



Green-shirted heroes bring hope

• Tippy-tap handwashing stations for informal areas

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Teams of masked, green-shirted aid workers have been hauling hundreds of plastic bottles, sticks, string, soap and information into Windhoek's vulnerable informal settlements for the past two weeks to fight against the spread of Covid-19.

"We are known as the green team," Gotlieb Sheya Thimo of the Development Workshop Namibia (DWN) said one early morning, shortly after the daily briefing with his team of volunteers.

Their task is to put up hands-free tippy-tap handwashing stations every few metres within the tangled and densely populated informal settlements where access to fresh water is a daily strain.

The teams also hand out thousands of pamphlets and inform residents of safety precautions and the resources available to them.

The Covid-19 emergency programme was launched by the DWN in collaboration with the Namibian Chamber of Environment (NCE) and the assistance of dozens of donor partners. DWN's Beat Weber says the aim is to install 20 000 tippy-taps over the next five weeks and to distribute information as widely as possible. By Friday, the teams had installed close to 1 000 tippy-taps that will benefit 3 000 families.

Teams have been dispatched to the Samora Machel and Moses ||Garoëb constituencies while more teams are in training to be deployed to the Khomas East and Tobias Hainyeko constituencies next week.

Informal settlements are faced with a myriad of challenges during lockdown, which residents of wealthier suburbs are not troubled with.

"Social distancing is difficult in crowded conditions. Families live in one- or two-roomed shacks. The second big challenge is resources. It's not easy to stay home for one or two days if you depend on daily wages," Weber said.

Efficient

The emergency teams put together tippy-taps in under three minutes. They erect them every few metres in the areas they target for the day.

"In the beginning, I was afraid for my people, who are already living in such vulnerable conditions. There is no water, no electricity, and information hardly gets here," Thimo said on Wednesday.

He is worried that once Covid-19 begins to spread in these areas, it will be devastating.

His work with the emergency programme has eased some of his concerns, though.

"At least we are doing something now," he said.

DWN volunteer Foibe Silvanus says apart from providing crucial hand-washing kits, information is key.

"I believe more information is needed here. Many do not know how to take care of themselves amidst this pandemic. They also do not know where to go if they are sick." She sees herself and her DWN team as foot soldiers in the battle against the pandemic.

"I couldn't just sit and watch my people not have information. I want to be part of this fight against the coronavirus."

She says the community is encouraged to build their own tippy-taps, and she is happy to see many are doing so.

She welcomed the City of Windhoek's recent announcement that it would provide free water to the informal settlements during the state of emergency.

Welcome

Nehemia Tiodor, a community leader in the Kapuka informal settlement, warns that unless people stick to the safety guidelines, his community could face a disaster.

"We will have major problems if we don't stick to the rules. The coronavirus, if it comes here, will spread very fast and I am concerned we will lose many lives."

He said the tippy-taps, information campaign and improved access to water are welcome developments by private and public institutions.

The DWN's work is assisted by donor funding from RMB, B2Gold Namibia, GIZ, Namibian Chamber of Environment, Debmarine-Namdeb Foundation and HousingforFuture.



(<https://d3rp5jatom3eyn.cloudfront.net/assets/images/3454/green-shirted-heroes-bring-hope2020-04-070.jpg>)

CARRY: Teams haul tippy-tap kits into the heart of the informal settlements each day.



(<https://d3rp5jatom3eyn.cloudfront.net/assets/images/3454/green-shirted-heroes-bring-hope2020-04-071.jpg>)

REACH OUT: The teams talk to residents about Covid-19 safety measures and resources.



(<https://d3rp5jatom3eyn.cloudfront.net/assets/images/3454/green-shirted-heroes-bring-hope2020-04-072.jpg>)

TEAMWORK: Volunteers and DWN workers install tippy-taps in poor informal settlements.