



# NATIONAL VACCINATION PROGRAMME CONTACT CENTRE SERVICES EXTENSION

## Impact Report

© Wavebreakmedia\_micro via Freepik

01

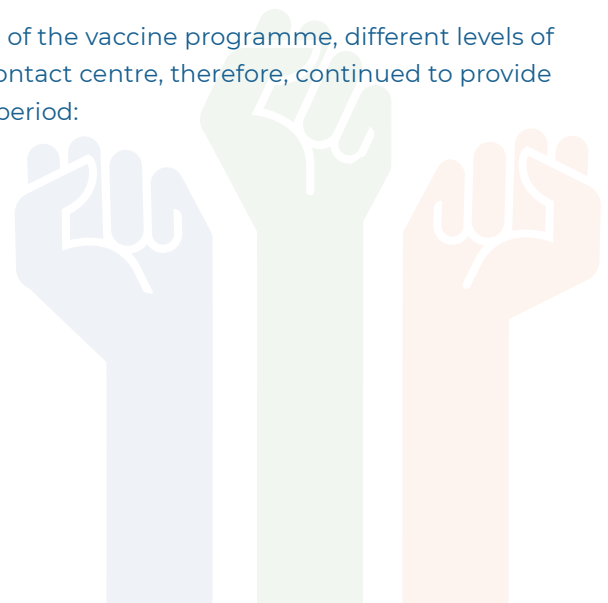
### SUPPORT TO THE COVID-19 VACCINE PROGRAMME

One of the key requirements of the National COVID-19 Vaccination Programme was to establish a comprehensive, adequately enabled, and well-coordinated call centre capability to provide critical information on the vaccine programme to citizens and key actors who were rolling out the vaccines across all areas of the country. This included building awareness amongst the population on the vaccination programme and driving up the level of participation, offering citizens answers to frequently asked questions, support for health workers, support for scheduling and booking processes, and communications across a range of government stakeholders.

In May 2021, the Solidarity Fund joined several other partners in supporting the National Department of Health (NDoH) to establish the COVID-19 vaccine contact centre. Initial funding for the contact centre was in place until March 2022, however, given the value of the service to citizens and the ongoing demand for the contact centre's support, the Fund provided additional financial support to extend the contact centre's services to 31 July 2022.

This project impact report covers the extended vaccination contact centre services for the period 1 April – 31 July 2022. An impact report on the initial contact centre support project is available on the Solidarity Fund website.

Given the complexity, sensitivity, and importance of the vaccine programme, different levels of engagement with citizens were necessary. The contact centre, therefore, continued to provide the following services throughout the extension period:



CENTRE	LEVEL	SERVICE TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Vaccination Registration Services	1	Enquiries about registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enquiries about when and how to register for a vaccination</li> </ul>
		Registration for vaccination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support with registering for vaccinations in the national electronic vaccine system (EVDS) – either directly online or guidance on how to use other channels e.g., WhatsApp</li> </ul>
		Appointment queries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enquiries about appointments, covering date/time, location, age groupings or associated communications (e.g., SMS texts)</li> </ul>
		Rescheduling appointments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cancellation and rescheduling of vaccination appointments on behalf of citizens</li> </ul>
		Queries about vaccination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General queries about vaccinations that can be answered by referring to Knowledge Base / FAQs</li> </ul>
	2	Escalations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Queries that cannot be answered immediately that require further investigation and a call back to citizen</li> </ul>
		EVDS Change of personal details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to change certain personal details for a citizen pre-vaccination</li> </ul>
Health Services	3	Clinical emergency (this assumes that doctors will not always be immediately available)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Urgent calls related to life-threatening symptoms (difficulty breathing, collapse and loss of consciousness, seizures)</li> </ul>
		General COVID-19 health queries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>COVID-19 queries related to an individual's specific health conditions</li> </ul>
		Pre-vaccination queries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Queries related to potential side effects and concerns about pre-existing medical conditions</li> </ul>
		Escalations from Tier 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complex or individual-specific questions about vaccine appropriateness or efficacy</li> </ul>
		Provision of COVID-19 test results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ring-fenced either as a separate line or a separate group of nurses</li> </ul>
Post Vaccination Services	4	Management of clinical emergency (rapid referral where necessary from Tier 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Urgent calls related to life-threatening symptoms (as above, and any other symptoms that Tier 3 personnel find alarming)</li> </ul>
		Post-vaccination events reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>COVID-related health queries post-vaccination</li> <li>Adverse events reporting</li> </ul>
		Pharmacovigilance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reporting complex or unusual adverse events</li> <li>Calls requiring active clinical management or possible referral</li> </ul>
		Other escalations from Tier 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complex health related questions about vaccine appropriateness or efficacy</li> </ul>

