

**Honourable Minister Lindiwe Sisulu**

Department of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation

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Copied to:

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1 June 2020

Dear Minister Sisulu

**URGENT REQUEST FOR PROVISION OF WATER TANKS, RELIABLE WATER SUPPLY, AND SANITATION PACKS TO COMMUNITIES WITHOUT ACCESS TO WATER**

1. We refer to our letter of [22 April 2020](#) and our follow-up letter of [30 April 2020](#) (attached hereto), in which we requested urgent intervention on behalf of a number of communities without access to water and basic sanitation. Despite having sent the above correspondence, we have not received a response.
2. Our previously stated requests included urgent intervention in relation to:

- 2.1. The provision of water and adequate sanitation, including sanitation packs for those highlighted in the annexure to our letter;
  - 2.2. Concerns about the proper functioning of the hotline established by the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), which related to:
    - 2.2.1. The accessibility of the hotline to rural communities who may not know about its existence or who may not have telephones or necessary network coverage in order to report issues of water access and sanitation;
    - 2.2.2. The advice provided to those that do call into the hotline, including them being referred back to municipal and provincial departments for assistance, to no avail;
  - 2.3. Allocating a liaison within the DWS or the National Disaster Water Command Centre (Water Command Centre), so that we may efficiently and effectively process our queries and community requests for water and sanitation packs.
3. We confirm that towards the end of April, we were invited to attend a meeting with a committee of your advisors in order to discuss the COVID-19 related interventions of the DWS. We attended this meeting on 30 April 2020 and immediately thereafter, at the request of your committee of advisors, included them in a follow up letter which we sent to you and the Water Command Centre, and which included an updated list of communities without access to water and proper sanitation.
  4. Having sent urgent correspondence to you, the coordinator of the Water Command Centre and your committee of advisors, without having received a substantive response, we are concerned about the seriousness with which our urgent requests for intervention, are being taken.
  5. The health and safety of hundreds, if not thousands of people in more than 60 communities across the country are being placed at risk by your departments failure to fulfil its constitutional obligations. Despite a number of commitments made by [yourself](#), as well as [President Ramaphosa](#), to protecting the interests of those who are most vulnerable, particularly in relation to access to water and sanitation during the Covid-19 pandemic, communities remain without water and proper sanitation.
  6. We acknowledge that your department is under significant pressure due to the ongoing [investigations into corruption and maladministration](#), and indeed, we commend the long overdue actions which are being taken. However, our understanding was that the establishment of the Water Command Centre would enable the [centralisation](#) of water distribution. This would imply the allocation of specific financial resources to the Water Command Centre in order to enable the efficient distribution of water and sanitation packs across the country. We therefore hope that that the investigation into corruption and maladministration at the DWS has not in any way impacted on the ability of the Water Command Centre to respond to urgent requests.
  7. In this regard, we had hoped that with the assistance of your committee of advisors and the Water Command Centre, our requests would be responded to more urgently. We confirm that subsequent to our second letter and update, additional communities have approached SAWC for assistance. We have updated our previous list to include these communities. Therefore, a full and updated list of communities without access to water and sanitation packs, is attached as **Annexure "A"** with additional information highlighted in yellow.

8. We note that other coalitions and organisations have written to you in order to seek assistance with access to water for affected communities. These include the [C19 Women's Solidarity Forum](#) as well as the [South African Food Sovereignty Campaign](#). Collectively, and inclusive of information provided by the SAWC, over 200 communities have been identified as being without access to water. This is surely a cause of immense concern and we demand that urgent action be taken to protect the health and wellbeing of those affected.
9. In our previous letters, we requested that the Department kindly provide us with a contact person with whom we can liaise regarding any updates and additional information. We reiterate this urgent request.
10. Kindly provide us with a response by no later than close of business on **Wednesday, 3 June 2020**, failing which we will have no option but to escalate this issue, including considering legal options.

