



Safe Hands Kenya launches unique approach to combat COVID-19

Kenyan tech steps up to enable data-driven distribution of free soap, hand sanitizer, surface disinfectant and masks to all Kenyans.

8 April 2020, Nairobi: A broad alliance of Kenyan companies has today launched **Safe Hands Kenya** to deploy free soap, hand sanitizer, surface disinfectant and masks to all Kenyans, as a first line of defence against COVID-19. A nationwide marketing campaign will be rolled out in parallel, to motivate behaviour change and inform people about practical and immediate measures they can take to stay safe and slow the spread of the virus.

This initiative is a homegrown blueprint for the particular challenges presented by COVID-19 in Kenya and other developing countries. Extreme social distancing measures being implemented around the globe are very difficult to implement within the African context, where many families live in close proximity and need to leave their homes to work in order to meet the basic needs of their families. The impact of COVID-19 could therefore be devastating.

The immediate provision of the tools for **rapid mass sanitation** (soap, hand sanitizer, surface disinfectant and face masks), along with the motivation and behaviour change education to adopt and use them regularly, is the most effective way to keep people safe and society functioning.

The alliance includes technology-based distribution companies, input suppliers, manufacturers, media houses and community organisations and has assembled a full-time project team that includes experts across supply chains, user experience and behavioural change. Distribution has commenced and will scale over the coming weeks and months.

The alliance has built a geospatial demand and supply allocation map and collectively distributes basic goods efficiently and transparently – using technology – to hundreds of thousands of small retailers, within reach of all Kenyan households.

All members have pledged to uphold three key principles: 1) zero margin: this is for impact, not profit; 2) speed is critical: every day counts; and 3) last-mile saturation: we leave no-one behind.

Andrew Waititu, CEO of Safe Hands Kenya CEO, and former CEO of GE Healthcare East Africa, explained: *“Rapid mass sanitation of hands and surfaces combined with adoption of masks is a pragmatic and scalable strategy in the Kenyan context. Whilst our initial focus is Kenya, we are developing an actionable blueprint for other countries facing similar challenges so they can adapt our learnings to their context and accelerate speed to market. Our intent is to scale and sustain Safe Hands Kenya’s operations for as long as they are needed, and we welcome additional funding and capability partners who can accelerate the impact of our approach.”*

Dr Ahmed Ogwel, Deputy Director of Africa CDC, endorsed this new alliance: *“I endorse Safe Hands Kenya – keeping hands clean by washing with soap and water or by using a hand sanitizer is a most effective way of stopping the transmission of Coronavirus. COVID-19 is a challenge of an*



entirely new magnitude so the boldness of thinking and the pace of action by the Safe Hands Kenya alliance is both necessary and welcome.”

The actions up and down Safe Hands Kenya’s supply chain will also spur economic activity and act as a stimulus for Kenyan families working within local manufacturing and supply chains. Longer-term, the initiative will also improve the overall state of hygiene practices, with concomitant benefits for other sanitation-related diseases and deaths.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

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Safe Hands Kenya is a growing alliance whose members include:

