



# SUPPORTING A SUSTAINABLE HEALTH SYSTEM - ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT PROJECT

## Impact Report

BENEFICIARY	APPROVED FUNDING (EXCL. VAT)	SPEND TO DATE (EXCL. VAT)
<i>Essential medical equipment for hospitals across all nine provinces</i>	R422 010 943	R371 500 085

01

### THE SOLIDARITY FUND'S HEALTH CARE MANDATE

As the COVID-19 pandemic hit South African shores, government, business, and civil society mobilised. Together they established the Solidarity Fund as a rapid response mechanism to raise and channel resources to three focus areas – health, humanitarian, and behaviour change communications - that could have the biggest impact in supporting the country to address the ravages of the pandemic.

The Fund's Health Pillar worked closely with the national and provincial health departments to help strengthen and augment the country's COVID-19 response, helping to save lives and improve the health and well-being of all South Africans.

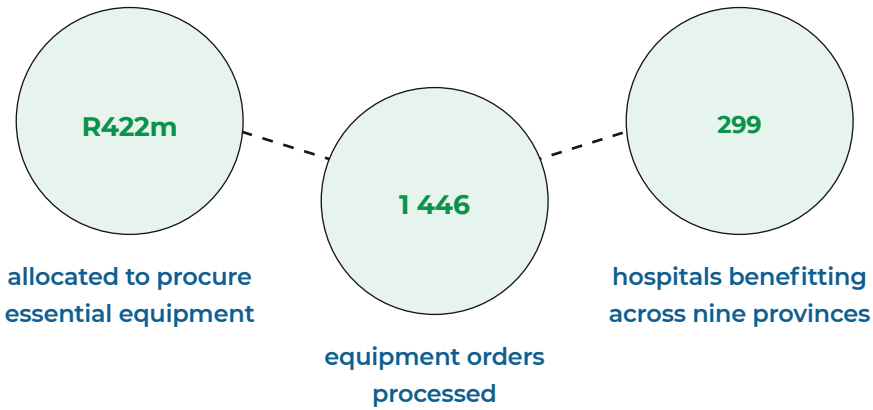
The surge of cases during the pandemic, increased demand for care, especially critical care, and the need to have isolated COVID-19 specific wards resulted in the demand for more essential equipment to be procured for special field hospitals, additional ICUs, etc. The WHO developed a list of essential COVID-19 equipment to guide countries for response preparedness. Shortages of essential medical equipment, particularly in rural communities, affects the level and quality of care and treatment for COVID-19 patients, hampering the health systems ability to support those in need.

To help address this challenge, the Fund's Health Pillar supported the procurement of essential medical equipment that had a positive and long-lasting effect within the health system. The range of equipment included diagnostic sets, waiting area furniture, beds, ICU and high care equipment, monitors, High Flow Nasal Oxygen respiratory support systems, and ICU ventilators, amongst others.

Not only did this equipment provide immediate support to those affected by COVID-19, it has also ensured the means to provide long-term care to patients beyond the pandemic, and capacitated the hospital infrastructure for years to come.

02

IMPACT AT A GLANCE



03

PROCUREMENT AND DISTRIBUTION

The Fund allocated a total of R422m to the procurement of essential medical equipment across all nine provinces. This equipment was needed to effectively treat those infected with the COVID-19 virus, including hospital beds, ventilators, and specialist equipment, with a focus on high care and intensive-care unit (ICU) patients. However, this equipment can be used for many other health challenges, thereby augmenting the capability of over two hundred hospitals across the country.

The project initially focused on the four provinces with the highest COVID-19 rates - Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Gauteng, and KwaZulu-Natal, allocating R363m for essential equipment for these four provinces. Due to the success and positive feedback from this initial roll-out, a further R58.9m was allocated to support procurement of essential equipment for the remaining provinces - Free State, North West, Northern Cape, Mpumalanga, and Limpopo.

The Fund partnered with the South African Pandemic Intervention and Relief Effort (SPIRE) in collaboration with the national and provincial health departments to implement this project. SPIRE is a public benefit fund managed by the FirstRand Group, established to make a sustainable difference in the country, and other key markets on the continent, to respond to the health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. SPIRE has partnered with the Fund on several other projects.

