

KSA 26 – Q3 HIGHLIGHTS

The WRC has and will continue engaging with its stakeholders through workshops, dialogues, seminars which have mainly been implemented virtually and with a few hybrid sessions due to the impact of COVID-19 on the ways of work. The WRC has also adapted its events platforms and partnerships to ensure that it is fully equipped to implement and manage virtual and hybrid events of an excellent standard. The WRC continuously designs the long-standing ways of engaging with key South African and international water stakeholders that have not been sufficiently catered for in the past years.

SA European Union (EU) dialogue facility project - The WRC with its partners, DWS, WaterNet, Water Joint Programming initiative (WaterJPI) and the EU delegation hosted the 2nd and 3rd consultative engagement workshops as part of a project led by the WRC on the impact of Covid-19 on capacity building activities on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in the Southern African Development (SADC) and the EU. The 2nd workshop which took a hybrid form was held on 14 and 15 October 2021 and was attended physically by experts from SADC, while the EU experts participated Virtually. The workshop had a special focus on the drafting of a SADC EU position paper. This paper was subsequently presented for the first time during the WaterNet symposium on 22 October 2021 in partners with the WRC. The 3rd engagement workshop was held on 15 November and took the form of a virtual event. Final findings of the project were presented, and the position paper launched. In this respect the final report of the project will be submitted to the steering committee in the December 2021.

Human rights approach to the Water and Sanitation service delivery workshop- The WRC with its new partners which included the Human Right 2 Water (HR2W) and Watershare hosted a workshop on the 29 of November 2021. The workshop aimed to share best practices using the human rights-based approach to improve water service delivery for marginalised and vulnerable people. The session highlighted practical ideas that incorporate a Human rights approach and the role of Water and Sanitation research and development and Innovation (RDI) in bringing about the reality (improve water service delivery for marginalised and vulnerable people).

International cooperation and best practice on citizen science engagement in water and sanitation workshop – On 9 December 2021, the WRC and its partners represented by HR2W, Watershare, WaterNet, South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), UNICEF and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Regional Centre for Science and Technology Transfer (RCSTT) hosted a workshop that reflected on the best practices of Citizen Science (CS) in the water and sanitation related space. The workshop reflected on CS models used in various communities and countries and their respective outcomes. It also reflected on various CS models and interventions that can be applied, especially for ownership



of programmes by communities and uptake of solutions as well as the use of information collected through CS engagement activities.

Evaluation of health risks associated with occupational exposures to biological and chemical contaminants at wastewater treatment plants and recycled water use

The National Institute for Occupational Health (NIOH), Immunology and Microbiology department funded by the Water Research Commission (WRC), is conducting studies to understand the occupational exposure to microbiological and chemical contaminants at wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs). The findings will help in designing science-based guidelines and policies to reduce exposure and provide safe working environments. The results were shared in a webinar held on 12 November 2021 with the South African Municipal Workers' Unions, other relevant/affiliated trade unions, and municipalities management dealing (with wastewater treatment. Workers at WWTPs play a pivotal role in ensuring the optimal performance of these facilities. However, due to the nature of their work which includes regular adjustments of equipment, constant evaluation of processes, general cleaning, and routine maintenance, workers are inevitably exposed to municipal wastewater, putting their health at risk. Previous research in other countries has confirmed that workers at WWTPs are potentially exposed to various microbiological hazards (bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites) commonly present in untreated wastewater during their normal work activities.

Newly signed partnership agreements with local government

On 18 November 2021 the WRC signed a partnership agreement with Sarah District Municipality (SBDM) in the Eastern Cape Province, an entity that was established in terms of Section 12 of the Local Government Municipal Structures Act (Act No.117 of 1998). The purpose of this MoU is to establish an overarching framework for strategic collaboration between SBDM and the WRC in the areas of Water Security, Sanitation, Food Security and Water Quality. The newly established partnership aims to establish future coalitions in selected research areas and matters related to the improvement of development.

