

MEDIA RELEASE
For immediate use

Sanitation as a human right – international teams focus on Diepsloot

(Johannesburg 6 July 2016) Diepsloot is the site for the realisation of basic human rights through the collaboration of design solutions and ideas from international teams in the Community Plumbing Challenge 2016 taking place from 9-15 July.

Having working, clean and safe toilets is a basic human right and access to amenities and services is contained in South Africa's progressive Constitution (notably, Section 27). Globally, the Sustainable Development Goals prioritise sanitation and note that "due to bad economics and poor infrastructure, every year millions of people, most of them children, die from diseases associated with inadequate sanitation and hygiene." The importance of being able to use a working, clean and safe toilet can't be under-estimated.

The Social Justice Coalition (SJC) notes that the absence of working, safe and clean toilets "violates the right to human dignity, freedom and security." This often manifests in the violent protests we see rocking the country, and yet, we can trace the protests' roots back to people feeling their dignities have been denied.

Most Diepsloot residents have to use communal toilets and complain of the toilets' inadequate cleanliness and the number of broken toilets. Philemon Mogasha, who has lived in Diepsloot for 13 years, explains the sanitation challenges he and others currently face: "The drains keep blocking and affect our water supply. The toilets are not suitable for people to use and the sewage is always running. It is bad for our health."

Recent studies show that in Diepsloot Extension 1 anywhere between 13 – 45 households share one toilet, tap and drain. Because of this predicament, residents have to resort to using open fields where they may become vulnerable to criminal attacks. SJC asserts that "no-one should have to fear assault, rape or murder while going to the toilet, yet this is an everyday reality for South Africa's poor."

But solving sanitation issues in places like Diepsloot is a challenge. Meaningful partnerships and collaborations have however come into being to improve communal toilet facilities in Diepsloot. Civil society and international organisations have pooled their resources to effect change.

An example is the Community Plumbing Challenge, taking place between the 9th and 15th of July 2016. It is hosted in Diepsloot by the WASSUP (Water, Amenities, Sanitation Services Upgrading Programme) and the Diepsloot Arts and Culture Network (DACN). It's facilitated in South Africa by Sticky Situations, partnering with the Wot-if? Trust, the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials (IAPMO), Healthabitat and Autodesk Education.

Eight defunct communal toilets have been plucked out of the ground in Diepsloot Extension 1, where four international student teams (representing Australia, India, United States and South Africa) will now collaborate to develop the most effective and sustainable new upgrade solutions. Teams will assemble and test their new designs, supporting WASSUP to reinstall and reconnect these communal toilets for local Diepsloot residents.

The CPC collaboration is an example of the power and potential of participatory decision-making and monitoring in a community. Says Sean Kearney of IAPMO, "we are working hard to tailor this programme to local contexts and aim to respond to the real needs of the community. While the

problems may seem complex, we have no doubt that together we will find innovative ways to solve them.”

Whilst the official launch of the programme takes place this weekend in Diepsloot, you can follow the Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/CommunityPlumbingChallenge/> for live updates of CPC 2016 taking place in Diepsloot, Johannesburg South Africa.

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Words (564)

Images:

Credit: Stickysituations.org

Caption: International teams tackle plumbing challenges in Diepsloot during Community Plumbing Challenge 2016



For Editors - Media welcome to attend official launch this Saturday 9th July 14h00 – 17h00 in Diepsloot – contact me for further details.

For interviews and further information regarding the Community Plumbing Challenge 2016, please contact Alison Spratley +27 (0) 82 476 1213 or alison@brandvision.co.za

Background to Community Plumbing Challenge 2016 (CPC 2016)

The international Community Plumbing Challenge aims to contribute to improvements to public health in regions where communities are still threatened by a lack of basic sanitation and safe drinking water systems. Attitudes will not necessarily change because of targets, health surveys, or editorials and opinions in newspapers, which all too often preach only to the converted. Rather, it is the actions of professionals working in the areas of health and sanitation which will demonstrate to the community how best to build local services, and will educate local communities about the benefits of such an approach.

Community Plumbing Challenge 2016 combines multi-discipline teams, with a cross-section of expertise expanding on the skills pathway and career options for plumbing apprentices and professionals in South Africa, and around the world.

The CPC is organized by IAPMO (International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials) in association with the World Plumbing Council. Hosted in Diepsloot by WASSUP (Water, Amenities, Sanitation Services Upgrade Programme) and DACN (Diepsloot Arts & Culture Network), in collaboration with Healthabitat Sanitation Studio and facilitated in South Africa by Sticky Situations. Further event partners are Autodesk Education Experiences and the Wot-If Trust.