



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

INTERNET ARTICLE

War on Leaks programme seeks ways to best approach the challenges facing South Africa.

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The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) as the custodian of South Africa's water resources is engaged in creating and upgrading relevant skills to maintain our existing water infrastructure.

According to the South African Institution of Civil Engineering (Saice) ideally there should not be a large gap between the available engineering professionals and inhabitants that need service delivery. In South Africa, in large cities and towns' municipalities, access to skilled professionals for each 100000 inhabitants needs to increase. There is not enough trained personnel to address our service delivery needs, including water, sanitation and waste management.

The War on Leaks (W.O.L) programme seeks to correct this imbalance and dilemma in terms of skills base; also bearing in mind that 25% of these skilled professionals are aged between 60 and 64 this means they could be retiring within the next 5 years. This presents a loss of the available skills and creates an enormous gap that would not be easy to fill.

Training engineers at South African tertiary institutions also cannot address this skills shortage fast enough. South Africa's accumulated wisdom is vested in an ageing engineering corps, and the challenge is to transfer this wisdom to young people.

This happens whilst DWS is still grappling with challenges regarding water purification, aged and poorly maintained infrastructure, absence of piped water systems and storage. Personnel are needed to work on boreholes, pumps and pipes to households in order to augment the skills capacity in the sector and to work mainly in townships, rural and disadvantaged communities.

The War on Leaks (W.O.L.) programme aims to train the youth as water agents, artisans and plumbers.

Water agents will undergo a water reticulation and waste water unit standards skills programme. It is a diploma (NQF4 level) qualification and they will work in their own communities. The objective is for them to acquire skills in water conservation advocacy, basic leak detection, environmental impact and water wise knowledge.

Artisans are trained as fitters and turners, welders, instrument mechanicals and electricians. Once they graduate they will work at municipalities, in communities and industries. They will be fully qualified to handle repairs, retrofitting and replacements.

Plumbers from all regions will work in their own communities. They will work at municipalities and water boards.

The War on Leaks (W.O.L.) programme has already started to play a major role in communities towards addressing water loss reduction, installation of water efficient devices, water audits, identification and repair of water leaks, retrofitting water fixtures, fittings and devices.



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Since Phase 1 was launched on 28 August 2015 training for 2871 learners was achieved. Water agents who have been recruited during Phase 1 have now completed the water reticulation and wastewater unit standards skills programme. They are busy with placement at the workplace that is being placed at municipalities. Almost 95% placement has been achieved to date. Artisans and plumbers are engaged with their N-courses and legacy training. They are currently busy with their three years qualification which is made up of 14 weeks' theory and practicals. This will be followed by a 36 weeks workplace programme.

The DWS' aim of training 15 000 water agents, plumbers and artisans over a five-year period is definitely underway.

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