Organising for our lives!
Building community responses to the coronavirus

*The title was first used by the Treatment Action Campaign in 2012.*
The lockdown is an important step to us stopping the spread of the coronavirus. But for many, it has been very difficult. For some, it has been impossible. Many more people will be forced into unemployment and many households will lose the income of the only breadwinner. Many will go hungry and lose their livelihoods. Many will lose their lives because they don’t have the ability to self-isolate and they rely on an unequal health system. Tensions will rise and Gender Based Violence will increase. The coronavirus is just a trigger for these crises. Our failed economic system is the cause.
During the lockdown, we must work together to stop the spread of the virus. We must look out for and care for our families, communities and especially those who are the most vulnerable. We need to get through this with respect, solidarity and kindness.

But the economic crisis that has been triggered by the Coronavirus will remain. The coronavirus crisis will change the way we see politics, the economy and the environment. If we organise now, our communities will better respond in the future, not for one person, but for all people.

The responses to these crises must be led by people on the ground. By communities, informal traders, workers and the unemployed. Now, more than ever, we need to organise to build a more just and equal world.

*We need to organise for our Lives!*
This toolkit is a call to all street committees, community movements, community-based organisations and groups of individual activists. It calls for the strengthening and building of community bonds and organisation. It calls for us all to protect and support each other. It calls for people’s power and ground-up responses.

How does the toolkit work?

The toolkit has been designed to support community-activists in mobilising People's Action Teams in their communities. These groups will support responses to the spread of the coronavirus and the socio-economic impacts it will have on our communities.

The toolkit covers 4 steps - which follow each other:
Step 1: Set up your People's Action Team (page 8)
Step 2: Map your community (page 16)
Step 3: Run awareness campaigns (page 28)
Step 4: Know your rights under lockdown (page 33)

Some of the sections end with discussion questions. These discussion questions are meant to assist the Action Team members who are using the toolkit to discuss and debate their plans to think more deeply about your community and struggles.

What is a People’s Action Team?

A People's Action Team is a group of activists in a small area working together to build community organisation, support each other and keep each other safe. The Action Team is community-based, but each Action Team supports the building of many other Action Teams in their community. What we need is for these support networks to be on every street and on every block!

The Action Team is self-organised and will use the wisdom, energy and resources of the community to make things happen! It will bring
community-members from every street together to learn from each other and share experiences. It is also part of a bigger group of activists from around the country, and together we need to ensure the virus does not spread and that everyone’s social and economic needs are met.

**What is the role of Action Team members?**

Action Team members:
- Mobilise other community members towards action
- Create awareness in the community on the coronavirus and how to be protected from it
- Identify people who are vulnerable in the community
- Identify the resources in the community
- Identify the immediate needs of community members and seek out resources
- Advocate for the rights of community members
- Set up support structures
Remember to keep yourself safe as well!

It is best that you stay at home but if you do have to leave your home, take precaution:

Wash your hands as often as possible

Wear a mask (explained in the factsheet on the last page)

Don’t touch your face

Don’t touch other people and stay 2 metres away from others

Cough or sneeze in your elbow
How do we organise under a lockdown?

During this time, most of us need to stay at home. This makes connecting with our neighbours and community members difficult. But not impossible! This section will give you suggestions on new and creative ways of organising under a lockdown.

Start your People's Action Team

*To note:* your community probably has organised structures already, such as street or block committees, sport clubs, religious organisations, women’s groups and community movements. There is no need to duplicate what is already happening. Build on what is already there.
Step 1:
Set up a WhatsApp group with a minimum of 3 activists in your community
  • Give the group a name! A suggestion is the community name followed by “Action Team”, eg. “Botshabelo Action Team”
  • If you think someone that doesn’t have WhatsApp access should be part of the Action Team, make sure they are partnered up with someone who does and is able to share information with them.
  • At this stage try and get as many streets or area blocks represented as possible.

Step 2:
Set up your first meeting (Guidelines on running meetings under lockdown are below)
  • You can discuss the following things: this toolkit, the challenges the community faces because of the coronavirus and mapping the community (information on mapping is in the next section)
Ensure that your group is diverse. Each Action Team should include different kinds of people in the area: old and young, differently abled, LGBTIQ and different language speakers.

Organise with your community

Once you’ve started your Action Team, it’s time to organise with your community:

1. Divide your community into smaller sections, for example, streets, blocks or a group of around 10 households that are close to each other (we will look at mapping in Section 4).
2. Think of at least one activist on each small section who will be the Street Organiser of the section. Contact them, tell them about the Action Team and send them this toolkit via WhatsApp.
3. The Street Organiser should make contact with as many households in their street/block/area as possible, and tell them about the Action Team and why it is needed.

