

AMATOLA WATER

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CORPORATE BROCHURE



Bringing water to life

Amatola Water operates over an area of approximately 47,500 square kilometres in the central region of South Africa's Eastern Cape province. Its vision is to extend that to the entire province; and it has taken long strides towards this goal

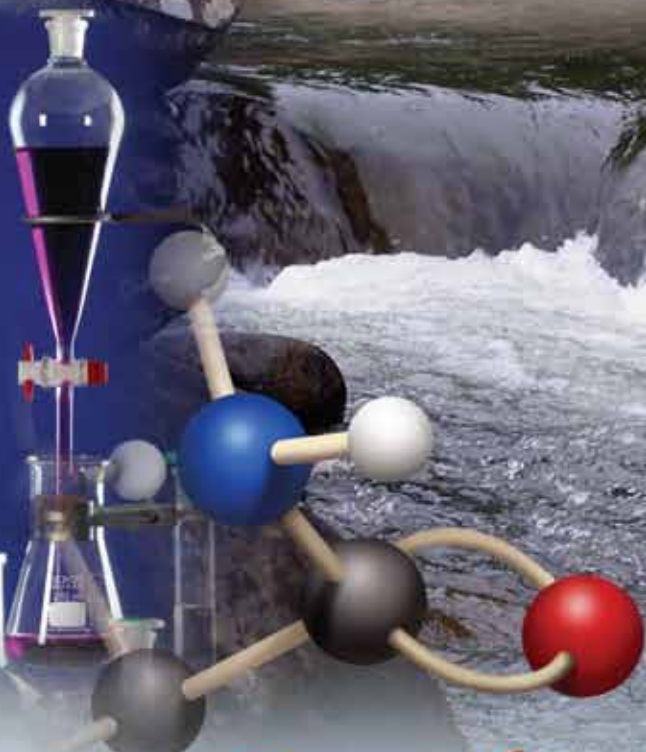
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outh Africa is one of the few countries in the world that enshrines the basic right to sufficient water in its constitution, which states: “Everyone has the right to have access to sufficient food and water”. However, much remains to be done to fulfil that right. When Thabo Mbeki took over the reins of office in 2004, he promised running water to all households within five years; yet there’s some way to go before that vision is realised by the country’s 20 water boards, of which Amatola Water is one.

Amatola Water, a state-owned, non-profit making business enterprise accountable to the minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, was established in November 1997 by national, provincial and local community stakeholders to serve as a multi-service, bulk water services provider.

Initially the catchment area covered 11,000 square kilometres in the Eastern Cape province; but this has since been increased fourfold to 45,800 and now encompasses most of the Amathole and Chris Hani district municipalities, together with smaller portions of the Joe Gbadi and Cacadu district municipalities. With its headquarters in East London, Amatola Water operates 11 plants and seven sub-regional, bulk distribution networks. It offers comprehensive contract services to municipalities for water abstraction, treatment, bulk supply and water quality monitoring for domestic, industrial and agricultural use. Service agreements are devised for the operation and maintenance of customer-owned water treatment and plant and reticulation installations. Amatola Water supports these services with complementary managerial, technical, laboratory and related specialist advisory services tailored to the needs of major industry and other institutional customers.



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the development of chemicals and dosing systems that made purification safer and more efficient. In 2000, **ZETACHEM**

became the first South African drinking water additive manufacturer, to be granted NSF Certification. Products carrying NSF Certification are manufactured to consistently high standards that comply to the World

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However, the operations of the company extend further than this suggests, according to operations director Xola Bomela. "Our operational activities have grown dramatically over the past five years. Our vision is to cover the entire province and we have been developing an expansion plan to guide the organisation through this growth phase." The expansion plan was adopted in February 2010 and is now being implemented.

The plan will result in the water utility operating outside the gazetted area as it extends its footprint in the province. Amatola Water's gazetted service area has increased from about 43,800 square kilometres to 47,515 square kilometres as part of a strategy officially launched in July 2010 and since converted into a five-year business plan. This forms part of a 2020 project aimed at assisting municipalities as water services authorities to provide safe potable bulk water. The expansion drive has resulted in the utility increasing its operational area to about 125,100 square kilometres of the 170,000 square kilometres that constitute the Eastern Cape. The vision is nearly complete.

