



## **INTERNET ARTICLE**

### **North West champions participate in the 2026 South African Youth Water Prize National competition**

02 June 2026

The 2026 South African Youth Water Prize (**SAYWP**) North West champions, Boitumelo Plaatjies and Neo Mokgopi from ZM Seatlholo Secondary School under the Mahikeng local Municipality took part in this year's SAYWP National competitions held in Kempton Park at Protea Marriott Hotel from 28-29 May 2026.

The National competitions were attended by the SAYWP winners from the nine provinces to compete mainly for the top spot which include representing the country at the Stockholm Junior Water Prize in Sweden, where they compete against winners from 35 countries.

At the National competitions the first prize winners walked away with R15 000-00, a ticket to Sweden to represent South Africa at Stockholm Junior Water Prize, and a subsistence allowance of R10 000-00 to be used while in Sweden, the second prize winner walked away with R14 000-00, and the third prize winner took home R12 500-00.

Although Boitumelo Plaatjies and Neo Mokgopi did not make it to the Top 3 winners of the competition, they have expressed their gratitude to the Department for the opportunity provided through the SAYWP competitions. "Through SAYWP competitions we have secured our future through the bursary awarded to us by the Department by being the North West provincial champions. We were also exposed to the different water and sanitation study fields we can follow and universities where we can register to further our studies if we continue with the DWS bursary" said Plaatjies and Mokgopi.

The pair presented their solar powered Aqufi Purifier model used to purify water. The project was designed and developed after the learners experienced water shortage in their community. "We researched and found that we can build a low-cost water purifier which would be affordable and produce safe water for consumption", said Plaatjies and Mokgopi

On the first day of the National competitions the learners were taken through the different study field in the water sector and the careers available. The second day saw the learners competing with their peers from different provinces for the main prize of representing the country at the Stockholm Junior Water Prize in Sweden.

Moreover, the learners were given motivation by different speakers who occupy senior positions in various water sector entities and by former beneficiaries of the same SAYWP programme. One such beneficiary is Mr. Mashila Phihlela who was also part



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of the adjudicators and works for the Department. He urged all the learners not to underestimate themselves and to remain hopeful about their future.

### **This year's National SAYWP competition winners are as follows:**

1<sup>st</sup> Position - Sinenhlanhla Sikhulile Nkosi from Sintintile Secondary School from Mpumalanga-cash prize of R15 000-00, ticket to Sweeden to represent South Africa at Stockholm Junior Water Prize and Subsistence allowance of R10 000-00 to be used while in Sweden.

2<sup>nd</sup> Position - Alissa Pillay from Star College in KwaZulu-Natal-cash prize R14 000-00.

3<sup>rd</sup> Position - Moegamat Panker and Rylee Joseph from Kimberley Technical High School in the Northern Cape-cash prize R12 500-00.

**By Katlego Maponya**