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COMMENT



KHULEKANI NGOBO

Working to ensure SA's water security

THE right to water and sanitation is a human right provided for in the bill of rights.

The Constitution contains a Bill of Rights which forms part of the cornerstone of our democracy. It enshrines the rights of all people and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality, and freedom.

The Constitution places a legal obligation on government to ensure this right becomes a reality for all people living in the country. Successive governments have, over the past 27 years, prioritised the provision of water especially to communities that were deliberately excluded by apartheid and the current administration continues to upgrade water infrastructure.

As a young professional who grew up in Mpophomeni Township, KwaZulu-Natal, I accept the call to responsibility that comes with the many rights and freedoms that I have been privileged to inherit from the sacrifice and suffering of those who came before me.

Human Rights Day always takes place on the day before of the UN World Water Day, celebrated under the theme "Groundwater: making the invisible visible" for 2022.

Groundwater is invisible, but its impact is visible everywhere. Out of sight, under our feet, groundwater is a hidden treasure that enriches our lives. Almost all of the liquid freshwater in the world is groundwater. As climate change gets worse, groundwater will become more and more critical. We need to work together to sustainably manage this precious resource. Groundwater must not be out of mind.

How far has South Africa gone in the provision of water and what are the rights and responsibilities that come with water?

Despite the improvement, the arrival of Covid-19 laid bare unequal access to water in the country and there is still much more that needs to be done to ensure access to clean water.

The pandemic has increased the demand for water since people are expected to regularly wash their hands to prevent the spread of the virus. During the pandemic we have been able to provide water tanks and pipes to increase access to water in high-density public areas, informal settlements, and rural areas.

The Department of Water and Sanitation is in the process of finalising the National Water and Sanitation Master Plan, to ensure water security in the country.

Through the National Water Act 36 of 1998, we are committed to the sustainable provision of water to all households.

Ngobo is a communicator at Department of Water and Sanitation