



## water & sanitation

Department:  
Water and Sanitation  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

### INTERNET ARTICLE

#### Water and Sanitation Forums make an impact

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South Africa is poised for a peaceful way of resolving service delivery protests with the establishment of Water and Sanitation Forums (WSFs). The forums have become a revolutionary platform of addressing water and sanitation challenges without communities resorting to taking to the streets to express their grievances.

Styled along the Police Community Forums, WSFs were proposed by Minister Nomvula Mokonyane, as a platform to address the growing water and sanitation issues which were at the epicentre of service delivery protests in most parts of the country. Aggrieved communities complained that lack of water put their lives at risk as they could neither cook nor wash themselves.

Without water South Africa cannot prosper and there can be no development.

However, since the inception of WSFs in affected areas, the rate of social protests on water has decreased substantially as residents have resorted to the structures to air their grievances.

“We have helped to establish 95 of WSFs since 2014,” says Jabu Mtolo, Deputy Director in the Department of water and sanitation who is co-ordinating the establishment of the forums across the country.

KwaZulu-Natal boasts the biggest number of these forums with 23 having been established in Umzinyathi (Dundee), Mkhanyakude (Mkuze), Umgungundlovu (Natal-Midlands), Uthukela (Estcourt) and Ugu (Port Shepstone). Ngaka Modiri Molema District in Mahikeng and Lydenberg has the second biggest number with 22 forums that have been established since 2015. The figure does not include areas such as Jericho and Majakaneng whose forums rate among the most effective in terms of service delivery.

In Majakaneng the department has made considerable progress regarding the restoration of water in the area. Technicians have fixed a leaking water reservoir and it is pumping water to full capacity. At least 1 570 leaks were identified in the area and 1 061 of these are in the process of being fixed. The department is targeting to repair 15 leaks a day for repairs. Also, 10 boreholes have been drilled and four of these been developed into production boreholes. In addition, the Department has supplied Jojo tanks with the aim of installing 31 of these.

In July this year, Moses Seokane, chairperson of the Jericho Water and Sanitation Forum, invited Minister Nomvula Mokonyane and Premier Supra Mahumapelo to launch a R15 million Phase Two of the Jericho Rural Community Bulk Water Supply Scheme in Madibeng. The scheme pumps water from a reservoir to yard taps.

Phase Two, which includes mechanical and electrical components as a result of the scheme, an electrical contractor was appointed and considerable progress has been made. The entire upgrade for the Brits Waste Treatment Plant is envisaged to be completed by 2017/18 financial year.



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The focus of establishing these forums is on 27 priority District Municipalities which were identified as the institutions that need urgent attention and also in hotspot areas identified across different provinces.

Although Limpopo has only 14 forums, Mtolo speaks highly of their work rate and their effectiveness among the communities they serve. In the eight months of their existence, Mtolo, says, they have been able to resolve many water and sanitation issues in areas like Vhembe (Thohoyandou and Makhado), Mopani (Tzaneen), Sekhukhune and Waterberg where water scarcity poses serious challenges.

Of the 95 forums, 44 have been trained and various water management skills and in handling water related complains.

### ESTABLISHED WATER AND SANITATION FORUMS THAT CAPACITATED AND ACTIVE

PROVINCE	DISTRICTS	FORUMS CAPACITATED	FORUMS INVOLVED
NW	2 (Bojanala, Ngaka Modiri Molema).	13	16
NC	3 (John Taolo Gaetsewe, Namakwa and Pixley ka Seme).	1	3
LP	5 (Vhembe, Mopani, Sekhukhune, Capricorn and Waterberg).	9	10
MP	1 (Ehlanzeni).	0	0
KZN	9 (Umzinyathi, Mkhanyakude, Zululand, uThukela, Umgungundlovu, Ilembe, Amajuba, Ugu and Harry Gwala).	11	7
FS	3 (Xhariep, Lejweleputswa and Thabo Mofutsanyana).	4	10
EC	4 (Chris Hani, Joe Gqabi, Amathole and OR Tambo).	5	1
GP	2 (West Rand and Ekurhuleni).	0	0
WC	3 (City of Cape Town, Eden and Central Karoo).	1	4



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Among the key objectives of the forums are:

- to ensure government direct interaction with different communities on issues that affect them on daily basis and come out with agreed resolutions.
- to reduce increasing number of service delivery protests that are mainly due to lack of communication and feedback.
- to promote two way flow of information about provision of reliable water and sanitation services to the communities in terms of envisaged developments/plans, challenges and progress.
- to promote transparency on water and sanitation issues affecting different communities and running of projects if applicable.
- to create an enabling environment for stakeholder participation and empowerment in water and sanitation governance.
- to encourage active participation of local community members on water and sanitation matters.

Just like the Community Policing Forums, WSFs are a way of improving working relation and co-operation between the government and communities to address bread and butter issues without anyone resorting to using violence.

**Themba Khumalo**