

Effective strategies for sustainable water services: some potential pathways

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Outline

- Current status of water supply – the SDG challenge
- Emerging trends - progress stalled
- Contributors to poor performance
- Obstacles to improvement
- Pathways to a better performing future
- Conclusions – the political & SDG challenges

SA has no water supply 'backlog' But not keeping up with population

- **History:** In 1994, 12-million of SA's 36-million people had no access to infrastructure for basic water supply
- **Status:** 6-million of SA's 60 million people have no access (54 million have infrastructure)
- **Progress:** Infrastructure provided for 30-million people since 1994!
- **2030 Goal: Universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all (UN SDG6.1)**

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■ OPINION

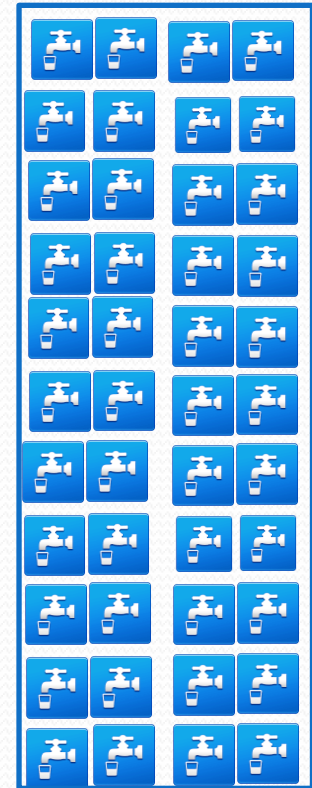
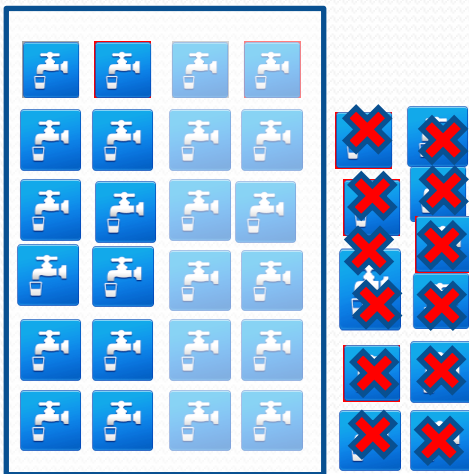
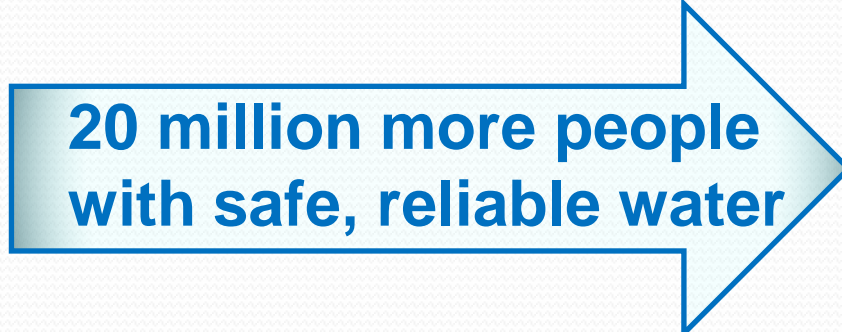
MIKE MULLER: There are no water supply backlogs – just difficult decisions

