



SALGA Municipal Sustainability Portfolio National Water Week

15 to 22 MARCH 2021



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The National Water Week campaign is aimed at educating the public about their responsibility in water conservation initiatives, raising awareness around the need to protect and conserve the country's water resources. The Department of Water and Sanitation will join the rest of the world in the commemoration of the World Water Day (WWD) under the 2021 theme, "Valuing Water". To further heighten the awareness of this important day, the Department together with its sector partners, will embark on a week-long commemorative educational activities dubbed, National Water Week from 15 – 22 March. The World Water Day is a United Nations initiative with an aim to bring focus on the importance of fresh water and to raise awareness of the billions of people living without access to clean and safe water. This day is about taking action to decisively deal with water challenges facing the globe.

This year's theme aims to understand whether people are valuing water in their lives and advocates for behavioral change in the manner in which people consume water. The 2021 WWD comes during a challenging period as the globe is still struggling with the novel coronavirus pandemic. Water is at the centre of the fight against this pandemic as the World Health Organization has consistently advocated for the washing of hands regularly with a soap as the most effective way of preventing the spread.

Water is the catalyst in eradicating poverty, economic growth, creating employment opportunities, fighting global pandemics, therefore it needs to be valued and behavioral change is needed to stop water wastage and vandalism of water infrastructure. The National Week will be commemorated from 15th to 22nd March 2021, as part of National Water Month celebrations under this year's campaign theme of "Valuing Water".

SALGA's Municipal Sustainability Portfolio encourages municipalities to join and support the commemoration of the National Water Week; and aims to highlight the current water crisis and the creative and innovative ways municipalities are addressing droughts and lack of access to clean water.

Some topical issues that SALGA will be profiling throughout the week include:

- Municipal and community scale multiple water-use systems as key to reducing climate vulnerability;
- The Water-Energy-Food Nexus and associated benefits of a circular water economy; and
- The role of municipalities in protecting rivers as fresh water sources and curbing river pollution for a sustainable water balance. Climate change is already a measurable reality posing significant social, economic and environmental

risks and challenges globally. Water is the primary medium through which the impacts of climate change are being felt in South Africa according to the National Water Resource Strategy (Department of Water Affairs, 2013). Increases in climate variability and climatic extremes are impacting both surface water and groundwater quality and availability in through changes in rainfall patterns, with more-intense storms, floods and droughts; changes in soil moisture and runoff; and the effects of increasing evaporation and changing temperatures on aquatic systems. South Africa has been experiencing a serious drought since 2015, with associated crop losses, water restrictions, and impacts on food and water security, and ultimately net economic losses and decline in gross domestic productivity.

According to the World Weather Attribution Group <https://www.worldweatherattribution.org> climate change tripled likelihood of drought that pushed Cape Town water crisis to 'Day Zero' brink. This group's report, all the climate models used in their study show the likelihood of droughts that goes back to 2015, and will increase with further global warming. As a result, it's important for municipalities to improve resilience to drought.

We begin this week by sharing a report compiled by the National Treasury's Cities Support Program on the What the Cape Town Drought Taught Us: 4 Focus Areas For Local Governments (<https://www.africancentreforcities.net/unpacking-cape-town-drought-lessons-learned/>)



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