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REPORT ON THE IMPACT OF COLLAPSED WATER MANAGEMENT CAPACITY ON HUMAN RIGHTS OF RESIDENTS OF THE FREE STATE PROVINCE

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STATE LEGISLATURE

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Roy Jankielsohn, Leader of the Official Opposition in the Free State Legislature
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1. Introduction

South Africa's Constitution (section 27) indicates that everyone “***has the right to have access to...sufficient food and water***”. However, this constitutional right to sufficient water depends on a water services network that is able to deliver sustainable and safe water to households, industries and businesses across the Free State. Sound infrastructure networks combined with human capital are critical for service delivery, which includes electricity, running water and sewage systems. In modern societies, water is at an intersection between natural, cultural, political and economic systems within bureaucratic, legal and human rights frameworks¹.

This report outlines the most important sources of water scarcity experienced by households, industries and businesses in the Free State and interrogates the most important reasons for this. These reasons include historical factors, collapsed and deteriorating infrastructure, human and institutional incapacity within local and other spheres of government and environmental factors. The impacts of these create a fragile environment that is discussed within the various sections of the report.

The report includes annexures A (photographic examples of some of the water and sewage issues in the Free State) and B (a report per municipality regarding water-related issues in various towns and communities) to substantiate the argument presented herein.

¹ Dugard, J. 2021. Water Rights in a Time of Fragility: An Exploration of Contestation and Discussions around Cape Town's "Day Zero" Crisis. *Water*. 2021; 13(22): 3247. <https://doi.org/10.3390/w13223247> Date of access: 23 October 2023.

2. Sources and impacts of water-based incapacity in the Free State Province

Neither the Free State's nor South Africa's water related problems can be separated from a history of racial inequality dating back to previous colonial and Apartheid governments that included the unequal provision of basic services that included water, electricity, infrastructure and housing. The pre-1994 Apartheid system was characterised by separate development of different race groups, each within defined geographical areas across the country. Black industrial labourers were restricted to live in urban ghettos known as townships with limited access to basic services, while many others were marginalised in rural areas often referred to as the dumping grounds for a redundant black population². Historical water distribution in the country has been described as cultural Darwinism in which "*a racially defined political elite gained hegemonic control over the balance of hydrological privilege in society*"³.

Water-based insecurity is caused by not only a lack of access to water supply and sanitation, but also other aspects such as too much, too little or water that is too polluted to be used. Together, all of these aspects can cause severe disruptions and compound fragility in social, economic and environmental systems. Where water insecurity repeatedly affects communities, it acts as a risk multiplier, intensifying existing grievances, creating new risks, and deepening inequalities. It is often not the scarcity of water itself that leads to tension, but the way in which it is administered – inefficient use and management of water, unequal distribution, outdated infrastructure, and inappropriate legal, political, and economic frameworks all exacerbate water-related tensions in local communities⁴.

² Piccard, L. and Mogale, T. 2015. "The Limits of Democratic Governance in South Africa", UCT Press, Cape Town. p 205.

³ Turton, A. and Meissner, R. 2002. "The hydrosocial contract and its manifestation in society: A South African case study", in Turton Anthony and Henwood Roland, *Hydropolitics in the Developing World: A Southern African perspective*, African Water Issues Research Institute, Pretoria: 37-60, p 37.

⁴ Sara, J.J. & Bousquet, F. 2020. Tackling the vicious cycle of fragility and water insecurity. World Bank: Published on Development for Peace. 15 December. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/dev4peace/tackling-vicious-cycle-fragility-and-water-insecurity> Date of access 16 October 2023.

Most of these aspects are applicable to the Free State Province, especially since most communities residing alongside major national rivers also suffer from serious water insecurity.

This report uses an Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) research design to categorise water based issues in the Free State into economic, environmental, political, security and societal dimensions⁵.

2.1 Economic dimension

The economic dimension measures vulnerabilities stemming from weak economic fundamentals and the coping capacities to mitigate their impacts on the wellbeing and prosperity of individual people, households and the whole society⁶.

South Africa's Constitution [section 7(2)] provides that the state must ***“respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights which are contained in the Bill of Rights”***, including (section 22) ***“the right to choose their trade, occupation or profession freely”***.

The economy of the Free State is experiencing similar pressures to South Africa's national economy which affects people's rights to work and trade freely. Many factors affecting the Free State's economy are service delivery related and include inadequate access to water and poor sanitation in municipalities which are a result of poor governance. The Free State Provincial economy contracted 2% in 2022 contrasting the 3.6% growth rate recorded in 2021, and provincial economic growth in 2023 is expected to be a mere 0.1%⁷.

⁵ Desai, H. & Forsberg, E. 2020. Multidimensional fragility in 2020. OECD Development Co-Operation Working Paper 79. Paris: OECD Publishing. p 17.

⁶ Desai, H. & Forsberg, E. 2020. Multidimensional fragility in 2020. OECD Development Co-Operation Working Paper 79. Paris: OECD Publishing. p 41.

⁷ Brown, G. 2023. Free State Provincial Budget Speech 2023/24 delivered by the Member of the Executive Council for Finance. Free State Provincial Treasury. South African Government. www.gov.za. Date of access: 7 November 2023. & Meeko, T. 2023. Speech delivered by the Member of the Executive Council. Free State Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs Provincial Budget Vote Speech 2023/24. South African Government. www.gov.za Date of access 7 November 2023.

Economic activities in the country and provinces take place within municipal boundaries. Municipalities are also responsible for ensuring services such as water, sewage, electricity and local roads networks that are required for businesses and households to prosper. National Government reports indicate that 275 municipalities across the country are rendered economically unviable due to growing debt, the inability to pay for bulk water and electricity, and worsening audit outcomes.

Free State municipalities are some of the worst performers in terms of debt collection rates, which makes bulk services and infrastructure unaffordable⁸. A Treasury report for Free State municipalities indicates that by 28 February 2022 the debt owed to municipalities by residents, in many instances due to collapsed billing systems, was R28,37 billion of which 35% was for water services and 13% for waste water services. Creditors (debt owed by municipalities) was R20, 72 billion of which R18, 26 billion (88.1%) was for bulk services to local water boards and the national electricity provider (Eskom). A further indicator of economic decline of Free State municipalities is that the report indicates that 7 of the municipalities were unable to submit their creditors' data, in all probability due to their financial dysfunctionality⁹.

The poor management of water and sanitation has serious economic consequences. The realistic approach by the World Bank indicates that since most forms of production create pollution as a by-product, it can be extrapolated that economic growth and water pollution are linked. It is generally understood that water is a requirement for both life and economic production, and that upstream pollution affects downstream users. Most authorities agree that the elimination of all pollution in water is unfeasible and costly and appropriate levels of pollution must be determined. This refers to weighing economic benefits against the costs of pollution. The World Bank research indicates that where rivers are moderately polluted, the downstream GDP growth is reduced by 1.4%, and when they become heavily polluted the cost is 2%. However, in middle income countries (such as South Africa) this could be 1.76% and 2.5% respectively¹⁰. This research is based on pollution caused by economic activities which

⁸ Murray, A. 2022. Service Delivery at Sub-National Level (in Mills, G., Jonas, M., Bhoorat, H. & Hartley, R. 2022. Better Choices Ensuring South Africa's Future. Johannesburg: Macmillan South Africa. p 108-109.

⁹ Treasury, 2022. Consolidated Municipal Performance Report for the period ending 28 February 2022. Department of Treasury. Free State Province. <https://www.treasury.fs.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/8.-Consolidated-Municipal-Budget-Performance-Report-28-February-2022.pdf> Date of access 21 December 2023. p 5-9.

