



Media Release
10 June 2020

The Solidarity Fund boosts Covid-19 testing across the country for those in need

10 June 2020 – As South Africa experiences an increase in the number of Covid-19 infections, the Solidarity Fund is supporting the provision of more than 1m Covid-19 tests across the country to help government’s efforts to ramp up testing, tracing and quarantining to slow the spread of the virus.

The Fund’s Healthcare lead, Jonathan Broomberg said: “The Solidarity Fund is committed to helping make efficient and accessible testing and analysis available to as many South Africans as possible to ensure the optimal containment of Covid-19.”

The Solidarity Fund has supported the National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS) with a grant to the value of R250m, which will assist the NHLS to procure reagents that will enable a further 1.1 million tests to be conducted.

The Fund also supported the South African Medical Research Council and a consortium of several universities with a grant of R88 million to scale up testing in their virology laboratories. This is expected to add capacity for a up to 12,000 tests per day once fully operational.

In addition, The Solidarity Fund has supported Dischem and Global Health Innovations Laboratory with an initial grant of R20 million to roll out free testing at walk-in testing facilities for those who are not on medical aid and cannot afford the cost of a test. The service is targeted at communities that are underserved. This is expected to add an additional 33,000 tests.

The funding provided by the Solidarity Fund is allocated purely towards the cost of testing. Dischem will arrange testing facilities at a number of shopping mall parking lots at its own cost, including the provision of nursing and other staff as well as Personal Protective Equipment for these staff.

Testing at these facilities is consistent with current government testing guidelines and includes a complete pathway from screening to communication of results, with full reporting of results to patients and the authorities.

Widespread Covid-19 testing not only helps provide individuals with valuable information to assist them to better manage their own health, it assists epidemiologists to better identify positive cases, track and trace potential contacts to further slow transmission of the virus. In turn, this helps protect the public health system, frontline healthcare workers and to assist the health authorities to identify potential hotspots to manage the impact of the pandemic. Testing also provides valuable data to help determine whether containment measures are working.

Interim CEO of the Solidarity Fund, Nomkhita Nqweni said: “As the Covid-19 pandemic evolves, The Solidarity Fund continues to play a vital role in supporting the national health response, contributing to humanitarian relief efforts and mobilising South Africans to drive a united response to the Covid19.”

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