



INTERNET ARTICLE

Ndlela Secondary School crowned 2024 National Water Month Science Schools Competition champions

18 March 2024

Ndlela Secondary School from Mkhondo Local Municipality in Gert Sibande District in the Usuthu sub-catchment of the Inkomati-Usuthu catchment management area in the Mpumalanga Province were crowned champions of the 2024 National Water Month Science Schools Competitions during the finals held at the Lowveld Botanical Gardens in Mbombela on 15 March 2024.

The second position went to Zenzele Secondary School from Nkomazi Local Municipality in Ehlanzeni District in the Lower Komati sub-catchment and the third prize went to Takheni Secondary School from Chief Albert Luthuli Local Municipality in Gert Sibande District in the Upper Komati sub-catchment.

The Science Schools Competition is part of the National Water Month Celebrations whereby learners in the Inkomati-Usuthu catchment management area are expected to design models aimed at providing quality water to their communities. The final pits winners from the sub-catchment competitions against each other in the quest to be crowned overall champions. The competition also exposes the learners about the importance of water conservation, water quality, the protection of water resources and the prevention of pollution of the water resources. This year marked the 10th edition of the Science Schools Competition.

The Science Schools Competition which is an initiative with the Department's agencies, the Inkomati-Usuthu Catchment Management Agency and the Komati Basin Water Authority in partnership with other sector stakeholders which include the Department of Education, Silulumanzi, South African National Biodiversity Institute, Working on Fire, Manganese Metal Company, Umsimbithi Mining, Barberton Mines and Sappi shows that working together we can achieve great strides and ensure water security for the current and future generations.

The National Water Month is South Africa's expansion of the World Water Day which is observed annually on 22 March and focuses its attention on the importance of freshwater and advocating for the sustainable management of freshwater resources.

Each year, the United Nations Water sets a theme for World Water Day which corresponds to a current or future challenge. The theme for 2024 is "**Water for Peace**". This theme aims to galvanise communities all over the world to share water resources to enhance peace instead of conflict. Thus, the theme entails that water can be a tool for peace when communities and countries cooperate over this precious shared resource, but water can also spark and intensify conflict when access is denied and usage unfairly shared.

SOUTH AFRICA IS A WATER SCARCE COUNTRY





water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



In her address during the finals, the Provincial Head of Department of Water and Sanitation {DWS} Mpumalanga, Ms Dudu Sifunda reminded the audience of the importance of the National Water Month in putting the water agenda at the top and acknowledged the competition for creating water ambassadors who will promote water conservation and the protection of water resources.

“DWS and other sector partners puts the centrality of water in the spotlight during the National Water Month in March. The National Water Month, with the twilight being the World Water Day on 22 March, comes after Human Rights Day. Access to water and sanitation is one of the fundamental human rights and this puts water issues on the spotlight. The National Water Month creates awareness on the importance of water in the livelihoods of the general public and the country’s economy and advocates for the sustainable management of freshwater resources. The National Water Month is celebrated through intensive awareness campaigns to remind the public of the importance of water conservation, water quality and the protection of water resources for water security, especially as South Africa is a water scarce country with about half the world average annual rainfall making water security one biggest challenges facing the country”, she said.

She further acknowledged the role of the competition and the partners in building water ambassadors. “The Provincial Science Schools Competition is one of the flagship awareness campaigns in the Mpumalanga Province within the Inkomati-Usuthu catchment management area. This partnership is very important and needs to be maintained and strengthened at all times”, she said.

The winning school’s educator, MS ZE Miya was so overjoyed with their achievements and said “the competition was a great experience for both me and the learners. We are glad that after so many weeks of hard work and preparations, we ended up achieving our goal of getting position one. More than anything else, this was a great learning experience for the learners. The competition gave the learners the exposure they never would have gotten had they not been given the chance to take part in the competition”.

One of the winning learners, Zamatshali Mtshali emphasised the importance of teamwork for their achievement. “Obtaining this first position means a lot to me. I am very happy, we are overjoyed. We did not expect this. You know what they say, expect the unexpected and the unexpected will become the expected. It was teamwork, this is basically the result of teamwork, and I am so happy with my contribution. This competition taught me a lot about the water sector as before I did not know much. Now I am going to do a thorough research on the careers in the water sector as I now have a better view of the importance of professionalism in the water sector”, she said.

Themba Khoza

SOUTH AFRICA IS A WATER SCARCE COUNTRY



Department of Water and Sanitation South Africa



DWS RSA