



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OPINION *PIECE*

Time to practise water conservation is now

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It is a fact that since the dawn of democracy at least 95% South Africans have had access to potable water. In the Northern Cape in particular, by 2013 an incredible 93,3% households have had access to water services.

By 2013 households in the Northern Cape with access to basic sanitation was 81,3%. Nationally households with access to free basic water increased by 300 000 households from 11.3million to in 2010/11 to 11.6 million households in 2011/12.

Access to sanitation continues to improve, growing from 51% of households in 1994 to 83.4% in 2011/12.

These are significant milestones and we ought to look back and celebrate.

Kindly allow me to paint the following picture for you in order to bring our challenge into perspective.

We are up against Drought, Climate change which will have an effect on both surface and ground- water resources that are likely to be impacted through increases in temperature, changes in potential evaporation, shifts in precipitation patterns, increases in the frequency of floods and droughts. We are also faced with Global warming, Desertification and Ozone layer deterioration, not forgetting that we are a water scarce country ranking 30th driest on the globe.

The listed phenomena accelerate water scarcity and evaporation, inevitably leading to rivers running dry and dam levels dropping.

It is common practise to build up reserves and to use resources sparingly and efficiently

One of the strategies is to store more water.

It means no more dripping taps, leaking toilets and burst pipes or water running all over the streets. It is going to take the collective efforts all mankind to ensure water availability for now and the future. All South Africans need to pull into the direction of water conservation.

President Jacob Zuma recently launched the war on leaks programme that will see 15 000 water agents, plumbers and artisans waging war against leaking taps and burst pipes in order to combat the 36% water losses worth R7billion.

The Department of Water and Sanitation is already looking at desalinating sea water in the coastal provinces and Minister Nomvula Mokonyane has admitted that the process would be expensive but it was necessary if the government was to guarantee water supply for all South Africans.

Now that scientists have predicted that this unfavorable weather conditions we are experiencing could take up to 3 years, we need to do more to save water and use it sparingly.

We need to come up with interventions that will ensure the provision of water to rural and informal settlement. We have to consider water restrictions to ensure better water demand



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and management of water supply in affected areas and accelerate our Education and Awareness campaigns.

The Department of Water and Sanitation has commissioned a three year study for the continuation and maintenance of bulk water supply reconciliation strategies for all towns in South Africa.

The studies will gather information about the bulk water balance situation of all towns in the country, to select the towns that are most in need of comprehensive strategies for reconciliation of water availability and future water requirements, and to identify the most appropriate series of interventions that will form part of such strategies.

The study will also ensure that sufficient water can be made available for pertinent developmental imperatives in and around all towns.

Sanitation portal at: www.dwa.gov.za