



Response of the Catholic Church to the Covid-19 Pandemic in Southern Africa



Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference



Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference

IN MEMORIAM

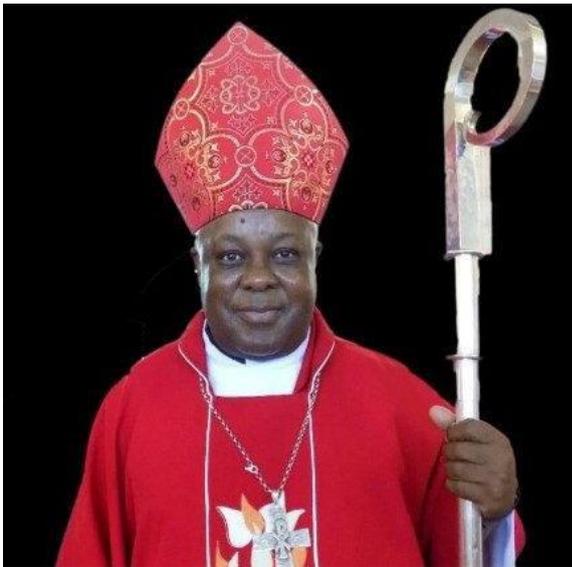


Photo: His Grace Archbishop Abel Gabuza

Born: 23 March 1955, Alexandra

Died: 17 January 2021, Durban

Cause of death: Coronavirus disease 2019

... "the Church of Christ started small in homes not in big structures that we have today. In a way we are going back to our roots because each family is a domestic Church. When we come together on Sundays or any other day we gather as various domestic churches". *Gabuza, Abel (11 April 2020). ["Church in South Africa supports government's COVID-19 efforts, archbishop says"](#). *Crux (Interview)*. Retrieved 6 October 2020.*

Abel Gabuza was born on 23 March 1955 in Alexandra, South Africa. He was one of six children. His father died when he was young and his mother sent him to boarding school. He studied at St. Paul Minor Seminary and St. Peter Major Seminary, both in Hammanskraal, interrupting his studies after the first year to spend a year as a factory worker, and then at the National Major Seminary of St. John Vianney. He was ordained a priest of the Archdiocese of Pretoria on 15 December 1984.

Gabuza worked in parish ministries from 1985 to 1987. He spent the 1987–1988 academic year earning a master's degree in theology at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, California. He returned to teach at the St. Paul Preparatory Seminary in Hammanskraal, serving as Rector of that seminary from 1991 to 1994. He took up parish ministry again in 1995. In 1999 he became Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Pretoria, and in 2009 its Apostolic Administrator.

Pope Benedict XVI appointed Gabuza Bishop of Kimberley on 23 December 2010. He received his episcopal consecration on 19 March 2011 from Jabulani Adatum Nxumalo, Archbishop of Bloemfontein. He became President of the Justice and Peace Commission and Department of Social Action of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference and advocated for safeguarding workers' pension funds from government interference and the protection of miners' health. He also challenged child labour practices and championed efforts to reduce arms trafficking.

On 9 December 2018, Pope Francis named Gabuza Archbishop Coadjutor of Durban. He fulfilled this position until his death in 17 January 2021.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC), within the Department of Social Action, organized a committee to collect the reports of Covid-19 responses from all of the organizations, and dioceses that contributed towards the relief of the thousands of poor, needy, vulnerable and desperate men, women and children as a result of the effects of the pandemic.

We extend our gratitude to His Eminence Cardinal Wilfrid Napier OFM, Archbishop Buti Tlhagale OMI, Bishop Sithembele Sipuka, and Bishop Victor Phalana for their insights, encouragement, support and leadership in undertaking to bring “hope-in-action” in alleviating the devastation brought on through COVID-19. A special mention to Sr. Hermenegild Makoro CPS and her team, for their invaluable assistance and motivation of all the Secretariats during this very critical time of the global pandemic.

We also give thanks and pay tribute to all our donors, benefactors, and Agencies whose service of charity gave selflessly and generously during the lockdown in making a difference to the lives of those in desperate need. All these “partnerships” who, though of many parts, have made it abundantly clear that “the response of the Church not only enabled the most vulnerable to survive physically – it also restored hope, and showed them that God had not abandoned them”.

Pretoria, 4th October 2021.

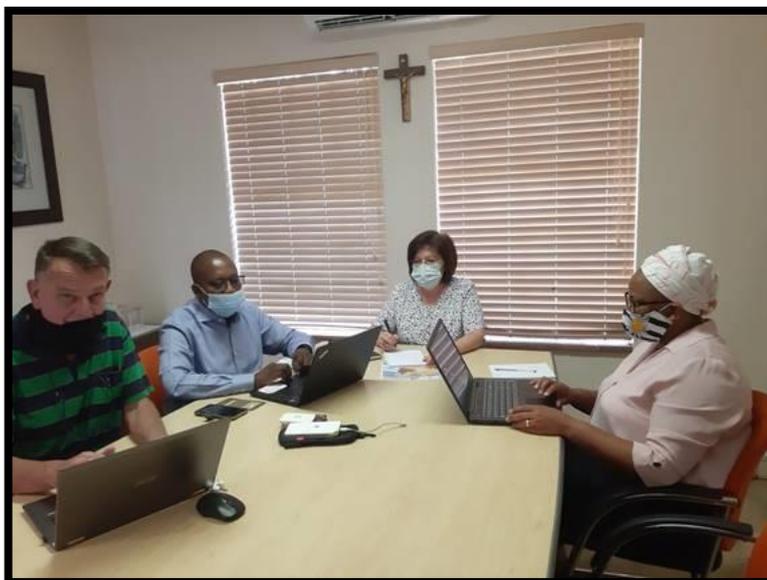


Photo: SACBC committee for compiled report. From the left: Mr Johan Viljoen, Fr Patrick Rakeketsi CSS, Sr Maria de Lurdes Lodi Rissini MSCS, Sr Clementine Sekantsi HFB.



Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference

INTRODUCTION

“And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed.” (Luke 17:26-29). People have often reflected on the words of Jesus describing the end of time and his second coming and have drawn the conclusion that they were living in the end times. But it is difficult to think of a time when this seemed to be more appropriate than now. The suddenness with which it happened resonated with the words of Jesus according to Luke 17. In January 2020,



Bishop Sithembele Sipuka, President of SACBC and Bishop of the Diocese of Mthatha. (Photo: Archive SACBC)

life on the planet carried on as usual. Four months later COVID-19 had spread exponentially. Every country had been affected. In many countries hospitals and mortuaries couldn't cope. Businesses had closed down. The travel industry had ground to a halt. Millions of people were living under lockdown – unable to leave their homes except to buy food or seek medical help. In every country, people had lost their livelihoods or incomes, and were plunged into abject poverty.

South Africa continues to be severely affected. Years of economic decline, and a deteriorating public health system, have made it difficult to mitigate the effects of the pandemic.

The Church responded immediately. Every diocese, parish, religious congregation, and social outreach surveyed their communities, identified those most affected, and provided them with nutrition, medication and counselling. Many, especially migrants and refugees who did not qualify for South African government food parcels or social grants, might not have survived if it wasn't for the support they received from the Church. This book documents in detail the response of the Church.

The Church's response to COVID-19 has been a missionary endeavour, the likes of which has not been seen for many years. In *Evangelium Gaudii*, Pope Francis says that “to evangelize is to make the Kingdom of God present in our world”. And in Romans 14:17 St Paul writes that “The Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating or drinking, but of justice, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit”. In its response to COVID-19, the Church brought about “justice, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” as a visible manifestation of the Kingdom of God, and brought “good news to the poor, proclaimed liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, and release

to the oppressed,” (Luke 4:18). The testimonies of our beneficiaries, many contained in this book, make it clear that the response of the Church not only enabled the most vulnerable to survive physically – it also restored hope, and showed them that God had not abandoned them.

By documenting the work done by the Church and all its constituent parts, this book pays tribute to those who worked tirelessly and joyfully, and who continue to do so while the pandemic still rages.

We also give thanks and pay tribute to our donors and benefactors, who made everything possible.

+ Sithembele Sipuka

President of SACBC and

Bishop of the Diocese of Mthatha

FOREWORD

The world has changed radically since the beginning of 2020. We have seen the fulfilment of St Paul's prophecy in 1 Thessalonians 5:3 "While people are saying, 'Peace and security,' destruction will come upon them suddenly, like labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape." At the dawn of 2020, nobody could have foreseen that, four months later, COVID-19 would have spread to every country on the planet, and that, by the end of the year, millions would be infected, hundreds of thousands would have succumbed to COVID-19, the global economy would have collapsed, and millions would have lost their source of livelihood, facing destitution.

South Africa has been particularly hard hit. Our economy was already in recession before the COVID-19 pandemic. The virus spread rapidly. At one stage our country was one of the ten



Bishop Victor Phalana, Chairperson of the Department of Social Action, Justice and Peace and Bishop of the Diocese of Klerksdorp (Photo: SACBC Archives)

worst affected in the world. The fall-out has been catastrophic. The economy registered its sharpest contraction on record. Millions who depended on the informal/subsistence economy could not earn a living, being confined to their houses because of lockdowns. Many businesses went insolvent and closed down. In towns and cities throughout our country, empty retail- and office space in all commercial and business centres testify to this. The emotional and psychological effects of lockdowns and economic collapse have been profound. Globally there is a loss of hope. Australia reported that more people died from suicide during lockdowns, than from COVID-19. The UK reports that the use of anti-depressant medication has trebled. There are no indications that the situation will improve any time soon. Vaccines have raised hope. But new variants of the virus are appearing in many countries against which the current vaccines could well be ineffective.

The Church responded immediately through its network of dioceses, parishes, religious congregations and social agencies. It identified the most vulnerable in each community, raised resources and provided the most vulnerable with food, clothing, sanitary packs and education about prevention. It prayed for the sick and gave consolation to the bereaved. In following the injunction of Jesus in Matthew 25, to feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, clothe the naked and visit the sick, the Church truly became "a light for the nations" (Isaiah 42:6).

This book gives an overall view of what the Church did to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, reaching the remotest, most isolated and most marginalized communities in South Africa, Botswana and Eswatini. It is an ongoing story that inspires and gives hope, and that deserves to be documented and publicized.

+ Victor Phalana,

Liaison Bishop of the Department of Social Action, Justice and Peace and
Bishop of the Diocese of Klerksdorp



CARITAS SOUTH AFRICA

NPO N. 211-375

Liaison Bishop: His Eminence Cardinal Wilfrid Napier OFM
Chairperson of Caritas SA: Fr Patrick Rakeketsi CSS
Coordinator: Sr Maria de Lurdes Lodi Rissini, MSCS



Source: SACBC Archives

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In December of 2019 the world heard for the first time of an outbreak of COVID-19 in Wuhan, People's Republic of China. COVID-19 was described as an infectious disease caused by the novel Coronavirus. In the time that COVID-19 has been with us, we have learned that this disease spreads extremely quickly from person to person, from country to country. Secondly it has changed the world completely in a very short period and because of its virulence and its ability to cause absolute havoc, it is driving scientists (virologists) from all parts of the world in a race against the clock to develop vaccines to control it and save lives.

Because the Coronavirus has already taken so many lives, and in a matter of weeks and months, it continues to create enormous fear and anxiety. What is particularly frightening is the ease and frequency with which it mutates, so that no sooner is one wave seemingly over only for the next to strike with even greater ferocity.

Pope Francis is one of the people who keeps challenging us to be vigilant, not only for our own safety and security from infection, but especially for that of the poor and the needy. That is why he requested the Dicastery of Human Integral Development, which includes Caritas Internationalis, to build up a worldwide emergency charity response to COVID-19. This explains why all levels of Caritas, (parish, diocesan, national and continental) are being mobilised to bring assistance especially to communities of the poor.

In response Caritas Internationalis has taken the lead and is challenging all Confederations to go beyond fear as they respond to the words of Jesus with practical action: "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink." (Matt 25:3).

We are proud to report in South Africa, (which has been in lockdown since 27 March 2020) that our national body, Caritas South Africa, began immediately to be actively engaged in relief works, especially among migrants, refugees and undocumented people of all kinds.

Much sterling work has been done in very difficult conditions of the hard lockdown, during which we were permitted to leave home only to buy essential foodstuffs, to seek medical attention, to obtain fuel and to access the bank.

Subsequent to that initial lockdown, restrictions have been enforced to address the need. One thing is sure: the lockdown has caused unimaginable hardships everywhere, but particularly in the poorest communities. Even before the lockdown, the South African economy was already in dire straits, having contracted for two quarters in a row, resulting in approximately 30% of the workforce unemployed and close to a dip into recession.

To mitigate the effects of COVID-19, the President announced a ZAR 800 billion (Euro 40 billion) relief and rescue package. This included the distribution of food parcels to the country's poorest households, as well as a monthly welfare grant of R350.00 per month. Unfortunately, these benefits were only available to the documented South African citizens, permanent residents and documented refugees, despite the fact that the country is home to more than five million foreign nationals, over a million of them refugees, asylum seekers, and undocumented people – who are the most vulnerable and indigent.

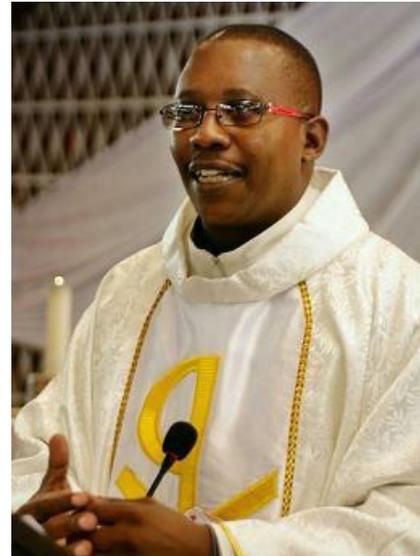
+ His Eminence Cardinal Wilfrid Napier OFM

SACBC Liaison Bishop and President of Caritas South Africa.

Letter of Chairperson: Fr. Patrick Rakeketsi CSS

COVID-19 has brought us to realise the deep meaning of the vision of the new SACBC Pastoral Plan: “Evangelising Community, serving God, Humanity and all Creation.” The evangelising mission of the Church was brought to the fore through charity during this pandemic.

From the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa, Caritas South Africa has been engaging with all the Diocesan Caritas structures, to determine which sector of the population is most vulnerable. Most South African nationals were able to access food parcels and social grants from the South African government, however it was agreed that migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented people were the most vulnerable and disadvantaged by the current situation.



Source: SACBC – Communications

Pope Benedict writes in *Deus Caritas Est*: “The Church’s deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God (*kerygma-martyria*), celebrating the sacraments (*leitourgia*) and exercising the ministry of charity (*diakonia*). These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable.”

Since “the service of charity is a constitutive element of the Church’s mission and an indispensable expression of her very being.” our bishops, through various platforms of charity within the SACBC region embarked on this mission of charity during the pandemic.

It was a mission accomplished with passion, commitment and a sense of being children of the same Father, regardless of the provenance of each beneficiary.

We therefore extend our deepest gratitude to all who opened their hands of generosity to help those in need, without expecting anything in return.

Fr. Patrick Rakeketsi CSS

Chairperson of Caritas South Africa.

CARITAS SOUTH AFRICA – COVID-19 RESPONSE

The economic collapse caused by COVID-19 continues to affect all the poor communities, especially the migrants, refugees and undocumented people. According to government statistics of October 2020, more than three million people in South Africa have lost their jobs. Most of the poor communities, the migrants, refugees and undocumented people generate income from the informal economy, which shut down completely during lockdown. Foreign nationals and undocumented people have been excluded from social assistance by the SA government, which was only intended for SA citizens, and continue to rely on the Church's support for food relief, clothes, sanitary products, etc. The payment of rent and acquisition of food was a real challenge. Women and children were most affected.

Pope Francis in *Urbi et Orbi* on the 12th of April 2020 said, "The crisis we are facing should not make us forget the many other crises that bring suffering to so many people." We are indeed in the middle of a pandemic which is a big global crisis but the Pope reminds us that while trying to find ways to combat this pandemic, we should be aware that it is not the only crisis we are facing. Pope Francis has the poor and the marginalized at his heart and he invites the Church to be active in this ministry. He challenges us to be a caring Church. Indeed, the Church in Southern Africa through the services of Caritas and Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees demonstrated its care among the less fortunate and affected during the pandemic of COVID-19.



Source: Caritas South Africa and SACBC Migrants and Refugees Office

Caritas South Africa, the Arch/Diocesan Caritas and the Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees Offices coordinated the response to assist the poor and the vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the end of March 2020 when the President of the Republic of South Africa announced the lockdown, the National Office of Caritas South Africa made a quick survey to all dioceses to have information of the most vulnerable and needy. Coming face to face with the reality all over the country, Caritas South Africa applied for an Emergency Grant which was approved and implemented in six arch/dioceses for three months serving a total of 8 172 families and 12 485 indirectly. People from 29 countries on the African Continent were assisted.

Some situations in the country during the implementation of this project:

Scalabrini Centre & the court case: The Scalabrini Centre in Cape Town took the government of South Africa to Court for excluding asylum seekers and special permit holders in the Social Relief of Distress Grant. The High Court on 18 June 2020 ordered that asylum seekers with valid documents and special permit holders from Angola, Lesotho and Zimbabwe, be included in the Social Relief of Distress Grant. This was a great win by the arm of the Church in advocating for the vulnerable people.

