



## INTERNET ARTICLE

### **DWS engages stakeholders on Ministerial Advisory to find lasting solutions to the water challenges in the Middle Letaba sub-catchment**

18 June 2024

The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) met with affected multi-stakeholders in the Middle Letaba Sub-Catchment in Giyan where the draft Terms of Reference (TORs) for the Investigative Panel that will investigate the root causes and make proposals on resolving the water challenges in the long term in the sub-catchment were presented and inputs and comments sourced from the stakeholders on 11 June 2024. This engagement is a follow-up on the resolutions taken during a Ministerial engagement earlier this year.

On 23 April 2024, Minister Senzo Mchunu in his capacity as the Minister of Water and Sanitation supported by the two Deputy Ministers and officials of the department conducted an oversight visit to the Middle Letaba sub-catchment and convened a multi-stakeholder meeting on the prevailing water challenges.

One of the resolutions announced during the meeting was the appointment of an independent investigation panel to investigate the root causes of the water challenges and make proposals on resolving the water challenges in the long term. The Department has concluded the appointment of an Advisory Committee consisting of individual experts in different fields relating to the prevailing problems in Middle Letaba. The Advisory Committee is expected to contact the stakeholders during the investigation.

Ms Doris Maumela from DWS Limpopo outlined the purpose of the engagement as a follow-up to the Ministerial engagement held in April. She further outlined that the main purpose of the meeting was to engage and finalise the Terms of Reference for the independent investigative that will investigate the water challenges in the Middle Letaba sub-catchment. She encouraged the delegates to seriously scrutinise the draft TORs and make inputs so that all issues are addressed.

Ms Dudu Sifunda, the Provincial Head of Mpumalanga DWS, presented on the challenges, interventions and the background for the formation of the Ministerial Advisory Committee. She stated that the purpose of the presentation was to appraise the stakeholders of the intervention undertaken by DWS to resolve the water challenges in the Middle Letaba-Subcatchment. The Middle Letaba Nsami system, dominated by domestic and irrigation water use sectors, has been in deficit since around 2012. The significant reduction in natural hydrology is the main reason for the lower yield in the catchment. The natural flow record for Nsami Dam has significantly been reduced from a mean annual rainfall (MAR) of 9.47 million

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## water & sanitation

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m<sup>3</sup>/annum in 1997 to the current 3.34 million m<sup>3</sup>/a. Similarly, the MAR for the Middle Letaba Dam dropped from 135 million m<sup>3</sup>/a to 80.5 million m<sup>3</sup>/a in the same period.

“The Minister has been receiving concerns from the community and their leaders on the status of the Middle Letaba Dam. He subsequently visited the catchment and also convened a multi-stakeholder meeting on 23 April 2024. The community reiterated their lack of trust that the current interventions (regulatory and system augmentation) will bring relief, let alone be implemented. The Minister then announced his intention to institute an independent investigation into the water challenges in the Middle Letaba”, she said.

Deputy Director-General Mr Xolani Zwane presented the draft Terms of Reference to the delegates and requested their inputs so as to finalise the appointment of the independent investigative panel. The Roles of the Advisory Committee will be to: (a) Advise on the adequacy of the regulatory interventions done by the Department to resolve the water crisis. These include the validation and verification, compliance monitoring, and enforcement), (b) Advise on the adequacy of system operation (current initiatives, gaps, (c) Advise on the adequacy of the planned regulatory interventions done by the Department, (d) Evaluate the adequacy of the planned system augmentation, (e) Advise on the possible gaps in the overall water resource management programme of the Department in terms of its responsiveness to public complaints, the ability to proactively prevent water shortages, to redress inequalities in accessing water resources, (f) Assessment of impediments legal, technical, etc.) that limit the Minister to urgently intervene in cases of water crisis.

“Due to the urgency of the matter, the Advisory Committee will be appointed for a short duration of five(5) months and will be composed of not more than eight (8) individuals. The appointment will be in line with the prescribed DPSA Hourly Rates for Consultants. Costs associated with the retired judge will be informed by their status in terms of approval to undertake remunerative work with the state”, he stated.

Dr Matlala outlined the expertise required and how the panel was assembled and the delegates were given the opportunity to make their inputs.

The stakeholders made their inputs and showed their appreciation that the process is moving as they are tired of talkshows and want a lasting solution to their water challenges in the sub-catchment.

The MMC for Technical Services in Mopani District, Cllr Sefufi made her inputs and also responded to issues on water supply raised by the delegates.

DDG Zwane, in his closing remarks noted all the inputs and comments from the audience and promised that they will be incorporated into the final terms of reference.

**Themba Khoza**

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