The challenge now is to keep pace with growing demand as the population expands

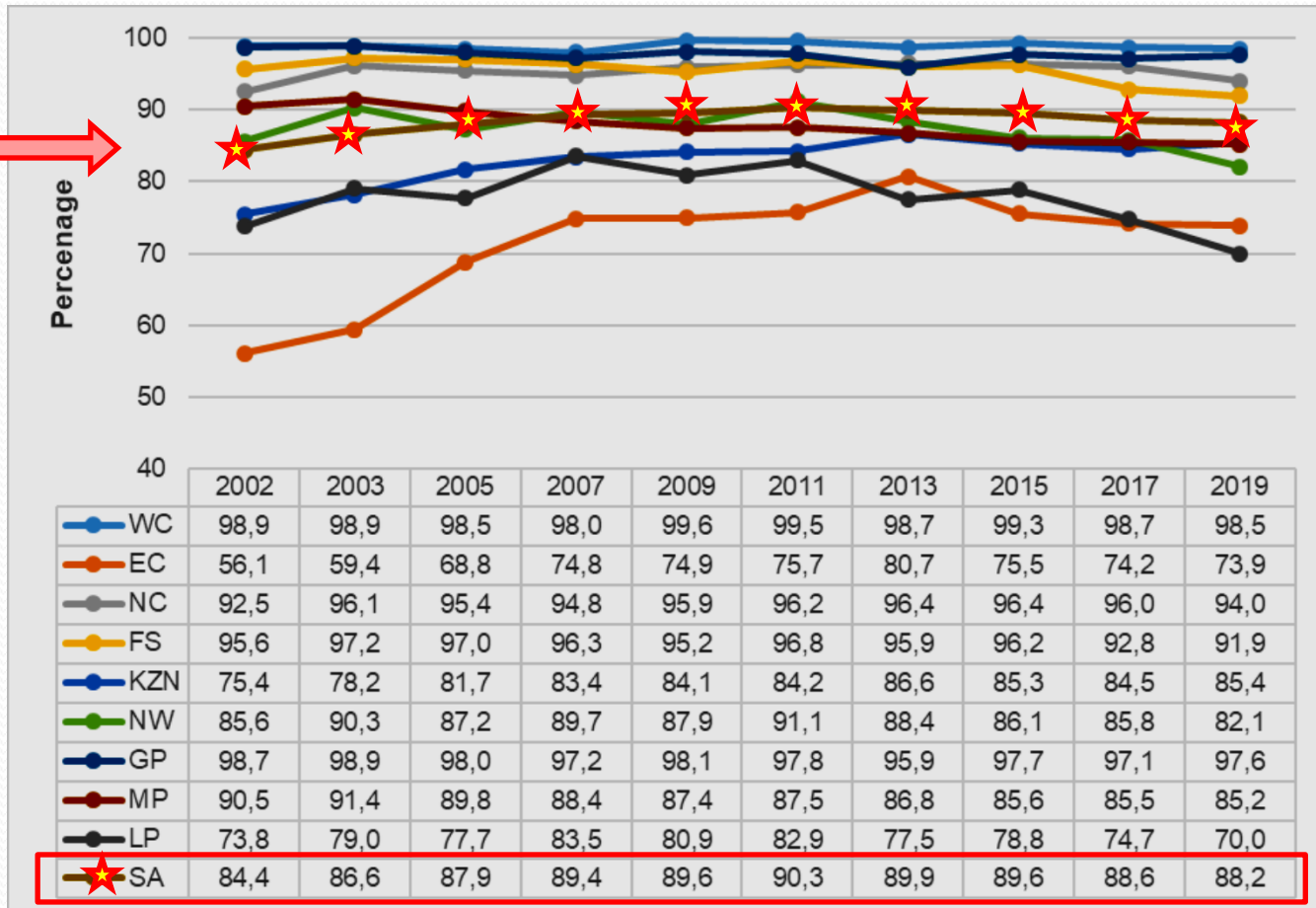
Progress 1994 - 2022

1994
piped water supply:
24 million with
12 million without

2022
piped water supply:
54 million with
6 million without
10 million unreliable

