



Fighting COVID-19 Through Communication: A South African Story



government communications
Department:
Government Communication and Information System
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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REMEMBERING THE LATE MINISTER **JACKSON MPHIKWA MTHEMBU**

This book is dedicated to all government communicators and members of the media who lost their lives during the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic in pursuit of bringing vital information to our citizens.

It is also dedicated to the late Minister in The Presidency, Mr Jackson Mthembu, for steering the department under challenging conditions in the fight against COVID-19.



(5 June 1958 – 21 January 2021)

The COVID-19 pandemic caused severe human suffering and took many precious lives from us, including the late Minister in The Presidency, Mr Jackson Mthembu. He passed on at the height of the pandemic from health complications related to COVID-19.

Our nation lost one of its finest public servants and government communicators. His death robbed us of a decisive leader and servant of the people who led the government communication system through one of the most difficult times in our history. As the face of government communication, Minister Mthembu understood that clear, effective and honest communication was critical to keeping South Africans updated on government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Based on these key communication tenets, he led the government communication system through the unprecedented crisis. The Minister was the nexus between the National Coronavirus Command Council (NCCC) and communicators on the ground while being at the forefront of providing valuable content to South Africans. His untimely passing left us with a massive void.

His contribution to our nation in one of our most challenging moments will never be forgotten. We remember his decisive leadership and willingness to go over and above the call of duty. His approachable, considerate, diplomatic, strategic and above all, down-to-earth nature, was instrumental in our nation reaching our communication goals during the COVID-19 period.

He was always positive no matter the challenges and had confidence that we would prevail and emerge stronger as a nation. He engaged constructively with the GCIS management and staff to ensure that the department achieved the best outcomes.

His life is a testimony that one person can make a difference. He was dedicated to building a better tomorrow for our people and inspired others to do the same.

Minister Mthembu left an indelible mark on the government communication fraternity and set the tone for government communication to forge ahead into the future.

He dedicated his life to our country and its people, and worked tirelessly towards creating a better South Africa until his untimely passing.



He lived the values of unity, selflessness, collective leadership and honesty. The Minister left a unique imprint on the type of public service we continue to strive to build.

It is now the duty of every public serv-

ant, particularly government communicators, to keep his legacy alive. To take Minister Mthembu's legacy forward, communicators are encouraged to rise to the challenge to propel the government communication system into

the heart of service delivery.

In order for government communication to keep his legacy alive, communicators are reminded of the important role communication plays in inspiring our citizens.

Our task as communicators is to convey a message that is anchored in hope and confidence. Let us follow in the footsteps of Minister Mthembu by putting our nation and her people first.

Our nation will forever be indebted to Minister Mthembu not only for the role he played in our struggle for national liberation but also in driving back the spread of an unyielding virus in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. We salute him and honour his profound legacy.

Mr Mondli Gungubele, MP
Minister in The Presidency

FOREWORD

This e-book captures the work of South African communication professionals and partners in the fight against the devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic. It not only details the resilience and robustness of the communication systems, but serves as a legacy of communication for future generations.

The pandemic severely affected every facet of people's lives and forced everyone to adopt new ways of doing things. It also affected how governments around the world communicated with the public.


The reality is that nobody anticipated a challenge of such magnitude, yet the crucial task of educating and reassuring the public remained paramount. Citizens were forced to adapt to a new way of living to protect themselves from the deadly virus and also find new ways to communicate.

The GCIS at the time faced the daunting reality of a constrained budget to run a communication campaign to reach over 60 million citizens. With no new funds available to support communication projects, the department had to use existing resources and innovative thinking to drive our communication campaigns forward.

This enormous challenge took an immense physical and mental toll on officials on the frontlines. In the first few days of the pandemic, especially soon after the initial declaration of the National State



Summary of alert levels

ALERT LEVEL 5	ALERT LEVEL 4	ALERT LEVEL 3	ALERT LEVEL 2	ALERT LEVEL 1
 OBJECTIVE				
Drastic measures to contain the spread of the virus and save lives.	Extreme precautions to limit community transmission and outbreaks, while allowing some activity to resume.	Restrictions on many activities, including at workplaces and socially, to address a high risk of transmission.	Physical distancing and restrictions on leisure and social activities to prevent a resurgence of the virus.	Most normal activity can resume, with precautions and health guidelines followed at all times. Population prepared for an increase in alert levels if necessary.



of Disaster on 15 March 2020, most GCIS officials were overwhelmed with additional work to ensure continuity in the work of government.

Since the virus was rampant in those first few months, many fell ill and had to isolate for a few days. However, there

were no gaps or shortfalls as most communicators chose to forego their planned or annual leave to mitigate the shortage of staff. It is through such acts of solidarity and selfless sacrifice that we were able to help save many lives through our effective communication.

Regular research undertaken by the GCIS guided the communication approach to ensure that it was relevant and accurate to meet specific information needs and respond to areas of concern. One of the distinguishing features of how government managed this pandemic was listening to the people and their concerns.

We continually assessed our operations and amended our practices to best respond to various challenges. Through our development communication programmes – including community radio talk shows, door-to-door outreach campaigns and mall and taxi rank activations

– we listened to the concerns of the people.

Moreover, by taking information directly to the doorsteps of our communities, the GCIS was able to keep its finger on the national pulse and this sometimes acted as an early warning to issues emerging in the communities. We made adjustments to balance people’s concerns, knowing that we must continually do better for the people of our nation.

Our communication focused on instilling behaviour change by daily profiling preventative measures to stop the spread of the virus. We encouraged people to be mindful of the impact of their own behaviour on the well-being of others, especially those most vulnerable to the virus such as the elderly and persons with comorbidities.

This was done in line with Section 195(g) of the Constitution of the Republic of

“We used digital platforms such as national portals, mobile apps and social media to spread information to South Africans with access to the internet”

South Africa of 1996 to “foster transparency and provide the public with information that is timely, accurate and accessible”.



Faced with such a daunting task and confronted with an unseen enemy that took away our daily human interaction, we quickly migrated to new ways of working. In this period most meetings, conferences, training sessions and workshops took place virtually or remotely.

While the move to virtual communication may have taken years to reach its full potential, it was amazingly fast-tracked in a matter of weeks and months. For instance, the GCIS used Skype for Business and other virtual meeting platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams for virtual engagements.

