



**NDA**

National  
Development  
Agency

# EVALUATION REPORT

RAPID ASSESSMENT OF THE VOLUNTEER  
PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTED IN RESPONSE TO  
COVID-19 PANDEMIC

MARCH 2021



social development

Department:  
Social Development  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**sassa**

SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIAL SECURITY AGENCY

# EVALUATION REPORT

## A rapid assessment report of the volunteer programme implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, funded by the National Development Agency (NDA)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **Social sector response to the COVID-19 pandemic**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of South Africa put several governance structures in place to mitigate and manage the spread of the virus. The Social Sector is an active participant in these governance structures, through representation by the Department of Social Development (DSD), South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) and the National Development Agency (NDA). Together these government entities form the Social Development Portfolio, mandated to deal with the social and development aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

To fulfil the social sector mandate, the NDA conceptualised a volunteer programme modelled as a partnership intervention with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) that delivered a range of interventions to vulnerable communities to contain and limit the transmission of the COVID-19. This collaborative programme was aimed at creating an environment for the social development sector to have service continuity for the most vulnerable populations nationally. The programme was meant to ensure that critical support services such as access to food, information and social security grants are delivered efficiently in the face of lockdown regulations. It was premised on enhancing the partnership with the CSOs tasked with the identification and deployment of volunteers who would work in communities. The NDA identified 200 CSOs from its database of over 15 000 organisations that had been profiled and assessed. The CSOs had to mobilise 2 009 volunteers who would render services to households in districts where they were operating. The CSOs were already implementing community-based programmes through volunteers and field workers in their respective geographical areas of operation.

### **Aims and objectives of the rapid assessment of the programme**

In February 2021, a rapid assessment of the programme was conducted. The aim was to generate evidence that would inform the NDA and the social development sector on the value added by the volunteer programme and its contribution to the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Given that the conceptualisation and implementation of the programme were undertaken rapidly, the social development sector, in particular the NDA, sought to take stock of how well the programme had been designed and implemented based on evidence from the provinces. This would generate insights on how the programme could be institutionalised and re-purposed to respond to community challenges beyond the COVID-19 pandemic period. The NDA also sought to understand how volunteering, as an approach to respond to disasters, could be made more relevant, effective, efficient, impactful and sustainable in the South African context.

### **Rapid assessment criteria**

The design of the rapid assessment was inspired by the need to understand how volunteering contributed to the attainment of programme results through the lens of nine dimensions of change: Inspiration, Collaboration, Inclusion, Participation, Innovation, Social Action, Ownership, Agency and Value Addition. In line with standard rapid assessment requirements, the rapid assessment methodology was primarily designed to generate evidence on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the programme. Eight additional criteria (acceptability, utility, equity, complementarity, adaptability, accountability, ownership, added value) were also used to ensure a holistic assessment of the programme design, implementation processes and immediate results. Use of the twelve criteria enabled a structured discernment and formulation of evidence-based recommendations on how the programme could be repurposed factoring in planning, administrative, volunteer management, resourcing, coordination, partnership, managerial, learning, documentation and reporting considerations.

## **Methodological approach**

The methodology used in the rapid assessment was grounded in the actor-based approaches for individuals and teams that played a role in field coordination, management, community engagement and adaptation of the programme were able to reflect on their experiences and observations. In this vein, volunteers and CSO representatives were the main respondents in the assessment. NDA staff members and selected key informants were also interviewed in recognition of their roles as the managers and observers of programme respectively. Given the restrictions associated with COVID-19 lockdown regulations, the evaluators used remote/online engagement platforms to ensure safe and effective data collection. Data collection involved telephonic interviews, a self-administered questionnaire survey and focus group discussions. All interviews with NDA staff, Volunteers and Key Informants were conducted telephonically. A questionnaire in MS Word document format was emailed to a selected number of volunteers, allowing them to capture their responses to questions in the spaces provided. Focus group discussions, conducted via the Microsoft Teams platform, was organised for representatives of CSOs. Data collected was predominantly qualitative, hence qualitative methods were used to analyse the bulk of the data. A basic thematic analysis approach was used to identify common responses from data generated through interviews and focus group discussions. This involved reviewing all qualitative responses to each question and identifying commonalities in responses, particularly common observations, experiences, meanings, attitudes and perceptions.

## **Relevance of the programme**

The programme was a relevant and timely entry initiative to dispel the myths and misinformation about COVID-19, coming at a time when there were widespread doubts and speculation about the existence of COVID-19 in many parts of the country. Through the placement of volunteers to assist in the registration of R350 social relief grant recipients, the programme timeously mitigated the impacts of lockdown on household income generation and food security. By availing themselves to share information on procedures to access services and distributing information sheets on application processes, volunteers created

platforms and mechanisms for communities to access information which was problematic in the past and had created negative attitudes towards departmental and agency staff. As they engaged and interacted with the communities, volunteers managed to identify cases of social ills that were affecting individuals and households thereby responding to the problems needing attention during the pandemic. These include cases of GBV, child abuse, substance abuse, profiling and discrimination of foreigners, gang-related violence and violent crimes. Volunteers managed to reach the vulnerable and disempowered in communities and filled gaps in service provision support systems. They also anchored inter-departmental collaboration and bridged the digital divide by providing support in online applications for grants.

### **Effectiveness of the programme**

Overall, the objectives of the programme were successfully met, including identifying households that were eligible for the R350 SRD, ensuring the marginalised and vulnerable had access to relief packages, rolling out COVID-19 awareness campaigns in diverse settlements and collecting data to ensure beneficiaries of the disaster relief efforts were profiled. The programme left a notable legacy of organised queueing and referral systems that will continue to be useful in grant application and collection processes at SASSA and Post Offices. Through the work done by volunteers, the programme strengthened collaborative linkages with government departments and agencies as well as local non-profit sector entities. The nature of collaboration among government agencies was strengthened and became more responsive to the prevailing contexts and community needs as volunteers identified gaps and challenges that needed focused attention from the relevant service providers. Technical and soft skills that volunteers gained as they were implementing the programme enhanced their employability. Volunteers were able to reach and assist identify individuals and households that needed special attention due to their vulnerability to COVID-19 and the secondary psychosocial and economic impacts of the pandemic. The volunteers' self-drive, pre-existing relationships and trust between CSOs and the communities, and the door-to-door approach



used by volunteers to demonstrate the COVID-19 protocols, contributed significantly to programme success.

### **Enablers of efficient programme delivery**

The adoption of innovative programme management practices and procedures contributed to efficient delivery of the programme. Some NDA staff developed lists of tasks that volunteers were expected to execute aligned to sector plans of NDA, DSD and SASSA and linked to the national COVID-19 response strategy. The monthly reporting system put in place for CSOs provided a framework within which NDA could track progress, identify successes and challenges for coordinated follow up with the CSOs. The creation of WhatsApp groups by CSOs helped to improve information flow that is necessary for field coordination and linkages with volunteers in the field. Pre-existing relationships between NDA provincial structures and CSOs enabled NDA Provincial Managers to promptly provide technical and administrative to CSOs without the need for protracted initial formalities.

### **Constraints to efficient programme delivery**

The programme was designed amid uncertainties around how the COVID-19 pandemic was going to unfold and, initially, there was a lack of clarity on actual activities that volunteers were supposed to execute as the contexts varied from area to area. There were issues with SASSA and Post Office not being aware of how the volunteers would work with their teams. Community members and other local stakeholders were initially not aware of the objectives of the programme, resulting in some community members refusing to accept the messages that volunteers were disseminating. Lack of updates on when payments would be made after submission of reports made it difficult to plan systematically as they were not aware of when they would receive funding to maintain the momentum in programme implementation. Late disbursement of the administration fee resulted in delays in the deployment of volunteers as some volunteers needed the money to cover their transport and data costs. CSOs also reported that the fee was barely enough to cover the costs they incurred, including printing, communication and subsistence for the volunteers. Most volunteers only learnt about the

actual tasks they were expected to perform on the job because the training they received at the beginning was too basic to enable them to engage communities effectively. Delays in payment of their basic monthly allowances dented the morale of volunteers. Some volunteers resigned, disrupting the implementation of the programme, resulting in extra training and orientation costs as they recruited new volunteers. It took a while for some SASSA and Post Office staff to have a full appreciation of the role of volunteers, cases of volunteers being allocated duties that were not in line with what was defined in their contracts reported.

### **Factors contributing to acceptability of the programme**

The programme has been widely accepted by local communities, a development largely attributed to the placement of volunteers to connect households, community groups and individuals with special needs with relevant sectoral agencies during the pandemic. Nationally, the volunteers satisfied the expectations of local communities, with evidence of their people-centred approach involving being visible, approachable and available contributing to acceptance and trust-building. Community members liked the visibility of volunteers and their willingness to cover tasks beyond the confines of their duties as defined in their contracts. Volunteers earned a reputation as identifiers of community problems and connectors to the right service providers. The ground-breaking efforts by volunteers to address the needs of the people with disabilities through home visits gave the programme a face of compassion and social inclusion.

### **Factors behind negative attitudes towards the programme**

There were inherent attributes of the programme and implementation aspects that did not resonate with the expectations and preferences of local communities. Some of the concerns and negative attitudes towards the programme were a result of misinformation, myths and conspiracy theories peddled by those that had a limited understanding of the overall purpose of the programme. In most areas, negative labels and attitudes towards volunteers were reported mainly as a result of the community dislike of the types of PPEs wore when they were conducting their outreach. During the initial phase of registration of R350 SRD, some

prospective applicants refused to give their identity details to volunteers fearing that the information would be used to make fraudulent claims. They did not want to interact with the volunteers. In rural areas, some community members were expecting the programme to distribute PPEs, sanitisers and food vouchers. They did not appreciate that the volunteers were only mandated to work with SASSA and Post Office. They felt that the programme was not meeting some of their primary needs. Although volunteers appreciated the personal and community benefits of the programme, they had some concerns around some of the administrative processes, lack of formal recognition and their vulnerability to abuse.

### **Equity and coverage**

One of the strengths of the programme was its inherent emphasis on targeting people that needed assistance recognising their diverse vulnerabilities and the likelihood of exclusion in awareness programmes. This included vulnerable socio-demographic groups such as the elderly, female-headed households, households headed by the elderly, orphaned and vulnerable children, people living with disabilities, communities in isolated areas where basic service provision is limited, people living with HIV, among others. Most CSOs had social inclusion agendas in their normal community outreach and successfully used the vulnerabilities of people in their areas of operations as targeting criteria, ensuring equity in the delivery of the programme. Despite these CSO's intentions and capabilities to address social exclusion, experiences from the field revealed there were exclusions by default in the form of reliance on online grant application platforms which excluded the elderly, lack of transport which hindered regular outreach to farms and rural areas, individuals without proper identity documents were unable to access grants promptly and exclusion due to little or no CSO coverage in the area.

### **Accountability**

At national and provincial levels, NDA had clearly defined mechanisms to share programme progress updates and emerging results with other government departments and agencies. Through the reporting structures linking CSOs to NDA offices at the provincial level, progress

updates, challenges and recommendations were shared through monthly reports compiled by CSO managers. Information contained in daily reports compiled by volunteers and forwarded to their supervisors fed into monthly CSO reports submitted to NDA. However, there were no formal and clearly defined platforms and processes for ensuring that the programme was accountable to local stakeholders in terms of availing information on the overall performance of the programme. Sharing of information about the programme with communities, local leadership and other stakeholders was therefore informal and not standardised across provinces.

### **Values added by the programme**

The programme was successful in generating unique values beyond the scope of what was originally expected when it was conceptualised. These values include generation of knowledge on benefits of grassroots volunteering, revealing the enablers of and constraints to effective volunteering, establishment and strengthening of social networks, contributions to systems strengthening for government departments, opportunities for organisational development for CSOs, contributions to national skills development among the youths, and removal of bottlenecks in service delivery systems. The evidence of sustainability gathered include self-drive among volunteers through an enhanced culture of volunteering, organised queueing and defined referral systems as part of the grant application and collection processes, internalised knowledge and adopted behaviours to mitigate COVID-19, working relationships between government departments, organisational capacity of CSOs and recognition of volunteers of point persons in solving community challenges.

### **Adaptation and ownership by CSOs, volunteers and communities**

CSO managers and volunteers made subtle and informal adjustments and adaptations to their community engagement strategies, responding to emerging needs, problems and opportunities during implementation. These included emphasizing targeting specific groups in communities, adjustments in volunteer work schedules, identifying and focusing on new community engagement platforms, the inclusion of new components to the original

intervention pillars and finding alternatives when resources were not available. In terms of ownership, the rapid assessment revealed how programme implementers, beneficiary communities and supportive stakeholders' structures recognised roles they could play to contribute to programme success. Evidence of gradual community participation, provision of awareness resources by local organisations and assistance to improve volunteers' access to communication platforms was documented. Faced with resource constraints that could hinder efficient and effective delivery, CSOs improvised ways to motivate volunteers and used their organisational resources to cover the gaps in the support from NDA.

### **Sustainability**

Some interventions have already been adopted and actively supported by institutions that were programme partners during implementation. The evidence of sustainability gathered include self-drive among volunteers through an enhanced culture of volunteering, organised queueing and defined referral systems as part of the grant application and collection processes, internalised knowledge and adopted behaviours to mitigate COVID-19, working relationships between government departments, organisational capacity of CSOs and recognition of volunteers of point persons in solving community challenges.

### **Recommendations**

Analyses of the findings of the rapid assessment generated insights on appropriate adaptations to the overall design and delivery for the programme to address gaps and challenges while at the same time leveraging opportunities and building successes. The recommended adaptations and additions would also contribute to the desired attainment of global standards of impactful volunteering in contemporary disaster response programmes. The recommendations presented below are broadly framed as additions, adaptations and actions on how the volunteer programme can be institutionalised to improve relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

### ***Volunteer management manual***

To ensure a more structured, effective and sustained volunteering approach, there is a need to develop volunteer management guidelines that guide CSOs on how to recruit, train, support, motivate, monitor and empower volunteers. This would make tracking and documentation of the performance and contribution of volunteers more systematic, paving way for the identification and recognition of volunteer champions that excel in their work.

### ***Improving design and delivery processes***

Going forward, the development of a clear programme inception plan is critical. The inception plan should include elements such as platforms for the official introduction of the programme and role of volunteers to key stakeholders, identification of accountability mechanisms for informing stakeholders about progress updates, results and plans for the follow-up activities.

There is a need to map CSO capabilities and geographical coverage and define ways to allocate focal communities/geographical areas to individual CSOs. This mapping exercise would reveal areas that could be excluded and any overlaps in coverage so that volunteers can be deployed evenly in the delivery of the programme.

Appropriate branding of clothing/PPEs used by volunteers should be a priority to ensure easy identification and acceptance of volunteers. Good branding could go a long way in dispelling misinformation, wrong perceptions and incorrect labels which breed negative attitudes towards volunteers and the programme in general.

### ***Improving administrative, field coordination and management systems***

There is a need to determine the full spectrum of costs incurred by CSOs so that the budgets allocated cover the key costs associated with the management of the programme and logistical support to volunteers. Timely payment is critical for motivating volunteers to avoid delays and disruptions in the implementation. There should be clarity on the costs that the

programme covers, including actual data allocations as well as transport and subsistence allowances.

There is a need to improve communication between NDA, DSD, CSOs, SASSA, Post Office and other government departments that hosted or supported volunteers during the programme. On the part of the NDA and CSO, there should be defined feedback processes to ensure that issues raised by CSOs are attended to timeously. This is important for adaptive management of the programme, ensuring that challenges are identified and addressed while at the same time leveraging emerging opportunities to enhance the success of the programme.

***Monitoring and evaluation systems for learning and empowerment of CSOs and volunteers***

Since CSOs and volunteers are at the forefront of programme implementation, evidence gathering and knowledge generation, there is a need to put in place sound monitoring and evaluation systems that empower them to contribute to evidence-based local decision-making and influence in planning processes. The systems should encompass mechanisms to enable CSOs to track their performance and growth as organisations and fulfilment of their mandates.

***Safeguarding and protection mechanisms for volunteers and communities***

risks and vulnerabilities of volunteers as they engaged communities and other stakeholders during the implementation of the programme. There is a need to identify and characterise the risks to and vulnerabilities of volunteers as a step towards developing appropriate safeguarding and protection measures in line with the country laws. The measures should cover issues related to exposure to aggressive communities, limited or no recognition of volunteer role and contributions, false accusations, lack of protection against harsh environmental conditions and allocation of duties outside the scope of what was defined in their contracts.

Safeguarding and protection should also cover risks households and communities served by the volunteers, especially ways to ensure that personal information shared by individuals and households is secure.

***Strengthen collaboration among government departments and agencies***

Any follow up programmes or related initiatives should build on, leverage and strengthen the collaboration among government departments as it has been noted to be an enabler of success. There is a need to make the relationships formal, acknowledging that CSOs and volunteers are the anchors behind the work done jointly. An entry point to formalising these relationships is to map out areas of common interest and how CSOs and their volunteers contribute to the collaboration so that the engagement and communication procedures as part of the partnership can be defined.

***Securing stakeholder support and promoting community ownership***

There is scope for engaging the community and other stakeholders to enhance the relevance of the programme. This should involve the identification of ways in which local communities and other stakeholders can now contribute to programme adaptation, ensuring that they participate, support, drive and own programme interventions. This should include mapping of stakeholders, existing community assets (e.g., existing physical infrastructure) and capabilities (e.g., youth skills and networks) and how these can complement or fill gaps in the programme design and delivery approaches. This is critical to ensure that the programme is embedded in existing community structures and interaction platforms. Stakeholder mapping should be conducted in a way that captures the diversity of stakeholders and their context-specific interests and influence, ensuring that those excluded in the original conceptualisation such as the private sector are included.

To enhance programme accountability to local level leadership structures and the community in general, the programme should establish ways to connect with local structures such as ward



committees, command councils, community development forums so that it is recognised as a contributor to community-based disaster response and social protection.

To promote learning, exchange of knowledge and experiences, there is a need to create platforms to connect CSOs at provincial and national levels, leveraging the growing utility and popularity of online platforms such as Microsoft Teams to promote networking among CSOs. A similar network and associated online platforms should also be set up for volunteers so that they become a recognisable and reputable network.

***Growing the programme, building on successes and emerging priorities***

The rapid assessment revealed growth areas that the programme could build on, leveraging successes and responding to emerging priorities. The legacy of the network of volunteers that have diverse social backgrounds, skills, aspirations and capabilities should be harnessed by either designing follow up programmes that create opportunities for them to apply their skills or connecting them to similar programmes run by other departments and agencies.

It is worthwhile to document how the programme has contributed to the launch of careers among the volunteers potentially through tracer studies, tracking the employment sectors that absorb the volunteers. This will eventually contribute to the generation of knowledge on the benefits of youth volunteering in South Africa.

