

5 000 handwashing units to be rolled out in City of Cape Town COVID-19 hotspots

CAPE TOWN – October 15, 2020 – Today, Global Handwashing Day, saw the commencement of 5 000 plastic bottle handwash units being rolled out across Cape Town’s informal settlements by the National Business Initiative (NBI) and Business for South Africa (B4SA) COVID-19 Water Working Group, in partnership with Astron Energy, local NGOs and the City of Cape Town.

COVID-19 has brought into sharp focus the importance of handwashing for improved hygiene, public health and safety and curbing the spread of the coronavirus. However, safe access to handwashing is still considered a luxury for many people. To answer this call for improved hand hygiene, Astron Energy has sponsored the rollout of the 5000 handwashing units, with the company invested in making a long-term difference in these communities. Astron Energy’s Social Investment Advisor, Winny Dubazane, says: “Effective and regular handwashing is one of the best tools available to help prevent the spread of the virus in the absence of a vaccine. It is therefore important for us as an organization to support initiatives like the one NBI /B4SA runs, especially in communities that are most vulnerable.”

Three main hotspot areas – Khayelitsha, Dunoon and Bloekombos – received the handwash units via NGOs partners with strong community ties in the respective areas, namely Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC), Save our Schools (SOS) and Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU).

The rollout of the handwash units is taking place primarily within Early Childhood Development Centres (ECDs) across Cape Town’s informal settlements, culminating in an event focusing on the importance of good hygiene practices on Global Handwashing Day (15 October) which this year has the theme of “Hand Hygiene for All.”

The handwash units will enable children and staff in and around the ECD centres to wash their hands regularly with soap and water. These small, portable and affordable handwashing units incorporate a bracket to hold two-litre soft drink bottle with a self-closing valve to conserve water, along with a soap holder. The units provide a simple, water efficient and convenient means to wash hands in almost any location. Training on use and installation has also been provided by the manufacturer, Envirosan.

This initiative has been made possible by the generous sponsorship of Astron Energy, working with the NBI and B4SA COVID-19 Water and Sanitation Working Group, in partnership with the City of Cape Town’s Water and Sanitation, Social Development and Environmental Health Departments.

Alex McNamara (NBI: Water Lead) says: “This initiative serves as an excellent example of how partnerships can achieve long-term improved health benefits in communities, showcasing the possibilities inherent in collaboration between business, government and civil society.”

Hotspot areas are high-density informal settlements which are at higher risk of COVID-19 transmission, given limited handwashing facilities and practical difficulties experienced in social distancing.

For more information on this initiative and the National Business Initiative’s (NBI) water related work, please contact Alex McNamara (NBI: Water Lead): AlexM@nbi.org.za