



INTERNET ARTICLE

DWS Mpumalanga educates and reminds learners of the importance of proper handwashing

30 October 2023

The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) Mpumalanga Provincial Office is on an educational awareness drive to educate and remind the public about the importance of good hygiene and the proper ways of washing hands as part of the Global Handwashing Day celebrations.

Global Handwashing Day (GHD) is a global advocacy day dedicated to increasing awareness about the importance of hand hygiene and triggering lasting change from the policy level to community driven action. GHD is celebrated on 15 October annually, but the DWS uses the whole month of October to educate and create awareness on the importance of hand hygiene and proper ways of washing hands. This year, GHD is celebrated under the theme **“Clean hands are within reach”**, which emphasises that everyone has a role to play to ensure clean hands for everyone.

On 25 October 2023, officials from the Sanitation Unit engaged learners in the Nkangala District of the Mpumalanga Province. The Department engaged learners of Hlangu-Phala Primary School in Ogies in Emalahleni Local Municipality and Ever Green Primary School, a rural school on the outskirts of Middelburg in the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality.

Ms Lomina Shongwe and Ms Vongani Mabasa presented on the importance of Global Handwashing Day and proper handwashing as the simplest and cheap way of preventing the spread of germs and diseases. “It is important that you always properly wash your hands to protect yourselves, your friends and family members from germs and diseases. You must take what you learn here today and share with your friends and families so that they also know and understand the importance of properly washing their hands”, stated Ms Shongwe.

The main purpose of the educational awareness campaign is to create ambassadors of hand hygiene, therefore the main focus is to let learners educate their peers. Four learners were identified at Hlangu-Phala Primary and two learners were identified at Ever Green Primary schools. The learners demonstrated the proper handwashing steps to their peers and educators. The learners also had to answer questions relating to handwashing and the critical times of handwashing.

To ensure that the educational awareness continues, the schools were engaged on providing platforms for the ambassadors to engage and educate the other learners on a regular basis

SOUTH AFRICA IS A WATER SCARCE COUNTRY





water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



and the schools promised to provide slots to the ambassadors during assembly so they spread the message, educate their peers and entrench a culture of hand hygiene in their schools and communities.

“I always remind my friends here at school and at home that they must always wash their hands when they come from the toilet, before taking food and after eating. After playing, I always lead my friends to wash our hands. I promise to spread the message of handwashing in our school and the community to ensure that we live in a healthy environment”, said one of the learners, Meluleki Ngwenya from Hlangu-Phala Primary School.

The proper washing of hands with soap and hand hygiene in general has major health benefits for individuals and society at large. Some of the benefits of hand hygiene include reducing diarrheal diseases, reducing acute respiratory infections, reducing the transmission of outbreak-related pathogens such as cholera, COVID-19. Proper hand hygiene has also been linked to benefits beyond disease reduction, such as reduced rates of school absenteeism and improvements in wellbeing, dignity, and productivity.

The learners were also educated about the importance of water conservation and were given water saving tips to share with their friends, families and other community members. “Always use water wisely and sparingly as South Africa is a water scarce country and water has no substitute. Even when washing your hands, always remember not to leave the tap flowing, only open it to wet and to rinse your hands. We must strive not to waste even a single drop of water as every drop counts, especially in a water scarce country like ours”, stated Mr Themba Khoza from the Department of Water and Sanitation.

Themba Khoza

SOUTH AFRICA IS A WATER SCARCE COUNTRY



Department of Water and Sanitation South Africa



DWS RSA