

QUICK BRIEF 2020



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COVID-19: A Blueprint for Collaboration on an Unprecedented Scale

It is in times of crisis that we are asked to question the accepted *status quo* and seek solutions outside the normal ambit of business as usual.

In this vein, the COVID-19 pandemic poses a unique challenge to both business and government to do things differently, with both parties already rising to the occasion.

Winston Churchill summed up this notion of weathering catastrophic events as: *“Never let a good crisis go to waste.”* While there is very little good to be found in a crisis, resulting system level shifts in politics, economics and society at large can be framed as positive outcomes.

In the South African context, the urgency of the current crisis has broken down procedural barriers and opened doors to strong collaborative approaches, particularly between the Public and Private sector.

President Ramaphosa and **Health Minister Mkhize** have been praised for displaying formidable leadership in the face of adversity. In turn, the private sector has stepped up to the administrative plate, with offers of funding and partnership opportunities.

The **National Business Initiative’s (NBI’s)** work under the **Technical Assistance, Mentorship and Development Programme (TAMDEV)** is a key example of the type of collaborative effort that has resulted from the COVID-19 crisis.

In partnership with BUSA and the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), 2000 vulnerable communities with no water services have been identified as needing water facilities in the fight to curb COVID-19. Technical assistance is being provided by the TAMDEV programme to design interim facilities such as foot-pump water stations.

Working closely with local municipalities and communities, this work will ensure that hand-washing facilities are prioritised in informal settlements, commencing in Ekurhuleni (Gauteng). As a critical first step, hand sanitisers, sponsored by private companies are being distributed to these communities.

The NBI's **Ruth Troskie**: Unit Head - TAMDEV, explains how this pandemic has demonstrated that collaboration is possible on a previously unimagined scale. Furthermore, this crisis lays the foundations for even greater partnerships post COVID-19. The current crisis has spurred on collaboration to get infrastructure projects scoped and to market in reduced timeframes, ensuring ongoing job creation. Ruth is confident that this precedent establishes "*a new and improved way of serving communities because we have been given a blueprint for how to do things differently.*"

The imperative in the coming weeks and months, as South Africa emerges from the lock-down, is to ensure that business in this country embraces a new normal. This means the business sector needs to keep building on the foundations set down during the COVID-19 crisis.

For more information on the NBI's Technical Assistance, Mentorship and Development Programme (TAMDEV)
please contact:

Ruth Troskie RuthT@nbi.org.za



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The National Business Initiative (NBI) is an independent and voluntary coalition of South African and multinational businesses launched in 1995 by the then President, Nelson Mandela

Our mailing address is:

NBI

61 Katherine Street

Dennehof

Sandton, GP 2196

South Africa

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