

Shortage of water in hospitals a big worry

THE shortage of water in some of our hospitals as a result of power outages is a tell-tale sign of how fragile and vulnerable South Africa is as a water-stressed country.

It lays bare the level to which the absence of water may hinder the provision of basic services to communities.

Although the water shortages in hospitals are due to ongoing disruptions in electricity supply, they are a useful barometer to measure the impact of water supply – or lack thereof – in providing services in the future.

This is against the backdrop that the country has low levels of rainfall relative to the world average as well as a high level of evaporation due to the hot climate and increasing challenges of water pollution.

To pursue accelerated economic growth and make a significant dent in the high unemployment levels, more water is required.

However, translating this into reality is that it comes at a very high price.

Hence, the Department of Water and Sanitation places a premium on the conservation of available water resources.

Supplying water without fail in a water-scarce country like ours has led to the belief that the warnings about its lack are an invention of the government and therefore there is no immediate concern to conserve it.

The more taps continue to run, the stronger the indifference to the extent of the magnitude of the water shortages facing the country.

As communities, we have to adapt to the reality that our current water situation is dire.

We should confront head-on the fact that our actions are undermining imperatives such as the expansion of infrastructure, building of houses and the provision of essential services in hospitals.

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