During this period, online licences were extended to include large meeting formats and webinars, and social-media platforms were also used to live-stream media briefings and other government events. Most government communicators welcomed the arrangement to work from home during the pandemic.

Despite some technological flaws and glitches, we nevertheless transitioned to the digital and virtual world seamlessly.

We used digital platforms such as national portals, mobile apps and social media to spread information to South Africans with access to the internet.



South Africans were able to watch live streams of press briefings and announcements by government on the Government Facebook page from the comfort of their homes. We also ensured that most media briefings were broadcast live to community radio stations that reached the far-flung rural areas in the country.

These new technologies dovetailed with more traditional methods such as loud-hailing which was undertaken in partnership with other spheres of government and agencies. The GCIS also used various government products and platforms such as *Vuk'uzenzele* newspaper, News Service (SAnews), *My District Today* newslet-

ter and *Public Sector Manager* magazine.

The GCIS also used community radio stations, particularly African language radio stations, to provide news and information to people in their preferred languages.

Our comprehensive communication campaign also focused on media en-

gagement, paid-for advertisements in electronic broadcasting, print, face-to-face engagement and digital media platforms.

As a vital partner, the media was provided with constant updates on what still was a fast-evolving situation. Through regular virtual meetings, press conferences and engagements we kept the media informed so that they could impart vital information to the public.

What this period showed more than anything else is the power of partnerships which we fostered with civil-society organisations, particularly those working at the coalface to ensure that people are informed about the importance of adhering to preventative measures such as regularly washing hands with water and soap or using a 70% alcohol-based hand sanitiser, keeping a safe distance and wear-

ing a mask that covered both the mouth and nose.

Apart from assisting in spreading information about the importance of adopting the measures to prevent exposure to the virus, our stakeholders also helped us to deal with incidents of fake news and misinformation.

The work we achieved during this difficult period would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work of the staff and colleagues.

We shall also not downplay the generous support provided by our partners to save lives and drive a narrative of hope.



Ms Phumla Williams
GCIS Director-General (DG)

INTRODUCTION

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic plunged the entire world into uncharted waters. While the virus was fought on many fronts, communication was at the centre of our nation's efforts to prevent the spread of the deadly virus and thus save lives.

Our immediate realisation was that communication was an essential tool in the country's mitigating strategy to combat the spread of the virus. The GCIS spearheaded the nationwide communication system that played an instrumental role in the fight against COVID-19. The highly effective communication campaign provided messages of hope to people in South Africa and guided their actions throughout the onslaught of the pandemic.

Government communication sought to inform, educate and reassure people in South African, as well as instil hope, that the country would emerge

stronger after the virus had subsided. Frequent communication focused on providing accurate, useful and up-to-date information to the public. Through reliable information, South Africans were able to make informed decisions about their daily routines.

The pandemic had changed the way government communicates and engages with its citizens, as face-to-face or physical interactions were limited in line with national lockdown regulations. For the first time since the start of our democracy, many of the everyday freedoms South Africans enjoyed were curtailed in a bid to fight the spread of the virus. Religious services and traditional practices were also placed on hold.

To limit the spread of the virus, there was an unprecedented closure of activities such as sports, entertainment and public events.

The pandemic had also brought with it a deep sense of doubt and anxiety. Many people had lost their jobs and did not know how they were going to provide for their families.

Communication had to address these daily challenges as well as deal with misconceptions about the spread of the virus. For example, in the early days there was a misconception that the virus only affected affluent citizens traveling internationally and that some citizens were immune from infection.

There was also a growing trend of fake news on social media that sowed roots of contention and undermined our nation's communication efforts. Widespread myths such as the COVID-19 vaccine containing a microchip or that it could change a person's DNA had to be overcome through effective communication.



When vaccines became available, a nationwide communication initiative was activated to encourage people in South Africa to vaccinate to defeat the virus. Our communication highlighted that every citizen had a role to play in building the momentum needed to reach population immunity.

The pandemic was also a stark reminder of the importance of providing quality and reliable information at a time when fake news flourished, especially on social media. Government communication became the vanguard in the fight against

misinformation and fake news, which posed a real risk to our nation's efforts to fight the virus. Our communication push had been to constantly remind people that they are part of the solution.

Through communication, the GCIS played an important role in helping to limit the spread of the virus and fostering compliance by encouraging more people in South Africa to adhere to preventative and safety measures.

This resulted in behaviour change as more people around the country adhered to preventative measures.



An infographic with a green background and yellow accents. At the top, it says '4 PRECAUTIONS TO FOLLOW TO AVOID BEING INFECTED'. Below this are four numbered steps, each with an icon and a brief description. Step 1: 'WASH YOUR HANDS' with an icon of hands being washed. Step 2: 'GOOD PERSONAL HYGIENE' with an icon of a person coughing into their elbow. Step 3: 'DO NOT SHARE FOOD AND UTENSILS' with an icon of a fork and knife. Step 4: 'SEE A DOCTOR IF YOU ARE UNWELL' with an icon of a first aid kit. At the bottom, there is a yellow banner with the text '24HR NICD HOTLINE 0800 029 999' and 'REMAIN VIGILANT AND ADOPT GOOD PERSONAL HYGIENE PRACTICES'. Logos for the Department of Health and the NDP are also present.

Research has shown that sustained heightened communication from both government and social partners has had a positive impact on behaviour change and vaccine uptake during the COVID-19 pandemic.

COMMUNICATION AS A FIRST LINE OF DEFENCE AGAINST **COVID-19**

As early as the end of 2019, the GCIS was monitoring the COVID-19 situation in other parts of the world through extensive assessment. The situation in Wuhan, China, the epicentre of the pandemic, was quickly deteriorating, with news emerging that South African students were stuck in the city.

The National Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure (NATJOINTS) was convened to deal with the repatriation of citizens from Wuhan. NATJOINTS held several intense meetings, as often as two to three times a day, to plan for the repatriation of the students.

The GCIS was tasked to develop the communication plan and present the daily media environment report. The department, in partnership with the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, began communication on the repatriation of South Africans based in Wuhan.





At the same time, the GCIS also began preparations on communication for a possible outbreak of COVID-19 in the country, which was spreading rampantly across the world. Like the rest of the world at the time, there was a deep sense of apprehension and uncertainty.

