

16 April 2020

Update from the BSA COVID-19 Working Group on Water and Sanitation

WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) is the first line of defence against the coronavirus

The Business for South Africa (B4SA) COVID-19 Working Group on Water and Sanitation (B4SA Water), in collaboration with the National Business Initiative (NBI) is supporting the COVID-19 response efforts of the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) and of local municipalities. The launch of targeted emergency water response projects supports the overarching message that WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) is the first line of defence against the coronavirus. The B4SA Water and NBI partnership is focusing on supporting handwashing facilities in dense urban areas, as well as supporting water access for handwashing in rural communities.

WASH is central to curbing the spread of COVID-19. Aligning with DWS and partnering closely with local municipalities and communities.

Gauteng is the most populous province in South Africa, the centre of the economy and the region most affected by COVID-19. Reducing the rate of infection in Gauteng is essential to protecting employees, vulnerable groups and the economy as whole. With strong buy-in from local government, B4SA Water and the NBI have the ability to deploy solutions rapidly. B4SA Water and the NBI will be providing hand washing facilities in prioritised informal settlements, hostels and social housing commencing in the City of Ekurhuleni.

The first phase of this initiative (in Ekurhuleni Municipality, Gauteng) has the NBI's Technical Assistance, Mentorship and Development Programme (TAMDEV) providing technical support by designing foot-pump hand washing facilities. Currently, the plan is to integrate the foot operated valve and handwashing station with tanks provided by DWS through their national programme.

In addition, hand sanitisers are being distributed as an emergency interim measure. NBI member company, Sasol, has come forward to sponsor these hand-sanitisers as part of the on-going emergency response.

As a supporting activity, an initial trialling of a basic, affordable in-house handwashing unit (using a 2l plastic bottle design), has commenced with 150 households in an informal settlement in northern Johannesburg.

The second phase of the response entails the identification of areas in Limpopo Province, with sufficient groundwater for the installation of boreholes, in support of community water access in rural areas. Funding for the installation of up to 10 boreholes has already been secured. Technical assistance kindly provided by a local engineering firm, SRK, has assisted in verifying existing groundwater data gathered by the DWS Limpopo regional office.

This initiative highlights the possibilities inherent in rapid response, multi-stakeholder approaches in combating COVID-19.

The B4SA Working Group on Water and Sanitation and the NBI continue to appeal for companies with applicable technology or with communities they wish to support to come forward and help make a difference now to flatten the COVID-19 curve.

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

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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.