



## PRESS RELEASE

### **SOLIDARITY FUND APPROVES R175 MILLION IN FOOD RELIEF AS COVID-19 INFECTIONS RISE**

*"It is vital that amidst the hardship and challenges brought about by this pandemic, we give back as much dignity and agency as possible to the beneficiaries of our humanitarian relief measures. This is central to the crafting of our interventions in the areas of providing food relief for vulnerable communities and support for efforts against gender-based violence."*

**Head of the Humanitarian Pillar of the Solidarity Fund, Ms Wendy Thlou**

**31 July 2020** – As the impact of Covid-19 on employment and livelihoods becomes increasingly apparent with hundreds of thousands of people losing their income either temporarily or permanently, the Solidarity Fund has ramped up its efforts to bring some relief to those affected by the pandemic.

In line with its mandate to contribute to humanitarian relief efforts, the Solidarity Fund has focused its efforts on alleviating two of the biggest issues that have emerged - food relief and gender-based violence. In conceptualising its support initiatives, the Fund has partnered with relevant government departments and agencies, representatives of the United Nations in South Africa, as well as civil society.

#### **Phase 2 of the Food Relief Programme**

The Solidarity Fund has earmarked R175m for Phase 2 of its food relief programme. It is in the final stages of planning its food voucher roll-out to urban and rural beneficiaries and will be commencing preparations to roll-out the farming input vouchers to rural communities.

#### **R100m support package for food vouchers**

A R100m support package will be disbursed through a once-off R700 food voucher to identified beneficiaries in approximately 135 000 identified households.

Since urban job losses will also have a significant effect on rural households which regularly receive remittances from family members, the Fund has taken a bold decision to target 108 000 urban households and 27 000 rural households who do not fall within the country's social security net.

The beneficiaries will include unemployed young people, expectant mothers, women, and foreign nationals who are not classified as asylum seekers or refugees in terms of South Africa's Immigration Act. These households will be identified by a number of partners, including the Department of Health's MomConnect platform, M4JAMs urban youth, Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator, National House of Traditional Leaders, South African Council of Churches, South African National Zakah Fund, Department of Sports, Arts & Culture and the United Nations International Organisation for Migration.

### **R75m towards farming input vouchers**

A further R75 million will be used to disburse a once-off R2 000 farming input voucher to 35 000 beneficiaries who engage in subsistence or household farming in rural areas across the nine provinces.

The farming input vouchers are to assist subsistence-focused smallholder and household/micro farmers who have lost income from a combination of sources during COVID-19 restrictions. This has compromised their ability to fund their ongoing farming activities or to prepare for the next farming cycle. By supporting their ongoing ability to produce food, this programme will provide these households with direct access to food and prevent them from being pushed into a poverty trap.

To help identify these beneficiaries, the Solidarity Fund has reached out to the National House of Traditional Leaders and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations who work with a number of community based organisations. FAO will also assist with technical expertise on the project.

The Solidarity Fund is also engaging with the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development as a strategic partner and to provide a list of approved suppliers across the nine provinces at which beneficiaries can redeem their vouchers.

### **Gender Based Violence**

Recognising the increase in incidents of gender-based violence as one of the unintended consequences of the lockdown, in Phase 1 of its response, the Solidarity Fund disbursed R17 million to organisations that support victims of gender-based violence. Based on a rigorous needs analysis aimed at ensuring the largest possible impact of its contribution, the Fund partnered with the Gender Based Violence Command Centre, the National Shelter Movement and the Thuthuzela Care Centres.

Phase 2 of the Gender Based Violence support programme, which will amount to approximately R50 million, is still being conceptualised. The Fund has begun extensive consultation with a range of stakeholders from government and civil society. These interventions are envisioned to have a catalytic impact on gender-based violence far beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms Tlou added: "In the face of such immense need, The Fund has focused its relief efforts on where it can make the biggest impact both immediately and beyond Covid-19. It is thanks to the generous support of the many donors to the Solidarity Fund that we are able to demonstrate unity in action and bring relief to many of the most vulnerable in our society who face economic hardship at this time."

**ENDS**