

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

Johannesburg, 8 May 2020 - 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 rollout of foot-operated hand washing facilities and plastic bottle hand washing units, in the City of Ekurhuleni (Gauteng), was officially launched in May 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 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."

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 facilitate 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 informal settlement conditions, for example. 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 1 000 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:

Jane Molony, B4SA: COVID19 Water & Sanitation Lead
(jane.molony@pamsa.co.za)

Alex McNamara, NBI: Water Lead (AlexM@nbi.org.za)
or **Mmaphefo Thwala** (MmaphefoT@nbi.org.za)

PHOTOS



Caption: The in-house hand washing units, comprising 2-litre plastic bottles with a self-closing valve and soap dish holder



Caption: Ekurhuleni Mayor Mzwandile Masina, with the foot-operated hand washing facility that can be implemented at scale at communal sites, such as taxi ranks, schools, informal settlements and clinics



Caption: The National Business Initiative's Alex McNamara (NBI Water Lead) and Mmaphefo Thwala (Project Manager: Water) demonstrate how to use the in-house hand washing units

Note to the Editor

Business for South Africa (B4SA) www.businessforsa.org is the alliance of volunteer resources from across South African business bodies and organisations, member companies large and small, including professional services firms and communication specialist. B4SA actively collaborates with government to use business resources and capacity to support public sector initiatives. B4Sa is mobilising volunteer resources through focused working groups that are driving a coordinated and proactive programme in support of government's COVID-19 public health and civil defence campaigns. The primary goal being to keep the country's business community and other stakeholders updated on progress made across the various working groups, highlight challenges faced, launch calls to action, obtain the business resources to assist in these profoundly challenging times, to forge partnerships with existing expert organisations in the areas of need and to create links to important information from government and other role-players. The B4SA Working Group on Water and Sanitation (B4SA Water) is one of eight focus areas of the B4SA Economic Interventions Workgroup www.businessforsa.org/economic/

National Business Initiative (NBI) www.nbi.org.za (established in 1995) is an independent and voluntary coalition of companies working towards sustainable, inclusive economic growth and social transformation in South Africa through responsible business action and in support of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The NBI promotes that business thrives where society thrives. So while the issues change over time, the role remains constant, which is to build a South African business community that plays a meaningful, trusted and action-orientated role in the achievement of a sustainable, equitable and inclusive society. The NBI has deep project management and execution expertise across many spheres including within the B4SA context public private partnerships, water, local economic development, SME support and section 18(A) donation management.