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Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

INTERNET ARTICLE

Lesotho Highlands Water Project Phase 2 is in full steam.

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The Lesotho Highlands Water Project is an ongoing water supply project which comprises a hydropower component in Lesotho, and a system of several large dams and tunnels throughout Lesotho and South Africa. In Lesotho it involves the rivers of Malibamatso, Matsoku, Senqunyane and Senqu. In South Africa, it involves the Vaal River. It is Africa's largest water transfer scheme.

The purpose of the project is to provide Lesotho with a source of income in exchange for the provision of water to South Africa, as well as to generate hydro-electric power for Lesotho.

The phase 1A of the project was completed in 1998. It consisted mainly of the construction of the Katse Dam on the Malibamatso River in Lesotho. The phase 1B of the project was completed in 2002. It consisted mainly of the construction of the Mohale Dam, a very large rockfill dam, located on the Senqunyane River. There is also a transfer tunnel between Mohale Dam and the Katse reservoir. The system is interconnected in such a way that water may be transferred in either direction for storage in Mohale Dam or ultimate transfer to South Africa through the Katse reservoir.

The second phase of the LHWP was launched in March 2014 by President Jacob Zuma and King Letsie the 3rd, a bi-national project between Lesotho and South Africa.

The RSA Minister of Water and Sanitation, Nomvula Mokonyane, on her recent trip to Lesotho in August 2015 announced that Phase Two of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project is in full steam. She visited Lesotho to assess progress made on the Project. The second phase of the project commenced in March 2014, and is expected to be completed by 2024. The second phase of the four-phase project, when completed, is expected to cost just upwards of R17 billion.

The second phase, upon completion, is expected to increase the current water supply rate of 780 million cubic metres of water per year from the LHWP to the Vaal River System by a further 465 million cubic metres, effectively bringing the water supply rate to 1 255 million cubic metres per year.

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Although South Africa is naturally a water scarce country, the LHWP is one of the major DWS projects aimed to increase water supply for all use. South Africa aims to maintain top international standards and to be amongst those countries with the "best water" in the world. It aims to be ranked amongst one of those few countries in the world whose tap water is safe to drink, of international quality and in compliance with World Health Organisation requirements.

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