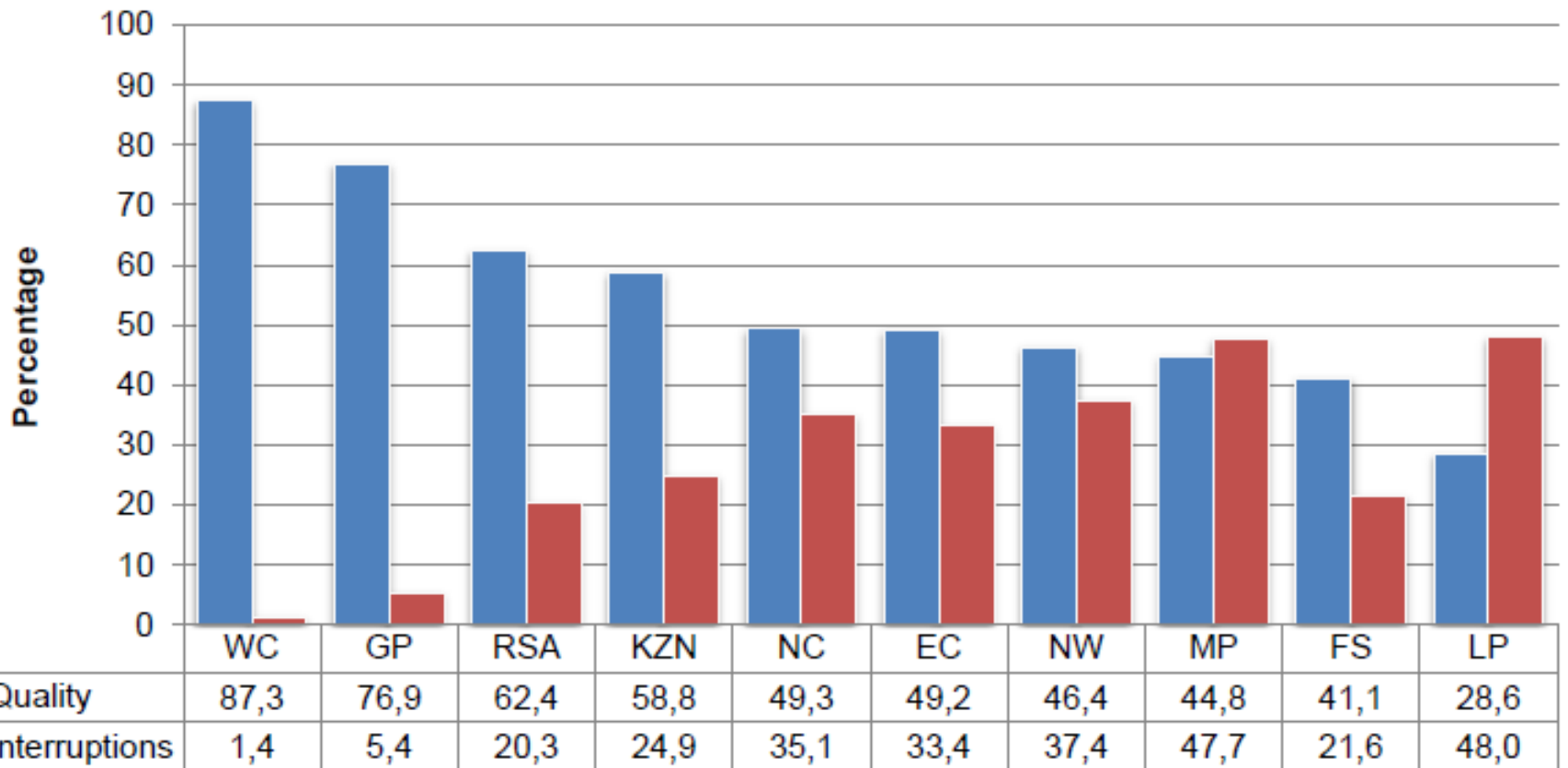


Progress has stalled - emerging trends



Households with access to piped or tap water in their dwellings, off-site or onsite by province, 2002–2019 (%)

Households' concerns: quality of municipal water services as indicated by service interruptions



Why the poor performance?