¹⁰ Desbureaux, S., Damania, R, Rodella, A-S., Russ, J. & Zaveri, E. 2019. The Impact of Water Quality on GDP Growth: Evidence from around the World. Washington DC: The World Bank Group. p 1, 9.

weighs against negative impacts, and does not take large scale sewage spills as a result of local government failures (which are characteristic in the Free State) into account. Such pollution affects local and downstream inhabitants and deters economic investments and development.

In the Free State, the economic impact of poor water management is not only through the pollution of freshwater resources, but also through losses of treated water due to ageing infrastructure, burst pipes and unmetered connections. It is estimated that 56% of treated water in Matjhabeng Local Municipality, the second largest in the Free State, is lost as a result of leaking water pipes costing residents R323 million per year. The largest municipality in the province, the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (MMM), experiences water losses of R406, 6 million per annum which is about 46% of all treated water¹¹. According a statement issued by a MMM Councillor, Rossouw Botes, the municipality has lost over R1, 781 billion in drinking water over the last decade. This amounts to daily losses of approximately R488 000. The Auditor General has consistently highlighted this as an issue in their annual reports, wherein the financial strain of this mismanagement is matched only by the detrimental impact to the community's basic right to water. The Municipality's average of 39% in water losses soars above the accepted national average of 19%¹².

Water shortages in the MMM are expected to be mitigated by a long term water supply project that will involve pumping water through a 200 kilometre pipeline from the downstream Gariiep Dam at a cost of R10 billion with a completion date of 2029¹³. It is doubtful that this date will be realised due to limited funds which, together with the incapacity to put measures in place to mitigate water shortages, will have serious economic implications for the province's only Metro.

¹¹ Schrieber, S. 2023. Free State municipality leaks millions as 56% of water trickles away. Times Live. 9 March. <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2023-03-09-free-state-municipality-leaks-millions-as-56-of-water-trickles-away/> Date of access: 7 November 2023.; Koteli, T. 2023. Water loss costs Mangaung half a billion per year. OFM News. 16 February. <https://www.ofm.co.za/article/centralsa/321982/water-loss-costs-mangaung-almost-half-a-billion-per-year#:~:text=The%20Mangaung%20Metro%20Municipality%20allegedly,is%20lost%20by%20the%20municipality> Date of access: 7 November 2023.

¹² Botes, R. 2024. Mangaung's water crisis: A R488 000 daily drain on resources demands urgent action. DA Free State Newsroom <https://fs.da.org.za/2024/01/mangaungs-water-crisis-a-r488-000-daily-drain-on-resources-demands-urgent-action>

¹³ Mchunu, S. 2022. Progress in Eradicating the Gaps in the Provision of Water and Sanitation. Ministerial Briefing to the National Council of Provinces. Presented by the Minister of Water and Sanitation Mr Senzo Mchunu. 15 March. Cape Town: Parliament.

Poorly managed and ageing infrastructure, which refers to the technical services provided by the state, contribute significantly to poor services and the lack of economic investment in most municipalities. Impacts of this include load-shedding and limited access to electricity networks, collapsed sewage and water systems, deteriorating roads, poorly managed machines and technology that impact negatively on the quality of life that local governments are able to provide for citizens. Functional water infrastructure and a sustainable water supply also plays a part in the ability of important economic industries such as agriculture, mining and production to function and grow¹⁴. The Free State continues to experience serious economic water services and network-based decline that contribute significantly to the rapidly deteriorating economic conditions of residents.

The Free State only has one Special Economic Zone (SEZ) which provides tax incentives for investors in the Maluti-a-Phofung Municipality near the town of Harrismith. This SEZ is in the poorest region of the province and includes a large cluster of rural villages in a vast mountainous area of QwaQwa. This SEZ and the whole industrial area of QwaQwa, that successfully housed many incentivised factories prior to 1994, is now the poorest region of the Free State with most of the factories closed and vandalised. The main reason for this economic decay is the collapse of municipal services such as roads infrastructure, and water and electricity provision. The decline of water services is also linked to sabotage and monopolies by so-called water mafias that grow rich from state sponsored private water services¹⁵.

The inability of municipalities in the Free State to deliver basic services such as water has significant economic impacts on financial resources of municipalities and the lives and livelihoods of residents of the province. All of the mentioned economic factors impact heavily on the economic rights of residents of the province to obtain employment and practice their trades in the Free State.

¹⁴ Sternehill, T. 2016. Understanding State Fragility through the Actor-Network Theory: A Case Study of Post-Colonial Sudan. Bechelor Thesis in Peace and Development Studies. Sweden Växjö Linneuniversitetet: School of Social Sciences. p 9.

¹⁵ Nkuyane, L. 2022. Mangaung loses 46% of its water due to leakages. OFM News. 11 April. <https://www.ofm.co.za/article/centralsa/314725/mangaung-loses-46-of-its-water-due-to-leakages> Date of access: 7 November 2023. & Schoeman, K. 2022. 'Water tanker mafia' in Free State. Mail & Guardian. 28 October. <https://mg.co.za/news/2022-10-29-water-tanker-mafia-in-free-state-making-a-killing-from-desperate-residents/> Date of access 29 December 2023.

2.2 Environmental dimension

The environmental dimension evaluates vulnerability using climatic and health risks that affect livelihoods as well as the social and legal institutions in place to counterbalance such risks. In this respect the effectiveness of governments and impacts on food security are important. Aspects that may aggravate such risks of vulnerability include urbanisation, socio-economic factors, risks of infectious diseases and environmental performance¹⁶.

South Africa's Constitution (section 24b) provides that ***“everyone has the right to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures that prevent pollution and ecological degradation [and] promote conservation”***.

The environmental dimension is one of the most prominent regarding the risks relating to fragility in the Free State Province as indicated in Blue and Green Drop Reports issued by the National Government's Department of Water and Sanitation. Residents of the province are subjected to extreme pollution with raw sewage running through roads and yards and into rivers and streams. National government reports indicate that the Free State Province is the least compliant, with 64 out of 96 waste water systems in a critical condition, while 80% have no plans in place to mitigate this.

The Green Drop Report measures wastewater treatment plants that are tasked with purifying wastewater (including sewage) and releasing it back into rivers so that it can be reused by residents in their homes and businesses. This report states that, across the Free State Province, there is a ***“dreadful state of negligence, lack of management commitment, effort or duty to maintain public assets”***. Only 3 out of 19 municipalities in the province have drinking water that complies with minimum microbiological and chemical compliance standards, with 16% good, 10% poor and 74% classified as bad. The result of this is that strategic rivers such as the Caledon, Vaal and Orange Rivers are polluted by raw sewage that also flows into nature reserves. This pollution also

¹⁶ Desai, H. & Forsberg, E. 2020. Multidimensional fragility in 2020. OECD Development Co-Operation Working Paper 79. Paris: OECD Publishing. p 42.

poses serious health risks for humans and animals who consume food contaminated by polluted water, as well as directly polluted water from many contaminated dams, rivers and streams¹⁷.

The Blue Drop Report measures the technical aspects relating to infrastructure (pipes, pumps, reservoirs as well as processes regarding water distribution and quality). In this respect the Free State Province's technical site assessments that evaluate the abstraction, pumps and distribution networks gave the province 63% in terms of overall conditions with the highest being Tswelopele Local Municipality with 82% and the lowest being Masilonyana Local Municipality with 30%. Of the 21 water treatment plants measured in terms of microbiological water quality status; 7 were in excellent condition, 5 were good, 1 was poor and 8 were bad. The report indicates that "*the water in these systems poses a serious acute health risk to residents*". The report further indicates that in terms of chemical compliance only 2 have excellent, 6 good, 2 poor and 11 bad systems which is indicative of poor resource management and lack of technical skills¹⁸.