Amatola Water focuses on service and quality in bringing water to the people, stresses Bomela. "Clearly we want to be recognised as the best bulk water supplier in the Eastern Cape. But our core aim is to assist local government in the effective development and sustainable operation and maintenance of safe, reliable water supply and wastewater services. Amatola Water is committed to improving the quality of people's lives. The eradication of water and sanitation backlogs is central to the supportive role that Amatola Water plays in this regard," he says.

The problems in the Eastern Cape have more to do with population movement and the lack of investment in the past rather than the rapid population growth that has caused acute problems elsewhere. General trends indicate that urbanisation is significant, while the overall population growth rate is between 0.75 and 1.5 per cent. These figures are relatively low due to the predicted impact of AIDS and migration to

Zetachem

Zetachem is recognised as a major supplier of specialty chemicals to the water industry and is supported by a significant manufacturing capability within South Africa. The company produces and trades in a range of synthetic organic and inorganic coagulants to assist in liquid solid separation processes. It is one of only two South African manufacturers of water treatment chemicals to operate under NSF and ISO 9001 certifications. NSF approval guarantees that the products carrying NSF Certification are manufactured to a consistently high international drinking water standard. Zetachem's areas of application include potable water clarification, sludge dewatering and effluent treatment.

more economically active areas such as the Western Cape and Gauteng provinces.

The real challenges in the Eastern Cape are what are termed the 'service backlogs' for water and sanitation, the severe lack of capacity at the municipalities and insufficient capital and operational funding, he says. "Amatola Water's response to these challenges is currently being developed in the expansion plan. The approach is essentially to take over the operation and maintenance of the province's bulk water and sanitation services either directly through the Department of Water Affairs (DWA) institutional realignment process, where this infrastructure will be given to our organisation, or by contracting directly with the municipalities for this function. The reticulation, revenue management and customer management functions will remain with the municipalities and it is hoped that this reduced direct responsibility for the municipalities will be within their grasp."

Amatola Water follows a procurement policy focused on the Broad-Based Black



five per cent of our salary budget for training across the organisation. This caters for postgraduate studies right through to ABET [Adult Basic Education Training],” says Bomela. In September 2010, Amatola Water took another step towards establishing its fully-fledged training hub when it received accreditation as a training provider by the Energy Sector Education and Training Authority. The utility also celebrated the graduation of 140 learners from its wastewater treatment and practice programme, conducted in partnership with Buffalo City FET College.

The past three years have seen an increasing number of the municipalities turning to Amatola Water. So far it has helped them on a demand-driven basis but the organisation is now determined to restructure itself to take on the challenge of the entire province’s bulk water service function. The big

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In July 1953, Fields came into existence, and today is still supplying a comprehensive range of engineering requirements to industry, parastatals, etc, in the Border region. What is not kept as one of 8,000 line items can be effectively found to suit customer requirements. The long-standing relationship with Amatola Water is testimony to our commitment to service and quality.

change is going to be replacing the old ad-hoc approach with a sustainable and efficient operation, says Bomela. “Maintaining the bulk water and sanitation services is the most significant contribution Amatola Water can make to economic development in the province.” www.amatolawater.co.za ■

Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) charter for the sector. The principle is to award contracts to companies that generally offer the best combination of value for money, adequate competency, and strong BBBEE compliance in their own right. The organisation also seeks to support locally based service providers with offices located in the Eastern Cape. Supply chain management is the responsibility of the organisation’s procurement section. Longer term contracts include the supply of water treatment chemicals, safety clothing and the like. In terms of quality of service, these contracts are governed by service level agreements that detail roles, responsibilities and standards of service expected.

Cost reduction programmes include a pump efficiency programme, an equipment calibration programme, off-peak electricity

consumption maximisation, regionalisation of bulk infrastructure to eliminate smaller, less efficient water treatment works, water demand management, water loss monitoring, maximising the use of gravity in the bulk infrastructure schemes, recycling of backwashing water at water treatment works and the implementation of a preventative maintenance programme, says Bomela. “Quality is very important to us, and we realise that we need not only to achieve high standards but to be able to measure them as well. We have identified six sigma as a regime that we would like to implement in the near future.”

Of course, quality depends directly on the competency of the operators, so training is another priority. “We train our own water treatment works operators and are busy developing a plan to create a training academy around this critical function in the water sector, having appointed a consultant to assist us with this challenge. We set aside about

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