# Do African Leaders Deliver on their Election Promises? A Case of Fetakgomo-Tubatse Municipality, Limpopo Province

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Abstract: The study focused on the failure of the local municipality under the leadership of the ANC as the ruling party, to provide clean water to the households. Provision of clean water has remained a key element in the manifesto of the ANC over the years, and also in the current 2019 election campaigns, however, this aspect has been eluding the party over the years. This is in contrast to the legislation which states that Provincial and Local Government Municipalities should provide un-interrupted quality water services to citizens. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, in particular, chapter two (Bill of Rights) sections 27(1) (b) enshrines the basic right of access to sufficient water, as well as a safe and healthy environment. Furthermore, the constitution obliges government, in particular Municipalities as water service providers to meet their constitutional responsibility of providing healthy drinking water services to the communities. The other major piece of current legislation is the National Water Act, 36 of 1998, chapter 2, water management strategies that delineates how water resources need to be protected, used, developed, conserved, managed and controlled. Chapter 3, part 3, further deals with water reserve which consist of two parts and they are, the basic human need reserve and the ecological reserve. The basic human need reserve provides for the essential needs of individuals served by water resource in question and includes water for drinking, for food preparation and for personal hygiene. The ecological reserve relates to the water required to protect aquatic ecosystems of the water resource. This has to be primarily within the guiding principles of sustainable development and for the benefit of everyone in South Africa.

Keywords: Bulk water supply, Framework, Service delivery, Water quality, Water resources

### 1. Introduction

Leaders across the globe are good in making election promises, which prove to be difficult to deliver once such leaders are in office. This is because campaigning is easy, and fulfilling election promises calls for availability of various resources. More often than not, election promises are based on the dire needs of the communities; politicians know how to 'scratch where it itches the most'. However, they tend to ignore calculating the resources that will be needed when implementing their manifestos. It is therefore not surprising to find that electorates are forgotten immediately after the elections, and will only be remembered when the other elections are due. Hence, most African leaders focus on how they will benefit once they get into power, instead of focusing on uplifting communities. South African politics are riddled with a number of empty promises to the voters. Moeng (2019) observed that politicians make numerous promises to the voters during the election period with the hope of getting more votes, however, such promises are not fulfilled. Thus, this article focuses on water promises that were made to Fetakgomo-Tubatse local municipality. The municipality experiences huge water shortages, despite election promises and legislation that stipulates that all South Africans will have access to clean water.

Water is the major source of life and it plays a pivotal role in peoples' lives. Kingsbury and Remenyi (2004) state that water has a direct impact on the everyday livelihoods of communities. The Republic of South Africa's Constitution Act, 108 of 1996, in particular, its Bill of Rights enshrines the basic right of access to sufficient water, as well as a safe and healthy environment (RSA, 1996). Furthermore, the constitution obliges water service providers to meet their constitutional responsibility of providing healthy drinking water services to the communities. If ever this right of access to clean water services is compromised it will mean that the rights of the people are being infringed.

The Water Services Act, 108 of 1997, outlines the responsibility of the government departments even more. The Act provides an outlined regulatory framework within which water-related services should be provided. It provides the basic guidelines for the management of the country's water resources 36 of 1998. This has to be primarily within the guiding principles of sustainable development and for the benefit of everyone in South Africa.

Nevertheless, the effective provision of clean drinking water is the major challenge confronting South Africa's public service sector since the democratic governance in 1994 (Kido, 2008). In recent years many communities, in all parts of the country, have resorted to protest activities to express their dissatisfaction with the state of municipal service delivery. Protest actions have progressively increased in intensity since 2004. Damage to private and public property and threats to human safety have been part and parcel of the protest actions. One leading cause of the dissatisfaction, in respect of the water sector, has been the government's unfulfilled promise as indicated above of a sustainable supply of proper drinking water as contained in the Municipal Infrastructure Grant booklet (2004-2007:04).

Despite the formalised legislative measures and comprehensive policy strategies, not much has come out of the commitment made of proper water services for all. This is true especially in the rural areas of the poorer provinces of South Africa, such as Limpopo, the Eastern Cape and parts of KwaZulu-Natal, where there are clear discrepancies (Nzimakwe, 2009:62). The above statements confirm that there is a serious problem in implementing plans for an effective framework to ensure that the country's water resources are protected, developed and well managed (Thompson, 2006). Thus in the village of Mohlaletse, under the jurisdiction of the Fetakgomo Greater Tubatse local municipality, water shortage has reached a level of being a crisis. The study intends to investigate the election promises made to the community of Fetakgomo-Tubatse local municipality and to determine if the political leaders delivered on their election promises.