In June 2023 the Free State Department of Health confirmed nine cases of cholera that resulted in two deaths in the Ngwathe Municipality¹⁹. This is a municipality that has access to the Vaal River but is failing to deliver access to regular and clean water to residents due to administrative and financial mismanagement and sabotage. The Ngwathe Mayor, Victoria De Beer-Mthombeni, blamed sabotage and electricity load-shedding for the inability of the municipality to ensure functional water reticulation and sewerage systems. Water tested by the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), AfriForum, confirmed the existence of cholera and E. coli in samples taken from the Vaal River at different locations within the municipality²⁰.

¹⁷ Karim, A.A. and Gonzales, L. 2023. #Earthcrimes: Free State's foul failure. Amabungane Centre for Investigative Journalism. 11 April. <https://amabhungane.org/stories/230411-free-states-foul-failure/> Date of access: 7 November 2023. & Kretzmann, S. 2022. Free State drinking water polluted by sewage. Groundup news. 3 August. <https://www.groundup.org.za/article/winburgs-drinking-water-polluted-by-sewage-works/> Date of access: 7 November 2023.

¹⁸ Department of Water and Sanitation, 2023. Blue Drop Watch Report. <https://ws.dws.gov.za/IRIS/releases/BDWR.pdf> Date of access 18 December 2023. p 66-73.

¹⁹ Motlounge, T. 2023. Cholera outbreak: Death toll rises to 32 as Free State records second fatality. news24. 9 June 2023. <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/cholera-outbreak-death-toll-rises-to-32-as-free-state-records-second-fatality-20230609> Date of access 30 December 2023.

²⁰ Seleka, N. 2023. Cholera outbreak: Sabotage, load shedding contribute to raw sewage flowing into Vaal River, says Ngwathe Mayor. News24. 29 May 2023. <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/cholera-outbreak-sabotage-load-shedding-contribute-to-raw-sewage-flowing-into-vaal-river-says-ngwathe-mayor-20230529> Date of access 30 December 2023.

Another significant example of the extent of pollution by municipalities is the destruction of the Seekoeivlei Nature Reserve that was declared a Ramsar Convention Wetland Site in 1997 at the town of Memel in the Phumelela Municipality.

In reply to questions asked in the Free State Legislature, the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) responsible for Environmental Affairs in the Free State Provincial Government, Mr Thabo Meeko, indicated that investigations found that the Memel sewage plant does not have the capacity to handle the increasing volumes of raw sewage from the community which has resulted in the large scale pollution of the reserve²¹.

The MEC for Cooperative Governance and Human Settlements, Mr Ketso Makume, indicated in reply to a similar question that the Thabong sewage plant in Matjhabeng Municipality has cost over R64 million but is still incomplete²². A contractor has been appointed but oversight by the DA has shown that there is no contractor on site and the plant appears complete. This plant is supposed to service a large area but its non-functionality means that raw sewage is consistently being pumped into the natural environment that feeds the Sand River agricultural irrigation scheme.

In a statement, a Democratic Alliance Councillor in the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (MMM), David Masoeu, indicated that there are 9000 pit latrines in the Metro that are sporadically serviced which is often months apart. Residents complain about worms, skin disorders and other health hazards. Metro authorities indicate that they do not have adequate resources to deal with the problem²³. There remain thousands of pit latrines as well as bucket toilet households across the Free State. This impacts significantly on the environmental rights of communities and people's right to dignity that is enshrined in Section 10 of South Africa's Constitution that

²¹ Meeko, T. 2023. Question 318 asked by Hon. L. Kleynhans (DA) to the Hon. MEC responsible for the Department of Economic, Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs: Mr. Thabo Meeko. Free State Legislature Internal Question Paper No 6 July-December 2023, 2nd Quarter of the 5th Session of the Sixth Legislature. Bloemfontein: Free State Legislature.

²² Makume, K. 2023. Question 423 asked by Hon. R. Jankielsohn to the MEC responsible for COGTA&HS. Free State Legislature Internal Question Paper No 6 July-December 2023, 2nd Quarter of the 5th Session of the Sixth Legislature. Bloemfontein: Free State Legislature.

²³ Gericke, M. 2024. 9 000 puttoilette in Vrystaat word 'sporadies gediens. Netwerk24 online.

<https://www.netwerk24.com/netwerk24/nuus/aktueel/9-000-puttoilette-in-vrystaat-word-sporadies-gediens-20240131> Date of access: 2 February 2023.

indicates that: **“everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected”**.

The Census 2022 report details the types and distributions of toilets across households in the Free State²⁴:

- Flush toilet – 76.3%
- Chemical toilet – 1.1%
- Pit latrine with ventilation – 5.8%
- Pit latrine without ventilation – 10.6%
- Bucket toilet – 3.5%
- None – 1.7%
- Other – 0.9%

The environmental impact of neglected sewerage management across the province is that rivers, streams and dams are subjected to pollution by raw sewage. This has significant environmental and health impacts for communities and poses serious economic risks, especially to tourism and agriculture. Raw sewerage runs into rivers that are used to irrigate crops which implies that food produced is contaminated with various pollutants. This impacts on the presumption that the right to **“sufficient food and water”** would imply that this food and water would be safe for human and animal consumption.

2.3 Political dimension

Political processes and coping mechanisms to strengthen accountability and transparency are important instruments to measure political fragility. Other factors include government capacity, political stability and legislative and judicial constraints. A lack of political integrity, corruption and clientalism can also be used as risk –related indicators²⁵.

²⁴ StatsSA. 2022. Census 2022 Housing and Basic Services. Pretoria: Published by Statistics South Africa. pp 77

²⁵ Desai, H. & Forsberg, E. 2020. Multidimensional fragility in 2020. OECD Development Co-Operation Working Paper 79. Paris: OECD Publishing. p 44.

The ANC-led government after 1994 inherited a state that was not designed to develop opportunities or deliver services to the poor and marginalised. The policies and legislation guiding the civil service and state institutions had to be transformed at political and administrative levels. This transformation saw the expansion of basic services to more people, but the system also became starved of capacity as many experienced and skilled civil servants left, or were forced to leave the government for the private sector or retirement. While the delivery of services is less unequal than in the past, 30 years after the dawn of democracy many people in South Africa still live in informal dwellings with limited access to basic services such as sufficient and safe food and water²⁶.

The cadre deployment strategy of the ANC government, also referred to in communist terms as democratic centralism, is regarded as a significant cause of poor service delivery and water-based fragility. This strategy is part of the governing ANC's communist styled National Democratic Revolution (NDR)²⁷. This strategy must, in the words of a former ANC strategist Joel Nietshitzhe, transform government and society by: *"...extending the power of the national liberation movement over all levers of power: the army, the police, the bureaucracy, intelligence structures, the judiciary, parastatals and agencies such as regulatory bodies, the public broadcaster, the central bank and so on"*²⁸. The cadre deployment policy is widely recognised as the major cause of corruption and poor service delivery in the country.

Within a water-related context, Mike Muller from Corruption Watch indicates that: *"...the problems of corruption go well beyond just a few individuals. They are clearly systematic, involving many people at all levels, from plumbers and tanker drivers to mayors and ministers. Many businesses joined in too, benefitting richly from corruption and in some cases, actively organising and encouraging it. A wide range of cases have been identified across many areas of activity. They range from corruption in the supply of water by road tankers and the provision of temporary toilets, to the*

²⁶ Seekings, J. & Nattrass, N. 2015. Policy, Politics and Poverty in South Africa. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. p 190.

²⁷ Jeffery, A. 2023. Countdown to Socialism. The National Democratic Revolution in South Africa since 1994. Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball Publishers. pp 62-65.

