

Publication: The Star (Late Edition 13h00)

Reach: 75772

Title: WHAT COVID-19 MEANS FOR OUR ACCESS

AVE: 51308.15

TO WATER

Publish date: 20 March 2020

Author: HOSIA SITHOLE

COMMENT



HOSIA SITHOLE

WHAT COVID-19 MEANS FOR OUR ACCESS TO WATER

AS THE world intensifies efforts to deal with the unprecedented global coronavirus pandemic, the Department of Water and Sanitation is pulling out all the stops to ensure that the rural and poor communities are not left to their own devices to deal with the deadly virus that may disproportionately affect them.

In response to the spread of Covid-19, Minister of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation Lindiwe Sisulu has called for the department to implement decisive measures to address shortages of water in areas such as QwaQwa in the Free State.

This call is cognisant of the fact that the availability of water lies at the heart of preventing the ferocious spread of the Covid-19.

To contribute to containing the outbreak of the virus, Sisulu said: "The pandemic poses a serious threat to people in disadvantaged communities. Given this, I have committed my department to respond to the urgent needs of people through the provision of water and sanitation as we are confronted with a possible spread."

Water shortages pose a serious situation for communities and especially the poor in far-flung areas of the country. Their plight is even more serious considering that they now face the prospects of falling victim to the Covid-19.

It is therefore in the light of this pressing disaster that the department is appropriately responding to the need to provide water to communities.

Without water, the communities will not be well-resourced to adequately deal with the disease.

“

Water shortages pose a serious situation for the poor in far-flung areas

While the privileged can afford necessities such as sanitisers and masks to shield themselves from contracting the virus, the poor cannot afford even the basics of these necessities.

Hence, the lack of water for these communities makes for a horrifying experience. The availability of water not only supports economic growth of communities but plays a critical role to ensure that they live longer and healthy lives.

In line with the direction of President Cyril Ramaphosa, Sisulu has, in relation to water challenges in QwaQwa, directed that the Sedibeng Water speedily implements solutions to address water challenges.

Thus, the Sedibeng Water and the Maluti-A-Phofung municipality are working around the clock to ensure that both the short- and medium-term directives of the minister are implemented to resolve the chronic water shortages.

So far, 132 water tanks have been delivered to QwaQwa residents and 2 000 more have been procured to progressively meet Sisulu's target of 5 000 tanks.

Of the 2 000 tanks procured, 1 000 have a 5 000-litre capacity, while the other 1 000 have a capacity of 10 000 litres.

The department has a uniquely important role to play to ensure an adequate response to contain the Covid-19 outbreak and that a safe environment, a basis for all South Africans to thrive free from harm, is created.

Sithole is a communicator at the Department of Water and Sanitation in Gauteng