The COVID-19 pandemic reached South Africa with the first case reported on 5 March 2020. Addressing the nation,

President Cyril Ramaphosa announced that the country would enter a national lockdown in an attempt to curb the spread of this new disease. Alert level 5 was enforced from midnight 26 March to 30 April 2020.

The anxiety among citizens was palpable as lockdown measures placed restrictions on their movement. GCIS preparations for the lockdown included creating

a WhatsApp group of communicators and arranging travel permits that would allow a core group of communicators to remain mobile.

The Communication Command Centre (CCC) was activated through the GCIS's Cluster Coordination unit, which drew communicators from across the government system. The GCIS also convened the communication and community mobilisation work stream consisting of government communicators.

The work stream reported to the NAT-JOINTS and ultimately the NCCC through the Minister in The Presidency.

The GCIS, together with the Department of Health (DoH), played an instrumental role in driving communication and coordinating departments, and identifying role players to execute communication. Later in the national lockdown, communication was declared an 'essential' service, which

allowed communicators free movement to keep communities abreast of developments.

The GCIS ensured that our nation's communication was aligned to all health, socio-economic and other measures taken by government. A number of communication approaches were developed and aligned to the various lockdown phases of addressing the pandemic.

The department convened two media

briefings daily at its Head Office in Pretoria, to update the nation. Journalists were able to participate virtually in the briefings that were broadcast across various platforms. Our partnership with the SABC saw the broadcaster assisting with studio space, broadcast equipment and a pool feed to enable anyone across the globe to have access to the government briefings.

Our communication thrust was con-

stantly to remind South Africans that they are part of the solution. To ensure that our communication had the desired impact, the GCIS had to lead from the front and communication was centralised to ensure clarity, consistency and transparency. The Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) on COVID-19 Vaccines chaired by Deputy President David Mabuza was also instrumental in drawing stakeholders across government in a united communication effort.

In leading communication in this difficult period, the department understood that the pandemic changed the way government would communicate and engage with its citizens. In South Africa, the face-to face or physical interactions that were common before COVID-19 were now limited in line with lockdown regulations and restrictions.

In the initial phase, the GCIS decided to



shift towards digital platforms such as on-line portals, mobile apps and social media. This cost-effective communication method helped to accelerate the spread of information to South Africans with access to the internet. The department also used community radio to reach local communities in their own languages.

The GCIS constantly endeavoured to keep South Africans abreast of the latest developments through key messages, statements, online briefings or engagements through social media.

One of the major communication successes in early 2020 came with government's engagement with community leaders and faith-based leaders to persuade them to place religious services and gatherings on hold.

Spokesperson for the Ministry of Health at the time, Dr Lwazi Manzi, said that "we got quite good with meeting with commu-



nity leaders such as the faith-based leaders. We had learnt that in Daegu, South Korea that COVID-19 started to spread rampantly after a lady infected with the virus had attended a church service”.

Various churches were engaged ahead of the annual Easter celebrations that year to support our nation's public health measures by postponing their religious meetings. They included the Zion Chris-

tian Church (ZCC), the largest African-initiated church operating across southern Africa, with an average of over 10 million pilgrims that gather annually in Moria in Limpopo as part of their Easter service.

Convincing religious organisations to postpone their gatherings was a major achievement at a time when oxygen and ventilators were in limited supply. If the COVID-19 virus had spread during this

time, it could have resulted in a 20% mortality rate for our nation.

The GCIS also brought together business, labour and civil society under the auspices of the National Communication Partnership (NCP) on COVID-19 and vaccine roll-out. The partnership convened weekly to manage communication activities between the private and public sectors, and civil society.

The National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) was instrumental in drawing together constituents from across business, community, government and labour that helped affirm the partnership.

Representatives from NEDLAC and the NCP also participated in the daily Rapid Response meetings hosted by the GCIS. In March 2020, the COVID-19 NEDLAC Rapid Response Task Team was established to ensure that the country respond-

ed effectively to the threat of COVID-19.

The GCIS understood the dynamics of an ever-changing COVID-19 environment communication, and constantly adapted and improved its communication by embracing new ways of doing things.

The country moved from Level 5 to Level 4 on 1 May 2020 and on 1 June 2020 moved from Level 4 to Level 3 of the national lockdown. This marked a shift from an enforcement approach to one of voluntary compliance to preventative measures against the spread of COVID-19. In response, the communication strategy was adjusted to support this new phase.

Informed by international experience, government and its social partners developed a Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) approach to encourage long-term societal buy-in and compliance with preventative measures to curb the spread of COVID-19.

This approach did not only rely on international studies but drew from a growing body of domestic research on understanding the South African realities on the ground.

The GCIS-led Government Communication Strategy implemented at the start of lockdown adopted the SBCC approach and changed its branding from “Stay Home” to “Stay Safe” to take the campaign forward. This adjusted strategy was shared with various sector partners through structures such as the NCP to align all public and private communication efforts.



REFLECTIONS BY COMMUNICATORS





“When the pandemic first broke out there was tremendous fear and anxiety, particularly for us as communicators who would be called to the frontlines. This was something that we had never encountered before and we needed to get ready even though we did not know what would be expected from us. In those early days, we had to find our way and support one another in whichever way we could. I am proud of the many communicators who responded to the call in those uncertain times, often at their own personal safety.”

Ms Phumla Williams, GCIS DG

“Most of the time I felt a lot of anxiety and fatigue. I did not sleep well as I had journalists calling from 4am because they wanted to get their stories out by 5am. We were also on television (TV) and radio, which meant having to get up at 4am to be ready for the prime-time news shows. We also spent a lot of time doing interviews in the evenings, which meant late nights. I was tired but at the same time I felt a huge sense of privilege to be that person communicating, being the nexus between the technical and communication.”

Dr Lwazi Manzi, then DoH Spokesperson





“We had long days and long nights. As communicators, we were stretched to our limits so that we could keep South Africans abreast of developments to ensure that they had information so they could make informed decisions. I was glued to my laptop from one Zoom meeting to another to help coordinate government communication during this extraordinary time. The traditional working hours that we were used to had gone out of the window. It was through the dedication of our entire team that we rose to the challenge in the fight against the pandemic.”

