

Global Action Day aims at harvesting rainwater

The local theme for Global Action Day on 10 October 2010 this year is water conservation and will take the form of a campaign to encourage the use of tanks to collect and conserve rainwater. Thea Holm, who is organising the local event, says ten schools around the dam have been identified and will be supplied with tanks to harvest rainwater. The first five kilolitre tank will be installed at Meerhof School on 10 October after which the remainder will be installed at the other nine schools. The tanks are being donated by Jojo Tanks. The schools involved are Broederstroom Laerskool, Doxa Deo School, Ennis Thabong School, Frikkie Schmidt School, Generaal Hendrik Schoeman Laerskool,

Hoërskool Hartbeespoort, Meerhofskool, Mountain Cottage School, Pecanwood College and Re-Elwele School. The rainwater project also entails a promotion whereby JoJo contributes a certain percentage of the selling price of a tank to a fund to supply further tanks to schools. The exact percentage is still being negotiated, but if it is one percent a tank will be supplied to a school for every 100 tanks sold. Global Action Day is the initiative of the international 350 organisation. The name is derived from the scientifically determined number of CO₂ particles per million that can safely be accommodated in the atmosphere without threatening life on earth. The present CO₂ level in

the atmosphere is 387 ppm and a real cause for concern. 350.org was established in 2007 and petitions to bodies and governments worldwide over environmental issues. The first Global Action Day was held last year to demonstrate citizens' concern about the environment. 116 countries have already registered projects for 10 October and in Hartbeespoort residents will be asked to commit to buying a tank to harvest rainwater. Thea says that Prof Anthony Turton has pointed out in 2008 that 98% of South Africa's water resources was already allocated, meaning that there is no more capacity to dilute pollution. There will be an increasing need to treat water to ever higher standards before it can be discharged into communal waters. Harvesting rainwater relieves this pressure as well as the demand for energy to pump water. Harvested rainwater still has to be treated for human consumption, but the treatment required is

much less than that for water from already polluted rivers and reservoirs. The basic components for harvesting rainwater are:

- Catchments: roof surface to collect the rain
- Conveyance: canals or pipelines from the catchment's area to the storage area
- Roof washing: diverter system to filter and eliminate pollutants
- Storage: reservoirs or tanks where collected rainwater is securely stored.
- Purification: includes filtration, ozone or ultraviolet light to purify the collected rainwater for household purposes such as cooking and drinking.
- Distribution systems usually including a small pump and pressure tank.

A new design of storage tank is now available in a variety of colours that should make it more appealing to urban users.

More information about 350.org can be found on their website at www.350.org. Thea Holm can be contacted at 082-824-8340

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Donderdag

Who will take the blame?

The financial recovery plan prepared by a technical team comprising officials from the National Treasury, the Development Bank of Southern Africa, the North-West Provincial Treasury and Madibeng Municipality is a formidable document. It also confirms what has been known for a long time - Madibeng is technically bankrupt. The report acknowledges that the situation is the result of years of mismanagement, poor financial control, lack of supply chain management, poor budgeting practices and corruption. And one can add to that: cadre deployment and faction fighting.

The report is an indictment of the way this municipality has been managed for the last ten years and the reckless way money has been spent on unnecessary luxuries such as new four wheel drive vehicles for the mayor, fancy furniture, pretentious ceremonies and entertainment and a host of needless expenditures. And all the while the infrastructure has steadily been deteriorating because the maintenance budget has been raided for frivolities.

Today there is hardly a facet of the municipal management that is not in crisis, as reflected by the report of the technical team. It still remains to be seen if the strategies the team recommended to rectify the situation will succeed - money has to be found somewhere, qualified personnel (regardless of political affiliation) have to be recruited and expenditures re-prioritised.

The people who were in charge of the municipality the past ten years have very little to be proud of - in fact, they should be ashamed of themselves. Their power struggles and constant bickering only served to run this municipality into the ground. In a normal democratic society the mayor would have resigned, more so because he or she has been invested with executive powers and should take full responsibility.

Harvesting rainwater

The initiative of the organisers of the Global Action Day to start a water tank promotion for the harvesting of rainwater deserves the support of the community. Some of the figures that have been supplied in support of the campaign are quite frightening and every little bit that can be done to rectify the situation, should be supported.

It is especially disconcerting that the CO_2 levels in the atmosphere are already beyond the safe limit to sustain life on earth. Of course, there is very little an individual can do to materially change that figure, but just as every little bit of CO_2 emission contributed towards exceeding the safe 350 parts per million limit in the atmosphere, so every little bit preventing the emission of CO_2 will help to curtail it.

But even more frightening is the statement that 98 percent of the country's water resources are already allocated, meaning there is no more water to dilute the heavily polluted rivers and reservoirs from which we must get our potable water.

A rainwater tank might not be the ideal solution, but if managed sensibly can go a long way towards relieving the pressure on our water resources, especially where there is very little other.