

# **REPORT ON THE CELEBRATIONS OF** **WATER DAY AT KATSE** **ON 14 MARCH 2007**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The water day celebration is an annual event through which the international civil society marks the importance of water and protest the destruction of environment and people's lives. The theme has always been **celebrating our rivers, water and life**. TRC was not left behind in recognizing this important event.

## **ORGANIZATION OF WATER DAY FESTIVITY**

Through its Water for Justice Project TRC set a stage to galvanize the civil society to be part of the event. The water day celebration was organized in conjunction with PELUM Lesotho as a primary stakeholder in water and sustainable agricultural development. PELUM had planned to send their people to grace the event. They undertook to pay for a video that would be used to cover the event; they approached the PSI and the Sesotho media to be part of the water day celebrations. The Sesotho media provided their sound system to make the event laudable.

For the past three years, TRC has been able to celebrate the water day through the assistance from the **Green Grants and IRN**. These friends of the poor provided much needed financial support to make this year's event successful. Viva the Green Grants!!

The day was widely broadcast by both the Lesotho Television and a majority of the local radio stations and newspapers.

## **WATER DAY CELEBRATIONS AT KATSE ON THE 14<sup>TH</sup> MARCH.**

The water celebrations took place at Katse, next to LHDA operations center. The day was graced by the several mokhibo dances and mohobelo from Koma- Koma, Ha Tsiu and Ha Makotoko. Mothusi Seqhee, who explained to the communities the purpose of that day, delivered a speech. Mr. Shale of the DPE made a speech on the water privatization and prepaid water systems, while Mr. Lenka addressed communities on water and politics. He highlighted that some countries, especially South Africa, have become water hegemony. He said if Lesotho did not take its opportunity to abstract their own water, there would be time when the down stream states would stop her from doing so because of the shortage of water that would be prevailing. Within twenty years, Lesotho will be water stressed, Lenka said. For this scenario he advised that Lesotho villages should not have less than 5 silos of water each. Water should be so conserved that every citizen would not have to experience a shortage that would lead to a crisis, culminating into water wars, both on the state and community levels. For more than one thousand community representatives, the story of having no water because of the drought that is imminent is a caveat that the Lesotho government and partners should renegotiate the Lesotho highlands water treaty,

an arrangement that would accord Lesotho the opportunity to abstract water from the existing dams.

Communities were also informed about the water policy that government is contemplating. Once this policy is put into operation, every Mosotho will be entitled to 30 litres per capita. Advice was made to the communities that they should not allow Lesotho water to be put in the hands of the private companies. If this happens, water, which is a free natural good to be enjoyed by every one would have a price tag. A clarion call was made to the communities affected by the Lesotho Highlands Water Project and the entire Basotho nation to reject commercialization of water and that water itself should be a constitutional right enshrined into the Lesotho constitution. A plea was made to the authorities that communities around the LHWP dams should get water from the existing dams; they should be provided with electricity and other tourism development opportunities.

The communities were made aware of the drought that has hit Lesotho, and that they should plan trees and rehabilitate the much damaged Lesotho environment; the huge dongas, which have disfigured the Basotho land will have dire consequences on Lesotho's water resources. Immediately after the water day celebrations, the Lesotho government went with shame to beg South Africa for water. If nothing drastic does not happen to help Lesotho out of "water poverty" the consequences will be even killing by 2025. Another thing that communities were informed about was that water in Lesotho continues to be polluted. Fresh water will soon be a problem, and Lesotho will have to beg it from somewhere. A call was also made to the international community to help Lesotho development her own sustainable water resources.

Another organization, which put its weight behind the success of water day, was the Development for Peace Education (DPE). The DPE undertook to make a presentation on water privatization and pre paid water system. Mr. Shale said it would not be fair to pay M25.00 for water as a standing charge. If water was sold, it is obvious who would survive; the rich, not the poor, Shale said. He asked the communities whether they thought water should be sold? The communities with an emphatic voice said no!

A representative and chairperson of Survivors of Lesotho Dams (SOLD) addressed communities about the formation of SOLD, and how to be a member in this people's organization. He said as the people on the ground, they were also paying particular attention to a healthy environment. He appealed to LHDA to allow back to the dam the speedy boats that were used by the communities around the Katse dam. The chairperson of SOLD said to that date there were more than 152 animals, which had fallen into the dam. He appealed to the authorities to put safety measures around the dam to avoid people and animals falling into that giant dam.

The Positive Action and the PSI were also present to educate the communities about the reproductive health and HIV AIDS as well as other communicable diseases. That awareness campaign was necessary as it has become a government priority. The communities were made aware of how to handle the HIV patients.