



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

ADDRESS BY MS. NOMVULA MOKONYANE, MINISTER OF WATER AND SANITATION DURING THE LAUNCH OF THE BLOEMHOF PURIFICATION PLANT AT BOITUMELONG TOWNSHIP IN LEKWA-TEEMANE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, BLOEMHOF, NORTH WEST

24 NOVEMBER 2016

INTRODUCTION

Hardly a fortnight that myself and Ms. Pamela Tshwete were appointed by the President of the Republic of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, as Minister and Deputy-Minister respectively, to lead the newly formed Department of Water and Sanitation, we were confronted by the ugly incident of diarrhea outbreak as a result of water contamination here in Bloemhof.

At the time, a decision was made to suspend the flow of tap water in order to reduce all possibility of the community drinking what could be polluted water supplies.

The local municipality drained their whole system, cleaned their sand filters, and flushed their system. The community at the time received water by means of water tankers.

Despite this, it was confirmed that a diarrhea outbreak as a result of contaminated water had claimed the lives of three babies while hundreds were treated for diarrhea.

As part of the intervention, the Department of Water and Sanitation issued a directive in June 2014 for Sedibeng Water to take over the responsibility of operations and maintenance of the Water Treatment Works (WTW) and Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW) in Bloemhof, following the sewage spillages into the Vaal River.

Circumstances today indicate progress and growth in relation to the challenges that beset the community of Bloemhof.

We have assessed the progress on the Bucket Eradication Programme thus far as well as unveil the plaque at the Bloemhof Purification Plant in honour of the babies who died of diarrhea in Bloemhof.

This gathering here at the stadium is a culmination of the rest of the activities that took place earlier today.

THE SANITATION PERSPECTIVE

In South Africa, about 2,2 million households do not have access to basic sanitation and thus continue to make use of shift toilets and even resort to open defecation. No one likes talking about sanitation and toilets; but, it is an important conversation to have. From a health and environmental perspective, the provision of a toilet acts as a barrier to disease.

Since 1994, we have improved service provision with those with improved facilities standing at nearly 80% (77,9% from Stats SA). However, there is still a portion without any sanitation at all (3.9% South Africans).

We have been working hard to eradicate the bucket system nationwide – in 2004 there were about 231 660 that required replacement with appropriate sanitation systems. In 2013, this number dropped to 100,000 and in 2014 to around 80,000. At the beginning of 2016, we managed to reduce a further 15,000.

The sanitation task is daunting but one which we will continue to tackle. Worldwide, sanitation is known as the ‘Cinderella’ of basic services – it is more hidden and less well-known than drinking water supply – ***yet it is equally as important.***

The World Health Organisation/UNICEF 2014 Report alludes to the fact that there were about 644 million people in sub-Saharan Africa (70% of the population) using an unimproved toilet facility or having to resort to open defecation.

This challenge will not be resolved by government alone; instead a number of stakeholders and partners are required.

Innovation and Technology in Sanitation

In 2015, we asked the private sector and all innovators to assist with the challenge of Sanitation. Many of the developers and innovators came to demonstrate their innovations at the National Sanitation Indaba held at the iNkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre in Durban.

This Indaba was held to stimulate partnership with the private sector; but more so, to learn first-hand the innovative ways in which municipalities tackled sanitation challenges in informal areas;

We learnt from the Indaba about how Communal Ablution Blocks can provide hygienic facilities in informal areas – not only for going to the toilet, but also for washing clothes, and we applied the lessons elsewhere.

We also saw young South Africans studying about sanitation as a discipline, with the aim of resolving this sanitation challenge.

Impact of the World Toilet Day

On 19 November, South Africa joined the rest of the world in celebrating the World Toilet Day under the theme **“TOILET AND JOBS”**. Several forms and platforms were used to create awareness of the daily struggle for proper sanitation which approximately 2,5 billion people worldwide face.

This day is marked across the world to break the taboo of sanitation. It is in this context that we must talk about sanitation because of the health and environmental implications.

You may ask yourself what jobs are there for toilets; surely it must be caretaking services and plumbing, both of which are critical to maintaining community health through the maintenance and provision of clean facilities.

There are other jobs linked to sanitation, with businesses centred on providing sanitation services across the value chain – from providing new toilets to converting faecal waste into beneficiated products like charcoal substitutes, which potentially hold a monetary value.