The home garden projects that volunteers supported is one initiative that the programme could build on as it addresses the issue of food insecurity when household incomes decline due to lockdown restrictions. The recommendation is to promote basic home economics principles, whereby volunteers would train households now on how to invest in the production of nutritious food, promoting healthy eating and growth of herbs that have medicinal values and mental wellness benefits.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CNDC- Community Nutrition and Development Centre

COVID-19 – Corona Virus Disease

CSO- Civil Society Organisation

DHA – Department of Home Affairs

DoE – Department of Education

DoH – Department of Health

DSD – Department of Social Development

ID- Identity Document

GBV- Gender-Based Violence

HIV- Human Immunodeficiency Virus

NDA – National Development Agency

PPE- Personal Protective Equipment

RFQ – Request for Quotation

SANDF- South African Defence Force

SASSA - South African Social Security Agency

SAPS – South African Police Service

SRS- Simple random sampling

SRD- Social Relief of Distress

TB- Tuberculosis

TVET- Technical and Vocational Education and Training

## 1.BACKGROUND

### **The Social Development Sector response to COVID-19**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of South Africa put several governance structures in place to mitigate and manage the spread of the virus. The Social Sector is an active participant in these governance structures through representation by the Department of Social Development (DSD), South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) and the National Development Agency (NDA). Together these government entities form the Social Development Portfolio, mandated to deal with the social and development aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In fulfilment of the social sector mandate, the NDA conceptualised a partnership intervention with the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) that delivered a range of interventions to vulnerable communities to contain and limit the transmission of the COVID-19. This collaborative programme was aimed at creating an environment for the social development sector to have service continuity for the most vulnerable population nationally. The programme was meant to ensure that critical support services such as access to food, access to information, access to social security grants are delivered efficiently in the face of lockdown regulations. It was premised on enhancing the partnership with CSOs to identify and deploy volunteers who would work in communities.

The NDA identified 200 CSOs from its database of over 15 000 organisations that had been profiled and assessed. The CSOs had to mobilise 2 009 volunteers who would render services to households in districts where the CSOs were operating. The CSOs were already implementing community-based programmes through volunteers and field workers. The volunteers would deliver services around:

- Advocacy initiatives conducted (i.e., pamphlets distributed, loud hailing activities or any other communication).
- Covid-19 community screenings.
- Distribution of food through the CNDs.
- Assisting communities to apply for the SASSA SRD Grant.

- Providing services in public institutions (such as a behavioural change in communities through social distancing and general hygiene).

The identified CSOs had systems to track households and communities that would be covered by the volunteers and make the necessary follow-up. The distribution of CSOs and volunteers per province is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: *Distribution of CSOs and Volunteers across the provinces and districts*

Province	Number of District Municipalities (incl. Metros)	Number of CSOs enlisted	Planned Number of Volunteers	Volunteers gender breakdown			Actual Number of Volunteers
				Females	Males	Unspecified	
Eastern Cape	8	24	220	141	90	0	231
Free State	5	22	220	88	132		220
Gauteng	5	21	237	95	68	61	224
Kwa-Zulu Natal	11	23	220				
Limpopo	5	22	220	148	71	1	220
Mpumalanga	3	22	220				
Northern Cape	5	22	224				
North West	4	22	220	144	74	1	219
Western Cape	6	22	228				
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>528</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>894</b>

### **1.1 Deliverables at the time of the rapid assessment**

At the time of this rapid assessment, the volunteer programme had delivered on the following areas:

- Created 2000 work opportunities made up of 1600 women, 400 men, including 1750 youth.
- Increase in household income for participating volunteers who receive a monthly stipend of R1500 per person.
- Building selfless, caring, and responsible communities during and post COVID-19.
- Building social capital in communities.
- Providing information and advocacy on Covid-19 in local languages.
- Household profiling will inform policy and programme approaches in communities.

## **1.2 Rationale for the rapid assessment**

This rapid assessment was conducted to inform the NDA and the social development sector on the value added by the volunteer programme in response to COVID-19. The conceptualisation, planning and implementation of this programme were based on a quick response to deliver relief quick to those vulnerable and prevent the section of the population to be subjected to severe distress during the height of COVID-19. The social development sector, in particular the NDA, therefore needed to take stock of how well the programme was designed and implemented, how best such a programme could be institutionalised by the NDA and the sector. The rapid assessment would assist in re-purposing the programme to respond to community challenges beyond the COVID-19 period.

## **1.3 Aims and objectives of the rapid assessment**

The main aim of the rapid assessment was to assess the extent to which the CSO Volunteer Programme of the NDA intervention contributed to the COVID 19 response in addressing access to information, enhancing access to food parcels, and providing guidance on social distancing measures for social grants recipients.

The objectives of the assessments were to:

- 1) Assess the processes of the mobilising of CSOs and volunteers to participate in the response programme.
- 2) Assess the quality and quantity of services that were planned to be delivered by the volunteer programme of the NDA.
- 3) Assess the management, coordination and management of the programme by the NDA and the CSOs who are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the volunteers.
- 4) Assess the systems and processes that were put in place to ensure efficiency in running the programme.
- 5) Assess and quantify the value of the programme in contributing to the responses of the social development portfolio (DSD, SASSA and NDA) overall interventions
- 6) To propose, from the assessment, how the NDA can institutionalise the programme into its main CSOs development interventions.

#### **1.4 Scope of the rapid assessment**

The scope of the rapid assessment covered the following key areas of the NDA volunteers programme operations, including processes and systems supporting operations of the programme:

- Assess the planned deliverables of the programme as was initially conceptualised, and ascertain if these plans were feasible, well defined, appropriate for responding to the response areas they were expected to deliver on.
- Assess the preparedness of the NDA and CSOs to undertake the COVID-19 responses that the NDA seek to contribute to the social development portfolio COVID-19 responses.
- Assess, through interviews, documents and reports review from the CSOs and NDA on the monitoring, reporting and support to the programme to ensure it is operating efficiently and effectively understanding the limitations of the state of emergency.
- Assess the supportive environment provided to the CSOs and volunteers by the NDA in ensuring that they are protected against contracting the virus and provided with stipends to enable the volunteers to have relief and means to conduct their functions.
- Assess challenges and opportunities, and how the volunteer programme operations have been affected given the environment that was operated under during COVID-19, and what lessons can be learned for the future.
- Produce a comprehensive rapid assessment report on the programme, including processes that supported the programme and recommendations on how the programme can be improved and possibly integrated into normal NDA interventions post COVID-19.

#### **1.5 Expected deliverables**

The main deliverables were:

- 1) Produce and present a draft preliminary report of the findings of the rapid assessment of the CSO volunteer programme for engagement with the NDA and the Social Development Portfolio – Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Research Steering Committee.

- 2) Submit a final report of the rapid assessment to the NDA, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit.
- 3) Submit all data collected and captured for the rapid assessment with the final report to the NDA Monitoring and Evaluation.

## 2.METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

### 2.1 Conceptual framework

#### **Volunteering as a recognised modality for delivering disaster response**

Globally, volunteer-driven interventions are increasingly being recognised as critical pillars in addressing immediate social, environmental and economic needs of communities in disaster situations. Recruitment and deployment of volunteers is now part and parcel of disaster responses in many countries, leveraging pre-existing human and social capital in state and non-state institutional structures. The use of pre-existing volunteer networks and capabilities helps facilitate quick and focused interventions to avoid delays that could exacerbate the impacts of disasters on vulnerable members of the community. There is evidence suggesting that disasters tend to trigger waves of emotion and empathy, nudging citizens to consider volunteering to save communities affected by disasters. Although this can be viewed as a positive development, there is a need to ensure that volunteering is intentional, safe, focused, effective, responsible and sustainable. In the South African context, this is the particular role that government agencies such as the National Development Agency (NDA) play as the nation deals with the COVID-19 pandemic. NDA views volunteering as an approach, among others, to address challenges emanating from pandemics. In this vein, the agency recognises the need to conduct evaluative assessments to generate evidence on how the volunteering approach can be made more efficient and effective in disaster response. This rapid assessment seeks to partly contribute to that objective.

### **Contextualising role of CSOs in promoting volunteering**

Inspired by global trends in volunteering as a modality for delivering disaster response, most countries are taking steps to contextualise the role and contribution of volunteers as natural and man-made disasters continue to affect citizens. In South Africa, volunteering is a priority and recognised modality for delivering disaster response, at community, municipal, provincial and national levels. Volunteering is grounded in the spirit of Ubuntu, providing inherent motivations for youths, community groups, private companies, philanthropists, scientists and celebrities (to mention but a few stakeholders) to dedicate their time and resources to alleviate pain and suffering when disaster strikes. At the forefront of work to amplify the role of volunteers in disaster response are Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). Apart from having the capacity to articulate the needs and aspirations of communities and specific groups in the face of disasters, CSOs have a deep understanding of appropriate grassroots approaches, implementable locally, that can be used to prevent and mitigate disasters. This places volunteers affiliated to CSOs in a strategic position to drive the actual implementation of activities as part of disaster response, supported by local community leadership, district municipality and provincial structures. Acknowledging the role of volunteers that engage communities under the auspices of CSOs is defined, there is scope for generating evidence on how these roles are articulated, applied, adapted and supported using real-life experiences as is the case currently when South Africa is dealing with COVID-19-induced social and economic challenges. An assessment of the CSOs' capabilities, field coordination mechanisms and management as part of the COVID-19 response is critical in this rapid assessment.

### **Dimensions of change in volunteering programmes**

A good understanding of how volunteering brings about change that contributes to the outputs and outcomes of programmes is critical when evaluating volunteer-driven programmes. One standard way of assessing the contribution of volunteering in both humanitarian disaster response and mainstream development programmes is to consider the dimensions through which change triggered by volunteers can be conceptualised. Volunteering is known to trigger change and impact in nine ways or dimensions namely, Inspiration, Collaboration, Inclusion, Participation, Innovation, Social Action, Ownership,



Agency and Value Addition. These dimensions should be considered when designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating volunteering programmes. They are relevant to the NDA volunteering programme and will therefore be used as the basis for assessing the contribution of volunteers and the overall volunteering programme. Viewing how change happens using the nine dimensions as the lens through which assessments and evaluations can be conducted allows researchers to define change and impacts beyond the specific tasks that volunteers execute. A description of these dimensions is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: The nine dimensions of change associated with effective volunteering

Dimension of change	Description (viewed from a disaster response perspective)
Inspiration	The programme inspires community action through the influential role played by volunteers in demonstrating practical solutions to problems affecting the community
Collaboration	The programme builds links with relevant stakeholders and opens spaces for working together to plan, implement and sustain disaster response activities
Inclusion	The programme articulates the needs and rights of vulnerable and marginalised members of the community, ensuring that underlying drivers of exclusion are addressed as part of disaster response
Participation	The programme creates opportunities for beneficiary communities to play an active role in decision-making processes, action and monitoring of programme activities
Innovation	The programme facilitates the emergence of ways of working and perspectives, contributing to new solutions to context-specific problems
Social Action	The programme promotes the spirit of active citizenship, setting foundations for individuals and groups within communities to volunteer and help others in their localities
Ownership	The programmes create platforms for beneficiary communities to take a lead in activities, allowing them to gain skills and confidence to continue working to address their problems
Agency	The programme contributes to beneficiary community empowerment to enable communities to work together to pursue agendas of their choice
Value Addition	The programme facilitates the improvement of services and opportunities for community resilience through capacity building, skills exchange and strengthening of decision-making processes to deal with disasters

These dimensions of change were used as a frame of reference to determine how the programme performed in terms of meeting these global standards of change through volunteering. This benchmarking process provided the basis upon which some of the recommendations on how the volunteer programme should be institutionalised were formulated.

## 2.2 Methodology

### 2.2.1 Description of the assessment criteria

Responding to the objectives stated in the RFQ, this rapid assessment took stock of how well the NDA-supported volunteering programme was designed and implemented, with a view to discerning factors that could be used to inform the institutionalisation of lessons from the programme. In this vein, it was important to structure the study in such a way that it focused on the three phases of the programme cycle. These phases being: (1) Conceptualisation (Design), (2) Implementation and Monitoring, and (3) Evaluation and Adaptation. The assessment also focused on steps and processes involved when transitioning from one phase to the next.

Acknowledging that the task at hand was a rapid formative assessment, the methodology presented below created opportunities to learn from interventions implemented and draw insights on how to repurpose the programme, acknowledging that there is a need to sustain the COVID-19 responses beyond the current funding cycle. Primarily, the methodology was designed to generate evidence on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. In addition to these universal assessment criteria, eight additional criteria (acceptability, utility, equity, complementarity, adaptability, accountability, ownership, added value) were also be used to ensure a holistic assessment of the programme design, implementation processes and immediate results. The methodology was grounded in the actor-based approach to ensure that individuals and teams that played a role in the conceptualisation, coordination, management, field implementation and adaptation of the programme were able to reflect on their experiences and observations as part of the assessment. Context-specific definitions of each criterion are presented below.

**Relevance:** The extent to which the key programme interventions and specific activities were aligned and responsive to target communities' needs, requirements and priorities.

**Efficiency:** The extent to which resourcing, administrative, coordination efforts were managed to contribute to implementation success and attainment of the desired results.

**Effectiveness:** The extent to which the desired results under each of the five intervention areas were achieved, focusing on the immediate observed changes at community and municipal levels.

**Acceptability:** The extent to which stakeholders (including target communities and the general public) appreciate or disapprove of the programme (approach and processes).

**Utility:** The extent to which the goods, services and products delivered by the programme satisfy stakeholder and communities' needs and expectations.

**Complementarity:** To what extent was the programme coordinated to purposefully support and supplement other similar programmes or service provision mechanisms.

**Equity:** The extent to which the community engagement methods, goods and services benefited different stakeholders and communities appropriately, acknowledging differences in gender, socio-economic class and (dis)ability considerations).

**Coverage:** The extent to which the programme reached target vulnerable and marginalised populations across geographies.

**Adaptability:** The extent to which the programme acted upon or responded to emerging needs, problems and requirements community, municipal, provincial and national levels.

**Accountability:** The extent to which the programme teams (NDA, CSOs, Volunteers) fulfilled reporting and information sharing requirements, as expected by beneficiaries, government agencies and community leadership structures.

**Added Value:** The extent to which the programme generated other results/outcomes beyond what was conceptualised before implementation.

**Sustainability:** An indication of the extent to which programme interventions and immediate results of the programme are likely to continue beyond the funding cycle of the programme.

Guided by these criteria, the evaluators were able to address specific objectives stated in the RFQ comprehensively in a structured manner. This also enabled the discernment and formulation of evidence-based recommendations on how the programme could be repurposed factoring in **planning, administrative, volunteer management, resourcing, coordination, partnership, managerial, learning, documentation and reporting** considerations, among others.

### 2.2.2 Formulation of rapid assessment questions

The criteria, listed above, was used as a basis for developing evaluative questions, enabling structured and focused data collection and analysis. The questions were framed in a way that allowed the evaluators to qualitatively rate the performance of the programme, whilst at the same time probing issues to elicit qualitative responses in the form of reasons, explanations and justifications for answers given.

The respondents engaged in this rapid assessment fall into four main categories: NDA staff members, CSO representatives, volunteers and key informants<sup>1</sup>. Acknowledging that individuals that fall under these categories had varied experiences and contextual understanding, depending on the role they played and level of engagement in the programme, relevant data collection tools were developed for each category. Building on the assessment criteria presented above, topline themes for the different respondent categories that were unpacked during interviews are presented in Annex 1.

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<sup>1</sup> Key informants were individuals that were not involved in the project design and implementation but had opportunities to observe programme activities and also interact with implementers and the beneficiary communities at large.

For each of the topline questions presented in Annex 1, there were follow up probing questions to enable respondents to explain and substantiate their responses.

### **2.2.3 Sampling techniques**

The NDA provided lists of CSOs and contact persons together with their email addresses, personal mobile phone numbers and office landlines. The CSOs were identified as the sample unit in a one-stage sampling frame. From the lists, 14 CSOs were randomly selected per province to make available five volunteers for telephonic interviews, and twelve CSOs representatives per province for the focus group discussions, each CSO making one representative available. The selection was made in such a way that CSOs that had different mandates were included in the sample. Based on the sampling frame, CSO proportional representation by province ranged between 11.0% and 11.8%, and due to the proximity of these values, it was felt that representation would be achieved by having an equal number of participants per province to make up the determined sample size.

Each participant returning a usable completed form was assigned a unique participant identification (PID) number for the assessment. All respondents included in the sampling frame were assigned a randomisation number and a participant ID on completion and return of the case report form (CRF) for the self-completed emailed questionnaires.

From each of the 14 CSOs in each province, three volunteers were selected to participate in the self-administered questionnaire survey. All participants qualifying for enrolment into the survey were enrolled using the simple random sampling (SRS) procedure, selecting three volunteers from each CSO.

Each participant was assigned a unique participant identification (PID) number for the assessment. All respondents included in the sampling frame were assigned a randomisation number and a participant ID on completion and return of the case report form (CRF) for the emailed participants and completion of the telephonic interview for the other set of participants for purposes of capturing the data.

Participant study numbers consist of three key components and take the format:

**NDAVP-V-W-XX-Z** • NDAVP= Funder-assigned protocol number

- V = 1-digit representative of province
- XXX= Unique 3-digit participant number, assigned in chronological order by province
- Z=check digit, a sum of all the preceding digits.

#### 2.2.4 Sample size

The sample size was informed by a cross-sectional observational study design, with a +/-5% margin of error and a 95% confidence interval given a reported percentage of 50%. The calculation was based on an estimated finite population size of 2000.

Thus, the sample size is given by<sup>2</sup>:

$$\begin{aligned}
 n &= \frac{Z^2 + p(1-p)e^2}{1 + [Z^2 p(1-p)/(e^2 N)]} \\
 &= \frac{1.96^2 + 0.5 \times (1-0.5) \times 0.05^2}{1 + [1.96^2 \times 0.5(1-0.5)/(0.05^2 \times 2000)]} \\
 &= \mathbf{323 \text{ participants}}
 \end{aligned}$$

N= Population Size (2000)

Z= z-score (At 95% confidence level, the value for Z on the Z-table=1.96 )

e = margin of error (5% = 0.05)

p = standard of deviation (0.5)

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<sup>2</sup> Source: Ramesher, A.N (2019) 'How to calculate your ideal sample size'. Accessed from: <https://blog.remesh.ai/how-to-calculate-sample-size>

Table 3: Target number of respondents in the rapid assessment

Exercise	Respondent	Engagement method	Number per province	Total for cadre	Total
Interviews	NDA representatives	Online interview	N/A	3	3
CSOs focus group discussions	CSO representatives	Online group discussions	12	108	108
Survey	Implementers (volunteers)	Telephonic interviews	3	27	324
		Self-administered questionnaire	33	297	
Interviews	Informants	Telephonic interviews	2	18	18
Total			50		453

### 2.2.5 Methodological steps and activities

The key steps and activities undertaken to achieve the objectives of this rapid assessment are presented below.

#### **Inception meeting**

An online inception meeting was held on 21 January 2021. Updated details on contextual background, the status of the programme, overall expectations (deliverables) and plans for engagement between NDA and Break the Chains during the assessment period were discussed during the meeting. The overall methodology was discussed and elements that needed to be reviewed were identified. The revised methodology presented below incorporates comments and suggestions shared during the meeting. Reasonable sample size was defined, in consultation with NDA staff, and key documents to be reviewed were identified.



## **Document review**

A desktop review of key documents that contain details on the programme was conducted. This involved a review of concept documents and progress reports compiled by NDA based on field reports submitted by CSOs. This review enabled the evaluators to get an overview of the general design of the programme, programme implementation strategy and plans, coordination mechanisms and the actual steps taken during the delivery of the programme. Profiles of beneficiaries' households and communities and geographical coverage covered were also be reviewed.

