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COMMENT



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WATER AND SANITATION HAS CONSTITUTION AT HEART

THE celebration of the adoption of the Constitution on Saturday, May 8, 1996, was an affirmation of efforts to address the question of equity and the allocation of scarce water resources for transformation to deal with poverty and promote sustainable socio-economic development.

Twenty-five years after adoption the of the Constitution, the Department of Water and Sanitation has proven to be one of the quintessential advocates of the Constitution by providing the basic necessities of water and sanitation as one of the basic human rights.

This is in the context that equitable access to water and the benefits derived from it are central to transformation and extracting previously disadvantaged people – from the periphery of the economy to the mainstream economy.

The department is of the view that the denial of some sections of the population to economic benefits has been a direct result of not accessing water.

However, since 1994, the department has made strides to provide clean, quality water to communities.

It believes that providing water is a constitutional imperative and that any act or omission that deviates from it is in conflict with the values of the Constitution. It acknowledges that these efforts still need to go far enough to achieve equality, between those who were advantaged and those who were not – in terms of access to water.

It is for this reason that the department continues to regard the core values of the Constitution as the moving spirit behind entrenching the rights of all South Africans across political and ideological divide.

Admired the world over, even by entrenched democracies, this supreme document enjoins the people of our country to acknowledge the centrality of human dignity.

In the eyes of the department, the Constitution is not just a document of meaningless words that ring hollow and only exist for the sake of it. It is a living document that contains words that jump out to affect the course of our lives.

Chapter two of the Constitution, known as the Bill of Rights or fundamental rights, forms the backbone of this supreme piece of legislation.

It puts weight on the incontrovertible fundamental rights that must be enjoyed by every person within the borders of our country.

This is irrespective of whether or not they are South African citizens. The dignity of the person is, therefore, central to the principles envisioned in this document.

Thus, so important is human dignity that the department has set the goal of access to safe water by year 2030 to all South Africans.

This ambitious goal is in harmony with the National Development Plan (NDP), which seeks to see the fruition of a deconstructed and reconfigured water sector to achieve the developmental aspirations of the people.

While faced with the challenge of limited resources, coupled with devastating drought in some areas of the country, the department is working tirelessly to ensure that backlogs in the provision of water and sanitation, especially in rural areas, are dealt with – as this adversely affects communities.

Providing the basic services of water and sanitation gives meaning and effect to the Constitutional core value of advancing human dignity.

The department marks the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution by pressing ahead with programmes that breathe life to hopes and aspirations of the people.

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