensure that targets are met, and that an enabling environment for municipalities to deliver is created. Given the challenges outlined above, my Department is funding a special support programme under Project Consolidate to support the sanitation implementation capacity in the needy municipalities. The objective is to build long-term management and operating capacity. Through this programme six municipalities have received permanent technical support in the Free State and one in the Northern Cape. This is additional support given to other municipalities on regular but short-term bases.

Furthermore, within the auspices of Project Consolidate we are also supporting municipalities on drinking water quality monitoring to avoid incidents such as that of Delmas. Municipalities are supposed to submit monthly reports on drinking water quality status. The Free State is to be commended in this area and as I announced recently in Parliament during a debate on drinking water quality: "My Department, DWAF, partnered with the Free State Provincial Government and local authorities to pilot an electronic system to monitor the quality of water; and the success of this joint effort has resulted in 95 – 98% of the authorities in the Free State collecting the data and complying with quality requirements".

4. Job Creation and Education

Ladies and Gentlemen, provision of sanitation does not happen in isolation we need to link our sanitation with education programmes, and health and hygiene awareness. To this end, my Department in collaboration with the Department of Education has developed curriculum aligned education resource materials for educators and learners in which health and hygiene is one of the key components. The resource materials are available and provided to educators as a tool that will enable them to teach health and hygiene and water resource management effectively. We have also, in collaboration with the Department of Health developed a Health and Hygiene Strategy which will guide municipalities in ensuring that health and hygiene are an integral part of sanitation delivery.

It is also necessary that we see roll out of sanitation services as an opportunity to create jobs and reduce poverty. In this regard my Department has signed a memorandum of co-operation with the Labour Job Creation Trust to work together in the sanitation programme to create job opportunities in the delivery of sanitation, and develop the necessary skills so that our people can be employable even after completion of the sanitation projects in their communities.

I want to remind every body here today that women and youth must not be neglected in these job creation initiatives. In particular, we must ensure that women are trained and supported; and I encourage all women to claim their rightful place in sanitation delivery as they are the ones who ensure that there is water in their homes and that their families are protected from water-borne diseases.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, In December 2004, African Ministers responsible for sanitation gathered in Dakar to discuss the strategies of accelerating sanitation service delivery. One of the strategies adopted in Dakar was to raise the profile of sanitation. This entails embarking on advocacy programmes aimed at changing the mindset of the entire society to prioritise sanitation, health and hygiene. The slogan of my Department which says, "Water is Life and Sanitation is Dignity" is in keeping with the resolutions taken in Dakar as well as the Millennium Development Goals not only to prioritise sanitation but also to make sanitation a vehicle to create jobs and thereby reducing poverty.

I urge all of you gathered here today to do all that is within your power and also join the rest of the African Continent as well as all South African's in ensuring that the lives of our people change for the better through accelerated sanitation delivery while creating jobs and reducing poverty in meeting our delivery targets.

WATER IS LIFE, **SANITATION IS DIGNITY!!!**

I thank you.