4. The Street Organisers will be the core of your communities organisation. They will map out their area (refer to the next section), identify people who are vulnerable and run awareness campaigns in their area. They will also engage with other streets - through the Action Team group.

5. Add all Street Organisers to your WhatsApp group. Your group will grow over time.
Guidelines for running meetings under lockdown

Remember: under a lockdown, you cannot meet physically. Your meetings will need to be online. The cheapest effective way to meet online is via your WhatsApp group:

- Set a time where all the group members will be focused on the app and set an agenda.
- Appoint a Chairperson who will ensure that the meeting runs for a certain amount of time and everyone gets to speak.
- Appoint someone to summarise the important decision that your meeting made.
- Use Voice Notes! Voice Notes are an effective way of speaking through ideas and ensuring that the meeting flows.

A more effective but more costly way to meet is through an app called Zoom, which can be downloaded (here: zoom.us) and used for free (there will be data costs which can be minimised if everyone turns off their video).
It’s important to set up support structures

One of the most important roles of your Action Team is to support your community members, especially those who are elderly, have existing physical and mental illnesses, child-headed households or people living alone. Please remember to adhere to lockdown regulations. Only leave your home if absolutely necessary. You can set up support structures by:

- Identifying those who are vulnerable
- Checking up on them at least every second day (do this over the phone if possible)
- Ensuring they have your contact details to call in case of an emergency
- Offering to buy groceries, medical supplies or other essentials for them
- Assisting them to keep informed with verified information from trustworthy sources
Gender Based Violence is likely to increase during the lockdown and if you do suspect any abuse, do not intervene directly, but call one of the numbers listed.

Your organising work does not end with Covid-19!

We need sustainable organisation in our communities in order to confront our struggles. The struggle for health, food and water, human rights, decent homes, land and dignity will not end once we have stopped the spread of the virus, together.

We will build community organisation and build people’s power now to confront the current crisis and also to prepare us for the crises of unemployment, inequality, Gender Based Violence and climate change. We need a social system that puts people first, not profit.

Additional resource: Reading circle
It is important that while organising your community your Action Team tries to understand the world, the
economy and other things related to this crisis. You do this so that you can have the tools to confront the crisis. We have compiled a reading list with suggestions on running online political reading circles during the lockdown. You can access it here: http://tiny.cc/5h8znm

Discussion questions:

1. How will the lockdown affect your community?
2. Will the lockdown affect all communities in South Africa in this way?
3. What happens after the coronavirus is contained? Will your community’s struggles be the same?
4. Are there links between the effects of the lockdown and the pandemic on your community and your community’s daily struggles?
5. How do we use this moment to organise our communities to confront all these struggles?
How do I map my community?

(During lockdown you will have to do this online.) A map will guide you when you are planning community actions. It is also something that can ensure everyone in your community has access to information and can contribute to the actions and decision making. A map will help you answer the following questions:

- How can we use what is in the community to respond to any challenges?
- What is the best way to run an awareness campaign?
- What is the best way to safely get and distribute food parcels?
- Who needs assistance in the community?
- If needed, where can community members meet?
- Where can community members access different services?
- How can Action Team members safely move around in the community?
- What additional needs does the community have?
What you will need for this section:

- A few big pieces of paper (to draw on)
- Pens/Pencils/Markers
- Printed map of your area (if possible)
Step 1: Appoint one Action Team member to draw a map of your community: Begin with a picture or map of the area you are working in. You could use Google maps or a road map. Or you can use a pencil and a large page to start drawing what you and other Action Team members know. On the picture, roughly plotting the streets and homes.
Step 2:
Break the area into smaller sections: this could be a street, a block, or 10 households. A section should be small enough for people to easily stay in contact with each other. Circle each of the smaller sections on the map.

Step 3:
Map the Street Organisers: In each circle, write the name of the Street Organiser.
Step 4: Identify the resources and weaknesses in your community: Each Street Organiser and Action Team member will identify the tools and resources in their areas. Use the questions above to help you with this step. Use WhatsApp to communicate this information and add it to the bigger map. On WhatsApp, list the tools into categories, eg: existing structures (community forums, street committee), food (spaza shop, informal traders, grocery stores, community garden), water and sanitation, transport, medical (clinics, doctors, hospitals), police, skills (farmers, nurses and doctors, social workers, local government workers, artisans and lawyers), support services (clinics, community halls, churches, mosques, NGOs, people with permits to move around and schools). Also list people who need the most assistance.
Step 5:
Plot all the tools, resources and weaknesses on your map: The map drawer will plot the list on the map. The group can decide what icons to use to mark the items on the list. You could use: crosses, lines, drawings or even emojis.
Step 6: Update the map regularly: The map drawer will keep the map and update it with more information coming from community members such as new food spots, police visibility in certain areas, new Street Organisers, new challenges identified or water tanks being put up.

