

BUDGET AND POLICY STATEMENT
THE DEPARTMENT OF WATER AND SANITATION,
VOTE 41

By Mr. David Mahlobo MP,

Deputy Minister for Water and

Sanitation

Hybrid Mini- Plenary

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Honourable Speaker, Ms. Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula

HE Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa

HE Paul Mashatile, Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa

Hon. SE Mchunu, Minister of Water and Sanitation and other Hon Ministers

Hon. Judith Tshabalala, Deputy Minister of Water and Sanitation and other Deputy Ministers

Hon. P Majodina and D Dlakude- Chief Whip and Deputy Chief Whip

Hon R Mashego, Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Water and Sanitation and other Members

Honourable Members of Parliament

The Director-General, Dr. S Phillips, and other senior managers of DWS

Leadership of our Entities- Chairpersons, Members of the Boards, CEOs, and Senior Executives

Leadership of various stakeholders in our sector and civil society Esteemed Guests

Fellow South Africans

1. INTRODUCTION

Your Excellencies comrades and friends, the global security continue to deteriorate due to Ukraine- Russia conflict exacerbated by the global response that is pushing the world into a brink of the WWII.

The ongoing conflict has impacted negatively on global supply chains, food security and energy security. Many citizens across the globe continue to be vulnerable to high cost of living, poverty and whilst exposing inequalities existing amongst the nations.

2. WATER SECURITY

Water is one of the most precious resources. It is estimated that more than 1 billion do not have access to a source of clean drinking water, and around 3 billion people experience water scarcity at least one month per year on average.

Water is unequally distributed over space and time. Water is a limiting resource for development in Southern Africa and a change in water supply could have major implications in most sectors of the economy. Factors that contribute to vulnerability of water systems in Southern Africa include seasonal and inter-annual variations in rainfall, which are amplified by high run-off production and evaporation rates -these being climate change impacts.

As a country we have done well to expand access to water to more than 89% of all South Africans and 84% have access to sanitation services. Despite our achievements as the ANC led government, we are the first to admit that more still needs to be done in our sector.

Water is wasted, polluted, and unsustainably managed. Water shortages have great impact on human health, socio-economic development, human security, and the environment (Water insecurity causes hunger, poverty, education deprivation, sanitation issues and diseases, conflicts, and biodiversity loss).

Climate change has significant impact causing flooding though limited to some localities, while drought and drought-related disasters regularly affect communities as well as the national economy.

We are on course to create a conducive environment for water security through the harnessing of the social and productive potential of water to the benefit of all, ensuring its destructive potential is sufficiently contained, but equally we are the first to admit that South Africa cannot yet be considered fully “water secure”.

3. STATE OF WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

South Africa’s growth, productivity and competitiveness as a global entity relies heavily on its economic infrastructure– from the national level through to provinces and down to the local level. Good social infrastructure provides opportunities for social mobility while improving the length and quality of human life. The condition of public infrastructure is largely dependent upon the allocation of appropriate budgets and the development and implementation of sound maintenance systems, policies, and processes.

South Africa has an average rainfall of 465 mm, which is half the world average, and water scarcity is a serious threat. The national bulk water resources infrastructure system includes dams, abstraction works and water transfer schemes. Although ageing and in need of more maintenance, the system has been reasonably effective in meeting demand.

There have been no major structural, mechanical, or electrical failures. The quality and reliability of water supply systems continue to decline in small towns and rural areas. In some urban areas the water supply systems have been operated at full capacity and will not be able to meet growing demands unless proactive measures are taken to decrease consumption, refurbish critical components of the systems, and expedite key bulk water augmentation projects that have been delayed.

In our Green Drop 2022 report we rated 34% of 1 186 water supply systems as being at high to critical risk of failure. Regarding water quality, just 40% of systems achieved microbiological compliance and only 23% chemical compliance. Slightly less than 41% of treated water is lost to leaks and illegal connections.

Spending on repair, maintenance and rehabilitation of water supply systems remains inadequate. Damage due to increased theft, vandalism and service delivery protests diverts funding from maintenance and expansion budgets, exacerbating the problem. Despite our improved access to water supply the factors above have impacted

negatively on supply reliability which is decreasing in many municipalities especially in rural and urban areas.

Access to improved sanitation has increased from 61.7% of households in 2002 to 84.1% in 2021. However, the quality of wastewater treatment is declining. Of the greatest concern is the extent to which substandard final effluent is discharged, raising the risk of disease transmission to communities downstream.

4. GROUNDWATER

We are in the process of implementing several measures to ensure the increased use of groundwater in a sustainable and reliable manner. Firstly, the management of borehole-based water service schemes by municipalities must be improved.

