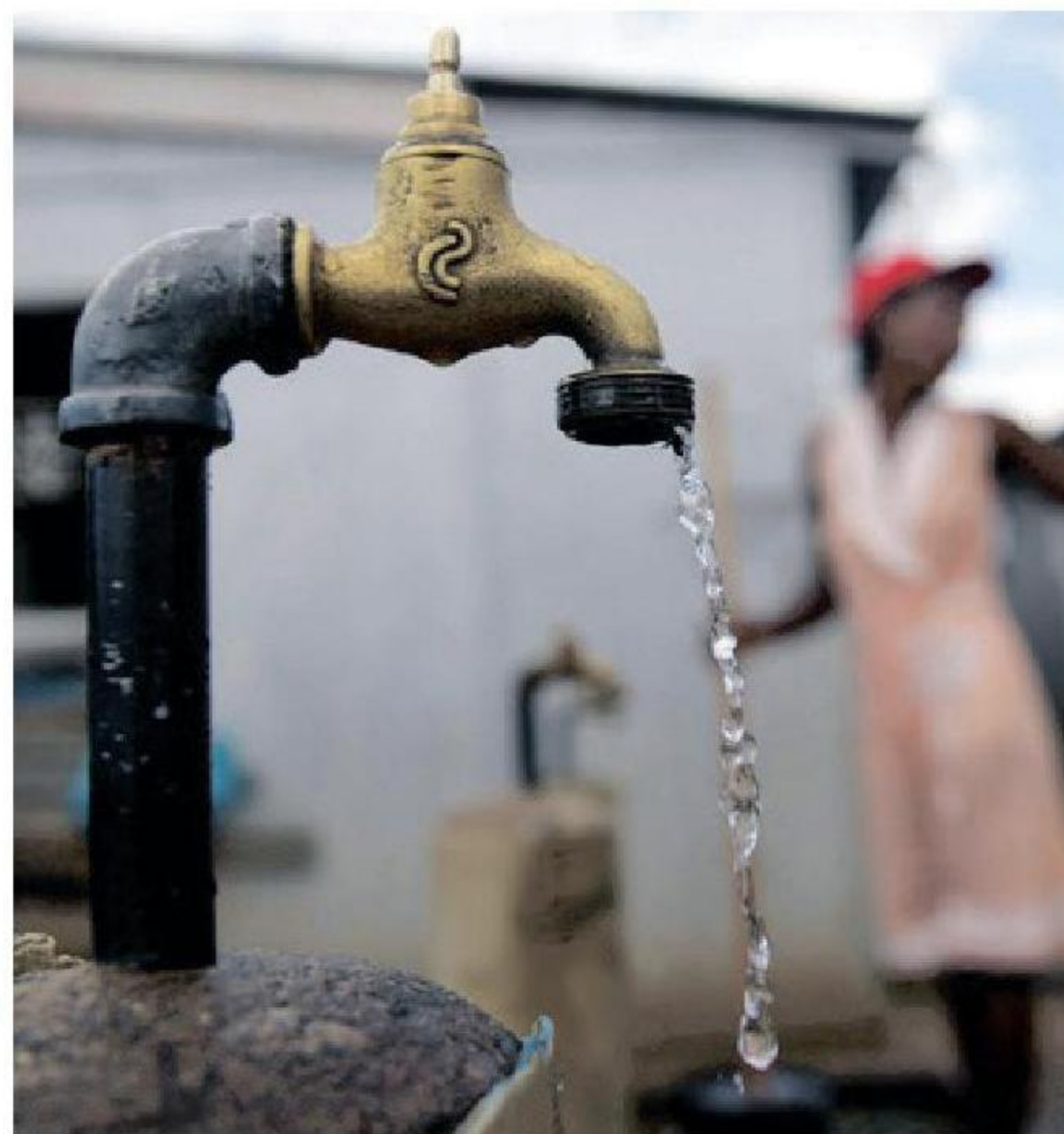


Access to water is key to empowerment of our country's women

WATER is life and key to socio-economic development. Lack of access to water is a serious disadvantage and negatively affects the empowerment and development of people, especially women as they have to go look for water for their families to survive.

As we celebrate International Women's Day on Saturday, let us remember that the day is a clarion call to accelerate women empowerment and gender equality. International Women's Day, celebrated annually on March 8 acknowledges the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women and marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality.

This year the day is celebrated under the theme "Accelerate Action" which hopes to speed up progress worldwide to achieve gender parity. Focusing on the need to Accelerate



THE lack of water causes serious hardships for communities, especially women, says the writer. | Independent Newspapers Archives

Action emphasises the importance of taking swift and decisive steps to achieve gender equality. It calls for increased momentum and urgency in addressing the systematic barriers

and biases that women face, both in personal and professional spheres.

Women empowerment can no longer be shelved, it needs to be prioritised to accelerate gender equality. As we celebrate this International Women's Day, let us remove all the barriers that impede women empowerment and development thereby negatively affecting gender equality. Water is a source of life and a lack of it causes serious hardships for communities, especially women. It is therefore important that we fast-track water provision to ease the burden on women's shoulders and give them, especially girls, an equal footing to compete with their male counterparts. It is therefore important to accelerate the delivery of water infrastructure and projects to ensure the empowerment and development of women. Women empowerment must no longer be taken for granted, but it must be a priority as empowered women empower communities and the world.

THEMBA KHOZA | Department of Water and Sanitation