

Water and Sanitation in the News

Bill Gates drinks water distilled from human waste

Bill Gates has drunk a glass of water made from human faeces; to showcase technology he said could provide clean water in the developing world. The Microsoft founder said he wanted to begin sending processing plants around the world after tests later this year.

In a video posted on his blog, Mr Gates watched as the human waste was fed into the processor, before drinking the end product from a glass. "The water tasted as good as any I've had out of a bottle. And having studied the engineering behind it, I would happily drink it every day. It's that safe," he wrote in the blogpost.



In the video, the developer of the Omniprocessor system, Peter Janicki, says the raw "sewer sludge" is first boiled, during which process the water vapour is separated from the solids. Those solids are then put into a fire, producing steam that drives an engine producing electricity for the system's processor and for the local community. The water is put through a cleaning system to produce drinking water. Mr Gates said that a pilot of the Omniprocessor was due to go ahead in Senegal later this year and that he hoped to begin sending working plants to India and other countries soon after.

Source: [BBC News, 07 Jan. 2015](#)

Context

Better water management and technology initiatives are being implemented across the globe to ensure water security of current and future generations. In South Africa, engineering systems for the management of water and sanitation services are especially crucial as South Africans

use 235 litres of water each a day compared to the international average of 173 litres - which is pushing the country into a water crisis that will, within a decade, rival the electricity catastrophe. This is coupled with ageing infrastructure and a backlog of water delivery to communities because not enough money is being pumped into infrastructure.

According to a report by the Institute of Security Studies (ISS) called *"Parched Prospects: The emerging water crisis in South Africa"*, high use, coupled with waste, poor planning, abuse, and looming climate change, was creating the predicament. Dr Jakkie Cilliers, co-author of the report, said that 60% of the 223 river ecosystems were threatened and 25% were critical. "If we don't start dealing with the water problem, we are going to get into a situation where the margins are going to get really tight and water restrictions will be severe." Cilliers said water management needed to be made a priority as there was insufficient capacity to build enough dams.

Source: [IOL News, 05 Jan. 2015](#)

Water infrastructure challenges are in no way unique to South Africa, and the [WAMTechnology](#) system has been deployed immediately with great success in various countries to facilitate the management, administrative and operational functions of a water care works and related activities. The value of having done work in other parts of Africa (including Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi) has given us a huge advantage in building systems aimed at meeting local requirements, both in terms of available skills sets and limited technology infrastructure.

WAMTech has installed the **Municipal Assistant™** system in **54 South African municipalities** and completed asset assessment and database updates in excess of: 112 Waste Water Treatment Works; 264 Waste Water Pump Stations; 108 Water Treatment Works; 141 Water Pump Stations; 304 Reservoirs; 114 Bulk Supply Pipelines (700km); 137 Boreholes; and 20 Dams, etc.

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WAMTech are specialists in implementing technology systems for improved governance, focussing on Water and Public Health Information Systems

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