

Budget Vote: Department of Water Affairs
Address by the Deputy Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs
Ms Rejoice Mabudafhasi, Old Assembly
21 May 2013

Honourable Speaker
Minister Molewa
Ministers and Deputy Ministers,
Honourable Members of the Portfolio Committee
MEC's, Mayors
Chairpersons and CEOs of Water Entities and NGO's
Distinguished guests

INTRODUCTION

We remain committed and focused on ensuring that water availability is not constraint to economic development that our country desperately needs. The National Development Plan reiterates the scarcity of water in our country and the need to come up with creative water management programmes that will ensure water security for South Africa. Our response to this challenge as a water sector leader was the consolidation of a Water Conservation Programme which I will outline in my speech.

WATER CONSERVATION PROGRAMME

In the last financial year, the Department took water conservation to higher levels. We developed water conservation strategies for domestic, agriculture, mining and industry as we know that these sectors are major consumers of our water resources. They have been very involved in the development of our National Resources Strategy and some have even partnered with the department in funding some of our programmes. Allow me to share with you some of the programmes that our department and partners have been implementing in the last financial year.

War on leaks project

We were all shocked by the outcome of the results published by Water Research Commission on water losses in the country that revealed that about 36% of our water is lost in the system and is unaccounted for. For a country that is so water scarce, this situation is totally unacceptable. We have therefore intensified one of our successful programmes, the War on Leaks project. This programme reduces unaccounted for water through leaking pipes and taps, creates awareness to the users about water use efficiency, provides job opportunities and equips our youth with skills that they can use in the job market.

This programme would not have been successful without the political leadership. I have heartwarming examples of how this simple and community based program has worked so well in the Northern Cape where we did door to door visits educating households users about water conservation and fixing water leaks. Ms Louise Mouers in the Northern Cape will recall how we practically fixed a leaking tap and toilet in her house. In the Randfontein Local Municipality our Water Conservation Warriors (young people) visited and educated 3017 households about water conservation.

This door to door campaign is not about mobilizing votes, it is about service delivery on the ground.

With the limited funding mainly coming from the municipalities, we have created seventy (70) job opportunities and accredited training for Water Conservation Warriors.

We are on a clear path to extend the implementation of this programme in nine (9) municipalities within the 24 priority district municipalities prioritized by our Cabinet. About Three Hundred (300) jobs will be created from this programme.

We are deeply indebted to and humbled by the continued support from our partners SASOL, Eskom, Municipalities, Water Boards and Communities to name but a few. Water conservation is one of our strongest pillars of our National Resource Strategy. We will continue to call for more partnership for this programme.

Blue Bus Campaign

We will continue with our Blue Bus campaign themed “Be Water Wise”, which is aimed at creating awareness and educating South Africans about water use efficiency. We mobilized artists acting in Muvhango, Tshisa, Home Affairs, Society and others to be our water ambassadors using the Blue Bus. We are using other creative ideas to interact with communities like industrial theatre and these have proved to be effective tools of communicating.

Water Sector Awards

The success of our campaigns can be seen by the implementation of water conservation projects by various sectors. Annually, the Department awards municipalities, mines, industries, organizations as a recognition for outstanding for water conservation projects.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO CLEAN DRINKING WATER

Last year I reported that the Department is involved in various interventions in partnership with District Municipalities to ensure that communities have access to clean drinking water. During National Water Week 2013 we handed over the R18 million Mukula Bulk Water Supply project to the late Chief Takalani and the Mukula community. This project supplies safe clean drinking water to 17 villages. A total of 45 locals were employed during the implementation of this project. The project was jointly funded by the Department and the Vhembe District Municipality.

Our partnership with traditional leaders yields great results. I intend to work with all local leaders and communities to address the new challenge of vandalization of infrastructure. A sustainable solution to protect community assets comes from communities themselves. The role of traditional leaders in service delivery cannot be underestimated.

We have been working with Department of Science and Technology (DST) and Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) to investigate appropriate technologies for providing safe drinking water in rural areas. The first phase was successfully implemented in the Amatole and OR Tambo district municipalities in the Eastern Cape which provided

communal water stations that benefitted 8,989 people. This project is a good example of how community based knowledge can be matched with modern technology for sustainability.

Experience from this project has formed a good basis for Phase II currently being undertaken in eleven sites across Limpopo and Mpumalanga Provinces. These projects will reach approximately 25 000 people. The exciting part of the Phase II will also tackle the operations and maintenance of infrastructure which is a national problem that is a threat to our water infrastructure.

In last year's address we indicated that we will provide hands on support to the 24 District Municipalities with water services backlogs. I am happy to report that the Department in conjunction with Municipalities conducted a study to assess communities without water supply. A comprehensive report that indicates areas without water and non functional infrastructure has been developed. These studies led to the Municipal Water Infrastructure Grant that the Minister referred to.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

We brought rural women on board to prove that water resource management is not for engineers and scientists only. People with indigenous knowledge have a key role to play, hence the conceptualization and implementation of the Adopt a River project.