Relaxation of ports of entry during COVID-19: South Africa has 72 designated ports of entry. During the lockdown the movement of people was limited, and the smaller borders remained closed. Only people who obtained special permits from the Home Affairs ministry were allowed to cross for emergencies and for repatriation. This impacted negatively on the lives of migrants from the neighbouring countries because many of them depend on the support from their loved ones in South Africa and some of them resorted to illegal crossing (which put their lives in danger). South Africa erected a fence to prevent people crossing the border to and from Zimbabwe. Unfortunately, it was a wasted expenditure because it was vandalized. However, people continued to cross illegally both from Lesotho across the Caledon River as well as from Mozambique and Eswatini.

Developments in the political situation and government activity towards aid agencies:

SACBC calls for resistance to corruption: Bishop Sitembele Sipuka (SACBC President) called all South Africans to resist a culture of corruption. His article published at the end of August 2020, describes the situation that all of us are experiencing whilst living in South Africa. The article may be viewed at www.sacbc.org.za.

Justice and Peace calls for an end to gender-based violence and femicide: The Justice and Peace Commission advocated to combat gender-based violence and femicide especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. They encourage men to be positive role models to young boys and mentor and guide them in their journey to adulthood. Men and boys are educated about the impact of abuse on the victims and families. Men and boys are taught to resolve conflict without resorting to violence or other abusive behaviour.

The South African Council of Churches (SACC) have also addressed the issue of corruption and called on national church leaders to dedicate the month of September 2020 to a campaign against "COVID-19 Corruption".

Gauteng Township Economic Development Bill: There is great concern about the Gauteng Township Economic Development Bill, which was by then under discussion. The bill sought to prohibit migrants and asylum seekers from conducting businesses in Gauteng's townships. Many migrants and refugees, especially Somalis and Ethiopians earned their living from running small businesses in Gauteng's townships. This bill would deprive them from earning their livelihoods and would also impact negatively on township residents who rely on the shops run by the non-SA nationals in townships for their provisions.

#PutSouthAfricansFirst: A new anti-foreigner group had emerged called *#PutSouthAfricansFirst*. It started in April 2020 (during the beginning of strict lockdown) and sparked a lot of discussion in the media. Judging by the quality of its promotional material, the group appeared to be well funded. It was tapping into the current national concern about gender-based violence to promote its aims.

From the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa, Caritas South Africa has been engaging with all the Diocesan Caritas structures to determine the challenges of Diocesan Caritas due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Most South African nationals were able to access food parcels and social grants from the South African government. However, it was agreed that migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented people were the most vulnerable and disadvantaged as a result of the current situation.

The result of the consultation with diocesan Caritas, six arch/dioceses (seven organizations working directly with Migrants and Refugees Programmes) identified where the migrants, refugees, displaced persons and undocumented populations were the most indigent and vulnerable during this pandemic period. The approved fund assisted Caritas South Africa, Caritas Durban, Caritas Aliwal North, Caritas Port Elizabeth, Bienvenu Shelter for Refugee Women and their children in the Archdiocese of Johannesburg, Catholic Shelter for Women in Musina in the Diocese of Tzaneen, Caritas Rustenburg and Pastoral Care for Migrants & Refugees in the Archdiocese of Johannesburg. These seven organizations are the sub-grant partners for the implementation of the "Emergency Project of Caritas South Africa COVID-19 Response". Caritas SA assisted each partner closely, with the aim of providing a better understanding of the overall project and the requirements needed during the implementation of this project and the monitoring and evaluation needed for the reports.

Short stories of the beneficiaries telling how they benefitted from the assistance provided by the Church through the organizations:

- I am Mr. MN, a married man and a father of three children. I work as security guard. Since the beginning of the lockdown, I have been struggling to feed my children because my last salary was paid in March. The financial situation of my family was worsened when my wife gave birth at a private hospital due to COVID-19. The grant of food vouchers that Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees distributed was like a breath of fresh air in my family because I was again able to buy the essential foods for my family. Thank you so much to Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees and Caritas for your support.
- My name is NK, a father of nine children. With a big family like mine, it is not easy to have enough financial resources when you are an asylum seeker in South Africa. I am unemployed, but sometimes I have piece jobs here and there. Due to COVID-19, life is hard for me. It pains me as a father to see my children crying of hunger. Through Facebook, I knew that Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees of the Archdiocese of Johannesburg is assisting vulnerable migrants and refugees. I took the opportunity to call the office and I was assisted with a food

voucher that helped me to put food on the table for my family. May God bless the Pastoral Care and its sponsors for supporting me and my family with food.

- My name is SB: I am a street vendor. As a single mother, I usually sell items such as second-hand clothes and shoes that I collect from Pastoral Care in order to sustain my family. With the lockdown, it was almost impossible for me to bring food to the table. We did not know where we could find food during this period. The voucher and the sanitizer we received from Pastoral Care came at the right time. Now my children can smile again as they have something to eat all these days. Thank you for this gesture and may God bless all those who contributed to make this possible.
- Mrs B - country of origin DRC: When I received the vouchers, I was so happy, I wondered where I would get money to buy bread. Receiving the vouchers was a lifeline for me. I went, for the first time, to a food store and could use a shopping trolley and get what I needed. I felt so proud like everyone else in the shop. I was able to hold my head high when I got to the counter as I could pay for my food. God bless you.
- Mrs M - country of origin Zimbabwe: As a student from Baking, it has been very tough for me, as before the COVID-19 I was able to make scones and fat cakes to sell every day. This money gave me enough to pay rent and feed myself and three children. When we hit lockdown, I was crying, as now how can I survive. When I received my food parcel, it was such a happy day for me. My prayers had been answered. I decided that with the items of flour and sugar, I would be able to use them to bake again and then sell. This gave me hope as I could then provide, with my small money, food for my children. Thank you.
- Mrs C - country of origin Angola: I was praying, praying every day for a miracle, just for me to feed my six children. They were going to bed hungry and all I could do was give them hot water with sugar. This virus has taken everything away from me and my family. When I received the phone call to come and collect vouchers, my prayers were answered. I went straight to the shop and was able to get the food I needed. That evening I knew that as a family we could all eat together again as we were blessed. My children would not go to bed hungry which made me feel proud as a mother.
- Mr P - country of origin DRC: We could only get the testimony from Mr P when we called him back. The day he received the vouchers, he just ran. We were concerned if he was OK and contacted him afterwards.
He said that he was so happy and thankful, but "I just ran as fast as I could because I was so hungry and went straight to buy food." He had not eaten in three days. This is the reality.
- Mrs W - country of origin Zimbabwe - Bienvenu Shelter resident: I was living in a shack, scared, worrying how I could feed my two girls and get them clothes as the ones they were wearing were so worn and tattered. Bienvenu Shelter saved us. I have been living here for five months and my stress has gone. My children are fed healthy meals, we are all taken care of and I don't have to worry about clothes as now my children can dress nicely and be warm during this winter. I have another baby on the way and staff are really helping me and making sure I am taking care of myself. We all get the vitamins we need and healthy snacks. My smallest child who is nearly five has TB in her spine and we are waiting for her to have the operation. I have been blessed as they all help me and I am able to get to the hospital without worrying about how I can pay for transport. God bless you all.

- Aliwal North: About 50 beneficiaries testified that they are living in big families of 9-10 members in one household (the African concept of family). They shared three blankets and they got very cold during the night. Another family tried to make fire in their shack at night because they struggled to sleep due to the cold weather and unfortunately the shack burned down with everything inside.
- Ms M&M from Ethiopia: I came to South Africa with my husband. We have two children. We have no job and stay with friends. We currently struggle with feeding our family and as a foreign national it is very difficult to get a job. The Church is the only hope we have at the moment. The Church is helping us with food parcels like Jesus looking after people of God. Our family is very thankful. God bless the Catholic Church.
- Mr MK from Mozambique: The reason I came to South Africa was to look for a job. Currently challenges I experience are that I cannot move freely because of the COVID-19 pandemic. If I cannot get a piece job, I cannot have money to buy food for my family. I am so happy that the Catholic Church gave me food parcels, health packs and vouchers to buy winter clothes for my children. At least my family will have nice meal for a change. Thank you very much Catholic Church. We always feel at home when we come here at the Church.
- Mr IM from Zimbabwe: I came to South Africa in 2008. I came to South Africa to look for work. There is no work in Zimbabwe, the economy has gone down and we are suffering that side. Here in South Africa, it is better. The challenges are that there are not enough jobs. As you can see, I am happy, there is no one who can give you things (food parcels). You can't find these things from the streets tomorrow or somewhere else. I just want to say thanks to the Roman Catholic Church. Thank you very much.

Coordination:

The national office of Caritas South Africa organized various virtual meetings preparing for the implementation of the project. They had weekly meetings with their staff and volunteers for an ongoing evaluation to mitigate against any challenge they encountered. Coordinators followed up with staff and volunteers and had oversight measures to make sure that goods were given to intended beneficiaries. Arch/bishops, priests and coordinators worked together as a team. There was a positive spirit among all and the willingness to serve. There was a spirit of selflessness among the coordinators and their teams, they were quick to learn the contingency measures put in place by the World Health Organization, the South African Government and the SACBC so as to transmit the information to the beneficiaries. All the sub-grant partners worked tirelessly as agents of hope, they made people aware of the importance of washing their hands, putting on face masks and keeping social distance. We could also see how all arch/bishops were dedicated to serve and to raise awareness of how to be protected and protect others. The beneficiaries were happy and shed tears of joy to receive aid that answered their basic needs.

The volunteers could not conduct home visits as per the initial plan due to the measures of the lockdown and for the high risk of contamination. The distribution sites that were sanitised, fumigated and complied with the health regulations were used as the meeting spots. During distribution the beneficiaries signed as they received goods. All the signed documents were collected, submitted to the coordinators and in turn submitted to the national office of Caritas South Africa.

Diocese of Aliwal North: His Lordship Bishop Joseph Kizito

Caritas Aliwal North Coordinator: Ms. Refiloe Mothabeng

Number of Volunteers: 512. No stipend provided by the diocese. The 272 care workers that are contracted by Department of Public Works get a stipend while working for the COVID-19 Awareness Campaign as frontrunners.

Networking Partners: Department of Public Works and Council of Churches.

The Diocese of Aliwal North is situated in the town of Aliwal North, in the Eastern Cape Province. The COVID-19 response was mainly undertaken and coordinated by Caritas Aliwal North together with the office of the Bishop of Aliwal North.

2.1 - Developed projects in response to COVID-19

2.1.1 Awareness in partnership with the Department of Public Works

The Department of Public Works has contracted the youth from the Diocese of Aliwal North to assist as frontliners in the COVID-19 Awareness Campaign in and around the diocese. 272 Care workers were contracted for eight months assisting the Department of Health, Department of Education, Post Office and Municipality in monitoring funerals and making sure that people comply with the COVID-19 regulations in all the mentioned departments or organisations. Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) were provided to make sure that all involved were safe from contracting the virus.



Photo: Care workers for the awareness campaign.

2.1.2 School uniforms for stateless children



Photo: His Lordship Bishop Kizito, Caritas Coord. Ms. Refiloe and children receiving school uniform.

This project of Caritas Aliwal North was funded by the office of the Apostolic Nuncio to South Africa, to assist the stateless children with school uniforms. The funding was limited and only covered school shoes which were given to the beneficiaries on the 106th World Day of Migrants and Refugees. This gift was an encouragement for the stateless children to continue going to school and be hopeful about their future.

2.1.3 Sewing Machines for the caregivers to the elderly



Photo: Caritas coordinator Ms. Refiloe distributing the sewing machines.

As the country went into lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Caritas Aliwal North made a survey of the families in order to find out who was the most affected. Caritas Aliwal found that their caregivers to the elderly were most frustrated because they were advised to stay home and take extra precaution due to the vulnerable age of their charges.

Caritas Aliwal North provided 20 sewing machines to the ones that were already skilled in sewing. The machines helped them to generate income for their families and keep busy in the comfort of their homes. They felt appreciated and

cared for by Caritas. They expressed their gratitude to Caritas Aliwal North for providing the machines and for their concern.

2.1.4 Emergency project during the COVID-19 pandemic (three months)

Sub-grant partner with Caritas South Africa.

Caritas Aliwal North was the sub-grant partner of Caritas South Africa to roll out a three-month project that was aimed at assisting migrants, refugees and undocumented people left out of the government grant during the COVID-19 pandemic. The project especially assisted stateless children, 205 families with food parcels, 375 families with sanitizers and 333 families with winter clothes and blankets. The families were grateful and appreciated the assistance received during the cold winter in Aliwal North. The bishop of Aliwal North, Bishop Joe Kizito worked closely with Caritas Aliwal North. He encouraged them, prayed with and for them and even went with them to distribute aid and educate the communities about COVID-19. This was a testimony of the living Christ.



Photos: Ms. Refiloe, coordinator of Caritas Aliwal North with Bishop Joe Kizito & some stateless children. Bishop Kizito teaching the children how to wear the masks.

Archdiocese of Cape Town: His Grace, Archbishop Stephen Brislin
His Lordship Auxiliary Bishop Sylvester David OMI

Caritas Coordinator: Fr Paul Taylor

The Archdiocese of Cape Town is situated in the Western Cape Province in the southern extremity of the African continent. The provincial capital is Cape Town and it is also the country's legislative capital. The COVID-19 response was undertaken and coordinated mainly by Caritas Cape Town, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and the office of the Archdiocese.

Rev. Bishop Sylvester OMI reported that with the lockdown restrictions, the most viable form of ministry was to feed the hungry. The St Vincent de Paul branches in the parishes within the Archdiocese of Cape Town provided soup kitchens. He said that the migrants and refugees were also included in the parish structures and outreach programmes. Overarching all the initiatives was the effort of the team constituted by the archbishop to feed the poor. They gave out several thousand food parcels and also vouchers to those living in outlying areas.

Bishop Sylvester OMI also highlighted the good working relationship between the Western Cape government and the faith-based organizations in the province. He praised the Western Cape government as well as the people of goodwill who supported the poor financially and with kindness.



Photo: The volunteers delivering vouchers to assist families with food



Photo: Food parcels packed and ready to deliver to the poor.

Diocese of Dundee: His Lordship, Bishop Graham Rose

Caritas Coordinator: Mr. Nduduzo Shandu

Chaplain to Caritas: Fr Gerard Gostling (until 25th October 2020)

Networking Partners: Department of Health. Religious Congregations, Sodalities, Youth, St Vincent dePaul, etc.

Dundee is situated in a valley of the Biggarsberg Mountains in Kwazulu Natal. It is a coal mining area. The COVID-19 response was undertaken and coordinated mainly by Caritas Dundee, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and the Dominican Sisters of Montebello.

Caritas Dundee kept active throughout the lockdown. They obtained a permit as essential services from the government that allowed them to travel throughout the diocese to serve the poor. Mr Shandu and Fr Gerald coordinated the work of all the projects throughout the diocese and worked well with all the project facilitators and stakeholders.

During the lockdown they published a weekly newsletter that they named *The Gospel of the Lockdown*. In the newsletter they highlighted all the projects happening in the diocese during lockdown and the aim was to bring hope to all the people of God. St Vincent de Paul and the Dominican Sisters were a pillar of strength as they continuously gave food to those in need. The coordinator organized a volunteering group among the youth to assist people to apply for government emergency funding, social grants and the unemployment insurance fund (UIF). The homebased care staff and volunteer workers were assisting the Department of Health to screen for COVID-19 all around Dundee.

The Diocese of Dundee / Caritas received funding from Germany that was divided among four deaneries to assist with food parcels. They have supplied masks to different groups and assisted the community in raising awareness and containing the spread of the virus. They distributed food to orphans and vulnerable children, the elderly and poor households.



Photo: Sister Sindi is the community leader. Fr Gerald Gostling is visiting.



Photo: Father Musa Mncwango (Maria Consolata Newcastle) and Nduduzo Shandu making sandwiches and then offering them in the post office queue.



ARCHDIOCESE OF DURBAN

"I am my Brother and Sister's Keeper"

Archdiocese of Durban: His Eminence, Cardinal Wilfrid Napier OFM

His Grace, the late Co-Adjutor Archbishop Abel Gabuza

Caritas Coordinator: Mr. Zibukele Mqadi

Chaplain to Caritas: Fr. Zakhele Nzama

Networking Partners: KwaZulu Natal Council of Churches (KZNCC)

Durban is located on the east coast of South Africa, looking out upon the Indian Ocean. The city lies at the mouth of the Umgeni River, which demarcates parts of Durban's northern city limit, while other sections of the river flow through the city itself. It is deemed to be one of the fastest growing cities in the world. The Archdiocese of Durban is comprised of two big cities: Durban and Pietermaritzburg.

The COVID-19 response was undertaken and coordinated mainly by Caritas Durban, Pastoral Care for Migrants & Refugees and the KwaZulu-Natal Council of Churches. Cardinal Napier (the president of Caritas South Africa and Caritas Durban) requested permits for the essential service providers in his archdiocese so that they could move easily to assist the poor and affected people in their parishes and communities. Caritas Durban offered online counselling as it was not possible to reach people physically. They assisted homeless people to reunite with their families and offered support so that they would not return to the streets after the lockdown period.

The KwaZulu Natal Council of Churches met and organized a donation from each church and together were able to assist thousands of desperate families with food parcel, clothes, counselling, shelter for homeless people etc. His Eminence Cardinal Napier, president of Caritas SA and Caritas Durban was part of the KZN Council of Churches Committee.



Photo: Caritas Durban preparing food parcel.



Photo: His Eminence Cardinal W. Napier with volunteers supporting Caritas team.

Caritas Durban worked together with Pastoral Care for Refugees and Migrants in the archdiocese to answer to the immediate needs of the beneficiaries. The project of three months was able to assist 800 families with food parcels, 1 048 with sanitizers and 1 168 with winter clothes and blankets. They have a good working relationship and shared resources with the KwaZulu Natal Council of Churches in order to reach out to the needy families affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in the KwaZulu Natal Province.

