

SweepSouth fund to assist domestic workers

SweepSouth has launched a fund to help provide domestic workers with food and other basic essentials during the national lockdown.



Aisha Pandor, co-founder and CEO of SweepSouth, says at least R4 million a month will be needed to ensure that SweepStars and their families are able to eat and at least meet day-to-day living costs during a lockdown.

“Like everyone else, domestic workers in South Africa rely on their income to put food on the table for them and their dependents. But of course, the cost of basic necessities such as electricity and other utility expenses all add up.”

“Our research suggests that most domestic workers (over 70%) are single mothers and that many (over 80%) are primary breadwinners. Our annual survey shows that domestic workers spend on average R1,100 on monthly groceries.”

“If these workers aren't paid during the lockdown, they face worsening poverty and mounting debt. We simply cannot allow SweepStars and their children to be left to this fate.”

SweepSouth has seeded the fund which aims to provide food and necessities to active SweepStars (those who use the platform) and their families and is also negotiating with corporate backers to contribute.

“We are stepping into the breach to help these vulnerable families in retaining their dignity during a testing time for the whole nation, and we appeal to both the public and corporate entities to support us in doing this,” Pandor added.



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The launch of the fund has been aided by a R6m contribution from the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, which invested in SweepSouth in 2019. The aim of the investment into SweepSouth was to promote better family economic stability in South Africa by backing an organisation providing broad access to work opportunities. This initial injection of funds will enable SweepStars to receive weekly financial support in the form of top-ups of between R150 and R450 during the national lockdown period.

Building on this injection of funds, Pandor insists that SweepSouth's ambitions extend significantly further.

“Our aim is to raise up to R12m in order to contribute to SweepStars' living costs for a three-month period. Their financial difficulties will extend far beyond the 21-day lockdown, so it's important to mitigate this as much as possible. We're calling on all businesses and able individuals across South Africa to join us urgently in supporting these domestic workers.”

Pandor says their platform is negotiating with retailers to secure bulk buying discounts on basic food staples to maximise the buying power of the funds they have available to them. “The issues run deeper than only being able to provide fooda for these families. We are also gravely concerned about the lack of clean running water and adequate hygiene infrastructure in some communities in which domestic workers live, further posing risk and increasing susceptibility to Covid-19, so it is incumbent on the wider community to support in any way we can.”

The SweepSouth platform is geared to allow customers to continue contributing to domestic workers during the lockdown. The response has been positive, with over 40% of customers choosing to continue to provide support to SweepStars.

As a result, SweepSouth customers have contributed in excess of R100,000 so far. Pandor thanks SweepSouth customers for their generosity and calls on them, as well as all private employers of domestic workers, to continue helping to support those in our society who are the most economically vulnerable.

“Any member of the public who is financially able to assist in keeping these families healthy and fed during this time of national crisis is asked to contribute to the fund via our app. Moreover, if you employ a domestic worker privately, please do your bit and continue to pay them during lockdown - you will have the gratitude of thousands.”

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