# 2. Election Promises Made to Fetakgomo-Tubatse Local Municipality in Relation to Water Provision

South African citizens were promised clean water provision through the following legislation in

addition to election promises made by the governing party.

# 2.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

The constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, Chapter two: Bill of Rights, in particular, enshrines the principles of access to sufficient and clean drinking water as a basic human right. It also operates as a framework within which South Africa's water legislation must operate and for the division of legislative and administrative responsibilities between the different spheres of government. Section 27 of the Constitution stipulates that every person has a constitutional right to have access to sufficient water. The state must take reasonable legislative and other measures to achieve the progressive realisation of this right.

#### 2.2 Water Services Act, 108 of 1997

The Water Service Act, 108 of 1997, created a regulatory framework within which water services should be provided, which basically involves regulating the use of water resources and issues affecting the water resources. Section 3 stipulates that:

- Everyone has a right of access to a basic water supply and basic sanitation;
- Every water service institution must take reasonable measures to realise these rights.

The Act makes provision for the right of access to a basic water supply necessary to secure sufficient water and an environment not harmful to human health or wellbeing. The Act also places all water institutions under an obligation to give preference to the provision of a basic water supply and basic sanitation to the communities.

### 2.3 Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000

Bekink (2006:315) says that the provision of water and more specifically drinking water to the residents is generally considered to be one of the basic services that a municipality must render. Without water and basic sanitation infrastructure and services, it becomes difficult to imagine how a settlement can be sustainable and survive. Accordingly, water and sanitation services seem to tie in strongly with the development duties and objectives of municipalities

that have been entrenched in the Constitution. There is a clear role for the local municipality to address all challenges relating to the water supply in the local community. This includes priorities outlined in their 2016/2017 Integrated Development Planning (IDP). The local municipality is ideally positioned to provide citizens with a full range of municipal services and enable them to exercise their basic civil, socioeconomic and political rights. It is critical that the wellness of every citizen is given recognition so that growth and development become a reality. In fact, service delivery practices and a focused commitment by municipal officials can influence growth and sustainable development.

# 3. Challenges Relating to Water Delivery

The following are identified constraints facing water service delivery and management:

# 3.1 Natural Factors and Water Delivery Challenges

The limited rainfall received by the country is a major constraint which makes the storage of surface water very difficult. The limited rainfall in seven provinces of South Africa (except KZN and Western Cape) rendered most of the rivers dry throughout the season. Most water dams get dry before the beginning of the new rainy season. According to Statistic South Africa (2015), 67 762 households in South Africa receive water from a rainwater tank while in Limpopo, 3 236 households receive water from a rainwater tank. It is also further indicated by the Statistics South Africa of 2015 that 735 119 households in South Africa used rivers and streams and wells as their main source of water. This evidence means that the provision of water to these households depends on the mercy of enough rainfall (Lehohla, 2015:75).

As a result of this natural factor of receiving limited rainfall in some other parts of the country, it will be logical for South Africa to ensure that water is drawn from those provinces that receive more rainfall to those that are receiving little rainfall. The Department of Water and Sanitation as the custodian of water resources should ensure that Provincial water dams are interconnected. This would ensure that provinces such as Limpopo and the Eastern Cape are not left behind in terms of households that have access to piped water. The DWS can also enter into agreement with other

countries that have an abundance of water to address these natural factors, Lesotho in particular; the country is reported to receive an annual rainfall of 100 mm from October to April (LHWP, 2014). These are the opportunities that DWS can make use of to address the problems of the drought stricken provinces. It has been indicated at the beginning of this chapter that water is development. Without water, provinces such as Eastern Cape and Limpopo will always remain at the bottom of the ladder in terms of the human development index. Despite the annual rainfall that is received by South Africa, the country also depends largely on ground water. It is a known fact that most of the rural areas of South Africa use the onsite sanitation system such as pit toilets and this can cause the ground water to be contaminated (Muller, 1989:30). According to the South Africa Year Book, 2014, provinces such as Limpopo, Northern Cape, North West and Eastern Cape receive most of their bulk water from the ground water resources. It is estimated that about 52% and 82% of community water supply schemes are from ground water resources (Burger, 2006/7:608). This would mean that more people in those provinces are at risk of drinking contaminated water from the ground. It is therefore imperative that water treatment and testing be done on a regular basis by the Water Service Providers to ensure that consumers are not infected by contaminated water drawn from the ground.