Diocese of Eshowe: His Lordship, Bishop Thaddeus Xolelo Kumalo
(Transferred to Witbank in February 2021. Cardinal Wilfrid Napier OFM is the current Apostolic Administrator)

Coordinator: Mr. Mduduzi Nzuza

Team: Ms. Dineo and Nhlanhla Majози

Projects: Sewing, Gardening, Beadwork and Early Childhood Development (ECD)

Networking Partners: Yebo Zululand Initiative, German Government

Eshowe is one of the dioceses of the Durban Metropolitan in KwaZulu Natal. It is situated in the northern part of the province and it is mostly rural. The diocese is divided into four deaneries where each deanery has about six or eight parishes with their respective small Christian communities.

The COVID-19 response was undertaken and coordinated mainly by Caritas Eshowe. The unemployment rate is extremely high in Eshowe which leads to a high rate of migration and dependency on government social grants and or assistance from the Church. The biggest challenge reported by the coordinator is poverty, hunger and malnutrition. Family life is affected by the migration of people into big cities with the hope to get employment and send remittances back. Very often the family that migrates is not able to send economic support home due to the high level of unemployment in the country.

The Eshowe Diocesan Development wing acts as Caritas for the diocese and all the charitable outreach is done through this office. They have a garden near their offices which serves as a demonstration field for their agricultural projects.



Photos: Caritas Eshowe providing food to the poor. The vegetables are cultivated by the Church's project.



Caritas Eshowe supplied masks to the less fortunate individuals whilst selling others at an affordable price. They managed to give food parcels through their two Early Childhood Development Centres. Caritas Eshowe, through the assistance of the funders, managed to distribute food parcels in different struggling communities.

Vicariate of Ingwavuma: His Lordship, Bishop Mandla Jwara CMM

Coordinator: Mr. Mduduzi Gumede

Networking Partners: SANDF - The South African National Defence Force

The Vicariate of Ingwavuma is within the Umkhanyakude District in KwaZulu Natal stretching from the Umfolozi River in the South and Southwest bordering the Eshowe diocese, Ubombo Mountains in Northwest bordering Eswatini, Usuthu River in the North bordering Mozambique and the Indian Ocean in the East.

The COVID-19 response was undertaken and coordinated mainly by Caritas Ingwavuma.

Ingwavuma Caritas is registered as an NPO at the Department of Social Development and is structuring the activities within the diocese. The Caritas team works hand in hand with the local communities and with the assistance of the local communities.



Photo: Two blind brothers were assisted.



Photo: Families assisted with food parcels.

Ingwavuma Caritas partnered with the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) to build a house for a family of two blind men. They also gave the family groceries because they were struggling. Different parishes within the vicariate organised food parcels and distributed them among struggling people.

We are thankful for the initiative of the Ingwavuma Caritas team, the SANDF, the local community and His Lordship, Bishop Mandla Jwara CMM for their big hearts in serving the poor and needy in their diocese especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. May God bless!

Diocese of Klerksdorp: His Lordship, Bishop Victor Phalana

Coordinator and Chaplain of Caritas: Fr Bernard Sangwa

Secretary: Ms. Dineo Ralenkoane

Networking Partners: Caritas Poland, FIDESCO and Caritas Hong Kong, Overland Wholesaler, SACBC Justice & Peace Commission, Food Lovers, UN Women, individual parishioners.

Klerksdorp is situated in the North West Province. It is a mining area that attracts people for employment especially from the neighbouring countries. It is also a crop and animal farming area. The COVID-19 response was undertaken and coordinated mainly by Caritas Klerksdorp and the SACBC Justice & Peace Commission.



Photo: His Lordship Bishop Phalana, volunteers and community.

With the support of His Lordship, Bishop Phalana, Caritas Klerksdorp formed a COVID-19 team just after lockdown to determine how best they could respond to the needs of the vulnerable people during the COVID-19 pandemic in their territory. They were able to organize a strong team of about 20 volunteers.

When the president of South Africa announced Level 3, Caritas Klerksdorp with the support of different donors managed to buy Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for 30 parishes.

- Overland Wholesaler donated more than 1 000 food parcels and also offered transport for delivery of food parcels around the diocese. The food parcels were shared among four deaneries.
- Food Lovers donated 60 vegetable packs.
- Generous individuals donated money and clothing.
- Distribution of 200 food parcels from the UN to three home-based care facilities and other beneficiaries from the neglected farms.
- Donation from Caritas Poland, FIDESCO and Caritas Hong Kong, which helped to buy more food parcels, sanitizers, and the drilling of a borehole for the Caritas garden.

Many households benefited from the donations and all were very grateful to Caritas Klerksdorp for the support and care. Gratitude goes to the Caritas Team, the bishop, volunteers and donors. May God bless all.



**Caritas
Cares**

DIOCESE OF KOKSTAD

Diocese of Kokstad: His Lordship, Bishop Zolile Mpambani SCJ (since then transferred to Bloemfontein)

Caritas Coordinator: Nosisa Ngwadla

Networking Partners: Shoprite, Parish Garden project

Kokstad is a town in the Harry Gwala District Municipality of KwaZulu-Natal Province. The town is built on the outer slopes of the Drakensberg Mountains. It is a centre for cheese and other dairy products.

Kokstad diocese has 16 parishes with about 74 000 Catholics. When the COVID-19 pandemic was declared as a state of national disaster in South Africa on 23 March 2020 it brought fear and uneasiness to the communities. Despite the challenges the diocese was able to respond to the needs of the poor and vulnerable people of their territory. The people who benefitted were unemployed people especially youth, self-employed people like hawkers who could not sell due to lockdown restrictions, orphans and vulnerable children, the sick on chronic medication and the older persons who did not receive social grants and were raising grandchildren without birth certificates.

Various forms of help and activities were conducted:

- Shoprite mobile soup kitchen which served bread and soup to 561 community members.
- Number of individuals benefitted from soup kitchen: 578
- Number of families that received blankets and household items: 50
- Priests were supported with cleaning and laundry services since other parishes were not able to sustain helpers due to lack of finances.
- Empowering community members on how to apply for the R350 social relief grant.
- Mobilising people to get access to the government's food parcels.



Photo: Supporting families by providing vegetables from the parish garden project. New garden project supporting soup kitchen for 17 children.



Photo: Distribution of food parcels to families.



Photo: Families choosing second-hand clothes.



Photos: Providing food parcels to 297 poor families within the diocese.

Diocese of Kroonstad: His Lordship, Bishop Peter Holiday

Caritas Coordinator: Fr Kris Aneke MSP

Caritas project Manager: Sr. Obehi Ogbeide, SND

Organization Capacity: 52 caregivers (48 volunteers get stipends), seven fulltime employed staff and eight board members.

Scope: 21 catchment areas in two districts of the diocese (Fezile Dabi and Lejweleputswa).

Networking Partnerships: Departments of Social Development, Health and Agriculture. National Lottery Commission (NLC), Misesan Cara, Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC), Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and local businesses.

Kroonstad diocese is situated in the northern Free State. The Catholic diocese includes Welkom which is the second largest city in the Free State. Maokeng is an area within Kroonstad and is occasionally used as a synonym for the name of the town. The economy is completely dependent on gold mining. Despite the closure of many gold mines, the area continues to attract large numbers of migrants from Lesotho, Mozambique and other parts of South Africa. Migrants come in search of work at the gold mines, unable to find work, they stay on in the burgeoning informal settlements. There are high unemployment rates, high HIV infection rates, high death rates due to mining related diseases (TB) and the area is plagued by constant droughts and severe winters.

Caritas Kroonstad COVID-19 response

Caritas Kroonstad was proactive and obtained a permit to move around during the lockdown as frontrunners. Caritas Kroonstad received financial support from Misesan Cara, NLC, SACBC and individuals to purchase food and hygiene material for 1 800 vulnerable households. Additional food parcels were received from the Pride maize milling company, CRS and local businesses for 1 300 families. SACBC Justice & Peace Office facilitated the donation of e'Pap for 1 205 migrants and child headed households and PPE for 300 community homebased caregivers, teachers, priests and funeral ministers.



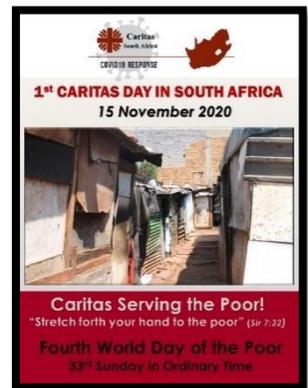


Photos: Caritas Kroonstad distributing food to families.

Caritas Kroonstad worked hard during the lockdown giving relief packages to vulnerable families. They have put in a well-coordinated effort from the priests and the parishioners as their Bishop, His Lordship Bishop Peter Holiday called for people to open their hearts to feed the poor and the vulnerable during this challenging time.

CELEBRATING THE 1ST CARITAS DAY IN SOUTH AFRICA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN THE DIOCESE OF KROONSTAD.

The Diocese of Kroonstad celebrated the first ever Caritas Day on Saturday 14 and Friday 20 November 2020. On 14 November, the Caritas office together with board members and caregivers reached out to 200 poor and elderly persons living in Marabastad (a very poor location) in Maokeng. These elderly men and women from the age of 60 years and above were brought to the diocesan Caritas office situated in the premises of St. Peter Claver parish, Seisoville, Kroonstad. They were fed with a delicious decent cooked meal and afterwards, were entertained with music.



Caritas Kroonstad has 52 home-based caregivers, 680 HIV and TB patients, 1 470 households in the foodsecurity project and 21 after-school drop-in-centres for 2 605 orphans and vulnerable children (OVC).

Number of families benefitted: 4,805 families.



DIOCESE OF MTHATHA CATHOLIC DEVELOPMENT CENTRE (*Caritas*)

Diocese of Mthatha: His Lordship, Bishop Sithembele Sipuka

Coordinator: Thembekile Kanise

Networking Partners: Department of Social Development (DSD), National Development Agency (NDA), Ikhala Trust

Mthatha is situated in the Eastern Cape. It falls under the OR Tambo District Municipality which is the poorest district in the Eastern Cape in terms of all poverty measures. Mthatha has the lowest human development index and the highest poverty gap in the Eastern Cape.

Caritas Mthatha still has to be registered. At the moment Caritas Mthatha is running under the name of the Catholic Development Centre. During the COVID-19 pandemic (since March 2020) they have provided food parcels to 390 families, 40 of these were distributed through the central deanery and others distributed directly by Caritas Mthatha. Those who received were in Nyandeni Local Municipality, KSD Local Municipality and Mhlontlo Local Municipality. Caritas gave food parcels to some families outside the Diocese of Mthatha at the request of funders. They gave food to families in Ingquza Hill Municipality and Ngqamakwe. The funds to purchase food parcels and soup were received from the Ikhala Trust based in Port Elizabeth and the Eastern Cape Department of Social Development.



Photo: *Volunteers ready to assist the community to prevent the spreading of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

Ten volunteers were identified to support families with applying for COVID-19 social relief of distress (SRD) grants. The grant is given to every South African who is over 18 years, unemployed and not a recipient of any form of government grant. The introduction of this grant has challenged the Department of Social Development, the South African Social Security Agency and the Post Office as huge numbers of South Africans registered, thus easily breaking COVID-19 safety protocols. The ten volunteers have assisted with registration for the grant, provided follow-up support, and assisted with adherence to COVID-19 safety protocols. The National Development Agency (NDA) has funded the programme which aimed to end in January 2021.

DIOCESE OF OUDTSHOORN

Diocese of Oudtshoorn: His Lordship, Bishop Noel Rucastle

Contact Person: Fr John Atkinson

Networking Partners: All charity organizations within the diocese.

Oudtshoorn is the “ostrich capital of the world”. It is a town situated in the Karoo region of the Western Cape Province of South Africa. The town’s economy is primarily reliant on the ostrich farming and tourism industries. Oudtshoorn is home to the world’s largest ostrich population with a number of specialised ostrich breeding farms.

Caritas Oudtshoorn in partnership with all the charity organizations within the diocese worked hard to feed the people. Food was the biggest need during the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. St Vincent de Paul mobilized and distributed food aid throughout the diocese. The Society of St Vincent de Paul reported that parishioners were most generous during the lockdown period and they received a number of substantial individual contributions during the last few months. This enabled St Vincent de Paul to be more generous with the contents of the food parcels in particular. They provided food to the homes for the aged, early childhood development centres, soup kitchens and to individual families in need. Some parishioners donated clothes and blankets that were also distributed. The beneficiaries were happy and very grateful.

St Anthony’s Church Sedgefield

Nearly all the adult residents in the area work casually and are paid weekly or daily. Due to the lockdown, they were left with no income which resulted in lack of food. The parish started shopping for basic needs and in the first month sent around R1 000.00 worth of foodstuff a week. They were also assisted by a non-profit organisation in Sedgefield called Masithandane which donated 10kg bags of pap and some bread and fruits. The money for all the other foodstuffs came from donations from the people of St Anthony’s.

This initiative then settled into delivering about R400.00 foodstuff a week plus 20kg of pap. Sedgefield Mobile Meals have also been delivering their leftover food several times a week plus a weekly donation of 20kg chicken. The generosity of the parishioners of St Anthony’s with financial support during the lockdown has to be commended. They stretched their hearts to their needy neighbours with love.

Caritas Oudtshoorn is grateful to all the generous donors and to all the volunteers for the hard work and care towards to the families in the community affected by the recession of the country due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Photos: Diocesan team, volunteers and beneficiaries. Assisting to the poor during COVID-19 lockdown.

Diocese of Polokwane: His Lordship, Bishop Jeremiah Masela

Coordinator: Mashobela Rawane

Polokwane is the capital city of the Province of Limpopo. The unemployment rate is reported to be extremely high in Limpopo Province.

Caritas Polokwane tried their best under the challenging circumstances to work together with parishes and sodalities to feed the poorer households during the lockdown. Caritas with other members of the church and sodalities managed to distribute food parcels to the needy and vulnerable families within the diocese. All parish families received at least basic food parcels. The beneficiaries were happy and expressed their gratitude.

In one food donation drive, the task team mobilised the parishes to share with those less fortunate, the response from the parishioners was good. The team managed to collect donations from the faithful. The depot was under the care of Mr. Seroni who made sure that everything ran smoothly. He also managed to organize some men from the men's guild who tirelessly helped with the packaging and distribution. Beneficiaries were +/- 300 people who got hampers. The target was 200 beneficiaries but because of the generosity of the parishioners they exceeded the target.



Photos: His Lordship Bishop Jeremiah Masela joined the sodality and volunteers to hand out food parcels for the communities in need during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Diocese of Port Elizabeth: His Lordship, Bishop Vincent Zungu OFM

Caritas Coordinator: Denise Philander

Networking Partners: Masinuysane, Windfarms, Renew, Father's House, Winds of Change

Port Elizabeth is located on the South Eastern coast of South Africa. It is situated on the western portion of Algoa Bay, adjacent to the Indian Ocean. The city lies 770 km east of Cape Town, between South Africa's Garden Route and Wild Coast.

Caritas Port Elizabeth rolled up their sleeves to be at the service of the poor during the lockdown. They obtained a permit to move around during the lockdown, and mobilized the parishioners, businesses and the people of good will to donate whatever they could for the poor. Wings of Change donated food and they assisted 1 390 families from this donation. They have had transportation challenges due to lockdown restrictions however they overcame their challenges because they were determined to "leave no one behind." Food aid became the greatest need among the poorer households. They are counting their blessings for all they have received to facilitate their service to the poor.

Food Distribution List & Funds Collected

The below mentioned is an account of funds collected and food parcels that has already been distributed according to the above centres to the date of this report. We also received donations from various parishioners, other groups (CWL, St Vincent de Paul etc.) in the form of money and or food items, which is why some of the amounts may vary here and there:

Income vs Expenditure - From April 2020 to January 2021

2 426 food parcels @ approximately R250 per food parcel

Additional funds/other donations were provided to fire victims, schools, GBV victims etc.

Overall, I feel the true message of Caritas is being extended to the different parts of the Port Elizabeth diocese. The teams are functioning well, and even though mistakes have been made, lessons are being learnt. With safety being our top priority, we are blessed in that we have not had any fatalities or any COVID-19 positive infections to our team.

Caritas Port Elizabeth was the sub-grant partner of Caritas South Africa to roll out a three-month emergency project that was aimed at assisting migrants, refugees and undocumented people left out of the South African Emergency Plan responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. They were able to assist 300 families with food parcels, 327 with sanitizers and 335 with winter clothes and blankets. Caritas Port Elizabeth exceeded expectations in their professionalism and accountability but most of all care for the vulnerable brothers and sisters.



Photo: Bishop Vincent Mduduzi Zungu and a volunteer of Caritas Port Elizabeth.



Photo: Beneficiary of food.



**CARITAS
QUEENSTOWN**

DIOCESE OF QUEENSTOWN

Diocese of Queenstown: His Lordship, Bishop Siphiso Vanqa SAC (Administrator until February 2021)

Caritas Coordinator: Sr. Felicitas Solani CMDA

Networking Partners: HIV/AIDS, Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC)

Queenstown is situated in the middle of the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. According to the Global Africa Network (2019), cattle and sheep farming is a main source of economic activities in Queenstown and the surroundings.

The coordinator of Caritas Queenstown, Sr Felicitas Solani CMDA highlighted that Queenstown Diocese has a high rate of unemployment that results in poverty among the people. Caritas Queenstown cares for the children who are orphaned and or vulnerable, they also care for the people who suffer from HIV/AIDS. The coordinator of Caritas Queenstown reported that during the lockdown, the movement and communication with the parishes was a challenge, however they assisted them the best they could. Some parishes planted vegetables to help the poor people to have food. The people are very happy for this great help.