Mr Michael Currin, GCIS Deputy DG: Intergovernmental Coordination and Stakeholder Management

“During the first lockdown in March 2020, it was upon us at the GCIS to be on the forefront of communicating messages and informing the public about the COVID-19 pandemic. Personally, I had anxiety, stress and uncertainty of the future but as a public servant I had to be strong. We were exposed to the virus each time we had to be at work during countless media briefings, as we had to update the nation daily on the pandemic. We worked under extreme physical and psychological stress, and not only our health was at risk but we were at risk of exposing our families to the virus.”

Mr Ishmael Selemale, GCIS Media Engagement





“When COVID-19 started, it started with numbers. When things hit a peak, the numbers changed to names. Now the names of people you knew and have interacting with such as the late Minister Jackson Mthembu. Some of us were working with him closely on a daily basis. When the numbers started to change to names, it began to get very scary and a moment that shook us as communicators.”

Mr William Baloyi, GCIS Chief Director: Media Engagement

“As communicators we faced both mental and physical fatigue. Many communicators until today have not been able to take leave over the two years that we fought the spread of COVID-19. The call to national duty to provide information that would save lives and keep our citizens informed was victorious. We had pulled together as communicators and partners in a common front to drive back the virus and protect our citizens.”

Ms Tasneem Carrim, GCIS Chief Director: Policy and Research





“We were called on to craft messaging on something we knew very little about. We grabbed onto every bit of information we could find on the virus. Our messaging teams had to become experts overnight on the subject of viruses and simplify complex medical terms into easily understandable language. We were often called to work into the late evening so new information was available the following morning to keep citizens abreast of new developments in the fight against the pandemic.”

Mr Gill Price, GCIS Director: Communication Resource Centre

“I think for us we are so used to being in the frontline for a crisis. The media engagement team at the GCIS is always ready. While there was some initial concern over the virus, we configured ourselves to deal with this crisis. Mr William Baloyi was at the forefront coordinating with the Ministers and the DG; a colleague was dedicated to updating our Twitter feed, another monitoring news and one in charge of quickly issuing statements. We had a working system that helped get us through the tough times.”

MsTshegofatso Modubu, GCIS Director: Domestic Media Engagement





“The place where we first activated the whole government communication machinery was when I was at a Justice, Crime Prevention and Security Cluster meeting. The meeting stopped for an important announcement. We were briefed on the situation in Wuhan, China and that if we did not act now we would face a crisis already experienced by other countries. We worked late nights as communicators; it was quite hectic as we dealt with a constantly changing environment. NATJOINTS also made lots of urgent demands on communicators.”

Mr David Jacobs, GCIS Chief Director: Cluster Communication

“What kept me going was the important work we were doing during those difficult times and seeing the number of partners that were part of the NCP growing and the impact our united front was having in the fight against COVID-19. I am grateful of the experience I have gained and the acquaintances made.”

Ms Motshidisi Madingwane, GCIS Cluster Supervision





“The biggest challenge was the fact we had to educate people about the virus without being in direct contact with them. There was a time when we mulled over getting protective white overalls for all field officials and we had to stop in our tracks because of the stigma that was attached to these overalls. There was stigma in the communities against people who were infected. We had to work harder as provincial and local communicators to dispel these myths and educate our communities about safe funeral practices as most people were getting infected at funerals. What worked for us was a strong provincial and local network of communicators; we were able to use these platforms to spread messages that came from national government and the Provincial Command Council.”

Ms Ndala Mngadi, GCIS Director: Kwa-Zulu-Natal Provincial Office





“The fear and restlessness triggered by the hard lockdown declared at that time meant government communications should take centre stage and put South Africans at ease. For me, that served as a testing moment for the effectiveness and resilience of communication coordinating forums of government at both provincial and local government. The team spirit displayed by communicators was very encouraging and the innovative ideas put forward – which included the use of strategic channels like loudhailing and community radio – mitigated against hearsays and fake news. Communities had an appetite to receive information on COVID-19. The vaccine roll-out programme also added a new flavour to the campaign when communities were encouraged to register for the vaccine. The on-site registration of approximately 2000 people on the Electronic Vaccination Data System (EVDS) through the GCIS-led community outreaches and the subsequent vaccination services provided in partnership with the DoH, remain a fulfilling contribution in the fight against the pandemic.”

**Ms Moepeng Tshwane, GCIS Acting Chief Director:
Provincial and Local Liaison (PLL)**





“There was a lot of anxiety, especially when the numbers were getting higher and names were becoming real to people we knew and family members – those infected, hospitalised or deceased. With the kind of work we do, that of reaching out to communities, we had to change our tactics to still ensure that information was disseminated to communities whilst our officials were still safe. With PLL’s strong point being Development Communication, it was really hard as we could not do face-to-face engagements at some point and had to rely on community media, loudhailing and knock-and-drop activities to disseminate information, which had an impact. One had to check on the team to ensure that they were safe.”

Ms Yolisa Blom, GCIS Director: Free State Provincial Office

“The realities of COVID-19 were felt when the country recorded more than 70 cases of the pandemic and the subsequent announcement of the hard lockdown in March 2020. The first question I asked myself was whether we would ever return to normal life. My anxiety was exacerbated by the growing number of positive cases and deaths related to COVID-19 in Europe. There were conflicting views about the pandemic, but government communicators always gave our communities reliable and reassuring information.”

Mr Ofentse Moeti, GCIS Director: Northern Cape Provincial Office





“When COVID-19 struck it was such an unprecedented occurrence. Being a Development Communication outlet in the GCIS, the shift from face-to-face to virtual interface was such a system shocker, but it was a shift for the better. A tactical shift that we unleashed was the power of digital communication, loudhailing and community broadcasting that was at the centre of intergovernmental communications messaging and coordination. Risky as it was at the time, we cherished the village-to-village and street-to-streets moments that we had in churning out government safety messages aimed at saving lives.”

Mr Ndlelantle Pinyana, GCIS Director: Eastern Cape Provincial Office

“It was very challenging for me as COVID-19 was the biggest project that I ever worked on. We had to be at work every day during the height of the pandemic to ensure we communicated government’s messages to all South Africans. I personally felt at risk because you would be in contact with someone and then told they had tested positive for COVID-19. The Communication Service Agency (CSA) team members were also the ones on the ground going across the country to take videos and photos to cover our nation’s response.”