A review of relevant external documents, Humanitarian Disaster Response Standards and Global Volunteering Standards were conducted. This enabled the evaluators to collate information on standards, principles and values against which the NDA-funded volunteer programme was benchmarked as part of the overall analysis to inform the institutionalization process.

## **Telephonic interviews**

Because of the restrictions linked to the COVID-19 lockdown regulations, the team of evaluators leveraged remote/online engagement platforms to ensure safe and effective data collection. All interviews with NDA staff, CSO Coordinators, Volunteers and Key Informants were conducted telephonically. To avoid inconveniencing the interviewees, appointments were set up in advance after securing consent from the respondents. The Break the Chains team, comprising four consultants, conducted the interviews. Each team member was assigned a specified number of respondents to interview. Details of how the interviewees were selected are presented in the next section. Interviews took 45 – 60 minutes. The questionnaires for telephonic interviews involving volunteers are shown in Annex 2 and the questionnaire for key informants is shown in Annex 3. The NDA staff members were interviewed online, guided by a set of questions presented in Annex 6.

## Surveys using a self-administered questionnaire

A questionnaire in MS Word document format was emailed to a selected number of volunteers (see Annex 4), allowing them to capture their responses to questions in the spaces provided. Details of how the respondents were selected are presented in the next section. Guidance on the purpose of the survey and instructions on how the respondents completed the questionnaire was included at the beginning of the questionnaire. Contact details of the responsible evaluator were shared with the respondents so that they could seek assistance or get clarifications as they participated in the survey. After completing the questionnaire, the volunteers emailed their responses to the relevant evaluator, either directly or through the CSOs they were affiliated to. Respondents were given up to 10 days to complete the survey.

All together 252 volunteers responded to the questionnaire with 246 providing coherent data that could be analysed. Table 4 presents some of the demographics of the participants. Eastern Cape had the highest response rate, with 17.3%, with 42 completed and analysable questionnaires.

Table 4: *Volunteer statistics and categorisation by gender*

Descriptive	Measure	Statistics		Total
		Male (n=72)	Female (n=171)	N=243
<b>Province</b>				
<b>Gauteng</b>	n (%)	5 (6.9)	23 (13.5)	28 (11.5)
<b>Western</b>			7 (4.1)	
<b>Cape</b>	n (%)	3 (4.2)		10 (4.1)
<b>KwaZulu-</b>			26 (15.2)	
<b>Natal</b>	n (%)	8 (11.1)		34 (14.0)
<b>Eastern Cape</b>	n (%)	17 (23.6)	25 (14.6)	42 (17.3)
<b>Mpumalanga</b>	n (%)	13 (18.1)	25 (14.6)	38 (15.6)
<b>Northern</b>			15 (8.8)	
<b>Cape</b>	n (%)	6 (8.3)		21 (8.6)
<b>Free State</b>	n (%)	9 (12.5)	17 (9.9)	26 (10.7)
<b>Limpopo</b>	n (%)	8 (11.1)	24 (14.0)	32 (13.2)
<b>North West</b>	n (%)	3 (4.2)	9 (5.3)	12 (4.9)
<b>Current age</b>	Median (IQR)	29 (24-37)	30 (25-37)	30 (25-37)

Most of the respondents were female, 170 (69.1%), with the youngest being 19 years and the oldest at 63 years of age. The median age is 30, with an interquartile range of 24-37 years.

The age category percentages presented in Figure 1 are for 240 volunteers who responded and gave their age in years.

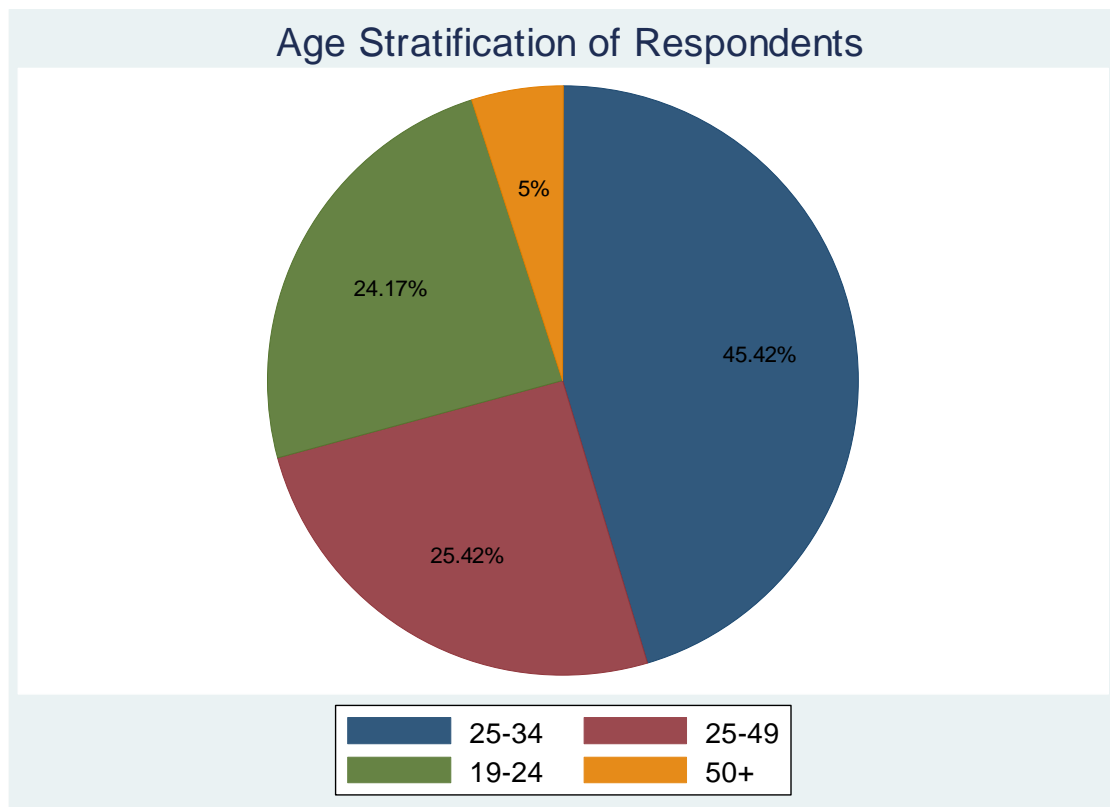


Figure 1: Age distribution of respondents

### **Focus group discussions**

Focus group discussions involving representatives of CSOs were organised. Microsoft Teams was selected as the online platform that would be used and this was communicated to the CSO representatives. A random check to assess familiarity with the online platforms among CSO representatives was conducted through telephone calls with a selected number of CSOs. There were no objections to the use of the platforms as most of them were already using the platform in their work. Each province was assigned one evaluator tasked with the responsibility of setting up the meeting, attending to any queries and facilitating the focus

group discussion. Key themes to guide the focus group discussions were drawn from the topline questions presented in the annexes section (Annex 1). The agenda for the focus group discussion and time allocation for each theme were framed in such a way that all themes would be covered comprehensively within 2.5 hours. Guided by the instructions on the focus group discussion guide (Annex 5), facilitators moderated the sessions, making sure that all participants were granted equal opportunities to speak and share their experiences. Proceedings of the focus group discussions were recorded to enable the evaluators to subsequently document and analyse the information shared during the meeting.

### **2.2.6 Data analysis**

Given the nature of the data collection methods and types of data collected, the bulk of the data was analysed qualitatively. Methods of analysis used were purposefully structured to enable the assessment team to answer specific questions stated in the RFQ. A basic thematic analysis approach was used to identify common responses from data generated through interviews and focus group discussions. This involved reviewing all qualitative responses to each question and identifying commonalities in responses (e.g., common observations, experiences, meanings, attitudes and perceptions). This method of analysis enabled the evaluators to identify common experiences and observations, while at the same time identifying peculiar responses. To achieve an in-depth qualitative analysis, responses to each of the questions under the 12 evaluation criteria were analysed individually. This provided answers on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, acceptability, utility, complementarity, adaptability, equity, coverage, accountability, added value and sustainability. Common responses were clustered to generate evidence on how the programme performed through the lens of each criterion. The clustering process generated key strengths based on observations and experiences from the respondents across the provinces.

Quantitative analysis was conducted using Stata Statistical Software: Release 14. College Station, TX: StataCorp LLC. The results presented are by complete variable analysis with no imputations for missing values. Proportions presented in the results are for complete cases by variable. Characterisation of all participants who took part in the study, using figures and/or tables was undertaken. The number of participants who participated was captured.

The distribution of categorical variables was summarised by frequencies and percentages. Quantitative variables were summarised using the median and inter-quartile range (IQR), where appropriate, and the minimum and maximum values were also reported. The data analysis followed a complete case by the variable procedure. Tables, charts (histograms and pie charts) were generated to display results in a simplified form.

In addition to using the 12 criteria as the frame of reference for analysis, programme alignment/congruence with international volunteering standards and humanitarian response guidelines was assessed as part of the analysis. These standards were used as international standard benchmarks against which the programme was assessed. Recommendations on how the programme can be institutionalised were made after identifying entry points, enablers, opportunities, risks and strengths of change of volunteer-driven disaster response.

### **2.2.7 General methodological limitations of the assessment**

No major challenges were encountered when communicating with respondents and setting up appointments for focus group discussions. However, some CSO representatives invited to participate in focus group discussions encountered internet connectivity challenges and therefore could not actively share their experiences during the entire sessions. Others were joining as groups and due to time limitations, it was not possible to allow every member to speak. Levels of proficiency in the use of Microsoft Teams among CSO representatives varied. While some had some experience in the use of the Teams platform, others were not very conversant with the functionalities. The focus group discussions brought together CSO representatives that had different levels of education, age and professional experience. Such disparities likely created a sense of nervousness among some participants and a generally intimidating environment affecting the level of participation and confidence to share experiences.

Poor internet connectivity and poor cellphone signal in some areas where the volunteers reside made it difficult for the evaluators to contact and interview volunteers that had been selected as respondents. This mostly affected the telephonic interviews as it was not possible to reach the volunteers.

### **3.FINDINGS**

#### **Overview of the presentation of findings**

In this section, findings from the data collection process are presented. The findings are presented using a format that is aligned with the outputs of the thematic analysis, integrating what emerged from focus group discussions involving CSOs, telephonic interviews and self-administered questionnaires as well as online interviews with NDA staff conducted via the Microsoft Teams platform. A comprehensive list of stakeholders interviewed is attached as Annex 7.

The findings are presented in such a way that the common experiences and observations across provinces, as articulated by respondents, are highlighted. Also presented are the unique provinces-specific findings to ensure that a holistic picture of how the programme performed in different contexts is clear. Key points that were commonly cited are reinforced with quotations from the respondents. Recordings of the focus group discussions and interviews are shared as part of the data collected.

In addition to presenting findings that answer specific questions on how the programme performed with particular reference to the original objectives, other immediate and emerging results that were not in the original suite of deliverables are also presented. This is done to provide the spectrum of results of the programme to generate comprehensive insights to improve or adapt the programme based on evidence from the field. The findings are presented by assessment criteria as outlined in the methodology section of this report.

Given that volunteers were at the forefront of implementing activities in the various communities, they were granted the opportunity to rate the various aspects of the programme and the nature of the activities they implemented. Based on the data from volunteers involved in the self-administered questionnaire, the nature of activities conducted by volunteers as part of programme implementation varied. As shown in Table 5, COVID-19 awareness was the most commonly cited activity implemented by the majority of the volunteers.

Table 5: *Activities conducted by volunteers engaged through the self-administered questionnaire*

Descriptive	Measure	Total
		(n=246)
Did you carry out COVID-19 awareness?		
Yes	n (%)	227 (92.3%)
No	n (%)	19 (7.7%)
Did you carry out COVID-19 screening?		
Yes	n (%)	178 (72.4%)
No	n (%)	68 (27.6%)
Did you carry out beneficiary household identification?		
Yes	n (%)	158 (64.2%)
No	n (%)	88 (35.8%)
Did you carry out food parcel distribution?		
Yes	n (%)	108 (43.9%)
No	n (%)	138 (56.1%)
Did you carry out collection of data on households?		
Yes	n (%)	174 (70.7%)
No	n (%)	72 (29.3%)
Did you carry out other community service duties?		
Yes	n (%)	184 (74.8%)
No	n (%)	62 (25.2%)

### 3.1 Relevance

The findings confirm that the programme was relevant from a wide perspective. Observations and experiences by respondents revealed that the programme scored highly in terms of meeting the needs of target communities, fillings gaps in service delivery systems, providing solutions to communities' immediate problems and responding to the local contextual factors and filling in gaps in awareness packages that other players were offering as part of COVID-19 response. These are the dimensions of relevance that can be attributed to the way the programme was conceptualised. Clustered evidence of relevance under each of these dimensions is presented below. Notably, CSO confirmed that the relevance of the programme was confirmed in speeches by premiers in the Free State, KwaZulu Natal and Western Cape.

As shown in Fig 2, volunteers involved in the self-administered questionnaire survey indicated that COVID-19 awareness and provision of community service were the most relevant activities.

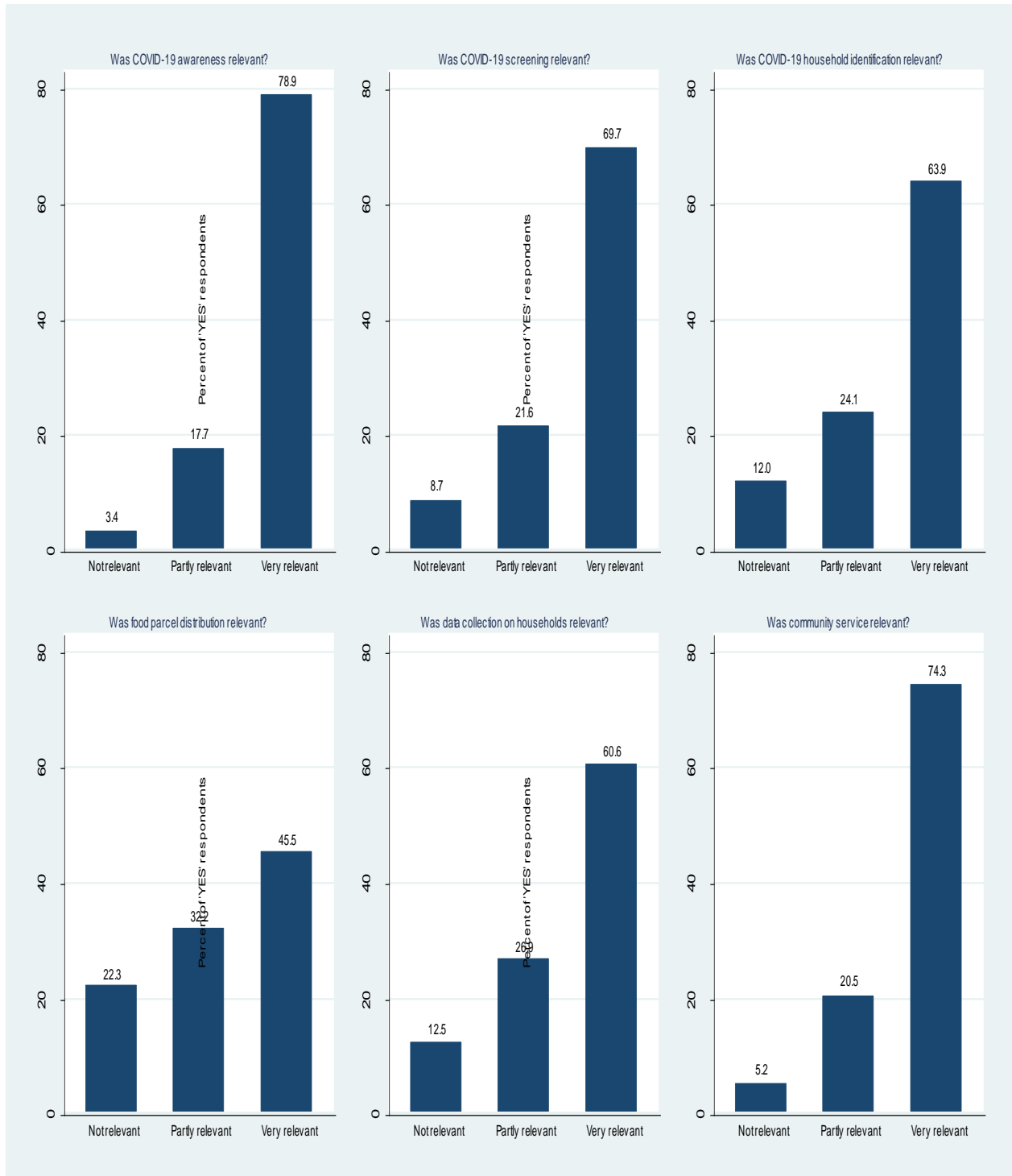


Figure 2: Relevance ratings for programme activities according to volunteers



### **Dispelling myths and speculation about COVID-19**

The programme was rolled out at a time when there were widespread doubts and speculation about the existence of COVID-19 in many parts of the country. It was a relevant entry initiative to dispel the myths and misinformation about the virus and how it spreads. The deployment of volunteers, drawn from the target communities, made it easier for locals to appreciate the messages as it was coming from local CSOs and volunteers they had worked with previously. The volunteers also knew how to contextualise the messages to reflect the local situation, making it easier for the target communities to relate to what they were expected to do to mitigate the pandemic.

### **Volunteers as anchors of inter-departmental collaboration in crisis response**

Volunteers became the new anchors around which the collaboration and interactions among government departments and agencies took place across provinces. Although modalities of collaboration among government departments existed before the COVID-19 pandemic, volunteers bridged the gap between the departments thereby making the relationships and collaboration between the departments truly functional in the face of limited opportunities for interaction due to lockdown regulations.

### **Meeting information needs of marginalised local communities**

Most of the people in the rural areas lacked information on the COVID-19 pandemic, especially the symptoms and ways to prevent the spread of the disease. The programme was relevant in its intentional efforts to target geographically marginalised rural areas and farm settlements to meet the information needs of communities that had limited means to access electronic and print media.

### **Focus on vulnerable and disempowered groups**

The programme specifically targeted individuals, households and groups that are vulnerable to COVID-19 due to physical disabilities, advanced age, low monthly income and crowded living conditions. These factors disempower them to proactively act or mitigate the health, economic and social impacts of COVID-19.

### **Appropriate methods to reach those at risk**

The community-based approach used by the volunteers was needed as it would enable them to track if food parcels being distributed reached those qualified to receive the assistance. The approach also enabled the volunteers to conduct house visits and attend to the needs of the elderly and the sick in their homes to reduce these vulnerable groups from being exposed to COVID-19 through travel using public transport and waiting in long queues.

### **Timely mitigation of impacts of COVID-19 on household incomes and food security**

Through the placement of volunteers to assist in the registration of R350 social relief grant recipients, the programme timely mitigated the impacts of lockdown on household income generation and food security. Most breadwinners, especially those dependent on informal work to generate income could not conduct business and become primarily dependent on the grant to meet their needs.

### **Opportunity for employment and skills development**

Most youths that were engaged as volunteers were unemployed. The programme provided opportunities for them to earn income, especially at a time when their families were experiencing reduced opportunities for earning income. The programme provided a rare opportunity for the volunteers to gain practical skills that they need to enter the job market.

### **Bridging the digital divide by deploying young people**

The programme responded to the need to bridge the digital divide by deploying young people who were conversant with information and communication technologies because of the challenges that the elderly would have encountered in terms of online grant application processes.

### **Volunteers filled gaps in service delivery systems**

Volunteers filled gaps in terms of the frontline workforce since some staff members from government departments could not work because they had underlying health problems. The volunteers performed the roles that these officials were expected to play as part of normal service delivery.

### **Facilitating information for improved service delivery**

The programme was relevant as it created a system for facilitating information flow, registration, query processing and feedback mechanisms for the social relief grants. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, there had been challenges with the application for social grants. Without the volunteers placed to assist in executing these grant application processes; the relevant departments and agencies would have been overwhelmed.

### **Hands-on approach to demonstrate desired behaviour change**

Volunteers' face-to-face engagement approach was relevant in practically demonstrating COVID-19 protocols for communities to change their behaviour. Although some information on the pandemic was made available through print and electronic media, it was not accessible to the poor, the elderly and the disabled. The volunteer, therefore, added a relevant practical approach to effecting behaviour change.

### **Filling human resource gaps in other COVID-19 response initiatives**

In some areas, there were organisations and private sector entities that had awareness materials but needed human resource to engage communities and demonstrate COVID-19 protocols. The deployment of volunteers in these areas helped bridge human resources gaps and contribute to the collective awareness for the benefit of local communities.

### **Contextual and resourcing factors that compromised programme relevance**

Although the points raised above confirm notable positive aspects of the programme, there were contextual and resourcing factors that compromised the relevance of the programme. They are presented below.

### **Contextual and resourcing factors beyond the control of CSOs and volunteers**

There were contextual and resourcing factors beyond the control of CSOs and volunteers that compromised the relevance of programme interventions. For instance, promoting regular hand-washing in areas that experience chronic water shortage, encouraging the use of soap and sanitisers by households that could hardly afford the products and promoting social distancing and self-isolation for families that did not have enough space in their dwellings.

### **Limited responsiveness to the special needs of people living with disabilities in messaging techniques**

There was little consideration of the special needs of people living with disability in the design of awareness materials and formulation of community engagement strategies. The bulk of the materials that were made available were meant for people that could see and read information pamphlets, thereby excluding the blind. There were no sign language interpreters so the needs of the deaf were not catered for when the volunteers were disseminating messages verbally. Additionally, there was focused training to equip volunteers with the skills to effectively work with people living with disabilities.

### **3.2 Effectiveness**

Across the provinces, the programme delivered the intended results under each of the five intervention areas, with a host of immediate public health, social, institutional, behavioural and environmental changes observed. Notable testimonials from local stakeholders that observed the approaches and outcomes of work done by the volunteers were cited in most provinces. Below is a list of key achievements as reported by the respondents. According to the volunteers that participated in the self-administered questionnaire survey (Fig 3), COVID-19 awareness and community service (including marshalling queues) were the most effective programme activities.

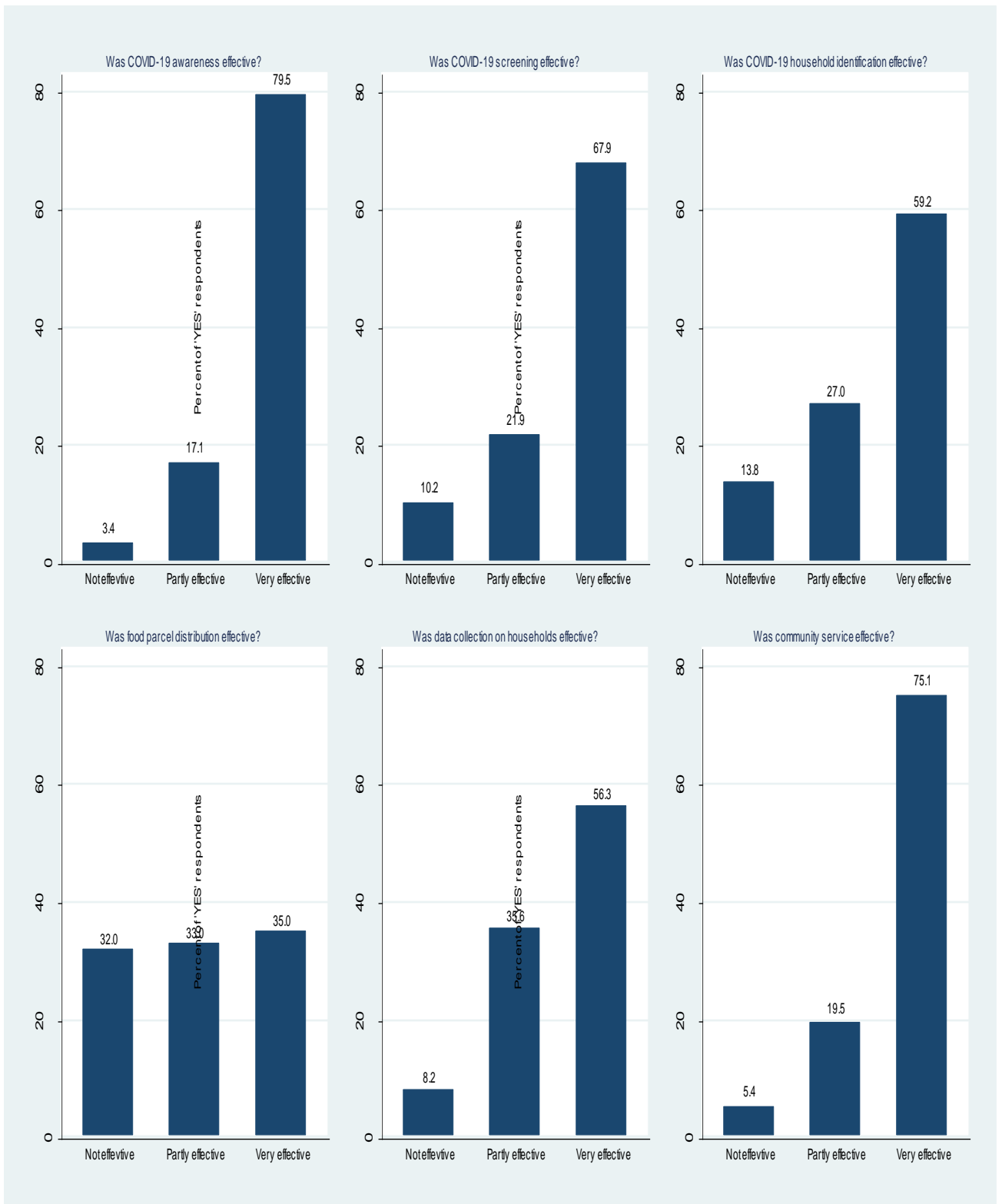


Figure 3: Effectiveness ratings for programme activities according to volunteers

### **Reaching groups with special needs for connecting them to appropriate services**

Volunteers were able to reach and assist identify individuals and households that needed special attention due to their vulnerability to COVID-19 and the secondary psychosocial and economic impacts of the pandemic. These included child-headed households, household led by the elderly, people living with disabilities, the homeless and the sick. They collected and submitted records of these vulnerable members of the community to the relevant government departments. A quote from one CSO representative confirms the appreciation of the platforms the programme created in terms of reaching out to the disabled: *“We would like to thank NDA for partnering with us as the disabled community because we know that we are always left behind. We appreciate that and most disabled people are always at home and not knowing what is going on so the door-to-door intervention helped a lot. We were also able to take them out, we did not know there were so many disabled people in the houses because they are always in the houses, it helped to take them out.”*

### **Improved relationships between communities and government agencies**

Volunteers helped improve relationships between communities and government agencies. By availing themselves to share information on procedures to access services and distributing information sheets on application processes, they created platforms and mechanisms for communities to access information which was problematic in the past and had created negative attitudes towards departmental and agency staff. They broke down barriers in communication and helped build trust as they executed their duties. This is evidenced by what a CSO representative from Mpumalanga said during a focus group discussion: *“When we started the implementation, it was not done properly and to be honest, we never had a good relationship with SASSA. When you went to SASSA, they would just send you from pillar to post. The programme has changed that ”*

### **Door-to-door campaign approach leads to behaviour change**

Evidence of internalisation of COVID-19 messages and behaviour change, largely attributed to door-to-door awareness campaigns by volunteers, was reported across the provinces. The door-to-door approach made communities appreciate the commitment of the government to curb the spread of the disease. As one CSO representative noted, *“There was a sense of ignorance and compliance when the government announced the lockdown and people would*

*even joke about how the government was controlling and restricting unnecessarily". As volunteers went around disseminating the COVID-19 message, community members began to respond, by wearing masks, practising social distancing in public, using sanitisers before entering shops, washing hands and limiting travel.*

### **Effective queue management system for quick and efficient service delivery**

The improvement in queue management systems introduced across provinces at SASSA and Post Offices was reported to be the most noticeable result of the volunteers' work. The volunteers marshalled the queues, explaining processes and ensuring that the vulnerable are accorded the opportunity to be served first. The improved queuing system was also instrumental in eliminating unfair practices where impatient and aggressive people could simply create disorder thereby disrupting smooth service delivery. Before the programme, SASSA and Post Office staff would be overwhelmed as they had no support in managing queues. During focus group discussions, there was a general agreement that the presence and actions of volunteers had effectively alleviated the burden on SASSA and Post Office staff.

### **Identifying places where COVID-19 protocols were not being followed**

In communities, volunteers were successful in identifying places where COVID-19 protocols were not being followed. Common examples of such places were spaza shops where, in some cases, sanitisers were not available and buyers were not maintaining social distance. This ensured that areas, where the risk of transmission was high, were identified so that the relevant authorities could provide support.

### **Volunteer-driven enforcement of adherence to COVID-19 protocols**

A key success mentioned in all provinces was how volunteers effectively screened community members for COVID-19, enforced adherence to social distancing requirements and marshalled queues to make sure that people followed the COVID 19 protocols at SASSA and Post Offices.

### **Eliminating disorder and addressing the needs of the vulnerable**

The queuing system and COVID-19 protocols introduced through the volunteer programme is now a permanent feature at offices. The queuing system has been ineffective in addressing

deep-rooted unfair practices whereby some individuals and groups would engage in corrupt activities, asking for money to have a strategic position in queues. The system also involves creating space for the sick and elderly to be served quickly.

#### **Identification of high-risk areas for targeted advocacy**

Volunteers successfully identified areas where COVID-19 awareness was needed, including major venues and public places where the risk of transmission was high in their localities. These include churches, shopping malls, cemeteries, ATMs and schools. They prioritised these places in their advocacy work and these public spaces continue to have points at which temperature-based screening for symptoms of COVID-19 takes place.

#### **Simplifying procedures for applying for grants and tracking outcomes**

Volunteers played a key role in assisting community members to complete their social grant applications correctly. They also provided simple guidance, in the language that locals understood, on how to track the status and outcomes of their applications.

#### **Making COVID-19 messages simple to improve understanding**

Most of the COVID-19 messages in the print and electronic media and public spaces were in English. Volunteers were instrumental in translating awareness from English to languages that local communities understood. This was helped the target communities understand, internalise and act upon the COVID-19 messaging.

#### **Promotion of household gardens for household food security**

Volunteers played a leading role in promoting the establishment of new projects that contribute to income generation and food security. Home gardens being promoted to demonstrate the benefits of household-based food production in a pandemic situation were cited as common examples of projects across the provinces.

#### **Identification of individuals without IDs and explaining steps to follow to be registered**

Volunteers were also instrumental in identifying challenges that affected community access to social services, including identifying households that were experiencing problems with processes for applying for IDs. They provided information on steps to follow for one to get an ID.



### **Successful identification of social ills and notification of relevant authorities**

As they engaged and interacted with the communities, volunteers managed to identify cases of social ills that were affecting individuals and households. These include cases of GBV, child abuse, substance abuse, profiling and discrimination of foreigners, gang-related violence and violent crimes. The information they documented was forwarded to the respective CSOs and, in some cases, they shared information with the relevant authorities.

### **Factors that contributed to programme success**

Having noted the successes of the programme attributed to the work done by volunteers, it is worthwhile to highlight some of the factors that contributed to the success above. These are:

- Volunteers self-drive contributed significantly to programme success. Some were not employed and were motivated to demonstrate what they had to offer to enhance their chances of securing employment in future. As one volunteer said, *“Although we were given a time frame of 5 hrs to work, at times we exceeded it because of the workload. We couldn’t leave people in the queues because it was knock off time, we would go the extra mile to help them”*
- In some areas, CSOs had already established ward- and village-based volunteer networks. These structures facilitated easy and effective mobilisation and identification of advocacy platforms.
- The programme focused on the immediate needs and problems of communities and this contributed to secured quick buy-in and acceptance of the work done by volunteers.
- Some volunteers had previously done community service in their respective locations and were known to be agents of community development. They were readily accepted by the communities and other stakeholders owing to that previous record.
- Pre-existing relationships and trust between CSOs and the communities made it easier for the volunteers to introduce the programme and identify the right entry points.

- The face-to-face interactions and hands-on approach in demonstrating the COVID-19 protocols helped build trust as the target communities could ask questions and adopt new behaviours.
- Recognised identification (name tags with official logo) enabled the volunteers to secure permission to enter houses, courtyards, shops and private business premises to disseminate COVID-19 protocols.

### **Challenges to the achievement of desired results**

In residential areas, public spaces and business premises where volunteers conducted their advocacy work, there were pockets of resistance to the adoption of behaviours associated with COVID-19 protocols. This was attributed to arrogance and complacency that volunteers could not deal with as their approach was mainly based on persuasive communication, not confrontation.

### **3.3 Efficiency**

#### **Factors that enhanced the efficiency of the programme**

Notably, there were practices and procedures, engagement platforms and institutional arrangements that contributed to the efficient delivery of the programme.

#### **Guidelines for aligning volunteer tasks sector plans of NDA, DSD and SASSA**

After noting the initial challenges emanating from lack of clarity on the roles of volunteers, some NDA staff developed guidelines defining the specific tasks that volunteers were expected to execute and how it was linked to sector plans of NDA, DSD and SASSA, linked to the national COVID-19 response strategy. This made it easier for the CSOs to ensure that the work the volunteers were doing was aligned with the programme goals and objectives.

#### **Clear reporting process for tracking progress, challenges and opportunities**

There were defined deadlines for CSOs to report on their activities every month. This provided a framework within which NDA would be able to track progress, identify successes and challenges for coordinated follow up with the CSOs.

### **WhatsApp platform for cheap, quick, accessible and inclusive information sharing**

The creation of WhatsApp groups by CSOs that were participating in the programme helped to improve information flow and improved the coordination of work done by CSOs and linking with the volunteers in the field. Given the limited travel allowed due to COVID-19 regulations, the groups provided a cheap, quick, accessible and inclusive platform for sharing information.

### **Queue marshalling as a technique to relieve workload on SASSA and Post Office staff**

The role that volunteers played in marshalling queues helped ensure order so that submission of grant applications and collection of the grants could be expedited without overwhelming the officials. Since the volunteers were available to provide information on grant application processes in their communities, it helped alleviate long queues as the grant beneficiaries could access the information without having to go to SASSA and the Post Office thereby reducing crowding. Since the volunteers were available to marshal queues, SASSA personnel were able to focus on processing claims, thereby enabling them to attend to more people than they would if they did not have support from volunteers.

### **Workspace provision for volunteers**

Government departments and agencies involved in the programme provided working space for the volunteers, including basic amenities they needed to perform their duties without unnecessary delays or distractions.

### **Functional communication channels pre-dating the programme**

Most CSOs already had good working relationships with NDA and had functional communication lines. There were testimonials from CSOs of how the good relationships made it possible for NDA Provincial Managers to provide technical and administrative to CSOs without the need for initial formalities.

### **Factors that impeded the efficient delivery of the programme**

Diverse factors that impeded the efficient delivery of the programme were identified. These can be categorised into missed entry points into communities, resourcing limitations, bottlenecked information flow, challenging field logistical arrangements and complex geographical environment in which the programme was implemented. Broadly, these factors

led to failure to leverage opportunities for synergy, delayed acceptance of programme interventions and volunteering approaches by communities and delayed attainment of expected results.

### **Designing amid uncertainties**

The three staff members from NDA interviewed bemoaned the pitfalls of the quick decisions that had to be made during the initial conceptualisation of the programme, given that this was an unprecedented pandemic that NDA and other agencies had not dealt with previously. They cited the uncertainties around how the COVID-19 pandemic was going to unfold and whether the programme would effectively address the context-specific issues given that there was no time to conduct an in-depth context analysis to assess local problems and capabilities of CSOs. A “learn as you go” implementation approach was adopted during the first two months of implementation. The major challenges encountered during that phase, according to the NDA staff members, was a lack of clarity on actual activities that volunteers were supposed to execute as the contexts varied from area to area. There were issues with SASSA and Post Office not being aware of how the volunteers would work with their teams.

### **Limited stakeholder awareness due to incomplete inception phase process**

Across all provinces, there were concerns about the gaps in the way the programme was introduced. Inception phase awareness and engagement of key local stakeholders at the local community level, especially community leadership and other organisations that could have supported volunteers at the start of the programme appears not to have been executed systematically. As a result, community members and most stakeholders were initially not aware of the objectives of the programme, with some community members refusing to accept the messages that volunteers were disseminating.

### **Delayed feedback impacting on CSO's planning processes**

Although the procedures for submitting progress updates to NDA were clear, including deadlines, there were issues with getting feedback on performance and clarity on whether recommendations made by CSOs in their monthly reports would be addressed. Lack of updates on when payments would be made after submission of reports made it difficult to

plan systematically as they were not aware of when they would receive funding to maintain the momentum in programme implementation.

### **Delays in the disbursement of the administration fees to CSOs**

A common constraint to the efficient delivery of the programme, in all provinces, was the delay in the disbursement of the administration fees to CSOs. Late disbursement of the administration fee resulted in delays in the deployment of volunteers and payment of stipend as some volunteers needed the money to cover their transport costs. CSOs also reported that the fee was barely enough to cover the costs they incurred, including printing, communication and subsistence for the volunteers. In some rural areas, weak cell phone signals hindered the process of checking the status of SASSA grant registration. This was compounded by the fact that volunteers did not receive data and therefore could not assist the applicants. Volunteers had to use their phones to apply for the community or make follow-ups regarding the status of applications and some were overwhelmed with requests for assistance. Some volunteers did not have smartphones and were unable to render assistance.

### **Demotivation of volunteers due to unfilled contractual obligations**

Failure to fulfil contractual obligations in terms of provision of data for communication and transport and subsistence allowances demotivated volunteers. Delays in payment of their basic monthly allowances was the most reported factor that dented the morale of volunteers.

### **Unclear roles of volunteers in the early stages of the programme**

During the early stages of the programme, the roles of the volunteers when working with SASSA, Post Office and government departments was not very clear. This meant that volunteers were also not clear of how they would work with SASSA, Post Office and other government departments. There were delays in responding to queries from CSOs sent to NDA offices during the same period. During the same period, CSOs were reluctant to deploy volunteers because they were not sure about their liabilities and risk management roles in case volunteers fell sick or were injured on duty.

