



Gift of the Givers
FOUNDATION



Project Report – COVID-19 Response 2020

“Best Among People are those who Benefit Mankind”

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Profile: Gift of the Givers

Overview

The Gift of the Givers Foundation is the largest disaster response, non-governmental organisation of African origin on the African continent.

It works to unite people, with a common vision, to make a real and telling difference by serving mankind for the 'Greater Good'.

Assistance is provided unconditionally; assisting the needy, irrespective of human or animal, race, religion, colour, class, political affiliation or geographic location.

Since its inception in 1992, the organisation has been responsible for the delivery of life-saving goods and on-the-ground support for innumerable people, collectively valued at some R2.8 billion, in more than 43 countries across the globe, including South Africa.

Gift of the Givers restores the hope and dignity of the most vulnerable in their time of need, rebuilding prosperous communities and empowering leaders of tomorrow.

What We do

Fast and Active Disaster Response:

Our responses to disasters vary considerably, dependent on prevailing conditions in identified disaster or war zones.

We have the immediate capacity to deliver all the appropriate materials, inclusive of :

- Temporary shelter;
- Bedding and blankets;
- Basic foodstuffs
- Baby provisions;
- Hygiene and dignity packs
- Sibusiso Ready Food Supplement (a high-energy and protein supplement, innovated by Gift of the Givers – and the first of its kind in the world);
- A wide range of medical supplies, medical equipment and ambulances; and
- Generators for emergency power supply.

In addition, we are able to immediately call on professional search and rescue teams and medical specialists, whilst facilitating the evacuation of affected people.

We also undertake the rebuilding and/or rehabilitation of infrastructure, such as homes, schools and medical facilities damaged during crises.

A Passion for Hunger Alleviation:

Hunger is a universal problem.

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In recognition of this, we distribute in excess of 100 000 food parcels annually, prepare and serve hot meals at our own centres, whilst also supporting existing feeding schemes through the provision of thousands of meals on a daily basis.

We further assist in key agricultural projects, supporting subsistence farmers in distress, as well as providing animal feed for needy farmers during crippling drought events.

Committed to the Provision of Water:

Water is a precious and scarce resource and one evermore affected by global climate change.

We have in place a number of water tankers, used for the delivery of water to desperate communities, and actively encourage the harvesting and recycling of water, whilst also establishing desalination treatment plants and providing point-of-use water purification solutions and – as a last resort – go so far as to provide bottled water to critically-affected communities.

We are integrally involved with borehole drilling operations, together with the development of such sites at schools, clinics and other central community points. Our team, headed by a geohydrologist with more than 40 years experience, is responsible for the sighting, drilling, testing, developing and monitoring all our borehole sites on a continuous basis.

Promoting Social Upliftment:

The under-development of many historically disadvantaged communities is regarded as a massive socio-economic problem.

Recognising this, we have developed a series of programmes designed to promote the empowerment and dignity of our young people, including:

- The provision of a range of school supplies for young learners;
- A toll-free telephonic, as well as face-to-face counselling service;
- Life skills training interventions and workshops; and
- Skills development initiatives.

Creating an Environment Conducive to Education:

We contribute towards the creation of an environment conducive to the improved education of the disadvantaged.

We have in place:

A comprehensive bursary programme, providing opportunities for deserving candidates to complete their tertiary education; an education they would have otherwise been denied;

A schools infrastructural development programme, improving – in particular – the quality of school toilets and the provision of potable water within educational institutions; and

A school-level entrepreneurial development programme, Jumpstart, at identified KwaZulu-Natal schools, which is designed to plant the seed of

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entrepreneurship in the minds of Grade 10 and 11 learners, by facilitating their ability to start their own small businesses. Our objective is to engender a high degree of self-belief, giving learners the ability to transform their business ideas into productive business entities and so contribute to the upliftment of their communities. Our intention is to stimulate an entrepreneurial spirit amongst learners in a concerted effort to empower young, aspiring entrepreneurs and to promote the essence of entrepreneurship in the face of growing levels of unemployment.

Contributing to the Healthcare of Communities:

Access to sound healthcare is the right of every citizen.

We have the capacity to contribute meaningfully to the provision of both healthcare facilities and practitioners.

A current key project involves our successful operation of one of the largest hospitals in war-torn Northern Syria. As a consequence, the Geneva-based humanitarian movement, Red Crescent, has entrusted our organisation with responsibility for a second hospital.