Ms Neli Shuping, GCIS Chief Director: CSA





“The pandemic destabilised the way we lived and communicated; I was scared because half of our population is not online. They are more familiar with word of mouth, which is why we have izimbizo and face-to-face communication. But the late Minister Mthembu ensured that communicators were here every day and people saw us speaking to them daily, which helped build hope in fighting the pandemic.”

Mr Ayanda Hollow, GCIS Director: International Media Engagement

“I remember the research team having to search for any available research that could assist to inform the Government Communication Strategy on COVID-19 pandemic urgently. None was readily available until we sourced and analysed the 2020 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Trust and COVID-19 as secondary data to use as a baseline research to urgently inform the strategy. Subsequently, the team conducted a unique tracking COVID-19 research to inform changes to the strategy as government managed the pandemic and responded to the public information needs. Lockdown regulations required innovative and effective data collection methods to ensure timely availability of research insights.”

Dr Ntombifuthi Nala, GCIS Director: Research





“Constant communication by government during the COVID-19 period instilled hope for citizens, and the well-orchestrated integrated communication strategy on messaging made a meaningful impact by educating communities and raising awareness in multiple languages on the health and safety measures to protect livelihoods.”

Ms Cleo Mosana, HoC, National Treasury

“The GCIS rose to the occasion by handling an unprecedented number of requests for the multilingual translation of COVID-19-related communication products. Apart from translating communication products into all official languages, the GCIS Language Services unit also facilitated the translation of some information into French and Portuguese. In addition to providing editing and proofreading services, the Content Development unit also produced two online publications, *Coronavirus Survival Guide* and *What you Need to Know about Coronavirus*.

Mr Elias Tibane, GCIS Director: Content Development

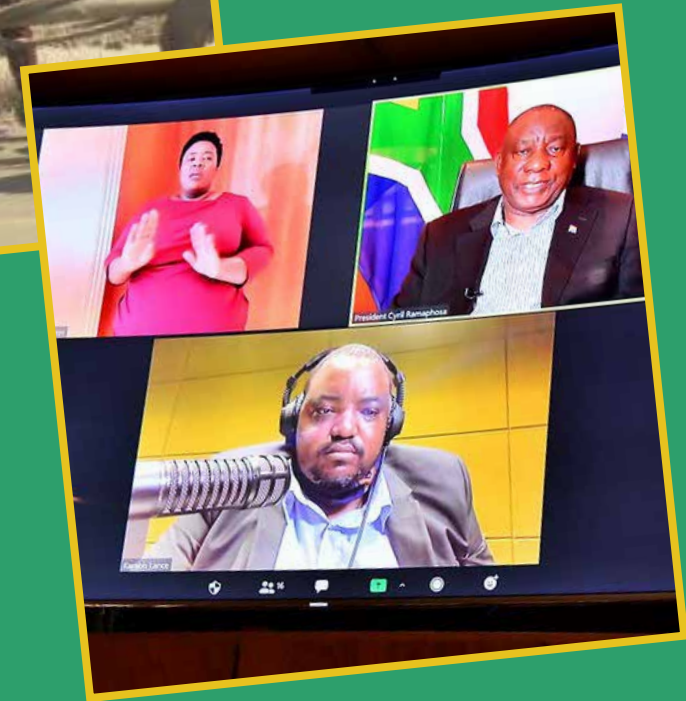
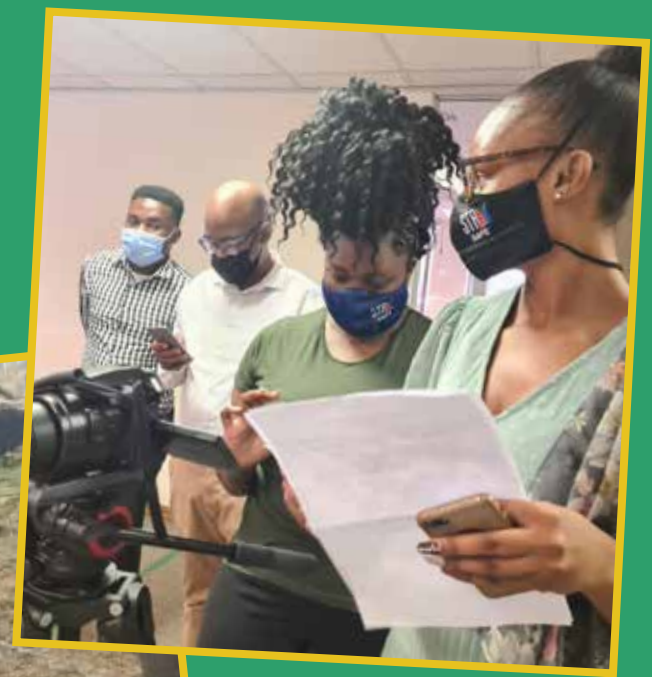


OUR COMMUNICATION HEROES AND HEROINES

Many people in our country heeded the call to go over and above the call of duty in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Government communicators also raised their hands to be counted.

Many of them worked frantically to produce and disseminate life-saving content. Like many essential services workers on the frontlines who often put their own health and safety on the line, the communicators did likewise to keep vital information flowing.





PARTNERSHIP WITH THE **DOH**



The first major communication by the DoH on COVID-19 was on two South Africans who were infected with the virus while aboard a ship in Japan. Communication at this juncture mainly focused on the issue of quarantine.

The situation worsened when South African students studying in Wuhan, China, the epicentre of the COVID-19 epidemic, requested to return home. Preparations to repatriate citizens had begun and were accompanied by strong planning around communication.

In the initial days, communication began essentially in the “backroom” with key officials meeting every two days to plan for the repatriation of citizens from Wuhan. The meetings later evolved into a War Room.

There was intense media interest and apprehension among citizens on bringing



home South Africans from Wuhan, possibly infected with COVID-19. Communication helped to keep the media abreast of developments and alleviate anxiety among citizens.

The country continued to remain on

high alert as reports of the unknown virus spread around the world. On 5 March 2020, the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) confirmed the country’s first case of COVID-19. The patient, a 38-year-old male, had returned

with his wife from a trip to Italy.

