

How we can all embrace philanthropy's true value in a crisis

By [Noxolo Hlongwane](#), issued by [Trialogue](#)

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Nedbank Private Wealth has won multiple awards for its philanthropic advice and has published The Giving Report, a snapshot of giving practices among South Africa's wealthy, since 2010.

South Africa's affluent families, often vilified on social media for having excessive wealth in a country of great inequality, have been quick to respond to the Covid-19 crisis. On 23 March 2020, the Rupert and Oppenheimer families each donated R1bn to assist small businesses and their employees during this difficult time, and on 28 March the Motsepe family, in partnership with their associated companies (Sanlam, Africa Rainbow Capital, Africa Rainbow Minerals) also pledged R1bn, to help save lives and slow the advancement of SARS-CoV2, the novel coronavirus that has plunged the world into chaos.

"Our aim is to mitigate the immediate economic impact of this pandemic, by keeping companies in business and protecting jobs. We will do this by funding direct financial assistance to employees who are at risk of losing their jobs or have suffered a loss of income, because of Covid-19," Nicky Oppenheimer explained.



Noxolo Hlongwane, Head: Philanthropy Office, Nedbank Private Wealth

It is at times like these that the true value of philanthropy becomes apparent, and we expect to see further pledges in the weeks and perhaps months to come. There is no doubt that short-term relief goes a long way towards undoing some of the immediate damage caused by a disaster of this magnitude. Our government is stretched, given the state of the economy, and philanthropy can bolster the national coffers, helping the most vulnerable to survive.

Philanthropy effectively underscores the need for a sustained collective effort to overcome the scourge of the virus. Partnerships play a critical role, and philanthropists can really assist the country by working with the public sector, the private sector, non-profits and affected communities. By leveraging our combined skills and expertise, we can ensure that relief is unlocked in sustainable ways should this crisis continue beyond a few months.

Here are a few points to bear in mind if you are considering a philanthropic approach to the crisis.

If you are a company

- Giving to your beneficiary organisations should not stop simply because of a disruption to delivery programmes – in fact, it is more important than ever to support those social impact organisations that are struggling with cash-flow or which lack the resilience to withstand the crisis over time. It is vital that these organisations can continue to pay their fixed costs while in lockdown, so they can continue to operate later. Consider how you can make a more long-term contribution that will lead to lasting social impact, like more sustainable infrastructure.
- Consider channelling funding towards immediate relief but within your areas of expertise. Don't move away completely from your focal area – be flexible and think where your support is most urgently needed. For example, at Nedbank

Private Wealth, we are redirecting our funding for maths and science into curating content and materials that can be disseminated from online channels. We will resume our support for maths and science but, for now, there is a pressing need for digital material to support learners' home study. The National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) is supporting the Department of Basic Education to make a variety of resources available to learners.

- Digital giving is coming to the forefront, and this is shifting our behaviour. Increasingly, we are turning to digital channels when finding, vetting and donating to organisations. While this is easy, convenient, and fully aligned with our objectives as philanthropists, it's important to note that one should not abandon due diligence. Make sure you're donating to registered organisations. Criminals take advantage of crises, particularly online, so adhere to the principles of good governance.
- Use this time to source and locate organisations within your local community that are most in need of assistance, and which are aligned with your interest – education, support for the homeless, children's causes or assistance for the elderly. Some communities will be harder hit than others, so consider equitable solutions. Also support frontline organisations like The Red Cross, Gift of the Givers, the Salvation Army, Unicef and so on. As with a war effort, we can repurpose our resources – for example, providing meals for healthcare workers.
- When the lockdown is lifted, consider volunteering both time and skills to aid with capacity-building – this will help to strengthen those organisations that lack reserves. We can also better prepare ourselves as donors by building resilience into the funding cycle and also becoming advocates for policy change where appropriate.
- Collaboration is everything – work with other funders and see how you can coordinate your efforts for greater social impact.

If you are an individual

- As people struggle to survive in an extremely challenging economic environment, individual giving will suffer. However, if you can give, it is important to do so. Everyone can be a philanthropist, from donating small amounts of money to registered organisations and the [Solidarity Response Fund](#), which is an independently administered fund. This is a unique opportunity to demonstrate the principles of *Ubuntu* – realise our interdependence upon one another and pull together to support one another. It will be of particular value as the Covid-19 outbreak will almost certainly lead to further unemployment and poverty.
- If you live within a small community – like a block of flats or a complex – consider helping the more vulnerable members of the community with shopping for essential items. We can assist at the most basic level, extending kindness to our less well-equipped neighbours.
- Be considerate of others. Stay at home and, if you need to go out, limit contact and maintain a safe distance from others. This in itself is *Ubuntu* in action – and social solidarity is vital at this time.

Nedbank Private Wealth sponsors the Philanthropy topic on the Trialogue Knowledge Hub, a digital platform for social investment information. For more on Philanthropy, visit <http://www.trialogueknowledgehub.co.za>.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Noxolo Hongwane is the Head of the Philanthropy Office at Nedbank Private Wealth

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