

■ DROUGHT

'Fresh ideas on water needed'

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EXPERTS have decried a decline in funding for research into water security studies as countries around Africa continue to battle drought.

While the question of energy generation dominated discussions at the African Utility Week and POWERGEN Africa conference this week, water security in Africa was also addressed.

Parts of the Western Cape continue to experience severe drought, while the Makhanda municipality has run out of water.

Experts emphasised the need for promoting innovation and improving policies.

Research fellow at the Nelson Mandela University, Dr Hlamulo Makelane, said not enough money was invested in research and development for water security.

"Funding for research and development (has) declined by 45% over the last five years," she said.

Dr Mamohloding Tlhagale from the Water Research Commission of South Africa said a need existed to fix policies that would promote new innovative measures to help with the country's current water shortages.

"In South Africa we are focused on surface water. We need innovators and researchers to bring new knowledge and work with policymakers and funders to establish new innovations and technologies to help us tap into other sources of water on the continent," Tlhagale said.

Researcher with the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, Paul Yillia said crises like Day Zero in the Western Cape highlighted challenges to water provision that include supply, demand, financial constraints, as well as issues around governance.

"Cape Town's main sources of water are under pressure and the city authorities have to look for other options," he added.