



NBI NewsFlash, 1 April 2020

Water Research Commission (WRC) dialogue on water quality, sanitation and hygiene in light of COVID-19

Water access is at the centre of the South African COVID-19 response.

South Africa's densely populated areas that lack piped water or adequate handwashing facilities are at increased risk of COVID-19 transmission. Reducing transmission requires adhering to WASH (water, sanitation & hygiene) principles while urgently increasing water access nationally.

WASH includes access to clean water and appropriate sanitation, as well the implementation of cleaning and disinfection measures. Education and awareness campaigns are crucial for the spread of accurate information, which can ultimately save countless lives.

The current COVID-19 transmission mode is considered to be virus droplets from the cough/sneeze of an infected person transmitted onto surfaces or into the air. Hence, touching contaminated surfaces, followed by rubbing your mouth, eyes or nose are considered the current transmission avenues.

WASH behaviour change addresses these risks through adequate hand washing or sanitising, cleaning and disinfecting of all contact surfaces.

Community behavioural change in terms of sanitation and hygiene is critical now. Infrastructural changes required include the need to extend safe and reliable water and sanitation access throughout the country, including the prioritising of adequate handwashing facilities.

The NBI's on-going work in water builds capacity, develops partnerships and works to unlock infrastructure investment to address these pressing issues.

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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

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