²⁸ Davis, G. 2010. Cadre deployment is never okay. Politicsweb, 20 November. Available from <http://www.politicsweb.co.za/politics/cadre-deployment-is-never-okay> (accessed 1 November 2018).

systematic looting of large scale construction contracts intended to develop water resources and keep the country water secure.²⁹

Cadre-based corruption has a profound impact on the government's capacity to deliver basic services such as water to communities in the Free State. Cadre deployment is regarded as being at the centre of state collapse. The strategy of cadre deployment has had the effect of ensuring that bureaucrats who are responsible for the management, quality and distribution of water, and the maintenance of water-related infrastructure are party loyalists. Loyalty to the party has taken precedence over qualifications and work ethics.

A joint report by Corruption Watch and the Water Integrity Project have identified a number of reasons for the decline in South Africa's water sector that include:

- The decline in the reliability of water services supply.
- A decrease in the resilience of services to problems such as droughts that lead to regular supply failures for millions of residents across the country.
- The non-payment for water by residents that is affecting operations and maintenance of water supply infrastructure.
- Pollution of rivers due to failed municipal wastewater management and poorly regulated economic activities.
- The collapse of the management of the national Department of Water and Sanitation, with billions of rand of irregular expenditure, huge debts and failed projects³⁰.

The above aspects can be linked to the political interference in the administration through cadre deployment.

Economic growth can only happen when the resources of the state are successfully mobilised to support development processes. This process is obstructed by a lethargic and inflated bureaucracy who have lost their vision of mobilising resources for development and poverty alleviation purposes. The provision of water and sanitation services in South Africa are mainly regulated by the Constitution (Act 108 of 1996 as

²⁹ Muller, M. 2020. "Money down the Drain: corruption in South Africa's water sector" Corruption Watch and the Water Integrity Network, Johannesburg, March 2020. p 17.

³⁰ Muller, M. 2020. "Money down the Drain: corruption in South Africa's water sector" Corruption Watch and the Water Integrity Network, Johannesburg, March 2020. p 21.

amended), the Water Services Act (Act 108 of 1997), the National Water Act (Act 36 of 1998), Water Research Act (Act 34 of 1971) and the Environmental Management Act (Act 107 of 1998) that are meant to ensure equitable, sustainable and efficient water management³¹.

Being a member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the country has responsibilities to protect water resources shared with neighbouring states such as Lesotho, which borders on the Free State Province. The SADC manages water resources through the Revised Protocol on Shared Water Resources 2000, the Regional Water Strategy 2006 and Regional Strategic Action Plans for the Water Sector. These agreements emphasise the equitable use of water resources that take into account the guiding principles of integrated water management, geographic and climatic factors and the socio-economic demands of member states³². The pollution of water resources by Free State Municipalities along the Caledon River, which is the border between Lesotho and the Free State, is in violation of these international agreements and has regional hydro-political implications.

The poor quality and lack of water as well as large scale pollution are largely a result of a current political dispensation that prioritises ideological considerations over those of the health and well-being of citizens. This impacts on all the other dimensions that create fragility within communities in the Free State.

³¹ Mchunu, S. 2022. Progress in Eradicating the Gaps in the Provision of Water and Sanitation. Ministerial Briefing to the National Council of Provinces. Presented by the Minister of Water and Sanitation Mr Senzo Mchunu. 15 March. Cape Town: Parliament. p 18.

³² SADC, "Southern African Development Community Towards a Common Future" available at <http://www.sadc.int/themes/natural-resources/water/> Date of access 20 March 2020.

2.4 Security dimension

Vulnerability to violence and crime as well as institutions that mitigate these risks are important measurement tools for the security dimension of vulnerability. Coping capacity regarding the rule of law and government control over territory are further measurement instruments within this dimension³³.

South Africa's Constitution (section 198(a)) indicates that "***National security must reflect the resolve of South Africans, as individuals and as a nation, to live as equals, to live in peace and harmony, to be free from fear and want and to seek a better life***".

A serious security issue related to poor water services and quality is protest action, in the form of service delivery protests that often become violent and result in damage to state and private property. These protests have become a regular feature of the Free State Province's political landscape. The dysfunctionality of local governments is the main reason for service delivery protests in South Africa, specifically in the Free State. These violent protests remain a combination of exposure to water-related threats and insufficient coping capacities of government to manage, absorb or mitigate these threats.

In replies to questions in the Free State Provincial Legislature, the MEC responsible for Community Safety, Roads and Transport, Maqueen Letsoha-Matai, indicated that between March 2021 and June 2023 there were 205 service delivery protests in the province, of which 69 were related to the lack of water and sanitation services. A total of 70 of these protests were violent resulting in 8 injuries and damage to property valued at R51, 426 million³⁴.

³³ Desai, H. & Forsberg, E. 2020. Multidimensional fragility in 2020. OECD Development Co-Operation Working Paper 79. Paris: OECD Publishing.

³⁴ Letsoha-Matai, M. 2023. Question 447 asked by Hon. J. Mokoena (DA) to the Hon. MEC responsible for Community Safety, Roads and Transport: Ms. Letsoha-Matai. Free State Legislature Internal Question Paper No 6 July-December 2023, 2nd Quarter of the 5th Session of the Sixth Legislature. Bloemfontein: Free State Legislature.

Criminal syndicates that have been dubbed “*water mafias*” in the province have also seen the erosion of the state in favour of private water suppliers across the province. A prominent example of these is in the Maluti-a-Phofung Municipality where private suppliers supply water to people through water tankers paid for by the state. Taps in households and businesses are regularly empty even though the municipality houses three large dams, the Fika-patso, Metsimatsho and Sterkfontein dams. At best, when water is available in taps it is erratic and unsafe.

Mafias are accused of sabotaging water infrastructure to force local governments to utilise their services. Reports in Maluti-a-Phofung indicated that R5 million was paid for 5000 water tanks, but only 1500 were delivered, even though the full amount was paid. These tanks are meant to supply water to communities, while being replenished by privately operated water tank trucks paid per delivery by the municipality³⁵. Sabotage was also cited as a reason for the inability to provide water and poor water quality in Ngwathe Municipality³⁶. These water tank mafias operate in an environment of a cadre deployment induced weak and corrupt state, as explained under the political dimension of fragility.

The security concerns of communities during water-related protests and criminality pose serious threats to the rights of residents to live in peace and harmony, to be free from fear and want, and to seek a better life. The lack of political will to deal with threats and large scale corruption in the water sector are serious sources of water insecurity in households and businesses across the Free State.

³⁵ Schoeman, K. 2022. 'Water tanker mafia' in Free State. Mail & Guardian. 28 October. <https://mg.co.za/news/2022-10-29-water-tanker-mafia-in-free-state-making-a-killing-from-desperate-residents/> Date of access 29 December 2023.

³⁶ Seleka, N. 2023. Cholera outbreak: Sabotage, load shedding contribute to raw sewage flowing into Vaal River, says Ngwathe Mayor. News24. 29 May 2023. <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/cholera-outbreak-sabotage-load-shedding-contribute-to-raw-sewage-flowing-into-vaal-river-says-ngwathe-mayor-20230529> Date of access 30 December 2023.

2.5 Societal dimension

The societal dimension of fragility is measured in terms of vulnerability affecting social capital and social cohesion and the ability of institutions in society to counteract potential risks in this regard. The risks may increase in societies with young populations who live in conditions of inequality and deprivation that limit their potential to develop human capital³⁷.

The societal aspects of water related issues are stressed by the World Bank who warn that: “*stressed water supplies exacerbate food insecurity, biodiversity loss and challenge human development*”³⁸. The right to access to adequate food is entrenched in South Africa’s Constitution alongside water.

The economic impact of unreliable and unsafe water services, among others, contributes to declining employment figures and poverty. The Free State Province recorded losses of 70,000 employment opportunities from July 2022 to September 2023 with agriculture being the hardest hit sector with 28,000 job losses³⁹. Over 60% of people in the province are living in poverty, and 1 million people rely on social grants out of a provincial population of 2,964,412⁴⁰.