During the time of the COVID-19 lockdown, the different parishes within the diocese continue to support the needy with the distribution of food parcels. The biggest challenge among the people was the lack of food due to the lockdown restrictions that prevented people to go out for piece jobs. Caritas Queenstown continue to motivate the communities to be in solidarity with the needs of the poor and find means to assist them.



Photo: Sr Felicitas with her team donating food aid to poor households.



Photo: Sr Felicitas with her team donating food aid to families from the community.



DIOCESE OF RUSTENBURG

Diocese of Rustenburg: His Lordship, Bishop Robert Mphiwe

(until February 2021 it was Bishop Kevin Dowling CSsR, who has since retired).

Caritas Coordinator: Mr. Paul Mogorosi

Number of Volunteers: 18

Networking Partners: UNHCR & Future Family

Rustenburg is the most populous city in the North West Province of South Africa. Rustenburg is home to the two largest platinum mines in the world and the world's largest platinum refinery. The majority of people in the region still live in abject poverty despite the massive profits yielded by the platinum royalties.

Caritas Rustenburg worked hard during the lockdown to serve the poor who were hithard by the pandemic. Bishop Kevin CSsR received a COVID-19 relief fund from the SACBC which was used to buy 250 hampers thus 250 families benefitted.



Photos: Caritas Rustenburg distributed 83 packs of fruits to unemployed migrants seeking employment along Dr Moroka Drive.



Photos: Caritas Rustenburg in partnership with UNHCR and Future Family distributed Sunlight Soap to 808 beneficiaries. The soap was donated by UNHCR and Future Family. Beneficiaries were happy with all that Caritas is doing in caring for the less fortunate.



Caritas Rustenburg was the sub-grant partner of Caritas South Africa to roll out a three-month project that was aimed at assisting migrants, refugees and undocumented people. They assisted 200 families with food parcels, 200 families with sanitizers and 200 families with winter clothes and blankets.

His Lordship Bishop Dowling met the parish priests at the beginning of the implementation of this project and explained to them the requirement of the donor regarding the distribution of goods. The coordinator of Caritas Rustenburg purchased the food, hygiene materials and vouchers for winter clothes and blankets.



Photos: Bishop Kevin Dowling C.Ss.R. and the beneficiaries.



DIOCESE OF TZANEEN

Diocese of Tzaneen: His Lordship, Bishop Joao Noe Rodrigues

Caritas Coordinator: Mrs. Trish Orr

Volunteers: 45 Care Workers, 6 Project Coordinators.

Networking Partners: President's Solidarity Fund, Kinderfonds Mamas, Du Roi Agritech and HCI Foundation.

Tzaneen is a large tropical garden town situated in the Mopani District Municipality of the Limpopo Province. It is situated in a high rainfall, fertile region with tropical and subtropical agriculture taking place. It is Limpopo's second largest town after Polokwane. The economy of Tzaneen depends largely on farming fruits, vegetables, animals and timber.

Caritas Kurisanani (Tzaneen) has five orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) projects running in five parishes of the Diocese of Tzaneen as well as a women's shelter for refugee and migrant women in Musina. Prior to the lockdown, the administrator sent each parish OVC coordinator a folder containing information about COVID-19, safety precautions and what they can do to educate the people in their area about COVID-19 safety.

The Catholic Women Shelter in Musina and Caritas Tzaneen received an emergency sub-grant for a three-month project in order to assist migrants, refugees and undocumented people. They provided 344 food parcels, 234 units of hygiene and sanitation and 259 units of winter clothes and blankets. All these were distributed to the women's shelter and identified families in parishes and villages. Some goods were bought for the shelter for the upkeep and use by the women and children who live there. They also managed to assist a neighbouring men's shelter, the counterpart of the women's shelter accommodating mostly migrants, refugees and undocumented people that were left out of government aid. All the beneficiaries were grateful and delighted because this was a great assistance during their time of dire need.



The Solidarity Fund and HCI Foundation delivered 500 food boxes via the Lunchbox Fund to be distributed to the five OVC parish projects and the Musina Women's Shelter.



Kinderfonds MAMAS made emergency funding available to buy food, blankets and hygiene material and water tanks to enable access to water in those

rural area where there were few water points. They also gave a box of vitamin C and multivitamin tablets to keep the care workers healthy. Kurisanani purchased masks and sanitiser and infra-red thermometers for the care workers to use.



Du Roi Agritech, an agricultural firm near Tzaneen donated packs of soup ingredients for distribution to the orphans and vulnerable children (OVC).

Diocese of uMzimkhulu: His Lordship, Bishop Stanislaw Jan Dziuba OSPPE

Caritas Coordinator: Pascal Karuhije

Chaplain to Caritas: Fr. Mashiya Emmanuel Mwimani

Networking Partners: Diocesan Sacred Heart Sodality

uMzimkhulu diocese is situated mainly in the rural areas of KwaZulu Natal. The parishes are in very remote, rural areas of the province.

Caritas in uMzimkhulu has been established at the parishes and it is the parishes that respond to the challenges of COVID-19 and other challenges that the communities faced like sickness, poverty, hunger, and children that are orphaned.

Many families lost their income due to lockdown especially those who depended on members who were working and sending remittances home.



Photo: Families being assisted by Caritas.



Photo: Religious leader assisting children with sanitizer and food.

Caritas uMzimkhulu is working together with local communities and municipalities to support the most vulnerable who are in need. The church associations and sodalities are working together with local communities to support the poor. The sodality of Sacred Heart of uMzimkhulu diocese contributed to Caritas uMzimkhulu fund to support those affected by COVID-19. St. Vincent de Paul and other parishes and parishioners are running feeding schemes, soup kitchens, and delivering food parcels to the poor and those affected by COVID-19.

The Caritas uMzimkhulu team and Rev. Bishop Stanislaw Dziuba purchased the food and coordinated the distribution. The parishioners contributed money to buy the food. They also made the food parcels and ran a soup kitchen.

The bishop distributed 160 blankets to the poor. Caritas uMzimkhulu distributed food parcels to 30 families in one parish. About 700 people were given food through soup kitchens, especially the youth and children. The distribution of food and the soup kitchen is still ongoing.

Diocese of Witbank: Bishop Thaddeus Xoleo Khumalo (since February 2021)

(Administrator was Rev. Fr. Molewe Machingoane until February 2021)

Caritas Coordinator: Rev. Fr. Linda Zwane

Witbank is situated in Mpumalanga Province and it is at the centre of a coal-mining area thus in 2006 the city name was changed to Emalahleni.

Caritas Witbank got a permit to move around during the hard lockdown. They have an active feeding scheme where they go to the informal settlements to feed the needy families. Some of the local businesses and people of goodwill donated food and money so that the poor could be fed. The local bakeries also assisted with bread to feed the less fortunate people in the community. This work, together with expressions of gratitude to the respective donors, is coordinated by Fr. Zwane. Some people donated second-hand clothes for the poor and everything was warmly welcomed.



Photo: Poor people of the community choosing second-hand clothes.

As South Africa battles the COVID-19 pandemic, the president of the country also acknowledged that gender-based violence is the second pandemic that the country is facing. The Diocese of Witbank organised an awareness campaign against gender-based violence. Attendance was satisfactory and the Church continues to teach and counsel the victims.



Photo: Awareness campaign on gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic.



CARITAS KWAZULU–NATAL (METROPOLITAN & CARITAS MARIANHILL)

Caritas KZN Coordinator: Jennifer Sharon Boyce

As the COVID 19 pandemic hit South Africa in March 2020 with Level 5 lockdown restrictions, we were all initially stuck in the challenge of dealing with an unknown reality. Two weeks into lockdown, we started providing support to the diocesan teams. Communication and support were all done virtually for the first time.

- We shared regular updates and relevant information about COVID-19.
- Provided information on non-pharmaceutical prevention methods provided through the Department of Health.
- Important guides on the Level 5 regulations including getting permits for critical work to be carried out by coordinators.
- Discussion and sharing ways in which local parish groups could respond to COVID-19, e.g. food parcel distribution and starting gardens.
- Sharing information on government interventions, how to access them and where to get assistance.
- Providing moral support to the Diocesan coordinators.

Highlights/Main activities and responses throughout the Metropolitan

- Many of the dioceses were able to access a grant from Caritas South Africa (CSA) to provide food parcels for needy households during COVID-19.
- Food gardens were started in the Kokstad Diocese to sustain families during this time.
- Soup kitchens and food distribution took place in uMzimkhulu Diocese and the Koinonia Project was able to provide support to up to 500 families.
- Projects functioning in the development wing of Eshowe Diocese were already undertaking food security through vegetable gardens, and these efforts were stepped up. The skills development projects involved in sewing had an opportunity to create cloth face masks.
- Dundee Diocese was able to provide some food parcel support and the chaplain and coordinator were holding virtual meetings using WhatsApp. A newsletter helped to keep all the teams connected and already functional efforts were able to continue in their efforts.
- Durban Diocese worked with the KZN Christian Council to distribute Solidarity Fund vouchers throughout the region. The Denis Hurley Centre partnered with the eThekweni Municipality to provide emergency shelter for the homeless in Durban. Many homeless were rehabilitated or returned to their families. A group of homeless men started a food garden and this project has survived to supply some of the food chains around Durban and give a new lease of life to the homeless.
<https://www.sapeople.com/2020/11/04/homeless-men-turn-land-behind-durbans-elangeni-into-booming-organic-farm/amp/>

- Projects like the John Vianney Youth Care Centre was able to provide outreach to the local communities through food parcels and other donations received during this time.
- The Diocese of Ingwavuma was able to distribute food parcels. The geographical layout of the Diocese made it difficult to respond even though the area was badly affected by COVID-19
- Diocese of Marianhill: Some of the parishes responded with food distribution e.g., St. Xavier parish is serving the local community with a hot meal every Sunday and this includes an informal settlement with nearly 1 000 families. At Mariannridge, St. Mary and Anne a total of 150 hot meals were prepared twice per week at the parish and distributed to the elderly, sick and frail throughout the community. A partnership with the Montebello – John Vianney Child and Youth Care Centre, helped to distribute dairy products twice during the hard lockdown and they also receive 1.5 tons of potatoes which were packed and delivered to families in the community. A rosary street prayer was held to keep the community hopeful during this time.

The St. Mary's Community Outreach Centre was able to continue to provide support to their almost 500 beneficiaries in the four communities around the Greater Mariannhill area. This included PPE, food parcels and food gardens. Staff maintained contact with the vulnerable children through WhatsApp groups and community care givers were able to still check in with families.

We believe the church in the metropolitan of Durban has been able to respond as far as possible to the COVID-19 crisis. We do however realize that much room for improvement exists, and therefore in 2021 want to focus on introducing the ABCD model for development which draws on the local communities' own assets to drive development, and therefore be better able to survive any future crisis. We must continue to build the capacity of each Diocese to have a disaster response plan and improve local capacity both in human and other resources.

Other forms of support

At the beginning of the lockdown the John Vianney Children Home had no water. We were able to mobilise some support from parishes in Mariannridge and Kloof to provide clean water for the institution while the management brought to the attention of the Department of Water and Sanitation the need for a very quick resolution. Without clean water the home would be faced with a serious health challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Kloof parish was able to include some Easter treats for the children.

At the end of 2019 Jenny Boyce was recovering from a long illness which left her hospitalised and unable to carry out her tasks for Caritas as required by the job description and key performance indicators. It was therefore agreed to advertise the post of Caritas KZN coordinator and find a replacement. This process has been ongoing but has been adversely affected by COVID-19 and the South African lockdown levels.

During September 2020, a virtual assessment via ZOOM, WhatsApp and telephone was done in each diocese to get a sense of progress being made on Caritas. Interviews were held with diocesan coordinators, chaplains and the local bishops where possible.

In November 2020, a virtual meeting with the Bishops of KZN was held, and the state of each diocese was presented with possible actions to be taken once the lockdown was lifted. A new coordinator was appointed.

A funding proposal was prepared for the work of Caritas KZN. With support of Cardinal Napier, an application was submitted to the Motsepe Foundation on 04 December 2020. Plans to apply to other donors as well will take place in 2021.



Photo: St. Xavier Parish, Mariannahill feeding programme.



Photo: St. Xavier Parish, Mariannahill clothing distribution.



Photo: St's Mary and Anne, Mariannridge food gardens.



Photo: Caritas KZN working committee and coordinators of diocesan Caritas.



Diocese of Bethlehem: His Lordship, Bishop Jan de Groef M. Afr.

Caritas Coordinator: Mr. Tabi Moloi

Networking Partners: Misereor, Shoprite/Checkers

Beneficiaries were given grocery vouchers from Shoprite/Checkers and distributed per family. The vouchers are then emailed to the parish priests to facilitate the buying of groceries. Then Shoprite/Checkers donated a further grocery voucher which was given to the Friedrich Bussereau Home for the Disabled run by the Sisters of St Paul in Senekal.

A list of needy families through the Diocese was compiled. These are families where parents are not working, single parent families, orphaned child-headed families and families where the grandparents are raising grandchildren with no help from anywhere. In total 33 families were identified, both Catholic and some non-Catholics.

1. MN are a family of six, living in a shack. Their shack recently burned down destroying whatever little they had. In their process of recovery, the groceries helped to ease their strife.
2. MM is one of eight orphaned children who live on their own in a squatter camp in Bohlokong. They are struggling to make ends meet. This relief eased their struggle and they were grateful.
3. AMC is a 73-year-old pensioner who stays with her two grandchildren in Ladybrand. Her husband forced her out of their matrimonial home. She resides in someone's house because she cannot afford to pay rent or to have her own place.



All of the funds available for the poor were used to purchase grocery vouchers from Shoprite/Checkers so that all the beneficiaries could buy food for their families according to their needs.

The coordinators decided to give the vouchers in order to avoid standardising food parcels as some food stuff may not be helpful for some of them. The diocese faced challenges with the transport of the food. Locating enough volunteers to assist with the outreach during the pandemic also proved difficult.

DIOCESE OF DE AAR

Diocese of De Aar: Rt Rev Adam Musialek SCJ

PROJECT – SOUP KITCHENS – REPORT COVID-19 RESPONSE

On the menu was tasty soup and bread.

The second picture: 'take and go'. People are not allowed to stay around. Another plan will have to be made regarding dishes. Next time people will have to bring their own as styrofoam is detrimental to the environment.



This little one is very happy – a bit shy but before the photo was taken he had a big smile. This is basically one ladle of food. It is not enough but it is better than nothing. We struggle with providing fresh vegetables and protein-based foods. The food is tasty and people appreciate what they receive, but this as the only meal a day is of course not sufficient



This photo was taken towards the end of the sharing of meals. It shows clearly how the children are keeping social distance. Quite a feat when considering the age of most of the children. They are so afraid of not receiving something to eat.



114 food parcels between four major areas: Midros, Rosmead, Lusaka, KwaNonzame. It contains the basics – we hope to add some soya mince, more samp, speckled beans and soup powder.

We were happy to receive some vegetables and a few other things from Gift of the Givers. They promised some more when available.

This is Lusaka and Eliza who cook, they are organizing the children and adults to keep social distance.

The attendance ranges from 350 to over 400 people per day. The end of each month shows a drop in the number of people requiring assistance.



The soup kitchen at Rosmead, showing people lining up to receive their meagre meal for the day. This place is 10km outside of Middelburg. They serve 140 people at a time.



Although this is again a photo of Lusaka, it also indicates the number of people gathering at Midros.

The soup is accompanied by either samp, rice or porridge. Sometimes a meal of samp and beans is served, or when oil allows, 'vetkoek' with some filling which everybody just loves.

Soup Kitchen in town. Soup is served on a Saturday and Sunday and when there are enough funds, meals are served twice during the week also.

The other soup kitchens are KwaNonzame and Midros and they too cater for about 400 children and adults three times a week.

The last week of April shows a figure of 5018 meals. Under 'normal' circumstances it would be something like 2000-3 000 meals in the month.

The numbers are not so high at the end of the month, because the pensions are paid out.



DIOCESE OF KIMBERLEY

Diocese of Kimberley: His Lordship, Bishop Duncan Tsoke

Apostolic Administrator, His Grace, Archbishop Jabulani Nxumalo OMI

Networking Partners: Misereor

Kimberley is situated in the Northern Cape Province. It is known for diamond mining. In as much as Kimberley produces the best raw diamond in the world, the area is extremely poor. The area is known for mining and farming. Kimberley also attracts tourists for the museums and Big Hole attraction.

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Kimberley is divided into five Deaneries: Kimberley, Taung, Vryburg-Morokweng, Kuruman and Mahikeng. The money that the Diocese received from the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC) as relief during the COVID-19 pandemic was used only for food aid to poor households. According to the reports received, the majority of people struggle and depend on the government social grant.



Photo: Diocesan staff assisting a family with food.

DIOCESE OF KEIMOES-UPINGTON

Diocese of Keimoes-Upington: Bishop Edward Risi OMI

We struggled on our own with parish funding which itself was greatly reduced due to the churches having been closed and all means of contact between people having been curtailed.

With the donation received from the SACBC Secretariate we answered the needs of those who suffered the initial impact of the full lockdown:

- Farm workers who lost their employment overnight.
- Crèche assistants in our own institutions who were not immediately able to access the UIF-COVID-19-TERS.
- Mothers who struggled to feed their children in the initial lockdown period.
- Purchased flour for distribution among the needy.

