



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



EdTM

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MINISTER OF WATER AND SANITATION

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY: QUESTION ★74 FOR ORAL REPLY

A draft reply to the above mentioned question asked by Ms J M Maluleke (ANC) is attached for your consideration.

DIRECTOR-GENERAL (Acting)

DATE: 29/09/2014

DRAFT REPLY APPROVED/~~AMENDED~~

**MRS NP MOKONYANE
MINISTER OF WATER AND SANITATION**

DATE: 09.09.14.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FOR ORAL REPLY

QUESTION NO ★74

DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 26 AUGUST 2014
(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 11)

★74. Ms J M Maluleke (ANC) to ask the Minister of Water and Sanitation:

In light of the recent water crisis in North West, particularly in Bloemhof, Sannieshof and Biesiesvlei, (a) what measures has her department put in place to address the situation and return it to normal and (b) what are the relevant details of her department's plan to deal with the challenge of funded posts that are vacant in her department?

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REPLY:

(a) BLOEMHOF

Sewage spillages into the Vaal River, about 100 metres upstream from where the Bloemhof Water Purification Plant sources water, resulted in a diarrhea outbreak amongst community members in the township of Boitumelong and the death of three (3) babies.

On the 30 May 2014 I visited the Bloemhof to establish the facts relating to the deaths and to take corrective action. It became evident from my engagement with the Councilors and Management of the Lekwe Teemane Municipality that the Municipality had failed in their duty to provide the community with a safe drinking water supply and to manage the sewage disposal in such a way as not to be harmful to the community. Through consultation with the Premier of the North West Province, I immediately established a Technical and Communication task team to conduct a full assessment of the situation and to put emergency measures in place to have safe water available for the community. This latter aspect was dealt with by immediately mobilizing tankers to cart water to the Community and instructing Sedibeng Water to mobilise technical staff to be deployed to the Municipality to stabilize the operations.

The Technical Task Team was established with representatives from: my Department of Water and Sanitation, the District and Local Municipality, Sedibeng Water Board, Department of Health, Department of Human Settlement/Sanitation division, Municipal Infrastructure Support Agent (MISA), SALGA, Contractors and Consultants.

The assessment revealed gross mismanagement of both the water and sewerage systems resulting in the subsequent water quality failures were mainly attributed to:

- Insufficient operation and maintenance practices;
- Shortages of water treatment chemicals and inadequate disinfection;
- Insufficient maintenance equipment;
- Inoperable process units e.g. the dissolved air flotation units;
- Poorly designed systems (problems experienced with the sewer network);
- Poor system management; and
- Infrequent water quality testing and recording.

An action plan to address the above problems was developed and endorsed by the task team on the 6 June 2014.

The action plan is fairly comprehensive addressing short term and medium term actions and progress is monitored on a weekly basis. The main reason for the contamination was due to raw sewer spillages into the Vaal River upstream of the point from where Bloemhof Water Purification Plant sources water. The spillage caused serious water pollution which resulted in rampant diarrhea to community members in Boitumelong Township and environs. These spillages are attributable to poor management of infrastructure and gross negligence on the part of the Municipality and its contractors.

Water samples were taken from various points by the Department of Health and analysed by the National Health Laboratory services. The tests results were made available on 2 June 2014, the reports showed no presence of vibrio cholera. It was concluded therefore that the diarrhea was caused as a result of the elevated levels of E.Coli in the water as a result of the sewage spills. Sedibeng Water immediately dealt with the disinfection of the water systems to eliminate the e-coli. The systems were flushed, chlorinated and brought back into service. Cases of raw sewer spillages into the Vaal River from where Bloemhof Water Purification Plant sources water. The spillage caused serious water pollution which resulted in rampant diarrhea to community members in Boitumelong Township and environs.

Following the engagement between me and the Premier action was taken against the Mayor and the Municipal Manager of Lekwe Teemane Municipality who were placed on suspension for dereliction of duty.

On 17 June 2014, I directed Sedibeng Water in terms of Section 41 of the Water Services Act, 1997 (Act No.108 of 1997) to urgently intervene in Bloemhof in order to turnaround water quality and operations and maintenance of the works. Sedibeng Water are working with the team, consisting of officials from the Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District Municipality as a Water Services Authority, Departments of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation, Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, as well as the North West Province to address the challenges of water and sanitation in the area.

Sedibeng Water has stabilized the water supply system and clean water is being provided to the communities while they deal with the refurbishment of both the Water and Waste Water Treatment works. Their Business plans have been evaluated and the Department has reprioritised funding from The Regional Bulk Infrastructure Grant and Accelerated Community Infrastructure Programmes to execute the work which is estimated at R36 million which will be implemented within the next 12 months. The Department is currently engaging with National Treasury to secure a budget of R19.5 million for the operation of the two systems. The Water Board has nevertheless been instructed to proceed with the work in terms of their approved Business Plans and they are implementing the programme for refurbishment.

SANNIESHOF

A follow up site visit was conducted around the Sannieshof Township and the sewer pump station on the 27 August 2014. The Municipality has allocated an amount of R10, 462, 973.00 from Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG) funding in the current financial year for the construction of Sannieshof WWTP. There is a further R12 million MIG allocation for Sannieshof/Agisanang Bulk Water Supply & Reticulation in the next financial year 2015/16.

BIESIESVLEI (Itekeng)

The Department together with the Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality conducted follow-up inspection around the Itekeng Township on 23 July 2014. During the site visit water samples were taken twice at the Itekeng Clinic and Communal Tap for bacteriological and chemical analysis to verify the water quality status. The analysis results received did not show any form of contamination.

- (b) The Department has an ongoing recruitment programme to fill vacant posts, currently the needs are being evaluated against the new mandate of the Department.

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