



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

INTERNET ARTICLE

The Department celebrates Sanitation and Hygiene Month

12 May 2015

Activities to mark the celebration of the **Focus Week of Sanitation and Hygiene Month** kicked off in various parts of South Africa on Monday. The Department of Water and Sanitation declared May for the occasion to remind South Africans about the importance of decent sanitation and good hygiene practices. This year's theme is: ***It's Not all About Flushing!!***

The focus week started with Deputy Minister Pamela Tshwete leading participants in KwaZulu-Natal during the **Journey of Water** at Ukhahlamba on Monday. A joint initiative between the department and World Wide Fund, the event is an awareness campaign to highlight **the key elements of the water value chain from source to tap, and the fact that water doesn't come from a tap** and the struggle of rural communities to access drinking water.

This was followed by a visit on Tuesday by Minister Nomvula Mokonyane to Sedibeng in Vereeniging where she visited the Sedibeng Regional Sewer Scheme and later addressed the public at Saul Tsotetsi Hall on issues around water and sanitation.

On Wednesday and Thursday the Minister will host a **Sanitation Summit** at Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre in Durban where delegates will discuss wide range of sanitation challenges that the country is faced with.

At the same time Deputy Minister Tshwete will launch the **Adopt—a-River** in Malamulele, Limpopo, as part of the department's river health programme.

The main objective of the celebration is to raise awareness and the public profile of sanitation and to encourage local governments to prioritize sanitation, health and hygiene as key issues towards a healthy nation.

Among the activities during the **Focus Week (11 -17)** Minister Mokonyane will host a two-day Sanitation Summit at the Durban's International Convention Centre in KwaZulu-Natal where delegates will discuss pertinent issues on sanitation. Furthermore, the Minister will launch a pilot project on alternative sanitation that is aimed at improving the quality of sanitation in Khayelitsha, Cape Town.

Research figures estimate that each year almost 1.5 million children around the world die from diarrheal and other diseases associated with unsafe water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene practices. Lack of sanitation is a pressing challenge and more than 40% of world's population (that is approximately 2,4 billion people) still have no access to basic sanitation

South Africa's water, sanitation and hygiene programmes are aimed at improving the health of low-income families by increasing access to clean water and household water treatment and toilets.



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Access to adequate sanitation is fundamental to personal dignity and security, social and psychological well-being, public health, poverty reduction, gender equality, economic development and environmental sustainability.

OBJECTIVES OF THE 2015 SANITATION & HYGIENE MONTH

The objectives of the Sanitation and Hygiene month are to:

- Increase awareness of the importance of sanitation to ones' daily lifestyle, health and dignity
- Promote the continued identification, documentation and replication of sanitation best practices.
- Promote innovative approaches towards the acceleration of sanitation implementation programmes.
- Promote programmes to ensure sustainability of sanitation facilities, through their correct usage, operations and adequate maintenance.
- Acquire buy-in and support from key neglected stakeholders and interested parties, like the media and civil society.
- Holistic celebration of progress made in sanitation facilities provision and health & hygiene promotion in the past government dispensation
- Celebrate progress made on development of improved legislation towards proper regulations, monitoring and evaluation on sanitation related services.

In September 2000, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to reduce poverty and improve the health and well-being of our communities. In 2002, during the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, sanitation was included as one of the MDGs. During the same year South Africa hosted the first Africa Sanitation and Hygiene Conference, which sought to highlight the strategic importance and benefits of provision of sanitation and to put mechanisms in place to accelerate the rate of delivery in Africa.

In 2010, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly passed a resolution declaring “the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights”.

South Africa is amongst many countries faced with the global challenges affecting the eradication of sanitation backlog. However, the country has committed itself to join the world towards enhancing and fast-tracking programmes and developments towards fulfilling the international commitment to eradicate sanitation backlogs by 2015. In response to the global sanitation related challenges, the South African government has set out higher targets and committed itself to ensuring that all buckets in formal established settlements will be eradicated as soon as possible.



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Reasons hampering progress on eradicating existing backlog, include the fact that sanitation has from the past not been regarded as a priority, thus the need to raise the profile of sanitation in order to change the mindsets of ordinary citizens, decision makers, all spheres of government and all stakeholders through advocacy programmes and campaigns.

Worldwide,. Globally, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 1.8 million people die each year from diarrheal diseases, mostly related to poor sanitation and hygiene. It is estimated that 5 500 children across the world die every day from diseases caused by contaminated food and water.

COORDINATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SANITATION AND HYGIENE WEEK

The National Sanitation Services (NSS), Regional Sanitation Managers, Regional Communications Officers and the Communications Chief Directorate's National Events Manager will be responsible for the overall coordination of national events and provide support to the regions. The regions will coordinate regional events by planning, providing estimates of the allocating budgets and implementing regional events in partnership with municipalities and other sector partners and stakeholders.

Different stakeholders will be engaged in the process of coordinating the 2015 Sanitation and Hygiene Week both at National and Regional level, identified role players are as follows:

- The National & Regional Department of Water and Sanitation
- The National & Provincial Department of Health
- The National & Provincial Department of Human Settlements
- The National & Provincial Department of Basic Education
- The National & Provincial Department of Cooperative Governance and Administration
- The Office of the Presidency (Gender Mainstreaming)
- The Premier's Offices
- The South African Local Government Association
- District Municipalities
- Local Municipalities (Water Services Authorities)
- Water Boards
- NGOs
- The Youth Commission
- Women's Groups
- Civil Society

By Themba Khumalo