PROCUREMENT

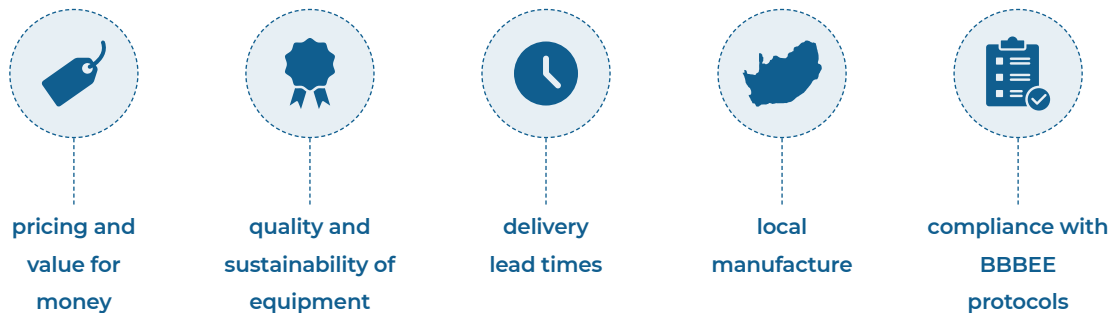
The Solidarity Fund entered into a procurement agency agreement with SPIRE on 30 September 2020 to manage the procurement of all essential equipment orders for all nine provinces. At the request of the Western Cape Health Department, the Fund contracted The Health Foundation to further support procurement and distribution in the Western Cape.

The list of equipment required was provided by clinicians at the various hospitals. This list was then reviewed and approved by the Solidarity Fund's technical review panel and the relevant provincial and/or national health department officials.

In terms of the procurement agency agreements, SPIRE and the Health Foundation sourced suppliers, conducted various checks prior to onboarding suppliers, validated pricing against the National Treasury tender list for medical equipment, and, where possible, negotiated

pricing. They were also responsible for managing the deliveries to ensure that they reach the intended hospitals, and ensuring correct invoicing.

In alignment with the principles of the Solidarity Fund, the following factors were considered in the procurement process:



### **CONSUMABLES, TRAINING, AND MAINTENANCE**

The Fund aimed to not only provide essential equipment that would alleviate the immediate COVID-19 pressures on the public health system, but also to build a legacy that would outlive the pandemic.

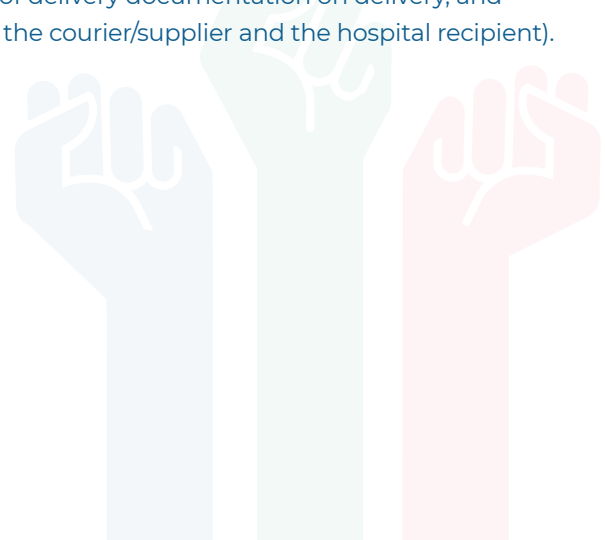
Some medical equipment required the use of consumables to enhance their efficiency and / or allow them to be used. Where possible, consumables were therefore purchased to support devices for three months. In addition, where possible, the Fund procured maintenance plans for equipment to ensure they are serviced and repaired, if needed, beyond the life of the project. These plans will help hospitals to maintain and run their equipment at optimum capacity, while reducing the wear-and-tear cost to hospitals.

Relevant hospital staff were also provided training on how to use the new equipment.

### **DISTRIBUTION**

SPIRE managed the distribution process through an approved supplier or courier agents, with coordination through the Solidarity Fund, provincial health departments and partners. Strict protocols were included in contracts to effectively monitor the safe and correct distribution of the equipment. These included:

- Deliveries to be made only to the verified addresses provided to the supplier by SPIRE and Health Foundation, and confirmed with the receiving hospital and provincial office;
- Deliveries to be handed over to specific individuals at each site;
- Deliveries were prearranged to ensure the designated hospital was available;
- Delivery personnel were to check the identification of the predetermined recipient; and
- Delivery personnel had to ensure signed proof of delivery documentation on delivery, and stamped with the official hospital stamp (both the courier/supplier and the hospital recipient).



