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BACKGROUND NOTES ON WATER PROJECTS IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this brief is to provide a concise overview of water and sanitation projects in Limpopo province in light of the provincial week events taking place in March 2022.

The 2020 Statistics South Africa General Household Survey revealed that Limpopo was the province with lowest number of households (71.3%) with access to tap water. This percentage reflects both off-site (water accessed outside the yard using a neighbour's tap, public or communal taps) and on-site (water accessed in the dwelling or in the yard) sources of water.¹



Between 2002 and 2020, access to water declined in Limpopo by 2.6%, although more households were provided with water in 2020 than 2002. Households in Limpopo (58.5%) also reported the most disruptions in water supply.²

A number of water projects have been implemented across Limpopo to increase household access and to provide water for agricultural and economic activities. A number of water projects will be focused on during the Provincial Week engagements, of which a few are summarised below.

¹ StatsSA (2020).

² Ibid.



2. FLAG BOSHILO BULKWATER SYSTEM

The Olifants River Water Resource Development Project in Limpopo is an extensive water resource development project in the province. Phase 1 of the project involves raising the Boshielo Dam and Phase 2 (scheme 1) involves a 70 km long, 1100 mm diameter pumping main from the Flag Boshielo Dam to Mokopane. Three pump stations of 4 MW each are required as part of this project. The second scheme under Phase 2 involves the extraction and distribution of water from the De Hoop Dam to several end points through pipelines that range from 1700mm to 1000 mm in diameter. One pump station of 13 MW is required along the 110 km pipeline.³

In 2020, the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) in Limpopo committed to fast-tracking the upgrade of Flag Boshielo Water Treatment Works. The treatment works supply water to 156 villages in Ephraim Mogale, Elias Motswaledi, Lepelle-Nkumpi and Makhuduthamaga Local Municipalities.⁴

The Flag Boshielo Water Treatment Plant was officially launched on 9 October 2021, during which the Minister of Water and Sanitation urged members of the community and municipality to guard the infrastructure against theft and vandalism.⁵

Lapelle Northern Water was the implementing agent for the refurbishment of the plant, which abstracts water from the Boshielo Dam and supplies increased potable water to 28 185 households and 112 740 persons. The refurbished plant has an increased capacity to produce 16 megalitres of water per day, compared to the initial 8 megalitres per day, which did not meet the needs of the growing population in the Sekhukhune District. Plans were underway to upgrade the plant further, so that it can supply up to 32 megaliters of water per day.⁶

The additional augmented capacity cost approximately R100 million and created employment opportunities for 57 workers.⁷

3. MOGALATJANE IRRIGATION SCHEME

After a steady decline in the rural agricultural schemes, the Limpopo provincial government is revitalising some of these schemes with the aim of creating 3 000 jobs. Some of the reasons provided for the collapse in some projects and schemes include poor management, corruption, infighting among beneficiary communities, a lack of government support and a failure to access markets.⁸

³ Sipiwe (2020).

⁴ SAnews (2020).

⁵ DWS (2021).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Mukurukuru Media (2021).



In 2021, the Limpopo Premier announced that more than 122 hectares of cotton will be planted in the Mogalatjane Irrigation Scheme, which will provide work to more than 50 people. The project is located on the banks of the Olifants River near Marble Hall.⁹ By 2020, the process was underway to clear more than 100 hectares for the Mogalatjane Irrigation Scheme.¹⁰

The 2021/22 Integrated Development Plan (IDP) for the Sekhukhune District Municipality references the revitalisation of the Mogalatjane Irrigation Scheme, with an estimated budget of R17.3 million. The District intends to support the revitalisation of all seven irrigation schemes along the Olifants River to increase productivity and job creation.¹¹

4. DE HOOP DAM

The De Hoop Dam was opened on 24 March 2014 and was the 13th largest dam in the country at the time, and the first dam to be built in South Africa since the 1970's, which cost more than R3 billion to construct. It formed part of Phase 2 of the Olifants River Water Resources Development Project, which was part of the Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission's strategic infrastructure projects at the time, which was aimed at fast-tracking development and growth across South Africa, creating jobs and improving basic service delivery.¹²

The dam also included a number of seismic sensors, recorders and software to monitor the area for seismic activity.¹³

More than a thousand jobs were created during the construction of the dam. The dam was constructed to provide water to surrounding towns, industries and poorly serviced rural communities in Sekhukhune, Waterberg and Capricorn Districts and to supply water to mines in the region.¹⁴

The distribution network included a pipeline from Jane Furse to Lobethal, also connecting the villages of Ga-Mashabela, Diphagane, Ga-Phahla, Ga-Marishane, Tisane and Mamone, which was still under construction in 2014. Another pipeline from Mooihoek to Tubatse was completed, but awaiting an offtake agreement. This pipeline would supply water to the villages of Mandagshoek, Mashabela, Ntsoaneng, Driekop and River Cross.¹⁵

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ City Press (2020).

¹¹ Sekhukhune District Municipality (2021).

¹² Kolver (2014).

¹³ Motion Control (2018).

¹⁴ News24 (2017).

¹⁵ Kolver (2014).



By 2017, it was reported that only Ga-Malekana and Ngwaabe to Ga-Maphopha were benefiting from the De Hoop Dam. The Sekhukhune District Municipality stated that this was due to the withdrawal of R126 million in the Municipal Infrastructure Grant funding, which it opposed the time, but failed. Treasury responded that most of the projects linked to the stopped funding were not ready for implementation at the time.¹⁶

By 2019, it was reported that due to the failure to connect infrastructure to several villages around the dam, including treatment plants, many communities were still left without access to water.¹⁷

Extensive augmentation of water supply systems in Limpopo are currently underway, as reported in March 2021. Sub-phases C, D and E of Phase 2 of the Olifants River Water Resource Development Project include a bulk water distribution system from the De Hoop Dam that will ultimately links with the existing Olifants-Sand Transfer Scheme at Olifantspoort.¹⁸

5. TSWELOPELE IRRIGATION SCHEME

By 2020, it was reported that the clearance of 41 hectares at the Tswelopele Irrigation Scheme in Fetakgomo Tubatse Local Municipality was approved.¹⁹ By 2021, infrastructure designs were completed for the scheme, which would be implemented with the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform, and Rural Development during 2021/2022.²⁰

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