



**water & sanitation**

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

**KEY NOTE ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE DEPUTY MINISTER OF  
WATER AND SANITATION, MS PAMELA TSHWETE, MP, DURING THE  
HANDING OVER OF A MEDIA CLASSROOM TO MMULAKGORO  
INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL ,MANGAUNG, FREE STATE**

**20 November 2015**

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Programme Director,

Deputy Executive Mayor, Councillor Connie Rampai,

Department of Education,

Department of Economic, Small Business Development, Tourism and  
Environmental Affairs,

Department of Sports, Arts, Culture and Recreation,

Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality,

Provincial Head of Free State Water and Sanitation, Dr Ntili,

Chairperson of the Bloem Water Board,

MTN Foundation South Africa, our Sponsor,

Wildlife and Environmental Society of Southern Africa (WESSA)

Members of the Mayoral Council,

Religious Leaders,

Ward Councillors,

The School Principal and all Teachers of Mmulakgoro Intermediate School,

The School Governing Body and all Learners of the School,

Parents and Community Leaders,

Government Officials,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

**DUMELANG!**

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This Imbizo is happening at a time when students are protesting about how difficult it can be to access education in universities. Many of you have heard about similar protests in Bloemfontein where students have vowed to shut down the campus and stop going to classes.

There is nothing wrong with students being active if it is constructive and if it helps improve the learning environment. However, there is something wrong if students burn down their university, if they beat students who want to go to class, and threaten lecturers to force learning to stop.

Our Constitution states in the Bill of Rights that everyone has the right to education and that everyone has the right to be educated in his or her official language where possible. As a rising democracy, South Africa is in the process of achieving these two rights for everyone.

The country has a language policy in place, bursaries and scholarships are available for students. So why should students burn down their own schools? How will you learn if you have no school?

The Learners here today must ensure that they respect the right to education. If learners are unhappy and burn down their schools, there will be no future for those who are younger than them.

A school belongs to its community and so the community must keep it safe as well.

Today as we hand over a multi-million rand media classroom to Mmulakgoro Intermediate School I want us to think about how the community would be affected if this media classroom were to be destroyed.

Nelson Mandela said that “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”. He said this because during Apartheid, Black People were forced not to study Maths, Science, and Physics in school because it is difficult.

The ANC-led Government has fought hard to bring back good quality education in Maths, Science, and Physics. I want Learners here to know that Tata Madiba would be proud if you take care of your school and you study Maths, Science, and Physics.

How many of you are going to study maths, science, and physics?

Raise your hands up for me. I want all the Learners here to

Matriculate with good marks in these subjects.

I am confident that the School Principal and the Educators will make sure that all of these Learners matriculate with Maths, Science, and Physics because with these subjects you can become anything you want to be in the world.

However, this task cannot be done without the support of the Parents of the Learners. Where are the Parents? Please raise your hands. Parents must always attend to matters affecting their children at the school. We are happy that you are here today.

If as Parents you want your children to have successful careers, then YOU must participate in the education of YOUR children. When your child comes home, then help your child with reading, writing, and counting.

Be pro-active in disciplining your children and ensure that they go to school. Parents have more power than Educators because “NO” begins at home. uHayi, uqala ekhaya akaqali esikolweni. This means that discipline starts in the home, not in the school.

This media classroom comes with computers and a printer, an overhead projector, software, training of educators, and a security gate and alarm to keep the classroom safe from vandals and thieves.

The school also won a cash prize of six thousand rands sponsored by the Rand Water Board.

This classroom was not free, the school worked hard for this classroom and they won it as a prize at our National Youth Water and Sanitation Summit this year.

At the Summit, learners are expected to compete in various categories such as creating posters, music, drama, praise poetry and poetry. Mmulakgoro Intermediate School won for creating a strong poem about how water should be conserved.

The media classroom will give learners in rural communities access to high quality education that will empower them, as members of this community, to rise against the wasting of water and poor sanitation, and to find innovative solutions in the water sector:

*You see, education is power. Because when you are educated, you don't have to burn down schools, you can come up with solutions.*

For the past few years, the country has been suffering from serious drought conditions, which have caused a heat wave and have reduced rainfall in South Africa.

Climate change is causing extreme changes in our weather. As a result, Government has declared five provinces as disaster areas: the North West, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, and this province, the Free State.

The drought means that there is a shortage of water resulting in:

- Cattle dying and river animals like fish cannot survive;
- Agricultural crop dying or not growing;
- Dams, rivers, lakes and reservoirs are drying up
- Lack of water for drinking, cooking, cleaning, and washing;
- Food supply is shrinking;
- Businesses will shut down and people will lose their jobs because if there is no water, there is no economy.

The Government, including the Department of Water and Sanitation, has put in place interventions such as JoJo Tanks, water restrictions, drilling boreholes, transferring water from one place to another, and now we are trying to find new methods and technologies to stop this water shortage.