# 3.2 Theft and Corruption in Local Municipalities

According to Myburgh (2008:15-17), theft of generators and water pumps and vandalism of water pump valves regularly result into most rural areas going without water for weeks in Limpopo. One incident of this nature happened in Mankweng Township, an area that is under the jurisdiction of Polokwane Local Municipality. In a similar incident, in Louis Trichardt, Makhado Municipality, residents had no water for the entire day after cables at the pump station at the Albasini dam were stolen (Myburg, 2008:3). Cable theft continues to grow rampant in Limpopo Province. Diesel generators used to draw the underground water are the targets of criminals. The majority of rural areas in Limpopo Province still use diesel generators to draw water from the boreholes to the reservoirs. This is in line with the Free Basic Water Supply to ensure that poor communities do receive water. It is however, the responsibility of the municipalities to ensure that security measures are put in place to prevent further theft. The Local Polokwane Municipality should also encourage communities to take ownership of the municipality's infrastructure by reporting criminal acts to the police. It is from this background that President Thabo Mbeki in his state of the nation address in 2008 demanded that all local municipalities must have had anti-theft and anti-corruption strategies to deal with corruption (Rohan, 2008:24).

### 3.3 Lack of Capacity at Local Municipalities

Devas and Rakodi (1993:190) indicate that inadequate financial management and resources remain among the key constraints on the provision of satisfactory service delivery. Lack of financial skills in running huge projects such as water service projects has been a major constraint in the country. It is from this background that the PDLGH has considered it imperative to deploy experts in various fields to build capacity among the weak municipalities that are unable to perform according to the required standards and procedures. The South African Local Government Association (SALGA) has also embarked on ensuring that Municipal Councillors are equipped with the necessary skills to manage big projects in their municipalities. It is a known fact that most of the councillors in all municipalities are elected and not appointed. In some instances, some are without the necessary skills that are required to ensure that services to the people are delivered.

### 4. Causes of Water Problems

The main causes of the water problems, according to studies conducted by specialists, as seen in the water crisis in the 21st century was much more related to management than to a real problem of scarcity and stress (Rogers, 2006:17). Nevertheless, according to other specialists, it is the result of a set of environmental problems aggravated by economic and social development problems (Gleick, 2000:24). Somlyody & Varis (2006:12) attest that the deepening and complexity of the water problems are due to real problems of availability and increased demand, and to a sectoral management process that responds to such problems without a systematic approach that tries to foresee them. Tundisi & Matsumura-Tundisi (2008:28) heighten the need for a systematic, integrated and predictive approach to water management at a level decentralised from the river basin. According to these authors, a consolidated database converted into a

management tool can be one of the most effective forms of confronting the problem of water scarcity, water stress and deteriorating quality.

Tundisi *et al.* (2008:29) highlight that, in the broad social, economic and environmental context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the following principal problems and processes were the main causes of the water problem:

- Intense urbanisation, increasing the demand for water, expanding the discharge of contaminated water resources, while there is tremendous demand for water for drinking and economic and social development (Tucci, 2008:09);
- Water stress and scarcity in many regions of the planet due to alterations in availability and increased demand;
- Poor infrastructure or infrastructure in a critical state in many urban areas, with losses in the network of up to 30% after treatment; and
- Problems of stress and scarcity due to global changes with extreme hydrological events increasing the human population's vulnerability and compromising food security (intense rains and intense periods of drought).

Tucci (2008:10) went further to propose that the services such as the regulation of cycles, climate control, water supply, energy and food production should be the basis for a new approach in the management and governance of water resources. Advanced monitoring capacity with the preparation of a database and the production of software suitable to the management is another methodology of broadly applied scope (MEA, 2003:52).