The 2022 census indicates that the Free State Province has 845,250 households, of which 81,693 still live in informal and 10,497 in traditional dwellings. The census also indicates that the Free State Province has lost 10,067 people since 2011, who have left the province to seek better living conditions and jobs in other provinces, a poor reflection on the provincial economy⁴¹.

³⁷ Desai, H. & Forsberg, E. 2020. Multidimensional fragility in 2020. OECD Development Co-Operation Working Paper 79. Paris: OECD Publishing. p 45.

³⁸ Jha, S-K. 2023. Water knows no borders: Transboundary cooperation is key to water security and avoiding conflict. World bank Blogs. Published on The Water Blog. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/water/water-knows-no-borders-transboundary-cooperation-key-water-security-and-avoiding-conflict> Date of access: 7 November 2023.

³⁹ StatsSA, 2023. Quarterly Labour Force Survey Quarter 3: 2023. Statistical Release P0211. Pretoria: Published by Statistics South Africa. p 54.

⁴⁰ StatsSA. 2022. Census 2022 Provinces at a glance. Pretoria: Published by Statistics South Africa. & Meeko, T. 2023. Speech delivered by the Member of the Executive Council. Free State Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs Provincial Budget Vote Speech 2023/24. South African Government. www.gov.za Date of access 7 November 2023.

⁴¹ StatsSA. 2022. Census 2022 Provinces at a glance. Pretoria: Published by Statistics South Africa. pp 20-23.

Many victims of the economic and social decline due to poor water-related services are young people. Many of the unemployed youth in the Free State Province experience social impacts of fragility that include:

- severe financial difficulties
- poverty
- debt
- homelessness
- family tensions and breakdown
- alienation and stigma
- increased social isolation
- crime
- lack of confidence and self-esteem
- the inability to attain skills and education
- ill-health

All of the above issues increase with the duration of unemployment⁴².

3. Mitigating water-based fragility in the Free State Province

The World Bank's 20 years of experience in mitigating fragility identifies 3 key priorities, namely strengthening institutional capacity, building resilient societies, and catalysing private investment⁴³. Some important recommendations to ensure sound water management, as advocated by the Water Integrity Network, include fighting corruption in this sector by the designation of the water sector as an island of integrity, ending impunity by instilling a culture of consequences for poor water management, employing skilled, honest and ethical people within the sector to manage water and wastewater treatment plants and ensuring that procurement is carried out within the required time frames, at the right quality and correct prices. This revolves back to the principles of transparency, accountability and responsiveness at all levels of the public service.

⁴² Mosala, S. 2018. Youth Unemployment in the Free State Province: Causes, Consequences and Solutions. Economic Analysis Directorate. *Staff Working Paper Series. March 2018*. Bloemfontein: Department of Treasury Free State Province. P 6.

⁴³ African Development Bank Group, 2022. Bank Group's Strategy for Addressing Fragility and Building Resilience in Africa (2022-2026). Abidjan: Transition States Coordination Office (RDTs). March 2022. p 16.

The management of what can be referred to as a hydro-political crisis in the Free State will require interventions that include:

- Abandoning the ideologically-based cadre deployment policy and appointing technically qualified and skilled individuals to manage scarce water resources and operational systems.
- Prioritising investment in water reticulation and sanitation infrastructure renewal to mitigate water losses and ageing infrastructure.
- Ensuring visible and expanded oversight by legislative bodies with consequence management over government's use of funds that are meant to ensure greater equity of water resources in the country.
- Implementing existing legislation to ensure that individuals responsible for corruption, water-related crimes and environmental pollution due to negligence and malfeasance are prosecuted.
- Educating end-users on the sustainable use of water as a scarce resource⁴⁴.

The key to mitigating the water-related problems of the province lies in an admission of the seriousness of the issue and the creation of a sense of urgency by implementing solutions immediately. There needs to be less focus on historical explanations and more action. Various NGO's are assisting communities who experience water shortages and are unable to afford to buy water from private suppliers. Such NGO's include Water Shortage South Africa, AfriForum and Gift of the Givers who intervene when vacuums exist as a result of the failures of local and other spheres of government in the Free State.

These NGO's and other local community organisations have tested water samples to determine the safety of water and have been instrumental in ensuring that individuals and households have access to drinking water during water-related crises. The crisis regarding water in the Free State extends to all towns and municipalities and it is not within the financial or human capacity of NGO's or local communities to fill the infrastructure and capacity vacuums created by dysfunctional municipal administrations. They do, however, help with temporary measures such as bottled

⁴⁴ Jankielsohn, R. & Haj-Younes. 2020. Ideology based government incapacity on hydro-politics in South Africa – an ontological assessment. *Relaciones Internacionales Journal*, La Plata University Argentina and with University of Madrid: October 2020 (45): 289-304. p 302. & Muller, M. 2020. "Money down the Drain: corruption in South Africa's water sector" *Corruption Watch and the Water Integrity Network*, Johannesburg, March 2020. p 67-69.

water when situations become life threatening⁴⁵. For this, the province is indebted to their goodwill and commitment to assist communities and individuals in need when government services collapse.

The DA in the Free State request the South African Human Rights Commission to consider this report and use all possible authority within its constitutional mandate to assist residents of the Free State whose basic human rights are violated by the deliberate actions of, and often inaction by, provincial and local governments.

⁴⁵ Afriforum, 2016. Afriforum help water verskaf in Kroonstad. Artikels/Form Nuus. 14 June 2016. [AfriForum help water verskaf in Kroonstad - AfriForum](#) Date of access 30 December 2023. & Ngcobo, K. 2023. Gift of the Givers to distribute water to Vredefort as three family members die of cholera. Timeslive. 8 June 2023. [Gift of the Givers to distribute water to Vredefort as three family members die of cholera \(timeslive.co.za\)](#) Date of access 30 December 2023.

Annexure A - Images

Winburg



Raw sewage polluting streets in Makeleketla in Winburg



Raw sewage polluting streets in Makeleketla



Residents of Makeleketa have no decent sewerage systems or networks and have to navigate raw sewage in their yards

Odendaalsrus



The Odendaalsrus sewage treatment plant was refurbished in 2010 to the value of R16 million. Today it is derelict and vandalised with all the sewage flowing into the Sand River and is budgeted to cost R185 million to rebuild.



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Thabong



The Thabong sewage treatment plant was built at a cost of R64 million and is currently non-functional with all the sewage flowing into open spaces in the community and eventually polluting the Sand River.



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The Thabong sewage treatment plant was built at a cost of R64 million and is currently non-functional with all the sewage flowing into open spaces in the community and eventually polluting the Sand River.

Ladybrand



The sewage plant at Ladybrand is derelict and the sewage ends up in the Caledon River, which is the border with Lesotho.



The sewage plant at Ladybrand is derelict and the sewage ends up in the Caledon River, which is the border with Lesotho.



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The sewage plant at Ladybrand is derelict and the sewage ends up in the Caledon River, which is the border with Lesotho.

Matjhabeng



The Virginia sewage plant is in an advanced state of decay and all the sewage flows into local rivers and streams.



The Virginia sewage plant is in an advanced state of decay and all the sewage flows into local rivers and streams.



The Meloding sewage plant is in an advanced state of decay and all the sewage flows into local rivers and streams.



The Meloding sewage plant is in an advanced state of decay and all the sewage flows into local rivers and streams.



Discoloured tap water from Welkom

Ntha Lindley



The waste water treatment plant in Ntha at Lindley was built and remains dysfunctional.



The waste water treatment plant in Ntha at Lindley was built and remains dysfunctional.



The waste water treatment plant in Ntha at Lindley was built and remains dysfunctional.



The waste water treatment plant in Ntha at Lindley was built and remains dysfunctional.



The waste water treatment plant in Ntha at Lindley was built and remains dysfunctional.