After the initial period, March 2020 to the end of May 2020, people were able to return to work and the welfare and development offices began to operate again. The needs of the people were no longer as pressing as at first.

Application for UIF-19-TERS were submitted; only one payment was made in each case although application in most instances was made over three months for three payments.

With the lockdown in March 2020 everything closed and the people were left stranded: No Home Affairs, no social services; soup kitchens were closed and all of a sudden those who relied on these services or needed ID documents to apply for the special grant could not be helped.

Our soup kitchens were able to start operating again with the funding from the Department of Social Development and other organisations after May 2020. In the meantime, we and other church groups were busy with food parcels and our AIDS office played a very big role in the distribution of food since we already had lists of people in our records.

We were grateful for the initial amount given to us as it enabled us to assist people in the drastic lockdown which occurred over night.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Upington made food parcels which they distributed to people in the informal settlements.

A highly skilled unemployed farm worker availed himself for garden work so as to earn bread for his family.

Also in the parishes, between 20-30% of the Lenten Appeal funding collected prior to the lockdown was utilised to assist the poor and the parishes kept a record of what was done. This ultimately meant that there was Lenten Appeal money which was diverted from the Fund at the discretion of the bishop.

We are grateful to the Secretary General of the SACBC and the Nuncio who kept regular contact with us.



DIOCESE OF MANZINI - ESWATINI

Diocese of Manzini: Rev. José Luis G. Ponce de León IMC

National Director of Caritas Eswatini: Mr. William Kelly

The Diocese of Manzini is one of those particular cases where the borders of the Diocese and the ones of the country are the same. This is the only Catholic diocese in the Kingdom of Eswatini (formerly known as Swaziland).

As soon as the state of emergency was declared in the kingdom by the prime minister, our Diocese took two initiatives. The first initiative was to stop the celebration of religious services in all our parishes. The decision was taken so swiftly that it took many by surprise. The swiftness of the decision underscored the seriousness of the pandemic.

The second initiative was to identify – together with Caritas Swaziland/Eswatini – the areas we wanted to target with specific projects. We presented them both to our people in the country and to benefactors all over the world. Looking back, we are grateful to God that we have been able to implement all of them and continue to do so.

- **Appeal 1: Personal protective equipment (PPE) for health workers.** Though a small Catholic presence, our Diocese is known for our service towards education, health, refugees etc. Aware of the coming demands upon Good Shepherd Mission Hospital (the only Catholic hospital in the SACBC Region), the seven Catholic Clinics and Hope House (hospice), we provided masks, gloves, goggles & gowns for health care workers. Later on, we also provided thermometers and sanitizers to our parishes.
- **Appeal 2: Hunger alleviation.** Two areas particularly affected by COVID-19 were “jobs” and “education”. Lack of employment and reduced salaries for longer periods deeply affected the financial situation of families. Schools are, in our country, one of the main sources of nutrition for the children who not only couldn’t benefit anymore but were then in the hands of parents with little financial income. It is also important to remember that due to the HIV/Aids pandemic a high percentage of children are orphaned and in the care of relatives. For this reason, through our parishes, we have been providing food parcels to the poorest in the area.
- **Appeal 3: Water and sanitation.** “*Wash your hands*” was one of the very first messages we all received and preached. The question was: *what do you do when there is no water?* While we probably had a good rainy season, there are areas in the country where water is scarce. We then identified families to whom we offered a water tank and gutters. In this way, if it would rain, they would be able to collect some water. Having a water tank would also allow them to buy water when available and store it for future use.
- **Appeal 4: Access to information.** Like in other countries, the national government used radio and TV to inform the people about the virus. It was a very systematic and clear message. To our surprise, we came to discover that there were families in rural

areas who did not have even a radio. Therefore, with the help of the youth, families were visited and a list of about 500 received support. Involving the youth was a plus as they were happy to be of service to the community, defending the life of the most vulnerable. People were deeply grateful when they received rechargeable batteries. The radios also benefited the children as the government continued teaching them through it.

- **Appeal 5: Building two-room houses.** This programme is not new in our Diocese. It started many years ago thanks to the support of “Home Plan” (Holland). COVID-19 made it more urgent. Social distance is essential in the fight against the virus but for some families that is just a luxury as they live crowded in a one room house. Therefore we continued building two-room houses targeting orphans in a special way.

These projects were implemented thanks to local support as people looked for ways to support those most in need through “trusted organisations”. The Catholic Church and Caritas Swaziland/Eswatini have always been recognized as such. We have also been blessed with the help of the Diocese of Taichung (Taiwan) who for over ten years has been a sister diocese to us, MISSIO Munich, the Italian Bishops’ Conference (CEI) and Home Plan.



Source: Diocese of Manzini – Eswatini.



Source: Diocese of Manzini – Eswatini.



Source: Diocese of Manzini – Eswatini.



Source: Diocese of Manzini – Eswatini.



Source: Diocese of Manzini – Eswatini.

COVID-19 required that we search for new ways to serve the spiritual needs of our people in a way we had never done before. With a help of a team of lay people and priests, we offered daily MP3podcasts of music, the daily gospel and a short reflection (alternating English and Siswati). Our WhatsApp group suddenly increased to 1 300 members, a sign that this was very much needed. We also offered the Sunday Masses on YouTube. They were presided over by the bishop and each one of the priests made themselves available for preaching.



DIOCESE OF FRANCISTOWN – BOTSWANA

Caritas Francistown

Walking together towards a world of hope justice and dignity

Diocese Francistown: Frank Nubuasah (Gabriel Gaie-Administrator)

Caritas Coordinator: Rev. Fr Mosalagae A Ngwenya

Networking Partners: Fours Group, St Vincent De-Paul, Tirisanyo Commission

The Vicariate of Francistown was created in 1998 with territory taken from the Diocese of Gaborone that covered the whole country. It was elevated to diocese on 2 October 2017. The territory of the diocese lies north of the Tropic of Capricorn. The Diocese of Francistown comprises of the following civil districts: Central, Northeast, North West, Chobe, Ngamiland and Ghanzi.

Caritas Francistown works with the most vulnerable communities to eradicate poverty and injustice. We are a diocesan charity driven by social justice and the dignity of every person. We work with the local communities in the vast area of the diocese, listening to concerns, assessing needs and working with partners on locally led development programmes. With hope, support and compassion at the core of what we do, we work towards a world where all people may thrive.

The pandemic affected priests, religious workers and the wider community in the following ways.

1. Lockdowns and curfews affected the ordinary street vendors. Though the government promised food parcels for these sectors, most people were left without food, prompting Caritas Francistown in cooperation with FOURS RETAIL stores to organise and distribute food parcels to the needy and toiletries at the Caritas centre for undocumented migrants
2. Lockdown meant no church services or a limited number of people attending services and this affected the church financially since the majority of our parishes survive through collections. As a result, priests and religious workers were affected, hence the application for the subsidy that was applied towards relief for priests and religious workers. Fortunately, no priest or religious worker lost their lives to COVID-19 in Botswana.
3. The diocese in cooperation with CARITAS, organised for psycho-social support for those who lived with fear or lost their loved ones. Botswana has to date recorded 46 600 cases and 702 deaths. The most affected areas are the schools.

4. Below are two pictures of relief provided by CARITAS.

Taking pictures is forbidden at the government institutions where we do most of our work.



Source: Caritas Francistown



Source: Caritas Francistown

COVID-19 is a big challenge and threat to humanity, restrictions in movement without any waver result in many losing their jobs and without any source of income. Restricting public gatherings like religious services and school attendance may help to curtail the spread of the virus but has adverse effects in communities and on people's mental health and security. The biggest challenge is reaching out to those in remote areas because of limited funds.

Liaison Bishop: Bishop Victor Phalana

Coordinator: Rev. Fr Stan Muyebe, OP

SACBC JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMISSION AND UNITED NATIONS UNITE TO OFFER HOPE TO THE POOR AND SUPPORT TO THE FRONTLINE HEALTHCARE WORKERS

From the time the National State of Disaster was announced, SACBC Justice and Peace Commission has unwaveringly taken on the challenge to support the government's COVID-19 response and to ensure the protection of frontline healthcare workers. Although our primary focus, is advocacy for structural change, the situation of the poor, and the limitations of government's response during the pandemic. necessitated outreach in the form of emergency relief.

The United Nations Women and DG Murray Trust believe that faith-based actors have a critical role to play in the prevention, care and treatment responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, they therefore chose SACBC Justice and Peace Commission to work with them in implementing their National Disaster Relief Programme.

In the context of this partnership, here is how SACBC Justice and Peace Commission made an impact on the lives of the poor and frontline workers during the pandemic:

Feeding the poor hardest hit by COVID-19

We facilitated delivery of food parcels to communities nationwide hardest hit by job losses and other economic impacts of COVID-19. Nationwide, 387 989 families living in poverty have benefited from the programme. Some of the food parcels were distributed among the following dioceses: Aliwal North, Witbank, Tzaneen, Kroonstad, Klerksdorp, Johannesburg and Pretoria. In partnership with the e'Pap foundation, Witbank, Tzaneen, Aliwal North and Kroonstad had a special outreach to the refugees and migrants who are located in rural areas.

We also worked with 127 shelters for abused women nationwide to ensure women who live in such shelters during the pandemic have enough food and are protected from COVID-19 infection.



Photo: Bishop Victor Phalana supporting J&P team.



Photo: Bishop Victor Phalana and Fr Stan organizing Justice & Peace food support.



Photo: Food distribution.



Photo: Food distribution to the community.

Strengthening the health system

We facilitated the distribution of 43,933 food vouchers nationwide for the benefit of community healthcare workers who are involved in the COVID-19 testing campaign. We coordinated the distribution of protective supplies to 398 clinics nationwide as well as the delivery of 1 258 CPAP respiratory units to hospitals nationwide. We also worked with various partners to setup triage tents in 149 hospitals around the country. This was critical during the second wave of COVID-19 when one of the biggest challenges was the hospitals and clinics in Eastern Cape and Kwazulu Natal running out of oxygen machines and personal protective equipment.

We have been concerned about the plight of ex-miners suffering from lung diseases. In 2020, we organized mobile clinics to conduct COVID-19 testing and black lung disease testing for ex-miners who worked in coal mines in Mpumalanga and Limpopo.



Photo: Mobile Clinic for testing COVID-19 of ex-miners.



Photo: Mobile Clinic for testing COVID-19 of ex-miners.



Photo: Mobile Clinic for testing COVID-19 of ex-miners.



Photo: Supplies to rural clinics during the pandemic.



Photo: Support from Coca-Cola for delivery of medical support.



Photo: Support from Coca-Cola for delivery of medical support.

Offering protection to those at the frontline of pastoral ministry: priests and religious workers

We organized access to protective supplies for nine dioceses so as to ensure that priests and funeral ministers are protected. We provided similar assistance to religious workers in Gauteng and the Free State as well as their places of ministry so as to ensure that religious workers are also protected.

This was in response to rising cases of COVID-19 infection and deaths in the community of religious sisters.

Our nation needs healing. In partnership with DG Murray Trust, we will soon be coordinating training and workshops on healing of memories for priests, funeral ministers, shelters of abused women and community healthcare workers in clinics.

Word of Gratitude

We thank the United Nations and DG Murray Trust for inviting SACBC Justice and Peace Commission to be a key partner in their national response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We also thank logistic companies and Coca-Cola who organised trucks for the delivery of various relief supplies.

Our contribution ignited hope among the poor and helped to reduce hunger while restoring faith and elevating dignity. It also contributed to the strengthening of the National Health System through improved access to protective supplies and medical supplies especially in remote rural areas.



SACBC MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES OFFICE

Liaison Bishop: His Grace Archbishop Buti Tlhagale OMI

Co-ordinator: Sr Maria de Lurdes Lodi Rissini, MSCS

COVID-19 does not safeguard anyone based on their wealth, status, religion or origin etc. South Africa is home to more than five million foreign nationals. Over a million of them are refugees and asylum seekers – who are often the most vulnerable and indigent. During the COVID-19 pandemic they lost any chance of earning income and were unable to access the meagre social benefits that the South African government made available to citizens. In addition, they live in densely packed slums, making it impossible to practice social distancing, thereby placing them at an increased risk of infection.

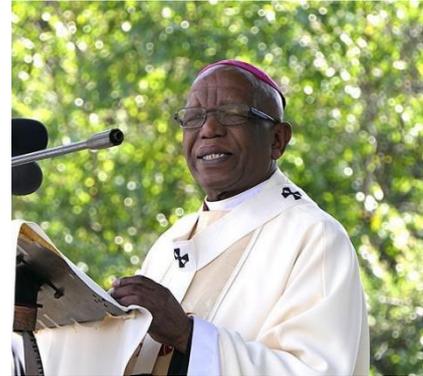


Photo: His Grace Archbishop Buti Tlhagale OMI

2020 came at a time when the whole world started to face the COVID-19 pandemic. It has already ravaged many millions of lives all over the planet, exposing many inequalities, injustices and extreme poverty. We are aware that the coronavirus pandemic has added an extra burden and challenge on the lives of migrants and refugees. The SACBC Migrants and Refugees Office is saddened and disheartened by the way many governments have responded to the socio-economic needs of their people, excluding refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.

The SACBC Migrants and Refugees Office in an attempt to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 to the excluded Migrants and Refugees in the country, worked in solidarity with Caritas South Africa, the Diocesan Caritas, Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees as well as other organizations in drawing attention to, and assisting with their basic needs especially during lockdown.

People on the move are indeed more vulnerable to COVID-19 due to the poor quality of their journey and precarious working space and living conditions. Migrants often have to share housing and this leads to crowding (which contradicts the requirements of social distancing), on top of which there is little access to running water and soap. Apart from dire poverty, it may be added that some refugees and migrants may be reluctant to seek assistance for fear of discrimination/xenophobia, which too might impede their ability to be within reach of these vital and fundamental life-giving necessities. The different departments who work with migrants and refugees within the SACBC all offered assistance.

The SACBC Migrants and Refugees Office of the Catholic Church in Botswana, South Africa and Eswatini, are aware of the amount of work that the Church has undertaken and continues to do in responding to the needs of thousands of migrants, refugees, undocumented and other forcibly displaced persons, most of whom live in deplorable conditions. A great deal of work still needs to be done, not only for their protection and integration, but especially now with

the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. We encourage all dioceses to continue serving the needy out of love for Jesus that is represented by the face of the poor knocking at our doors/offices searching for help.

On behalf of the SACBC Migrants and Refugees Office, I would like to thank all organizations and people of God that unconditionally assisted those who were starving, for the distribution of food and goods to thousands of families in the SACBC territories. This made a huge difference in the lives of many that were excluded from a dignified life during the COVID-19 pandemic. May God bless you all!

+ Buti Tlhagale OMI

SACBC Liaison Bishop for Migrants and Refugees
Archbishop of Johannesburg

PASTORAL CARE OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

Archbishop of Durban: His Eminence Cardinal Wilfrid Napier OFM

Coordinator: Mr. Hupenyu Makusha

Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Peter Lafferty CSSp

Networking Partners: Caritas South Africa, Caritas Durban, Justice and Peace Commission, Refugee Social Services and people of goodwill.

The Refugee Pastoral Care is the project of the Archdiocese Durban responsible for handling all matters affecting all foreign nationals in the Archdiocese and beyond. The project was started in 1999 and gained momentum in 2002 when it was allocated a full-time chaplain. The pastoral role was and still is, fulfilled with our refugee brothers and sisters receiving counselling and masses said in their own languages. Services have always been offered indiscriminately.

The project was first administered by the Jesuits, and when they were no longer in a position to maintain a presence in Durban, the Archdiocese approached the Spiritans for assistance in running the ministry. The project is based in the Denis Hurley Centre at the Emmanuel Cathedral since that is the central point for the large population of refugees living in Durban.

The COVID-19 crisis caused untold suffering among people; rich and poor, young and old, citizens and non-citizens. However, the most affected in South Africa were the poor communities in general and undocumented migrants in particular. In response, the Catholic Church in Durban, through its Commission for Refugees and Migrants rolled out a programme of food distribution to vulnerable migrants. Those in the informal settlements are visited and assessed, and food allocated to them. The parishes in the Archdiocese have been very cooperative in advancing the welfare of migrants. Thanks to the parish priests and volunteers.



Photos: *Distribution of food to communities in Durban*

The nationalities of beneficiaries in Durban and Pietermaritzburg (the two main cities in the Archdiocese of Durban) include Zimbabweans, Malawians, Congolese, Burundians, Ugandans, Mozambicans, Zambians and a few people from Guinea-Conakry, Liberia, Nigeria, Cameroon. Undocumented South Africans also benefitted from the programme. Pastoral care for refugees and migrants engaged in educating people to take care of themselves and adhere to the government regulations on COVID-19. They received and distributed sanitation products to prevent the spread of the virus. The Department of Pastoral Care of Refugees and Migrants distributed food to more than 8 250 households and approximately 30 000 sanitation products were provided. The hygiene products enabled them to comply with the government regulations and to be protected.



Catholic Archdiocese of Johannesburg Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees

Archbishop of Johannesburg: His Grace Archbishop Buti Tlhagale, OMI and

Auxiliary Bishop: His Lordship, Bishop Duncan Tsoke

Episcopal Vicar: Rev. Fr. Jean-Marie Kuzituka Did'ho

Head of Department: Sr. Marizete Garbin, MSCS

Networking Partners: Bienvenu Shelter, Weltkirche, Caritas South Africa, Parishioners and Private Donors.

The Department of Pastoral Care started in 1998 with the Congregation of Missionary Sisters of St. Charles – Scalabrinians, with the invitation of His Lordship Bishop Reginald J. Orsmond, Archdiocese of Johannesburg.

