

AGENDA FEMINIST MEDIA
SCRIPT: THE POLITICS OF WATER
DURATION: 12'10"

INTRO SIG TUNE

INTRO: Hello and welcome, my name is Thobeka Linda... It's 5am in a bitterly cold Cape Town, South Africa.

SFX (as under bed to above and below narration): Cock crow, woman yawns, bed creaks, a match is struck; candle is lit; and match is blown out

NARRATION: 41 year old Christina Fisa wakes up to the ritual of filling a 20 litre canister with water from a communal tap.

CHRISTINA 1: My name is Christina. I am staying in Samora Machel. I'm (a) single parent. I'm (a) mother of four and granny of two. **{XH intact}**

SFX (as under bed to above clip): Door creaks open and closes, footsteps on gravel path. Tap opens and closes.

NARRATION: Christina lugs water at least three times a day so that her family can wash and prepare food.

CHRISTINA 2: I don't have a brick house. I have a RDP house with a slab – it's one room. Our toilet was outside. Even the taps are outside. So we are using the 20 litre buckets to drink from that water, to cook from the water, to wash from that water but for the toilet, you have to use outside. **{XH intact}**

NARRATION: Christina is one of over a billion people in developing countries who don't have direct access to clean, running water. The crisis is worst in sub-Saharan Africa, where an astounding 2 in 5 people lack a safe water supply. Part of the region's dire water situation is the fact that only 36 percent of the population have access to adequate sanitation which includes flush toilets and hand washing facilities. So how do the remaining 64 percent live?

ELEANOR 1: My name is Eleanor Hoedemaker. I live on an informal settlement called Zille-Raine Heights. We are a community of about 48 families (which) equals to about 250 people (including) children. We've been living on this informal settlement for five and a half years.

ELEANOR 2: When we were moved here, we had no sanitation and no tap. After about two weeks, we only had two standpipes. At the moment, we have 17 bucket system toilets but in the beginning there were less. We were about four to five families (sharing) one toilet and one family consists of about ten people in one house. After we complained to the health inspector and to the municipality, we have seventeen toilets now and six stand (pipe) taps.

NARRATION: The bucket system toilet is traditionally a 20 - 25litre black bucket which is distributed to households and serviced by municipal workers. Eleanor tells us that often three families, comprising a total of at least 30 people, share one bucket toilet in informal settlements.

ELEANOR 3: In the past they used to come and clean it once a week until we complained, had fights with the municipality and called the health inspector in. (Now) they clean it out thrice a week. It's still unhygienic because it's different people using the toilets and as women it's easy to get infections and things, using the same toilet. So we're not satisfied with this bucket system. We feel that each family should have their own toilet and it should not be the bucket system, it should be flush toilets.

NARRATION: Ethne Davey is the former Chairperson of the Gender and Water Alliance. She explains that apart from the obvious health implications of poor access to adequate water and sanitation, there are safety concerns for women which are not being addressed.

Ethne 4: I don't believe that there should be a need for women not to have toilets. I don't believe that women today should be getting raped on their way to the toilet and there should not be communal toilets but somehow the policies and the various authorities are not talking to the people. Here we are in isolated islands – all saying the same thing but not doing anything about it. As the years have gone by I have actually seen this whole toilet scenario getting worse.

SFX: MUSIC

NARRATION: South Africa has the highest incidence of rape in the world. According to the South African Police Service, a woman is raped every 17 seconds. This does not include the number of child rape victims. Women living in rural areas and informal settlements are the most vulnerable. Eleanor explains the danger she has faced when trying to access a communal bucket toilet.

ELEANOR 4: We as women and children must use the toilets at night. There's no electricity – it's very dark on this field. Anyone can come here. You don't know who belongs here and who doesn't at night because it's so dark. So for us as women and children, it is very dangerous to use those toilets.

NARRATION: Christina adds...