In a few moments, I want to hear from the community about what they have been doing to manage the drought situation in the Free State.

But, for the moment, I want to talk about how our Department can reduce the impact of the drought by decreasing water leaks.

In August this year, President Zuma introduced a War on Leaks Programme that will reduce the shortage of water in South Africa. Although we have a drought, we have learned that 37% of drinkable water is lost to leaks in the communities.

This amounts to seven billion rands that could be used on education and training programmes for youth development. The War on Leaks Programme will train fifteen thousand youth as plumbers, water agents, and artisans.

The youth will graduate with an accredited qualification and they will serve communities like the one in Botshabelo. In the rural town of Peddie in the Eastern Cape, the community said that they want their youth to be trained so that they can get jobs or start their own businesses in the water and sanitation sector.

By increasing the number of artisans in the sector, a community will see fewer tap and meter leaks, more water availability, and greater economic growth.

This is why when you see a leak, you must not walk away and say “well, that is not my tap”. Knock at the door of the house or turn off the tap yourself. Water being wasted in one house can affect the availability of water in the entire community. This is why our Department says every drop of water counts.

As the Department, we have a zero tolerance programme against theft of water and vandalism. The law is there to safeguard the right to clean quality and accessible water.

Last year, the Department and I implemented an enforcement programme in five provinces to stop illegal use of water. In Gauteng, we caught a farmer who built a wall to stop water from going to the community so that he could get all that water for his family.

In Limpopo, we found another water user who installed pipes to illegally bring him water that he was not paying for. He vandalised the water pipes of the municipality in order to get this water.

If you steal water, you must understand that you increase the shortage of water in a community, you make water more expensive for those who pay water rates, and you force the municipality to implement water restrictions.

Illegal connections are also dangerous because the water does not go through a water treatment plant first. As such, stolen water can be unclean and can cause illness or death.

We have found that many water leaks will also come from illegal connections because the water thieves are not artisans or engineers.

Some people will say, "I did not know it was illegal to take water" or they will cry "I did not have access to water and so I had to get someone to connect pipes for me".



My advice to people who are stealing water is “STOP”. If you are a community member who is paying to receive stolen water, “STOP”. Poverty is no defence as many of us grew up poor, but we did not steal. The law will be firm when it catches you. We will disconnect the illegal water and then we will charge you.

If you feel that you are not getting enough water, then get involved in municipal IDP forums to raise your concerns or consider ways of reducing water usage in your home.

Once the MTN media classroom has been installed talk to these learners here to tell you of innovative ways to start saving water.

Ignorance is no defence. You have a municipality that you can report to if there is no water and you do not have the right to take municipal water without paying for it.

The other challenge I want to talk about is that many people don't know that water does not come from a tap. Did you know that?

Water comes from natural sources such as rivers, lakes, streams, and the ocean.

Water travels long distances, sometimes even from other countries, before it reaches the tap in the community.

Government cannot resolve the drought situation on its own. The community must take a stand and play a role. Mobilise yourselves into Water Forums or street committees that address the water shortage by:

- Reporting illegal use of water and leaks to the municipality,
- Closing leaking taps when you see them,
- And by using water wisely, for example, re-using water.

Rural communities are being affected more harshly by the drought because very few homes have reliable sources of water. Many rural communities are deeply affected when water tanks dry up from the drought or when thieves steal water.

The responsibility of the community is make sure that they conserve water otherwise we are going to have a bigger shortage of water in South Africa. Please, use buckets to wash your cars and your stoeps.

And also, when you plant seeds, water the area that has the seeds do not water the entire patch; when you brush your teeth, please use a little cup and do not let the water just run from the tap. If you clean the house, then use the same water to clean outside the house, re-use the water. You can even pour this water into the toilet bowl for flushing.

If you waste water, then ask yourself, what would you do if this was the last drop? Where are you going to get the water because we cannot grow water like a plant?

The best way of changing how a society uses water is to start by educating children. What I love about children is that when they have been taught something new, they run home to share it with uMama, uTata, or uMalume.

When they see you brushing your teeth whilst the water is coming out from the tap, they will shout, “Hayi, uTishala uthi kufuneka sivale impompo xa sivasa amazinyo” or “Hayi, masingawa chiti lamanzi” because the child knows that you can re-use water in the garden or for washing your stoep.

We are honoured that the MTN media classroom will serve as a source of education about water and will enlighten the learners at Mmulakgoro Intermediate School about the importance of taking Maths and Science in school to combat climate change and water shortages.

Maths and Science is easy when you know what you are going to use it for. If you are going to use it to transform your community, then the Department will support you through training programmes like the War on Leaks Programme, bursaries, learnerships, and internships.

I ask that the Learners and Educators use the media classroom be to improve the lives of Learners and Educators. I ask the community of Botshabelo to stand up to and repeat after me: “Water is Life, Sanitation is Dignity”.

**KE YA LEBOHA, THANK YOU.**