The objective of Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees is to promote dialogue and to welcome and integrate migrants and refugees within the local community, thereby strengthening their faith in the spirit of the new evangelization.

To promote and coordinate Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees in the parishes, in all archdioceses of Johannesburg, every person is welcomed and respected for his or her religious and cultural expressions.

The Department of Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees, worked mostly in partnership with Bienvenu Shelter and other networking partners within the Archdiocese of Johannesburg in response to COVID-19. Direct assistance was provided to 17 890 households and 72 974 people. 2 350 Beneficiaries were provided with food vouchers, 2 690 beneficiaries received sanitation & hygiene kits and 1 166 beneficiaries were assisted with vouchers for clothing (primarily used for children's school uniforms). The services provided by Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees in the COVID-19 Response Programme were distribution of food (perishables and non-perishables), food vouchers and food parcels, clothing vouchers, hygienic kits, sanitisers and masks. Children were assisted with school stationery and school uniforms. Many needy families were supported with payments of their rent and setting up their small businesses within the Archdiocese of Johannesburg.

This was possible because there was a plan in place and a database that helped to find the migrant families in need as well as the local community. Many meetings took place prior to and continued during the implementation process.

The Department of Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees with their partners reached out their services and attention to all eight deaneries in the Archdiocese of Johannesburg. We assisted 17 parishes in desperate need. All of them received food, food vouchers, hygienic kits, sanitisers and masks. We assisted many shelters in the form of sharing donations of food on a regular basis.

The community leaders and parish priests were fully involved and very supportive throughout this process in ensuring that they identified those who were truly in need. This reminds us of the Good Samaritan from the Gospel of Matthew.

A contingency plan was followed during distributions and support provided to the different parishes. All regulations were observed in line with the government directives. Field workers were trained on the protocols required and advice was also given to all beneficiaries on how to keep themselves and their families safe and healthy during this pandemic.

We are truly thankful and overwhelmed by the understanding, commitment and love shown to those most desperately in need, especially those who have lost their jobs and are unemployed. Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees was able to bring all together as one family during this very tough time to assist those less fortunate. We thank all the donors - international and local - for the financial assistance and donations that sustained the migrant families in a very special way. Their open heart and generosity are incredible. We also thank all the staff and volunteers who have directly been involved in the COVID-19 response.

May God bless each and every one of them with continued health and let us remain hopeful in the faith that the world will heal itself once again.



Photo: Father Jean-Marie Did'ho, Sister Marizete Garbin, with their Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees team organizing food distribution to the families.



Photo: St Francis of Assisi Vanderbijlpark: Sister Marizete Garbin & her team handing a food voucher and sanitisers to a migrant. Father Jean-Marie Did'ho, is seen in the background with the parish priest of St. Francis of Assisi and Father Tony, OFM.



Photo: Sr Marizete with her team preparing the food parcels to be distributed to families and parishes.



Photo: Sr Marizete and Bienvenu assisting the families.

Coordinator: Mr Jacob Skhosana

Number of Staff: 38

Volunteers: 4

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international Catholic organization whose mission is to accompany, serve and advocate for the rights of refugees and forcibly displaced people.

JRS programmes are found in nearly 50 countries worldwide, aiding refugees in camps and cities, individuals displaced within their own countries, asylum seekers in cities, and to those held in detention centres. The main areas of work are in the field of education, pastoral care, healthcare, livelihood activities, social services, and advocacy.

Services provided during COVID-19 pandemic.

- Strengthening of the JRS contingency plan drafted to respond to the current COVID-19 environment.
- Staff was trained on the protocols to be observed in the workplace.
- Attendance registers in all the offices signed by all clients for contact tracing.
- We have put sanitizer stands at all entry points of our three offices in Gauteng, two meters apart, marking the point of entry and we check everyone's temperatures as they enter the offices. Any person showing three or more symptoms of COVID-19 will be isolated immediately and not allowed entry into the office.
- Internal posters with COVID-19 information have been pasted all over the offices for client's and staff's benefit.
- Everyone MUST mask-up and have their temperatures taken. We have a NO MASK, NO ENTRY in our offices.
- All frontline workers are provided with enough PPEs to use in the field.
- All staff members were screened for COVID-19 and those presenting symptoms were tested for COVID-19.
- Provision of food parcels to the most vulnerable in the community.
- Provision of hygiene and cleaning materials to the most vulnerable clients.
- Health education and COVID-19 information sharing with our walk-in clients and students in our livelihood centres.

Challenges:

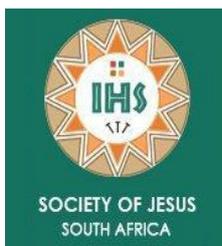
- Greater need of assistance but lack of adequate funding.
- Some people still not respecting the rules and regulations of COVID-19 like social distancing and masking up.



Photo: Assistance to families.



Photo: Provision of food parcels to community.



SOCIETY OF JESUS (JESUITS)

SOCIAL APOSTOLATE COORDINATOR: RAMPEOANE (RAMPE) HLOBO SJ

Networking/partners: JENA, Global Ignatian Advocacy Network (GIAN) Migration, Jesuit Refugee Service, SACBC Migration and Refugees Office, SECAM, CPLO, SIHMA, Caritas, UNHCR, Radio Veritas.

The Society of Jesus (Jesuits) is a religious order of priests and brothers dedicated to the service of God and the Church for the betterment of the world around us. Our Social Apostolate is rooted in faith that does justice and in Ignatian spirituality. We come together with others to collaboratively protect human dignity and our common home by challenging violations of human rights and ecologically detrimental activities.

The work done during this period, some of which is listed below, was of advocacy in nature and in collaboration with and support of others, like the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference - SACBC Migrants and Refugees Office, CPLO, SECAM, University Chaplaincy, etc.

- Collaboration with SACBC Migration on World Refugee Day – 20/06/2020 and Civil Registration and statelessness in Africa – 10/08/2020
- Panel Discussion on “Refugees from an interfaith perspective” – Turquoise Harmony Institute 25/06/20.
- Legal Aspects of Advocacy for Migrants - CPLO South Africa training 24/09/2020.
- 106th World Day of Migrants and Refugees – Campaign for Migrants and Refugees Section.
- General overview of Catholic Social Teaching (Understanding the Pope’s Message)
- 106th World Day of Migrants and Refugees – SACBC Migration Webinar 01/10/2020.
- Irregular Migration and Internally Displaced Persons in the era of COVID-19 - SECAM-JPDC WEBINAR 27/10/2020.
- Through Social Media (Twitter & Facebook), conducted Anti-Xenophobia reflections, campaigns and advocacy against attacks on non-South Africans and the #PutSouthAfricansFirst movement.

TURQOISE | Panel Discussion
HARMONY INSTITUTE

REFUGEES FROM AN INTERFAITH PERSPECTIVE

Thursday 25 June, 18:30

Webinar Link : <https://bit.ly/3hQFwXC>

Watch Online :

Facebook: www.facebook.com/TurquoiseHI

Youtube: bit.ly/TurquoiseHI

Presented by:

 Mr. Aydin Inal (Turquoise Harmony Institute, Cape Town)	 Ms. Alana Baranov Freelance Writer, Researcher, Consultant & Human Rights Activist (Jewish Perspective)	 Fr. Rampe Hlobo Society of Jesus in South Africa (JESUITS) (Christian Perspective)	 Mr. Omar Njia Int. Solidarity for African Union, Legal Consultant in Int. Human Rights Law (Muslim Perspective)
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 TurquoiseHI **www.turquoise.org.za**
info@turquoise.org.za

- Raising awareness on social media about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Suicide.
- Promotion of Laudato Si' on social media and online discussions on environmental justice with the Youth leadership of St Mary's Nyanga (Cape Town).
- <https://www.jesuits.africa/jcammedia/recent-news/1259-international-day-of-clean-air-for-blue-skies-7-september>
- <https://www.jesuits.africa/jcammedia/recent-news/1256-covid-19-reveals-challenges-of-the-pre-existing-pandemic-of-poverty>
- <https://www.jesuits.africa/jcammedia/recent-news/1250-shepherding-the-youth-virtually-at-a-time-of-uncertainty>



Source: Society of Jesus (Jesuits) Social Apostolate.



Source: Society of Jesus (Jesuits) Social Apostolate.

The COVID-19 pandemic has proven that we are indeed facing the same storm in different boats and exposed the many fault lines that have been created by many injustices of the past. We are more than ever before, challenged to – through collaborative work – explicitly promote the link between social action and our faith.



Executive Director: Rev. Fr Filippo Ferraro, C.S.

Project Manager: Mr James Chapman

The COVID-19 Response from Scalabrini Institute for Human Mobility in Africa (SIHMA)

Based in Cape Town and established in 2014, the SIHMA is a non-profit and public benefit organization which operates under the auspices of the Archdiocese of Cape Town, which is headed by the Archbishop of Cape Town, the Most Reverend Archbishop Stephen Brislin. The Executive Director of SIHMA is Fr Filippo Ferraro, C.S. SIHMA works closely with the Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town and is also a research institute as part of a network of seven established research centres around the globe, located in Manila, Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo, Paris, Rome and New York. SIHMA and these centres are part of Scalabrini International Migration Network (SIMN). Research centres in this long-established network study the movement of populations around the world, publish books and peer-reviewed journals, and organize conferences and seminars. SIHMA has four main members of staff, a number of support staff and one to four interns and volunteers. SIHMA's work is founded on the Scalabrini ethos and inspired by universal values such as respect for human dignity and diversity. SIHMA's vision is an Africa where the human rights of people on the move are ensured and their dignity is promoted.

Services provided during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In some ways SIHMA's operations remained as they were prior to the pandemic, for instance, continuing to publish the AHMR peer reviewed journal and maintaining research, publications, events and communications and a new publication series entitled the "Advocates' Migration Brief" was launched. Quite a few articles in the AHMR are on the impact of COVID-19 on migrants in various parts of the African continent. However, despite some operations remaining the same, there are several areas which SIHMA has adapted and changed due to the new environment. For example, field research and in person interviews were halted since the pandemic and lockdown. A number of interviews were conducted telephonically or through virtual meetings instead. Similarly, in person training and workshops did not take place as planned since the start of the pandemic. SIHMA worked extensively through training with partners, workshops, and seminars all on virtual meeting platforms. Historically SIHMA received volunteers in person, and yet largely as a result of COVID-19, SIHMA has adapted the volunteer programme receiving three to four volunteers working remotely from all over the world. Over the last nine months SIHMA has received volunteers working remotely in Mauritius, South Africa, France, Italy, Norway, and USA.

SIHMA has consistently engaged in research, publications and advocacy work throughout the pandemic. This has manifested in research publications and advocacy both generally and also specific to COVID-19 related work. For instance, a lot of the research and communications from SIHMA have related to or reflected on the pandemic including authoring sections for *Only One Home* (UnaSolaCasa) looking at *Humanity's Response to the Test of COVID-19* – see <https://sihma.org.za/Blog-on-the-move/only-one-home-unasolacasa-humanity-s-response-to-the-test-of-covid-19> and in particular a section from page 115 entitled: 'The impact of Covid-19 on the move in, to and from Africa (Filippo Ferraro, James Chapman – SIHMA)'. Similarly, SIHMA's *Blog On The Move* includes weekly articles that look at various aspects of migration in Africa and in some instances focuses on the direct and indirect impact of the pandemic on migrants and refugees. For example, the *Blog On The Move* posted on 26 January 2021 entitled 'South Africa at the Precipice of Opportunity – COVID-19 Vaccinations', looks at the role of the COVID-19 vaccine in Africa and in South Africa in particular and advocates an inclusive vaccination process that provides for the vaccination of people on the move whether they are documented or not. See the blog post at <https://sihma.org.za/Blog-on-the-move/south-africa-at-the-precipice-of-opportunity-covid-19-vaccinations>.

The conclusion of the blog post states: "It is hoped that the Vaccine ID process adopted will be inclusive of all and not impacted by divisive nationalism or securitization agendas. Is it probable that South Africa's trajectory will change, and that society will become more inclusive and united? Will the government include refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in the vaccination process whether they are documented or not? Will the country move towards shaking off the mantle of xenophobia and hostility towards foreign nationals? The answer hoped for and that SIHMA and Civil Society as a whole must call for is 'Yes'. From a health perspective the answer should be obvious. South Africa sits at the Precipice, it is sincerely hoped that the opportunity is seized and a healthy future for all is realised."

Similarly on 6 October 2021 the SIHMA *Blog on the Move* looked at 'COVID-19, Tourism and Migration in Africa', accessible at: <https://sihma.org.za/Blog-on-the-move/covid-19-tourism-and-migration-in-africa-1>

Research, communication, and interviews taking place online have become the norm and yet, while this has allowed and brought greater focus to some research, it has limited in person research interviews and drawing information from those for whom access to remote communication is not an option. Some of the most vulnerable migrants have been left stranded and, in some cases, detained because of COVID-19 and policy and practice responses to the pandemic. SIHMA has and will continue, to seek innovative ways to conduct research, publish and raise awareness and advocate for the rights of migrants even where access to certain communities or resources are limited. For example, while travel restrictions prevented in person interviews relating to research initiatives with people on the move in Malawi, Mozambique and South Africa, contact via WhatsApp and Zoom opened the lines of communication to allow projects to continue.

In conclusion, SIHMA in the midst of the pandemic, has and will continue to strive to conduct research and research related advocacy that contributes to the development of informed policies and practice which ensure the rights and dignity of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in Africa.



The Precipice of Opportunity



#OnlyOneHome

HUMANKIND CHALLENGED BY COVID-19



COMMUNICATION ON THE MOVE

Zoom Launch Event

Join us and get to know all our publications, research and social media activities, and help us to disseminate information about human mobility as we seek to further realise our vision of ensuring human rights of and promoting dignity for people on the move in Africa.



Wednesday
25th November
2:00pm-2:45pm
(SAST)

Join us by sending an mail to admin@sihma.org.za

COVID 19 AND THE SECURITISATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN BORDERS: THE CASE FOR AN INCLUSIVE RESPONSE

by Ella Weldon
Edited by James Chapman



Liaison Bishop: Archbishop Stephen Brislin

SCCT Board Chairperson: Rev. Fr Filippo Ferraro, C.S.

Head of Advocacy & Legal Advisor: Ms. Sally Gandar

Networking partners: CPLO; JRS; SIHMA; African Centre for Migration and Society (ACMS); UCT Refugee Rights Unit; Nelson Mandela Refugee Rights Centre; Lawyers for Human Rights; Legal Resources Centre, and others.

The Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town (SCCT / Scalabrini Centre) is a registered not-for-profit organisation that perceives migration as an opportunity and is committed to alleviating poverty and promoting development in the Western Cape while fostering integration between migrants, refugees, and South Africans. The Scalabrini Fathers have been providing welfare services in Cape Town to displaced communities since 1994. In providing assistance, the SCCT advocates respect for human rights and utilises a holistic approach that considers all basic needs including advocacy, development, and welfare services. The SCCT offers six programmes: Advocacy, Employment Access, Welfare, Unite, Women’s Platform, and an English School.

We adapted all of our programmes during the lockdown of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our English School adapted by offering online classes as well as classes via WhatsApp.

Our Employment Access Programme (EAP) offered courses to its clients through online platforms. It also continued to assist people to write CVs and resumes, through an online form. In addition, as the lockdown in South Africa has eased, the EAP has been working hard to find job placements for people – particularly those who may have lost their jobs during the lockdown. In addition, together with the Women’s Platform, EAP offered livelihood assistance in the form of small business grants to clients during the lockdown.

The Unite Youth Programme operates in high schools around Cape Town. During the lockdown the Unite team adapted their programming to be online but has begun to offer in person programming with the easing of the lockdown. This programme is particularly important from a long-term advocacy perspective, in terms of building resilience, integration, and countering xenophobia.

The Women’s Platform, which has a personal development course as well as a livelihoods element, partnered with the Employment Access programme to offer small livelihood grants during the pandemic. In addition, it continued its personal development course via online platforms. It also assisted women with small businesses, particularly in relation to crafts – and much of this work was focussed on making material, re-usable face masks. They donated some of these, and also made others available for sale, which assisted with income generation for clients.

The Welfare Programme was inundated with requests during the lockdown. It more than doubled the amount of assistance it provided to clients, and also distributed food parcels. The assistance provided by this programme was a lifeline for many families and individuals.

The Advocacy Programme engaged in high level advocacy, strategic litigation, and one-on-one advice to clients during the pandemic. This included delivering presentations to the Department of Home Affairs in order to ensure that asylum seekers and refugees were given blanket extensions on their documentation while the lockdown was in effect (and the refugee reception offices closed). We also successfully litigated against the Department of Social Development to ensure that asylum seekers and special permit holders would get access to a special 'social relief of distress' grant offered by the SA government. In addition, we launched a constitutional challenge in respect of the Refugees Amendment Act and have been successful in the first part of that litigation. We worked together with partners to ensure that foreign-owned shops were allowed to operate during the nationwide lockdown, and we provided input into policy documents to further the rights and freedoms of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. We offered a day-to-day paralegal advice and assistance service via WhatsApp and telephone, so that clients can call in with questions. We delivered presentations to the Department of Labour to ensure that asylum seekers would be able to access temporary unemployment benefits. Throughout all of this, we endeavoured to offer effective communication of issues through pamphlets and information – particularly information about COVID-19, making it available in multiple languages.

During the lockdown we have also strengthened our work regarding unaccompanied or separated children, as well as children on the move. This resulted in us obtaining permanent residence for 12 children or young persons who had been in the care system (or were still in the care system), and assisting with other matters such as family reunification, and voluntary return, where appropriate. We also contributed by issuing two briefs on the impact of the lockdown and COVID-19 on migration and migration policy; as well as a COVID-19 Rapid Needs Assessment report by UN agencies. The Scalabrini Centre continued to make submissions on policy and legislative developments nationally and internationally.



