INTERNET ARTICLE

Department of Water and Sanitation Strengthens Water Access in Bronkhorstspruit as National Water Month Highlights Women's Empowerment

10 March 2026

The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) has intensified efforts to improve water access in Bronkhorstspruit, in the City of Tshwane, while placing women at the centre of water development initiatives during National Water Month. As part of these activities, the Minister of Water and Sanitation Pemmy Majodina, commemorated International Women's Day by officiating the handover of a newly completed borehole to the Sokhulumi community. The initiative forms part of the Department's broader National Water Month programme aimed at strengthening reliable water access for communities, while also promoting and recognising the important role women play in shaping the future of the water sector.

The engagement, held at the Indlu Yokuthula Service Centre in Sokhulumi, highlighted the critical relationship between water access, dignity and socio-economic opportunities for women and communities across South Africa.

Minister Majodina was joined by Deputy Ministers David Mahlobo and Sello Seitlholo, along with representatives and board members from Rand Water and the Water Research Commission. Their participation underscored a coordinated sector-wide commitment to addressing water access challenges while strengthening women's participation in the water and sanitation sector.

The newly completed borehole was implemented following an assessment of persistent water supply challenges affecting the Sokhulumi community in Bronkhorstspruit. The assessment identified the urgent need for additional and reliable water sources to support residents in the area.

The borehole is expected to significantly improve access to safe and reliable water for households in Sokhulumi and surrounding communities, providing much-needed relief and strengthening local water security.

Speaking during the engagement, Minister Majodina emphasised that water security and gender equality are closely interconnected.

“Water is not simply about infrastructure and service delivery. It is about dignity, health, equality and human rights. In many communities, when water systems fail or supply is interrupted, it is women who carry the greatest burden. Women and girls often walk long distances to collect water, manage household water needs and bear the consequences when sanitation systems are inadequate,” she said.

She added that improving access to water directly contributes to women’s empowerment by enabling greater participation in education, economic activities and leadership within communities.

The commemoration takes place during a significant month for South Africa. March marks National Water Month, a period during which the country reflects on the importance of protecting and managing its scarce water resources while also observing International Women’s Day and Human Rights Day.

“These commemorations are deeply connected. Access to water is a constitutional right, but it is also a women’s rights issue. When communities have reliable water services, women gain time, dignity and opportunities to participate more fully in education, economic activities and community leadership,” Minister Majodina said.

The programme also aligns with this year’s World Water Day theme, “Water and Gender,” under the global slogan “Where Water Flows, Equality Grows.” The theme calls on governments and stakeholders worldwide to place women and girls at the centre of water solutions and decision-making.

The ministerial engagement also served as a platform to advance the Department’s Sector Wide Women in Water Programmatic Approach 2026–2030, which aims to strengthen gender mainstreaming across the water and sanitation sector.

Through this initiative, the Department seeks to promote women’s leadership within water institutions, expand technical training and skills development opportunities for young women, support women-owned enterprises within the water value chain and increase women’s participation in infrastructure development and maintenance.

“Women are not only beneficiaries of water services. They are engineers, scientists, innovators and leaders in this sector. Our responsibility is to ensure that the water industry opens more opportunities for women to lead and shape the future of water management in our country,” Minister Majodina said.

The engagement brought together women leaders across the water sector, including representatives from water boards, private sector partners, non-governmental organisations, civil society, rural women’s groups and educational institutions. Stakeholders used the platform to reaffirm their commitment to accelerating opportunities for women and building a more inclusive and equitable water industry.

The event also comes amid intensified national efforts to address water challenges across the country. During the recent State of the Nation Address, President Cyril Ramaphosa identified water security as one of South Africa’s most pressing priorities.

The President announced the establishment of a National Water Crisis Committee, which he will chair, to strengthen coordination and accelerate responses to water supply challenges affecting both urban and rural communities.

During the Sokhulumi engagement, the Ministry also interacted directly with community members, providing residents with an opportunity to share their experiences and priorities regarding water access.

The dialogue reinforced government’s commitment to community-driven solutions and responsive service delivery.

The Department of Water and Sanitation reaffirmed its commitment to expanding reliable access to water through sustainable Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) initiatives. These interventions aim to strengthen water infrastructure, improve maintenance of existing systems and support municipalities in delivering reliable water services.

Through initiatives such as the Sokhulumi borehole project, government continues to prioritise sustainable water provision while ensuring that women remain central to shaping the future of water management in South Africa.

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