



Cyril Vuyani Gamede

# From The Desk of The CHIEF EXECUTIVE



>> March 2017

**G**reetings, sanibonani. Welcome back to my blog. Before I deal with the business of the month, I want to pay homage to the 69 innocent people who were shot dead by apartheid police in what has come to be infamously known as the Sharpeville Massacre. On 21st March 1960, during a peaceful protest outside the Sharpeville police station, they made the ultimate sacrifice for illustrating their abhorrence of pass laws that attempted to make Black people foreigners in their own country. March 1960 should be remembered by South Africans as the turning point in our repressive history. It was when the world witnessed the cruelty of the racist government and its fellow travellers. What followed was condemnation of apartheid and it was declared by the United Nations General Assembly as a crime against humanity.

The democratic government's declaration of 21st March as Human Rights Day and a public holiday is a small but important way of remembering the 69 dead, other victims of apartheid and those who were incarcerated, banished and banned for their beliefs. Our freedom was hard-won; let's cherish and protect it so that future generations will continue to enjoy its fruits and be proud patriots.

## REMEMBER SHARPEVILLE



21 MARCH 1960  
69 KILLED  
180 WOUNDED

Source: South African History Online

The sad reality is that almost all of us were affected, in one way or another, by apartheid. We are products of a system that divided us on the basis of our pigmentation and succeeded in turning us into strangers. It is our responsibility to create a society that is far removed from the vestiges of separateness and bigotry. Perhaps the time has come for all like-minded South Africans to pledge commitment to a future that will allow our children and their children to become beacons of a discrimination-free society. That is

the least we can do as a tribute to those who positioned human rights as non-negotiable in the struggle for freedom. Staff of Umgeni Water, as members of the wider community, also have an important role to play in designing our country's future.

### Now for the business of the month

**U**mgeni Water is a learning organisation that constantly strives to create opportunities for its staff to enhance their skills, benchmark their work against that of similar institutions and for graduates to receive work-related experience. In this regard, partnerships have been formed with the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Mangosuthu University of Technology and Durban University of Technology. These partnerships allow the three academic



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institutions to send graduates for on-the-job training under mentorship. Additionally, the partnership with the University of KwaZulu-Natal was formed for Umgeni Water Middle and Senior Managers to participate in programmes that allow them to study in disciplines related to their work.

Graduate technicians and artisans from the Durban University of Technology, Mangosuthu University of Technology and Technical Vocational Education and Training Colleges have already received training under Umgeni Water’s mentorship programmes. This training allows them to market their learning and skills among prospective employers. Further, graduates sponsored by State institutions, among them National Treasury, have also received work-related experience at Umgeni Water and they are now based at skills-starved municipalities. Umgeni Water’s contribution to assisting municipalities address skills gaps and to preparing graduates for the job market is both strategically important and crucial to water services provision and poverty alleviation.

Similarly, programmes that have been developed by the University of KwaZulu-Natal are playing an important role in assisting our Managers expand their workplace horizons and also prepare them for what could be a challenging future in the water sector. A group of Middle Managers completed a Management Development Programme and graduated in December 2015. A group of Senior Managers is currently in the Senior Leadership Development Programme (SLDP) that began in October 2016 and is due for completion in May/June 2017. Participants in SLDP have to do individual and syndicate assignments as

mandatory requirements for completion of the programme. These assignments have been approved by Exco and are intended to assist or take further the effective and efficient execution of work at Umgeni Water.

In order to provide context to the global environment in which they operate, SLDP participants undertook an intensive 10-day study tour of Brazil. There are two key reasons why Brazil was selected: because it is one of South Africa’s partners in BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and because South Africa has many similarities to Brazil. These similarities include the large extent of inequality (gap between poor and wealthy), backlogs in access to potable water, impact of drought, ageing reticulation infrastructure and emerging landscape of public-private partnerships to provide water services where municipalities have failed to do so.



Source: [www.sanasa.com.br](http://www.sanasa.com.br)

Reports provided to me indicate that the study tour was both enlightening and beneficial, to the extent that many learnings can be applied by participants in their daily jobs.



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Furthermore, some of the learnings, such as an investigation into sludge disposal by SANASA of Sao Paulo, will assist one of the SLDP groups that is investigating, on behalf of Umgeni Water, a cost-effective way of disposing of wastewater sludge. If the investigation can make a business case for the generation of revenue from sludge disposal, it will be seriously considered by Exco and the Board.

Two major water utilities that operate through concessions, Sociedade de Abastecimento de Agua e Saneamento SA



Source: [www.grupoaguasdobrasil.com.br](http://www.grupoaguasdobrasil.com.br)

(SANASA) and Aquas do Brasil, were also visited during the study tour to learn whether public-private partnerships in some parts of Brazil are working or not. These entities provide the full bouquet of potable water and wastewater services and, according to presentations by Aquas do Brasil, its area of operation and number of people it serves are growing annually. SANASA is wholly owned by the municipality of Campinas, to which it provides water and sewage collection and treatment services, while Aquas do Brasil is owned, through partnerships, by private companies, local governments and other public entities based in cities where it operates. The bitter irony or paradox in their success can be found in the failure of municipalities to provide an acceptable quality of water and a level of service that is both reliable and

efficient. The economy in Brazil, like that of South Africa, is in a state of stagnation which has resulted in reduced spend on new infrastructure and infrastructure upgrade.