Source: Scalabrini Centre Cape Town.



Source: Scalabrini Centre Cape Town.



Communities used to travel to buy, maybe one loaf of bread.

Source: Scalabrini Centre Cape Town.



Source: Scalabrini Centre Cape Town.



THREE2SIX REFUGEE CHILDREN'S EDUCATION PROJECT

Director of Three2Six: Mr. Mark Potterton

Three2Six advocacy, communication and stakeholder engagement officer: Ms. Charlotte Margerit

Networking/Partners: During the COVID-19 pandemic different partners and donors supported the Project Three2Six.

Three2Six is a bridging education project for refugee and migrant children who cannot access state schooling in South Africa. We are members of a Johannesburg-based organization, which falls under the NPO number of the Institute of the Marist Brothers of the Schools. It provides its learners with three hours of mathematics, English and life skills a day, a meal and a snack, stationery, textbooks, uniforms and safe transport to and from the project. It also prepares them for their transition into mainstream schooling by supporting their resilience through various initiatives. It currently accommodates 225 refugee and migrant children and employs nine teachers who are refugees themselves. Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, the project provided regular food parcels and food vouchers to its families along with PPE and hygiene items as they could not afford them.

During the weeks of hard lockdown in South Africa, the project had to move to distance learning for three months using WhatsApp and Radio Veritas to keep the children engaged and to ensure they could still learn despite the closure of the campuses. During this period, the teachers regularly called the families to check in on them for any additional support needs.

When the campuses reopened mid-June 2020, we observed all the new rules: wearing of masks, social distancing, regular and thorough hand washing, while teaching the learners on site. Psychosocial support was provided to them on all three campuses.

One of the challenges faced by the project during the months of hard lockdown was distance learning given the children's lack of access to technology at home. It required adaptability from the teachers to keep teaching the children. Another challenge was the teaching time lost due to the hard lockdown. Once the campuses could reopen, teaching hours were added to the normal schedule to catch up. Providing food support to the families who were in dire need also proved to be a challenge in the first weeks of the lockdown as the regulations did not allow for gatherings. This is why food vouchers were given to the families. The project had to raise extra funds for this family food support programme.

The project participated in online coordination meetings organised with actors from the migration field to share coping strategies, and available services and resources during the COVID-19 crisis. Thanks to the generous support of its funders and thanks to their flexibility in the use of funds, in 2020 Three2Six was able to provide much needed support to its beneficiaries.

Despite the challenges that the crisis posed, the project and its team adapted its activities, kept delivering on its objectives, and supported its learners and families.



Photo: *Thre2Six team providing assistance to the children and their families.*

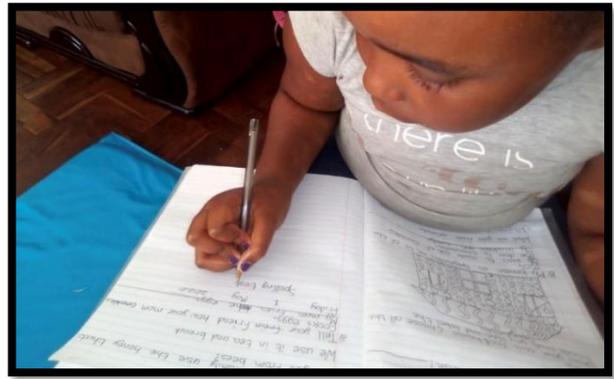


Photo: *Child participating the Three2Six class.*



Bienvenu Shelter

For Migrants and Displaced Women and their Children

BIENVENU SHELTER

For migrants and displaced women and their children

Congregation: Missionary Sisters of St Charles Borromeo – Scalabrinians.

Director: Sr Marivane Chiesa MSCS

Networking Partners: Department of Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees (Archdiocese of Johannesburg), Caritas South Africa, parishes within the Archdiocese of Johannesburg, international and private donors.

In 2001, the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of St Charles Borromeo (Scalabrinians), initiated the project of Bienvenu Shelter as a result of their commitment in promoting the human dignity and human rights of migrants. Bienvenu Shelter for Migrants and Displaced Women and their Children is a safe and secure environment that provides healing and assists the women and their children to restart their lives.

When the global crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic started in March 2020, the sustainability of the shelter and its mission became an extreme concern. Once again Bienvenu Shelter was challenged to think on how to reach out the huge number of people in need of assistance. All of them knowing how much Bienvenu Shelter cares for them especially during this critical time affecting the poor.

With prayers, hope and love, the Director called her team and a contingency plan was designed to assist and protect the women and their children in the shelter as well as the ex-residents and the community living in the Archdiocese of Johannesburg territory. Together with the Department of Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees and the support of their dear donors and friends, these concerns were soon lifted, and they were blessed with donations of essentials that enabled them to continue serving the people. This exercise brought new donors and volunteers contacting them directly with offers to assist the mothers and children.

The Bienvenu Shelter was truly overwhelmed by the generosity of others and with this, they could serve not just the mothers and children living at the shelter, but also the surrounding community, providing them with food parcels, food vouchers, vegetables on a regular basis, blankets, warm clothing and sanitary packs.

In partnership with Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees, the Archdiocese of Johannesburg provided thousands of food parcels to the neediest ex-residents, the crèche children, many parishes, shelters and local communities in general over the course of the year. The shortage of staff was the main challenge.

Bienvenu Shelter cannot predict the coming months. However, it is busy preparing for the “new normal” with its own challenges as it is still dealing with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic – spiritually, emotionally, logistically, financially, etc.

They thank all the partnership organizations, the donors and volunteers that assisted to reach out to the poor and needy. May God bless all.



Photo: Pastoral Care and Bienvenu Shelter outreach programme at **St. Lewis Bertrand Paneyville:** Bienvenu Boleko, Sr. Marizete, Sr. Marivane and Fr. Raphael the parish priest of Rose de Lima.



Photo: At **St Rose of Lima Delmas**, Sister Marivane handing a food voucher to a beneficiary.



Photo: Mrs. Adilia de Sousa distributing food vouchers to families.



Photo: Mrs. Adilia de Sousa and Ms Yvette assisting the outreach community.

**CATHOLIC SHELTER FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN (MUSINA)
(Border with Beitbridge - Zimbabwe)**

Diocese of Tzaneen: Bishop Joao Noe Rodrigues

Congregation: Sisters of the Holy Cross

Director of the Shelter: Sr Francis Grogan

Networking Partners: Diocese of Tzaneen, Caritas Kurisanani, Caritas SouthAfrica, Future Family and private donors.

The Catholic Shelter for Women and Children opened in 2007 as a response to the influx of migrants and refugees from Zimbabwe due to the political and economic situation in the country at that time. The old Catholic church in Nancefield was made available as a place of safety and refuge for the vulnerable women.

At the time, it was not foreseen that this would be an on-going situation even from other African countries. From the beginning this was meant to be a short-term response to an emergency situation. However, the women continued to come. The shelter welcomes up to 125 women and 30 children at a time.

The majority of the women come from Zimbabwe and are considered as economic migrants. They come to get piece jobs to support their children back home because of poverty and hunger; many are HIV positive. They are supposed to stay for not longer than three months but when is time to leave, they are not yet ready due to the economic situation in South Africa. Many of them come through the river and are robbed or even raped on the journey. The COVID-19 restrictions from the government make it even more difficult for them to earn their livelihood as they used to have an income from the informal sector and selling in streets of Musina.

Caritas Kurisanani and Caritas South Africa with other private donors were able to assist the women and children during the COVID-19 lockdown. The solidarity of many people assisting the shelter made it possible to include many people who reside in different parishes under the same Diocese of Tzaneen, where the shelter is situated. The women and children were all migrants and refugees that just arrived before the lockdown started. They come from Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Burundi etc.

In the townships of Musina such as Nancefield and Harper, the care workers and volunteers came across a number of migrant families living in very poor conditions and who benefited greatly from the assistance provided by the shelter. Blankets and food parcels were given to the migrants and undocumented people in the area, including South Africans that are undocumented and were also struggling during this pandemic.



Photo: Beneficiary of the project and the Catholic Women's Shelter of Musina – Diocese of Tzaneen.

All in all, Musina Women's Shelter and Caritas Tzaneen bought and delivered 344 units of food items, 234 units of hygiene and sanitation and 259 units of winter clothes and blankets. All of these were distributed to the women's shelter and identified parishes and villages. Some goods were bought for the shelter for the upkeep and use of the women and children who live there. They also managed to assist a neighbouring men's shelter who are the counterpart of the women's shelter in also assisting the migrants, refugees and undocumented people that were struggling during the lockdown. All the beneficiaries were grateful and delighted because this was a great assistance during their time of great need.

His Lordship Bishop Joao of Tzaneen expressed his gratitude for the funding and applauded Caritas South Africa who kept an open communication with the Caritas Kurisanani, the local Diocesan Office in Tzaneen and with the Catholic Women Shelter of Musina. He said that it was good that the funding was channelled through the already existing structures in the Diocese.



SOUTHERN AFRICAN CATHOLIC PARLIAMENTARY LIAISON OFFICE (CPLO)

Liaison Bishop: His Grace Archbishop Stephen Brislin

Director: Rev. Fr. Peter-John Pearson

No. of staff members: 7

The Parliamentary Liaison Office of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) is the official vehicle for contact and dialogue between the Catholic Church in South Africa on the one hand, and the country's parliament and government on the other. It provides an avenue for the Church – as part of civil society – to contribute to debates on issues of public policy, to exert an influence for the common good in areas of political, economic and social concern, and to help shape legislative and policy developments.

Purpose: to participate in the discussions around policy and legislation especially in the parliamentary domain. During the pandemic its emphasis was on contributing to policy and legislative discussion, engage the content of such policies through the lens of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) and share information with the broader faith communities *inter alia*.

We used the following modalities:

Written work in the form of digests – a collation of links to articles on a particular subject. We published 15 such digests on topics directly connected with COVID-19.

Ten responses which are immediate reflections/analysis on a particular topic, again relating to the pandemic.

We published six briefing papers which contain longer, more in depth analysis of policy, again in this time related to the pandemic. These covered topics ranging from mental health to small scale farmers to displaced persons.

We also hosted or co-hosted a number of webinars directly related to the pandemic. Topics included small scale farmers, alcohol bans, children and gender based violence during the lockdown.

We also hosted five webinars where we connected with Catholic Parliamentary Liaison Offices across Africa and provided opportunities for our colleagues and ourselves to share news and analysis on various government and church responses to the pandemic, to analyse best and worse practices.

Individual staff members contributed to national and international think tanks responding to the pandemic.

Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference
PARLIAMENTARY LIAISON OFFICE

20 Years of Participating in Public Policy





TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS DESK

Liaison Bishop of CTIP: His Grace Archbishop Buti Tlhagale OMI
Director: Sr Melanie O'Connor

The Counter Trafficking in Persons office opened on 1 May 2020, immediately after the country moved from Level 5 to Level 4. It continued with its work of providing support for women survivors of human trafficking. Most were particularly severely affected by COVID-19, as a result of which they had lost their livelihoods. So, for instance, one young Zimbabwean woman who was saved from trafficking, and who is pregnant as a result of being raped, was provided with rent to pay for a room, as well as groceries and clothing.

At the end of lockdown, sewing machines, laptops, projectors and material for making clothes was sent to Malawi, to equip four centres for women in the Mzuzu Diocese. They are already generating small incomes from the sewing, enabling them to mitigate the worst poverty caused by COVID-19. They are also making masks and selling them in their communities.

In October 2020 a physical workshop was conducted at the Municipal Offices in Sandton, for auxiliary social workers from Alexandra.

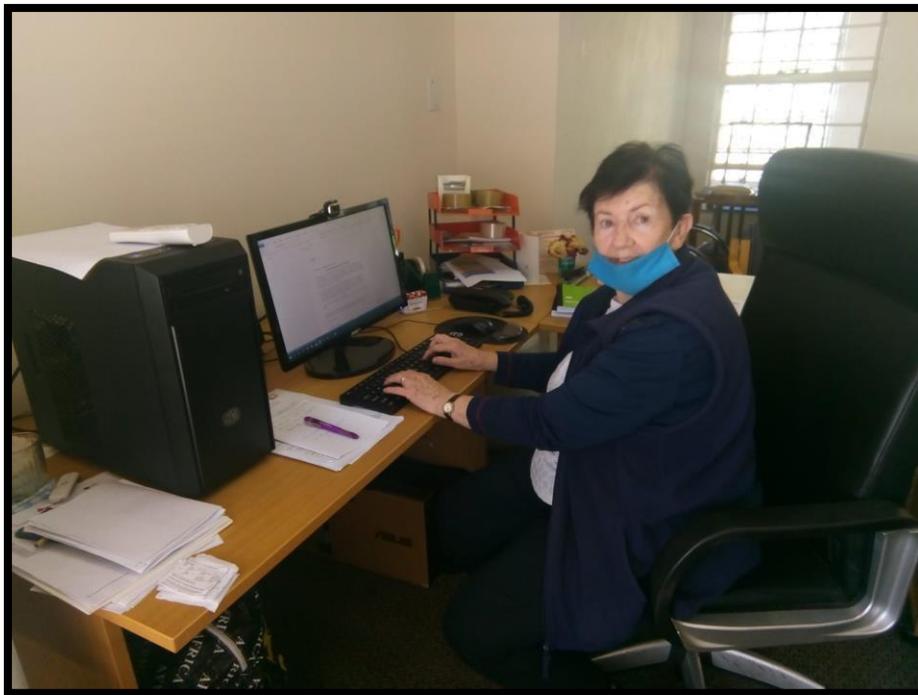


Photo: Sr Melanie O'Connor working in her office.

Liaison Bishop: Bishop Frank Nubuasah SVD

Director: Fr. Patrick Rakeketsi CSS

During the lockdown, the SACBC AIDS Office, together with other partners continued on the “Early detection of TB” programme, at implementation sites countrywide, doing door-to-door screening for TB, referring those suspected of having TB to their local clinics for sputum tests and monitoring those initiated on treatment for adherence to treatment.

The community advocates were on the campaign to encourage people living with HIV to test and start treatment as it became clear that if they were not on anti-retroviral treatment, and have a low CD4 count, they would be at higher risk of experiencing severe COVID-19.



The “track and trace” programme was also still in full swing; to track ARV treatment defaulters, to re-initiate them in treatment, and to enrol them in support groups.

Community advocates would also monitor that the people who have been tested would stay in the support groups through either door-to-door with social distancing kept or through telephone. They would also ensure that people living with HIV have safe access to their treatment in the local clinics.

Personal protective equipment was provided for all community advocates to allow them to continue with their work in a safe manner. Permits were procured for their easy movement during curfew.

Liaison Bishop: Liaison Bishop: His Grace Archbishop Stephen Brislin

Director: Mr. Johan Viljoen

The Denis Hurley Peace Institute named after South African Catholic Archbishop Denis Eugene Hurley, a critical voice of the church during Apartheid, would like to be associated with his stance that the church (its people and organizations) must become a community serving humanity. The Institute hopes to do this by serving people in conflict situations ensuring that building peace addresses the root causes of conflict and the processes by which the peace is achieved, respects the human rights of people.

The vision is that the Denis Hurley Peace Institute will be a credible and respected peace-builder in Africa and internationally, actively upholding the social teaching that peace is much more than the absence of war.

Its mission is to build and co-labour for peace in Africa and internationally through solidarity with and service to humanity in conflict through the promotion of dialogue, justice and reconciliation.

The goal of the Denis Hurley Peace Institute (hereafter Hurley Institute) is the enhanced capacity for an informed and appropriate response to conflict by the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC) in particular and faith-based leadership in general, acting in solidarity with other civil society partners for the benefit of humanity.

They are awestruck by the generosity of all who assisted them in any way in supporting the needy and most vulnerable. They thank first God for allowing them the opportunity to be His hands and feet in these trying times. They also thank all the generous hearts that supported their projects. Without them many of the poor and needy were not able to be assisted.

The Denis Hurley Peace Institute opened its offices on 1 May 2020, when the country moved from Level 5 to level 4 and has been fully operational since then. It has been continuing with its normal activities since then.

During lockdown, DHPI wrote funding proposals for its partners and submitted them to potential donors:

- For Caritas Uige (Angola) for a COVID-19 relief project.
- For Caritas Luanda (Angola) for a COVID-19 relief project.
- For Caritas Bamenda (Cameroon) for a COVID-19 relief project.
- For J&P Bamenda, to the German Embassy, for a GBV project.
- For J&P Bamenda to the Commonwealth Association, for a GBV project.
- For Archdiocese of Gulu J&P to Misereor for a land right and GBV project.
- For Caritas South Africa, for a COVID-19 relief project.



Photo: Mr. Johan Viljoen assisting organizations.



RURAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT PROGRAMME (RDSP)

Coordinator: Brenda Snyders

RDSP has been operating, but in a very different way than usual. Once the lockdown was enforced our core work of onsite training and mentoring could not continue. As staff and with the support of our management board we decided to continue to support vulnerable rural communities. Staff reached out to the different community development organisations we work with in the Western, Northern and Eastern Cape to assess the needs. No specific funding was available at the time and the decision was made to raise funds via social media, specifically via our Facebook page and WhatsApp.

Eastern Cape Campaign

A campaign was launched on 20 April 2020 for the supply of face masks and hand sanitiser to three rural Eastern Cape villages. Our initial target was to supply 50 families (250 people) with face masks, but we are so grateful that we have far exceeded this target.