In addition, professional health care workers were given access to specialist support for mental health and wellbeing, including:

CENTRE	SERVICE TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Support to Healthcare Workers	Support for mental health concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Telephone counselling and crisis intervention 24 hours a day</li> <li>Online support group</li> <li>Individual or group sessions with a mental health professional</li> </ul>

02

**PARTNERS**

Several different organisations were involved in the original period of service delivery. This was refined slightly and enhanced for the extension of the service beyond 1 April 2022. The table below outlines each organisation and their respective areas of support for the extension period:

AREA OF SUPPORT	ORGANISATION AND ROLE
Overall support to NDoH	DG Murray Trust (DGMT) continued to deliver overall support to NDoH and Chair the Steering Committee.
Level 1 & Level 2	BPESA continued in the role as Contract Manager and took on budget management responsibility for the Level 1 and Level 2 services, paying the monthly invoices.
	TKG continued in the role as the design and assurance experts, providing and managing a supplier eco-system, direction and delivery of the programme, and assuring service delivery on a day-to-day basis.
	CCI South Africa continued as the Lead Service Provider.
	The three Regional Service Providers under the management of CCI, continued to support the programme at the regional level. The three providers were: Altron, Sigma and SA Commercial.
Level 3 & 4	National Health Laboratory Services (NHLS) continued delivering all Level 3 & Level 4 services.
	DGMT took on the responsibility of budget management of the Level 3 & Level 4 services and paying the monthly invoices.
	TKG also took on the responsibility of providing advisory and consultancy services to NDoH, enhancing the delivery and assurance of Level 3 & Level 4 services.
SADAG External service	Provided support to Health Care Workers seeking support for mental health concerns.

03

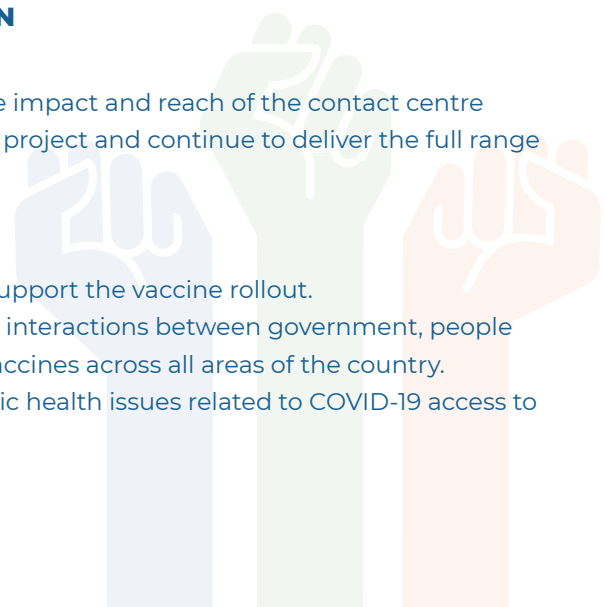
**PROJECT PURPOSE AND IMPLEMENTATION**

**Purpose**

The purpose of the project was to capitalise on the impact and reach of the contact centre services that were delivered as part of the original project and continue to deliver the full range of contact centre services to citizens.

The extended project aimed to:

- Maintain all call centre services to citizens in support the vaccine rollout.
- Assist in the management of voice and digital interactions between government, people and the key actors who were rolling out the vaccines across all areas of the country.
- Provide the people of South Africa with specific health issues related to COVID-19 access to professional nurses.



- Provide the people of South Africa with real-time information and respond to their enquiries about vaccinations.
- Support vaccine literacy uptake, ensuring consistency of messaging, and allow 'on the ground' issues expressed to be escalated and addressed at the appropriate level and fed back into public communication channels.
- Ensure that health care workers in need of support are provided with access to counselling and linkage to support structures.
- Provide omni-channel interaction management service that supports the communication of different types of digital interactions (calls, instant messaging, chat platform, emails and web) to a range of devices typically used by citizens.
- Devise a quality assurance framework and associated reporting mechanisms for L3 and L4.
- Support a coaching framework to enhance the quality assurance feedback to nurses.
- Continue to maintain knowledge management capabilities that supported agile content collation, development, packaging, and presentation (e.g.: creation of frequently asked questions), shared across all levels of the service.
- Promote the sharing of best practice between the different tiers and with other organisations.
- Provide a support network and referral service for all healthcare workers.

During this extension period the contact centre continued to provide services and maintain options across all existing channels of communication through the ability to answer queries over the phone 24 hours per day, with full contact centre services between 07:00 – 22:00 Monday – Friday and 08:00 – 18:00 Saturday, Sunday, and public holidays. The centre also maintained 170 agents for Level 1 and 2 services, and 70 nurses for Level 3, and 14 nurses for Level 4 services. Level 4 services included maintaining 33 Professional Nurse C1 and 49 Phlebotomy Officers.

