

World Water Day: Collaboration protects vulnerable communities against Covid-19

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The international community is preparing to mark World Water Day on 22 March, during which countries across the globe highlight the importance that freshwater plays in the lives of people including drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), while also advocating for the sustainable management of freshwater resources.

Access to clean water, decent sanitation and hygiene remains pivotal for the health and wellbeing of communities but, unfortunately, many of the most vulnerable citizens, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, do not have access to it, which amongst other affects also hampers their ability to combat the spread of coronavirus (Covid-19).

The Heineken Africa Foundation (HAF), together with Heineken South Africa, has partnered with the international charity WaterAid in its drive to tackle the spread of Covid-19 and other diseases, as well as significantly broaden access to clean water across the continent.



Kya Sands, Johannesburg

This partnership has resulted in increasing WASH access to approximately 28,000 people. The project includes completed installation of 20 handwashing facilities, the construction of five water storage tanks as well as pipes in the Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni areas in Gauteng, and Vhembe District in Limpopo province. In addition, the procurement and distribution of vital hygiene products such as soap, sanitisers and sanitary products to identified refugee camps across the Gauteng and Limpopo provinces. Hygiene behaviour change educational material to address Covid-19 were also distributed to ensure improved hygiene as a preventative measure against the spread of Covid-19.

"Handwashing with water and soap is the first step in the journey towards effectively combating the spread of Covid-19, however, over four million people in South Africa don't have access to clean water and, consequently, nowhere to wash their hands with soap and water, making it easier for diseases to spread. The support of the Heineken Africa Foundation is providing us with vital assistance in terms of our Covid-19 response work," explains Millicent Maroga, corporate affairs director at Heineken South Africa.

"World Water Day is an important occasion to highlight water issues. Conserving water is one of the six focus areas of our sustainability agenda known as *Brewing a Better World*. While our water efforts often focus on reducing the water that we use in our breweries, and treating the water we discharge back into the environment amongst others, this partnership between the Heineken Africa Foundation and WaterAid allows us to expand our efforts to supporting the fight against Covid-19 and enable greater access to water through a focus on WASH activities," says Maroga.

Suzanne Giele, general manager of the Heineken Africa Foundation, adds: "On this day, it is key to highlight that an estimated 790 million* people around the globe do not have access to clean water, even though it is a basic human right. WASH has been on our agenda already for many years but with the pandemic it has become more relevant than ever. We will continue our efforts with WaterAid and we are currently reviewing where additional support is needed over the course of 2021."

The foundation has made available a total of €5m to fight Covid-19 in the coming year. For the first phase, €2.5m was made available to support WaterAid in Nigeria, Rwanda, Mozambique and South Africa and World Vision in DRC, Ethiopia, Burundi and Sierra Leone from July until December 2020.

About Heineken South Africa

*Heineken South Africa is a key player in the beer and cider industry in the country, with an impressive portfolio of brands, including Heineken®, Sol, Windhoek, Miller Genuine Draft, Amstel, Strongbow, Fox, Soweto Gold, and Tafel. Heineken South Africa is a joint venture between Heineken N.V. and Namibia Breweries. Heineken's sustainability framework **Brewing a Better World** prioritises health and safety, protecting water resources, reducing CO₂ emissions, responsible consumption and growing with communities.*

Visit www.heinekensouthafrica.co.za

About the Heineken Foundation

The Heineken Africa Foundation was created in 2007 with the purpose to improve the health for people living in sub-Saharan Africa. Since then, the foundation has committed over €13,5m to 128 projects in 10 different countries. Over the years, the foundation has built a strong expertise on mother and child care and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) projects. The Heineken Africa Foundation is a registered non-profit organisation and a separate legal entity from the Heineken Company. It is funded through an endowment fund from the Heineken Company and regular contributions. It is governed by the board of trustees that bases their decisions upon the recommendation of the advisory board, of which the majority are external experts.

Visit the Heineken Africa Foundation website: <https://africafoundation.heineken.com/home/>

About WaterAid

WaterAid works to make clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene normal for everyone, everywhere within a generation. The international not-for-profit organisation works in 28 countries to change the lives of the poorest and most marginalised people. Since 1981, WaterAid has reached 27 million people with clean water and 27 million people with decent toilets.

Visit www.wateraid.org, follow [@WaterAidUK](#) or [@WaterAidPress](#) and [@WaterAidSARO](#) on Twitter.

*Global WASH fast facts

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