



# HUMANITARIAN PILLAR II

## SANZAF FOOD VOUCHER PROGRAMME

### Final Impact Report

DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT ALLOCATED (EXCL. VAT)	AMOUNT DISBURSED (EXCL. VAT)
South African National Zakah Fund (SANZAF)	R10.7m	R10.7m

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#### HUMANITARIAN PILLAR MANDATE - PROMOTING FOOD SECURITY

The Solidarity Fund's Humanitarian Pillar worked to support the most vulnerable South African's affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. A key focus for the pillar was supporting and promoting food security, working with government and civil society partners to help vulnerable households' ability to access food. This support began with the distribution of food parcels, and then evolved to the distribution of vouchers to households most in need to purchase food and essential supplies.

To reach more rural beneficiaries and strengthen more sustainable food security, the pillar then supported the distribution of farming input vouchers to subsistence farmers, enabling them to buy the farming supplies they need to maintain and even grow their farms. This served to benefit not only individual households, but also their communities.

COVID-19 has had a sustained effect in the country, continuing to negatively impact the vulnerable in particular. The Fund sought to make a further impact on food insecurity as it started the process of mapping out its transitioning to a scaled down state. The Fund therefore decided to implement a rapid Humanitarian Pillar project focused on providing additional food relief support.

From October 2022 to February 2023 the Fund partnered with four civil society partners to implement various rapid food relief projects to support the vulnerable South Africans who face the daily struggle to afford sufficient food for themselves and their households.

This report discusses the activities and impact of SANZAF food voucher project.

### SANZAF PROJECT BACKGROUND

Many South Africans have been unable to recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and do not know where their next meal will come from. This project aimed to help alleviate this challenge by facilitating access to basic food items through the provision of food vouchers. The Solidarity Fund partnered with SANZAF to **distribute and manage the redemption of R1 000 food vouchers to 10 000 vulnerable beneficiaries** in urban and rural areas in five provinces - the Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, Eastern Cape and Northern Cape. Due to savings achieved, the project was able to distribute an additional 202 vouchers.

#### Beneficiaries

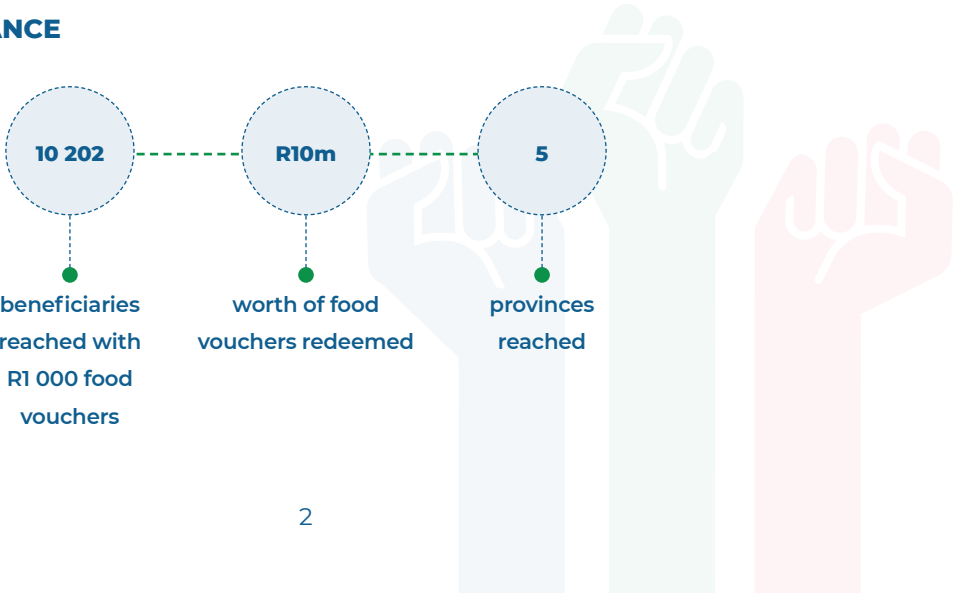
The beneficiaries were sourced from SANZAF's existing welfare lists and through partner organisations that serve communities where there is the greatest need. Beneficiaries had all been affected by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and some by the floods of 2022 (in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape), and the civil unrest of 2021 (in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng). These factors had left these beneficiaries without an income and unable to purchase even the basic food supplies and necessities for themselves and their families.

Beneficiaries were selected from the following urban and rural areas across the five provinces:



Fig 1. Rural and urban areas where beneficiaries were supported with food vouchers

### IMPACT AT A GLANCE



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## **PARTNERSHIP WITH SANZAF**

SANZAF is a registered NPO that has been operating in various communities in South Africa for close to 50 years. It provides short term relief to impoverished individuals and communities through food relief and welfare aid. SANZAF also attends to long-term needs in respect of poverty alleviation through empowerment and development programmes.

The Fund had partnered with SANZAF to implement an earlier food voucher project and knew they were a reliable partner capable of supporting the rapid implementation of this humanitarian project in a professional and cost-efficient manner.

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## **PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND SUPPORT**

The project was implemented through the following phases:



### **Procurement of vouchers**

SANZAF worked with Shoprite, Save, Supersave, Afrisave and Checkmart to procure 10 000 vouchers to the value of R1 000 each. These service providers were chosen as they were accessible to the beneficiaries and were able to provide robust redemption information.

Discounts were received from Shoprite which were used to procure a further 202 vouchers. These were added to the overall distribution to ensure that the full R10m disbursed to the project was utilised.