# 4.1 The Water Contribution Towards Regional and National Economics

Regional and national economies depend on the adequate availability of water for the generation of energy, public drinking supplies, irrigation and food production (agriculture, aquiculture and fishing for example). Improving the management of water resources, integrating and improving the multiple uses, flexibly in allocating water to different users and investing in public sanitation (sewage collection, resolving sanitary problems of waterborne diseases) are of the most important forms of economic and

social development, because improving the quality of life promotes the generation of jobs and income and expands the ability to supply water for multiple uses and stimulates the economy (Bhatia & Bhatia, 2006:30). Low cost technologies can support the implementation of measures and the development of actions in basic sanitation, especially for low-income populations on the periphery of large metropolitan regions (Tundisi *et al.*, 2006:35).

# 4.2 Effects of Climate Change on Availability of Water

Climate change plays an important role in the hydrological cycle and in the quantity and quality of water. These phenomena can promote countless changes in the availability of water and in the health of the human population. With various changes on continents and in regions, three fundamental problems should be studied to promote solutions:

Hydrological extremes - hydrological extremes that will occur on different continents and in regions should affect human populations due to disasters (floods, mudslides, overflows) or intense droughts (increase in semi-arid and arid regions), compromising human health, food security and increasing the vulnerability of the cycles and biogeochemical processes; urban areas can be affected to the extreme by these hydrological extremes.

Contamination - studies undertaken in many regions indicate a sharp increase of contamination aggravated by salinisation and decontrol of land use, interfering with the cycles of phosphorus, nitrogen and heavy metals (Tucci, 2008:22). The eutrophication of surface waters (rivers, lakes and reservoirs) should increase because of higher water temperatures and thermal resistance to circulation, as a consequence there will be greater frequency of outbreaks of cyanobacteria (Pearl & Hussmann, 2008:45), aggravating the toxicity of springs and natural water supply sources.

Water and regional and national economies - These hydrological extremes and the increased contamination will affect regional economies, causing profound alterations in the economy dependent on the availability and demand for water resources. The solution to confronting the consequences of the effects of global changes in water resources is to adapt to these alterations by promoting better governance at the watershed level, developing advanced technologies

for monitoring and management while expanding community participation - users and the public in general - in this management and in the sharing of the technological processes that will improve the infrastructure of the database to give greater sustainability to the actions.

#### 5. Methods and Materials

Research methodology is the specific procedures or techniques used to identify, select, process, and analyze information about a topic (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:141). The researcher followed qualitative methods of conducting the study due to the nature of the topic and the intended data to be collected. Qualitative research design encompasses several approaches to research that are in some respects quite different from one another, but they all have two things in common: firstly, they focus on phenomena that occur in a natural setting, that is, in the real world, and secondly, they involve capturing and studying the complexity of those phenomena (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:141).

The researcher implored Phenomenological study because it attempts to identify and understand the challenges that face Fetakgomo Tubatse Municipality with regard to its water management strategy. Semi-structured interviews with respondents were conducted. The interview guide with open-ended questions was developed to guide the interview sessions. The flexibility of using semi-structured interviews as compared to structured interviews is that the former allows the researcher for the discovery and elaboration of information from respondents that is important to the research but may not have been thought of as pertinent by the researcher (Gill, Steward, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008:1). Besides the semi-structured interviews, the researcher also utilised document analyses as form of secondary data collection and observations.

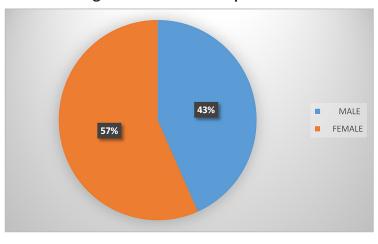
# 5.1 Study Area

Mohlaletse is one of the villages that fall under Fetakgomo Tubatse Local Municipality, Sekhukhune District. Mohlaletse boarders with Mabopo, Apel, Nkoana and Seroka Villages. Fetakgomo Tubatse is a product of reconfiguration of municipalities, a process that was undertaken by government in the year 2016. The Municipality is located north of the N4 highway, Middleburg, Belfast and Mbombela, and east of the N1 highway, Groblersdal and Polokwane. The

**Table 1: Gender of the Respondents** 

Male	Female
13	17

**Figure 1: Gender of Respondents** 



Source: Authors

municipal area of jurisdiction covers approximately 4 550.001105 square kilometres or 45 500.1105 ha in size. The area is known as the middle-veld as it is located between the High-veld and Low-veld regions. It is located within the Sekhukhune District Municipality (SDM) of the Limpopo Province. (Draft consolidated IDP for Fetakgomo Greater Tubatse Municipality, 2016/17). Mahlaletse used to fall under jurisdiction of former Fetakgomo Local Municipality, which was considered to be one of the rural based municipalities with less/no potential for revenue generation. The village is situated approximately 120 kilometres East of Polokwane City (IDP Document, 2016/2017).

