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Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



INTERNET ARTICLE

DWS partners with sister Departments to commemorate Global Handwashing Day

17 October 2023

The Department of Water and Sanitation partnered with several government Departments along with Unilever, Lifebouy, Water Aid as well as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) to help raise awareness about the importance of handwashing, while also preserving water.

This was done to commemorate Global Handwashing Day which was observed under the theme: "**Clean hands are within reach**" at Mabu-A-Tlou Primary School in Hammanskraal, on 13 October 2023.

The day was filled with fun and games for the primary school learners, who also had a chance to interact with footballer, Simphiwe Tshabalala and goalkeeper Andile Dlamini who both shared their experiences on how effective handwashing helps alleviate the spread of diseases in contact sport.

"Part of what I do as a goalkeeper is touch, and this means my hands need to be strong and clean to ensure that the whole team wins when we go out there to play," said Dlamini. Adding to her sentiments, Tshabalala said contact sport requires good hygiene practice and also encouraged the learners to make the practices a part of their daily routine.

A medical doctor and an official from the National Department of Health, Dr Moeng-Mahlangu, took the platform to educate the learners about the effective ways in which handwashing can help prevent the spread of diseases such as diarrhoea, which are often as a result of poor hygiene practices.

"We saw how, during the peak of COVID-19, we were all encouraged to regularly wash our hands to help prevent the virus from spreading. Although this may not always be as easy as we imagine it to be due to the water scarcity concerns in the country, but we need to find ways on how we can still maintain the practice," Dr Moeng-Mahlangu said.

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She added that a bucket of water filled with soap and bleach can be used by the learners and teachers to regularly wash their hands and thus uphold good hygiene practices in the school.

“Education around this subject is very important as it is often the younger generations who can drive the message home. These are the ambassadors who will remind their grandparents and parents at home to wash their hands regularly,” she emphasized.

To conclude the day, the Department of Basic Education in collaboration with Lifebuoy donated school shoes to more than 400 grade 1 and 2 learners, as well as handwashing stations and a jungle gym to the school.

Global Handwashing Day is an annual global advocacy day dedicated to increasing awareness and understanding about the importance of washing hands. Proper hand hygiene has been linked to benefits beyond disease reduction, such as reduced rates of school absenteeism and improvements in wellbeing, dignity, and productivity.

Nthabiseng Dhlamini

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