Step 7: Share the community map: The map drawer will take photos of the map everytime it is updated and send it to the other Action Team members. Action Team members will then send it or show every member in the community they have access to.
Step 8:
Use the map to take action! When planning community actions, use the map as a guide and help everyone understand and contribute to decision making.

To note: The mapping needs of women compared to men are different, and the needs and experiences of women must be considered. For example, dark streets or toilets that are often inaccessible and dangerous for women at night, and this should be noted on the map.

You can also use the map to access resources to meet the immediate needs of your community:

1. Identify what resources are needed: you now have an idea of the basic needs of your community through engaging with individuals. These would include things like: masks, hygiene kits, non-perishable food and mobile data and airtime. List these on a piece of paper.
2. **Create a database for resource mobilisation:**
First, identify how internal resources can be used. For example community gardens can be used to feed many households, through also using people with farming and logistical skills and masks can be made by people with sewing skills.

3. **Identify drop off points** where resources are stored and can be received or collected during the lockdown. Read the part on how to get permits in the section of this toolkit titled “Important information for your Action Team”.

Then, make a list of places to access resources externally. These will include the government’s Food Parcel Helpline (0800601011), NGOs in your city and resourceded communities who have organised similar structures.
How do we gather information under a lockdown?

During lockdown, community mapping is more difficult because you can’t walk through your community to gather information.

Here are some tips for gathering information while on lockdown:

- The easiest way is to phone people, if you have mobile data.
- You can also use your shopping day: while people queue at the local shop, use the time to talk to your neighbours (remember to remain at least 2 meters apart), gain information and share your contact details. Identify people who are willing to be Street Organisers and get their contact details.
- Put your contact details and information up at local shops, grant distribution points, clinics and ATMs. Ask people to send a WhatsApp, SMS, or a Please Call Me to tell you about a resource or weakness in their home or area, or to offer a skill.
When speaking to people remember that you are gathering very personal information and it might not be easy to talk about. Introduce yourself to people and mention you are organising in a Action Team and ask open questions. Examples of questions: *Who do you live with?* *What are you worried about during this time?* *Is there anything you are finding very difficult about the lockdown?* *How is it going to affect your life?* *What do you think is important for us to know about your health?* *What skills, knowledge or resources can you share in the community?*

**To note:** the map can be important for your community even after the lockdown and after the coronavirus crisis. It shows the reality of our communities from the perspective of community members - instead of the perspective of the government or outside NGOs. Use it to take community action and to build people's power!
Discussion questions:

1. Why is it important that community members understand their communities and its resources?
2. How can you use this understanding to confront the issues that you face, after lockdown?

One of the main roles of your Action Team is to raise awareness that will support community members in answering these questions. This section will explore suggestions on how to run awareness campaigns under lockdown, and beyond.
How do we create awareness under a lockdown?

The most important tool we need to stop the spread of the coronavirus is knowledge. Our communities need to know the answers to the following questions:

- What is the virus?
- How is it spread?
- How can the spread of the virus be prevented?
- How can we access real information and not fake news?

One of the main roles of your Action Team is to raise awareness that will support community members in answering these questions. This section will explore suggestions on how to run awareness campaigns under lockdown, and beyond.
Where do we get accurate information?

- Use the factsheet on the last page of this toolkit: it has basic information.
- Send a WhatsApp message to the Department of Health on 060 012 3456 for updated information.
- Visit the website sacoronavirus.co.za for updated information.

Where can we get awareness materials?

- Contact your local clinic or SAPS. Some of these institutions would have flyers with accurate information.
- If your community has access to a printer, visit this website (https://www.nicd.ac.za) to download flyers in different languages.
What tools can we use to raise awareness?

- WhatsApp: send the posters and information on your Action Team WhatsApp groups and other community WhatsApp groups.

- Social media: if you have a Facebook, Twitter or Instagram account, update your status or stories regularly with awareness information.

- Posters: during essential trips put posters up at local shops, grant distribution points, clinics and ATMs. Ensure that you sanitise your hands regularly!
• Loudhailers: if you have access to a loudhailer, you could use it to shout information on your street or block. Remember to be considerate of other community members if you do do this.

