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## Responding to COVID-19: Using Simple Innovations to Save Lives

Across South Africa, millions of people live in impoverished conditions in informal settlements, without access to adequate water, sanitation and hygiene.

In partnership with **Business for South Africa's (B4SA)** Water Working Group and the **Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS)**, the **National Business Initiative (NBI)** has commenced with an emergency water response to combat the coronavirus, focused on supporting effective hand washing.

The official launch of foot-operated hand washing facilities and plastic bottle hand washing units, in the City of Ekurhuleni (Gauteng), took place in May 2020, with the rollout commencing in June 2020. The launch was hosted by Ekurhuleni Mayor Mzwandile Masina and included the donation of R1.2 million worth of food parcels and other donations on the day.

The initial rollout of these technologies has been made possible by the generous sponsorship of **AECI**, a member of the NBI. Nicole Solomon (Group CSI Manager at AECI) says: "This Initiative with the City of Ekurhuleni has demonstrated that true public private partnerships are alive and well." **Astron Energy** is the newest funder to join this Initiative and next week, 1000 plastic bottle handwash units, sponsored by them, will be distributed in Thokoza and Katlehong (City of Ekurhuleni).

## How Simple Technologies Can Curb COVID-19 Transmission

High-density informal settlements are at high risk of COVID-19 transmission, given limited hand washing facilities and practical difficulties experienced in social distancing.

In order to curb the spread of COVID-19, increasing the number of safe, communal hand washing facilities in high-density areas is essential. In addition, these hand washing facilities need to be foot-operated to prevent the spread of the virus.

This NBI and B4SA water response focuses on two main technologies:

1. A foot-operated hand washing facility that can be implemented at scale at communal sites such as taxi ranks, schools, informal settlements and clinics.

2. An affordable in-house hand washing unit, comprising a 2-litre plastic bottle with a self-closing valve and a soap dish holder.

The first technology, the foot-operated hand washing facility, can be connected to a water tank, communal tap or municipal water supply. The facilities are hygienic as they aid hand washing without touching a tap, which mitigates infection transfer. These communal hand washing facilities are also specifically designed to prevent vandalism or theft.

The second technology, the in-house hand washing unit, allows for the washing of hands in and around the home, and is well-suited to contexts such as informal settlement conditions.

These small, portable and affordable hand washing units can also potentially be deployed in rural areas. Furthermore, this technology allows for safe access to hand washing at night for women, girls and the elderly.

### **The Immense Need for Safe Hand Washing Facilities**

While the NBI and B4SA are currently rolling out thousands of hand washing units in Gauteng, the need across the country for safe hand washing facilities is enormous. Every R187 000 donation provides 1000 impoverished households (approximately 2000 people) with hygienic water access and a hand washing facility. All donations are managed by the NBI under a separate water emergency fund and are entitled to a Section 18A tax deduction.

This Initiative highlights the impact that can be achieved when municipal officials, engineers, scientists, water experts, project managers and the private sector come together to develop innovative solutions.

**For further information on these projects or on how to help please contact:**

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