The couple and their two children were part of a group of 10 people who arrived back in South Africa on 1 March 2020. A media briefing was immediately convened on the breaking news to keep the public abreast of the situation and limit any scope for speculation.

The couple's children attended the Cowan House Preparatory School, which announced that it would close after confirmation that a parent had tested positive for the virus. The DoH met with school representatives and parents to provide them with information to help them make informed decisions in dealing with this situation.

The DoH developed the daily statement. It initially contained few details and was later increased with additional content and graphs as the appetite for information became insatiable. When new



developments arose, more details were provided and the epidemiology then explained.

The DoH also established the weekly Friday briefing on COVID-19 on the Zoom platform with the Minister of Health and key experts from the country's medical and scientific community. The regular engagements ensured a constant sharing of vital information.

It was agreed that in line with international practice, the President would lead communication on major announcements and updates to the nation. The communication team at the DoH would then work with The Presidency's communication team and the GCIS on major announcements.

It resulted in an approach that saw the President leading major announcements,

with Ministers thereafter communicating on what it meant for each department.

The drafting of the regulations was a daily exercise and communicators closely collaborated with lawmakers. This allowed communicators the opportunity to craft messages in a manner that made it easier for citizens to follow the regulations.



One of the major shifts that happened with communication during COVID-19 was the use of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). It allowed briefings, webinars and engagements to take place anywhere in the country to ensure a constant feed of information.

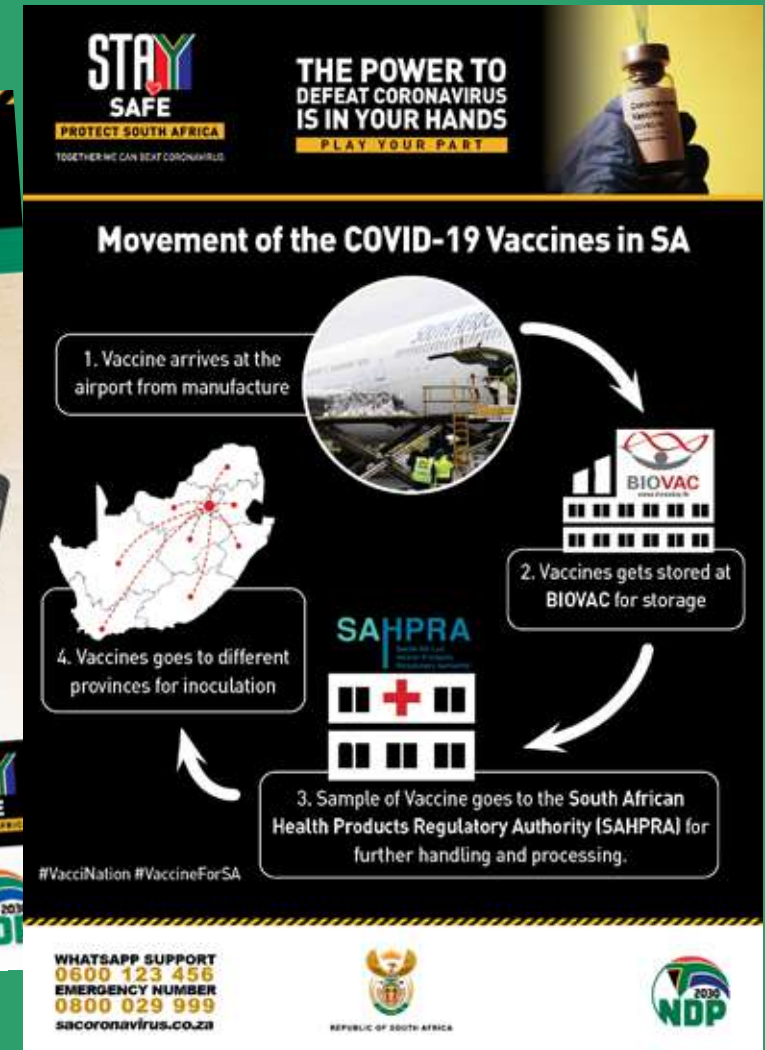
This form of online engagement was particularly valuable during the national lockdown when mobility was limited, and was a departure from the traditional face-to-face communication and big rallies typically used by government.

Broadcasters also had to learn how to

broadcast from the Zoom platform. In the beginning some broadcasters were filming the Zoom meeting and had to learn to connect to VoIP onto their systems. There were many teething glitches such as people not hearing each other, learning to unmute and to put on their video.

Eventually, Zoom briefings became the norm, which expanded government's communication reach and opened the use of other online platforms such as Twitter Spaces, YouTube and live streaming on Facebook.








COMMUNICATION STRATEGY



In late 2019, the GCIS together with the DoH developed a risk communication strategy to implement communication measures to combat the COVID-19 virus. Once South Africa received its first reported case of COVID-19, this communication initiative was widened to become an interdepartmental communication initiative driven by the GCIS.

The government communication machinery comprising national, provincial and local government communicators was activated. Given that the campaign had no dedicated budget, communication was implemented using existing platforms and mediums of government communication.

In the early stages, the overarching objective was to create awareness and educate South Africans about the disease, symptoms and risks of infection. It includ-

A global picture on communication practices: key departments & the presidency					
 <p>Key Departments</p>	 <p>South Africa</p> <p>South Africa leans on the Department of Health as a key ally as it is the department of the forefront of combating the virus' spread</p>	 <p>Nigeria</p> <p>The Nigerian government has chosen to use the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and the Presidential Taskforce being instrumental in being a powerful bridge of communication between the state governors representing citizens and the presidential office.</p>	 <p>U.K.</p> <p>Similarly, the UK has utilised the National Health System, as has Italy in amalgamation with the health ministry's efforts</p>	 <p>Italy</p> <p>Italy used the National Health System in amalgamation with the health ministry's efforts</p>	 <p>Brazil</p> <p>In contrast, however, is the tenuous relationship between the Presidency and the health department in Brazil, with President Bolsonaro's rapid rate of replacing health ministers when his current Minister seems to favour anti-Covid-19 strategies instead of supporting the presidency's insistence on trivializing the virus</p>
 <p>The Presidency</p>	<p>Television broadcasts for national addresses by the Presidency are used.</p>	<p>The Presidency uses television broadcasts for national addresses.</p>	<p>The Presidency uses television broadcasts for national addresses.</p>	<p>The Presidency uses television broadcasts for national addresses.</p>	<p>A lot of communication from the presidency occurs during prime time televised national addresses.</p> <p>The Brazilian presidency has been particularly notorious for going directly against other branches of government and their effort to mitigate the devastating effect of the virus in the country, with the president encouraging citizens to go against regulations put forth by local governors such as social distancing, quarantine and curfews.</p>

ed warning the public about the dangers of the virus, the provision of credible advice on symptoms, and providing information on prevention and precautionary measures.