Mashaeng



The waste water treatment plant that serves Mashaeng at Fouriesburg is dysfunctional with raw sewage flowing through streams into the Little Caledon and eventually the Caledon River.



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The waste water treatment plant that serves Mashaeng at Fouriesburg is dysfunctional with raw sewage flowing through streams into the Little Caledon and eventually the Caledon River.



The waste water treatment plant that serves Mashaeng at Fouriesburg is dysfunctional with raw sewage flowing through streams into the Little Caledon and eventually the Caledon River.

Parys



Sewage running into the Vaal River in Parys.



Incomplete water works project to supply water to Parys.

Jagersfontein



An unused, broken water tank in Jagersfontein



A scarce water tank for the whole of Jagersfontein



Residents getting water from one of the very few water supplies of the entire town that is inconsistent with water supply

Nala



Sewage flows into streets, storm water systems and eventually the Vals River at Bothaville



Sewage flows into streets, storm water systems and eventually the Vals River at Bothaville



Sewage flows into streets, storm water systems and eventually the Vals River at Bothaville



Sewage flows into streets, storm water systems and eventually the Vals River at Bothaville



Sewage flows into streets, storm water systems and eventually the Vals River at Bothaville

Tswelopele



Broken equipment at the sewage plant



Raw sewage flowing into catchment areas and eventually the Vet River



Raw sewage flowing into catchment areas and eventually the Vet River

Annexure B – Municipal Reports

Reports were compiled from statements and information sent by local DA councillors across the province.

Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality

DA Caucus Leader: Johan Pretorius (072 226 0222)

In most of the Township wards there are several reoccurring sewerage leaks that are left unrepaired or are poorly repaired. When attended to by the Municipality, the same problems shortly reoccur. Extensive maintenance and replacement is needed to resolve the issue. This is especially egregious at Kamohelo Primary and Grassland Primary schools where learners have to walk through flowing sewage to attend school.

The following reservoirs have had no ball valves for the past 7 years and thus either overflow on a regular basis or leave residents stranded without water as the reservoir is empty, sometimes for up to 72 hours as the valves have to be opened and closed manually.

- Slypteen Reservoir that feeds Bloemdal and Ferreira
- Ednau Reservoir that feeds the Arcadia / Waterbron and Ednau small holdings area of Bainsvlei
- Spitskop Reservoir feeds Spitskop, parts of Groenvlei and parts of Langenhovenpark

Non-payment to Bloemwater forces them to reduce the flow to 30% thus interrupting water flow to the high lying areas in the Southern Suburbs of Lourierpark, Pellissier, Kwaggafontein, Uitsig, Hospital Park, Fichardtpark. This has occurred at least twice a year since 2016.

The sewage works in Dewetsdorp, Wepener and Van Stadensrus have been non-operational for more than five years. It is difficult to obtain relief services from the Municipality as they are centralised in Bloemfontein. Any relief is temporary as blockages and overflows re-appear after a few days. Raw sewage flows into the Modder River (which supplies water for Rustfontein Dam) and the Sandspruit (which flows into the Caledon River and supplies water for the Welbedacht Dam). In Van

Stadensrus, raw sewage forms dams which syphon into the ground and contaminate boreholes which is their only supply of water.

Loadshedding also interrupts water supplies as many reservoirs are unable to fill to capacity. The only municipal water tanker available for Naledi has been broken for four months now and this tanker assists areas like Riverside with water supply daily.

Fezile Dabi District Municipality

Mafube

DA Caucus Leader: Suzette Steyn (072 632 6383)

The municipality has a water debt of about R472 million with the Department of Water and Sanitation. Revenue losses for water were at 91% in 2020/22. The acceptable norm is 15-30%.

The municipality experiences poor quality drinking water and water losses. They have limited waste water treatment capacity and poor infrastructure maintenance. The treatment plants are overwhelmed. Villiers, Tweeling, Cornelia and Frankfort urgently need upgrading. The Qalabotjha plant has been non-operational for months. There is no electricity due to cables stolen over six months ago and there has been to attempt to repair the issue. There are regularly no chemicals available to treat the raw sewage, water cannot be pumped and raw sewage spills directly into the Vaal River.

Requests are regularly received for blocked and overflowing manholes, and burst or leaking water pipes. Some areas do not have VIP toilets and the bucket system is still used in areas where infrastructure is installed but not linked.

Metsimaholo

DA Caucus Leader: Jeff Zwane (082 744 6324)

An escalating sewage spillage in Sasolburg has caused a severe health threat since the initial complaint was lodged in September 2023. There has been no remedial action to deal with this hazard. Residents and pedestrians must deal with this growing marsh on a daily basis.

Moqhaka

DA Caucus Leader: Chris Dalton (082 552 5471)

The Kroonstad sewage plant is in the process of being upgraded, but about 65% of the sewage still runs into the river untreated. Water is sporadic with Maokeng/Phomolong area without water for days at a time. The contractor is on site for the upgrade, but progress is slow. The Viljoenskroon sewage plant needs urgent attention.

Steynsrus has had issues with protest action around interrupted water supply and is often unable to pump water for several days.

Ngwathe

DA Caucus Leader: Carina Serfontein (083 635 2851)

The Oudewerf pump station in Parys is broken, which has led to an overflow at a manhole for 10 days into the Vaal River, directly above the water abstraction point for the drinking water plant. It has not been fixed yet. Additionally, the last manhole before the wastewater treatment plant regularly overflows during power outages in Parys, as diesel is not always available for the generator.

The Schonkenville Sewage Pump Station is currently not functioning due to electrical problems, leading to overflow into the veld and into a dam.

The Vredefort Wastewater Treatment Plant has not been functioning correctly for more than 10 years. Despite spending R20 million on consultants and contractors, the project has remained unfinished with very sloppy work for over a year and a half. The contractor has abandoned the site, and untreated sewage flows through the plant without active treatment. The final effluent goes directly into the Skulp Spruit and then into the Vaal River.

At the Parys Wastewater Treatment Plant, the final effluent does not meet standard specifications, with 5x biofilters not working at all, and the rest of the plant is in a terrible state. This plant pollutes the Vaal River every day. There are also instances in Parys where sewage is deliberately being diverted into storm water drains.

Roodam, originally built for irrigation water, is now filled with sewage, causing an unbearable stench for residents.

Potable water is a consistent issue in Parys. The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) is running a project to resolve this, but there is a poor relationship between them and Ngwathe officials and the Mayor, resulting in the project dragging. Chemicals are not always available, leading to some areas receiving dirty water or no water for days. Poor communication from water officials has resulted in upset residents, and councillors are refused access to conduct oversight.

The Koppies Water Works plant is too small to provide Kwakwatsi and Koppies town with drinking water. The water is often extremely dirty or completely unavailable. This happens due to poor procurement of chemicals. The municipality sources inferior products as they owe too much money to their regular suppliers.

A pipeline was in the process to be built from Koppies to Edenville to supply water to Edenville (which has been battling for years with dried up and non-functional boreholes). It is 70% completed by the same contractor as the Vredefort plant, who has abandoned both projects.

Residents in Vredefort and Mokwallo have been battling with poor water quality and not enough water for years. The abstraction point at the river in Parys is a huge problem, breaking from time to time, resulting in Vredefort and Mokwallo to be without water for days. One area in Mokwallo has not received water for over three years.

Lejweleputswa District Municipality

Masilonyana

DA Caucus Leader: Doc Molahloe (076 191 9147)

Phomolong sites were handed out in 2021 and have never been serviced. Residents are forced to deal with their own sewage and there is not even a bucket system in place. They are forced to walk uphill to fetch water at a private residence as no water tanks are supplied.

Large sections of Winburg have spent months without water (Winburg High School has over 1000 learners, Ipopeng Secondary School over 700).

