



Memorandum

To: The President of the Republic of South Africa – His Excellency MC Ramaphosa

Date: 11 April 2020

From: Dr Dirk Hermann - Chief executive Solidarity
Connie Mulder – head Solidarity Research Institute

Subject: The Road to a New Normal - Saving Lives and Livelihoods

Article I. Executive Summary

“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy”
Martin Luther King, Jr.

The South African nation is standing on a precipice – we can either rise or perish. Corona has changed the world as we know it – a pandemic sweeping across all of humanity has changed the global landscape forever – and South Africa is not going to emerge from this crisis unscathed.



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Solidariteit Hoofkantoor | Solidarity Head Office
T: 012 644 4300 | C: 0861 25 24 23 | E: diens@solidariteit.co.za
H.v. DF Malanrylaan en Eendrachtstaat, Kloofsig | Cnr DF Malan and Eendracht Streets, Kloofsig

Due to timely and drastic intervention by our government we have been given a chance at emerging stronger and united – rather than falling by the wayside of history. Now we need to ensure that we, as a country, keep the right course a little while longer so that we can overcome the pandemic, whilst building a stronger foundation for the next generation to build on.

Solidarity understands the need for drastic intervention in the fight against Covid-19. South Africa is at unique risk due to our high levels of immune-vulnerable people within our population – and drastic intervention to ensure the lives of our vulnerable is justified and necessary.

We now need to ensure that we also safeguard the livelihoods of the millions of South African workers, whilst not compromising on our commitment to saving as many of our vulnerable people as humanly possible. As a country we now need to take the right course to realise President Ramaphosa's vision of pursuing "a path that both saves lives and protects livelihoods."¹

Our priority should be to ensure that healthcare is available to the vulnerable members of our society. Ultimately the fight against Covid-19 will be fought by our healthcare workers – we need to ensure they have all the resources they need to win this fight. These resources can only be ensured by getting our economy back to life, without compromising on the health and safety of our populace.

It is in this spirit that Solidarity proposes stringent conditions under which we can get most of South Africa back to work during the lockdown period. South Africa is a country of workers – and the unfortunate reality of the economy grinding to a halt is

¹ <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/speeches/message-president-cyril-ramaphosa-covid-19-pandemic-0>





that workers will bear the brunt. Government, trade unions, business and civil society need to do everything we can to enable the South African worker to once again earn his or her living – and to enable the South African worker to protect the vulnerable, the destitute and the lonely in our country.

South African citizens crave peace and stability above all else. We need peace and stability to enable our elderly to watch their grandchildren grow up in a better world, to enable our youth to realise their dreams and to ensure that we create an environment where ordinary people can live and thrive. As Solidarity we are worried about the impact of the lockdown on people's ability to earn an income and provide for their families. An empty stomach could lead to desperate people taking desperate measures. It is with peace and stability in mind that Solidarity proposes amendments to existing regulations to ensure South Africa gets back to work and to ensure South Africa's security forces can maintain peace and stability during our most trying time as a country.

Compared to the rest of the world South Africa is faced with a unique proposition when it comes to Covid-19 – we have almost 8-million people living with HIV/AIDS. The majority of people living with HIV/AIDS have been enabled to live a largely normal life due to government's extensive ARV-programme. This extensive ARV-programme has been one of the shining achievements of the South African government – ensuring that millions of people get to live full lives with a minimal impact due to HIV/AIDS. However, Covid-19 constitutes a serious threat to anyone with an underlying condition – and this population is particularly vulnerable. With our vulnerable in mind Solidarity proposes amendments to regulations to ensure we can quickly identify clusters of infection and react with the necessary speed.



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Deel van die Solidariteit Beweging

In his inaugural address to Parliament on 16 February 2018 President Ramaphosa beseeched South African citizens to answer the call of *Thuma Mina*. We now ask our government to accept our help during this crisis.

Trust South Africa to realise the gravitas of the situation and to act responsibly.

Trust South Africa to work safely and productively.

Trust South Africa to protect and help those most vulnerable.

Trust South Africa to face the high mountains and cross the rough seas.

God bless South Africa. God seën Suid-Afrika.

Article II. Lockdown

A national lockdown is an extreme measure meant to slow the spread of the virus and to save lives. The goal of a lockdown is to buy time for healthcare to build additional capacity and to “flatten the curve” of infections.

This critical intervention is meant to ensure healthcare does not get overwhelmed as has been evident in other countries.

Thus, any regulation should ultimately serve the goal of slowing the spread of the virus and enabling South Africa's healthcare sector to remain standing in the fight against Covid-19.