### **Limited training of volunteers during induction**

There was concern that most volunteers only learnt about the actual tasks they were expected to perform on the job. The training they received at the beginning was too basic to enable them to engage communities effectively, especially during the early stages of the programme.

### **Delayed distribution of awareness materials to CSOs**

Delays in the distribution of awareness materials to CSOs was also noted to be a notable constraint to effective advocacy. Some CSOs reported that they only received the materials months into the programme implementation phase, while others did not receive the materials at all.

### **Disruptions due to resignations by volunteers**

Some volunteers resigned during programme implementation. Apart from disrupting the implementation of the programme, these resignations resulted in CSOs losing talented and committed volunteers. The volunteers that resigned were already trained at a cost. The CSOs had to replace the volunteers, resulting in extra training and orientation costs.

### **Slow acceptance of the volunteering approach by SASSA and Post Office staff**

The volunteering approach adopted by the programme was new to some SASSA and DSD staff. It took a while for them to have a full appreciation of the role and contribution of volunteers. Across the provinces, there were cases where the volunteers were at times allocated duties that were not in line with what was defined in their contracts.

### **Reduced interaction time due to high travel costs**

In rural areas and farm settlements, the long distances that volunteers had to travel resulted in extra transport costs. The result was that volunteers would reduce their trips compromising their interaction time with communities.

### **Delayed deployment due to shortage of PPEs**

During the early stages of the programme, some volunteers could not interact with communities as per their advocacy mandate because they did not have PPEs. This was due to a national shortage of PPEs.

### **Incorrect information creating extra tasks for volunteers**

There were numerous cases of individuals who have false information during the registration of grant recipients. This meant the records captured were incorrect, creating extra tasks for the volunteers and delays in the processing of applications.

### **Missed opportunities for support and synergy**

When volunteers were deployed, they were not introduced to like-minded organisations and relevant local stakeholders. They could not, therefore, share their knowledge nor join forces with other volunteers conducting COVID-19 awareness in their communities. Although some volunteers later discovered these opportunities, it was too late to have joint outreaches.

## **3.4 Acceptability**

Noteworthy aspects of the programme that were accepted by the target communities and other stakeholders vary greatly. They include community engagement approaches used by volunteers, an initiative taken by volunteers to gather information about diverse community problems, socially inclusive targeting criteria adopted by the programme, responsiveness to key socioeconomic needs of households, new avenues for accessing social services from government departments, dedication and visibility of volunteers in communities, creation of opportunities for new livelihood projects and skills development opportunities for youths. Highlights of the aspects liked by communities and stakeholders, including and the specific reasons why are presented below.

### **Volunteers as popular local champions of relief efforts**

There was confirmation by CSOs of how volunteers are now popular champions of relief efforts mainly because they worked selflessly, covering tasks beyond the confines of their duties as defined in their contracts. For example, volunteers were meant to work 5 hours per day but in most cases, they would exceed their normal working hours, in line with the working hours of the agencies they were attached to. Letters of approvals and testimonials from some SASSA and Post Office staff were sent to CSOs, particularly in Gauteng, KwaZulu Natal and Free State.

### **Volunteers as identifiers of problems and links to services**

As one CSO representative said during the focus group discussion, the volunteers have since become the “eyes and ears of the community”, to quote one CSO representative from Gauteng. This is a particular acknowledgement of how the volunteers have been able to collect information on social problems affecting communities, including the identity of the individuals and households affected by the problems and their locations and linking them with the right services.

### **Volunteers are visible, approachable and available**

Although there were other means through which communities could gain access to COVID-19 messages, especially via the electronic media, communities appreciated that volunteers who were knowledgeable about the pandemic and mitigation protocols were resident in their localities. They were easily identifiable, approachable and available to provide information. The volunteers could simplify the details and share them in local languages. The one-on-one approach allowed the volunteers to interface with households and communities and build trust.

### **Targeted reach to people with disabilities against a history of exclusion**

Across provinces, the volunteers are known to have reached the marginalised and vulnerable in their localities. They bridged a gap in terms of the provision of information to individuals with special needs. A point confirmed by CSOs is that the mainstream media and national awareness platforms rarely mentioned the plight of people with disabilities. The groundbreaking efforts by volunteers to address the needs of the people with disabilities through home visits gave the programme a face of compassion and social inclusion.

### **Actions that resonated with immediate needs of communities**

As noted earlier, the most popular interventions were the ones linked to assisting communities to access their R350 SRD. This was mainly because most formal and informal income-generating activities had been negatively affected by lockdown regulations. This inclusion of an intervention that resonated with the immediate needs of the communities made the volunteers welcome, creating opportunities for them to disseminate awareness



messages extensively. In some areas, the volunteers have taken a leading role in promoting livelihood projects that would have received less attention due to lockdown regulations.

### ***Factors behind negative community attitudes towards the programme***

There were inherent attributes of the programme and implementation aspects that did not resonate with the expectations and preferences of local communities. As evidenced by some of the points below, some of the concerns and negative attitudes towards the programme were a result of misinformation, myths and conspiracy theories peddled by those that had a limited understanding of the overall purpose of the programme.

### **Wrong perceptions about PPEs and stigmatisation of volunteers**

In most areas, negative labels and attitudes towards volunteers were reported mainly as a result of the community dislike of the types of PPEs worn when they were conducting their outreach. The white overalls made the volunteers look alien as the community associated the overalls with people that handle serious cases of infections and dead bodies. There were wrong assumptions and rumours that the volunteers were spreading the disease intentionally. The stigmatisation of volunteers as spreaders of COVID-19 affected the volunteers' family members too. Some residents did not like visitors, volunteers included, as they thought they would be exposing themselves to infections.

### **Untrue accusations denting the reputation of volunteers**

There were unsubstantiated claims that volunteers were illegally gaining access to the R350 SRD meant for ordinary community members. These claims were made in cases where applicant documents were rejected by SASSA and when there were delays in the processing of the applications for grants. These unproven accusations dented the reputation of the volunteers and unfortunately, there were no mechanisms to dispel these claims.

### **Concerns about providing personal information**

During the initial phase of registration of R350 SRD, some prospective applicants refused to give their identity details to volunteers fearing that the information would be used to make fraudulent claims. They did not want to interact with the volunteers.

### **Insecurity due to unidentifiable volunteers**

In some areas across provinces, volunteers were not easily identifiable because they did not have branded clothing (PPEs) or formal identification documents. Community members were afraid that criminals could take advantage of the presence of the volunteers to gain access to their houses.

### **Misunderstood mandate of volunteers and the objectives of the programme**

In rural areas, some community members were expecting the programme to distribute PPEs, sanitisers and food vouchers. They did not appreciate that the volunteers were only mandated to work with SASSA and Post Office. They felt that the programme was not meeting some of their primary needs.

### **Volunteers were associated with long queues**

There were negative sentiments about the long queues that were common at the Post Office where the volunteers were placed. Although the queues were not a result of the NDA programme, the community disliked the fact that they would spend hours in queues controlled by the volunteers. The long queues were against the awareness messages and COVID-19 protocols that the volunteers were promoting and fuelled rumours that R350 SRD recipients would be infected in queues.

### **What volunteers did not like about the programme**

Although volunteers appreciated the personal and community benefits of the programme, they had some concerns around some of the administrative processes, lack of formal recognition and their vulnerability to abuse.

### **Unplanned personal expenditure to uncover field implementation costs**

Delays in payment of allowances was a major issue that volunteers disliked about the administrative aspects of the programme. Due to the delays, volunteers often used their own money to buy data and cover transport costs which were not in line with what was stipulated in the contract.

### **Lack of professional recognition and respect**

Volunteers felt they were not accorded professional respect and official recognition they were expecting from SASSA and Post Office, a factor largely attributed to the fact these agencies had not involved volunteers in their operations before. Cases of volunteers that worked extra hours and days but were not acknowledged were reported in all provinces.

### **Exposure to abuse and dealing with hostile community members**

During their engagements with the community, volunteers occasionally encountered unfriendly, abusive and aggressive individuals that trivialised their work. Volunteers felt they did not have formal protection and could easily be abused or become victims of violent crime. Communities thought volunteers were in charge of the payments from SASSA. If payments were late, they would complain to volunteers.

### **Differences in working conditions**

There were differences in working conditions for the volunteers, depending on where they were based. Some had to travel long distances using public transport whereas others simply walked to their placement areas. Those who were deployed to Post Offices had to work on Saturdays while others worked during weekdays only.

## **3.5: Complementarity**

Through the work done by volunteers, the programme strengthened collaborative linkages with government departments, the private sector and other non-profit sector entities. The nature of collaboration was strengthened and became more responsive to community needs as volunteers identified gaps and challenges that needed focused attention from the relevant service providers. Some of the linkages emerged as the organisations acknowledged the role the volunteers were playing and acknowledge the volunteer roles and opportunities to leverage the volunteers as frontline actors in the fight against COVID-19. These linkages helped redefine and strengthen referral systems, much to the benefits of communities who previously had a limited understanding of processes and procedures for accessing services. Details about some of the organisations involved, the role played by volunteers and are

summarised in Table 5. Although the list of organisations and departments that were engaged through the groundwork of volunteers is not exhaustive, it indicates areas of common interest and synergies in serving communities evolved.

As noted earlier, the programme successfully complemented other programmes as indicated by 84.5% of volunteers who indicated that they worked with other departments, agencies, organisations or groups in their communities.

Table 6: *Roles played by volunteers when working with departments and other institutions*

<b>Departments / Organisations / Programmes</b>	<b>Role played volunteers as part of the collaboration</b>
SASSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assisting with the grant application process</li> <li>• Disseminating information on eligibility and application process</li> <li>• Identifying households without appropriate documentation</li> </ul>
Post Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marshalling queues</li> <li>• Disseminating information</li> </ul>
Department of Social Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Referral of beneficiaries who qualified for other grants other than COVID-19 relief</li> <li>• Registering beneficiaries for different grants</li> <li>• Identifying households without documentation and assisting with acquiring such documents</li> <li>• Cleaning and sanitising early education centres</li> </ul>
Department of Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Filing documents</li> <li>• Screening people visiting health centres</li> <li>• Sanitising health facilities</li> </ul>
Department of Home Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying individuals without IDs</li> <li>• Providing details on the process to follow when applying for IDs</li> </ul>
Department of Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assisting officers to connect with farmers whose operations were affected by lockdown regulations</li> </ul>
Department of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assisting with queue marshalling, screening and sanitising premises</li> </ul>
Department of Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disseminating information about social distancing in vehicles</li> </ul>

SAPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing information on COVID-19 during crime awareness campaigns</li> </ul>
Church Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distributing food parcels in communities</li> </ul>
Department of Labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing information on youth employment aspirations and challenges</li> </ul>
Banks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marshalling queues</li> </ul>
Private Companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distributing food parcels in communities</li> </ul>
Non-Governmental Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distributing food parcels in communities</li> </ul>

### 3.6: Equity

#### **Purposeful focus on vulnerable groups and communities**

As noted in the Relevance section, one of the strengths of this programme was its inherent emphasis on targeting people that needed assistance recognising their diverse vulnerabilities and the likelihood of exclusion in awareness programmes. This includes vulnerable socio-demographic groups such as the elderly, female-headed households, households headed by the elderly, orphaned and vulnerable children, people living with disabilities, communities in isolated areas where basic service provision is limited, people living with HIV, among others. Based on data gathered through focus group discussions, most CSOs intentionally used the vulnerabilities of people in their areas of operations as targeting criteria, ensuring equity in the delivery of the programme. A significant number of CSOs in each province already had social inclusion agendas in their normal community outreach and understood the entry strategies when targeting the marginalised and vulnerable in communities. Volunteers' views on the performance of the programme in terms of reach were particularly positive, with 90.6% of respondents confirming the remarkable reach to those that deserved to receive the goods and services provided by the programme.

Despite these CSO's intentions and capabilities to address social exclusion, experiences from the field shared by volunteers there were exclusions by default as highlighted in the points below:

- The transition and increasing reliance on online platforms are disadvantaging the elderly in terms of access to information as they are not conversant with smartphones and applications.
- There are South African citizens who were not registered at birth and due to lack of proper identity documents, they could not register for the R350 SRD. Those that were assisted to apply for IDs still have to wait for months to have their application processed.
- Due to the scatter patterns of farmworker communities and some rural settlements, it was a challenge for the volunteers to reach them as part of the advocacy campaigns due to lack of transport. Within the urban and peri-urban areas, there was a public perception that the programme concentrated in township areas.
- Some religious groups refused to accept help and COVID-19 messages because they believed that only God could help them survive the pandemic.
- During the first phase of the lockdown, homeless communities were moved to shelters. However, as time passed some of them were not satisfied with the conditions in the shelters and moved back to the begging spots, where they could not be targeted during the registration processes and awareness campaigns.

### **3.7. Coverage**

As noted in the Equity section, the intention, as confirmed by CSOs during the focus group discussions, was to cover all geographical regions and human settlements, irrespective of the social or economic status of the residents. However, the outreach efforts were not evenly distributed mainly because of resource constraints. Owing to transport challenges, some volunteers concentrated on areas they could easily reach. The footprint of their work was also influenced by the locations of SASSA, Post Office and other government departmental offices as they spent the greater part of their time at the premises of these institutions. The allocation of areas of coverage for CSOs was also ward-based and this resulted in disparities in coverage as some wards were not covered. In some metropolitan provinces, volunteers could not cover areas that were known to be crime hotspots. This was the case in Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu Natal.

### **3.8. Ownership**

Evidence of gradual community participation, buy-in and ownership of the programme interventions was captured from the interviews and focus group discussions. Diverse contributions from other stakeholders to complement the community service by volunteers were also documented across the provinces. There were notable adaptations made by CSOs to ensure effective implementation. As noted earlier, the volunteers also demonstrated innovativeness and commitment, demonstrating their willingness to be the drivers of the programme on the ground. Pieced together, the points highlighted below provide insight into the extent to which the key actors, beneficiaries, enablers and support structures recognised their roles and contributions they could make to ensure programme success.

#### **Granting volunteers and CSOs access to Wi-fi**

In metropolitan provinces, community centres with Wi-Fi facilities offered CSOs and volunteers' access to their premises so that they could access the internet. This helped reduce data costs and facilitated communication among key actors involved in the implementation of the programme.

#### **Welcoming the volunteers in homes and public spaces**

The primary targets and beneficiaries of the programme (communities) largely granted volunteers access to their properties and other shared spaces during the outreach. Although there were isolated incidents of resistance and refusal to let the volunteers conduct their work, volunteers successfully utilised the space and time given by communities to meet the goal and objectives of the programme.

#### **Innovative ways of motivating volunteers**

There was noteworthy evidence of ownership of the programme by CSOs and the desire to see it succeed by motivating their volunteers. Some CSOs added tasks to volunteer work schedules to motivate them (e.g., nutrition project and connection with school homework clubs). They improvised when the resources volunteers needed were not made available on time – e.g., in the Western Cape, they used the information they had to spread the COVID-19 awareness and incorporated issues around comorbidities – HIV, TB etc. Some CSOs added

elements of time management to the initial training of volunteers to ensure timely completion of tasks and contribute to the overall attainment of programme objectives.

#### **Commitment to using personal resources to complement what was provided by NDA**

Volunteers and CSO leaders often used their financial resources and personal equipment to ensure that the work went ahead without disruptions, especially when there were delays in the disbursement of grants and administration fees. They did not entirely depend on the resources provided by NDA.

#### **Buy-in and complementary activities by church groups and private companies**

Church groups and some private companies engaged volunteers when they were distributing food and clothing to the marginalised, thereby recognising the volunteers and the programme in general. There were cases of private companies that provided gazebos and shelters to volunteers to work from.

#### **Community plan to ensure the safety of volunteers**

In terms of community buy-in, a particular example from the Western Cape deserves mention and recognition. After realising that volunteers were not safe in areas affected by gang-related violence, the local community leadership requested that a local security company accompanies volunteers when they were passing through crime hotspots.

#### **Inclusion of volunteer's work on community agendas**

Programme activities implemented in communities by volunteers were gradually included in social dialogues at municipality levels. This means that work done by volunteers was recognised, accepted and worth being included on the list of community agendas.

#### **Acceptance of local referral pathways for service provision**

Acceptance of referral pathways (strengthened by volunteers) by government departments, especially DSD, DHA, DoE proved instrumental in ensuring that the respective departments attended to queries that volunteers could not.



### **Inclusion of volunteers in sector-based events**

Volunteers were invited to public events organised by the private sector and municipalities recognising that they shared a common agenda.

### **3.9. Adaptability**

CSO managers and volunteers made some adjustments and adaptations to their community engagement strategies, responding to emerging needs, problems and opportunities during implementation. Although some of the adjustments were subtle and informal, they represent that relevant that were made to ensure effective and efficient delivery. These included emphasizing targeting specific groups in communities, adjustments in volunteer work schedules, identifying and focusing on new community engagement platforms, the inclusion of new components to the original intervention pillars and finding alternatives when resources were not available. Below are some of the broad categories of adaptations made, as reported by volunteers and CSO representatives.

- As awareness of the most vulnerable age groups (to COVID-19) became known, the general reaction by CSOs was to volunteers place special emphasis on the elderly in communities when disseminating information through door-to-door campaigns.
- In areas where some household-based and community livelihoods were underway, volunteers were given the responsibility of coordinating work to ensure that the programme remained functional in the face of lockdown regulations that restricted gatherings and movements. In some areas, new gardens were established to highlight the need for households to produce their food as incomes dwindled. Cases, where volunteers provided manpower in cooking food at soup kitchens, were reported.
- A significant proportion of volunteers encountered transport challenges and instead of staying at home, they decided to focus their attention on advocacy work in areas they could get to without incurring transport costs. Apart from ensuring that there were no disruptions in work, this was also done to keep the volunteers busy and motivated.

- Initially, the volunteers covered all residential and public spaces equally. However, as information on places where the risk of transmission was high due to large crowds become available, there were shifts to ensure that volunteers were present at places and events such as large shopping malls, arenas for awareness campaigns, funerals, taxi ranks, among others.
- When there were delays in the delivery of the awareness materials, some CSOs leveraged their networks and local well-wishers to supply and equip the volunteers with the required resources materials.

### **3.10. Accountability**

At national and provincial levels, NDA had mechanisms to share programme progress updates and emerging results with other government departments and agencies. Through the reporting structures linking CSOs to NDA offices at the provincial level, progress updates, challenges and recommendations were shared through monthly reports compiled by CSO managers. Information contained in daily reports compiled by volunteers and forwarded to their supervisors fed into monthly CSO reports submitted to NDA. However, there were no formal and clearly defined platforms and processes for ensuring that the programme was accountable to local stakeholders in terms of availing information on the overall performance of the programme. Sharing of information about the programme with communities, local leadership and other stakeholders was therefore informal and not standardised across provinces.

- Volunteers had occasional opportunities to address groups of people as they were waiting to be served at pay points.
- Local radio stations made announcements regarding dates when pay points would be open and encouraged the community to attend so that they could get more information from volunteers.
- Door-to-door visits by the volunteers provided opportunities to explain the objectives and activities of the programme.