The Department has developed generic standard operating procedures for municipalities to follow, covering groundwater planning and exploration, drilling, borehole testing, monitoring, operation, and maintenance. Compliance with these standard operating procedures will be included in the revised norms and standards for water services to be issued under the Water Services Act. We have also requested National Treasury to include compliance to the standard operating procedures in the grant frameworks.

We will put in place a capacity building programme on the standard operating procedure for municipalities and other community groundwater developers. In addition, we will support municipalities by identifying those areas of the country with groundwater aquifers which have potential for further sustainable exploitation, and then assisting municipalities in those areas to develop and implement Programmes for making greater use of groundwater.

We are also in the process of strengthening our regulation of the use of groundwater. This will include introducing spot checks of groundwater users to ensure that they are adhering to the legal requirements and to their license conditions. We are developing new regulations to require all groundwater users to register their boreholes and provide information such as abstraction volumes and to require borehole drillers to provide the department with information on all drilling.

5. DAM SAFETY AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

South Africa's development vision will only be realised if water resources are managed in a way that is sensitive and supportive of the many demands which we place upon those resources. The operations and maintenance of dams is a very essential component of sound and sustainable water resource management. South Africa has more than 500 large dams, which are used mainly for irrigation purposes and to supply urban areas with water.

Dams potentially provide social and economic benefits but at the same time pose a threat to lives and livelihoods and the environment. Dam owners have a legal obligation, in most jurisdictions, to ensure that dams are operated in a way that optimises economic and social outputs while not compromising safety. This is a dynamic process that requires regular monitoring and review.

The WCD, for example, advocates a comprehensive review of all existing dams to ensure that they are optimally delivering benefits in an effective, efficient, and equitable manner.

Dam failure usually implies a breach of the wall and a catastrophic release of the stored water. It may also be in a more economic sense as the reservoir fills up with sediment and the dam is no longer able to fulfil its storage function.

The Department is both the regulator of all dams in the country and the manager of the dams owned by the national government. The Department's Dam Safety Office reported to Parliament that of the top 20 largest state dams, only 2 complied 100% with Dam Safety Regulations.

These five-year dam safety evaluations by APPs are over and above the quarterly and annual inspections conducted by the Department's own engineering staff. The Department has now sourced external APPs and will be dealing with the backlog of five-yearly dam safety evaluations during this financial year.

In addition to general maintenance, the Department also implements a Dam Safety Rehabilitation programme to ensure that the lifespan of dam structures is prolonged and to improve the safety of these structures.

Since its inception in 2006, rehabilitation projects at 43 dams have been completed. Four dam safety rehabilitation projects are currently underway.

In September 2022, the tailings dam failed at the Jagersfontein mine in Free State, causing huge damage in the neighbouring community. The owners of Jagersfontein mine failed to timeously inform the department when the dam reached a size requiring its registration as a dam with a safety risk in line with section 120 of the National Water Act.

The classification was approved in April 2022, with a requirement that a dam safety inspection by an APP be completed within three years of the classification. This inspection was not carried out before the failure of the dam in September 2022.

The Department has commissioned an independent investigation to determine the reasons for the failure of the dam, despite it having been inspected by registered engineers. A criminal investigation is also in process after charges were laid by Deputy Minister Mahlobo on 4 November 2022, for contravention of the National Water Act.

Following this incident, the department is implementing several measures to ensure compliance with dam safety regulations. In April we issued a call to all mines to register their tailing dams on the department's database and to update their information where necessary.

The Department invested in 22 major water resource projects since the inception of democracy, and these included large dams that are fulfilling crucial roles today in ensuring the enhancement of water security across our country for all our people.

Some of these key projects include the Inyaka Dam which is serving the once-forgotten people of Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga; the Nandoni Dam which today serves the once-forgotten people of Mopani and Vhembe in Limpopo; the Raising of Flag Boshielo Dam which was implemented in collaboration with mining houses to grow the economy in Limpopo; Spring Grove Dam which today serves an integral part of the water security to the heartbeat of the KZN economy; the Berg River Dam which serves as a key source to the Western Cape Water Supply Scheme which is also serving the City of Cape Town.

The 2023/24 budget is planning to fast track the implementation of more projects to ensure that this legacy is sustained.

The Department is continuously monitoring dam levels and other dam safety indicators and issuing timeous warnings to downstream communities if and when it becomes necessary to release water from the dams. Water resource systems facing water shortages due to drought or excessive abstraction have appropriate restriction rules imposed for the year.