### **Collation of beneficiary lists**

SANZAF regional offices prepared the beneficiary lists which consisted of individuals who were known to the organisation as worthy beneficiaries and/or those who approached SANZAF for assistance. The regional offices also engaged community structures in rural areas to ensure beneficiaries in these areas were also reached.

Lists were verified internally, with some beneficiary names being replaced where their circumstances had changed.



### **Communication with beneficiaries**

Once the lists were compiled, beneficiaries were contacted to collect their vouchers. They were advised to come to the SANZAF office or to a central location and provide the required documentation to prove their identity and eligibility for the voucher.

Since the project had a tight implementation timeline, the teams could not spend too much time tracing beneficiaries. Therefore, if they did not respond to invitations to receive a voucher they were replaced by another beneficiary.



### **Voucher distribution**

Beneficiaries were given a date, time and venue to receive their vouchers. In most instances, this was done in or near to the store where the beneficiaries could immediately make a purchase. The purpose of this was to expedite the redemption process, and help beneficiaries save money on transport costs by not having to travel twice.

Transport was arranged to and from the store for some beneficiaries from rural communities, especially the elderly, so they did not have to travel distances or carry heavy stopping bags back to their homes.

In Gauteng, SANZAF issued a small quantity of digital vouchers to pilot and gain experience with using this method of voucher distribution. Use of digital vouchers through mobile phones is a more efficient and cost-effective method that the organisation would like to adopt as part of its services.

Management played an active role in ensuring that the distribution was done optimally and visited a few sites to observe the process.



### **Distribution administration**

Distribution documentation required beneficiaries to provide an address, an identity document, and a telephone number. These documents were verified before vouchers were handed over.

Furthermore, each beneficiary had to sign a second document to acknowledge receipt of the voucher. These signature pages were referenced back to the voucher number.

Once the regional office was comfortable that batches of beneficiaries had utilised the vouchers, they requested redemption data from the participating shops. From mid way through the distribution, the redemption data was requested on a weekly basis to ensure effective reporting.



### **Redemption tracking**

Participating stores provided redemption data to SANZAF as required. However, they did not always provide them at the intervals requested by SANZAF. This resulted in delays in reporting redemptions in the weekly reports to Solidarity Fund. However, towards the end the stores were more willing to provide the final report as opposed to weekly ones.



### **Reporting**

Data from across the country was reported weekly and monthly by each of the eight regional offices. Some regions with smaller staff complements experienced delays with reporting because they were prioritising the distribution and redemption of vouchers.

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### **PROJECT IMPACT**

Through this project, **10 202 beneficiaries and their families were able to buy food and essential supplies.** And for at least one month they did not have to worry how they would be able to afford this. This kind of peace of mind is invaluable and gave them a **sense of hope that there is a better tomorrow,** and that there are others that care about them.

Beneficiaries were also given the **dignity to shop for what they really needed** based on their individual circumstances, and not just given food and supplies that they did not need or like.

For SANZAF, the project provided the opportunity to extend their support to those most in need. The organisation also gained additional experience and a reputation as a reliable partner in this field, helping to improve its ability to source funding from other entities.

The biggest highlight of the project was the smiles and relief on the faces of many of the beneficiaries. This assistance may have been a temporary relief, but for many beneficiaries it has made an incalculable impact.

**Images of beneficiaries redeeming vouchers and purchasing much needed food and essential supplies.**



*Food voucher beneficiaries queue to receive their vouchers*



*A robust process was in place to manage the voucher redemption process*







Some of the supplies purchased with the R1 000 vouchers

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CHALLENGES AND MITIGATIONS

CHALLENGE	MITIGATING ACTIONS
<b>Beneficiary verification was a long slow process delaying voucher distribution</b>	The beneficiary lists had to be verified which proved to be a lengthy process. However, this was an integral part of ensuring vouchers reached those most in need and correct beneficiaries. Distribution could only commence once the lists were finalised. This meant that voucher distribution had to be done faster due to the short project timeline. SANZAF freed up additional resources to support this, and time dedicated to other activities was reallocated to the voucher distribution.
<b>Balancing governance requirements with reaching those most in need</b>	The administration and reporting requirements, although justified and necessary for governance purposes, sometimes led to those in need being turned away (i.e., no identity document, etc). The team struggled to balance the humanitarian objectives with the administrative requirements – not to let the paperwork get in the way of assisting the poor and needy. However, all governance and reporting procedures were followed as required.
<b>Onerous data collection</b>	The collation of the data at the end of the process was extremely onerous and required a number of resources to verify, link and scan documents. A project of this scale requires more time to close out which will ensure more efficient reporting.

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## LESSON LEARNED

- Providing individuals with the agency to select the food items of their choice was a huge positive. There was a greater acceptance of the voucher as opposed to a food hamper.
- There is a need to facilitate and support beneficiaries to redeem the voucher in store as many struggle with this. This will help to improve redemption rates.
- Having a strong administration team is as important as the distribution and welfare team. Each team is motivated differently and therefore performs well in their area of specialisation. An administration team will also be focussed on the end report. However, this will add to the overall cost of distribution.
- Many NGOs struggle with the strict reporting requirements from donors. A means to balance requirements with capacity should be investigated on a project-by-project basis.

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## CONCLUSION

This additional phase of the food voucher programme was designed as a crisis food relief response to alleviate the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic that have left many South Africans struggling to feed themselves and their families. Through this project, the Fund has helped an additional 10 202 households to buy much needed food and essential supplies and helping them to provide a more enjoyable Christmas for their families and giving them hope for a better new year.