- Data on beneficiary households collected by volunteers were shared with appropriate stakeholders locally, although it was not consistent. CSO managers also shared the data in their interactions with other stakeholders.

### **3.11. Added Value**

The programme generated unique values beyond the scope of what was originally expected when it was conceptualised. Data gathered through the interviews and focus group discussions revealed diverse values that translate into current and future benefits from the perspective of CSOs, volunteers, communities and partner organisations. Broadly, these values fall into various categories including generation of knowledge on benefits of grassroots volunteering, revealing the enablers of and constraints to effective volunteering, establishment and strengthening of social networks, contributions to systems strengthening for government departments, opportunities for organisational development for CSOs, contributions to national skills development among youths, and removal of bottlenecks in service delivery systems. In summary, below are some of the clustered unique values added by the programme.

#### **Evidence of transformative skills development on the part of volunteers**

Volunteers confirmed that they gained invaluable skills as they were implementing the programme. A wide range of soft skills was cited, including effective verbal communication, report writing, client services, planning, time management, conflict resolution, confidence building and being resilient in the face of hostile community members. The allowance they received was a financial boost for some as they used it to access online job markets. Working as a volunteer was a CV-booster for most volunteers, especially those that had formal qualifications from TVETS and other institutions of higher learning. They seek to approach SASSA and other government departments for work and the experience they gained will enhance their chances of being hired.

### **Improved working relationships among government departments**

One of the most recognisable legacies of the programme is the improved working relationships among government departments necessitated by service delivery issues identified by volunteers. Volunteers contributed to defining bottlenecks in service delivery systems, creating a way of identifying and referring community members to the right duty bearers. A particular benefit of having volunteers assisting SASSA was that it improved the application process as crowd management was managed by volunteers.

### **Enhanced reputation of CSOs locally**

As the frontline entities managing volunteers, CSOs had practical opportunities to improve their reputation and influence in their areas of operation. The programme contributed to making CSOs informal information hubs from which residents can seek assistance if they are experiencing challenges with service delivery.

### **Experience in grant management and management of volunteers**

The programme helped CSO managers gain experience in grant/project management, including coordination with government departments and fulfilling financial accountability and reporting requirements. They also had the opportunity to gain practical experience in managing volunteers in a pandemic situation.

### **Recognisable benefits of volunteering at community level**

The programme demonstrated that volunteers could do more than just deliver messages on COVID-19 and marshal queues. It demonstrated, with careful planning, volunteer-driven activities can be successfully linked to other outreach programmes that address the needs and problems of communities. This is exemplified by the home gardening projects, identification and reporting of cases of social ills and establishment of informal information hubs through the work of CSOs.

### **Improved social standing of volunteers**

Volunteers' commitment and trust they built as they were implementing the programme has improved their social standing in the communities. There is potential for the volunteers to

become development champions as they apply their technical and soft skills in the post-programme period.

### **Strategic positioning of CSOs building on their experiences**

CSOs had the opportunity to work outside their usual area of focus. They were working outside their comfort zones, providing opportunities for them to work for communities at large, as opposed to projects that target specifics, socio-demographic groups. This has positioned the CSOs for adding other components to their work as they develop their portfolios.

### **Scope for gaining a deeper understanding of root causes of service delivery challenges**

Various CSOs indicated that volunteers are playing the role of activists in the community as they are now able to identify social problems and gather basic information about how it is affecting communities so that the relevant government departments can be notified. This helps the departments in deepening their understanding of the root causes of poor service delivery.

## **3.12. Sustainability**

Building on the points highlighted in the Ownership and Value-Added section, various programme interventions are already being driven through local community and volunteer initiative and are likely to continue beyond the phase of the programme under review. Some interventions have been adopted and actively supported by institutions that were programme partners during implementation. The evidence of sustainability gathered include self-drive among volunteers through an enhanced culture of volunteering, organised queueing and defined referral systems as part of the grant application and collection processes, internalised knowledge and adopted behaviours to mitigate COVID-19, working relationships between government departments, organisational capacity of CSOs and recognition of volunteers of point persons in solving community challenges. Although this evidence of short-term sustainability is drawn from points shared by volunteers and CSO representatives, it is important to highlight that there was a consensus among respondents that follow up programmes would enhance the sustainability of the overall outcomes of the

programme. The points listed below substantiate the elements of sustainability that were picked through the rapid assessment.

When asked to rate the programme in terms of sustainability, 78% of the volunteers indicated that programme activities were likely to continue beyond the current phase of the funding cycle.

#### **Legacy of improved queueing and referral systems**

The most commonly cited component of the programme that was noted to have the highest likelihood of continuing beyond the current phase is the organised queueing and defined referral systems as part of the grant application and collection processes at SASSA and Post Offices. The benefits of such an orderly way of managing large groups of people seeking services were reported across the provinces and despite programme activities being stopped in some areas, the queueing and referral systems continue. The demand for support in filing online applications is still high.

#### **Sustained behaviour changes at community level**

CSO representatives and volunteers shared examples of how local communities have gained knowledge of COVID-19 protocols and adopted the behaviours that were promoted. These desirable results were attributed to hands-on and face-to-face community engagement approaches used by volunteers. Already in some areas, volunteers are no longer conducting advocacy work, the behaviours are being reinforced through other sources of COVID-19 awareness and protocol enforcement.

#### **Skills for career building and professional development**

The technical and soft skills that volunteers gained during the implementation of the programme are likely going to become part of their capabilities applicable in their day-to-day lives as well as in professional development and career-building. Since volunteers viewed voluntary work as part of personal development, they are likely going to continue using the skills for personal, family and community benefit.

### **Capacitated CSOs able to continue delivering volunteer-driven programmes**

Grounding the programme management in CSOs helped amplify the role of volunteers in community services. Although volunteering is also known to be a modality through which CSOs delivered their mandates, the programme strengthened the capacity of the CSOs to manage volunteer-driven interventions. Since the CSOs are based in the communities, they are likely going to promote the volunteering approach as it has helped attain new status as implementers of solutions to emergencies.

## **4.RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommendations from the rapid assessment are presented in two parts. The first part of this section presents a summary of how the programme performed through the lens of the nine dimensions of change. Recommendations on how the programme could be adapted to align with the nine dimensions are presented in Table 6. These recommendations are presented in recognition of the need to ensure that the NDA-CSO Volunteer Programme meets global volunteering standards in terms of delivery and outcomes. The second batch of recommendations primarily is framed as action points that, if adopted, would generally improve the performance, impact and sustainability of the programme.

Table 7: Recommendations on how the programme could be adapted to align with the nine dimensions

Volunteering dimension of change	Description (viewed from a disaster response perspective)	Evidence of fulfilment of the volunteering dimension of change from the findings	Summary statement on action to improve programme performance and outcomes in line with standard dimensions of change
Inspiration	The programme inspires community action through the influential role played by volunteers in demonstrating practical solutions to problems affecting the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No strong evidence of inspiration yet</li> </ul>	Given that it is less than one year since the programme was launched, it may be too early to pick strong evidence of inspiration. However, it is important to keep track of the volunteers' efforts to be able to identify any new initiatives emerging through the work done by volunteers
Collaboration	The programme builds links with relevant stakeholders and opens spaces for working together to plan, implement and sustain disaster response activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identified areas of collaboration with government departments that provide services on public health, social protection, citizen registration, food security, upholding rights and youth employment</li> <li>• Through the initiative of volunteers, the programme departments and agencies to deal with systemic challenges that hindered service provision to groups within communities</li> </ul>	Clear definition and documentation of specific values added by the collaborations, including interaction processes as part of the collaboration at national, provincial and lower-level administrative structures



Volunteering dimension of change	Description (viewed from a disaster response perspective)	Evidence of fulfilment of the volunteering dimension of change from the findings	Summary statement on action to improve programme performance and outcomes in line with standard dimensions of change
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leveraged opportunities for volunteers to provide support to initiatives by the private sector and NGOs</li> </ul>	
Inclusion	The programme articulates the needs and rights of vulnerable and marginalised members of the community, ensuring that underlying drivers of exclusion are addressed as part of disaster response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Targeting communities marginalised by the distance of their locations to main service centres (farmworkers and rural dwellers)</li> <li>Identifying, registering and targeting vulnerable groups (specifically the sick, elderly, homeless and people with disabilities) during advocacy activities</li> <li>Identifying citizens disempowered by lack of identification and connecting them with service providers</li> </ul>	Understanding the needs and vulnerabilities and purposefully designing materials and engagement approaches that specifically address the needs of the excluded, marginalised, stigmatized and vulnerable groups
Participation	The programme creates opportunities for beneficiary communities to play an active role in decision-making processes, action and monitoring of programme activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community members passing on the COVID-19 awareness messages they received from the volunteers to others during community events</li> </ul>	Identifying overall contributions and specific tasks that beneficiary communities, local community structures and other local stakeholders can undertake aligned with the programme activities

<b>Volunteering dimension of change</b>	<b>Description (viewed from a disaster response perspective)</b>	<b>Evidence of fulfilment of the volunteering dimension of change from the findings</b>	<b>Summary statement on action to improve programme performance and outcomes in line with standard dimensions of change</b>
Innovation	The programme facilitates the emergence of new ways of working and perspectives, contributing to new solutions to context-specific problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteer-managed queueing systems to reduce crowding and risk of infection at service provision centres</li> <li>• Reaching the elderly at home to minimize exposure to the virus</li> <li>• Volunteer-driven identification of individuals and households that cannot rights and services</li> <li>• Deployment of youths conversant with online systems to speed up application processes</li> <li>• Encouraging volunteers to explore and provide other community service tasks to motivate them and promote personal growth</li> <li>• Promoting home gardens to demonstrate benefits of household-based production in the face of reduced income</li> </ul>	Providing clear incentives for innovation among volunteers and CSOs in the areas of engagement of vulnerable community members, use of online platforms to solve problems and volunteer motivation
Social Action	The programme promotes the spirit of active citizenship, setting foundations for individuals and groups within communities to volunteer and help others in their localities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of an informal network of volunteers across communities capable of delivering community service during emergencies</li> <li>• Actions by volunteers to highlight the plight of abused members of the community and individuals affected by other social ills to ensure action to address the problems</li> </ul>	Although the volunteers that participated in the programme have gained skills that make them point persons in their communities and could easily be linked to form a network, there is a need to map the location and influence of all volunteers for better coverage.

Volunteering dimension of change	Description (viewed from a disaster response perspective)	Evidence of fulfilment of the volunteering dimension of change from the findings	Summary statement on action to improve programme performance and outcomes in line with standard dimensions of change
Ownership	The programmes create platforms for beneficiary communities to take a lead in activities, allowing them to gain skills and confidence to continue working to address their problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Granting volunteers access to buildings to access internet services at community centres and local organisations' offices</li> <li>• Use of personal and organisational financial resources and equipment by volunteers and CSOs to bridge gaps in support from NDA, to avoid delays and disruptions of programme activities</li> <li>• Discussion of work by volunteers during social dialogues at community and municipality levels</li> </ul>	Linked to the recommendation on enhancing participation, it is important to communicate the goals and objectives of the programme and call for action communities to link volunteer's work with local projects
Agency	The programme contributes to beneficiary community empowerment to enable communities to work together to pursue agendas of their choice as part of disaster response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although evidence of agency was rather weak, there were cases of CSOs working on projects targeted at people living with disabilities pushed to have the priorities of their constituents amplified in COVID-19 messaging (e.g., in the Western Cape).</li> </ul>	Acknowledging restrictions in interactions due to the pandemic, create opportunities for communities to provide ideas and local solutions reflecting local needs and problems as part of redesign or adaptation
Value Addition	The programme facilitates the improvement of services and opportunities for community resilience through capacity building, skills exchange and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving working relationships among government departments, all centred around the work done by volunteers</li> <li>• Contribution to skills development to prepare volunteers for professional jobs</li> </ul>	Linked to recommendations on innovation, there is a need to capture the diverse spinoffs of the programme, including new projects started, old projects revived and overall roles and contribution of volunteers the

<b>Volunteering dimension of change</b>	<b>Description (viewed from a disaster response perspective)</b>	<b>Evidence of fulfilment of the volunteering dimension of change from the findings</b>	<b>Summary statement on action to improve programme performance and outcomes in line with standard dimensions of change</b>
	strengthening of decision-making processes to deal with disasters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational development for CSOs through practical experience in managing small grants</li> <li>• Creation of information hubs required to help communities understand how to approach service providers</li> </ul>	improvement of the welfare of communities

During the engagement with CSOs, volunteers, NDA staff and key informants, a wide range of recommendations were put forward. The bulk of the recommendations presented in this section are drawn from these interviews and discussions. Some of the recommendations are based on the analysis of findings, packaged as key design and implementation considerations that would make the programme meet global standards of volunteering and contemporary disaster response programming. The derivation of the recommendations was inspired by the spirit of learning from failures/challenges as well as building on successes. The recommendations are broadly framed as additions, adaptations and actions on how the volunteer programme can be institutionalised to improve relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The recommendations presented below are framed thematically as:

- 1) adaptations to the programme design and delivery approaches, responding to constraints and opportunities identified through this rapid assessment,
- 2) administrative, field coordination and management systems to improve delivery processes,
- 3) volunteer management manual, covering training, resourcing, motivation and capacity development,
- 4) programme monitoring and evaluation systems for learning and empowerment of CSOs and volunteers
- 5) safeguarding and protection mechanisms focusing on the safety and security of volunteers and programme beneficiaries,
- 6) coordinated value-based collaboration among government departments and other stakeholders
- 7) actions for securing stakeholder support and promoting community ownership for the sustainability of programme outcomes, and
- 8) Growth areas, building on successes and emerging priorities.

The eight recommendations above represent key considerations for evidence-based institutionalisation of the volunteering approach to COVID-19 response. Although the evidence was derived from a programme that specifically focused on COVID-19, the recommendations could be contextualised for effective volunteering in integrated disaster response and community development. The recommendations cover a broad range of considerations, which could be described as imperatives, in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the volunteer programme. Below are the specific action points under each of the nine theme-based recommendations.

### **1. Volunteer management manual, covering training, resourcing, motivation and capacity development**

To ensure a more structured and effective volunteering approach, there is a need to develop volunteer management guidelines that guide CSOs on how to recruit, train, support, motivate, monitor and empower volunteers. This recommendation will address the unstructured way in which volunteers are currently being managed to make tracking and documentation of the performance and contribution of volunteers more systematic. Other aspects that should be included in the manual are communication and reporting, conflict resolution, managing personal aspirations and ways to ensure responsibility and accountability. Ways in which volunteers that perform exceptionally well can be formally recognised (e.g., certification) can also be defined to facilitate the identification and growth of champions that leave a notable legacy. Given that online platforms are now commonly used, the manual should also include tips on how to engage, inspire and connect volunteers using social media and other information-sharing platforms.

### **2. Adaptations to the programme design and delivery approaches, responding to gaps and opportunities**

- **The development of a clear programme inception plan is critical.** The inception plan should include elements such as the formal introduction of the programme and the volunteers to key stakeholders, identification of accountability mechanisms for informing stakeholders about progress updates, results and plans for the follow-up activities. Volunteers should play a key role in the inception process and the use of local and national media platforms is recommended. **The inception plan should also include dissemination of information on the role of volunteers, community engagement approaches and the deliverables** to avoid raising community expectations on aspects that the programme is inherently not designed to cover. The mandates of CSOs involved and linkages to supportive government departments or programmes should also be communicated.
- Across provinces, there were assumptions that CSOs would automatically cover all geographical areas in which they operated. However, not all CSOs had the resources and influence to cover all communities in what was broadly defined as their area of operation. **There is a need to map CSO capabilities and geographical coverage and define how to allocate focal communities/geographical areas to individual CSOs.** This mapping exercise

would reveal areas that could be excluded and any overlaps in coverage so that volunteers can be deployed evenly in the delivery of the programme.

- **Appropriate branding of clothing/PPEs used by volunteers should be a priority to ensure easy identification and acceptance of volunteers** when they conduct community outreach. Good branding could go a long way in dispelling misinformation, wrong perceptions and incorrect labels which breed negative attitudes towards volunteers and the programme in general.

### **3. Administrative, field coordination and management systems to improve programme delivery**

CSOs expressed concern around the inadequacy of the administration fee to cover all costs incurred in the management of the programme and supporting volunteers logistically. **There is a need to determine the full spectrum of costs incurred by CSOs so that the budgets allocated to cover the key expenses.** This would help avoid delays and disruptions in the implementation due to limited financial resources. Provision of a management allowance to CSO Managers is one recommendation to consider in the quest to incentivise management of the funds given to CSOs, given that the majority of CSOs are under-resourced.

**Delays in the disbursement of volunteer allowance is a key issue that should be addressed urgently.**

In response to concerns on the allowance, it is recommended that comparison and benchmarking with allowances given to other volunteers by other government agencies and department should be explored. Timely payment is critical for motivating volunteers to work consistently and hard. There should be clarity on the costs that the programme covers, including actual data allocations as well as transport and subsistence allowances.

To avoid cases where volunteers are deployed without the necessary resources, efforts must be made to **secure a full package of materials that are required for them to disseminate information, engage the community using appropriate methods and language, secure feedback from communities and demonstrate the benefits of the programme.**

There is a need to **improve communication between NDA, DSD, CSOs, SASSA, Post Office and other government departments that hosted or supported volunteers** during the programme. On the part of the NDA and CSO, there should be defined feedback processes to ensure that issues raised by CSOs are attended to timeously. This is important for adaptive management of the programme, ensuring that challenges are identified and addressed while at the same time leveraging emerging opportunities to enhance project success. The connections between volunteers and government departments should be broadened to include other departments that were not engaged actively

during this programme, ensuring that the role that volunteers is in line with the mandates of the departments.

#### **4. Programme monitoring and evaluation systems for learning and empowerment of CSOs and volunteers**

Since CSOs and volunteers are at the forefront of programme implementation, evidence gathering and knowledge generation, **there is a need to put in place sound monitoring and evaluation systems that empower them to enhance learning and contributes to evidence-based local decision-making.** The recommended monitoring and evaluation should encompass not just mechanisms to capture project-specific data to capture programme outputs but should also enable them to track their performance and growth as organisations and fulfilment of their mandates. The introduction and adoption of this holistic monitoring and evaluation system should be co-designed, with input from the CSOs so that it caters for and is responsive to their organisational needs and capabilities. It should also include mechanisms for NDA to provide feedback on CSO performance so that areas of support/mentorship and organisational growth can be identified. Capacity building for data management and use of programme results to influence decisions and processes as well as contributions to local and district municipality targets should also be incorporated. The proposed monitoring and evaluation system is meant to empower CSOs and volunteers so that they utilise the programme and organisational data influence improve their profile and influence in planning processes.

