

South Africa and Zimbabwe enter landmark water sharing deal

Water and Sanitation Minister Senzo Mchunu and the Zimbabwean Minister of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development, Dr Anxious Jongwe Masuka, have signed an agreement for the transfer of treated water from Beitbridge Water Treatment Works to Musina.



Image source: Pxabay from [Pexels](#)

The agreement is the product of the bilateral agreement of cooperation on water resources management, and the establishment and functioning of the Joint Water Commission established by the two countries in 2015.

The transfer of treated water from Beitbridge Water Treatment Works in Zimbabwe to Musina, Limpopo, is a medium-term solution to address water supply challenges in the area.

The capacity of the Beitbridge Water Treatment Plant is 35 million cubic metres/annum (96 Ml/day) and is currently not fully utilised in Zimbabwe, with only 10% of the capacity used for Beitbridge.

Mchunu has welcomed the signing of the agreement and assured the community of Musina that the transfer of water from Beitbridge will alleviate water supply challenges in the area, as the quantities to be supplied are more than the current demand.

According to the agreement, the two countries will kick-start an implementation plan and oversee the construction of a pipeline and of pump stations to transfer 15 million cubic metres (41 ML/day) of treated water from Zimbabwe to Musina.

The two implementing agents to oversee the construction projects include the South African Development Bank and the Zimbabwe National Water Authority. The project is expected to be completed in 2026.

The treated water to be transferred is expected to comply with South Africa's water quality standards (SANS 241), set by the South African National Bureau of Standards (SABS), which is informed by World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines.

Mchunu said in the interim, the Department of Water and Sanitation is working with the Vhembe District Municipality, which is the Water Services Authority for Musina Local Municipality, in addressing challenges with the existing water infrastructure, including rehabilitating the existing but non-functional boreholes, while the project is being implemented.

"We are looking at operationalising the non-functioning boreholes in Musina and we believe that with the transfer of water from Beitbridge Water Treatment Works, the challenges of water supply in Musina will be a thing of the past.

"...We are thankful to the government of Zimbabwe to be able to expedite this water sharing deal, which will change the lives of the people of Musina," Mchunu said.

Masuka also welcomed the contribution of the government of Zimbabwe to ensure that economic development is sustainable in Musina.

"I am very pleased that this day has come to fruition. It has taken years of negotiation and I thank the technical team for having put their very best for their countries to ensure that we come to this level today," Masuka said.

The Minister reiterated that Zimbabwe is committed to supplying the maximum 15 million cubic metres of treated water per year to Musina town for the duration of the agreement. He is hopeful that the contribution will alleviate the water challenges in Musina, and also contribute to the economic development of the region.

As part of the two-day programme, Mchunu, accompanied by Deputy Minister Judith Tshabalala, held a meeting with Vhembe District and Musina Local Municipality leadership on Friday to discuss immediate, medium- and long-term solutions to water and sanitation challenges affecting the region.

The leaders later held an imbizo, where they gave an update to the community of Musina on the plans underway to provide them with water, as well as interim measures to alleviate intermittent water provision.

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