

YOU ARE NOT ALONE: How The African Diaspora Forum assisted thousands of people during Lockdown

ADF reaches out to communities Government hands were too short for

In March, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced a nationwide lockdown among a raft number of measures meant to contain the spread of the Coronavirus in South Africa.

A stringent but necessary move in the face of a pandemic that has since ravaged the entire world with devastating consequences, the lockdown began on March 27, sending millions of people into economic inactivity and throwing their future into deep uncertainty.



Children play with toys donated by the ADF and its partners at Zamimpilo informal settlement in Langlaag.

Among those worst affected by the effects of the lockdown are poor South Africans and African migrants, most of who survive on menial

jobs, are self-employed or completely unemployed.

As an organisation hard-pressed to not only cater for the needs of migrants, but also to nurture social cohesion among African communities, The African Diaspora Forum (ADF) went all systems out in negotiations with various benefactors who included the donor community, fellow non-profit organisations, faith-based organisations, the corporate world, foreign embassies and government bodies, to raise resources which were later channeled towards some of those whose only sources of income were hardest hit.

Among those who positively answered the call for assistance through various ADF communities were the Moroccan Embassy, Afrika Awake, Zimbabwe's Ndebele king Bulelani Khumalo, African Medallion Group, Al-Imaad Foundation, Angel Network and the Gauteng Food Security, among other benefactors.

ADF executives who included Deputy Chairperson Abdeslam Habiballah, Spokesperson Amir Sheikh and Organising Secretary Ngqabutho Nicholas Mabhena were kept busy during the lockdown, traversing the whole of Gauteng Province to provide assistance to needy people.

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Among the various local and migrant communities that received massive help are those who live in Zamimpilo informal settlement – which has a mixed community of locals and African migrants, Mayfair, Johannesburg Innerscity, Thembisa in the East Rand, Yeoville, Berea, Hillbrow, Pretoria, Regents Park, Rosettenville, Bramley and La Rochelle. The distributions, dominated by food parcels, also included face masks, clothing items and hand sanitizers to those who could not afford.



The ADF came to the aid of thousands of migrants and locals during the ongoing lockdown.

ADF helps those overlooked by Government

After receiving concerning reports that government assistance with food parcels was not reaching migrants in especially informal settlements, the ADF, led by its Spokesperson, Amir Sheikh, set itself out to source food parcel for the community at Zamimpilo

informal settlement, in Langlaagte, Johannesburg.



An ADF member prepares food donations for residents of Zamimpilo informal settlement, where South Africans live in harmony with their African brothers and sisters from Malawi, Zimbabwe, DRC and Mozambique.

The first of a series of distribution of food parcels at the settlement was done on May 26 and benefited 800 families – half of them locals and the other half migrants from various countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.

“We had received a complaint that government parcels were not reaching the migrants in the informal settlement, so we had to act,” says Mr Amir. One of the ADF’s main goals is to achieve social cohesion between migrants and locals and Amir was impressed by what he saw in Zamimpilo.

“The positive story that made us do the drive was that the local community that benefited from government aid shared that little they got from government with their fellow Africans who are

immigrants from countries like DRC, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.”

The distributions continued well into the month of June, where the ADF, in partnership with Afrika Awake, distributed several more parcels and cooked meals to the community at the settlement. Working through its various community leaders, the ADF distributed parcels to members of other migrant communities that include Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, Senegal and locals.

The ADF migrant community leaders who assisted in identifying beneficiaries for the distributions included Ngqabutho Nicholas Mabhena who is also chairperson of the Zimbabwean Community in South Africa, Pastor Paul from the DRC and Sister Angel from Nigeria. Residents of the informal settlement, home to an estimated more than 4000 people, received food parcels, cooked meals, face masks, crockeries, toys for the local nursery and a wheelchair to one disabled person.

An ADF partnership with Afrika Awake and Angel Network also distributed 240 litres of vegetable soup, 1000 loaves of bread and two decks of

ChickenBiriyani, feeding more than 1000 people. More toys, face masks, scooters and learning games for children.

Mayfair, Innerscity Johannesburg get lockdown help from ADF

Since the lockdown began, the ADF has been inundated with emails from people seeking assistance with especially food parcels and money to pay their rent and buy basics.

Among those who sent their desperate pleas for assistance were migrants from Zimbabwe, Malawi, Tanzania, Cameroon, DRC and Congo, who live in Mayfair, Innerscity Johannesburg and surrounding areas.



The ADF-AI Imaad Foundation partnership made it possible for hundreds of people to get food relief in the Johannesburg inner-city, Newtown and Mayfair, where migrants from Malawi, Zimbabwe, DRC and Tanzania lost their jobs and homes as one of the adverse effects of the lockdown.

The ADF, in various activities led by especially

its Deputy Chairperson, Mr Abdeslam Habiballah, went out of its way to assist with various food parcels.

