

# mo-Wash provides mobile hand washing units

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Godfrey Sono and Sibusiso Vilakazi successfully launched mo-Wash, mobile hand washing units into the market. This stand-alone, fully automatic portable unit requires no plumbing or drainage, providing a cost-effective hygiene solution at functions such as funerals, weddings and outdoor events.

The budding entrepreneurs saw a gap in the market, after noting that public events are a huge part of South African culture. One such occasion is at traditional funerals, where it is customary to wash hands after the gravesite has been visited. The washing of hands is a very important part of African culture but can be quite unhygienic as often, many wash their hands in that one basin. In other instances, there are many outdoor events that have mobile ablution systems, but no adequate hygienic facilities for one to wash his/her hands afterwards.



Godfrey Sono and Sibusiso Vilakazi, the brains behind mo-Wash

It is no surprise that regular handwashing can help prevent illness and is one of the best ways to remove germs, avoid getting sick, and prevent the spread of germs to others.

Statistics show that up to 80% of communicable diseases are transferred by touch and proper handwashing can reduce diarrhoea rates by 40% and respiratory infections by close to 20%.

In light of the current [Covid-19 pandemic](#), Godfrey Sono and Sibusiso Vilakazi share their story of mo-Wash...

## ■ Can you tell us a bit about mo-Wash?

mo-Wash was launched in 2012 and is a mobile hand washing station providing an innovative, eco-friendly solution to inadequate sanitation. This stand-alone, fully automatic, portable unit requires no plumbing or drainage thus positioned where needed. It delivers a cost-effective solution to maintaining hygiene at outdoor functions, such as funerals, weddings,

civic, and sports events.

mo-Wash's unique value proposition includes a hands-free water delivery system, a timer that controls water flow, a solar panel to power the wash station, advertising space for brands, and pop-up Wi-Fi. The company delivers a default 10-second wash, but the owner can adjust the settings according to his or her needs. Unlike other competitors, the unit does not require a foot pump.

### ■ ***When, how and why did you get started?***

After funeral rituals and mourning, customs are quite meaningful within the African culture. Death rituals begin by preparing the home to receive people who come to pay their respects, followed by a gathering of food and other provisions, cooking, eating, and assignment of tasks to prepare for the ritual. After the funeral, people go back to the family home to eat — creating a high-risk environment if the guests do not have access to handwashing facilities.

We were inspired by the freedom to create our own destiny when we could no longer take what is customary behaviour to wash hands after coming back from the cemetery at a funeral. Imagine how many people washed their hands before you and how contaminated the water is.

### ■ ***What is the core function of mo-Wash?***

Keeping hands clean is critical for preventing the transfer of diseases such as Covid-19, but bathroom facilities are not always accessible, especially when there is a no grid water supply and at events. In addition, shared taps in many facilities contribute to the spread of infection.



mo-Wash addresses these two challenges by providing people with a handwashing product. Given the impact of handwashing on the health, nutrition, education, and equity of the population, lack of investment in handwashing has important economic implications at the population level. mo-Wash is a sure way of assisting the country to achieve two of the “2030 Sustainable Development Goals” which are Clean Water & Sanitation (SDG 6) and Good Health & Well-being (SDG 3).

mo-Wash offers functional, safe and continuous water supply to users. mo-Wash provides easy access and convenience for hand hygiene. Unlike alcohol-based hand-sanitizers, our product uses clean running water that covers the cultural aspect and issues.

■ ***What are some of the obstacles you've had to overcome since starting out?***

One of the biggest obstacles has been educating our market about the importance of washing hands using clean running water and soap. With Covid-19 being the new normal, our units are now in demand.

■ ***What advice would you give to other aspiring entrepreneurs?***

Aspiring entrepreneurs should be able to look into the future and see things the rest of the others could never imagine. Also, understand that the difficulties in business come to educate and develop them for promotion.

■ ***What has been your proudest achievement thus far?***

mo-Wash earning the 2018 Frost & Sullivan New Product Innovation Award.

■ ***What does the future of entrepreneurship look like to you?***

The future of entrepreneurship is all about purpose-driven solutions to the problems around us and better entrepreneurs to drive them.

■ ***What do you think is the importance of startup accelerator/incubator programmes?***

Accelerator programmes empower and help startups with tools, knowledge, processes and a whole lot of business best practices to enable entrepreneurs to catapult their businesses to the next level.

■ ***What would you like to see changed in the South African startup landscape?***

Matching up of startups with almost similar organisations that have already made a mark in the business world as mentoring companies and co-create solutions that would take the startup quickly out of that phase.

■ ***What do you believe are the traits an entrepreneur needs in order to succeed?***

- "Entrepreneurs must be willing to be misunderstood for long periods of time" ~ Amazon Founder Jeff Bezos
- Needs to survive trouble in the business world
- Needs to be able to handle trouble
- Needs to have passion and perseverance for very long-term goals
- Needs to have grit
- Needs to be willing to take risks

■ ***Tell us about your biggest struggles as an entrepreneur, as well as some major highlights.***

One of the biggest struggles as an entrepreneur has been getting access to the right market when you are not politically connected.

While major highlights include securing funding for a project that most never believed in.

■ ***Why would you encourage someone to become an entrepreneur?***

The exposure to new ideas and lessons learned during the journey of entrepreneurship can have good lasting effects on anyone in their life wanting to be an entrepreneur even if they are not natural entrepreneurs.

■ ***Where would you like to see mo-Wash in the next 5 years?***

We would like to see mo-Wash being a permanent feature in all our public areas offering handwashing facilities to carry

out handwashing activities.

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