The sanitation sector can unlock the training of plumbers, manufacturers and contractors to help erase the sanitation backlog sooner than later to avoid the high social and economic cost of not providing decent sanitation.

Lack of proper sanitation is impacted upon by a plethora of reasons, some of which include the following:

- Rapid growth and urbanisation of villages, towns and cities;
- A lack and or unavailability of bulk infrastructure to provide water and/ or sewer discharge;
- Difficult ground conditions (hard rock, low ground water table, Steep terrain);
- A lack of operation and maintenance of existing infrastructure contributes to the regress of existing services to non-functional and ultimately a contributing to a higher backlog on basic services;
- Misaligned planning for infrastructure provision leaves communities to resort to either make-shift toilets and or the use of bucket toilets during service delivery lapses.

Therefore, in the bigger scheme of things in marking the **World Toilet Day**, we need to adopt an approach that;

- Uses the **World Toilet Day** platform as the “voice” for the un-served and under-served communities throughout South Africa, which then begins to stimulate a dialogue that will encourage a once taboo topic of sanitation to be openly discussed in our households, our streets and our communities at large;
- Promote discussions that include issues of health and hygiene, taking care of the sanitation facilities, and the prospects of disease from poor sanitation habits;
- Ensures access to proper sanitation, collectively raising awareness around the need for decent sanitation, including the provision convenient sanitation to the disabled and physically challenged;
- Highlights the high cost of poor sanitation provision to communities.

Paradigm Shift in the Sanitation Space

- Decent and private toilet facilities for women and children are paramount due to vulnerability to attack and abuse;
- Ending lower productivity and absenteeism of teenage girls at school due to poor access to menstruation facilities;
- Avoiding premature deaths of children below the age of 5 years due to diarrhea and respiratory illnesses resulting from exposure to polluted water and poor sanitation facilities;
- Fundamentally, decreasing the cost of polluting the environment - both our fresh water sources and ground water table;

We believe that healthy families begin at home, which ultimately reduces government's exposure to health care treatment and cost.

Notwithstanding all these challenges, and often due to a difficult environment for providing access to decent sanitation, the Department has changed its strategic focus in the following areas:

- Crafted and adopted a new sanitation policy that now considers a broader spectrum of sanitation issues ranging from the un-served residing in informal settlements, backyard dwellers and communities on privately owned land.
- Will also review its **norms and standards** in relation to the provision of sanitation together with a comprehensive Water and Sanitation Master Plan for South Africa that will guide and direct government to areas of demand and need for proper planning and budgeting towards realising the constitutional mandate and goals, bearing in mind that all households must have access to basic services.
- Will spearhead the provision of sanitation solutions under a revolutionary theme "**It is not all about flushing**".

(This theme acknowledges fundamental principles that any recognized and appropriate solution by government will be provided in our effort to eradicate the sanitation backlog. This shift therefore ignites the need to explore alternative solutions to deal with geographical and resource constraints).

16 days of *Activism for no Violence against Women and Children*

The Department will further observe the upcoming 16 days of ***Activism for no Violence against Women and Children*** (from 25 November to 10 Dec 2016). During this period, the Department will highlight the plight of gender-based violence on women and children, while emphasizing on the role of men in fighting abuse and violence.

CLOSING REMARKS

In 2015, the United Nations took a strategic decision to ensure everyone everywhere has access to toilets by 2030 through Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

- Beside the SDG, the South African Government has made an undertaking through the National Development Plan (NDP) to ensure universal access to sanitation services.
- In addition, Government will make a concerted effort with all stakeholders including communities, private sector and civil society towards realising this goal. As part of this drive, the Department has initiated the Women Incubator programme that will unlock the opportunities for greater participation within the sector.
- Today, in Boitumelong in the town of Bloemhof, the Department has demonstrated its intervention to deal with the bucket toilet system as a form of sanitation solution.
- Within Dr. Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District Municipality, this bucket eradicating programme eradicated about 621 bucket toilets over a period of two years in the Boitumelong and Kanana areas of Lekwa-Teemane and Matlosana Local Municipalities, respectively.

(All these efforts mark the end of a long era of bucket use in these communities, which will now join other provinces like Limpopo, Kwa-Zulu Natal, Mpumalanga, Western Cape and Gauteng as provinces with no more bucket toilet use.

Dankie

Ngiyabonga