

Inaugural Wetskills Challenge Aims to Combat Water Crisis in Zimbabwe

by **Whitney S Sibanda** — September 28, 2024 in **Community** 0



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The Wetskills Foundation in collaboration with the Kingdom of the Netherlands Embassy to Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi, the city of Bulawayo along with other local partners, brings an innovative challenge that aims to tackle some of the most pressing water challenges facing Zimbabwe and the region through youth-driven innovation and international collaboration.

The Wetskills Challenge will run from September 13 to 25, 2024, and will bring together local, regional, and international students, recent graduates, and young professionals. Participants will work collaboratively on real-world problems such as drought management, flooding, and water quality degradation.



“This is a unique opportunity for young professionals to engage meaningfully with real-world problems,” said Regional Manager (Southern Africa) at Wetskills Foundation, Dr. Craig Tinashe Tanyanyiwa, the local coordinator for the event.

He added, “By empowering the next generation of water leaders, we are cultivating long-term solutions that will benefit communities across Zimbabwe.”

Addressing Critical Water Challenges

The issues participants will tackle are pressing and multifaceted. They include enhancing drought preparedness and resilience in Bulawayo, building urban food resilience through climate-smart systems and wastewater reuse, ensuring a sustainable water supply in UMzingwane, and focusing on industry-specific water use. Each case is designed to address the unique challenges faced by Bulawayo, a city that has suffered from water scarcity and quality issues in recent years.

Community Engagement and International Collaboration

The Wetskills Challenge not only aims to foster collaboration among participants but also seeks to build connections between local and international stakeholders.

The program's format, often described as a "pressure cooker," will require teams to develop actionable solutions within tight deadlines. Over the course of two weeks, participants will engage in a series of workshops, field visits, and brainstorming sessions, culminating in a final presentation session at the Large City Hall in Bulawayo on September 24, 2024. Here, participants will showcase their solutions through two-minute pitches and a poster market, presenting their concepts to a jury of local officials and international experts.

The Urgency of Water Management

The need for effective water management in Zimbabwe has never been more critical. The country faces numerous challenges, including prolonged droughts, urban flooding, and deteriorating water quality, which threaten both communities and ecosystems. The Wetskills Challenge aims to provide a platform for innovative thinking that can lead to sustainable practices and policies.

"Water is life, and without effective management, we risk losing not just our resources but our future," emphasised Tanyanyiwa.

He added, "This Challenge is a crucial step in inspiring action and collaboration among young professionals who will be the leaders of tomorrow."

A Future Driven by Innovation

As the Wetskills Challenge unfolds in Bulawayo, it represents a beacon of hope in the fight against water-related issues. The event not only showcases the ingenuity of youth but also emphasises the importance of international collaboration in tackling global water challenges. With the support of local and international partners, this initiative promises to energise and equip the next generation of water leaders, fostering a spirit of cooperation that transcends borders.

For those interested in witnessing the creativity and determination of the next generation of water professionals, the Wetskills Challenge offers a unique opportunity. Attendees can look forward to the final presentation session, where innovative solutions aimed at addressing some of Zimbabwe's most pressing water challenges will be unveiled.

In conclusion, the Wetskills Challenge is not merely an event, it is a movement aimed at inspiring young minds to take action in the face of one of Zimbabwe's most pressing crises. As participants come together to develop solutions that address water scarcity and quality issues, they exemplify the potential of youth-driven initiatives to create meaningful change. The future of water management in Zimbabwe may very well depend on the ideas generated during this pivotal challenge.