

MUNICIPALITY UPS SERVICES

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SANITATION: The Setsoto municipal manager Tshepiso Ramakarane is under pressure.
Picture: ELVIS NTOMBELA

Despite the death of Andries Tatane, who was killed by police during a service delivery protest in Ficksburg more than a year ago, the Setsoto municipality is still grappling with the provision of water and sanitation and the delivery of other services to the community.

The municipality said while it acknowledged that there were still challenges facing it in service delivery, it was pushing hard to provide the required infrastructure to improve the situation.

Setsoto municipality manager Tshepiso Ramakarane said the problem of water shortages in the area was being addressed. Ramakarane said the Department of Water Affairs had determined that the Ficksburg water reservoir was 10% under the required capacity.

He said the municipality had sorted out the problem of water supply in the area and was no longer providing water in tanks. "We still need to deal with the issue of water usage in the communities. We need to use water sparingly, especially at peak time. The municipality has increased its capacity to supply water," said Ramakarane.

He said there was also a plan to upgrade water treatment plants, specifically in Ficksburg, where the plant was last upgraded in 1995 – despite the fact that the population had grown markedly since then. The municipality was currently building a second reservoir to increase the storage capacity of water. Ramakarane said at the time of Tatane's death the municipality was still in the process of moving from the bucket system to a water-borne sewerage system.

The conversion was not yet complete because it had been discovered that the new system was riddled with flaws. The sewerage pipes had been laid but not connected, resulting in sewerage coming up from the ground. A study commissioned to determine the cost of fixing the problem found it amounted to R58m.

Ramakarane said the money was not used appropriately to fix the sewerage system and a forensic investigation was conducted to establish who was at fault.

He said the confidential investigation report was handed to Premier Ace Magashule. One of the findings of the investigation was that contractors had done shoddy work, and although R198m was paid to the contractors for the work, there was very little, or nothing, to show for it.

Ramakarane said that 985 buckets needed to be replaced by a proper sewer system in Ficksburg. The municipality was also addressing the problem of spillages and blockages.

"I am under no illusion that it will take some time to address these sanitation problems," Ramakarane added. Although the municipality was trying to roll out the infrastructure timeously, it was faced with the problem of generating revenue, particularly revenue that was derived from the payment of services, as some residents in the area were not paying for these services.

Ramakarane acknowledged that Ficksburg was a poor town with many unemployed people.

[Source: www.thenewage.co.za]