• Community radio: a lot of people access information via community radio. Call a community radio station close to you and ask them for airtime to speak about your Action Team
• Door-to-door campaigns: if you do have a permit to provide an essential service, you could do door-to-door campaigning but remember the precautions!
• Community leaders: get community and religious leaders involved!

Say no to fake news!

Fake news can be really dangerous to individuals and our communities. As Action Team members you need to ensure that the information your community has is accurate. You should trust sources like the Department of Health or the World Health Organisation. The spread of any other information should be stopped, and the information checked using the sources above.
Important contact details

To protect your rights

If you witness any violations of a community members' rights or your own rights are violated through police brutality, illegal home evictions or misuse of political power, you can get free legal assistance by calling Lawyers for Human Rights: 066 076 8845

To report Gender Based Violence

Contact the Gender Based Violence command centre: 0800 428 428 or *120*7867#

To get a permit to move around

NGOs working to distribute essential items like food can get permits to operate as essential services. Your Action Team should link up with a registered NGO in order to obtain permits to carry out essential actions (food and water distribution, shopping for people
who are vulnerable, awareness campaigns):
  • Call the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition on 0861 843 348 or +27 12 394 9500
  • You can also visit your local police station for information on obtaining permits
If you do get a permit, moving around is still a risk to you, your family and community. Street Organisers should only move around within their streets or blocks and only when really needed.

To access accurate information

Send a WhatsApp message to the Department of Health on 060 012 3456 or visit the website sacoronavirus.co.za for updated information.

To respond to concerns about possible infections

If you or someone else in your community has symptoms of the coronavirus, don’t panic! Call the Coronavirus hotline immediately: 0800 029 999
To join a network of community activists around the country

Community action groups in informal settlements, townships, rural areas, suburbs and mining and farming areas are organising their communities across the country. Join a network of these groups to share ideas and experiences by going to this link: http://tiny.cc/ms8zrn

To join the national C19 People’s Coalition

The C19 People’s Coalition is made up of trade unions, NGOs and community movements (like yours) across South Africa. The coalition is working to ensure that the South African response to the coronavirus is effective, just, equitable and meets the needs of the least supported people in our unequal country.

To join the coalition, join the WhatsApp group through this link https://bit.ly/2xaLVdN or visit the coalition’s website: https://c19peoplescoalition.org.za/.
# Factsheet
Explaining Covid-19

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is Covid-19?</strong></td>
<td>It is a disease caused by a type of coronavirus that was identified for the first time in December 2019. It affects your breathing and can be mild for 8 out of 10 people. But some people develop severe symptoms, such as pneumonia, and will need to be treated in hospital. A very small number of infected people may die.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Who can contract the virus?</strong></td>
<td>Anyone can catch the virus. It does not discriminate. However, people over the age of 65 and people with existing health conditions (especially conditions that affect the lungs or immune system) are more likely to get really sick, and need to go to hospital.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>How is the virus spread?</strong></td>
<td>It is spread by droplets that are released into the air when someone who is infected coughs or sneezes. The droplets can be directly breathed in if you are close enough (less than 2 metres away). The droplets can also fall onto surfaces and if you touch these surfaces and then touch your face without washing your hands, you can transfer the virus from the surface to your own body.</td>
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What are the symptoms of Covid-19?
The common symptoms are cough, sore throat, shortness of breath or fever. If you are concerned that you or someone else has these symptoms visit a doctor or clinic immediately.

Taking precaution

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser (at least 60% methanol or isopropyl).

Maintain at least 2 metre distance between yourself and others.

Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.

Covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow when you cough or sneeze.

Wear a homemade-mask if you are out in public. Wearing a mask is important to protect others. A person may have COVID19 but still feel fine and will go out before they are able to do testing or receive medical care. You can make your own
mask (here’s simple instructions to making a mask: http://tiny.cc/nqshnz). Remember to use a mask with a double layer. Identifying who in your community has a sewing machine and knows how to sew is another way to create supply.

When wearing a mask:
• Wash hands before putting it on.
• Don't touch the mask while it is on.
• When you take it off, hold it by the straps only
• Put it straight in the wash (don’t put it down on surfaces, or let it touch anything else) and wash with hot water, and iron it if possible to kill the germs.
• Wash hands after removing the mask

It is better not to wear gloves because the virus can live on surfaces for up to 3 days. Gloves might increase the risk of spreading the virus - for example you can transfer the virus from one surface to another by touching them with the same glove e.g. to your cell phone. It is better to wash or sanitise your hands as often as possible and try not to touch your face.

If you have a cough, sore throat, shortness of breath or fever call your doctor or clinic and report your symptoms and wear a facemask when entering the clinic.