Yours faithfully

**SOUTH AFRICAN WATER CAUCUS MEMBERS AND AFFILIATES:**

1. Western Cape: Zinzi Mgwigwi and Khaya Mateta
2. Mpumalanga: Thelma Nkosi and Bafana Hlatshwayo
3. Gauteng: Samson Mokwena
4. Eastern Cape: Ntska Mteta and Nokuzola Bulana
5. Limpopo: Mashile Phalane and Gilbert Moela
6. Free State: Ephraime Mosibi and Thetso Mokonyane
7. KwaZulu-Natal: Caroline Ntaopane
8. Centre for Environmental Rights: Leanne Govindsamy and Zahra Omar
9. Environmental Monitoring Group: Thabo Lusithi, Nick Hamer, Siyabonga Myeza, Apiwe Mdunyelwa and Erna Curry
10. Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance: Samson Mokwena
11. WoMin: Caroline Ntaopane
12. Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC): Courtney Morgan
13. South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (SAFSC): Courtney Morgan
14. C-19 People's Coalition South Africa: Nicole Naidoo
15. C-19 People's Coalition Eastern Cape: Mthobeli Mabaso
16. African Water Commons Collective: Faeza Meyer and Ebrahim Fourie
17. Middelburg Environmental Justice Network: Bafana Hlatshwayo
18. Each One Teach One Covid19 Learning Network: Monde Ntshudu and Taryn Pereira
19. Mary Galvin
20. Victor Munnik

## ANNEXURE A

### LIST OF COMMUNITIES IN URGENT NEED OF WATER AND/OR SANITATION PRODUCTS

#### WESTERN CAPE

1.1. **Shukushukuma, Esibheshe and Bhekela Communities (Mfuleni)**

The community of Shukushukuma in Mfuleni has faced issues with access to water since the lockdown. There are approximately 200 people who are using just two taps and there are persistent water outages, particularly during the day. Soap is not provided. The informal houses in Shukushukuma, Esibheshe and Bhekela are without proper access to water and toilets. Community members wait on CCT trucks to deliver water daily to no avail. They utilize public toilets from the taxi rank which is far from their homes, and when it's dark it is difficult to get there, so they opt for relieving themselves in the nearest wetland and in the Kuilsriver catchment. Due to no rainfall in the region for some time, the faeces in the catchment are not transported elsewhere or discharged to the next channel, and therefore gives off a bad smell, making it unpleasant to even walk along the channel to fetch water from standpipes which are placed near the channel.

1.2. **Joe Slovo Community**

People living in this community do not have access to water or soap and are unable to afford either.

1.3. **Khayelitsha Community**

In this community the water trucks arrive once a day at 10:00 and provide water in one location and no soap is provided. Elderly people are unable to walk long distances and shouldn't be doing so given that they are at a higher risk from fatally contracting Covid-19.

1.4. **Makhaza Community, Khayelitsha**

Water supply is continuously interrupted and there are regular sewer bursts which pose a health risk to the community.

1.5. **Silvertown Informal Settlement**

Existing water infrastructure is ageing and does not extend far enough to reach all homes making water access very difficult. Soap is not provided.

1.6. **Greenpark Township (next to Delft and Mfuleni)**

In this community, the water pressure is very low, making access difficult and time consuming. The existing taps are very far apart and far from informal houses. Most taps also do not have caps, which were stolen a long time ago. The bucket toilet system is not cleaned or drained posing a health hazard. Soap is not provided.

- 1.7. **Eastridge, Westridge, Tafelsig, Beacon Valley (Mitchell's Plain), Lavender Hill and Retreat**  
Backyard dwellers of formal houses do not have water due to cut-offs and water management devices (WMDs) that limit water to 350 litres per day. Soap is not provided.
- 1.8. **Nduli township (two informal settlements), Tulbagh (four informal settlements) and Wolseley (two informal settlements) (Witzenburg Municipality)**  
Nduli, Tulbagh and Wolseley (with a total of 8 informal settlements) have no water tanks or improved sanitation facilities, a problem they have endured for 6-7 years. Nduli Township has confirmed COVID 19 cases, so water access is critical.
- 1.9. **Various farms, Robertson (Langeberg Municipality)**  
Farm dwellers have not received water for three weeks. The canal water is dirty as the water is coming from the mountain. And there has been no rain. At least two farms are affected. The farm dwellers receive 200 litres of water every second day which is not enough to meet even basic needs. There is a growing crisis on the farms.

