

Protecting South Africa's water infrastructure: a call to action

WATER is life and central to the socio-economic development of society.

South Africa is a water-scarce country, which calls for the wise and sparing use of the available water, and the protection of water infrastructure from theft and vandalism to prevent unnecessary leaks and losses to ensure that everyone has access to this source of life.

Access to water is a basic human right but it is violated by irresponsible people through criminal activities, which usually leave communities high and dry.

These criminal acts also result in water resource pollution. The main challenge we are currently experiencing as a country is infrastructure theft and vandalism.

Theft, vandalism and destruction

of water and sanitation infrastructure are basically social and economic sabotage and have serious negative consequences for communities and the environment.

These crimes pose a serious threat to the provision of reliable water and sanitation services; therefore, all forms of infrastructure vandalism must be discouraged and stopped at all costs.

These acts also take place in different forms — illegal connections lead to leaks wasting a lot of water and tampering with valves leaves communities without water and leads to sewer spillages.

Illegal connections also result in reduced pressure in pipelines leaving other communities, especially in high-lying areas, without water.

The theft of infrastructure parts is

another challenge that is causing serious challenges for reliable water supply and proper sanitation management.

The vandalism of sanitation infrastructure on the other side contributes to sewer spillages and the pollution of water resources. The pollution of water resources makes water unfit for use, which basically means loss of precious water, which we cannot afford as a water-scarce country.

Water resource pollution also has negative socio-economic consequences for communities, as it also affects the environment and the ecosystem. Sewer spillages pose a health risk, are detrimental to the environment, and negatively affect food security.

We can prevent the unnecessary health risks and environmental degradation by preventing infrastructure

vandalism in our communities.

It is in our hands to ensure a healthy environment and food security.

We can no longer sit idle and let these criminal activities of infrastructure theft and vandalism destroy reliable water supply, our water resources and our environment.

We need to act now and stop these criminals as infrastructure theft and vandalism are crimes, and at worst are crimes against humanity as they negatively affect people's rights to water and a healthy environment.

Infrastructure vandalism happens in our communities and the criminals reside within the communities. We therefore need to report these criminals to law enforcement agencies to stop this heinous criminal activity.

Infrastructure vandalism stalls

development and takes communities and the country backwards. We can no longer allow these criminals to wreak havoc in our communities by destroying essential infrastructure; they must pay!

Communities must take ownership of their water and sanitation infrastructure, protect it against vandalism and expose criminal elements affecting reliable water supply and proper sewer management.

Let us root criminals out of our society. Let us also expose the municipal and water service providers' officials who are involved in water and sanitation infrastructure sabotage and vandalism.

This sabotage cannot and must not be tolerated.

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