

ADDRESS BY MR RONNIE KASRILS
MINISTER OF WATER AFFAIRS AND FORESTRY
Launch of the WASH programme in the Northern Cape
APRIL 15 2002

Goeiemôre. Ek is baie bly om hier te wees, hier by julle, die mense van die Noord-Kaap, die mense van Calvinia en die Hantamberge. Dit is vir my 'n groot voorreg om met julle 'n paar woordjies te deel.

Deleted: MINISTER
SPEECH: LAUNCH OF THE
SA CHAPTER OF WSSCC
AND VISION 21†

Introduction

Big doors swing on little hinges. Sometimes the most important thing we do in a day can be one of the smallest acts. Washing our hands with soap and water after going to the toilet and especially before preparing and eating food is one of these small acts that can have a major effect in our lives. It is quite simple, if we all wash our hands and the hands of our children every time we and they go to the toilet, less children and adults will get sick and die from waterborne diseases. ***Laat ek dit direk in Afrikaans sê: Was julle hande met seep na julle van die toilet af kom en voordat julle eet.***

Diarrhoea which is often a direct result of poor hygiene remains the deadliest killer of children under five in developing countries and South Africa is no exception. The recent cholera outbreak in our country is another example of the impact of waterborne diseases.

As parents, teachers and care-takers this lesson of handwashing is one of the most simple and important life lessons that we can teach our children.

Access to water and sanitation facilities is a basic human right that safeguards health and human dignity. Every one of you deserves to be protected from disease and other health hazards posed by the poor disposal of waste. While the provision of clean safe water and of adequate sanitation facilities is critical to this protection, these alone are not enough to keep our children and ourselves safe. We must also practice good hygiene.

Clean water alone is not enough

This Government of yours has had remarkable success with delivering water to the previously unserved population of South Africa. It has improved the lives of millions of rural people. However experience has shown that in order to really improve health we must also add sanitation and good hygiene to good water. Our government is working very hard to improve the lives of all citizens. Much has changed over the past seven years. We have brought clean drinking water to over 7 million people at a cost of R4.5 billion. We are moving ahead in addressing the issue of sanitation. Government has adopted a national implementation strategy to deal with the backlog by 2010. I am committed to increasing our spending in providing sanitation over the next few years. We are already providing 26 million people with access to free basic water. This means that 66% of our people that have access to water infrastructure are benefiting from the programme.

My Department has dedicated substantial resources to the **WASH** campaign for the coming year with the intention of spreading the message of the need for good hygiene and sanitation. Sanitation and good hygiene are critical priorities of my Department and I would urge you to also make them critical priorities in your communities, your constituencies, your schools, crèches, churches and homes. We must together build a better life for all – Vuk’Uzenzele. ***Ons moet saam werk om 'n beter lewe te skep vir almal.***

We have heard the wake-up call of last year's cholera outbreak in our country and the provision of water, sanitation and health and hygiene education is being accelerated. We are committed to building a better life for all. This government works for you with you.

WASH is international

The **WASH** programme is bigger than South Africa. Good hygiene, water delivery and sanitation are global priorities, especially in other developing countries and **WASH** is an international campaign spearheaded by the UN-mandated Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council. Its objectives are to contribute to the eradication of poor

sanitation and hygiene practices in the developing world. In launching a local **WASH** campaign the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry is taking this global objective into a local context where it can be achieved by an intensive communication campaign and a concentration of attention by stakeholders. ***Water, sanitasie en higiëne kan lewens red.***

Working together to change behaviour

Improving hygiene practices is about changing behaviour and this is where **WASH** is focussed. The simple message of good hygiene – of washing our hands- is one of the key elements of WASH in South Africa. Just washing hands has shown to reduce illness and death from waterborne diseases by 40%. We all must join to popularise this campaign.

In order for WASH to be a success we need to do whatever it takes to get the message of handwashing out there. This means communities working together with their local municipalities, clinics and schools. It means municipalities working with NGOs, and the Departments of Health, Education and Water Affairs and Forestry. It means mobilising whatever resources we have available to spread the word and change behaviour.

In whatever ways we can we all need to be ambassadors of good hygiene practices every day. We are fighting a battle against diseases that are robbing our children of their health and their lives and so many can be saved from this by the simple act of handwashing. By working together we can start to turn back the tide on waterborne diseases. There is no need for our children to be sick and dying from the harmful bacteria that are associated with pollution.

Over the coming months my Department is going to undertake a range of innovative and educational WASH activities and we look forward to the support of local and provincial government, national public private, civic and community stakeholders in these endeavours.

It is with great hope and determination that we stop deaths from waterborne diseases that I launch this campaign today in the Northern Cape.

I hope you will all join with the Department in spreading the simple message of handwashing so that together we can ensure a safer, more healthy future for our children.

Let us remember what our President has said. He said that all South Africans have to stand up and lend a hand in creating a better life for all – VUK' UZENZELE. Let us use water for the common good, and let's build a country in which no one will ever die of cholera again. Let us all work for a better South Africa. ***Kom ons werk saam vir 'n beter Suid Afrika.***