There are some similarities between the proliferation of private-public partnerships in water and wastewater services provision in Brazil and South Africa. Back home many municipalities are either struggling or are simply unable to provide basic services, including wastewater and potable water. A consequence of that has been regular and on-going protests that cause wholesale disruption of other services, such as public transport. In Brazil, both state and federal governments would have none of municipalities' inefficiencies and failures and consequently initiated the concept of partnerships to overcome service provision problems. Private sector companies did not hesitate to step in, clearly because it is lucrative for them to be in that space.

Some South African municipalities' appalling failure cannot be allowed to continue. In Umgeni Water's operational area and outside of it, we have offered to assist municipalities on numerous occasions. For reasons best known to them, our offers have been turned down or simply ignored. In the meantime, households – meaning ratepayers who are paying for services – continue to endure hardship and protests show no signs of abating. The time has come for a high-level summit of all impacted and affected parties to talk through service delivery problems and strategise over solutions. There are various and exciting options that can be pursued in order to overcome these problems. Umgeni Water is ready and willing to facilitate a summit of this nature and it is also





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enthusiastic about ensuring that an acceptable level of service is provided, even through partnerships. The bottom line is there simply isn't sufficient State, Provincial or municipal funding available for new infrastructure. A situation of this nature adequately justifies the need for private sector involvement through partnerships. I'd rather have partnerships than no service.

There are some lessons to be learnt from the Brazilian experience; key among this is that government will not sit back and do nothing while frustration over poor or absence of services reaches boiling point. These protests ultimately hold the country hostage, at great cost to the economy. It certainly will not be surprising if future drinking water and wastewater services provision blueprints contain an element of investment by private entrepreneurs.

### Mgeni System: Water woes continue

The Joint Operations Committee established to monitor water resource availability, demand, use and savings in the Mgeni system continues to meet fortnightly in the wake of one of the most protracted water shortages in at least 50 years. Mandatory water restrictions of 15% have been implemented in this system and similarly eThekweni Metro, Msunduzi Local Municipality and uMgungundlovu District Municipality have been asked to achieve savings of 15%. Their performance is monitored on a daily basis in an endeavour to ensure Umgeni Water and its customers have a handle on the situation. It is disappointing that, barring an occasion or two, the targeted savings for municipalities are not being achieved. This is occurring at great cost to Umgeni Water as it has reduced potable water production by 15%. The question I have often asked

is whether municipalities are taking the target seriously. It was set for good reason, and that is to prevent future shortage crisis in this system. We cannot have a situation in which failure to achieve savings has become the norm. It is unfortunate that this situation has become complicated by perceptions among some politicians and consumers that the drought has ended. They base their view on the amount of rainfall that has been received in the Mgeni system over the past few weeks.

Rainfall that has been received has had no profound effect on dam levels, rather it has resulted in Midmar and Albert Falls dams



Albert Falls Dam

rising steadily. Part cause of water shortages in the Mgeni system is the backlog in rainfall – meaning below-average rainfall over the past three-four years. For the system to return to a semblance of normality, there has to be above-average rainfall over a long period. As an example, for Albert Falls Dam to reach capacity there has to be above-average rainfall for about three seasons. In the meantime, water restriction of 15% will remain and I am hoping municipalities will have greater success in achieving this. The situation will be assessed at the end of April or May after a new model is run.

That then concludes the business of the month. The other day I was doing some research on the South African horse



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racing industry and came across this snippet. I thought I'd share it with you.

### Donald Trump's fancy for fillies lands him the snip

It seems President Donald Trump has been giving his master some problems. The frisky Trump would not concentrate on work and rather prefers to spend time with fillies, a situation brought on by what his master describes as mating urges. Fed-up with his poor performance on the race track, his master/trainer decided the only solution was to give Donald the snip. He was gelded, and by all accounts he is now better behaved and calmer, especially in the company of fillies. It seems Donald's horse play days are now firmly over. So, who is this Trump who simply could not behave in the company of females? It is a former race horse from the Western Cape that had its performance requirements mixed up. What his trainer really wanted was for Donald to win races on the tracks of South Africa – and not the affection of filly stable mates. President Donald Trump was a huge disappointment, especially in the Western Cape.



Source: derpibooru.org

### Bye, Comrade Kathrada and Bra Joe

This column will not be complete without a final farewell to South African icons, struggle veteran Ahmed

Kathrada and actor Joe "Sdumo" Mafela, both of whom died in March. Kathrada, affectionately known as Kathy, served a long prison



term on Robben Island for his political convictions. He was 88 at the time of his death. Mafela, commonly known as Sdumo, died in a motor vehicle accident at the age of 75. Mafela, an actor, producer and writer, made us laugh – and cry – as he captured our interest and imagination on the small screen. His death is a huge loss to South African movie audience, the entertainment industry and particularly his family.

South Africa mourns the deaths of Kathrada and Mafela. They will be missed.

An unintended occurrence was that it took the death of Mafela to bring to the fore the sad plight of South African entertainers, including actors and actresses. Colleagues who paid tribute to him at a memorial service highlighted their plight when they spoke about difficulty in getting work and poor pay for long hours of work. Joe would have also spoken out about this situation.

Hamba Kahle, Comrade Kathy and Bra Joe. May your Souls Rest in Peace.

**Yours in Genuine Black Economic Empowerment**

**Cyril Vuyani Gamede**