**IMPACT**

The Fund was committed to assist in strengthening South Africa's healthcare system by improving access to medical equipment and bolstering current infrastructure with equipment that was needed in the identified facilities, to improve healthcare service to patients.

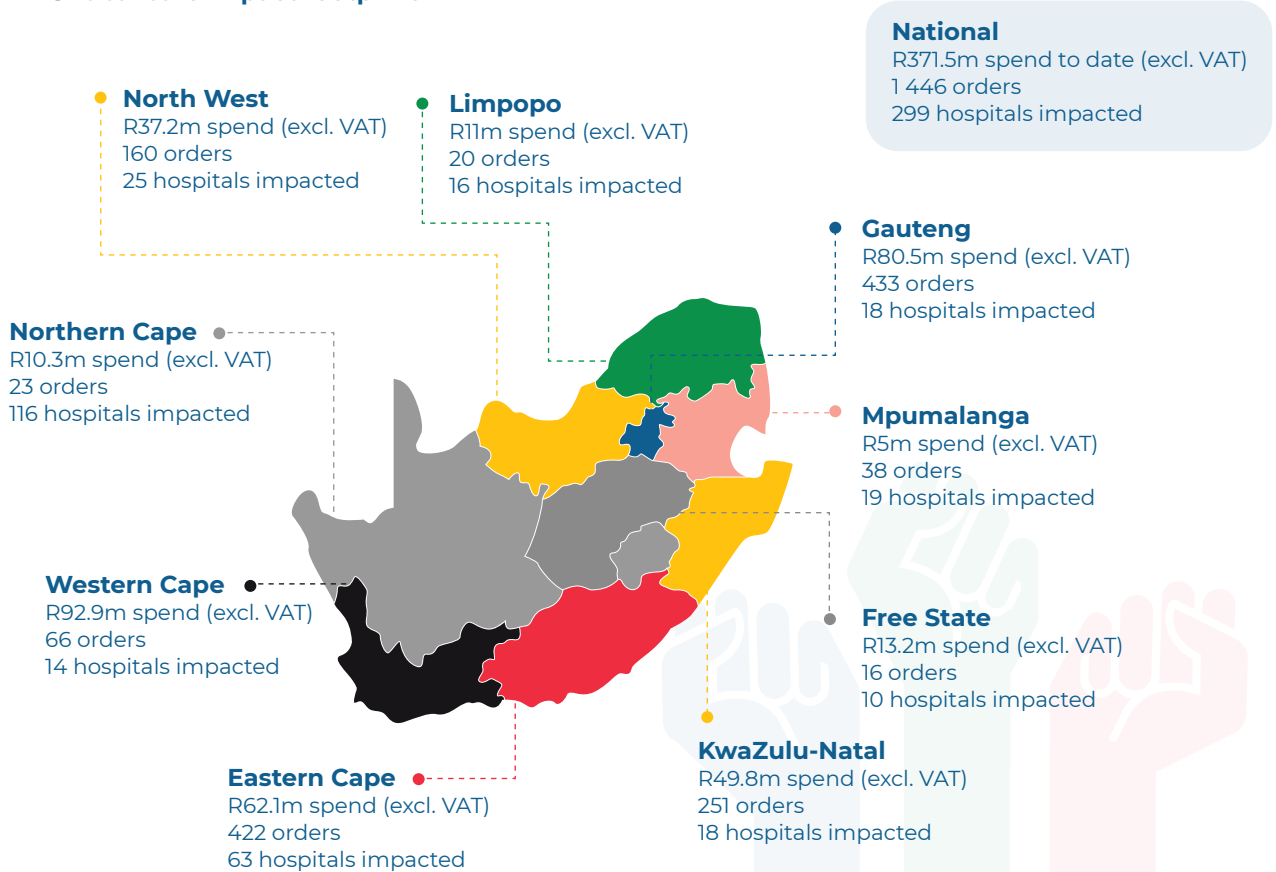
With so many COVID-19 patients affected in a multitude of ways, it was important to improve infrastructure and provide access to the correct essential equipment to be able to effectively treat and care for patients. This essential equipment helped to ensure that the benefitting hospitals could open additional isolation facilities to screen, investigate, and treat COVID-19 patients, and have the necessary critical equipment needed to provide efficient and quality healthcare during the pandemic.