The Wolwas Dam is filled by pumping water from the river, which is not done. A company was appointed in June 2023 to deal with water issues, but no work has been undertaken, only an assessment. Sewage flows directly into the Rietfontein Dam.

The sewage plant was recently renovated but it and the recently installed pumps are dysfunctional. The water pump station was progressing when the contractor was removed and another was illegally appointed. This contractor was also removed and construction has come to a standstill. Water is not potable as the necessary treatment chemicals are often not available. Livestock are left without access to water in camps for months at a time.

Theunissen and the surrounding communities were completely without water between December 2023 and January 2024. They are now subject to water shedding after the treatment plant was vandalised. It is still being repaired, but there are serious concerns about the quality of the repairs and the value for money.

Matjhabeng

DA Caucus Leader: Igor Scheurkogel (073 860 3698)

A report by the Lejweleputswa District Municipality revealed alarming contamination levels of Coliform and E. Coli in municipal borehole water in Odendaalsrus, rendering it unsuitable for drinking. This contamination is linked to a specific borehole situated near the dysfunctional Akasia water treatment pump station.

Matjhabeng Local Municipality's actions are in direct violation of section 19 of the Water Act 36 of 1998, which mandates the protection of underground water resources, such as boreholes, especially crucial during water restrictions imposed on residents. This negligence directly impacts residents who, in response to water restrictions, have increasingly turned to borehole water. The contamination of this vital resource jeopardizes the health and well-being of Odendaalsrus residents, posing a serious threat to the community's access to safe drinking water.

Since the commencement of 2023, Matjhabeng has imposed water restrictions to mitigate night-time water losses. Consequently, residents have been relying on borehole water, underscoring the importance of safeguarding its quality.

Scheduled for refurbishment on 01 November 2023 by the implementing agent Vaal Central, the Akasia pump station remains neglected, with no construction or renovation initiated. Disturbingly, Matjhabeng officials neglect steering committee meetings, failing to address the inadequate progress reported by the appointed contractor.

This negligence directly impacts residents who, in response to water restrictions, have increasingly turned to borehole water. The contamination of this vital resource jeopardizes the health and well-being of Odendaalsrus residents, posing a serious threat to the community's access to safe drinking water.

In early February 2024, residents were informed that the extreme discolouration in drinking water from the Balkfontein plant was as a result of organic matter and posed no health risks. However, shortly after this, residents were told that the water needed to be boiled or treated with bleach to render it potable. An independent test of a water sample taken at Doorn in Welkom showed elevated E. coli levels.

Nala

DA Caucus Leader: Thinus Barnard (083 447 6188)

Water access in the municipality is severely affected by non-payment to Bloemwater. Water shedding has been implemented as reservoirs cannot be filled due to pump issues.

One of the three lines from Balkfontein to Koppie Alleen has been out of commission since 2019 due to major leaks, leaving residents without water. Infrastructure maintenance is unfunded and the supply pipeline to Wesselsbron/Monyajeng needs urgent attention. A project was started to lay a new pipeline but was stopped due to funds being depleted. A project of constructing a reservoir to join the proposed pipeline also failed, as it is alleged contractors were not paid.

Officials at the plant indicated that a lack of adequate financing has had a huge impact on the operational level required at the plant and the reality on the ground is that the system is at a point of total collapse. Financial constraints were mainly due to non-revenue from municipalities. Necessary maintenance was not performed at the plant.

Bothaville and Kgotsong have been facing sewerage challenges for some time, which increased significantly in the past six months. Sewage water has been running in the streets and it is evident that sewer pipes are overloaded.

During an oversight visit to the Kgotsong sewerage systems and at the wastewater plant in Bothaville, the following was found:

- Most of the system at the wastewater plant is outdated and is poorly maintained
- Sewage system treatments are inefficient

- Pumps constantly malfunction
- There is no maintenance and operations are poor
- There is a lack of proper planning to increase the sewerage systems

Due to blocked sewerage pipes and lack of proper flow, the sewage runs into the streets, then flows into the storm water systems, and eventually runs into the Vals River in Bothaville.

The system is constantly not functioning properly and pipes are overloaded most of the time. The wastewater treatment works is failing to properly treat water and much of it is spilling into the environment before even getting to the treatment works.

Due to a lack of pipes maintenance and constant water manifestation, the ingress of tree roots or grass exacerbates sewerage blockages which leads to more spillage all across the streets of Bothaville, Kgotsong.

Tokologo

DA Caucus Leader: Johann Steenkamp (072 024 3029)

The newly built storm water channel project in Boshof was implemented in 2021 and was expected to be completed in 2022. However, due to a lack of proper planning, the project was only completed last year and cost over R3 million.

This was supposed to ease the lives of the residents in Mama-o-Ntelekile. The houses in the area flood every time there is heavy rainfall. Residents' furniture, household items and other valuables are destroyed by water every year and several times in a given year of heavy rain. Some residents are relocated to the park for safety during those trying times.

The project that was intended to better this situation has now caused more damage. The storm water channel is not supported by any drainage system. Instead, the water dams at the channel, endanger the lives of children who use it to swim in.

Tswelopele

DA Caucus Leader: Moshe Snyer (078 711 8925)

The treatment plant is in a satisfactory condition but the pipe network is old and pipes need to be changed. The old rusted pipes cause discolouration in the water and sometimes results in a bad odour.

On a recent oversight visit to the sewage treatment plant, some equipment was found to be non-functional and in a state of decay. Two of the pump stations visited were not running, causing raw sewage to flow into emergency catchment areas and eventually into the Vet River. The inflow of raw sewage into the river is upstream from the water tower where water is pumped out of the river for the town's potable water supply.

Thabo Mofutsanyana District M

Dihlabeng

DA Caucus Leader: Hilton Maasdorp (072 341 8635)

Untreated raw sewage continuously discharges into the environment from the Fouriesburg Sewage Plant. The untreated sewage finds its way through grazing fields into the Grootspuit River, ultimately contaminating the Caledon River. Such persistent pollution poses a significant threat to the health and well-being of Fouriesburg and Mashaeng residents, farmers, nearby towns, and even our Lesotho neighbours.

Maluti-A-Phofung

DA Caucus Leader: Alison Oates (084 588 0411)

Water supply is inconsistent and greatly affected by load shedding, especially in higher areas. Many towns do not have water for days or weeks on end.

In Kestell, burst pipes are not repaired and water is wasted. Aging infrastructure needs urgent maintenance and upgrading. In areas where the municipality has placed water tanks, they are insufficient to support the needs of the community. The plant is not operating as it should and there is no one in site. Constant blockages occur especially around Van Rensburg Street.

Mantsubise and Monontsha rotate their water supply, leaving one area without water for days at a time. Mabilela Phahameng has not had access to water for 15 years.

Mantsopa

DA Caucus Leader: Tim Mpakathe (071 792 6483)

The municipality's inadequate handling of the water crisis in the area during the recent heatwave left residents without any water or relief.

Bloemwater conducted maintenance in Excelsior in November 2023, causing a complete water supply outage. The community was not informed of this scheduled

maintenance, leaving residents dependent on boreholes for five days. This disruption resulted in empty pipelines, causing an ongoing water shortage, leaving residents with only 2 to 3 hours of water supply daily. Despite significant investments in infrastructure, the boreholes' capacity is insufficient to meet the water demand of Excelsior and Mahlatswetsa. The purification plant, funded with millions of rands for raw water supply, is also operating below capacity.

During the heatwave, Ladybrand, Mauersnek, and Manyatseng have endured up to six days without a water supply. Water tanks were not deployed to affected areas.

The municipality is consistently unable to properly spend the allocated Water Services Infrastructure Grant. Despite the conditional directive for these funds aimed at upgrades to the water purification plants and other water infrastructure. Unfortunately, due to bad planning and mismanagement, these funds go unspent.

