



## water & sanitation

Department:  
Water and Sanitation  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

### OPINION PIECE

#### Beyond one hundred days in office

01 October 2014

*It has been more than one hundred days of hard work and determination to succeed, most importantly, focusing on tackling the challenges that bedevil the country's water service delivery objectives.*

*Yes, it is true, Minister Nomvula Mokonyane's approach to doing her job in the new Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), has been the same as in her previous engagements – working hard and doing her uttermost best.*

*She is not called as "Mama Action" for nothing. She is a forthright person who takes everything she does seriously. No amount of hard work intimidates her. Actually, the more challenging the assignment is the more she marvels in doing what is expected of her.*

*When she was appointed to take charge of DWS around June or July 2014, Minister Mokonyane was mainly aware of the challenges that lay ahead as related to Gauteng where she was Premier.*

*She had to hit the ground running as she tackled, with great success, the water delivery crisis that rocked North West especially around Brits and Bloemhof areas.*

*She assembled relevant officials from the three-tiers of government to work around the clock to find solutions to the challenge.*

*Minister Mokonyane was there in person to listen to the concerns of the residents of the area. In the many meetings she held with the residents of those affected areas, Minister Mokonyane made a very valuable observation that was probably the main cause of water protests – that there is a total lack of consultation, communication and engagements with the residents, let alone, also with all water stakeholders.*

*She realised that it is very important to include residents in all issues relating to water service delivery in all areas of the country. For her engagement with all parties involved makes it much easier to all work towards arriving at an amicable solution together.*

*The Minister was, at the most, travelling throughout the country to be personally present to work in finding solution with all stakeholders. She did not shy away when the water challenge hit the Free State capital of Bloemfontein. Minister Mokonyane met the Free State Premier, Ace Magashule, Mayors, councillors, residents and various stakeholders.*

*What came out of these high-level engagements saw a breakthrough that brought water to the seemingly dry Free State. The parties, under the guidance of Minister Mokonyane, agreed that some of the water being pumped from Lesotho through the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) headed for Gauteng, should be redirected to the Free State to serve the people of the Free State.*



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*Minister Mokonyane reasoned that it was painful for the people of the Free State to witness tons of water being pumped from Lesotho go past them headed for Gauteng. This is another accomplishment since she took office.*

*The highlight of the first 100 days in office was when she launched and established the first-ever Water and Sanitation Summit that was held at the Birchwood Hotel in Boksburg east of Johannesburg.*

*The summit produced a declaration of intent where all the delegates signed and committed themselves to implementing the outcomes.*

*The summit agreed that a 10-year water plan should be drafted and implemented as soon as possible.*

*The Water and Sanitation Summit objectives were to engage with stakeholders on the primary challenges facing water and sanitation in South Africa, and to develop innovative solutions that will enable the country to take a great leap forward as people collaboratively develop a national vision for water and sanitation over the next 10 years.*

*There was also the Presidential Local Government Summit (PLGS) where Minister Mokonyane played a crucial role for attaining success.*

*It should be noted that DWS plays a key role in the core service delivery deliverables of water and sanitation. We should remember that water is life, sanitation is dignity.*

*This summit, the PLGS, according to delegates, resolved to:*

- 1. Implement the Back to Basics programme.*
- 2. Create conditions for decent living by consistently delivering municipal services to the right quality and standard. This includes planning and delivery of infrastructure and amenities, maintenance and upkeep thereof.*
- 3. Ensure good governance and effective administration - cut wastage, spend public funds prudently, hire competent staff, ensure transparency and accountability.*

### **Declaration for PLG SUMMIT:**

*Further ensure that corruption is prevented and rooted out at all levels;*

- 4. Ensure sound financial management and accounting by prudently managing resources so as to sustainably deliver services and bring development to communities;*
- 5. Build and maintain sound institutional and administrative capabilities managed by dedicated and skilled personnel at all levels;*
- 6. Put people and their concerns first and ensure constant contact with communities through effective public participation platforms;*
- 7. Ensure quarterly performance monitoring and reporting on the work of municipalities as directed by the Back to Basics approach; and*
- 8. Improve the political management of municipalities and be responsive to the needs and aspirations of local communities.*

*In these first 100 days in office the Minister also travelled to, among many towns, villages and cities, Bushbuckridge, where a Water Reticulation Project was launched. This project brought water to the homes of villagers and residents for the first time in their lives.*



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*This is great work indeed by this fearless activist whose ambition is to make sure that poverty eradication is a thing of the past, especially for poor communities.*

**Ike Motsapi**