We have primary healthcare workers, doctors and mid-wives who spend extensive time in the field in Somalia and we direct a Poor Patient Fund, which covers hospital treatment for patients unable to afford hospital such care in the Middle East.

In addition, we have also been actively involved in:

- Funding certain identified operations;
- Establishing an audiology screening programme at schools in Gauteng and KwaZulu Natal
- The large-scale distribution of wheelchairs.

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Approach to Disaster Response

The COVID-19 pandemic was unlike any other disaster that Gift of the Givers encountered. There were a number of challenges – including:

- Lack of comprehensive information on the (newly discovered) virus
- The speed at which it spreads
- The fact that South Africa began experiencing local spread
- The high rates of HIV and TB amongst our population
- The already overburdened public healthcare facilities
- The panic and fear in the general public – and the spreading of false information
- The treatment protocols requiring a different approach – especially when it comes to infection
- The impact on schools, institutions and public gatherings – and the requirement to catch up on missed syllabus for many pupils
- The services that were rendered via the school – such as the nutrition programme ensuring that kids receive a meal everyday
- The secondary impact on jobs and productivity and the impact it has on already many struggling businesses and employees that may be the sole breadwinners for their families

The address from the President and the measures announced in the speech are a step in the right direction – and should hopefully prevent a full-scale disaster. However, the state, the corporate sector, non-profit organisations and the public as a whole – all had a role to play.

A national plan covering the among other essential aspects: communication and risk awareness; monitoring of new cases and disease spread; controlling the points of entry/exit (land, sea and air); scaling up facilities for testing and treatment – and the influx of patients; disease prevention and control – including the need for specially allocated quarantine facilities for infected patients; had to be managed centrally by the state.

Gift of the Givers Foundation acted in a supporting role by assisting the state healthcare facilities. Given the many unknowns, it was extremely challenging to draw up a plan to address all issues, especially where it required huge financial resources from the state. However, there were general principles that guided our interventions:

1. The need to act on rational and real evidence – not on fear and hype.
2. Given the potential scale of the problem – realistically, it was not possible to assist everyone. We needed to recognize that some people were more at risk than others, especially people who had

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been affected. Resources had to be prioritized appropriately, and the guidelines from the state and the NICD try to take this into account.

3. While the fear was around the COVID-19 strain, the existing healthcare challenges and patients should not be compromised.
4. There was a need to be prepared for different stages of the pandemic, with a large focus on prevention and mitigation, which we hoped would be successful in preventing a full-scale disaster

The intervention of Gift of the Givers was primarily focused in South Africa.

Current Interventions

A detailed report has been prepared and will be made available on request.

Gift of the Givers Covid-19 Summary.

Gift of the Givers Intervention in the Covid-19 challenge has been rapid and decisive:

1. Our primary focus has been the protection of frontline health care workers and health workers in general. In addition to the procurement of one million masks, we have on order or in stock, coveralls, Hazmat suits, reusable and disposable surgical gowns, scrub suits, latex gloves, head covers, shoe covers, goggles, visors, thermal scans and sanitiser.
2. Thus far we have distributed protective supplies to 160 hospitals and clinics nationwide with many more to follow.
3. Fifteen video laryngoscopes for ICU have been bought. The first five have been delivered to Steve Biko, Tshwane General, Charlotte Maxeke, Rahima Moosa and Sebokeng Hospitals.
4. We have been distributing intubox, a special protective box for intubation, designed by Prof Feroza Motara (a Gift of the Givers team member) and her team at Charlotte Maxeke Hospital. Distribution to both public and private sector hospitals is ongoing.
5. We have erected 30 triage tents at various hospitals to screen patients and reduce contamination. Many more requests have been received. Furniture has been provided for some of these tents.
6. A portable ultrasound machine, pulse oximeters, laryngoscopes and medicines for general use to support facilities have been provided.
7. Thirteen Covid-19 testing sites have been set up. Thus far we have screened and tested 5000 patients. Gift of the Givers team members have been actively involved in the testing process.

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8. Gift of the Givers has partnered First Care Courier Pharmacy to provide a mobile Covid-19 testing team that travels distances for mass testing. Our partnership commenced a month ago. The testing team covers parts of Gauteng, Mpumalanga, North West and Limpopo.

9. Gift of the Givers has purchased six ILEX pcr test machines which will be set up in specially designated Covid-19 lab facilities to speed up the testing process. Each machine can produce 4 results in 45 minutes. Dedicated technicians will run these machines. Priority will be given for patients in ICU. We now have a huge interest from medical aid societies, corporate companies and provincial government departments requesting testing of their members and employees. SAPS has already partnered us and we have been testing their members nationally.