We have initiated a process to unlock the recreation and tourism potential of our dams, in partnership with the Tourism Council of South Africa. Working with tourism and recreation experts to develop a Request for Proposals to be issued to interested parties to make suggestions for developing recreation and tourism projects at our dams. It will be done in such a way as to ensure black economic empowerment, local business development and local employment creation at the same as protecting the ecology and functionality of the dams. The Request for Proposals will be issued during the course of this financial year.

We have security services at our dams, theft of metal parts of our infrastructure is a major setback, and it is difficult and expensive to provide security at all our infrastructure all the time. Theft of metal parts is also one of the major causes of the breakdown of municipal water and sanitation services. There is an urgent need for government and society as a whole to resolve this problem – we need to find a way to stop people from being able to sell metal parts stolen from public infrastructure to scrap metal merchants.

6. WATER CONSERVATION AND DEMAND MANAGEMENT

In South Africa, water is key to winning the battle against poverty and its scarcity could be a limiting factor to growth. No socio- economic development can take place without water.

South Africa's water resources are indeed limited and scarce. The situation is worsened by the occurrence of droughts and the increasing demand associated with population growth and a developing economy. As a country, we are approaching the full utilisation of our available water resources. Further water augmentation schemes will be costly and are likely to be detrimental to our environment. We therefore require a strategic change in the use and conservation of our water resources. Our water is a precious resource that has to be used as efficiently as possible before we consider any new water resources development.

There are opportunities to increase water use efficiency in all water use sectors. Most of the sectors are expected to experience growth and use more water as our country develops.

All consumers and water institutions have therefore a duty towards our country, our environment and themselves to implement adequate measures that contribute to water use efficiency through Water Conservation and Water Demand Management.

Average domestic water consumption in South Africa is approximately 237 litres per person per day, while the world average is approximately 173 litres per person per day.

One of the reasons for our high average water consumption per capita is the high level of physical water losses in municipal water distribution systems, which we must address urgently. Increasing efficiency of water use must also be a priority in the agricultural sector, which takes up more than 60% of the raw water used in South Africa.

To contribute to this, the Department is in the process of implementing approximately R1 billion worth of projects around the country to reduce leaks in its irrigation water conveyance infrastructure, including the Lower Sundays River Government Water Scheme canal, the Qamata Irrigation Scheme, and the Ncora Irrigation Scheme in the Eastern Cape; and the Nzhelele Irrigation Scheme in Limpopo. It is also planning similar irrigation conveyance infrastructure improvement projects for the Jozini – Makhatini Flats Canal system in KZN, the Vlakfontein Government Water Scheme in Mpumalanga, and the Vaalharts Government Water Scheme in the Northern Cape.

Secondly, we need to broaden our water resource mix and make more use of other sources of water, in addition to surface water. This includes developing the sustainable use of groundwater; desalination of sea water in coastal towns and cities; utilising return flows from treated waste-water systems; and the reuse of other poor-quality water such as acid mine drainage.

The entire water value chain requires attention in management of our scarce water resources:

- i) Water Resource Management -Water quality management; Social awareness and education ; Rehabilitation of a water resource; Dam storage optimisation; Removal of invading alien plants and Drought management
- ii) Distribution Management-Pressure management; Metering ; Replacement of infrastructure; Preventative maintenance; Infrastructure optimisation; Loss minimisation and Dual distribution systems
- iii) Consumer Demand Management -Social awareness and education; Retro-fitting; Effective pricing; Effective billing; Loss minimisation (repair leaks) and regulations
- iv) Return Flow Management-Minimisation of losses; Minimisation of storm water infiltration; Minimisation of pollution reclamation and polluter pays /Effluent charges

7. TRANSFORMATION OF IRRIGATION BOARDS INTO WATER USER ASSOCIATIONS

The National Water Act requires the transformation of irrigation boards into water user associations. Since then, only 58 of the 305 irrigation boards which existed prior to 1994

have been transformed into water user associations. To accelerate this process, over the past year the department has developed a model constitution for a water user association and a guide for the functioning of water user associations. These have been consulted and agreed to by all stakeholders and have removed some of the contentious issues which were delaying the transformation process.

The Department has also recently issued a gazette notice for the remaining irrigation boards to prepare and submit their proposal for transformation into water user associations within a defined period.

8. CONCLUSION

We are faced by several challenges globally and domestically and many have lost hope. Through the dark tunnel there is light . Our collective effort and resilience of our nation will see us through. Let's remain vigilant of the dangers faced by our revolutionary advancement but we should never be rigid, inflexible, or inactive to change. We have shared dreams and aspirations.

Let us work together towards the prosperity of our nation and for the benefit of future generations by using our water efficiently and by protecting our environment.

God bless South Africa, and her sons and daughters.

I thank you!