This project aims to clean polluted rivers whilst creating job opportunities and skills development for women. It also educates communities residing along river catchments about the importance of water conservation. During 2012/2013 financial year, twenty four (24) rivers were cleaned and 1148 job opportunities for women were created.

Last year I made an announcement that we will put some of these women in our skills development programme to tell a story that says "I was a river

cleaner now I am a Scientist". I am proud to report to you that forty four (44) women will be awarded bursaries in this financial year to study at Universities and FET Colleges. I also need to appreciate the partnership and support from the Birchwood Hotel who adopted the Modderfontein River in Ekurhuleni. This is indeed a good example of goodwill from our partners in the private sector. (Water business involves all sectors including Hospitality Industry)

Women in Plumbing Project

One hundred and eighty-one (181) women from various municipalities of the Western Cape were trained in plumbing. They will be part of the War on Leaks teams in their respective municipalities. This milestone has been achieved through our partnership with Development Bank of South Africa and the University of Stellenbosch.

Women in Water and Waste Treatment Works

Two hundred and fourteen women (214) from the nine provinces (9) have been trained as process controllers. A big thank you to the Local Government SETA for funding this project.

We will continue with Women in Water Awards which is our annual event recognizing outstanding women projects aimed at addressing water challenges in their respective areas.

During Women's Month we will host the Women Mayors' Dialogue to encourage them to champion water conservation, environment, women and youth projects in their respective municipalities.

2020 Vision for Water Educational Programme

We continue to implement the 2020 Vision Programme that educates grades R to 12 learners about integrated water resource management, climate change and environment including water related careers. We are grateful to our partners which are Department of Basic Education, MTN

Foundation, Birchwood Hotel, SASOL, WESSA, Water Boards and Rand Water Foundation.

Our youth will converge again during the annual Youth Water Summit to present their action projects undertaken during the course of the year. They will also go for excursions to Rand Water, Roodeplaat Dam and the South African Weather Service

Through this programme we have achieved the following:

- In partnership with MTN Foundation we handed over one thousand two hundred (1200) computers to sixty (60) schools connected to internet, equipped with maths and science programmes Learners from rural schools can now connect with the world.
- During 2012 youth from various countries of the Continent attended the Youth Summit and developed the Africa Youth Water Strategy which is one of the projects of AMCOW. This strategy will be launched during this year's youth summit to be held in July.
- Through partnership with WESSA we will implement the Eco schools project targeting the national winners of various projects of 2020 vision programme. They will develop and implement action plans to address the water and environment related challenges in their respective schools and communities. They will participate in this project for three (3) years.
- Developed curriculum aligned water related educational resource materials for grades R-9 learners and educators.
- In partnership with SASOL, Metsimaholo Municipality we implemented war on leaks project called Busa Metsi in twenty one (21) schools.
- Eighty nine (89) bursaries have been awarded to learners who participated in the projects of the 2020 Vision Programme to study water related careers. This programme also serves as an incubator for our Learning Academy.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Water sector is faced with a challenge of scarce skills, we have ageing workforce. Through our Learning Academy we will overcome this challenge.

Since the establishment of the Learning Academy in 2007, we awarded a total of 587 bursaries. 418 of these students have completed their studies and have joined the Department as Graduate Trainees.

We placed one hundred and sixty six (166) in permanent posts within the Department.

One hundred and fifty two (152) received their professional registration as engineers and scientists.

Our Learning Academy was awarded the Best Training Programme in the Public Sector at the 2012 BHP Billiton Achievers Awards.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Food and water security are inextricably linked. As a result this government has taken a nexus approach whereby the interdependency between water and food security is central in all interventions and plans. We provided support to one thousand five hundred and fifty nine (1 559) Resource Poor Farmers (RPFs) through the provision of irrigation pumps, installation of Hydroponic tanks, water supply and storage, operation and maintenance and subsidies on water use charges.

We provided four thousand and sixty eight (4 068) rainwater harvesting tanks to schools and households.

PARTNERSHIPS

In our quest to deliver clean drinking water, eradicating water leaks, conserve our water resources we established partnership with the following stakeholders: Department of basic education, Department of Science and

Technology, Municipalities, Water boards, MTN Foundation, SASOL, Eskom, WESSA, Birchwood Hotel, SA Cities, Rand Water Foundation and many others.

In partnership with Daily Sun newspaper we launched the 5 million water saving tips campaign. Through this Campaign Daily Sun readers will be called upon to suggest water saving tips in the home, workplace, schools etc. It is done in a form of a competition where 5 readers with the most innovative ideas are selected weekly and published in the Sunday Sun as winners. The winners will be awarded bursaries to undergo training at FET Colleges around the country for a basic plumbing course

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I wish to thank our honorable Minister for her guidance, the honorable chairperson and members of the portfolio committee for their continued support.

Acting Director-General and your team, we appreciate your unwavering support and commitment. We are proud and appreciate all departmental staff.

I also want to thank all our water boards and all water sector stakeholders for their commitment towards a better life for our communities.

Let us Respect, Conserve and Enjoy Water