

Dams empty in Eastern Cape

By [Nombulelo Damba-Hendrik](#)

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All dams supplying Butterworth and surrounding areas in the Eastern Cape are dry.

Amathole District Municipality (ADM) spokesperson Nonceba Madikizela-Vuso said 33 boreholes have now been drilled in Butterworth. Eight of these are equipped and operational, four are dry, four have water, but it's not fit for human consumption, and 17 are currently being tested.



The Gcuwa dam is now dry. Photo: Nombulelo Damba-Hendrik

Residents who live next to boreholes sunk at Butterworth hospital and Butterworth high school said the boreholes stopped working on Tuesday, 12 November.

In October, the municipality announced that it needs R944m to fight drought in the district.

The Butterworth water crisis has been long in the making. In December 2015, Mquma Local Municipality was declared a drought disaster area by then Eastern Cape Premier Phumulo Masualle.

When GroundUp visited Butterworth last week, residents had been queuing for hours for water, provided by a tap inside a

building, and fed by a borehole. Many people arrived in cars with drums for water.

Resident Anelisa Mathe, from Cuba informal settlement, said there is only one tap, but that is better than nothing. “We want a permanent solution. The ADM must build proper dams to feed our taps,” said Mathe.

She had been queuing since 7am. It was now lunchtime.

“I understand why people have brought big drums. I’m only crossing fingers that water does not run out before I get [to the head of the queue],” she said.

Nolitha Kobese had brought five 20-litre buckets. “I’ve been here since 8am. I left my buckets here, went to town, and I’m back now. As you can see, there are more than ten people in front of me and with many buckets,” she said.

Taps ran dry months ago in surrounding villages, such as Ndabakazi and Kwezana, which are now depending on water tankers.

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