



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OPINION PIECE

War on Water Leaks project is top priority

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Government is resolute in its efforts to cut water losses.

Accounting for water is an essential step toward ensuring that a water utility is sustainable.

The South African Water Research Commission (WRC) has been providing support to municipalities throughout South Africa to address leakages from their potable reticulation systems since the early 1990s.

South Africa was one of the first countries outside the United Kingdom (UK) to fully recognize the benefits of adopting the Burst and Background Estimate (BABE) methodology that was initially developed by the UK water industry when the major water suppliers in England and Wales were privatized in the early 1990s.

The state has now, from Friday 28 August 2015, dedicated its energies to focus on achieving its objective of fighting a good cause and attain no water losses anymore.

In doing this the state embarked on a massive drive to curb the problem of South Africa losing more than R7 billion worth of potable water annually due to leaking taps and pipes.

Government is also seeking private-sector assistance to deal with water infrastructure challenges to promote water sensibility whilst targeting water losses.

It is important that the water sector can, and must be, creative and innovative in tackling these challenges. The sector must remove the silos within which it operates and create the necessary partnerships to enhance the sharing of expertise and resources.

President Jacob Zuma, accompanied by a powerful delegation consisting of Ministers and Members of the Executive Committees (MECs), launched the War on Water Leaks programme in Port Elizabeth on Friday 28 August 2015.

The overall objective of the programme is to reduce water losses and address water scarcity. Studies indicate that, on average, 14% of the water treated by water systems is lost to leaks. Some water systems have reported water losses exceeding 60%.

As South Africa continues to record water losses of R5/kl, or R7-billion a year, the country is bleeding money that is equal to the construction cost of 20 dams the size of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project Phase II, which would cost R7.8-billion over 20 years.

According to DWS's National Programme Manager for Water Conservation and Water Demand Management Thabo Masike the country recorded about 235 litres per capita a day of 'non-revenue water', with metropolitan regions accounting for 291 litres and rural regions losing 65 litres, compared with the global average of 177 litres per capita a day.



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“Municipalities must be made aware that water demand management is a strategic issue in a water-scarce country. This factor impacts significantly on water for growth and development,” said Masike, adding that the municipalities must take ownership of water conservation and water demand management,” he said.

President Zuma said the War on Leaks programme will enable government to provide training opportunities to 15 000 unemployed young people who can be trained as water agents, artisans and plumbers.

With the service of well-trained water ambassadors stationed at various municipalities, residents will not have to complain about leaks that result in unaccounted for water.

KEY POINTS

@ *The government is resolute in its efforts to cut water losses*

@ *Accounting for all water is essential to ensuring that a water utility is sustainable.*

@ *The South African Water Research Commission has been providing support to municipalities*

@ *South Africa was the first country outside the UK to fully recognise the benefits of adopting the “burst and background estimate” methodology*

@ *From August 28, 2015, South Africa now dedicated its energies to fighting the good cause of attaining no water losses any more*

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