

VICE CHANCELLOR'S REMARKS

AT

BIUST PRODUCTS DONATION CEREMONY

HELD ON 7TH OF MAY 2020

AT

CDC - SEROWE

BY

PROF. OTLOGETSWE TOTOLO

VICE CHANCELLOR

1. Directors of Ceremonies
2. Bangwato Regent, Kgosi Sediegeng Kgamane
3. District Commissioner, Mr. Rapetse Mathumo
4. Council Secretary, Mr. Godimo Garegope
5. Dr Kitso Sedisa, Dean of Students Affairs and Chairman of the BIUST COVID-19 Rapid Response Committee;
6. Representatives, Local Enterprises Authority (LEA)
7. Representatives, Morupule Coal Mine
8. BIUST Staff present
9. Media houses represent
10. Central District Staff present
11. Ladies & Gentlemen

Good morning!

It is my great pleasure to be here today, in a brief ceremony where the Botswana International University of Science & Technology (BIUST), will be donating 1,700 bar soaps and 4,000 liquid soaps to Serowe Community to aid in the battle against the novel corona virus pandemic.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we now know that COVID-19 spreads fast and we know that it is fatal. Evidence from several countries is giving us a clearer picture about this virus; how it behaves, how to stop it and how to treat it. Every country is implementing a comprehensive set of measures to slow down transmission and

save lives, with the aim of reaching a steady state of low-level or no transmission.

BIUST) was established in 2006 and envisaged to be one of the key drivers in bringing about a fundamental transformation of Botswana -a catalyst for the economic and social development.

It is the University's aims to; stimulate research, innovation and technology transfer, live up to society's aspirations to improve health, wealth and well-being, amongst others. In responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic, BIUST has joined hands with the Government of Botswana in mitigating the spread of COVID-19 by undertaking the following projects, which were successfully launched last week Thursday:

1. **Production of bar and liquid soaps;**
2. **Production of Sanitisers;**
3. **Development of Drone Sprayers; and**
4. **Development of dashboard for visualization of COVID-19 cases.**

These products are produced at the BIUST laboratories and are the inventions of the BIUST students and the academic staff.

The University in partnership with Morupule Coal Mine (MCM), undertook a project to produce hand sanitisers and MCM contributed an amount of BWP100,000.00. The sanitisers were produced according to World Health Organisation (WHO)

Standards. In addition, BIUST designed and manufactured sanitiser dispensers to be used in public areas such as hospitals, clinics and dikgotla.

BIUST has been producing the bar soaps for the past three (3) years. However, for provision of much needed equipment to ensure sufficient production of both the bar soaps and the liquid soaps for the national market, BIUST partnered with the Local Enterprise Authority (LEA).

Another project is that of drone sprayers, which was developed in conjunction with the Botswana Defence Force (BDF). The purpose of the drone sprayers is to disinfect the air of open public spaces in the time of COVID-19 Pandemic. At this time of lockdown, critical open spaces in Botswana are where there will be unavoidable human activities such as hospitals, grocery stores, gasoline stations and quarantine facilities. The drone sprayer will help clean the air from the unseen corona virus in these areas.

The drones have already commenced work; having fumigated at the ever-busy Palapye Primary Hospital and the Palapye Administration Authority offices that have become a hotspot due to permits issuance that attract masses of people daily.

Through BIUST collaboration with iThemba Labs and the University of Witwatersrand(WITS), a Dashboard for visualising COVID-19 pandemic in Botswana has been developed.

The project encapsulates methodologies in Data Science and Artificial Intelligence that effectively combine medical and other data to provide a comprehensive synthetic view of the predictive landscape.

The Dashboard gives a detailed analysis of corona virus using maps, diagrams, graphs and pie charts and its purpose is to control the number of people infected, hospitalisations, ICU admissions and mortality. These outcomes are predicted as a function of non-pharmaceutical interventions in the post-lockdown period to allow for the economy to reactivate.

Serowe is the capital of the Central District, hence the University saw it fit to be here today to donate bar and liquid soaps. These products will be handed over to the relevant authorities who will then distribute them accordingly.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me assure you that post-COVID-19, the University would be very active towards economic diversification through research and innovation. Our efforts in mass production will go a long way in helping mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and positioning the products as prospective economic drivers post the pandemic.

Amongst projects we endeavor to pursue post COVID-19 pandemic are the production of;

1. Sodium hypochlorite,
2. Bitumen,
3. Caustic soda
4. Chlorine and
5. Other various waste energy projects.

The commercialization of these projects will contribute towards industry growth and development, and advancement of a diversified knowledge-based economy.

Finally, I would like to thank our partners, Morupule Coal Mine, Botswana Defence Force and Local Enterprise Authority for their generous contributions in assisting us to produce these products. We greatly appreciate this demonstration of national solidarity. Tackling this disease together is our only option.

With these few remarks Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish you a wonderful day, let us continue washing our hands with water and soap or sanitizing.

Thank you.