#### 6. Results and Discussions

The researcher utilised the thematic data analysis technique. The variables that denote themes were clustered together and those that denote the numbers were put together. The frequency of water supply is quantitative. The feelings of the households about service delivery are qualitative, hence a qualitative approach to this study (Giesler, 2004). The following are the findings of the study emanating from the data analysis:

#### 6.1 Biographical Information of Respondents

The biographical information intends to gather specific information as follows, gender of the respondents,

age group of the respondents, educational level of the respondents, household income, and size of house owned.

#### 6.2 Gender of the Respondents

In terms of gender the following information was found as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 and Figure 1 above demonstrate that according to the findings, the number of male respondents who were found at home was thirteen while their female counterparts were seventeen. The general opinion is that women are usually above men in number, especially during working days as most men are normally at work, while their wives are taking care of their homes. These data are consistent with the theory.

## **6.3 Age Group of the Respondents**

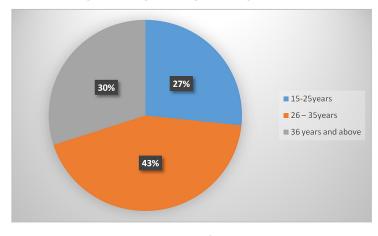
The age group information of the respondents is shown in Table 2.

The results depicted in Table 2 and Figure 2 on the next page show that three sets of age groups took part in the study. In terms of the findings, the respondents from fifteen to twenty-five years were eight, those between twenty-six and thirty-five years that took part in the study were twenty-three. The adults from thirty-six years and above were

**Table 2: Age Group of the Respondents** 

15-25 years	26 – 35 years	35 years 36 years and above	
8	13	9	

Figure 2: Age Group of Respondents



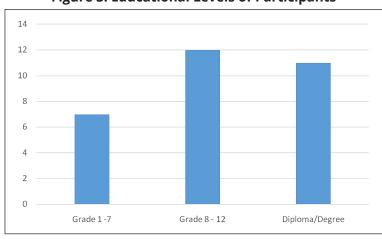
Source: Authors

**Table 3: Educational Level** 

Grade 1 -7	Grade 8 - 12	Diploma/Degree
07	12	11

Source: Authors

**Figure 3: Educational Levels of Participants** 



Source: Authors

twenty-nine. This part, as well, shows that a reasonable number of the residents were at home when data were collected, indicting the area is a rural setup with more elderly people, women and the sick are at home during working hours.

#### **6.4 Educational Level**

The educational level results are indicated in Table 3 above.

In terms of educational level, results indicate that the majority of respondents achieved Grade 8-12, which were twelve in number, followed by eleven with Diploma /Degree and seven in the Grade 1-7 category. The highest response rate of Grade 8-12 indicates that the most of community have high school education, and have some knowledge of water issues. They lack tertiary education because of lack of resources and the rural nature of the community.

Table 4: Household Income

R0 - R1000	R1001 – R5000	R5001 – R10 000	R10 000 and Above
12	10	5	3

Figure 4: Household Income Categories



Source: Authors

#### 6.5 Households Income

In terms of household income, results indicate that the majority of respondents were in the category R0-R1000, followed by R1001-R5000. Very few are in the category R10 000 and above. Similarly, very few are in the category R0-R1000. Household income is a strong determinant of the supply and use of water. It is argued that people could be waterpoor not because there is no safe water in their area but because they are income-poor. In other words, despite water being available within their area, people may fail to get connected and have access to safe water because they cannot afford the cost of doing so (Dungumaro, 2007:1146). The situation in Fetakgomo Tubatse indicates that the income of the community is very poor, with most residents falling in the lowest category.

Table 5 and Figure 5 on the following page show that seven of the households had only one room each. This room would be used as a kitchen, dining room, lounge and bedroom, reflecting a desperate state of lack of housing accommodation and indeed a state of poverty. One in eight households had two room houses and that still suggests a shortage. Most households with one and two room houses were in, implying severe lack of housing development in this municipality. The majority of houses were 3-4 rooms and 4-5 rooms. Some households

in the study area had bigger houses with more than five rooms. Some houses were built for the communities by government under its. The sizes of houses owned by households in the study area could therefore not be a reliable indicator of their economic status.

