

## Water and Sanitation in the News

### North West sewage endangers villagers' lives

Residents of Sunway Village in the North West are facing a sewage crisis. Most of them have to watch raw sewage flowing past their homes day after day. Once hailed as part of a presidential plan to bring quality housing to disenfranchised mining communities, residents now face serious health risks.

Sunway residents are already living without electricity, but now they'll have to make do without water. Taps in the village are expected to be dry during the day for the next few weeks, while authorities try to deal with the sewage problem.



Source: *eNCA*, 9 March 2015

### Context

The state of municipal water and sanitation infrastructure, particularly waste water treatment works, remains a cause of great concern in South Africa. According to the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), challenges being experienced in the municipal water sector include: a lack of ongoing maintenance of existing assets; high non-revenue water, especially due to physical water losses in the distribution systems resulting from poorly maintained infrastructure (with knock-on effects for investment and refurbishment); inadequate capacity of most treatment works and inappropriate selection and use of technologies; infrastructure and asset management challenges, especially with respect to treatment works, pumping stations and distribution networks / systems, which leads to dilapidated conditions (attributed to skills shortages and inadequate budgeting).

The polluting of water resources by poor sanitation infrastructure and management is becoming increasingly more devastating, given that the impact of climate change on the availability of fresh water resources is becoming more evident in Southern Africa. Close to 6000 people have been infected with cholera since January 2015 in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe. Heavy rains have been cited as the main culprit of the outbreak, but poor sanitation continues to plague the region, and human rights advocates say that is a failure of leadership.

The consequences of high worldwide population growth in the midst of a changing climate and dwindling fresh water supply are proving to be profound. Across the globe, reports reveal huge areas in crisis today as reservoirs and aquifers dry up. Last week in the Brazilian city of São Paulo, home to 20 million people, and once known as the City of Drizzle, drought got so bad that residents began drilling through basement floors and car parks to try to reach groundwater. City officials warned that rationing of supplies was likely soon and that citizens might have access to water for only two days a week. In California, officials have revealed that the state has entered its fourth year of drought with January this year becoming the driest since meteorological records began. At the same time, per capita water use has continued to rise...

Sources: *The Guardian & VOA News*, 8-9 March 2015

*For South Africa to adequately address its water resources and climate challenges and avoid similar health crises affecting its neighbours; all industry stakeholders (in government and the private sector) need to work together to achieve sufficient amounts of the much needed knowledge, skills and technologies (such as **Municipal Assistant™**) to help ensure a comprehensive and coordinated approach in solving current and future water infrastructure problems.*

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