



## water & sanitation

Department:  
Water and Sanitation  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

### INTERNET ARTICLE

#### **Mhlabatshane Dam Safety Awareness Campaign**

28 June 2016

Dams serve an important purpose as part of our nation's infrastructure. Millions of people rely on dams to bring them benefits such as flood control, water supply, irrigation, recreation, and renewable energy generation. Safe operation and maintenance is important towards sustaining these benefits and avoiding accidents which are very often preventable.

On Monday 27 June 2016, Umgeni Water in partnership with the Department of Water and Sanitation hosted the Dam Safety Awareness Campaign at Ophepheni in the UGu District Municipality focusing on the Mhlabatshane Dam.

The aim the awareness campaign was to encourage and promote community responsibility as well as best practices around dams and to advice on steps people can take to prevent future tragedies.

"As a responsible corporate citizen, we want to play an active role in preventing drownings and injuries that occur while swimming in rivers and dams. In this way, greater understanding of how to prevent injuries and deaths in unprotected areas such as dams and rivers will be heightened," said Mr. Msizi Cele, General Manager of Operations at Umgeni Water to the community of Ophepheni.

Various schools and the community members within the area were invited to the event. During the campaign, Bhekameva Primary School performed gospel music, recited poems and performed drama to entertain the public. The activities serve as an opportunity to raise awareness about our nations' dams and to take steps in making them safer infrastructures for our community, whilst also educating the community on the necessity of dam safety.

"We encourage everyone to be aware of the dams in your area, because knowledge and awareness are important parts of dam safety," said Mr. Cyril Gamede, Chief Executive of Umgeni Water. "The purpose of this Dam Safety Awareness Day is a time to inform your friends and neighbours about dams in the area and to contact your local dam safety official or local emergency management agency for more information," Mr. Gamede said.

The Department of Water and Sanitation and Umgeni Water have addressed the need for potable water in the Mhlabatshane area through the construction of the Mhlabatshane Bulk Water Supply Scheme, which includes a dam. However, it often happens that the provision of infrastructure such as dams, is accompanied by certain risks to people living in the vicinity of this infrastructure.



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The World Health Organisation (WHO) has reported that drowning is the third most common cause of unintentional injury and death worldwide. Almost 400 000 deaths occur globally each year as a result of drowning.

**Mbali Mahaye**