# 6.6 Contribution of the Municipality to Water Accessibility

According to the National Water Act, no 36 of 1998, government is the trustee and custodian of all water resources in the country and must ensure that water is protected, used, developed, conserved, managed and controlled in a sustainable and equitable manner, for the benefit of all persons and in accordance with its constitutional mandate. The government has the responsibility, among others, to conduct water resource management, enact water-pricing strategies, protect resources, and implement water augmentation schemes (Van Heerden *et al.*, 2008:110).

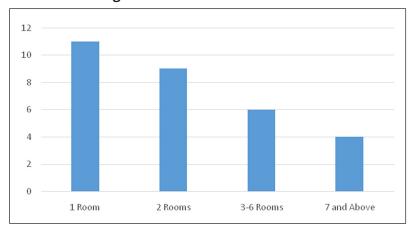
#### 6.7 The Problem of Water Supply in the Area

The identified area relies mostly on river water and boreholes. The few who can afford the piped water also have to fall back on river water or boreholes when the supply has stalled or has been interrupted. Physical assessment identifies that there

**Table 5: Size of Houses Owned** 

1 Room	2 Rooms	3 – 6 Rooms	7 Rooms and Above
11	9	6	4

Figure 5: Sizes of Houses Owned



Source: Authors

are no other sources of water besides river streams and boreholes, except the rain water. Community members regard piped water as an unreliable source of water as it frequently gets interrupted. The overarching factor to unreliable piped water supply includes unavailability of operators and municipal officials responsible for operation and maintenance lacking the requisite skills. In one of the incidences, respondents said that it took the municipality over a week to repair the broken pipe and restore the water supply. One of the challenges identified which affect supply of water to the research area is the illegal connections made in villages before Mohlaletse village. Illegal connections affect water pressure in the pipelines, either to or from the reservoir, as some piped water gets lost along the way.

## 6.8 The Effects of Water Scarcity in the Area

Scarcity of water has negative effects to the livelihoods of the citizens. The following are the possible negative effects to the wellbeing of citizens.

#### 6.8.1 Exposure to Diseases

In the absence of a piped water supply residents are forced to share river, stream water with animals, the practice that exposes them to waterborne viruses, especially the poor who cannot afford water purification chemicals. This situation leads to government spending more resources providing cures due to the cause which could have been prevented.

# 6.8.2 Life Becomes Costly

Residents have to go deeper into their pockets buying water from water tankers who take advantage of interruptions of piped water supply and water purification chemicals. The poor are hard hit as they used the money intended for other purposes on water purchasing and/or purifying.

#### 6.8.3 Time Consuming

The poor residents who cannot afford to buy water from tankers have to travel long distances to fetch water, thus consuming their time to engage in other tasks such as studying, exercising and household tasks other than having to travel such distances to get a basic need.

#### 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

South African communities have been promised access to clean water, however, this has not yet been a reality in many communities like Fetakgomo-Tubatse community. This is because political leaders tend to forget about fulfilment of their election promises upon ascension to power. The Fetakgomo-Tubatse local municipality also experienced a lot of protests in the area of non-delivery of services, a phenomenon that is prevalent in the country. It is therefore imperative that political leaders take the voters seriously and the communities that put them into power. Nevertheless, water shortage is a global crisis that needs to be handled with care. Governments should ensure that proper

water management strategies are developed and implemented.

The study recommends the following:

- Improve water management strategies and policing to prevent and root-out illegal connections to the system;
- Intensify water awareness campaign to educate citizens about effects of illegal connections;
- Water purification awareness to be embarked upon to educate the community about the danger of drinking unsafe water and how to purify it;
- Provision of water tankers every time the interruption of piped water supply has occurred. This will relieve the communities of unintended expenditure on buying water from private water tankers;
- Management should recruit people with relevant water management and technical skills in the Infrastructure and Basic Service Delivery Department and consider a capacity development programme to enhance the skills of the current workforce;
- Policy development on the municipal water management and enforcement of by-laws should be implemented and the consequences to the non-adherence to water by-laws be clearly communicated to the communities.

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