



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OPINION *PIECE*

Crackdown on wasted water

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South Africa is losing an estimated R7 billion through water leaks in taps, pipes and toilets. This is having a profoundly negative impact on the country's economy and the scourge must be nipped in its buds.

A recent study by the World Bank's energy and water department found that the total cost to water utilities caused by non-revenue water (water that is unaccounted for) worldwide can be conservatively estimated at \$141 billion (R169 billion) a year, with a third of it occurring in the developing world. In developing countries, about 45 million cubic meters are lost daily through water leakage in the distribution networks this is enough to serve nearly 200 million people.

Similarly, the study found that close to 30 million cubic meters are delivered every day to consumers, but are not invoiced because of pilferage, employees' corruption, and poor metering. All this directly affects the capacity of utilities in developing countries to become financially viable and fund necessary expansions of service, especially for the poor.

Leakage from all parts of the system and overflows at the utility's storage tanks can in some cases, comprise unaccounted for water. They are caused by poor operations and maintenance, the lack of active leakage control, and poor quality of underground assets. Commercial losses are caused by customer meter under registration, data-handling errors, and theft of water in various forms.

It's against this background that today's launch of the 'War on leaks' project by President Jacob Zuma and Minister Nomvula Mokonyane in Zwile township, Port Elizabeth, forms part of the government's concerted effort to tackle the problem head-on. A total of 15 000 young recruits will be trained as plumbers, artisans and water agents over a period of five years and be deployed among municipalities who will employ them to fix the leaking infrastructure. The first batch of 3 000 recruits from different parts of South Africa will be at the launch.

The recruits will be trained by Rand Water, a parastatal of the Department of Water and Sanitation. The project aims to decrease water leaks and losses by training and professionalizing unemployed youth to improve the overall water use efficiency within municipalities, communities and households. The end result will raise water conservation and water demand management awareness and instill a sense of appreciation for the scarce resource in municipalities, communities and households. The recruits will be trained and deployed over a period, with the first intake of 3000 in 2015, the second in 2016 (7 000) and the last in 2017 (5 000).

The trainees will upon deployment have a long-term impact on water losses, reduction of non-revenue water, policy improvements and competent available human resources capacity within the broader framework of water conservation and water demand management. This will be achieved through the constant engagements and consultations with the priority municipalities identified as recipients of the project.

The department has provided Rand Water with a list of priority municipalities that experience high water losses, these areas will be prioritized based on the list, and their challenges will be



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used to correctly design and implement interventions per priority area of the project to ensure that the project meets its primary and secondary objectives, which are to minimize water losses, and create capacity and employment within the various communities and the country.

The project is currently managed and monitored through a Project Management Office setup by Rand Water where a central repository of project plans, agreements and documentation is in place. A project structure and governance process has been constituted for transparency and openness. Constant quality assurance, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting processes have been instituted within the project structure. Various statutory and voluntary bodies have been consulted to participate in the project. The Energy and Water Services Sector Education Training Authority will assume full responsibility for the training, development and professional recognition of the recruits through accredited services providers.

At the inception and planning of the project various benchmarks against other similar projects were done to learn from the lessons learnt and prevent similar mistakes from recurring on the project. The project will dovetail into other nationally-run projects such as the youth employment programmes, infrastructure development, community upliftment projects to form part of a seamless transition that will minimize duplications and unnecessary start-ups and encourage cost

According to the Water Demand Management Analysis, about 43 000 residential areas in Tsakane, Langaville and Geluksdal in Ekurhuleni in Gauteng have high volumes of water wastage. The project involves conducting leak free tests in each property, fixing or replacing leaking plumbing items such as toilet cisterns and associated pipe work. It involves conducting leak free tests in each property, fixing or replacing leaking plumbing items such as toilet cisterns and associated pipe work.

This includes refurbishment of underground pipes and yard connections, fixing sink taps, baths, showers, outdoor taps, condition rating of underground pipes, and installation of meters on properties.

Speaking at the 7th World Water Forum in April this year, Minister Nomvula Mokonyane of the Department of Water and Sanitation, said prioritised infrastructure; skills development; sustainable solutions; and on putting in place measurable solutions that have high impact on the ground.

South Africa has a major shortage of skilled water engineers and technicians.

Sanitation portal at: www.dwa.gov.za