## LIMPOPO

- 1.10. **Ga-Madiba Village (N11), Mokopane community (Mogalakwena Local Municipality)**  
Some areas have no water tanks. Other areas have water tanks but they are empty. There is a burst sewerage pipe close to the community which poses a health risk. No soap is provided. There is a reservoir on the higher level/veld of the village, which fails to supply water to the community members who reside in the middle level/veld of the village, since all the water goes to the lower level/veld of the village. Taps were installed in a few sections of the village but due to poor water pressure, the water is unable to run from the taps. Community members have resorted to digging down next to those taps to reach the water source.
- 1.11. **Steenbokpan and Shongoane Communities, Lephalale**  
Water tanks in the area have been dry for five years and the remaining water point, far from the settlement, women wait for an entire day to fill a 20-litre bucket.  
  
In Shongoane, to obtain access to water, community members (mainly women) walk kilometres or stand in long queues for a day when there is water available. Households can buy water for R500 (2500 litres) or R4 (20 litres). This is unaffordable for most households.
- 1.12. **Mabuela Village, Mokopane**  
The community, and this falls to women, collect water from nearby streams. During the lockdown they are confronting police harassment when they walk to collect water. Households can buy water from private water vendors but the price per drum has now increased to R100.00, which is unaffordable.

1.13. **Sekutlong Village (Fetakgomo Tubatse local municipality)**

Communities used to collect water from Motsi River, polluted by mining since 2017. Some families continue to fetch water from the river as they cannot afford to buy water. Since the lockdown the water tanker has only visited on 6 April. It was supposed to come every Sunday. The community leaders called on 12 April and were told there was a shortage of diesel. On 15 April, the municipality advised after a second follow up call by the community that the next tanker would only come on 26 April.

1.14. **Elandskraal, Morarela, Mbuzini, Dichoeng and Tsansabela Villages (Sekhukhune District Municipality)**

Communities in these five villages are currently receiving reticulated water only once a week, which is simply insufficient. Water is trucked in to fill the villages' water tanks, but this source remains insufficient and unreliable.

1.15. **Tshamahansi Village, Mokopane (Mogalakwena Local Municipality, Waterberg District Municipality)**

Most villages in the Mogalakwena Local Municipality don't have reliable water supply; they depend on water tankers from the municipality. One family was forced to buy water from other members of the village to use during their funeral preparations after the ward councilor of Ward 21 failed to supply them with water as promised. Usually the municipality provides water for use during funerals, but this time the family was left stranded without any water as they could not get hold of the municipality in time.

1.16. **Sekuruwe Village, Mapela (Mogalakwena Local Municipality, Waterberg District Municipality)**

Community members have been without water long before the lockdown began. They have now resorted to creating a small dam, as animals were entering the dam they were previously using to get water.

## **EASTERN CAPE**

1.17. **Nombanjane, Nxarxo and Ngcizele, Mazeppa, Gcina and Cebe Villages (Centane region, Mquma Local Municipality, Amathole District Municipality)**

Communities in this area comprise approximately 600 households and have faced a lack of water access for many years. Despite repeatedly bringing this to the attention of the Mayor of their municipality, little has been done. No soap is provided in this area as well. In the Nombanjana and Narxo villages, there is no water in the taps.

The SAWC finds it particularly concerning that on, Tuesday 14 April, 10 leaders from the three areas were arrested for contravening the COVID-19 Emergency Regulations and charged. They will appear in Court on the 13 May 2020.

The District Municipality was contacted and promised to send out officials to investigate the situation last Thursday (23 April) and then send emergency water supplies. Community members received the following response from the Municipality:

*a. A Technical Team will be sent to the village to do assessment on the existing infrastructure. According to the municipality, water tanks should not be a priority as they have water taps installed already in the village and the technical team should work around the clock to fix the problem of dry taps.*

*b. The municipality doesn't have enough trucks to deliver water to the current areas depending on water tanks and hence for the village at hand, is better to fix the problem of dry taps.*

*c. For a truck to fill one tank it takes them hours due to the distance and bad roads between water collection point to the water tanks.*

*d. Water tanks should be last resort if it happens that the Technical Team is unable to fix the problem.*

Until today, no one has arrived despite numerous follow-ups by the communities.

**Update:** Last week, the charges against the 10 community leaders were withdrawn. However, the community remains without access to water.