The centre also maintained the ability to answer queries in five different languages: English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, isiXhosa and SeSotho, and to communicate with citizens through voice, email, webchat, chatbot and WhatsApp.

### **Ensuring high quality service delivery**

The project continued to focus on delivering at high levels of service delivery and quality standards. This was achieved by:

- Tracking service levels on a daily and intra-day basis.
- Maintaining a capacity plan and ensuring adherence to schedule by service providers.
- Routine governance of service delivery with weekly and monthly business reviews, and regular steering committee meetings.
- Maintaining balanced scorecards to ensure service delivery and quality standards were achieved.
- Delivering a coaching framework for nurses and maintaining associated scorecards.

### **Targeted beneficiaries**

- The contact centre was designed to support all citizens over the age of 18 with information on the national COVID-19 vaccination programme, and overstretched healthcare workers in need of psychosocial support. It was designed to help allay fears and concerns of citizens and to continue to promote the uptake of vaccinations by:
- Answering frequently asked questions from the public
- Assisting individual members of the public in registering for vaccination bookings using the Electronic Vaccination Data System (EVDS), including cancelling and renewing registrations for bookings.
- Assisting callers virtually with medical enquiries and accurate advice.

- Easing the burden on medical institutions by providing telephonic access to healthcare workers and information.
- Providing information of available health facilities and care provided for infected individuals.
- Educating the public on regulations during pandemic
- Supporting healthcare workers with administrative processes related to vaccination and mental health support.
- The centre also helped to reduce the risk of citizens in contracting COVID-19 and possibly spreading the virus by reducing their need to visit medical institutions for information.

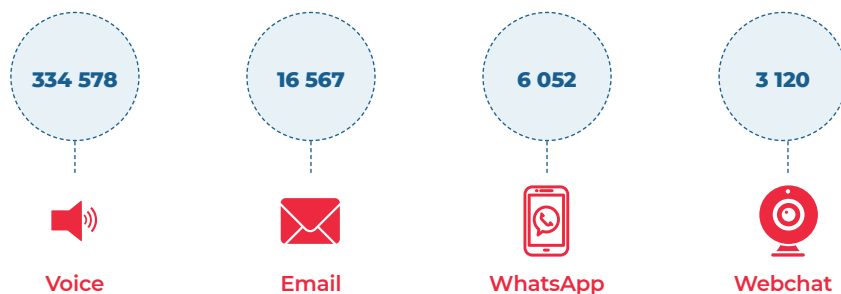
## 04

### PROJECT EXTENSION IMPACT

The COVID-19 Call Centre has proven very successful and a well-known source for information during the pandemic. The demand from citizens continued throughout the extension period, albeit the total number of calls received on a weekly basis gradually reduced as the number of vaccines per week has reduced. However, it is important to note that the vaccine to call ratio increased (from 0.06 to 0.14) during the extension period indicating that citizens have valued the service that was provided.

The project has been unique in providing a unified interface for citizens across both public and private sectors. It has also enabled the public sector to respond timeously to service delivery issues through the integrated communication between multiple stakeholders and the rapid sharing of insights and complaints from the public.

- **360 317 contacts** were received across the four channels in the extension period. This breaks down as follows:



- **The contact centre** continued to support **answering queries in five different languages:** English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, isiXhosa and SeSotho.
- **Multiple channels of communication** - voice, email, webchat, chatbot, and WhatsApp, **simplified and expanded** the ability for citizens **to access information.**

Citizens across the country welcomed a national contact centre that can provide information, guidance, and support with their health queries across various channels. As the pandemic stabilises, numerous lessons and successful practices related to the active phase of the COVID-19 pandemic can be adopted/adapted to address the current health service demands and contribute to the establishment of systems to support National Health Insurance (NHI) implementation.

**The NDoH has requested that the Contact Centre infrastructure, architecture, personnel, collaboration, and service delivery processes be repurposed to support priority health programmes** in South Africa with the potential for greater impact on population health. Additional lines for service for TB, HIV, and maternal and child health are planned.

## CONCLUSION

The extension of the contact centre services has continued to play a key role in the mitigation of the spread of infection. It has also assisted many citizens in addressing their fears and concerns relating to post vaccination effects. Assisting citizens with vaccination record updates and accurate vaccination certificates has enabled economic activity, study and travel to recover, supporting both individual and collective progress.

With the extension of the service to 31 July 2022, the net result is that the National Vaccination Programme Contact Centre Services has made a significant contribution in supporting the delivery of 36.5 million vaccinations across South Africa.

