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Update on the NBI and Business for South Africa COVID-19 Working Group on Water and Sanitation

The **National Business Initiative (NBI)** and **Business for South Africa (B4SA)** COVID-19 Working Group on Water and Sanitation (B4SA Water)* have launched an emergency water response in recognition that **WASH** (water, sanitation and hygiene) is the first line of defence against the coronavirus.

WASH is central to curbing the spread of COVID-19. In partnership with B4SA Water and the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), the NBI is focusing on supporting handwashing facilities in dense urban areas, as well as supporting water access for handwashing in rural communities.

The first phase of this initiative is currently underway in Ekurhuleni Municipality (Gauteng), with generous support provided by NBI member company, AECI. The NBI's Technical Assistance, Mentorship and Development Programme (TAMDEV) is further providing technical assistance by designing foot-pump hand washing facilities. Currently, the plan is to integrate the foot operated handwashing station with tanks provided by DWS through their national programme.

In addition, hand sanitisers are being distributed as an emergency interim measure. NBI member company, Sasol, has come forward to sponsor these hand-sanitisers as part of the on-going emergency response.

As a supporting activity, an initial trialling of a basic, affordable in-house handwashing unit (using a 2l plastic bottle design), has commenced with 150 households in an informal settlement in northern Johannesburg.

The second phase of the response entails the identification of areas in Limpopo Province, with sufficient groundwater for the installation of boreholes, in support of community water access in rural areas. Funding for the installation of up to 10 boreholes has already been secured. Technical assistance kindly provided by a local engineering firm, SRK, has assisted in verifying existing groundwater data gathered by the DWS Limpopo regional office.

This initiative highlights the possibilities inherent in rapid response, multi-stakeholders approaches in combating COVID-19.

*Previously referred to as the BUSA COVID-19 Water Task Team

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