Importantly, the communication strategy also focused on dispelling myths and misconceptions about the spread of the virus. It also targeted communication to stamp out fake news on social media.

The communication strategy centralised communication to ensure clarity, consistency and transparency. It was continuously updated to be relevant to the ever-changing circumstances.

A Crisis Communication Plan was included to prepare for crisis communication when an epidemic was declared. In this instance, the DoH was the lead department and the GCIS was respon-

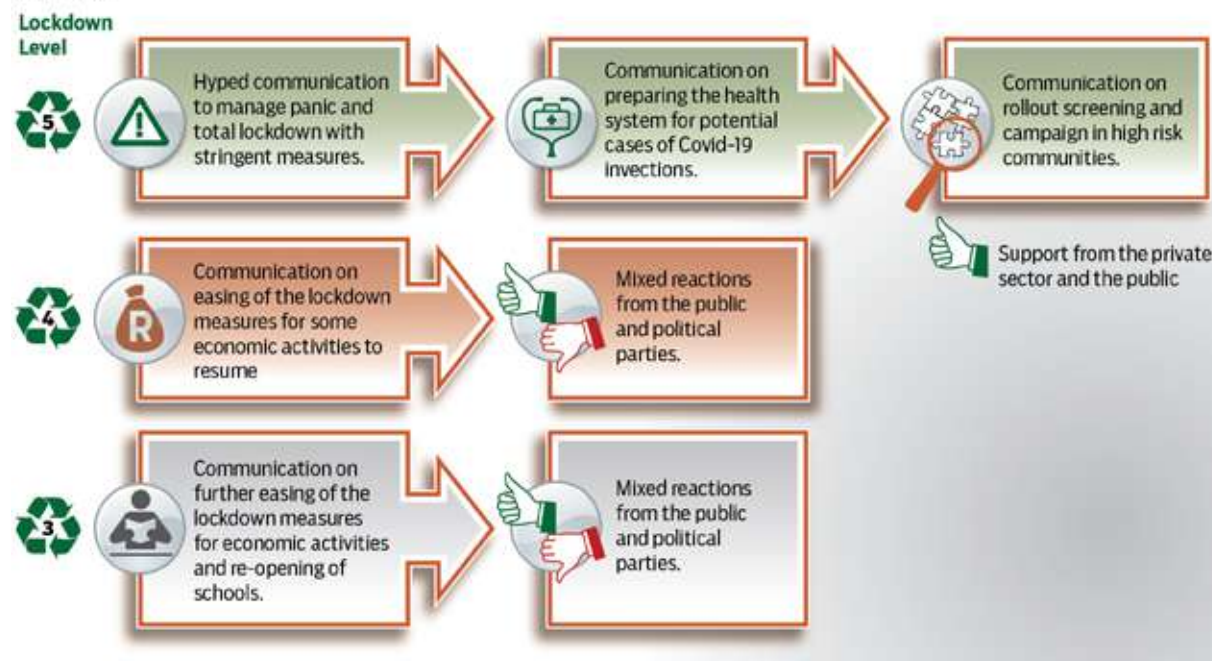
sible for convening the communication sub-committee around implementation of the communication plans to ensure integrated planning. It also involved media monitoring, and the drafting and dissemination of daily messaging to government for public communication, supported by continuous research to guide the impact of the message.

The table contextualises government’s communication efforts within global efforts to rally against the pandemic. The South African Government’s communication methods were on par and even exceeded those used by other countries’ governments to fight the virus.

There was enhanced awareness of individual responsibility and of the severity of the threat posed by COVID-19. As a result, the public at large was constantly informed about the virus and ways to stay safe. Communication was also undertaken

Overview of how South Africa responded

The South African government has acted swiftly to set up a number of communications outlets, including several hotlines and a dedicated WhatsApp information service, in addition to communicating via news outlets and national addresses aired on television.



en to popularise economic and social relief measures provided by government to protect lives and livelihoods. The graph above illustrates how communication was rolled out during the different national lockdown levels.

The arrival of life-saving vaccines on

our shores saw the launch of the country’s vaccination programme as a key intervention to mitigate the public health and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The vaccine roll-out programme – the biggest ever undertaken by our nation

– commenced in three phases to vaccinate a minimum of 67% of the population to achieve herd immunity. The roll-out ensured the majority of the population would be immune to the virus, indirectly protecting those who are not and making the spread easier to manage and contain.

The national roll-out was guided by a progressive vaccine communication strategy developed by the GCIS to communicate the vaccination programme.

The GCIS together with social partners – business, labour, civil society, media, traditional leaders, district communicators and others – led the implementation of the communication strategy.

The multifaceted strategy covered all aspects of our nation’s vaccine roll-out and was driven at the highest level by the IMC on Vaccines chaired by the Deputy President.

The communication strategy was based



on scientific evidence, national research and extensive data analysis, which since the start of the pandemic, had dictated our nation’s approach to deal with the virus.

Our ground communication initiatives included, amongst others, door-to-door campaigns, activations to encourage vaccination, communication support to local

councillors, and content and infographic development.

This had empowered local councillors and community leaders to speak to their constituencies and help get the vaccine message across. Opinion makers, thought leaders, influencers and sport personalities were engaged through various webinars to support our communication push.



COORDINATING THE **GOVERNMENT** COMMUNICATION SYSTEM



The COVID-19 pandemic required efficient government and society-wide communication. The GCIS brought together government communicators from all national government departments to ensure a coordinated and coherent communication approach in the fight against the pandemic.