#### **5. Safeguarding and protection mechanisms focusing on safety and security of volunteers and programme beneficiaries**

This rapid assessment revealed the risks and vulnerabilities of volunteers as they engaged communities and other stakeholders during the implementation of the programme. **There is a need to identify and characterise the risks and vulnerabilities before defining appropriate safeguarding and protection measures in line with the country laws, paying particular attention to the vulnerabilities of female volunteers.** Cases of aggression, limited or no recognition of volunteer role and contributions, threats and harassment, false accusations, lack of protection against harsh environmental conditions and allocation of duties outside the scope of what was defined in their contracts. These measures have to be explained to the volunteers to empower them. They also have to be communicated to institutions that host volunteers, with the backing and support from the security sectors (SAPS and SANDF). Safeguarding goes beyond volunteer safety and security to include the individuals, households and communities that they were serving. A case in point is to educate the volunteers on the ethics of keeping personal data shared by individuals and households safe to avoid



cases of abuse of the identity details. Modalities on how volunteers should be treated professionally by host institutions (e.g., SASSA and Post Office) to avoid cases where they could be exploited should also be defined in the safeguarding document.

#### **6. Coordinated value-based collaboration among government departments and agencies**

Positive results documented during this rapid assessment are attributed to the collaboration between government departments and agencies that received support from volunteers in various capacities. **Any follow up programmes or related initiatives should build on, leverage and strengthen the collaboration** as it has been noted to be an enabler of success. There is a need to make the relationships formal, acknowledging that volunteers are the anchors behind the work done jointly. The relationships between NDA, DSD, CSOs, SASSA and Post Office have more or less become formal but that is not the case for the other departments and agencies such as DHA, DoH and SAPS and DoE. An entry point to formalising these relationships is to map out areas of common interest and how CSOs and their volunteers contribute to the collaboration so that the engagement and communication procedures as part of the partnership can be defined.

#### **7. Actions for securing stakeholder support and promote community ownership for sustainability of programme outcomes**

Cognisant that the programme was conceptualised to respond to an emergency and there was limited scope for conducting community engagement as part of the design, now **there is a need to identify ways in which local communities and other stakeholders can participate, support, drive and promote ownership of programme interventions**. This can be achieved through mapping of existing community assets (e.g., existing physical infrastructure) and capabilities (e.g., youth skills and networks) and how these can complement or fill gaps in the programme design and delivery approaches. This is critical to ensure that the programme is embedded in existing community structures and interaction platforms. This is also important to ensure that communities appreciate the contribution they are making, directly and indirectly, ensuring that the programme does not promote a dependence syndrome. Developing databases of local community projects that could be supported by volunteers is also recommended.

Given that the goal is to promote the spirit of volunteering, especially harnessing the power of the youth, it is important **to identify ways in which volunteers can lead in connecting the programme to local structures and dialogue platforms at the ward, local and district municipality levels**. This

includes defining youth connecting youth volunteers affiliated with different organisations or programmes so that they operate as youth networks.

**Mapping key stakeholders that could complement the programme in various capacities should be a priority.** This mapping could be done at the provincial level to capture the diversity of stakeholders for context-specific engagement of the stakeholders. Particularly excluded in the original conceptualisation of the programme was the private sector. Evidence from some provinces showed that some private sector entities made commitments to provide material support to the same communities the volunteers were serving.

The current programme does not have defined mechanisms for ensuring accountability to local level leadership structures and the community in general. In this regard, **it is recommended that the programme establish ways to connect with local structures such as ward committees, command councils, community development forums so that it is recognised as a contributor to community-based disaster response and social protection.**

CSOs play a leading role in driving the COVID-19 response agenda at various levels, from the community to the provincial. To promote learning, exchange of knowledge and experiences, **there is a need for NDA to create platforms to connect CSOs at provincial and national levels.** There is scope for utilising the increasingly online platforms such as Microsoft Teams to promote networking among CSOs. **A similar network and associated online platforms should also be set up for volunteers** so that they become a recognisable and reputable network.

#### **8. Growth areas, building on successes and emerging priorities**

It also revealed some growth areas that NDA should consider to make the programme more responsive to the needs of local communities and volunteers. The few points presented here, though not exhaustive, provide insight into possible research and innovation that could add value to the programme.

The programme's legacy is a network of volunteers that have diverse social backgrounds, skills, aspirations and capabilities. At this stage, volunteers are showing outstanding leadership qualities and commitment to support their communities. This unique potential of these volunteer champions **should be harnessed by either designing follow up programmes that create opportunities for them to apply their skills or connecting them to similar programmes run by other departments and agencies.**

The contribution of the programme to technical and soft skill development among volunteers was documented in this rapid assessment. It will be **worthwhile to document how the programme has**

**contributed to the launch of careers among the volunteers potentially through tracer studies, tracking the employment sectors that absorb the volunteers.** This will eventually contribute to the generation of knowledge on the benefits of youth volunteering in South Africa.

**The home garden projects that volunteers supported is one initiative that the programme could build on as it addresses the issue of food insecurity when household incomes decline due to lockdown restrictions.** The recommendation is to promote basic home economics principles, whereby volunteers would train households now on how to invest in the production of nutritious food, promoting healthy eating and growth of herbs that have medicinal values and mental wellness benefits.

Evidence from the provinces showed that the programme brought diverse social and economic challenges to the attention of service providers. The programme should continue to **harness the enthusiasm of the young volunteers for them to fulfil their role as active citizens that promote social inclusion, removal of barriers to service delivery and identifying community projects** that require support from the government. These include registering individuals or household struggling to make ends meet due to sicknesses or social ills. Going forward, this could form part of what the volunteers do as they work with and in communities.

## 5.CONCLUSIONS

This rapid assessment was conducted using a predominantly qualitative approach and generated evidence of how the volunteer programme implemented as part of the national COVID-19 response performed, providing insights on how it can be repurposed. Overall, the programme was largely successful in meeting its objective of identifying households that were eligible for the R350 SRD, ensuring the marginalised and vulnerable have access to relief packages, rolling out COVID-19 awareness campaigns in diverse settlements and collecting data to ensure beneficiaries of the disaster relief efforts are profiled. Through the work done by volunteers, the programme strengthened collaborative linkages with government departments and agencies and local non-profit sector entities. The nature of collaboration was strengthened and became more responsive to the prevailing contexts and community needs as volunteers identified gaps and challenges that needed focused attention from the relevant service providers.

The programme has been widely accepted by local communities, a development largely attributed to the placement of volunteers to connect households, community groups and individuals with special needs with relevant sectoral agencies during the pandemic. Nationally, the volunteers satisfied the expectations of local communities, with evidence of their people-centred approach involving being

visible, approachable and available contributing to acceptance and trust-building. Volunteers were successful in collecting information on social problems affecting communities, including the identity of the individuals and households affected by the problems and their locations and linking them with the right service providers. Volunteers were able to reach and assist identify individuals and households that needed special attention due to their vulnerability to COVID-19 and the secondary psychosocial and economic impacts of the pandemic.

The programme was a relevant and timely entry initiative to dispel the myths and misinformation about COVID-19, coming at a time when there were widespread doubts and speculation about the existence of COVID-19 in many parts of the country. Through the placement of volunteers to assist in the registration of R350 social relief grant recipients, the programme timeously mitigated the impacts of lockdown on household income generation and food security. Across the provinces, the programme delivered the intended results under each of the five intervention areas, with a host of immediate public health, social, institutional, behavioural and environmental changes observed. By availing themselves to share information on procedures to access services and distributing information sheets on application processes, volunteers created platforms and mechanisms for communities to access information which was problematic in the past and had created negative attitudes towards departmental and agency staff. As they engaged and interacted with the communities, volunteers managed to identify cases of social ills that were affecting individuals and households. These include cases of GBV, child abuse, substance abuse, profiling and discrimination of foreigners, gang-related violence and violent crimes.

Inception phase awareness and engagement of key local stakeholders at the local community level, especially community leadership and other organisations that could have supported volunteers at the start of the programme appears not to have been executed systematically. A common constraint to the efficient delivery of the programme, in all provinces, was the delay in the disbursement of the administration fees to CSOs. Late disbursement of the administration fee resulted in delays in the deployment of volunteers as some volunteers needed the money to cover their transport costs. Through the reporting structures linking CSOs to NDA offices at the provincial level, progress updates, challenges and recommendations were shared through monthly reports compiled by CSO managers. However, there were no formal and clearly defined platforms and processes for ensuring that the programme was accountable to local stakeholders in terms of availing information on the overall performance of the programme. Negative attitudes towards the programme were a result of misinformation, myths and conspiracy theories peddled by those that had a limited understanding of the overall purpose of the programme. Volunteers were exposed to a wide range of risks as they

engaged communities and there is a need for appropriate safeguarding and protection measures in line with the country laws.

The programme was successful in generating unique values beyond the scope of what was originally expected when it was conceptualised. These values include generation of knowledge on benefits of grassroots volunteering, revealing the enablers of and constraints to effective volunteering, establishment and strengthening of social networks, contributions to systems strengthening for government departments, opportunities for organisational development for CSOs, contributions to national skills development among the youths, and removal of bottlenecks in service delivery systems. The evidence of sustainability gathered include self-drive among volunteers through an enhanced culture of volunteering, organised queueing and defined referral systems as part of the grant application and collection processes, internalised knowledge and adopted behaviours to mitigate COVID-19, working relationships between government departments, organisational capacity of CSOs and recognition of volunteers of point persons in solving community challenges.

## ANNEXES

### Annex 1. Topline questions by assessment criteria

Assessment criteria	Topline questions /themes			
	NDA officials	CSO coordinators	Volunteers	Key informants <sup>3</sup>
Relevance	To what extent were the goods and services provided by the programme aligned with gaps and needs of communities from COVID-19 information, health service, food security and social assistance perspectives?	To what extent were the goods and services provided by the programme aligned with gaps and needs of communities from COVID-19 information, health service, food security and social assistance perspectives?  <u>Probing question:</u> Provide reasons why you say they were aligned or not	To what extent were the goods and services provided by the programme aligned with gaps and needs of communities from COVID-19 information, health service, food security and social assistance perspectives?  <u>Probing question:</u> Provide reasons why you say they were aligned or not	To what extent were the goods and services provided by the programme aligned with gaps and needs of communities from COVID-19 information, health service, food security and social assistance perspectives?  <u>Probing question:</u> Provide reasons why you say they were aligned or not

<sup>3</sup> Key informants are individuals that were not involved in the project design and implementation but had opportunities to observe programme activities and interact with implementers and the beneficiary communities at large. They include SASSA and Department of Social Development staff, local community leaders (e.g., councillors) and representatives of other organisations working with beneficiary communities on the ground.

Assessment criteria	Topline questions /themes			
	NDA officials	CSO coordinators	Volunteers	Key informants <sup>3</sup>
	<u>Probing question:</u> Provide reasons why you say they were aligned or not			
Efficiency	To what extent did the programming resourcing, administrative procedures, management and coordination efforts contribute to implementation success and attainment of the desired results?  <u>Probing question:</u> Provide examples of resourcing, administrative, management	To what extent did the programming resourcing, administrative procedures, management and coordination efforts contribute to implementation success and attainment of the desired results?  <u>Probing question:</u> Provide examples of resourcing, administrative, management	To what extent did the programming resourcing, administrative procedures, management and coordination efforts contribute to implementation success and attainment of the desired results?  <u>Probing question:</u> Provide examples of resourcing, administrative, management	

Assessment criteria	Topline questions /themes			
	NDA officials	CSO coordinators	Volunteers	Key informants <sup>3</sup>
	and coordination challenges that hindered the programme efficient implementation	and coordination challenges that hindered the efficient programme implementation?	and coordination challenges that hindered the efficient programme implementation?	
Effectiveness	<p>What were the immediate observable results /changes attributable to programme interventions?</p> <p><u>Probing question:</u> What contributed to these results/changes?</p>	<p>What were the immediate observable results /changes attributable to programme interventions?</p> <p><u>Probing question:</u> What contributed to these results/changes?</p>	<p>What were the immediate observable results /changes attributable to programme interventions?</p> <p><u>Probing question:</u> What contributed to these results/changes?</p>	<p>What were the immediate observable results /changes attributable to programme interventions?</p> <p><u>Probing question:</u> What contributed to these results/changes?</p>
		What is it that households and communities appreciate or disapprove of the engagement	What is it that households and communities appreciate or disapprove of the engagement	What is it that households and communities appreciate or disapprove of the engagement



Assessment criteria	Topline questions /themes			
	NDA officials	CSO coordinators	Volunteers	Key informants <sup>3</sup>
Acceptability		<p>approaches used by the programme?</p> <p><u>Probing question:</u> Explain your answer</p>	<p>approaches used by the programme?</p> <p><u>Probing question:</u> Explain your answer</p>	<p>approaches used by the programme?</p> <p><u>Probing question:</u> Explain your answer</p>
Utility		<p>Was the information about the pandemic, food provisions and support in household registration useful and satisfactory?</p> <p><u>Probing question:</u> Why was it satisfactory and if it was not satisfactory, why?</p>	<p>Was the information about the pandemic, food provisions and support in household registration useful and satisfactory?</p> <p><u>Probing question:</u> Why was it satisfactory and if it was not satisfactory, why?</p>	<p>Was the information about the pandemic, food provisions and support in household registration useful and satisfactory?</p> <p><u>Probing question:</u> Why was it satisfactory and if it was not satisfactory, why?</p>

Assessment criteria	Topline questions /themes			
	NDA officials	CSO coordinators	Volunteers	Key informants <sup>3</sup>
Complementarity	<p>Was the programme interventions purposefully designed to be linked or be supportive of similar programmes (COVID-19 related or otherwise)?</p> <p><u>Probing question:</u> Which other programmes were the NDA-supported programme support or complement?</p>	<p>Was the programme interventions purposefully implemented alongside similar programmes (COVID-19 related or otherwise)?</p> <p><u>Probing question:</u> Which other programmes were the NDA-supported programme support or complement?</p>	<p>Was the programme interventions purposefully implemented alongside similar programmes (COVID-19 related or otherwise)?</p> <p><u>Probing question:</u> Which other programmes were the NDA-supported programme support or complement?</p>	<p>Did the programme teams (CSOs and volunteers) work in collaboration with other stakeholders/programmes?</p> <p><u>Probing question:</u> Which other programmes were the NDA-supported programme support or complement?</p>
Equity	Did the information, goods and services provided through the programme reach all intended	Did the information, goods and services provided through the programme reach all intended	Did the information, goods and services provided through the programme reach all intended	Did the information, goods and services provided through the programme reach all groups

Assessment criteria	Topline questions /themes			
	NDA officials	CSO coordinators	Volunteers	Key informants <sup>3</sup>
	<p>groups within communities without exclusion?</p> <p><u>Probing question:</u> Which individuals or groups were excluded and why?</p>	<p>groups within communities without exclusion?</p> <p><u>Probing question:</u> Which individuals or groups were excluded and why?</p>	<p>groups within communities without exclusion?</p> <p><u>Probing question:</u> Which individuals or groups were excluded and why?</p>	<p>within communities without exclusion?</p> <p><u>Probing question:</u> Which individuals or groups were excluded and why?</p>
Coverage	<p>Were all the geographical areas considered when the programme was conceptualised?</p> <p><u>Probing question:</u> Which areas were inherently excluded and why?</p>	<p>Were all the geographical areas in your area of operation considered when identifying target communities?</p> <p><u>Probing question:</u> Which areas were excluded and why?</p>	<p>Did you manage to reach/cover all communities in the area that you were assigned?</p> <p><u>Probing question:</u> Which areas were inherently excluded and why?</p>	<p>Were all the geographical areas under your jurisdiction covered during the programme?</p> <p><u>Probing question:</u> Which areas were excluded and why?</p>

Assessment criteria	Topline questions /themes			
	NDA officials	CSO coordinators	Volunteers	Key informants <sup>3</sup>
Adaptability	<p>Did the programme capture and respond to any emerging community needs and requirements during implementation?</p> <p><u>Probing question:</u> Specify any changes or adaptation made during implementation?</p>	<p>Did the programme capture and respond to any emerging community needs and requirements during implementation?</p> <p><u>Probing question:</u> Specify any changes or adaptation made during implementation?</p>		
Accountability	<p>What mechanisms for programme data generation and platforms for sharing information with relevant stakeholders were defined at the programme conceptualisation stage?</p>	<p>What system did you use to collect and share data with stakeholders?</p>	<p>What data/information did you collect and share with beneficiaries and community leaders?</p>	<p>What programme data or information was made available to you?</p>

Assessment criteria	Topline questions /themes			
	NDA officials	CSO coordinators	Volunteers	Key informants <sup>3</sup>
Added value	What unintended results/changes triggered by the programme did you observe?	What unintended results/changes triggered by the programme did you observe?	What unintended results/changes triggered by the programme did you observe?	What unintended results/changes triggered by the programme did you observe?
Sustainability	Any interventions and immediate results of the programme that are likely to continue after the programme ends?  <u>Probing question:</u> What factors will contribute to the continuation?	Any interventions and immediate results of the programme that are likely to continue after the programme ends?  <u>Probing question:</u> What factors will contribute to the continuation?	Any interventions and immediate results of the programme that are likely to continue after the programme ends?  <u>Probing question:</u> What factors will contribute to the continuation?	Any interventions and immediate results of the programme that are likely to continue after the programme ends?  <u>Probing question:</u> What factors will contribute to the continuation?



## Annex 2. Questionnaire used for telephonic interviews with volunteers

### DETAILS OF INTERVIEWEE

Name of interviewee:

Gender:

Age:

Level of education:

Province:

District Municipality:

Contact Cell phone Number:

Contact Email: Address:

Name of interviewer	
Date of interview	
Questionnaire Number	

### PURPOSE OF THIS ASSESSMENT

This questionnaire is one of the tools being used to collect data to assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness of the volunteer programme implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The programme was funded by the National Development Agency (NDA). You have been identified as one of the individuals involved in the conceptualisation of the programme that could provide invaluable information that will assist NDA to identify lessons from the volunteer programme for future planning purposes. All your responses will be confidential and will only be used for this assessment. Your participation in this assessment is greatly appreciated.