**1.18. Mendwana Community, Ward 21, and Ngoma Village, Willovale (Mbhashe Local Municipality, Amathole District Municipality)**

The community of Mendwana comprises approximately 480 households and has no water and is relying on a natural spring which is located far away from community members, making it particularly difficult for the elderly. No soap is provided. Community leaders have followed up with the municipality who promised to address the problem, but to date no relief has been provided. It is understood that there are emergency tanks at the Disaster Management Centre yard in Idutywa that have been there since last Thursday; however, it is not clear why these tanks were not used for the purposes of this emergency.

**1.19. Ndondo Square (Sakhisizwe Municipality)**

Residents usually depend on trucked water, which is unreliable, inconsistent and inadequate. This has greatly impacted elderly people. Ndondo Square currently does not have access to water.

**1.20. Rodana, EMalahleni (Chris Hani District Municipality)**

Residents of Rhodana have no access to water. Although a reservoir has been built, certain sections of the village do not have access. People resort to springs, also used by animals, which are unhygienic and unsafe.

**1.21. Elundini Community, Ward 4 (Raymond Mhlaba Local Municipality, Amathole District Municipality)**

This community has no water due to no infrastructure: the unavailability of diesel to pump water to stand pipes during this crisis. Small-scale farmers are struggling to get water for irrigation due to improper water infrastructure. The current water supply is dependent on diesel and is not sustainable or reliable, as most of the time diesel is unavailable to pump water from the engine.

**1.22. Mkhubiso Village (Raymond Mhlaba Local Municipality, Amathole District Municipality)**

This village has no running water.

**1.23. Tyefu and Hlosini Villages (Ngqushwa Local Municipality, Amathole District Municipality)**

These villages have been without water for years now. Earlier this year, a letter was sent to the MEC requesting an urgent meeting regarding this issue, but this meeting was postponed by the Spokesperson due to the coronavirus crisis.

**1.24. Ndakeni (comprising Ndakeni, Malanda and Maggabasi), Dinda and Bhukuva Villages (Mbizana Local Municipality)**

Communities in these villages have never been provided with any sort of water infrastructure, and at best they rely on pit latrines. Their only water source remains a few muddy puddles located some distance from each village. Since last week, only two villages have each received one water tanker, and the tanker has not been refilled since the date of delivery. They are therefore again without any water source or infrastructure.

**1.25. eNkanini, Mayfield Farm, Makhanda (Makana Local Municipality)**

There has been no water yesterday nor today. When there is no water, residents have to share water with the cows residing on the farm.

**1.26. Lessyton, Queenstown**

Most households have water only when there is rainfall; otherwise when they are forced to go without water for months on end.

**1.27. Residents of the following areas, villages and farms have indicated that for years they have been struggling to access water in their communities:**

- a) **Ngxutyana, Ciko, Gushuphondo, Nakazana and Qhora Villages, Willowvale**
- b) **Ward 9: Kolomana Village, Ngqikana Village, Votyiwe Village, Grafton Farm, Cains Farm (Raymond Mhlaba Local Municipality)**
- c) **Villages in Upper Blinkwater, Balfour, Phillipton, Readsdales, Jurieshoek, Ekuphumleni, Emakhaleni, Buxton (Greater Balfour)**
- d) **Ward 18: Mbandana Location (Mbizana Local Municipality)**