CHRISTINA 5: It was very problematic to have the toilet outside because I (had) two children at that time and it's the daughters – I don't have boys. My kids have running tummies and I have to wake up in the middle of the night to escort them to go to the toilet. The worst part of it is that next door, the guy is selling drugs. So you want to get to the toilet and there's somebody sitting there and you don't even know that person. I remember the other day, when I (went) to the toilet, I found this guy. I thought he was one of my neighbours. So I realised that it's not my neighbour. So I asked, "Who are you and where do you come from?" and he said that he comes from Langa. There were guys chasing him so he decided to come to my toilet. It was in winter, so it was still dark (and) the guy had a gun on his lap – in my yard. So it was very difficult for us to have our toilet outside. {XH intact}

NARRATION: The South African government has attempted to rectify this situation by enacting a free basic water policy. The policy seeks to deliver on the rights to water and sanitation as enshrined in the country's Constitution but is this policy working in the areas where it is needed most? We pose this question to Ethne Davey...

ETHNE 1: It works very well in cities like Cape Town, Durban (and) Johannesburg. It's excellent because it cuts right across the board – meters are there, people pay their water bills – but it does not work in a rural situation. Merely because there are no meters, very often the water infrastructure is broken down.

In fact, I did a study a few years back because I was going to present a paper at the United Nations on it. I was requested by the Minister of Water Affairs, (Buyelwa) Sonjica... but after I had done the study, I advised her that it would be an embarrassment to the Department of Water Affairs if this was presented to the United Nations merely because it works in an urban area but it does not work in a rural area.

NARRATION: To date, South Africa is one of fifteen African states that have enshrined the right to basic water and sanitation in its national Constitution.

ETHNE 3: South Africa has come up with tremendous documentation but policy is one thing. Implementing that policy is another thing. This is where we have come unstuck. It's the implementation of those policies and somehow, instead of it getting better, it seems to be getting worse as the years go by.

Ethne 11B: When the Minister (of Water Affairs) says 75 percent of South Africans have water, she doesn't say 75 percent of South Africans have infrastructure. Nobody says is that infrastructure working. Is there water coming out of the tap?

NARRATION: We ask Davey what measures can be put in place to ensure delivery.

ETHNE 5: Well, it's very difficult because somebody has got to pay for the infrastructure. To collect revenue efficiently for the payment of water, why isn't there an extra tax put on? A one percent extra tax which would then pay for the water infrastructure.

ETHNE 6B: We add extra taxes for roads. We have extra taxes for this and extra tax (for that) and people pay. We grumble (about it) but we pay but an essential thing that we cannot live without, why is there not an extra tax on that to be able to build the infrastructure?

NARRATION: Ethne Davey says that there are alternatives...

ETHNE 6: Why haven't the houses in South Africa got rainwater tanks? Why is there no emphasis on rainwater harvesting? Because whichever way you look at it, there'll always be people who will not be in a financial position to pay for water and somehow we have got to look at the haves and the have not's. So this is why this whole free basic water came into being (because) the haves use more water than the woman in the rural village does. On the other hand, if that woman in the rural village had two tanks supplied to her and her neighbours all had tanks, then for all we know she would have sufficient water to carry her through the winter months because it's really the winter months when they are the worst off but we don't do this and the water runs down to sea, to the rivers and so on. So that in my opinion is the one way to address that. Of course, the ideal situation – the nice to have – would be to add an extra tax.

NARRATION: The consequences of poor water and sanitation are far-reaching. In the developing world, a million girls drop out of school every year due to inadequate sanitation at school.

ETHNE 10: We talk about building women's capacity but we're not addressing it in the school – at that very level. A child goes to school, they reach puberty. Where do they change their sanitary towel? In a dirty, filthy toilet – or there is no toilet. There is no privacy. So she stays at home for five days a month. In the end, she is always behind with her studies and so she drops out even before she gets to matric.

Now there is somebody's educational capacity has not been built. So what is the likelihood of her getting a job? So we are actually continuing to perpetuate the inability of women's capacity.

CHRISTINA 8: I wish the government can do the inspection before (they) give the people the building. In most cases – especially in our area – you can even go now... The drains are boiling – everything is coming out. We've got kids who have got asthma. The government mustn't just give us the money to do some stuff and then sit back and say, okay I have given them the money, so it is fine. (They) must follow-up to check if things are (working) properly.

OUTRO: That was Christina Fisa bringing us to the end of this programme on women, water and sanitation. Visit our [website](#) to listen to the full interviews.

OUTRO SIG TUNE

ORIGINAL