- 'Old' infrastructure inadequate for existing and future* needs?
 - * Must provide for growing population/not about 'backlog'
- Poor operation and maintenance of existing infrastructure
 - Infrastructure life depends on O&M
- Failure to manage water use and collect revenue
- Municipal capacity and unqualified staff?
- Insufficient funding or inadequate welfare provision?
- Availability of water resources?
- Incoherent & uncoordinated settlement development?

Obstacles to performance improvement

- **Institutional constraints in a complex context**
 - Both too few and too many institutions
 - Extreme autonomy limits effective oversight, intervention
 - Incentives of the status quo, patronage and worse
 - Block effective reform to improve performance
- **Bias against O & M in municipal financial systems**
 - Equitable share (O&M) not ring-fenced like capital grants
- **Politics and policy ambiguity**
 - Ambiguous policy creates inefficiencies & confusion
 - Politicians not performing their key roles
 - Don't want to give up 'patronage' or take difficult decisions

Policy ambiguity - Free Basic Water

**Divergences: non payers
registered recipients
'indigents'**

	<i>De facto</i> :- Do not pay for water (Households with piped water)	<i>De jure</i> :- Receive free basic water (Consumer units)	'Indigents':- (i) with FBW & ii) of all consumer units
Percentage reported	55.4%	21.8%	75% (16%)
Number reported	7 547 000 (of 13 621 000)	3 015 120 (of 13 822 191)	2 163 000 (of 2 895 000) 2 163 000 (of 13 822 191)

Can't provide free basic water effectively without agreement on who gets how much, who pays and who controls, using what measures



From diagnosis to prescription

Pathways to a better performing future

Building blocks for better performance

must be laid upon

Strong foundation of strategic interventions

Pathways to a better performing future

- **Lay the strategic foundation, by addressing**
- Constitutional autonomy of sub national governments
 - Function cannot be left with persistent non-performers
 - Give water funds, eg. equitable share, to actual service providers
- Alternative institutions for water service provision
 - Water boards, private cos, CBOs, multi-jurisdictional utilities
- Revised norms and standards for services
 - Including minimum standards for free basic water, but also
 - Rights and responsibilities for higher service levels

Pathways to a better performing future

- **Put building blocks in place on strong foundation**
 - Competent staff deployed in functional organisational structure
 - WS&S funds 'ring-fenced', balancing investment/O&M, and ...
 - ... allocated to actual providers
 - water use managed: metered, billed, collected & enforced ...
 - ... within free basic water framework and broader service standards agreed with communities

Conclusions: can we achieve SDG6.1?

Universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all

Course correction needed!

- **End municipal impunity and extreme autonomy**
 - Enable national government intervention to support communities where municipalities fail to provide effective services and provincial efforts fail; and
 - Establish institutional arrangements for effective service provision, particularly in poor and spatially difficult communities not just in formal municipal contexts.
- **Successful intervention needs not just**
 - The right people
 - Getting sufficient funds
 - to do their jobs, but also
 - Effective interventions that make it possible for them to do so
- **Task of politicians is to create those conditions**

Action starting?

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State proposes drastic measures to save ailing water boards

Boards are owed R16.1bn by municipalities

BL PREMIUM

06 MARCH 2023 - 05:00KABELO KHUMALO

The government is considering taking drastic measures, including withholding equitable share to municipalities that fail to pay their water bills, in an attempt to save the country's ailing water boards from financial ruin.

Business Day understands that the department of water & sanitation briefed legislators last week on plans to ensure the financial viability of water boards, which were owed R16.1bn by municipalities by the end of December. This includes R10.9bn that is overdue for more than three months.

Conclusions: political leadership needed

- **Politicians must take the lead and do their jobs**
 - Not make technical decisions
 - Not intervene in projects & service management
 - *Primary role is to manage political challenges*
 - Technicians & administrators can't solve political problems
- **Local politicians must be supported to**
 - Explain to communities that payment for water use beyond free basic is needed to keep taps running
 - Ensure alternative institutions work (& are not captured)
- *In all spheres, politicians must build consensus & support*

Thank you! Questions? Discussion?