- e) Ward 25: Nenga Location, Mqanduli (OR Tambo District Municipality)
- f) Ward 20: Qumbu Location, Khalankomo (Mhlontlo Local Municipality)
- g) Ward 17: Gqaqhala Location, Ugie (Elundini Local Municipality)
- h) Ward 5 (New Khuleka): Ntlaza Location, Libode (Nyandeni Local Municipality)
- i) Ward 20: Mthentu Location, Mthatha (OR Tambo District Municipality)
- j) Ward 23: Balasi Location, Qumbu, Zwelitsha (Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality)
- k) Ward 21: Greenville Location (Mbizana Local Municipality)
- l) Ward 31: Qina Location, Centane (Amathole District Municipality)
- m) Ward 22: Mancam Location, Mqanduli (OR Tambo District Municipality)
- n) Ward 12: Slovo Location, Mthatha (OR Tambo District Municipality)
- o) Ward 35: Pendu Location, Jixini Agricultural Authority, Mqanduli (OR Tambo District Municipality)
- p) Ward 18: Pinglili Location Bityi Agricultural Authority, Mthatha (OR Tambo District Municipality)
- q) Ward 11: Mandela Park, Mthatha (OR Tambo District Municipality)
- r) Ward 13: Mpindweni Agricultural Authority, Mthatha (OR Tambo District Municipality)
- s) Ward 6: Bongweni (OR Tambo District Municipality)
- t) Ward 36: Mnqanda, Mthatha (OR Tambo District Municipality)
- u) Ward 16: Malangeni Location, Lusikisiki (Ingquza Hill Local Municipality)
- v) Ward 18: Tshazi Fama Location, Phumlo Agricultural Authority, Lusikisiki (Ingquza Hill Local Municipality)
- w) Ward 22: Lucwecwe Agricultural Authority, Kaula, Mqanduli (OR Tambo District Municipality)
- x) Ward 32: Ngqwala A/A, Mthatha (OR Tambo District Municipality)
- y) Ward 6: Nkolosane village, Ngcele Down, Ngcele, Upper Ntywenka, Lower Ntywenka, Sommerville, Qurhana, Siqhunqwini, Qulungashe, Lower Sinxako, Upper Sinxako, Govane, Majwarheni, Mqokolweni, Mpukane, Skansini (sophinia east and west), Sihlabeni, Ngxotho, Lower Tsitsana, Hlankomo, (ELundini municipality)
- z) Laphum'ikhwezi Senior Primary School Ward: Marhambeni and Ngojini, Mthatha (OR Tambo District Municipality)

## **MPUMALANGA**

### **1.28. Silobela township, Carolina (Albert Luthuli Local Municipality, Gert Sibande District Municipality)**

There is a shortage of clean water in the Silobela township.

### **1.29. Clewer and Vosman townships, eMalaheni (Nkangala District Municipality)**

There is a need for JoJo water tanks in these townships.

1.30. **Arnot farm, Middelburg**

The community residing on this farm obtains water from a river stream which is a long distance away. They require reliable access to water supply.

1.31. **Phola/Ogies (Nkangala District Municipality)**

Informal settlement of Iraq does not have access to water. Women are walking about 2 kilometres every day to collect water. Since the lockdown which has restricted women's movements, they have been turned away by police when they try to collect water. Now some of the women wait until it gets dark for them to collect water so that they won't be seen by police. This has put a lot strain on the women.

1.32. **Ward 16, Madadeni and Sikhwahlane (Nkomazi Local Municipality, Ehlanzeni District Municipality, Mpumalanga)**

Water tanks have not reached the area. People are gathering to fetch water at the nearby public taps of more than 500 meters away, depending on the households. There is no social distancing. People wake up early to do laundry at the public taps which serves both communities of Madadeni and Sikhwahlane.

1.33. **Kromhoek, Vaalbank and surrounding farms, Wakkerstroom (Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality, Gert Sibande District Municipality)**

A water truck has been assisting the communities on these farms since 28 March 2020. Since most families do not have JoJo tanks, they can only store the water from the truck in small buckets. The truck only comes every two weeks and the water from these buckets does not last the communities very long. As a result, they have to fetch water from the river. Community members wish to be provided with JoJo tanks so that the water they receive can last up until the truck returns.

## **KWAZULU NATAL**

1.34. **Somkhele (Mtubatuba Municipality)**

The community in Somkhele has not had adequate water access for years. A water tanker only passes through on Wednesdays carrying 2 500 litres of water to be shared amongst a population estimated at 5 791 (in 2011 national census).

## GAUTENG

### 1.35. Tjovitjo Informal Settlement camp, Orange Farm

There is a lack of sanitation in his community. While government has brought them some water tanks, there has been no sanitation of their portable toilets since the start of lockdown (or before). About 5 families share 1 toilet and making it very difficult for them to maintain hygiene standards without any sanitation products or sanitation of the toilets. A call has been logged with the municipality but nothing has come of this.

### 1.36. Soweto Community

Effluent runs into the Booyens River in Russellspruit (Riverlea), which feeds into the Vaal River. The downstream community in Soweto which includes the African Independent Churches, use this water for baptisms. Their livestock also drink from this polluted water. This issue has been ongoing for years.

## FREE STATE

### 1.37. Vetkop Farm and Barrage Informal Settlement, Kopanong (Xhariep District Municipality)

No access to water and sanitation products.

### 1.38. Botshabelo Formal Settlements (Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality)

The communities throughout the formal settlements of Botshabelo have no proper toilets and rely on pit and/or bucket toilets.