

# Novartis pledges its support during COVID-19 Pandemic

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Novartis SA has donated R13,3 million to two local NGO's as its contribution towards alleviating the socio-economic pressures currently being experienced by South Africans due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The donation follows a plea by President Cyril Ramaphosa for a multi-stakeholder approach in tackling the challenges that the pandemic has caused.

As the number of positive cases in South Africa, Africa and the rest of the world continue to rise, the rapidly spreading COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the socio-economic climate of many countries and negatively affected individuals, communities and businesses negatively.

In the face of the global crisis, Novartis has set up a COVID-19 Response Fund which will provide USD 20 million in grants to support public health initiatives to help communities manage challenges posed by the pandemic around the world.

There is a dire need of assistance for large amounts of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), across the healthcare sector. Numerous entities are facing challenges surrounding a severe lack of PPE to protect healthcare workers who are in the fore front fighting the pandemic. As an industry player, Novartis has committed to alleviating some of the pressure by donating funds towards purchasing of PPE supplies.

Shelly Horner, Novartis Country President says, "Currently, South Africa has been approved for an equivalent of R13,3 million as part of our local efforts to flatten the COVID-19 curve. Following our stringent due diligence process, including a local task team who form part of an integral approval process, we have partnered with credible, registered NGO's. We identified Feed SA and Gift of the Givers as suitable partners in our contribution towards the reduction of the spread of COVID-19, the protection and support of healthcare workers, the Department of Health (DoH) initiatives and assisting vulnerable individuals in our communities."

FEED SA is an NGO that sets up feeding schemes and community development projects in informal settlements around the country. Their beneficiaries are 100% BEE based, and range from crèches, to after school programmes, community centres, homes for the mentally and physically challenged, hospice, as well as meals for bed ridden and elderly citizens.

With the emergency of Covid-19, Feed SA launched their COVID-19 Action Plan, which is a fundraising campaign, aimed at supporting the most vulnerable members of South African society - people who live in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions, the sick, the elderly and the unemployed.

"During this pandemic, we have been fortunate enough to partner with organizations whose philanthropic activities have aligned with ours, and together we have been able to make a real difference in the lives of some of the most vulnerable people across South Africa. The funds provided are directly impacting peoples' lives and are going a long way to alleviating food insecurity and anxiety for thousands of households. People have received essential aid, allowing them to stay home, isolate effectively, improve their sanitation, and ultimately help manage the spread of the COVID-19 virus," says Genevieve Solomons, Executive Director Feed SA.

Gift of the Givers is a partner to the government's Covid-19 initiative, augmenting public health services by supporting medical professionals with protective wear, supplying relevant essential medical equipment and providing medical consumables to the institutions in urgent need.

“Partnering with organizations such as Novartis will help us in reaching and supporting under privileged communities. South Africans have been given isolation and sanitation guidelines that are aimed at flattening the COVID-19 curve. However, this has also impacted a large majority of the population who are unable to sustain themselves and their families due to financial and practical reasons. Therefore, Gift of the Givers, through private-public partnerships is assisting those who are hit the hardest by the implications of the virus with emergency supplies,” says Dr Imtiaz Sooliman, Gift of the Givers.

Horner concludes, “Partnerships are the most effective way of handling crisis situations of this magnitude. We are proud to have partnered with such committed and experienced NGO’s during this crucial time. Novartis continues to provide societal support through various initiatives across the continent and the world to fight the COVID-19 pandemic during this new era.”

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