

## NEWS RELEASE



# Media Release

Johannesburg, 17<sup>th</sup> July 2020

## The Solidarity Fund urges behaviour change as South Africa heads for pandemic peak

**17 JULY 2020:** The Solidarity Fund has urged all South Africans to stand together as Citizens in Solidarity and adopt behaviour changes to slow the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

“By embracing the behavioural changes needed by staying at home, wearing our masks, washing our hands and keeping our distance we can make a real difference how this pandemic impacts our collective future,” says Nomkhita Nqweni, CEO of The Solidarity Fund. “As we celebrate International Mandela Day this is the example that Madiba would have wanted us to set.”

As at 16 July 2020, the Fund has received R3 billion in pledges, with almost the full amount already deposited thanks to the generosity of South Africans. To date the Fund has fully allocated more than R2,2bn to fund initiatives that aim to prevent, support, detect and care for those affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. So far, R1.9bn of this has been earmarked for our health response, including behaviour change initiatives to change the trajectory of the pandemic.

### PREVENT

The Solidarity Fund has partnered various organisations to amplify its behaviour change campaign to ensure maximum reach and impact.

The Fund supports the Return-2-Work campaign and platform which has been developed to enable a safe return to work through providing step-by-step guidance and resources to businesses and various sectors on how to re-open and stay open safely during the Covid-19 pandemic.

It has also partnered with civil society and community constituencies, particularly in the hotspot provinces through the deployment of neighbourhood agents who act as ambassadors and custodians to encourage participation and adherence of life-saving behavioural changes at community level, such as wearing a mask and regular hand washing.

Chairman of the Fund, Gloria Serobe said the most effective strategies to contain the spread of the virus take into account the unique cultural context of different communities.

During the lockdown period, for example, it has been difficult for traditional leaders to communicate with their constituents as compliance with social distancing guidelines has prevented large gatherings and interrupted

the flow of vital public health information. To overcome this, The Solidarity Fund has formed a partnership with the National House of Traditional Leaders and procured 800 loudhailers to enable traditional leaders to communicate prevention messages to their communities. The first 57 have already sent out to hotspots areas in the Eastern Cape. The Fund will also be supporting the traditional leaders with scripted messages for communication.

"It is efforts such as these that show how homegrown solutions can help us as we face up to the challenge of Covid-19," said Serobe. "As we ride the next wave of the pandemic, it is critical that all citizens change our behaviour and attitude toward COVID-19."

The Fund is also hosting the inaugural Solidarity Cup three teams cricket match on 18 July in support of fighting the twin pandemics of Covid-19 and gender-based violence and to pay tribute to Nelson's Mandela's legacy. It will be the first live sports match to be broadcast since the country went into lockdown to curb the spread of Covid-19.

## **CARE**

The Solidarity Fund has distributed almost 20m units of PPE including gloves, gowns, masks, sanitisers, boot covers and face shields to healthcare workers across the country. In keeping with its principle of Solidarity in Action, the Fund has also donated more than 1 million surgical masks to nine medical schools across the country. This donation will help 5th and 6th year medical students and those in allied health sciences to resume clinical blocks and complete their studies.

As the pandemic continues to accelerate, the Fund has also earmarked R405m of critical medical equipment for the identified provincial hotspots of Gauteng, Western Cape and the Eastern Cape. This will go towards supplying public hospitals with essential high care equipment, including 760 ventilators and respiratory support devices.

With Gauteng now at the epicentre of the pandemic, the province will receive the lion's share of the disbursement at R209m, while R120m has been earmarked for the Western Cape and R76m for the Eastern Cape for similar critical care equipment.

In Gauteng, 40 000 items of critical hospital equipment will be used to supply field hospitals at NASREC and in Tshwane. A further 12 500 items of high care and critical care equipment such as ICU monitors and other critical equipment will be supplied to Covid-19-designated hospitals in the Eastern and Western Cape. In addition, funding has been provided to procure a total of 760 respiratory support devices including ventilators and high flow oxygen devices for all three provinces.

"Before the crisis, we imported 92% of medical equipment, including PPE, with only 8% being locally produced. As part of the what the Fund would like to see as its legacy, we saw a real opportunity to activate local, sustainable manufacturing to help address this imbalance," added Dr Jonathan Broomberg, Lead: Health Response.

To that effect the Solidarity Fund has invested R250m towards the local manufacturing and production of 20 000 non-invasive CPAP ventilators through the National Ventilator Project. The majority of these will be manufactured by the CSIR and a consortium of manufacturers. These locally manufactured ventilators have already passed the prototype stage and are expected to be ready from the beginning of August in line to meet the demand of the predicted peak.

The Fund is also investigating proposals to support local manufacturers of PPE and other medical equipment in order to ensure a sustainable local industry in this sector.

## **DETECT**

A widespread testing regime is a critical tool in the fight against Covid-19 and part of a holistic response to the pandemic. In the early phase The Solidarity Fund dedicated R250 million to support the National Health Laboratory Service to increase the number of tests.

To address processing backlogs, The Fund has further invested R88m to capacitate virology laboratories at seven universities across South Africa in an effort to extend the capacity of the NHLS testing programme.

In broadening the reach of testing, particularly to underserved areas, The Solidarity Fund has earmarked R26m to a network of community pharmacies and GPs to conduct the testing of healthcare workers across the country.

Nqweni acknowledged the generosity of the more than 298 000 individuals who have donated through direct deposits and payroll giving and over 2 000 corporates and trusts that have donated towards the Fund's activities.

"To all South Africans we say thank you for all your support and uniting as Citizens in Solidarity. Let's continue to wash our hands to protect our neighbours, wear our masks to protect our friends and keep a safe distance to protect our families."

The Solidarity Fund is committed to transparency around all of its activities. Find detailed information and reporting around donations received, projects and approvals as well as the impact the Fund is having by visiting [www.solidarityfund.co.za](http://www.solidarityfund.co.za).

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