For South Africa's healthcare sector to remain well-resourced and ready to react to the pandemic – it is critical that the South African economy is running at as close to maximum capacity as is reasonably and safely possible. Otherwise we might slow



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the spread of the virus – only to find resources dwindling and healthcare still being overwhelmed.

Solidarity proposes that most of the South African economy can still run, given stringent conditions and with worker health and safety as the utmost principle. We need a healthy and safe workplace to ensure a healthy country.

Section 2.01 A Healthy and Safe Workplace

To prevent the risk of exposure and the spread of the disease, it is of critical importance that South African workers be provided with decent workplaces during the pandemic.

Furthermore, a healthy and safe workplace not only protects the worker – but also enables workers to still contribute to the South African economy during this crisis where we need resources the most.

A healthy and safe workplace should

- Start by ensuring that workers travel to and from work safely
- Ensure the health and safety of all employees and other persons at the workplace
- Ensure that no persons other than employees are negatively affected by the activities at the workplace
- Have assessments to determine the hazards and risks for health and safety at the workplaces considering work procedures and processes.
- Determine what measures are necessary to eliminate the threats identified in such assessments. If the identified threats cannot be eliminated, the necessary



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measures to counter the threats and protect the employees and other persons should be determined; and

- Implement such measures and monitor the effectiveness thereof.

(a) Risk Management

- Appropriate risk analysis should be done at all workplaces and daily risk analyses must be kept. These risk analyses should specifically deal with Covid-19 as a risk to be monitored and controlled or eliminated.
- A phasing-in period should be implemented to ensure that South Africa returns to work in a safe and healthy manner. This can be done by limiting working days for a couple of weeks before a return to normal working hours. A phased approach enables better monitoring of the risk of Covid-19 in workplaces as we transition to a “new normal”.
- Workplaces should reduce the number of employees on site at any time to reduce the risk of the virus spreading. This can be done in several ways:
 - o Encouraging remote working as much as is feasible;
 - o Using a shift roster whilst simultaneously extending operating hours to minimise personnel on site;
 - o Ensuring that a space of at least 1 m² is maintained between employees at all times
- Workplaces should ensure the availability of adequate safety equipment for employees



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- Government can assist by allowing a tax rebate on the purchase of personal protective equipment
- Workplaces need to ensure adequate and high-quality hygiene facilities and products
 - Awareness campaigns should be undertaken at all workplaces
 - Regular sanitising of shared spaces by cleaners would also be required.
- Workplaces should have risk management plans and facilities to handle cases where an employee tests positive for Covid-19
 - Employees with flu-like symptoms should not report to work and rather report via telecommunication that they are self-isolating.
 - If any flu-like symptoms are witnessed at a workplace employees should be isolated at the workplace as soon as possible, unless the employee can self-isolate safely.
 - A well-ventilated and easily cleanable isolation area should be identified where employees can be safely isolated whilst health services are notified.
- Where possible, employers should assist employees with safe transport to and from work.

An exhaustive code of good practice is attached as addendum to this memorandum that fleshes out in much more detail the conditions for a healthy and safe workplace as proposed in this document.



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By adhering to health and safety measures we can “enable a phased recovery of the economy, allowing the return to operation of certain sectors under strictly controlled conditions”² as envisioned by President Ramaphosa in his televised address on 9 April 2020.

Section 2.02 Limiting Movement whilst Allowing Freedom

To curb the spread of the virus it is necessary to curtail unnecessary movement of people as much as possible. By way of speaking, Covid-19 does not have legs – people provide its legs.

However, the need to curtail movement needs to be balanced with the need for people to travel to workplaces and for other services.

In order to balance these conflicting needs Solidarity proposes a smart lockdown based on lessons learnt in other countries.

(a) International Lessons

Although Italy, China, the United States of America and Spain have been some of the hardest hit countries in each of these countries Covid-19 hit specific regions harder than others. In China the Hubei province was particularly hard hit³ whilst in Italy the Lombardy region bore the brunt of the disease.⁴ In Spain the communities of Madrid and Catalonia had the most infections⁵ with the rest of the country not

² <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/speeches/message-president-cyril-ramaphosa-covid-19-pandemic-0>

³ https://wp.m.163.com/163/page/news/virus_report/index.html? nw =1& anw =1

⁴ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1099375/coronavirus-cases-by-region-in-italy/>

⁵ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1102882/cases-of-coronavirus-confirmed-in-spain-in-2020-by-region/>



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nearly as affected. The prime example of the regional nature of the corona pandemic is the USA, with New York and New Jersey constituting 45,6% of the total Covid-19 cases whilst states like Wyoming and North Dakota have 0,05% and 0,06% of the total cases respectively. ⁶

The lessons learnt from these international examples are that more surgical lockdowns can be applied to great effect when a specific infection cluster has been identified. In fact this is the method China used to great effect – by implementing strict travel restrictions in most of China, but locking down Wuhan and the Hubei province specifically they stifled the virus's spread whilst maintaining economic activity in the rest of the country as best as possible.