10. Gift of the Givers will be supporting the eThekweni Municipality homeless shelter by paying for registered nurses to attend to 2700 individuals. We will provide the relevant medication required.

11. Food intervention is an absolute necessity. The level of hunger is heart rendering. Currently we fund 100 feeding centres and have delivered 70 000 food parcels of our promised 100 000 to hungry families nationwide. We envisage a much greater intervention in these areas in the coming days.

12. Our water tankers deliver 530 000L of water per week in the Eastern Cape. In addition, we have 400 fully functional boreholes drilled over an 18 month period which provide clean drinking water daily.

13. Material masks as well as rolls of material have been donated to us. Various women groups have participated in sewing masks for us. These are being provided to the health department Covid-19 contact tracing teams to hand out to high risk individuals.

14. We have 40 000 maternity and child care packs to be distributed at clinics soon.

15. We have a dedicated Covid-19 toll free line 0800786911 that provides information on testing and other related matters.

16. Our Counselling toll free line 0800786786 provides support on all counselling related matters.

17. Supporting SAPS has become an important consideration seeing that they are high risk with many of them having tested positive. Gift of the Givers has been supplying SAPS headquarters, and multiple divisions of the police services in various regions with protective supplies as well as food and water at checkpoints.

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Recommendations to Parliamentary Portfolio Committee

There are a number of challenges incurred when rolling out aid to communities and the additional issues faced are the growing number of newly unemployed people in the informal sector. The micro-enterprises face closure and their employees find themselves struggling to make ends meet.

Thanks to a long-standing relationship with the South African government and given our track record for aid delivery in South Africa and abroad, Gift of the Givers has not been negatively affected by the Covid-19 lock down restrictions in terms of procuring and delivering aid. However, for the benefit of other organizations in specialist fields and the greater good of fellow South Africans, Gift of the Givers would like to propose the following recommendations.

1. In the face of a global disaster COVID 19, the national Government should consult leading NGO's registered with DSD, for their input and expertise based on their practical know how to establish an emergency response plan tailor-made for the current crisis.
2. The expertise of logistics companies cannot be underestimated, however, the roll out of aid needs a nuanced and personal approach which organisations in the field have honed over an extensive period of time by serving their communities daily, thus earning insight and respect, enabling them to navigate and sufficiently deal with the challenges that arise in volatile situations thus ensuring a timely and efficient delivery.
3. Community and faith based organisations play a pivotal role as a fair and impartial player who are the eyes and ears on the ground and play an integral role in identifying the needs within their communities especially those individuals who may have physical disabilities or other restrictive impairments and those who may have slipped through the gaps and fail to qualify for state aid.
4. In times of disasters at this scale, there is a zeal by NGO's and other stakeholders to "cash in". There should be no objection to this on the proviso that the playing fields are level, and financial and political muscle should not undermine the benevolent intent of the proposed donations. We need a reliable and centrally available database in addition to DSD's database, to verify recipients. Furthermore, NGO's and government stakeholders, e.g. mayoral funds, municipalities, councilors etc. who access state or public based funding in cash or kind, should be compelled to release their vetted figures comprising of recipients of aid and geographical locations of delivered aid. This act of transparency will dispel mistrust and innuendo, and allow other stakeholders to fill in the gaps and prevent double dipping. There is massive competition for funding and through this grant portal only

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vettted NGO's meeting the requirements and complying with grantee standards should be approved for grants.

5. In the event of an extended disaster, highlighted by the Covid-19 pandemic, logistics and movements are challenging and many NGO's have run out of funding. A mechanism needs to be structured and aligned for these NGO's to access emergency funding based on a predetermined criterion.

We understand and emphasize that these are different times. We further acknowledge that hindsight is often the best tutor, however, we are of the opinion that in reacting to this disaster we have "reinvented the wheel" as the facts on the ground bear out by a slow and ponderous response, to food security issues. There was a two week window to plan and execute and the inability to deliver thereafter put a huge strain on under-resourced NGO's, CBO's and faith based organisations who were marginalised and constricted to deliver timeous aid.

Lessons need to be learnt going forward and a more inclusive stakeholder engagement process needs to be realised to enable a more coherent, cohesive and united effort.

Social Media

Follow us on social media for updates on current activities:

- Facebook: @GiftoftheGivers
- Twitter: @GiftoftheGivers
- Instagram: @gift.of.the.givers

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