

Taps often run dry in Eastern Cape village

By [Nombulelo Damba-Hendrik](#)

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Villagers in Ntshingeni outside Cofimvaba in the Eastern Cape say their standpipe taps run dry for weeks at a time. They say when the taps run dry they have to use water from a nearby canal, where dead dogs and diapers are sometimes dumped. The situation has been going on for years according to the villagers.



Asakhe Dontwana fills a black municipal rubbish bin with water when the village taps are working. Photo: Nombulelo Damba-Hendrik

When GroundUp visited Ntshingeni on 19 October there was piped water. Nombulelo Matintela said her family woke up at 4am to fill drums and buckets. They needed to make sure they had enough clean water to cook for a funeral.

“If we didn’t have water we would have been forced to hire a car to fetch water from other villages. That can cost close to R500, depending on how much water you want,” she said.

Community leader Andile Dontwana and his wife, Asakhe, keep about seven 20-litre buckets, a number of two-litre bottles and a black municipal dustbin full of water at their house.

When taps run dry, Asakhe walks over three kilometres to fetch water at a river. She carries a 20-litre bucket on her head. They drink and cook with river water, although they do not think it is clean. The water from the canal is used for washing clothes.

Andile Dontwana said elderly people have to hire youngsters, who charge R20, to fetch water for them.

Empty promises from officials

Dontwana said Intsika Yethu Local Municipality told them water fell under the Chris Hani District Municipality. “The issue of water here has been happening for more than five years. Each time we get empty promises that someone is going to look into the matter, but nothing is happening,” said Dontwana.

Ward councillor Neliswa Gadeni (ANC) said because of the drought there are water cuts; some sections of the village will get water in the morning, while other sections get water at night.

She said that an engine pumping water from Lubisi dam had often broken down, but it was now fixed.

GroundUp has been trying to get comment from Chris Hani District Municipality spokesperson Thandeka Mqamelo for a week.

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