

PRESS RELEASE



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Heading: UNDP AND WRC PARTNER TO RESPOND TO WATER CHALLENGES DURING TIMES OF COVID-19

Pretoria, 18 August 2020 – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in South Africa and the Water Research Commission (WRC) of South Africa are launching a partnership agreement which aims to fast track the development and promote the adoption of promising innovations in the water sector. In this regard, the two entities have signed a memorandum of understanding which guides the collaboration to facilitate research and innovation sharing, co-creation, and promotion of access to water and sanitation for people in South Africa and the rest of the African continent.

As South Africa implements various interventions to manage the spread of COVID 19, many remain unable to protect themselves through good hygiene practices. This is mostly due to a lack of basic water services, especially in rural and peri-urban areas. Many rural schools, for example, are unable to reopen due to their inability to meet basic safety requirements, such as the provision of water and sanitation facilities. Furthermore, the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlights Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

To kickstart the partnership agreement, UNDP and WRC have launched a call for applications from local innovators developing technologies and/or solutions addressing South Africa's water challenges; particularly those which have been exacerbated by the advent of COVID 19. The objective of this call is to accelerate the rate at which we address South Africa's pressing water need and achieve progress on SDG 6. This call is specifically for innovative solutions and not conventional and established technologies.

"UNDP is interested in enhancing development activities and promoting the availability and accessibility of water in South Africa by supporting the development and implementation of locally developed water innovations. Strengthening collaboration on water innovations within the African continent and supporting capacity development for water and climate change resilience remains a priority" said Dr Ayodele Olusola, Resident Representative of UNDP South Africa.

Head of Experimentation at the UNDP, Ms. Klariska Moodley and Innovations Manager at the WRC, Dr Manjusha Sunil highlighted that such a partnership will explore synergies between different models used by the organisations to enable fast tracking of innovative solutions to market and for off take.

“We are excited to partner with an entity that shares our vision of increasing the capacity to upscale innovations that address water challenges in South Africa and to catalyze knowledge sharing and collaboration across the African continent” said Dr Valerie Naidoo, Executive Manager of Business Development and Innovations at the WRC.

End.

For media-related queries please contact: Khosi Jonas | khosij@wrc.org.za | Tel: (012) 761-9300 or Sifiso Mazibuko | Sifisom@wrc.org.za

Facebook: Water Research Commission

Twitter: @WaterResearchSA

Website: wrc.org.za