“I was touched by especially the plight of migrants who live in dilapidated buildings in the Johannesburg inner-city, notably one dilapidated building in Jeppe Street,” said Mr Habiballah.

“The building is very dirty and the people live in very degrading conditions that pose a serious health hazard. When we arrived there, we were met with more than 100 unemployed Malawians.”

After a series of partnership talks, the ADF nailed deals with Corruption Watch, the Moroccan Embassy in South Africa and the AI Imaad Foundation for assistance with cash and food parcels meant for the migrants.



Migrants receive food parcels in the Johannesburg inner-city, one of the areas where people were hard-hit by the lockdown.

“We distributed food parcels in the inner city, Fordsburg, Mayfair and a

hostel in Newtown. Most of the beneficiaries lost their jobs when the lockdown was declared on March 26,” said Mr Habiballah.

Food parcels for less privileged members of society, including migrants.

“Unable to pay their rent, many of them had sadly been evicted from their homes to live on the streets. It is against that background that we had to come to their aid with the food parcels.”

Simultaneously, Mr Amir identified and assisted beneficiaries from among Kenyan migrants, assisted in that direction by the Kenyan migrant community leadership of Bila Masha, Maina Kagwe and Njuguna Nyoro.

Mr Amir and fellow ADF Executive Committee members that included Talla Niang, Flavien Gagoum, and Emmanuel Johannes, distributed food parcels to 113 needy families from the Kenyan migrant community in that exercise.

Assisting Zimbabweans in Hillbrow, Berea and Yeoville

Johannesburg suburbs of Hillbrow, Berea and



Yeoville are some of the areas dominated by Zimbabweans doing menial jobs, employed in domestic work, self-employed or unemployed. When the lockdown was announced, their economic situation took a dash for the worse as their sources of income were adversely affected.

Paid for only the work they do, many were completely cut of financially, as they do not work under professional contracts and are therefore, not cushioned against such



ZimCommunity in SA leaders distribute food to Zimbabweans in Yeoville

eventualities as a national lockdown currently obtaining. Caught unawares and given little time to prepare for the lockdown, many went hungry and could not even to buy food for their children.



ZimCommunity in SA chairperson, Ngqabutho Nicholas Mabhena with a representative of African Medallion Group during the distribution of food parcels in Yeoville.

Many of these migrants live from hand to mouth and when the hand was abruptly cut by the lockdown, starvation became the effect.

However, the Zimbabwean Community in South Africa, chaired by ADF Executive member, Mr Ngqabutho Nicholas Mabhena, quickly appealed for donations and working with the African Medallion Group, the ADF/Afrika Awake partnership and partnership with Bulelani Khumalo, Zimbabwe's Ndebele King, came to the aid of hundreds of the migrants.



Zimbabwe's King Bulelani Khumalo of the Ndebele with ZimCommunity in SA Chairperson, Ngqabutho Nicholas Mabhena.

Hundreds of food parcels were donated separately in Hillbrow, Yeoville and the East Rand and people got some timely relief from the effects of the Covid-19 induced lockdown.

**Not all rosy though
Dark cloud befall
some members of
the migrant
community!**

It was not all rosy though, as tragic incidents have continued to befall some members of the migrant communities in South Africa, including during the lockdown, some in the hands of heavy-handed law-enforcement agents. Among the tragedies recorded, the ADF received with sadness news that during the first

week of the lockdown a migrant and Ethiopian-born businessman, Adane Emmanuel, was fatally shot at point blank range at the Dakota informal settlement in Isiphingo, in front of his children.



Slain migrant businessman: Ethiopian Adane Emmanuel was gunned down in front of his children in Isiphingo.

On Africa Day (May 25) Somali national Abdi Noor Sheikh Mohamud was brutally assaulted by police officers inside his business. He sustained serious internal injuries and died in hospital after one week. A Mozambican-born woman was pummeled to death with beer bottles and a chair by her husband, leaving behind an infant who will be taken back to Mozambican to her granny. A few weeks later, a Somali national, Ibrahim Mohamed Hassan, was gunned down inside his business premises in Samora Machel Township, near Nyanga in Cape Town, in another incident that has left the ADF with a lot of work in its hands.

“On average, between 100 and 120 Somalis,

Ethiopian and Bengalis are killed in their businesses every year and most of the bereaved families don't get justice for their departed ones. I think it's time for the ADF to take stand in pursuit of justice for the victims,” said ADF spokesperson, Amir Sheick. The ADF – representative of 35 migrant communities has taken it upon its shoulders to do whatever is necessary to stop the killing of migrants in South Africa.

The ADF's anti crime commission is one of our most important structures. Apart from helping to stop the criminal attacks on migrants it will be one demonstrable way to show South African citizens that that the organization is holding their hands in the fight against the rampant crime scourge which affects the poor of the country the most. It is expected to be an important factor in building an anti xenophobia movement in South African society.