

Bandile Mdlalose of the Community Justice Movement considers continuing water cut-offs in KwaMashu

CCS Activist Brief December 2017

It has been more than six months, since May 2017, that the community of KwaMashu began struggling with water shortages and water cuts.

Service delivery has always been an issue in townships and informal settlements in Durban, as they are not serviced like other places, and while many complaints have been made no change has happened – residents still struggle with lack of access to services.

The current situation began when the municipality came to KwaMashu to disconnect water from people's homes, who they said were connected illegally or were failing to pay their service bills. However not only were illegally connected or unpaid homes cut off, but also those who were meant to be getting *free basic water*. This came right at a time where water access was more of a struggle due to water shortages because of the ongoing drought in Durban. There would be no water for a week at a time and mobile water tanks did not arrive regularly leaving residents with no access to water. What pains this community the most is that when these incidents take place, they are never notified or consulted about a way forward. Various stories are told about waking up for work in the morning only to find no water to wash.

During the past few months of heavy storms, the community has been relying on rainwater as an immediate supply to meet their needs. They use the rain water to bath, flush their toilets, and clean, while saving the mobile water tank for drinking and cooking. This is obviously not sustainable and cannot count as 'service delivery'. Residents in this community will tell you that it is still not clear what the causes for the water cuts are. Water is a very important thing in our lives, as we need water to survive. It is sad that we have reached the point of having to use rain water to survive; it is a shame that we have to pray for the rain in order for us to have a normal amount of water.

The eThekweni Municipality must be *transparent* by using their Councillors to call meetings and address the reasons behind the water shortage and cuts. The community is now raising questions about those who had their water cut, because they want to know the real reason for having their water cut. eThekweni Municipality must also be *accountable* for the water shortage as most pipes in the township are leaking; the majority of water goes to waste due to the municipality's negligence but they still blame the community for misusing water. If they were to pay serious attention and act fast to fix leaking pipes, perhaps we would not be in this situation?

Water cut offs such as these are some of the reasons that lead people to protest. These infrastructural faults, municipal negligence, and the burden carried by people with no water creates anger, and anger can go in many directions.