



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

INTERNET ARTICLE

Global Handwashing Day celebration at Soweto

17 October 2014

The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) was honoured to celebrate the Global Handwashing Day (GHD) on 15 October 2014, with the school children of Enkanyezi Primary School, Phiri in Soweto.

This year's GHD was celebrated under the theme: "Clean hands save lives." The department partnered with Clean South Africa in the campaign that sought to mobilise and motivate school children to lather up in order to reduce life-threatening diseases that are resultant from poor hand hygiene.

Clean South Africa is a non-profit organisation working towards stopping the spread of fatal and preventable diseases such as diarrhoea and acute respiratory infections. They also recycle and distribute used hotel soaps, lotions and shampoos to disadvantaged schools and poor communities in South Africa. UNILEVER South Africa was also one of the sponsors providing bar soaps and powder soaps for hand washing demonstrations on the day.

As the Enkanyezi learners stood with excitement in their school uniforms at the assembly, they were educated about the importance of washing hands. They were urged to be the ambassadors of change who will educate the community on the importance of practising good hand washing hygiene. They were informed that their active participation and involvement is to ensure sustainable behavioural change in the learners' communities.

Officials of DWS also encouraged the school children to conserve water.

Among the tips that were shared with the learners is to only take 30 seconds to vigorously wash hands with soap and water to effectively kill germs. Demonstrations on the steps to follow when washing hands were done by representatives from the DWS and sponsors. All the school children were provided with soap, buckets to use for rinsing and water, to participate in and repeat the demonstration done.

After participating with excitement in the hand washing activity, the children were treated with goodie bags containing bar and powder soaps, sunglasses, DWS shopping bags and healthy lunch packs.

Despite all the public awareness, it seems most people take hand washing with soap for granted and do not consider the importance in the prevention of infections and diseases. People generally undermine the degree to which they wash their hands. A research study by the American Society for Microbiology observed that only 65% of women and 74% of men wash their hands after using the public restroom. Men are significantly more likely to see another man leave a public restroom without washing hands.

Basic hygiene gives an intellectual standard to the physical and psychological improvement of an individual/family and community.



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Hand washing with soap facts:

- 🚰 80% of all infectious diseases are transmitted by touch. Prevent flu by washing your hands regularly.*
- 🚰 The solution to pollution is dilution. Soap may not kill all viruses, but washing hands regularly will decrease the viral counts to a point below the infectious threshold.*
- 🚰 Fingernails and surrounding areas harbour the most micro-organisms.*
- 🚰 The number of germs on your fingertips doubles after the use of a toilet.*
- 🚰 Germs stay alive on your hands for up to 3 hours.*

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Issued by the Department of Water & Sanitation

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