Through this project, the Fund delivered on this mandate, ensuring 299 hospitals, including provincial, regional, and district facilities, have the equipment they need to treat their communities. Across the nine provinces, the Solidarity Fund, together with SPIRE and Health Foundation, filled 1 446 orders for essential equipment to the value of over R400m.

Adequate access to essential equipment in hospitals improves patient care and recovery rates. Investing in essential equipment therefore, not only strengthened the healthcare system's ability to respond to unprecedented numbers of patients, but has also left a lasting legacy since these facilities will continue to benefit patients beyond the pandemic.

The map below shows the provincial distribution of the procured equipment and the impact across the country.

**Critical care impact footprint**





### FEEDBACK FROM BENEFICIARIES

The provision of this vital medical equipment is having a profound positive impact on the health and wellbeing of South Africans and health facilities' ability to provide the correct care.

*"We are having an unexpected and dreadful surge ... Equipment [received] right in time to help with it."* **Dr Van der Merwe**

*"The assistance has been phenomenal: ensuring our needs are met, procurement is efficient, equipment is commissioned, training is done, and – most importantly – equipment consumables have been made available to allow immediate use of the equipment."* **Dr Mrara, HOD, Department of Anaesthesiology, NMAH**

*"Thanks Solidarity Fund for providing us with tools to properly care for critically ill patients, especially during these difficult times with the COVID-19 pandemic. Frontier Hospital ICU staff, as well as the institution management, really appreciate your support."* **Dr Lazo, Frontier Hospital**

*"These hospitals need ventilators for the patients who crash, and they have to wait for a bed to become available in the referral hospital. [Previously] these patients just died. Now they have a fighting chance."* **Dr Abdullah, Steve Biko Academic Hospital**

## 05

### GOVERNANCE

To ensure the effective monitoring of the project, SPIRE tracked and compiled weekly reports on all procurement and delivery activities across all provinces. This allowed for strict monitoring of equipment being delivered, ensuring they were correctly and safely received by the correct hospitals. The Health Foundation provided the same weekly reports for the Western Cape.

Weekly meetings were held between the Fund's Health Pillar, SPIRE, public health experts and clinicians on the ground. This constant engagement allowed the Fund to respond nimbly to ever-changing and emerging needs that arose, especially during the particularly severe second and third waves of the pandemic.

Transparency and clarity were key. SPIRE was in constant contact with hospitals to keep the lines of communication open between suppliers and end users. This open flow of communication was essential to solving challenges arising at some hospitals, to maintain good relationships with all stakeholders.

06

## CHALLENGES

The project faced several challenges as it was rolled out. The most notable include:

### Industry challenges

The COVID-19 pandemic was a global emergency, resulting in a high demand for specialist and essential equipment. The high global demand affected the ability to source equipment at an affordable rate, resulting in increased lead times for equipment delivery.

### Logistical challenges

Another consequence of the pandemic's global nature was the closure of borders and restrictions to importing equipment from international suppliers. Logistical costs skyrocketed for equipment that had to be transported through multiple points, reducing the viability of sourcing and procuring equipment from some suppliers.

### Hospital challenges

With successive coronavirus waves, hospitals faced their own challenges. As a contractual obligation, hospitals were required to identify specific individuals to receive and sign off on the delivery of the equipment. This was implemented to monitor the process of distribution, and make sure that equipment did reach where it was intended. Due to the increased pressure placed on healthcare workers during these times, specified individuals were not always available, which delayed delivery times.

Secondly, once the equipment arrived at its destination, teams of staff were required to undergo training to ensure correct use and maintenance. Until this training had been completed, projects could not be fully closed and the equipment could not be used, resulting in delayed payments to suppliers.

07

## CONCLUSION

Strengthening the national health system is a priority for the Fund. In line with the Fund's healthcare mandate, and the national health strategy, this project was crucial in providing essential and life-saving medical equipment to healthcare facilities in need.

To add to this, the project has also impacted positively on the lives of healthcare workers by making their jobs slightly easier, and giving them the confidence of knowing they have the tools to support their patients.

Over the long term and beyond the pandemic, the project has helped to build resilience into the public healthcare system, helping facilities across the country to provide better care to the communities they serve.

