

Community Fighting For Their Lives Because Of Dirty Water

Follow up article

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Bathurst's location of Ndlambe Municipality in the Eastern Cape has been battling with water for a long time. This is as the water is either dirty or there is no water. On Thursday, 10 August 2023, the community discovered that the water they were using was dirty and made them sick. They say the water had what looked like powder inside and had a bad smell and taste to it.

Based on previous interviews between *Karibu!* and some of the community stakeholders, it was clear that from their side the water was safe for usage. And if ever there is someone claiming they are sick because that "people must go test and [get] treatment for their HIV and Aids status instead of blaming the water."

After the initial article, the follow up interview with the councillor Mzwandile Sweli, who was not at Bathurst at the time, said he had someone to test the water and it is clean. He added that he can see nothing wrong with it despite what the community is saying by assuring *Karibu!* that he will take a good look and see what is causing the community to be sick.

Ironically, a foreman who works at the Department of Water updated *Karibu!* that there was a problem with the water. He said at the Lushington River, the generator broke down and it could not distribute clean water anymore. Also at the Golden Ridge Dam, there is a problem with bursting pipes, and they have been in the process of being fixed since they were old.

Additionally, since the publication of the initial article regarding the water, it was announced by the Ndlambe Facebook page that the water will not be distributed because it was discovered that there has been a problem with the water sources. It was also announced that there will be no water coming from the taps due to damaged equipment from the water sources of the Lushington River and the Golden Ridge Dam.

After this is done, Councillor Sweli has assured the community on Thursday, 14 September 2023, that the water will then be distributed and clean.

Currently, people think it's unsafe for newborn babies to use water from the tanks that are placed on the streets because some people throw garbage and empty alcohol bottles inside. This causes water pollution which is dangerous, both for children and senior citizens.

Like Siphosethu Mathungane (23), he says the water has been giving him a runny and upset tummy in the past. Therefore, he is happy that the water is currently being cleaned after the *Karibu!* publication of the article. He said, "Before the water stopped being distributed in taps, it was dirty and brown in colour as well, that is why I never bothered to drink tap water after being sick." Mathungane concluded by saying he is happy that *Karibu!* managed to do what community stakeholders of Bathurst failed to do by being the voice of the community against the municipality.

Another affected victim also complained that the water had made her and her family sick, and that if an article was not written they would have died. "If it was not for *Karibu!* and the article, we would have died because the people who are supposed to be our voice as the community. [But instead they] are actually on the side of the municipality, claiming that we have our own sicknesses and we can never blame the water."

and maintenance of the pipes, as he claims that the pipes are old. Regarding an anonymous source claiming the pipes have been installed and renewed less than 5 - 6 months ago. Karibu! tried to speak to Maradonna Swaartboi, the Coordinator of South African National Civics Organisations (SANCO), with no success. Previously, he had said the community needs to stop blaming the water in order for them to intervene when one is sick so the organisation can pay for treatment and doctors' visitations."

Recent events show there is progress. This is as Bathurst has been struggling for the fight of clean water and with the distribution of water for many years with the hope that the councillor will stand with the community and provide them with the service the community voted him in for.

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