The complete shutdown of the water supply has been attributed to “technical problems at Genoa water treatment plant”, “power interruptions”, “problems at Genoa water treatment plant”, “repairs to electricity substation”, “burst mainline” etc.

The residents of Ladybrand, Mauersnek, Platberg, and Manyatseng have been left without water for an extended period, with no clear indication of when the supply will be restored. Approximately 20,000 residents, including critical institutions like hospitals and clinics, are forced to rely on temporary water tankers, which is neither sufficient nor sustainable.

In the Blue Drop Watch report released in 2023, for the 2021/22 financial year, the Department of Water refers to the state of the water purification plant in Ladybrand. Their comments on the municipality's ability to supply safe drinking water to its community were stated as “Inadequate alignment of the Microbiological Monitoring programme to SANS 241:2015 requirements mean the safety of water provided cannot be guaranteed.” It further states that the Ladybrand and other local water purification plant's chemical compliance is poor. The statement “coupled with poor Chemical Monitoring compliance achieved for all systems, further reduces the confidence in the water supplied”, is very worrying.

The water supply is very erratic and the quality of water has deteriorated. There is a foul smell emanating from the water. Residents are concerned about possible outbreaks of waterborne illness in the community.

The 14-meter Leeuwrivier water barrier project in Hobhouse, costing R2 053 181.00, has been completed with alarming deficiencies. The Department of Water and Sanitation's evaluation revealed that the barrier failed to meet the required standards. This unnecessary project was strongly opposed from the outset. The river had never faced severe water scarcity, and the barrier was deemed redundant.

Residents have been enduring massive sewage spills for years, with little action taken to address the issue. This was exemplified when a resident reported a sewage spill pouring into her yard, only to be informed that the sanitation department had reached its maximum overtime limit. Such mismanagement reflects a failure in planning, problem-solving, and implementation processes. The recent cholera outbreak can be directly attributed to neglect in maintaining and upgrading the water and sanitation infrastructure.

Nketoana

DA Caucus Leader: Thinus Blignaut (083 627 0141)

The municipality must deal with the continued theft of panels from the pump station that extracts water from the False River (Ntha) into the storage dams. The pump station has been non-operational for three months.

Although a contractor was recently appointed to replace the stolen panels, it has been reported that municipal employees from the Electricity department were used to do the job during working hours, with materials belonging to the municipality. The panel that the contractor was going to install at the station is exactly the same as the spare panel stolen from the municipal offices in Lindley town by municipal officials. Allegedly, a senior official from the water department in Lindley falsely reported that the pump was fixed, which would enable the service provider to submit invoices and claim full payment for work not actually done.

If enough water is not extracted and storage dams are not filled, there will be no water for residents, especially with the winter season fast approaching and it unlikely to rain. The residents of Lindley have already been subjected to water rationing for the past 9 years, where water is only available for 4 hours in the afternoon.

The municipality provided water to the Petsana neighbourhood in Reitz using trucks equipped with JoJo water tanks. The cost for two months totals R198 029, averaging

a monthly expenditure of R99 015. This excessive spending persists, despite the availability of a more cost-effective alternative, the installation of PVC pipes with stand taps. Not only would this represent a one-time expense, but it would also guarantee a consistent water supply at a fraction of the current cost. The spending of public funds on inefficient water supply methods directly impacts the residents of Petsana. The current situation not only imposes an unnecessary financial burden on the community but also jeopardizes the reliability of their water supply. By transitioning to a more cost-effective and stable solution, they can alleviate the financial strain on residents and guarantee a consistent, secure water source.

Phumelela

DA Caucus Leader: Doreen Wessels (082 770 8335)

In Warden, water supply stops in the morning and generally resolves in the late afternoon. This leaves learners without access to potable water at school. The water tank's pump was stolen. Issues with pumps also leave Vrede without water. Memel's water supply is extremely inconsistent as they are sometimes left without water and sometimes the reservoir overflows.

When it rains, sewage runs through the streets in Warden. Vrede's whole sewerage system is blocked and sewage runs into the streets, yards and houses.

Setsoto

DA Caucus Leader: Riette Dell (083 766 5552)

Clocolan has regular water disruptions due to burst pipes. The MOFOMO Pipeline, which cost R45 million, experiences regular problems. Water is still not connected to station houses as the project remains incomplete due to corruption. The wastewater works is not functioning, even though it was newly built three years ago. The water is extremely dirty and the area has many outstanding pit toilet conversions and connections to sewage lines.

A project to construct further pipelines to be placed to pump water to the water waste treatment plant was approved. Blasting occurred on 11/12/2023 to lie pipes. The commencement date for the construction of the pipeline is January 2024 with a completion date of February 2024. A great concern in this regard has been raised as the trench has not been cleaned and due to the expected start date the trench that

was blasted might collapse and cause fruitless expenditure and time delays on the project.

It is recommended that a bridge needs to be built during the construction phase, but this still needs to be approved. The site will not be completed on the contract completion date and an extension will be applied for by the contractor. It is expected that the project will continue for an additional 6 to 8 months.

Ficksburg does not have a sewage waste works. Civil engineers on site are busy drawing up a business plan for funding. The area experiences regular sewage blockages and burst water pipes. Pit toilet eradication project is a big problem. Extension 11 in Meqheleng is not connected to any sewage line.

The Van Soelen Sewage project has been plagued with corruption. It is a sewage line going from the abattoir to a pump station.

Marquard has Regular water disruptions due to water being pumped from Holstein from Clocolan. The funding for the new dam wall is still in question.

In Senekal, capacity of the waterworks is not sufficient for the town. There are capital projects in process.

Xhariep

Kopanong

DA Caucus Leader: Hessie Shebe (078 674 3366)

Neglect, lack of maintenance, and destruction of infrastructure, has left the community bearing the brunt of the municipality's and local clinic's collapse.

The municipality owes Bloemwater R597 748 087.48 and failure to meet payment will result in disrupted operations. The local clinic has no reliable water supply, and the pump that should be transferring water into the clinic is damaged due to a lack of maintenance and vandalism of the infrastructure.

Despite the Municipality's investment of R9 703 673 in a sewage upgrading project, residents continue to grapple with sewage leaks in their homes. The project, intended to enhance the existing sewage system and pump stations, has not provided the anticipated relief to the community, which has endured this health hazard for years with minimal municipal intervention.

Even after a substantial R9 million expenditure, the upgraded systems persistently leak, subjecting residents to a noxious odour. The continuous sewage leaks pose a serious health risk to the Bethulie community, undermining their well-being and quality of life. The municipality's failure to address this issue, despite substantial financial investment, has created an unacceptable living environment, forcing residents to endure the unpleasant consequences of the ongoing crisis.

In a commendable effort, the local taxpayers association intervened by installing water tanks in nine households, safeguarding their drinking sources from contamination caused by sewage leaks.

Letsemeng

DA Caucus Leader: Thabo Nthapo (060 505 6437)

In Petrusburg, only 2 out of 24 boreholes are able to supply the 4 reservoirs. The demand for water is too high for the reservoirs and pressure becomes too low to ensure adequate supply. Water shedding is a regular occurrence. Koffiefontein and Jacobsdal often go days without any water. Four out of five towns do not have do not have water between 8:00 and 17:00 on a daily basis.

Some communities rely in water tanks for supply but there is only one truck available for five towns, leaving communities without water for several days.

Municipally allocated sites in some extensions do not have toilets or running water.

Mohokare

DA Caucus Leader: Ian Riddle (082 807 6453)

The potable water in Mohokare has run out after the rainy season. For the third time in November, the Municipality was unable to supply water to the community. The municipality was not prepared and did not have the required chemicals for purification on three occasions in less than half a month. The Technical Department blames the Supply Chain Department and vice versa.

Water tankers are not dispatched to the affected areas and municipal boreholes are not used to assist in relieving the situation.