(b) Smart Lockdown

A smart lockdown would enable South Africa to lock down infection clusters as they happen and to allocate medical resources to the regions that need it most whilst enabling the other regions in South Africa to maintain as much economic activity as possible.

This would enable unaffected regions to ensure affected regions are afforded the necessary resources to fight the virus. By staggering the lockdown in such a manner South Africa can save lives as well as livelihoods.

A smart lockdown would

- Prohibit free movement of persons between regions

⁶ <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/us/>





- These regions would logically be municipalities – with each municipality being responsible for enforcing the travel restrictions in its own boundaries.
- In metros this can be further fragmented into regions that are easily enforceable.
- Domestic and international air travel will still be restricted, as well as passenger rail between regions.
- Allow free movement within these regions
 - This will allow people to still maintain normal economic activity as much as possible.
 - Ensuring a steady, albeit diminished stream of tax that can be allocated to regions requiring additional resources.
 - Allow South Africans to still partake in religious services, funerals and family gatherings in uninfected regions. Maintaining the social fabric of community is what makes us strong – the importance of this cannot be stated enough.
- Allow freight to travel unhindered to ensure a steady supply of goods
 - Currently regulation already allows free movement for essential goods within stringent conditions.
 - Following stringent health and safety protocols this can be extended to more sectors' freight with minimum disruption.
 - Allowing the logistical chains for goods and services to still operate will ensure quick and efficient reaction to critical freight needs in affected regions.



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- Enforce a strict lockdown on infection clusters
 - o If a region is identified as an infection cluster – movement and economic activity is drastically inhibited.
 - o Freight to and from the region can be reduced to only essential goods.
- Extending testing and delegating testing responsibility to provincial MECs and municipal officials
 - o Municipalities should report regularly on the Covid-19 testing done in their area as well as on the results
 - o Knowing not only how many people are affected but also where the infection cluster is – enables smart mobilisation of medical resources to render help to the people who most desperately need it.
- Rigidly police entrances and exits from regions
 - o Focusing police capacity on limiting movement between regions ensures that maximum efficiency can be achieved with minimal deployment.
 - o Reducing contact between citizens and security forces unless absolutely necessary will also decrease incidents of abuse by security forces as well as provocation by citizens.
 - o Any possible public violence can be easily isolated and managed with minimal effort.



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By amending existing regulations to enable a smart lockdown South Africa can surgically strike at the virus where it exists without the possible collateral damage of locking down a low-risk region.

Enabling as much economic activity in low-risk regions, within stringent health and safety protocols, will also ensure that countless jobs are saved, enabling us to ensure the financial impact of Covid-19 is evenly spread and manageable.

Article III. Conclusion

Once all struggle is grasped, miracles are possible.

Mao Zedong

As we enter the most trying time of our young democracy – let us not shy away from taking the right course.

We cannot afford to fail, as president Ramaphosa stated in his televised address on 9 April 2020: “We are only at the beginning of a monumental struggle that demands our every resource and our every effort.”⁷

We will require massive sacrifices from every South African citizen to “slow down the spread of the virus and to prevent a massive loss of life” whilst “preventing our economy from collapsing and saving our people from hunger”

⁷ <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/speeches/message-president-cyril-ramaphosa-covid-19-pandemic-0>



In this we need to embrace the strength of democracy, as Franklin D. Roosevelt stated: "Democracy alone, of all forms of government, enlists the full force of men's enlightened will".

As a trade union and member of civil society, Solidarity wants to take hands with all social partners and fellow South Africans and contribute. Now is the time for the South African people to show our unity and excellence in this crisis to the world. Government need not act alone in this crisis – all social partners are ready and willing to contribute. Yet, as the executive authority, it is required of government to translate these amendments to regulations that will unleash economic energy to prevent the spread of the virus, but also the spread of poverty. These amendments will also enable government to fund the healthcare sector – it will enable South Africa to not stand begging for medical supplies – but to supply the rest of Africa and the world in their time of crisis.

May God bless South Africa and protect her people.

God seën Suid-Afrika en haar mense.

Your sincerely



Dr Dirk Hermann

Chief executive Solidarity



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