



FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions

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MINERALS COUNCIL
SOUTH AFRICA



Mining Industry Response to COVID-19 in Host Communities

Introduction

Beyond the special measures implemented by government, corporate and philanthropic organisations in South Africa have come together to find effective and collaborative avenues of minimising the negative impact of COVID-19 on employees, communities, and on the general well-being of citizens. The Minerals Council and its members have actively joined these efforts, independently, in co-operation with each other and in co-operation with government.

What is the role of mining in its communities during the COVID-19 pandemic? Does mining have a responsibility to its communities, and is it fulfilling this?

The mining industry accepts its developmental role in society. From the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, members of the Minerals Council operating in the various mining regions have initiated a range of actions to address the impact of COVID-19. They have also received several requests for assistance from various national and provincial departments (particularly the Departments of Health and Social Development) and from local and district host municipalities.

Provincial and district authorities have reached out to the mining industry and requested assistance with a range of products and services.

Can you give a broad overview of what the companies are doing? Can you try and quantify this in terms of expenditure and/or impact?

Financial assistance that has thus far been provided or pledged includes the following:

- Provision of equipment and consumables for testing facilities;
- Provision and/or purchasing of personal protective equipment (PPE) and critical medical equipment for health and social development personnel in the field, and in hospitals and clinics;
- Purchase of water tanks and supply of water to public facilities and communities;
- Provision of food parcels to vulnerable families in host communities;
- Contributions to the Solidarity Fund and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs); and
- Increasing awareness through radio and print and social media.

Non-financial support that has been provided or pledged includes:

- Provision of tracers in priority municipalities;
- Access to mine ambulances and paramedics;
- Provision of access to tap stations, underutilised water tanks, mine water and tankers to refill water at various locations; and
- Provision of facilities that could be used for self-isolation by mine workers and other community members who test positive for the virus.

With the reopening of schools from 8 June 2020, mines are engaging the various provincial departments of education to explore ways and means of providing educators and learners with PPE (especially cloth masks) and with the sanitisation of classrooms.

While it is difficult to quantify assistance to communities and public authorities, it should be noted that the financial assistance is over and above the current SLP commitments.

What has been the Minerals Council's role in this?

The Minerals Council has sought to ensure that the industry's response is coordinated and responsive to the key priority needs on the ground. This has been especially the case in the Northern Cape, Mpumalanga and most recently in Limpopo.

Are there any specific examples that you can give where you think that companies have been innovative or have made a significant impact?

The Minerals Council conducted a limited survey of the industry response, which is summarised below:

ITEM	DETAIL
A: Ambulances	Provision of personnel and patient transport vehicles, emergency vehicles (ambulances) and ancillary services to health and social development personnel.
B: Donations to national / regional funds	Donations have included contributions to the Solidarity Fund, funds dedicated to the assistance of small and medium enterprises, community trusts, non-governmental organisations that focus on socio-economic community development, and emergency community relief funds.
C: Employee salaries	The majority of member companies continued to pay salaries and wages of employees who were compelled to stay away from the workplace, at least for all or most of the first phase of the lockdown.
D: Food parcels	Provision of food parcels distributed to the most vulnerable members of mine host communities (and some labour-sending areas).
E: Medical equipment	<p>Provision and/or purchasing of personal protective equipment (PPE) and critical medical equipment to supply health and social development personnel.</p> <p>Medical consumables and equipment such as PCR kits and PCR machines, non-contact thermal scanners, ventilators, intensive care unit beds, and other critical care equipment have been provided or pledged.</p> <p>The industry is also investigating how it can collaborate and assist government with screening and testing in host communities.</p>
F: Medical facilities (mine clinics and hospitals)	On-mine medical facilities have been made available for use by health officials should a need arise (either as treatment centres or quarantine facilities). One fully equipped 270-bed hospital has been donated to the government.
G: Medical personnel	Mine medical personnel have been made available in several mining provinces to assist the public sector as and when required.
H: Quarantine facilities	<p>The industry has made available various existing facilities that could be used for the treatment, quarantining or isolation of COVID-19 patients, especially employees. The industry has made available 4,400 quarantine/isolation beds (for individuals who are ambulatory with mild symptoms) and 3,200 hospital beds.</p> <p>Mines are currently exploring how they can assist with quarantine facilities for the use of host communities.</p>
I: Water and Sanitation	<p>Provision of water to communities which currently do not have access to piped water or to functional boreholes.</p> <p>The industry is also supplying communities with sanitisers and related hygiene products.</p>
J: Schools	With the gradual re-opening of schools, the industry is assisting the various provincial Departments of Education with the sanitising of schools and provision of PPE such as cloth masks for learners and educators.