

# NATIONAL WATER WEEK

20 - 26 MARCH



## Accelerating Change

WATER IS LIFE - SANITATION IS DIGNITY



**water & sanitation**

Department:  
Water and Sanitation  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA





### 1. BACKGROUND

The National Water Month is South Africa's expansion of the World Water Day which is observed annually on 22 March and focuses its attention on the importance of freshwater and advocating for the sustainable management of freshwater resources.

World Water Day is spearheaded by the United Nations (UN), using the day as a basis for longer-term action involving governments across the globe. The UN aims to ensure that everyone in the world has access to safe water by 2030, while not impacting negatively on the environment.

Each year, the United Nations Water sets a theme for World Water Day which corresponds to a current or future challenge. The theme for 2023 is **"Accelerating Change"**, and seeks to inform policy and decision-makers, inside and outside the water community, how improvements in water resources management as well as access to water supply and sanitation services, are essential to overcoming poverty and addressing various other social and economic inequities.

Water is at the core of sustainable development and is critical for socio-economic development, healthy ecosystems and for human survival. It is vital for reducing the global burden of disease and improving the health, welfare and productivity of people.

To date, there are off-track measures in place to meet the Sustainable Development Goal 6 on water and sanitation by 2030 and World Water Day is an opportunity to contribute to speeding up progress.

South Africa is a water scarce country, receiving around half of the global average annual rainfall, with this rainfall distributed unevenly across the country, and across seasons and years. This water scarcity is exacerbated by an escalating demand due to economic and population growth, urbanisation and rising standards of living, unsustainable use and high levels of wastage and loss, as well as increasing pollution which renders water unfit for use.

In addition, the degradation of wetlands, changes in rainfall patterns due to climate change and increasing temperatures also driven by climate change, are contributing to the reduction of the security of water supply.



## **2. RATIONALE**

South Africa will celebrate National Water Month from 1 – 31 March 2023.

This month-long awareness campaign helps the department to deliver its mandate on challenges that the National Water and Sanitation Master Plan (Master Plan) notes of insufficient water, infrastructure maintenance and investment, recurrent droughts driven by climatic variation, inequities in access to water and sanitation, as well as deteriorating water quality.

Other significant challenges that the Master Plan mentions, include that:

- The large number of people living in South Africa who still do not have access to a basic water supply service and people do not have access to dignified and safe sanitation;
- Only 64% of households have access to a reliable water supply service 56% of waste water treatment works and 44% of water treatment works are in a poor or critical condition and 11% are dysfunctional;
- More than 50% of South Africa's wetlands have been lost and of those that remain, 33% are in poor ecological conditions;
- Only 5% of agricultural water use is by black farmers;
- Water is severely under-priced and cost recovery is not being achieved;
- 41% of municipal water does not generate revenue and 35% is lost through leakage.



The Master Plan is therefore based on five key objectives that define a 'new normal' for water and sanitation management in South Africa and seeks to achieve:

- Resilient and fit-for-use water supply;
- Universal water and sanitation provision;
- Equitable sharing and allocation of water resources;
- Effective infrastructure management, operation and maintenance; and
- Reduction in future water demand.

These five objectives enable the achievement of the National Development Plan's (NDP) Vision for 2030 of affordable and reliable access to sufficient and safe water and hygienic sanitation for socio-economic growth and well-being, with due regard to the environment.

National Water 'Month will therefore create awareness on the priorities of the Departments Master Plan and the awareness month will be another opportunity to rally the country behind our water priorities so that we realize the Constitutional rights of all people in relation to water and the environment, as well as meeting *Goal 6 of the Sustainable Development Goal that seeks to ensure access to water and sanitation for all.*

### **3. OBJECTIVES OF THE NATIONAL WATER MONTH**

The objectives of the National Water Month are to strive through a collaborative effort and active engagement of government departments, private companies, academia, community members and stakeholders in the sector, to find solutions to water conservation, pollution, climate change, as well as floods and droughts.

The envisaged outcomes for National Water Month are as follows:

- Awareness on how an enabling environment will be created for effective water and sanitation management including information sharing on the five (5) pillar strategy of the Department of Water and Sanitation;
- Increased awareness on the use, management, conservation, development and protection of water resources,
- Dialogue within the sector of how the different players can work together to create solutions.



#### **4. KEY MESSAGES**

The Master Plan notes that South Africa is facing increasing water demands to meet the needs of a rapidly growing and urbanising population, changing lifestyles, and economic growth.

At the same time, climate change is driving the country towards a warmer and drier future, with predicted longer and more extreme droughts, and more intense floods. Climate change means that there will be less water available to meet water needs.

For this reason, the Key messages for National Water Month 2023 include:

- **South Africa is a water scarce country,**
- **“Seeds of Change: Innovative Solution for Water-Wise World”**
- **Accelerating change,**
- **To achieve water for all, we must use water more efficiently;**
- **To achieve water for all, we need to make informed choices about appropriate sanitation technologies and we need to plan for effective operation and maintenance of sanitation infrastructure.**



## **5. APPROACH TO EVENTS/ ACTIVITIES FOR NATIONAL WATER MONTH**

National Water Month activities will be held across the country. The integrated water sector calendar of events will be available on the website of the Department of Water and Sanitation.

To celebrate the annual awareness day, the Department of Water and Sanitation aims to bring together community members, experts, practitioners, diplomats, decision makers and business innovators in South Africa to exchange ideas and foster new thinking that will enhance the discussions around the various themes that were highlighted above.

## **6. APPROACH TO PROFILING IN THE MEDIA**

During the commemoration of National Water Month, communication will be rolled out on various media platforms including print, broadcast and social media. In addition to adverts and media engagements, media briefings and interviews will be held.

Regions will hold their respective media briefings to highlight their plans, successes, state of infrastructure as well current water levels and usage patterns by water users. The messaging should be able to ensure that even those without water are assured that they will have reliable access to safe water in the future.

The Department will work with partners in local government, private sector as well as community members in elevating the discussions and thematic areas.

All platforms will be exploited in a bid to ensure maximum profiling of the thematic areas including online, print and broadcast.



## **7. WAY FORWARD**

Achieving water security requires sound evidence to inform policy and dialogue, good governance, advances in research and technology, the mobilisation of finance and investment, management of climate risks, and cooperation in managing transboundary water resources. It requires balancing supply and demand, redistributing water for equitable access and use, managing water and sanitation services effectively, regulating the water sector with a focus on high impact use, improving raw water quality and protecting and restoring ecosystems. Thus, through this campaign the Department should:

- Encourage entities, partners and stakeholders to participate in a new orientation around the country's water resources;
- Ensure that campaign messages, materials and approaches are available on the DWS website for downloading;
- Register community activities and events on water saving online on the website of the Department;
- Take and share photographs and other media from communities who are actively involved in saving water;
- Work with corporates on profiling their innovations in becoming more efficient water users.

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