Our campaign was also published in the Southern Cross (thanks to Pamela Davids, one of our management board members).

A local woman made the face masks which provided an income to two families. We were able to distribute 400 face masks: 250 to the villages of Bhalasi, Tyutyu Village and Ilitha Township in King Williams Town and 150 to the community of Cathcart. The funds also allowed us to provide hand sanitizer to 80 families in these areas.

2 The Southern Cross, April 29 to May 5, 2020

LOCAL

Campaign to supply facemasks in Eastern Cape

BY ERIN CARELSE

IN the light of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Rural Development Support Program (RDSP), an associate body of the Southern African Catholics Bishops' Conference, has started a campaign to supply families in the rural villages of the Eastern Cape with facemasks, to aid in continued efforts to check the spread of the virus.

The NPO, which serves various regions, has been working in the Eastern Cape for over 13 years and in the past six years has been operating a satellite office in Ibhisho.

RDSP staffer Nosakhete Mpush, who knows and understands the local communities and runs the work in the province, explained that the organisation started the campaign on April 20, because it saw the need for hygiene items in neighbouring villages due to the pandemic.

Ms Mpush has identified three villages where there is a great need: Ibhilasi Location, Tyutu Location and Ilitha Township in King William's Town.

"The unemployment rate is very high in these villages and many people depend on the elderly and child support grant only. They live in small

houses or shacks where there are about five or more in one household, and there are no taps in their yards for water," she explained.

"Some family members have to go to public healthcare centres and collect their grant payouts—places where they need to wear facemasks. When I inquired why they do not follow the instructions of wearing masks, they said they cannot afford to buy them, and access to the shops where they can buy them is difficult," Ms Mpush said.

A major concern is that residents could easily get the virus and spread it to their families without intending to.

"Soon it is going to be grant paydays, so they will be at high risk for contracting the virus if not equipped with masks and hand sanitisers [due to the limited access to water]. Besides having limited food during this Covid-19 pandemic, they have the added burden of keeping themselves and their families safe and protected," she noted.

Nomthetho Kwinana, 49, who was born and bred in the rural areas of Keiskammahoek where she is currently based, makes the cloth facemasks with the help of her neighbour. She charges R20 per mask.

"Due to unemployment and unfore-

seen circumstance, in 2001 I started to make use of the skill that I have as a seamstress to put food on the table. Now I am sewing facemasks due to this Covid-19 pandemic," Ms Kwinana said.

She explained that the masks she makes are safe because they comprise three layers to ensure the virus cannot be spread easily.

"This project helps me in making sure we are living in a protected community. This pandemic has caused distress to self-employed people like myself; now at least I get to use my skills and keep myself busy by making facemasks," Ms Kwinana said.

To date, the RDSP has raised R8 600, which means that they will be able to supply 430 people with masks. It hopes to reach many more rural people through this initiative.

The organisation would also like to supply communities with hand sanitisers, and asks for donations for these as well.

The banking details are: Standard Bank Sea Point branch, account number 071059210, account name Rural Development Support Program. The reference is Covid-19 Response.

For more information on the campaign, contact Faith Brown on 071 095-3156 or faith@rdsp.co.za

The Rural Development Support Program, an SACBC associate body, is campaigning for funds to supply Eastern Cape rural families with facemasks and hand sanitiser in the continued effort to check the spread of the coronavirus.

Nomthetho Kwinana (right), with the help of a neighbour, is sewing three-layered cloth facemasks for sale.





Photo: Face masks were handed out to families from young to old.



Photo: Hand sanitizers handed out.

Global Giving Campaign - Nomfuneko is finally baking and cooking!



Photos of different activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RDSP started a Global Giving Campaign to supply wood fired ovens to vulnerable groups in the Eastern Cape. One of the beneficiaries that was identified for this campaign was Nomfuneko who runs Kusile Women Empowerment. When the lockdown was announced RDSP arranged for the stove to be delivered to her in Stutterheim prior to the total shutdown. We also supplied her with a 19kg gas cylinder to enable her to bake bread. This equipment has assisted Kusile Women Empowerment to cook quicker and smarter. The oven allowed Nomfuneko to be of service to the needy in her community. During Levels 5 and 4 of the South African lockdown, Kusile Women Empowerment has been working tirelessly, making sure that the poverty-stricken communities of Stutterheim have access to at least one cooked meal per day.

The stove that was supplied by Rural Development Support Programme (through Global Giving) is playing a very big role, as they were able to bake bread for their three soup kitchens. Producing between 60 and 90 baked loaves of bread per day. This has made a big difference to the staff and beneficiaries. Over 750 children as well as elderly people comprising 20% of the community, are benefiting from the three soup kitchens managed by Kusile Women Empowerment.

Western Cape Campaign

In the Western Cape we partnered with one of our long-standing community development organisations called Change Agents S.A. based in Montagu. RDSP supplied them with 100 face masks and 100 bars of soap to distribute in rural areas.

A total of 79 children and 52 adults received a meal. This was made possible through our online campaign as well as family and friends who donated ingredients. 131 meals were prepared and packed by volunteers. RDSP will continue to seek financial support to reach out to vulnerable communities. Our off-site mentoring and support during this time to our beneficiary organisations continues when needed.



Rural Education Access Programme (REAP)

Liaison Bishop: His Grace Archbishop Stephen Brislin

Director: Mr Russell Davies

At the beginning of the crisis in March 2020, all of our students had to vacate their residences and return home. Face to face classes were suspended indefinitely and all institutions were in the process of converting their academic programme to an online platform. This remains a work in progress and some institutions and faculties are further advanced than others.

Obviously, the ability of students to participate successfully in online learning relies on several factors being in place:

- Having a functioning laptop or computer
- Reliable connectivity (Access to data or Wi-Fi)
- Access to electricity to charge devices
- Living in an environment conducive to study
- Basic IT skills

Universities of South Africa (USAf) and various other institutions negotiated deals with the main telecommunications providers (ie. Vodacom, MTN, Telkom, Cell C) to negotiate zero rated data status for their websites and learning portals and also making data directly available to students. However, the extent to which this is actually happening for students varies widely. It can depend on the institution, the network or the deal (e.g. only night use between 12am and 5am), and whether they still need data to access other relevant documents or information. The institutions and NSFAS have also been supplying students with data and where necessary, laptops. Again, the effectiveness of the actual implementation of these measures varies.

In April 2020 we conducted a comprehensive survey of every REAP student with a view to ascertaining in detail their current circumstances. That included:

- Their home living environment – how many people at home, do they have food and electricity, is there a space to study, is it noisy?
- The status of their course – is it continuing, if so, using what modalities, are there tests / assignments / exams pending, is the student coping and up to date?
- The connectivity / access to data / functionality of their laptop.
- Whether they are still receiving their NSFAS allowances.

What emerged was that many students are really struggling to manage at home. They are living in crowded, noisy and cramped conditions, with a family under severe financial strain – and often pulled into onerous domestic responsibilities. They are anxious about their uncertain academic futures and struggling to adapt to a whole new way of learning which may go on indefinitely. They are also struggling with connectivity and access to data. Whilst REAP provides laptops to all students, some students received their laptops in first year but they have some faults which the students are struggling

to get repaired during this period. We are finding that our students actually need even more reassurance and support than usual during this period. Obviously, none of us know for how long this situation will continue.

Out of necessity REAP has cancelled all its scheduled workshops and camps and adapted its student support model to an entirely virtual modality. All our staff are now working remotely. We have converted to Google Classroom and are holding fortnightly group sessions with all students. We have recruited tutors (mainly drawn from REAP alumni & senior students) to assist them to manage the transition. These sessions last two hours, are hosted by our student development advisors, and address both academic and psychosocial support issues. For this to work effectively, both staff and students need reliable access to data. We are trying to assist as many of our students as possible to return to residence or private accommodation where they have a much better study environment and Wi-Fi with reliable connectivity. Most of the private accommodation providers are accepting students back but university residences are not. Those students who are still remaining at home are our greatest concern.

The delay in the release of 2020 university and matric results is making the registration process for 2021 extremely problematic. The funding challenges at NSFAS and delays in confirming applications is triggering significant student unrest.

CATHOLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION (CATHCA)

Liaison Bishop: Bishop Frank Nubuasah SVD

Director: Mr Andrea Cortemiglia

Summary of the key COVID-19- response by CATHCA

Key initiatives	No. of health initiatives	Community-based health initiatives by Catholic Health Providers
COVID-19 prevention, screening and testing integrated into HIV/TB services	13 Initiatives	CATHCA supported 13 community-based, Catholic health providers (CHPs) in carrying out COVID-19 prevention campaigns in hot spot areas such as informal settlements, taxi ranks, mining areas and busy streets across the provinces of Gauteng and Mpumalanga. They also engaged in screening, testing, and referring COVID-19 cases to hospitals, in close collaboration with the Department of Health at various levels. All the above was carried out as part of the wider HIV/TB service provision.
COVID-19 prevention- and- response campaigns	Four initiatives	CATHCA assisted four CHPs in implementing COVID-19 prevention- and- response campaigns through door-to-door visits to youth-headed, elderly-headed, and vulnerable households living in marginalized areas of Eastern Cape (Aliwal North), Free State, and Eswatini (Manzini). They educated the communities on the pandemic, engaged in screening and testing, reported on new infections to the health authorities, and made patient referrals to hospitals.
COVID-19 screening / Non-communicable diseases	Two initiatives	CATHCA supported two CHPs in conducting a series of COVID-19 testing along with screening of non-communicable diseases for elderly people living in remote areas of KwaZulu-Natal, in collaboration with local parishes.
Total for 2020	19 Initiatives	

There are also a number of diocesan-based and parish-based COVID-19-related initiatives carried out with local resources of which we have been made aware by CATHCA members.

Here's a few photos:

CATHCA- supported COVID-19 - related initiatives:

1. The Aliwal North Diocese in the Eastern Cape Province: Food parcels distributed to OVCs.



2. Lesedi Centre of Hope in the Free State Province:
Chronic patients receive food parcels in homes.



3. Siyathokoza OVC centre in the Free State Province:
Food parcels distributed to informal settlements.



4. Bishop Joseph Kizito of Aliwal North with Diocesan HIV/AIDS Committee distributing over 1000 food parcels to vulnerable youth and families.



5. Bishop Victor Phalana of Klerksdorp diocese with diocesan COVID-19 team supporting vulnerable children with food parcels.





SOCIETY OF ST VINCENT DE PAUL

www.ssvp.org.za

Name of Chaplain: Fr Brian Mhlanga OP

National President: Mr Peter Keshwar

Networking/partners: All Dioceses, parishes, Catholic schools and sodalities within the Catholic Church where a particular conference or central council is located. (More or less 2500 volunteers).

In South Africa, the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP) has approximately 2051 registered members and many more volunteers spread over 243 active conferences and 15 central councils who work relentlessly to assist people in need and combat social injustice.

The Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP) were committed to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. They were the first ones to reach out to the different parishes and dioceses all over the country in order to assist the poor and vulnerable. They provided soup kitchens, feeding schemes, food parcels, toiletry packs, old age homes, children's homes, distribution of food, clothing, blankets, toys and presents for Christmas.

The major challenges faced were:

1. The closure of churches which resulted in the Society's fundraising activities coming to an abrupt halt.
2. Elderly and retired members, which make up a large proportion of the membership, being unavailable due to health concerns.
3. Travel and contact restrictions.
4. Generally, all beneficiaries are visited and assessed. Personal contact had to be limited and a lot of remote assessment had to take place.
5. Overwhelming need – thousands of new applications daily with only limited resources.
6. Duplication of assistance and lack of coordination among various aid organisations.
7. Certain unscrupulous people selling donated food parcels to community members



Photo: The SSVP volunteers preparing a food distribution to families.

The Society of St Vincent de Paul assisted with: +/- 250 000 food parcels distributed and +/- 300 000

people assisted via soup kitchens & feeding schemes. SSVV members and volunteers have faced overwhelming difficulties and challenges in the year 2020. Yet they have always found a way to continue reaching out to those in need without ever losing sight of their roots and fundamental

Vincentian characteristics. They became instruments of hope to the needy.

The Church, other Catholic sodalities, convents, Catholic schools, as well as parishioners and local businesses and associations rallied to the Vincentian cause to provide and replenish much-needed resources. Parishioners, including priests, nuns, and deacons volunteered their time to operate soup kitchens and feeding schemes, pack and disseminate food parcels, toiletry packs, and much-needed relief to the needy. Loaves of bread, sandwiches, fruit and vegetables, dry and tinned goods, helped to fill their stomachs for a few days.

They are awestruck by the generosity of all who assisted them in any way in supporting the needy and most vulnerable. They thank first God for allowing them the opportunity to be His hands and feet in these trying times. They also thank all the generous hearts that supported their projects. Without them many of the poor and needy would not have been assisted.



Photo: The SSVV volunteers distributing food to families.

Archdiocese of Durban

Liaison Bishop: +Mandla Jwara
Name of Director Raymond Perrier
Number of Staff: 18 (FTE) staff
Number of Volunteers: Dozens of volunteers

As a living legacy to Archbishop Hurley, we work with people of all faith traditions to serve some of the poorest people in central Durban. In particular, we help homeless people, drug users, the urban unemployed and refugees treating them with the honour we all deserve as children of one God. We offer service through our primary healthcare clinic, feeding scheme, political and economic empowerment, community support and training programmes. We provided the following services during Covid19 Pandemic.

- We worked closely with eThekweni Municipality and other NGOs and corporates to set up and run emergency shelters for 2,000 homeless people during the hard lockdown.
- We provided mobile clinic services to the 8 emergency shelters, protecting people not just against COVID but all the other health issues they face.
- We housed 100 of the most vulnerable homeless (the sick, elderly and disabled) in our building for 4 months and ensured that they moved into long-term accommodation at the end.
- In the subsequent waves of lockdown, we have continued to provide food (about 14,000 meals per month working with a range of other faith organisations).
- We have also continued to offer primary healthcare to those in need. The biggest health issues facing marginalised people (esp TB, AIDS and addictions) did not go away because of COVID but were often neglected by the Department of Health.
- We managed to keep off the streets and in business, the homeless men we had empowered economically through our second-hand bookselling programme despite the obstacles that lockdowns created.
- We were advocating to ensure that homeless people could secure replacement IDs so they could access the emergency R350 grant.
- More recently we have been advocating (as part of the National Homeless Network) for a way to ensure that undocumented homeless and refugees can access the COVID vaccine.

We used mainline media and social media to tell the stories of homeless people affected by COVID and their resilience in the face of the crisis. We hosted an in-house Holy Week in 2020 for those who were resident and in 2021 co-ordinated a virtual ecumenical celebration of Holy Week working with dozens of local churches. And we hosted the National Homeless Conversation as a virtual conference which (using technology) enabled a record number of participants to attend (including many homeless people around the country).

While COVID posed a major crisis, it also provided an opportunity for us to be 'a community serving humanity' and to see (yet again) how much more we can achieve by working with other Christians and with people of other faiths. It highlighted the need for a robust and well-resourced faith-based sector who can work with Government and corporates but also has the independence to be able to hold them accountable. It also showed the importance of the Church being focused externally on the needs of society and not being obsessed by its internal issues.

Conclusion

One of the main issues of concern being highlighted by the Covid-19 Pandemic is the perilous state of the relationship between the countries of Africa and the international community. That is particularly true of the former colonizers of the Continent.

That relationship is marked by the gigantic gap in the levels of knowledge and information, as well as expertise and the means to respond to and fight off Covid-19. In most cases the relationship has mutated from colonial occupation and control to quasi-freedom which is characterized by near total dependence on the former occupying power for virtually everything.

For example, most African countries are still handicapped by Europe and the West holding them back from taking their place in the world community as worthy and equal partners. That handicap is international debt, which even in the best of times is a severe restraint on Africa's growth and development.

While there has no doubt been a sometimes exemplary willingness and readiness to share expert knowledge and information about the disease, there is still a huge problem of communicating the requisite knowledge and information to people who are living in a very different social and cultural context. What I have in mind here is specifically, how Covid-19 is spread; how it affects the human body; what simple safety measures can be taken to avoid being infected and, just as important, passing on the infection.

Almost everywhere in Africa the major restraint to effective action against Covid-19 is the inability to access the knowhow, material and other resources known to be effective in dealing with the pandemic.

I believe the Church has contributed, but can still do an enormous amount to close the gap in Africa's ability to fight off the virus. The challenge to the Church is to help remove:

- a) Lack of Information;
- b) Lack of Expertise, including knowledgeable people able to apply that know-how;
- c) Lack of Resources, facilities to make, distribute & use fruits of information;
- d) Lack of Personnel to use available material resources;
- e) Lack of Economic strength to apply know-how & authority.

A second key area where the Church can and must intervene is in changing the nature of the relationship between Africa & World Community:

- From colonization to political independence
- From political independence to economic self-determination
- From the theory of self-determination to real and effective action against Covid-19.

A third and most vital area of remedial action, which the Church can take up and run with, and to work towards making Africa self-reliant is:

Sharing of New Resources, in particular International Solidarity, whose Aim & purpose is so aptly summed up by St John Paul II as the "Globalization of Solidarity."

Many, even in the secular world, have adopted the language of globalization of solidarity. It is therefore time now for the Church to show us how to take the steps to apply it in this life-changing period of history!

Sincere thanks to all Archdioceses, Dioceses and Organizations for responding so promptly to SACBC General Secretariat appeal to Covid-19 Pandemic. The reports collected in this book are a reflection and a contribution from each person. We are eternally thankful. God bless you all!

+ Wilfrid Cardinal Napier OFM
President of Caritas South Africa.
Archbishop of Durban