



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

INTERNET ARTICLE

Water and Sanitation a Constitutional Right

25 November 2014

It cannot be comforting to still see South African women, particularly in the rural areas walking more than 1.4 km every day to fetch water. It is also fitting to talk about such challenges on the first day of the 16 Days of Activism, said the Water and Sanitation Minister Nomvula Mokonyane.

Speaking at The New Age SABC breakfast briefing in Sandton, Johannesburg on 25 November the Minister highlighted the need to review the laws that govern water services in order to address these challenges. "The public and private sector need to work together to ensure that water resources are used in a responsible manner for the benefit of all," said Minister Mokonyane.

*"The Department of Water and Sanitation is currently working on reviewing the National Water Act and the Water Services Act to align it to the National Development Plan," she said. The innovative changes that the Minister is introducing are appropriate as the conversation of the breakfast briefing was centred on the theme "**Radical socio-economic transformation through accelerated delivery of water and sanitation services**".*

In addressing the need for continuous rehabilitation of infrastructure, the Minister indicated that some of the service delivery protests on lack of water services are as a result of ageing infrastructure in the country. A dependable, safe and reliable water conveyance system leads to sustainable availability of water and also brings certainty to socio-economic development. "It is time that we appreciate the issue of aged infrastructure in South Africa and plan such that you go back and invest in the areas that have been neglected over time," said Minister Mokonyane.

There should be an integrated development plan and investment into maintenance especially in the urban areas as there is an influx of people into these areas, she added. Part of the plan of the department is to ensure that local government has the right capacity to perform operations and maintenance on the infrastructure and 10% of the budget is allocated to conduct this work as the recent Presidential Local Government Summit indicated.

For sufficient and adequate sanitation services to be delivered, the Minister said the department must address good urban governance and adequate urban planning to address challenges such as the eradication of the bucket system and other undignified sanitation. Since 1994 government has moved towards providing adequate sanitation to the people. At the moment the department is addressing approximately 2 million households that are part of the backlog, this is true for both rural and urban areas. "These two areas cannot be addressed in the same manner as the cost of laying infrastructure in rural areas is extremely high. This has given way for the use of alternative technology to be introduced to deal with this issue," said Minister Mokonyane.

The Minister indicated that she is repositioning the water boards to assist with the backlog of water supply and sanitation. The Minister added that the department has been given authority by the National Treasury to generate resources that will help in the area of water and sanitation.

Addressing the current challenges of Acid Mine Drainage (AMD), Minister Mokonyane indicated that there is adequate safe drinking water for all South Africans. The Minister stressed the necessity to explore the use of alternative technology to avoid incidents of pollution such as Acid Mine Drainage, which negatively affect the quality of drinking water.

In the meantime, government has already taken the first steps towards the resolution of Acid mine drainage and will continue these efforts with the relevant partners in civil society and industry.

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Issued by the Department of Water & Sanitation

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