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MEDIA STATEMENT

Torrential rains improve South Africa's water levels - report

15 December 2020

The people of Eastern Cape breathed a huge sigh of relief when the rains improved the province's dam levels after months of dry conditions that left most regions scrambling for water to drink. After plunging below half for several months, local dams this week recorded 51%.

The latest weekly report by the Department of Water and Sanitation shows that for the past two weeks dam levels have been on the rise at one percent a week. And with more rains expected in the run-up to Christmas, it is likely that the levels may soon soar to 55% and beyond, which will be remarkable.

In the past weeks, vast parts of the country have been soaked with torrential rains that have changed the water situation drastically. The current heavy downpours have increased Gauteng dam levels by five percent from 91,7% to 96,1% since the beginning of December. The increased levels, which include the Vaal Dam, will bring the much needed relief to Gauteng water users who were worried about the state of low levels of the dam at the beginning of summer.

Free State tops the charts with its week-on-week dam level improvement which the report captured at 72,4% this week. The figure reflects a seven percent increase compared to the same period last year when the dams stood at 65,2%.

Except Western Cape and Limpopo, all the provinces registered an increase in their dam levels. Western Cape, which has entered a dry hydrological summer season, dropped its total dam levels from 77,2% to 76% this week. However, the figure reflects a 16% improvement compared to the corresponding period last year when the province experienced the worst drought in a century.

Limpopo dropped slightly from 56,1% to 55,8% this week. However, the situation in Mopani and Mogalakwena districts is a great source of concern as some dams are scraping the bottom. There is virtually no drop in Middel-Letaba Dam which registered a measly 0,7% this week, the same as it was a week ago. The dam supplies Giyani and its sprawling villages.



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Glen Alpine Dam that supplies several towns in the Waterberg District, including Mokopane, dropped from 6,5% to 5,7% this week. However, the South African Weather Services predicted thundershowers for most parts of the province, giving hope that the water situation might improve by the end of the week.

On the brighter side of things, Mpumalanga looks set for a bumper season as its dams record a one percent rise week-on-week. This week local dams improved their intake from 63,4% to 64,4%, with 1 635,1 cubic metres of water in reservoir storage. In KwaZulu-Natal, where soft rains have become a weekly occurrence, we see an increase to its dam levels by a percentage week-on-week. As a result, the dry regions of Zululand and UMkhanyakude are receiving regular rainfalls that have drastically improved their situation.

Northern Cape and North West have also benefitted immensely from the current rainfall. The former recorded a whopping seven percent increase from 87,7% to 94,2%. North West improved slightly from 63,4% to 64,1%. However, more thundershowers have been predicted in the province this week.

The Department of Water Sanitation has urged water users in rural and peri-urban areas to harvest as much water as they can in the rainy season for future use in the dry winter. Water users in urban areas have been asked to use water wisely and sparingly as the country was not out of the woods yet.

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