

**Publication:** Daily Dispatch  
**Title:** Precious water  
**Publish date:** 30 March 2020

**Reach:** 15468  
**AVE:** R 6801.62  
**Author:** Sanku Tsunke

## Precious water

**R**ight now, the government faces two urgent and opposite needs: not only must it sensitise South Africans to the cautious use of water due to the scarcity of the resource, but at the same time, it must intensify hygiene efforts to wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and water, and to clean all surfaces frequently to avoid spreading the coronavirus.

But what about those struggling without access to water? No wonder they argue that water is a universal basic right that everyone is entitled to, and therefore it is insensitive to say people must wash hands when there is nothing to drink.

The government is aware of this, and it acknowledges it is still grappling with the problem of water supply in some parts.

The desperate Covid-19 need has come together with prolonged periods of drought in various provinces and fast-changing rainfall patterns due to climate change.

A number of districts in distress have cried out.

Between President Cyril Ramaphosa's pronouncement of a national disaster on Sunday March 15 and his declaration of the country's lockdown eight days later on Monday March 23, the department of water and sanitation moved as fast as it could to ensure widespread provision of water.

A plan was developed to provide water to drought stricken areas, informal settlements and rural areas. Communal water storage with water collection points will be supplied to struggling communities. Public places will be targeted to heighten health and hygiene campaigns.

As the nation enters this 21-day lockdown, anxiety and fear is high. Wash your hands, South Africans!

— **Sanku Tsunke**, department of water and sanitation