

Pandemic reminding us of importance of *ubuntu*, responsible kindness

 By [Sindy Peters](#)

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As part of our #LockdownLessons series, Bizcommunity is reaching out to South Africa's top industry players to share their experience of the current Covid-19 crisis, how their organisations are navigating these unusual times, where the challenges and opportunities lie, and their industry outlook for the near future.

We chatted to Thandazile Precious Nala, marketing manager at Afrika Tikkun, to get her take.

■ **What was your initial response to the crisis/lockdown and has your experience of it been different to what you expected?**

Thandazile Precious Nala: As Afrika Tikkun, we mobilised a community-level response to Covid-19 in the areas in which we operate.

Since lockdown has been in place, our five centres have been closed to our young people and 'business-as-usual' activities. However, we have implemented numerous campaigns that continue to serve the communities in which we work.

With the country having absolutely no experience in dealing with a global pandemic, no-one could have predicted what we were to expect and it continues to be an unknown going forward.

■ **Comment on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on your organisation or economy as a whole.**

Nala: The extreme seriousness of this pandemic meant that we had to be flexible with our fiscal budget and redirect funds to our Covid-19 campaigns, as well as rally donations and support from both the private and public sectors.

The entire non-profit sector is in the same position. What this has done is strengthened ties between government, non-profit organisations and community-based structures all working towards achieving the same goal – to see as little impact as possible on vulnerable communities.

In addition, our sister brand, Afrika Tikkun Services, continues to encourage older youth not to lose hope in their search for employment once lockdown is lifted, also launching numerous drives focused on Covid-19 education, upskilling and inspiration.

We applaud the South African government's swift response in dealing with the coronavirus crisis. Had it not been for this prompt action, the country would be in much worse shape than it is in terms of diagnoses, deaths and economic collapse. They have done a sterling job of funding initiatives for both the public and industry.



Thandazile Precious Nala, marketing manager at Afrika Tikkun



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▣ **How is your organisation responding to the crisis?**

Nala: Whilst our centres are currently closed to 'business-as-usual' activities, we have mobilised a community-level response to Covid-19:

- We are redirecting funds away from planned campaigns to increase education around coronavirus in their communities, particularly with regard to hygiene.
- There are nurses stationed at each centre who are conducting Covid testing.
- We have implemented a mask campaign called [#FaceUpToCovid19](#) that echoes what health minister Dr Zweli Mkhize said about the wearing of masks being one of the best ways to prevent the spread of the virus.
- Our centres also act as food distribution points through our [Neighbour to Neighbour Support Programme](#). Afrika Tikkun and partners, such as the Solidarity Fund, Cans with Purpose, KFC Adds Hope, SA Harvest, Pick n Pay Feed the Nation and donations from the public, have been able to put together nutritious food parcels for the most vulnerable in the communities in which we operate. So far, we have distributed over 30,000 food parcels but the call for donations continues as long as the crisis continues.

Since the national lockdown, our sister brand Afrika Tikkun Services has remained agile and will continue to do so. The focus has been to keep the youth engaged, informed and motivated during this time. The organisation continues to ensure that we continue to drive their vision of enabling the youth to become economically empowered.



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▣ **Comment on the challenges and opportunities.**

Nala: The challenge has been to turn around these beneficial initiatives in record time and to get enough support to keep them going in the longer-term.

Fortuitously, these troubling times have brought us closer together as a global society. Cooperation between countries is increasing on an unprecedented scale and we see the spirit of *ubuntu* shining through around the world.

▣ **How has the lockdown affected your staff? / What temporary HR policies have you put in place regarding remote working, health & safety, etc.?**

Nala: Our head office in Hyde Park is operating under the strict rules stipulated by government as we offer essential services. Our centres are working on a rotational basis to ensure we can still provide essential services like the distribution of food parcels and the offering of healthcare services. Staff working within the communities are encouraged to wear their PPE clothing, including masks, gloves and eye-wear protection to prevent catching the virus.



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▣ **How are you navigating 'physical distancing' while keeping your team close-knit and aligned?**

Nala: As a business we are working on the one-third ration system to ensure we do not have too many people at our office and centres; however, we are still connecting to stay aligned.

▣ **How have you had to change the way you operate?**

Nala: Our centres have all been converted into distribution centres to enable the offering of essential services to the community.

Like many organisations we are now communicating via WhatsApp, as well as online via programmes like Skype and Zoom.

▀ **Any trends you've seen emerge as a result of the crisis?**

Nala: Basic needs like food supply and access to healthcare services has increased more than ever. Young people seeking work opportunities have also been pushed to use digital platforms frequently to access courses for skills and development empowerment.



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▀ **Your key message to those in the sector?**

Nala: Vulnerable communities cannot be left alone to suffer. The pandemic is reminding us all of the importance of *ubuntu* and responsible kindness – pillars of Afrika Tikkun. As a nation, we must do what we can to support each other through the crisis.

▀ **What do you predict the next six months will be like?**

Nala: The shift from what we perceive as 'normal' is moving in a whole new direction and with that, many will be exposed to more vulnerable situations that they will need to navigate.

ABOUT SINDY PETERS

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