



Sustainability Policy Analysis (Team 2)

Country: South Africa	Author: Alice McGown
Topic: Clean Water Access	Date: 18 March 2021

Background Information:

Both struggles and remarkable achievements mark South Africa's water history. The country is experiencing increasing water scarcity due to multiple factors (including anthropogenic climate change), with poor and rural communities most affected [1]. Even cities are not safe- Cape Town, a major metropolitan center, famously experienced extreme water shortages during 2018. Since then, water shortfalls have continued to affect the nation, complicating efforts to ensure all citizens are provided with clean drinking water. In the face of such ongoing scarcity, South Africa has become a leader in water reuse technology, public water use reduction campaigns, watershed management, and has continued to invest in water infrastructure, with a government estimated 89.4% of South Africans having some access to state-provided drinking water [2].

Current Policy:

South Africa's water policy is best described as a balancing act between the guarantee of clean water as a constitutional right and the Water Services Act of 1997, which calls for the country's water systems to become financially stable through increase cost recovery [3]. In many areas, imposing measures such as pre-paid meters, restricting water pressure, and water subsidy income restrictions has increased municipal water providers' economic stability at the expense of degrading water security among the nations most disadvantaged [4]. Presently, the national government is pursuing a strategy of decentralizing water management to local governments, with financial support via Municipal Infrastructure Grants from the national ministry.

Recommendations:

South Africa's water management experts are overwhelmingly concentrated in the national government, while local and municipal water management departments suffer an ongoing "brain-drain" of water planning and engineering expertise. If the government continues to decentralize control of the country's clean water resources, it must ensure that relevant professionals are present at the local level to facilitate these additional responsibilities. Creating a system of personnel incentives to motivate existing water experts to work in cities and towns while training a new wave of clean water access professionals at the local level will strengthen South Africa's ability to deliver clean water even as it faces increasing climate change-driven drought.

Influential Policymaker:

Lindiwe Sisulu - Minister of Human Settlements, Water & Sanitation

Influential Organizations:

The Water Project - <https://thewaterproject.org/water-crisis/water-in-crisis-south-africa>

Mvula Trust - <https://themvulatrust.org.za/>

References:

- [1] L. Daniel, "South Africa's looming water crisis: Drought and dire infrastructure," *The South African*, 28 October 2019. [Online]. Available: <https://www.thesouthafrican.com/news/south-africa-water-crisis-gauteng-restrictions-october-2019/>. [Accessed 2021].
- [2] Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, "Drinking Water in South Africa," 2020. [Online]. Available: <https://www.southafrica.net/gl/en/travel/category/what-you-need-to-know/drinking-water-in-south-africa>. [Accessed 2021].
- [3] South African National Government, "Water Services Act 108 of 1997," 19 December 1997. [Online]. Available: https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/a108-97.pdf. [Accessed 2021].
- [4] M. Galvin, "Evolving Rights: South Africa's Free Basic Water policy," *Blue Planet Project*, 6 June 2012. [Online]. Available: <https://www.blueplanetproject.net/index.php/evolving-rights-south-africas-free-basic-water-policy/>. [Accessed 2021].