1.Relevance	1.1To what extent was the conceptualisation of the programme informed by prior knowledge of gaps, needs, problems and vulnerabilities of communities?  1. Yes or No
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	<p>1.2 To what were the needs and requirements of individuals and groups within communities considered during the conceptualisation (e.g., disabled people?)</p> <p>1.3 Were there any needs or problems in the context of COVID-19 that the programme could have addressed but missed?</p>
2 Efficiency	<p>2.1 To what extent were the programming resources managed to ensure programme success?</p> <p>1.1. To what extent was overall coordination/management of the programme tailored to enhance implementation success</p> <p><i>Probing question: Provide examples of resourcing, administrative, management and coordination challenges that hindered the efficient programme implementation</i></p>
3 Effectiveness	<p>1.2. Were all planned interventions/activities implemented successfully?</p> <p>1.3. What were the immediate observed results/changes attributable to programme interventions?</p>



	<p><i>Probing question: Explore the results/changes under each of the five service provision areas (information dissemination, community screenings, food distribution, registration for SASSA grant and public/community service)</i></p>
4. Acceptability	<p>1.4. What is it about the programme that local communities or other stakeholders liked or approved?</p> <p>1.5. What is it about the programme that local communities or other stakeholders disliked or disapproved of?</p>
5. Utility	<p>5. To what extent was the information about COVID-19, food provisions and support in household registration useful to the beneficiary households and communities?</p> <p><i>Probing question: What are the specific values/benefits of the goods and services provided?</i></p>
6. Complementarity	<p>6. Was the programme interventions purposefully designed to complement or support similar programmes (COVID-19 related or otherwise)?</p> <p><i>Probing question: Which other programmes were the NDA-supported programme support or complement?</i></p>
7. Equity	<p>6. To what extent did the information, goods and services provided through the programme reach all intended groups in communities without exclusion?</p> <p><i>Probing question: Which individuals or groups were excluded and why?</i></p>

8. Coverage	<p>8. Were all the geographical areas considered when the programme was conceptualised?</p> <p><i>Probing question: Which areas were inherently excluded and why?</i></p>
9. Adaptability	<p>9. Did the programme identify and respond to any emerging community needs and requirements during implementation?</p> <p><i>Probing question: Specify any changes or adaptation made during implementation?</i></p>
10. Accountability	<p>10. What mechanisms for programme data generation and platforms for sharing information with relevant stakeholders were defined at the programme conceptualisation stage?</p>
11. Added value	<p>11. What unintended results/changes triggered by the programme did you observe?</p> <p><i>Probing question: Any spinoffs/benefits added by the programme, e.g., capacity-building benefits, new partnerships, new engagement spaces, strengthening of relationships etc?</i></p>

11. Sustainability	<p>11. Any interventions and immediate results of the programme that you believe are likely to continue after the programme ends?</p> <p><i><u>Probing question:</u> What factors will contribute to the continuation?</i></p>
12. Recommendations	<p>12. What are the key lessons for redesigning the programme?</p>

### **Annex 3. Questionnaire used for informants**

#### **DETAILS OF INTERVIEWEE**

Name of interviewee:

Province:

District Municipality:

Contact Cell phone Number:

Contact Email: Address:

Name of interviewer	
Date of interview	
Questionnaire Number	

#### **PURPOSE OF THIS ASSESSMENT**

This questionnaire is one of the tools being used to collect data to primarily assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the volunteer programme implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The programme was funded by the National Development Agency (NDA) and implemented in partnership with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). Volunteers affiliated with the CSOs were responsible for working at community level to implement the specific activities.

You have been identified as one of the leaders that could provide invaluable information about the programme as part of the assessment. This will assist NDA to identify lessons from the volunteer programme for future planning purposes. All your responses will be confidential and will only be used for this assessment. Your participation in this assessment is greatly appreciated.

<p>1. Relevance</p>	<p>1. To what extent were the goods and services provided by the programme aligned with the needs and problems of communities?</p> <p><i>Probing question: Give examples of needs and problems of communities</i></p>
<p>2. Effectiveness</p>	<p>2. What were the immediate observed results/changes attributable to programme interventions?</p> <p><i>Probing question: Explore the results/changes under each of the five service provision areas (information dissemination, community screenings, food distribution, registration for SASSA grant and public/community service)</i></p>
<p>3. Acceptability</p>	<p>3.1. What is it about the programme that communities or other stakeholders liked or approved?</p> <p>3.2. What is it about the programme that communities or other stakeholders disliked or disapproved of?</p>
<p>4. Utility</p>	<p>4. To what extent was the information about COVID-19, food provisions and support in household registration useful to the beneficiary households and communities?</p> <p><i>Probing question: What are the specific values/benefits of the goods and services provided?</i></p>

5. Participation	<p>5. To what extent did the beneficiary households and community groups participate in the implementation of the programme in your area?</p> <p><i>Probing question: Explore practical actions, ideas or inputs from beneficiary communities or local stakeholders in support of the programme</i></p>
6. Equity	<p>6. To what extent did the information, goods and services provided through the programme reach all intended groups in communities without exclusion?</p> <p><i>Probing question: Which individuals or groups were excluded and why? Were there any special needs groups that were excluded or did not benefit?</i></p>
7. Accountability	<p>7. What programme data/information was shared with community leaders or the general public?</p> <p><i>Probing question: How did you make communities and the public aware of the programme activities and outcomes?</i></p>
8. Added value	<p>8. What unintended results/changes triggered by the programme did you observe?</p> <p><i>Probing question: Any spinoffs/benefits added by the programme, e.g., capacity building benefits, new partnerships, new engagement spaces, strengthening of relationships etc?</i></p>
	<p>9. Any interventions and immediate results of the programme that you believe are likely to continue after the programme ends?</p>

9. Sustainability	<p><i><u>Probing question:</u> What factors will contribute to the continuation?</i></p>
10. Strengths and weaknesses	<p>10.1. What are the key strengths of the programme?</p> <p>10.2. What are the key weaknesses of the programme?</p>

#### **Annex 4. Self-administered questionnaire for volunteers**

##### **DETAILS OF INTERVIEWEE**

Name of interviewee:

Gender:

Age:

Province:

District Municipality:

Contact Cell phone Number:

Contact Email: Address:

Name of interviewer	
Date of interview	
Questionnaire Number	

##### **PURPOSE OF THIS ASSESSMENT**

This questionnaire is one of the tools being used to collect data to primarily assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the volunteer programme implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The programme was funded by the National Development Agency (NDA) and implemented in partnership with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). Volunteers affiliated with the CSOs were responsible for working at community level to implement the specific activities.

You have been identified to participate in this survey as one of the volunteers that were involved in the programme. NDA appreciates that you have provided invaluable information useful for the rapid assessment. This will assist NDA to identify lessons from the volunteer programme for future planning purposes. All your responses will be confidential and will only be used for this assessment. Your participation in this assessment is greatly appreciated.

##### **1. RELEVANCE:**



1. To what extent were the six programme activities relevant to the needs of households and communities?

(TICK WHERE APPROPRIATE IN THE TABLE BELOW)

	Was not relevant	Partly relevant	Very relevant
COVID-19 Awareness			
COVID-19 Screening			
Identification of households for government support			
Food parcel distribution			
Collection of data on households			
Community service			

**2. EFFECTIVENESS:**

2.1. Which activity did you implement in your area/community?

(TICK WHERE APPROPRIATE IN THE TABLE BELOW)

	Tick where appropriate
COVID-19 Awareness	
COVID-19 Screening	

Identification of households for government support	
Food parcel distribution	
Collection of data on households	
Community service	
Any other activity (specify):	

2.1. To what extent were the activities effective?

	Not effective	Partly effective	Very effective
COVID-19 Awareness			
COVID-19 Screening			
Identification of households for government support			
Food parcel distribution			
Collection of data on households			
Community service			

**3. EFFICIENCY:**

3.1. How well was the programme managed/coordinated to enable you to work and achieve the results?

[ANSWER YES or NO]

3.2. Mention one main challenge that you encountered as a volunteer when implementing the programme

**4. ACCEPTABILITY:**

4.1. Mention one thing that local communities or other stakeholders liked or approved about the programme?

4.2. Mention one thing that local communities or other stakeholders did not like or disapproved of about the programme?

**5. UTILITY:**

How beneficial were the programme activities to the beneficiary households and communities?

	<b>Not beneficial</b>	<b>Moderately beneficial</b>	<b>Highly beneficial</b>
COVID-19 Awareness			
COVID-19 Screening			
Identification of households for government support			
Food parcel distribution			

Collection of data on households				
Community service				

**6. COMPLEMENTARITY**

6.1. Did you work together with or support any similar programmes (COVID-19 related or otherwise) in your area?

[ANSWER YES or NO]

6.2. Name programmes you worked with or supported in your area

**7. EQUITY:**

7.1. To what extent did the information, goods and services provided through the programme reach the groups and communities?

[ANSWER YES or NO]

7.2. If the answer to 7.1. is NO, mention individuals, groups and communities that were not reached during the programme?

**8. PARTICIPATION**

8.1. Did the target communities play any role or participate in the programme?

[ANSWER YES or NO]

8.2. If the answer to 8.1. is YES, what did they do?

**9. SUSTAINABILITY**

Do you think the activities implemented as part of the programme will continue after the programme ends?

[ANSWER YES or NO]

## **Annex 5. Guide for focus group discussions involving CSO representatives**

**Time allocation:** 3 hours

**Name of facilitator(s):**

**Province:**

### **Purpose of the Focus Group Discussion**

*(Background information to be shared by the facilitator before and at the beginning of the focus group discussion)*

As part of the rapid assessment of the volunteer programme implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, funded by the National Development Agency (NDA), focus group discussions involving CSO coordinators will be organised. This will provide a platform for the CSO coordinators to share the experiences and views on the programme, thereby enabling the Break the Chains team to assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness of the volunteer programme.

You have been identified as one of the individuals that could provide invaluable information that will assist NDA to assess various aspects of the implementation process and results of the intervention to identify lessons that could inform the redesign of the current programme and future planning purposes. All your responses will be confidential and will only be used for this assessment. Your participation in this assessment is greatly appreciated.

### **Pre-meeting preparations:**

- Work with NDA to characterize/analyse the CSOs, paying attention to CSO mandates, level of involvement during the implementation and reachability (resources available and IT capabilities). Agree on criteria for selecting the CSOs to be invited to the focus group discussions.
- Communicate with the CSO Coordinators to share background about the rapid assessment and inform them about the plan to invite them to the focus group discussions, suggesting possible dates and 3hr-slots for the meeting.
- Follow up with CSOs and identify suitable dates and slots for the focus group discussion, based on information provided by the CSO Coordinators.

### **Steps/tips for effective facilitation:**

- 1) Introduce yourself and welcome participants (USE ICE-BREAKER TO CREATE A RELAXED ENVIRONMENT)
- 2) Ask for permission to record the call/meeting proceedings
- 3) Allow all participants to introduce themselves (name, CSO and role played during the programme)
- 4) Agree on ground rules to ensure free participation, acknowledging diversity (language)
- 5) Highlight that information shared during the discussion will be treated as confidential and will only be used for the rapid assessment.
- 6) Explain the purpose of the focus group discussion, giving opportunities for participants to comment and ask questions
- 7) Take the participants through the programme, explaining the expectations and outputs of the focus group discussion
- 8) Ensure that there are breaks (consider taking 10 min break, 1hr 30min into the meeting)
- 9) Although the calls will be recorded, take notes on key points during the discussions

#### **General schedule for discussions**

To facilitate the discussion, use the guiding questions below.

Please read each question first, ensuring that all participants have understood the question first. Ensure that all questions are accorded the priority, by allocating the question the time as defined in the table below. ALTHOUGH THE QUESTIONS ARE GROUPED BY CRITERIA, YOU COMBINE SOME QUESTIONS FACILITATE SMOOTH FLOW OF THE DISCUSSION, BASED ON RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS. HOWEVER, YOU SHOULD ENSURE THAT ALL QUESTIONS ARE ANSWERED COMPREHENSIVELY.

Assessment Criteria	Guiding question	Time allocated
1. Relevance	1.1. To what extent were the goods and services provided by the programme aligned with the needs and problems of communities?  1.2. Were there any needs or problems in the context of COVID-19 that the programme could have addressed but missed?  <i><u>Probing question: Give examples of needs and problems of communities</u></i>	20 mins

	<p>1.3. What is it about the programme that communities or other stakeholders liked or approved?</p> <p>1.4. What is it about the programme that communities or other stakeholders disliked or disapproved of?</p> <p>1.5. To what extent did the information, goods and services provided through the programme reach all intended groups in communities without exclusion?</p> <p><i>Probing question: Which individuals or groups were excluded and why? Were there any special needs groups that were excluded or did not benefit?</i></p> <p>1.6. To what extent did the programme complement or support similar programmes (COVID-19 related or otherwise) in your area?</p> <p><i>Probing question: Which other programmes did the NDA-supported programme support or complement?</i></p>	
2. Effectiveness	<p>2.1. Were all planned interventions implemented successfully?</p> <p>2.2. What were the immediate observed results/changes attributable to programme interventions?</p> <p><i>Probing question: Explore the results/changes under each of the five service provision areas (information dissemination, community screenings, food distribution, registration for SASSA grant and public/community service)</i></p>	15 mins



	<p>2.3 What unintended results/changes triggered by the programme did you observe?</p> <p><i>Probing question: Any spinoffs/benefits added by the programme, e.g., capacity building benefits, new partnerships, new engagement spaces, strengthening of relationships etc?</i></p>	
3. Efficiency	<p>3.1. To what extent were the programming resources managed to ensure programme success?</p> <p>3.2. To what extent was overall coordination/management of the programme tailored to enhance implementation success</p> <p><i>Probing question: Provide examples of resourcing, administrative, management and coordination challenges that hindered the efficient programme implementation</i></p>	10 mins
4. Participation	<p>4. To what extent did the beneficiary households and community groups participate in the implementation of the programme in your area?</p> <p><i>Probing question: Explore practical actions, ideas or inputs from beneficiary communities or local stakeholders in support of the programme</i></p>	10 mins
5. Sustainability	<p>5. Any interventions and immediate results of the programme that you believe are likely to continue after the programme ends?</p> <p><i>Probing question: What factors will contribute to the continuation?</i></p>	10 mins
	6.1. What are the key strengths of the programme?	15 mins

6. Strength and weaknesses	6.2. What are the key weaknesses of the programme?	
7. Recommendations	7. What recommendations would you make for future programming?	<i>15 mins</i>

**Closing (5 mins)** At the end of the discussions, provide a broad overview of what was covered, thank the participants, outline the next steps and allow them to share any closing remarks.

## **Annex 6. Questionnaire used for interviews with NDA staff**

### **DETAILS OF INTERVIEWEE**

Name of interviewee:

Province:

Contact Cell phone Number:

Contact Email: Address:

Name of interviewer	
Date of interview	
Questionnaire Number	

### **PURPOSE OF THIS ASSESSMENT**

This questionnaire is one of the tools being used to collect data to primarily assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the volunteer programme implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The programme was funded by the National Development Agency (NDA) and implemented in partnership with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). Volunteers affiliated with the CSOs were responsible for working at community level to implement the specific activities.

You have been identified as one of the NDA staff members that could provide invaluable information about programme conceptualisation and implementation as part of the rapid assessment. This will assist NDA to identify lessons from the volunteer programme for future planning purposes. All your responses will be confidential and will only be used for this assessment. Your participation in this assessment is greatly appreciated.

<p>1. Relevance</p>	<p>1.1 To what extent was the conceptualisation of the programme informed by prior knowledge of gaps, needs, problems and vulnerabilities of communities?</p> <p>1.2 To what extent were the needs and requirements of specific individuals and groups within communities considered during the conceptualisation (e.g., disabled people?)</p> <p>1.3 Were there any needs or problems in the context of COVID-19 that the programme could have addressed but missed?</p>
<p>2. Effectiveness</p>	<p>2.1 Were all planned interventions/activities implemented successfully?</p> <p>2.2 What were the immediate observed results/changes attributable to programme interventions?</p>

	<p><i>Probing question: Explore the results/changes under each of the five service provision areas (information dissemination, community screenings, food distribution, registration for SASSA grant and public/community</i></p>
3. Efficiency	<p>3.To what extent were the programming resources managed to ensure programme success?</p> <p>3.1To what extent was overall coordination/management of the programme tailored to enhance implementation success</p> <p><i>Probing question: Provide examples of resourcing, administrative, management and coordination challenges that hindered the efficient programme implementation service)</i></p>
4. Acceptability	<p>4.What is it about the programme that local communities or other stakeholders liked or approved?</p> <p>4.1What is it about the programme that local communities or other stakeholders disliked or disapproved of?</p>
5. Utility	<p>5.To what extent was the information about COVID-19, food provisions and support in household registration useful to the beneficiary households and communities?</p> <p><i>Probing question: What are the specific values/benefits of the goods and services provided?</i></p>
6. Complementarity	<p>6. Was the programme interventions purposefully designed to leverage or support similar programmes (COVID-19 related or otherwise)?</p>

	<p><i><u>Probing question:</u> Which other programmes did the NDA-supported programme leverage or complement?</i></p>
7. Equity	<p>7. To what extent did the information, goods and services provided through the programme reach intended groups in communities without exclusion?</p> <p><i><u>Probing question:</u> Which individuals or groups were excluded and why?</i></p>
8. Coverage	<p>8. Were all the geographical areas considered when the programme was conceptualised?</p> <p><i><u>Probing question:</u> Which areas were inherently excluded in the design and why?</i></p>
9. Adaptability	<p>9. Did the programme identify and respond to any emerging community needs and operational requirements during implementation?</p> <p><i><u>Probing question:</u> Specify any changes or adaptation made during implementation?</i></p>
10. Accountability	<p>10. What mechanisms for programme data generation and platforms for sharing programme information with relevant stakeholders were defined at the programme conceptualisation stage?</p>
11. Added value	<p>11. What unintended results/changes triggered by the programme did you observe?</p> <p><i><u>Probing question:</u> Any spinoffs/benefits added by the programme, e.g., capacity building benefits, new partnerships, new engagement spaces, strengthening of relationships etc?</i></p>

12. Sustainability	12. Any interventions and immediate results of the programme that you believe are likely to continue after the programme ends?  <i>Probing question: What factors will contribute to the continuation?</i>
13. Lessons	13. What are the key lessons learnt from this programme?
14. Recommendations	14. What recommendations would you make for future programming?

#### Annex 7- List of stakeholders interviewed

##### A. Interviews with NDA staff

Stakeholder	Number	Names
National	1	Nkhensani Mthembi
Free State	1	Itumeleng Kwenane
Mpumalanga	1	Maxwell Mathebula
	<b>3</b>	

**B. Volunteers and Informants**

<b>Province</b>	<b>Self-Assessment Questionnaires Received</b>	<b>Volunteers Interviewed</b>	<b>Names of volunteers interviewed</b>	<b>Informants Interviewed</b>	<b>Names of community leaders interviewed</b>
Free State	26	3	Keneilwe Mokola Tshepo Mofokeng Dimakatso Mafammere	3	Tlalane Maboe Clement Ross Bereng Ramatsie
Limpopo	32	3	Idah Mogodi Gladys Khomonare Granny Mogoladi	2	Pillar Diana
Northern Cape	21	3	Frank Jantjies Nthabiseng Bahole Tswanello Lekgetho	3	Theodore Mouton Hopely Jander Selindele
North West	15	3	Protea Kuduntwane Katlego Molapisi Maria Mabula	3	Teko Nkhane Sello Motaung Mmapula
Mpumalanga	38	2	Simphiwe Masilela Celumusa Dlamini	1	Sifiso Shabangu
Eastern Cape	42	3	Yanga Magadla, Tryphina Magudulela,		



Western Cape	10	3	Joyce Van Heerdeem Zipho Ntlebi Zanele Mqela		
Gauteng	28	4	Felicia Lubisi Luther Shivambu Victoria Duiker Thandeka Mbatha		
KZN	40	3	Nomathemaba Maseko Kanyisile Mdunge Jabulani Ndlangisa	1	Phindile Nene
<b>Total</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>27</b>		<b>13</b>	

### C. Focus Group Discussion with CSO Coordinators

<b>Provinces</b>	<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Date the session was held</b>	<b>Number of CSOs that attended</b>
Limpopo	CSOs Coordinators	15/02/2021	10
Western Cape	CSOs Coordinators	15/02/2021	4
Northwest	CSOs Coordinators	15/02/2021	3
Northern Cape	CSOs Coordinators	15/02/2021	4
Kwazulu-Natal	CSOs Coordinators	16/02/2021	7
Mpumalanga	CSOs Coordinators	16/02/2021	9
Eastern Cape	CSOs Coordinators	16/02/2021	7
Gauteng	CSOs Coordinators	16/02/2021	9
Free State	CSOs Coordinators	17/02/2021	6