The department convened the communication and community mobilisation work stream consisting of government communicators. The work stream reported to the NATJOINTS and ultimately the NCCC under the lead-



National call to all Public Servants

Volunteer to contribute to the Solidarity Fund to fight COVID-19 in South Africa

The Forum of South African Directors General (FOSAD) is making a call for all public servants in national and provincial departments including in public entities to donate voluntarily to the Solidarity Fund in an effort to support the containment of COVID-19. **In support of this call, FOSAD has decided that all FOSAD members will contribute a sum of R30 000 per member to the fund, which shall be deducted from their salaries over a period of up to five months.**

Public service employees, in heeding the call, may contribute what they can afford and may elect to have their contributions deducted from their salaries, alternatively they may make such contributions directly to the fund.

To pledge your support to the Solidarity Fund, please use the following banking details, visit www.solidarityfund.co.za for EFT & Credit Card options or call us on 0860 001 001.

Bank: Standard Bank
Branch: Sandton City
Account Name: Solidarity Fund
Account No. 025070021
Account Type: Current Account
Branch Code: 051001
SWIFT Code: SBAZAZ33

WHATSAPP SUPPORT
0600 123 456
EMERGENCY NUMBER
0800 029 999
sacoronavirus.co.za

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

2020 NDP

ership of President Ramaphosa.

The DG of the GCIS attended the regular NCCC meetings and would thereafter brief communicators to align their communication to the plans of government.

Meetings with communicators were ini-

tially convened virtually as part of an Ops Room at 9:30am on weekdays to tackle issues in the media environment, inputs from various work streams, feedback from the NATJOINTS and focus on communication planning. These meetings included:

- **The CCC:** A daily meeting held on Zoom at the start of the pandemic. In the interest of improving coordination and allowing communicators time to plan and implement communication actions, the frequency of meetings was reduced to three times a week.
- **Rapid Response meetings:** Held daily to support the CCC, they included regular communication strategising workshops. A similar approach was adapted at provincial and local levels.

- **Communication Cluster's meetings:** They were used to ensure all clusters aligned their programmes to the current COVID-19 situation. These engagements ensured that the cluster system dealt with transversal issues that required more detailed meetings than the CCC and Rapid Response. National communicators liaised with provincial, metro and district communicators through various appropriate forums to coordinate messages.
- **Intergovernmental Communicators' Forum:** Convened every time there was a change in our communication approach, it allowed communicators to receive new directives and to deal with matters in their local environment. A reporting template with a standard set of indicators en-

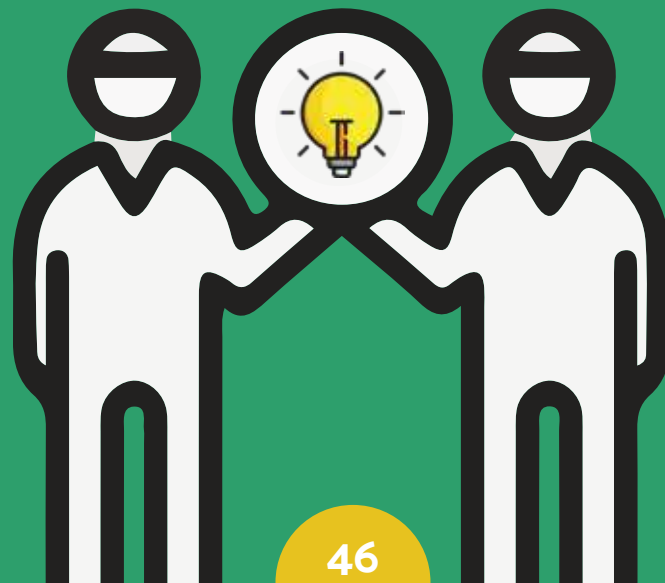
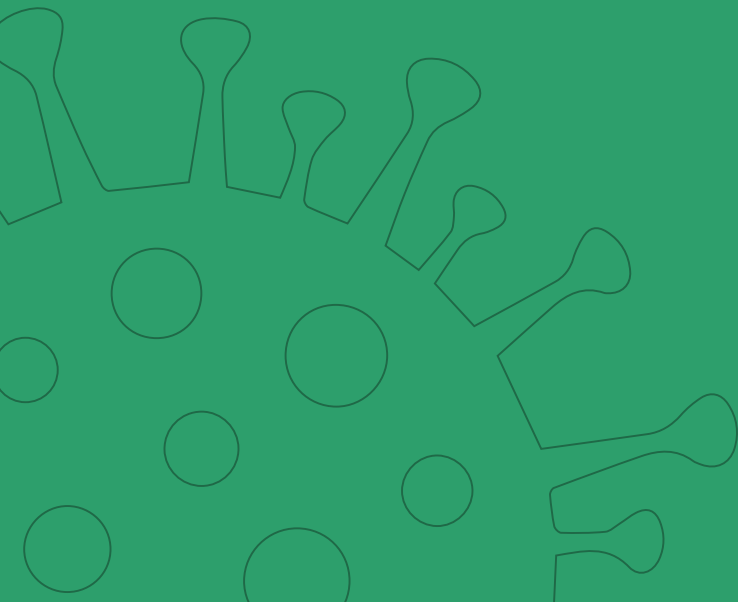
sured regular and detailed reporting on communication.

These meetings were instrumental in building communication support around government plans to fight the virus. They became critical feedback mechanisms between national and provincial activities, especially when hotspots needed heavier lockdowns than the rest of the country. It had also been at the forefront of identifying and stamping out fake news about COVID-19 often shared on social media, which caused panic and confusion among citizens.

All existing communication structures – such as the provincial, district, local government and municipal communicators' forums – were also used to coordinate communication over the period.



UNDERSTANDING THE COMMUNICATION NEEDS OF SOUTH AFRICANS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST **COVID-19**



Results Dashboard

Government is perceived to be handling COVID-19 well



Agree Governments is handling the pandemic well/fairly well



Agree Governments is handling the vaccination programme well/fairly well

Most trusted sources of information about COVID-19

Health Professionals	80%
Health Experts	78%
World Health Organisation	75%
The President	75%
Government	75%
Joe Phaahla (Minister of Health)	66%

Build trust in KZN

1 Recall

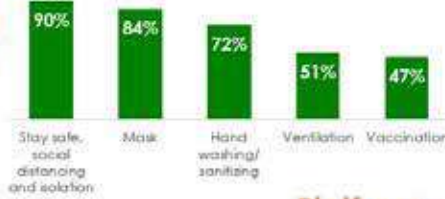


How much see/heard/read about COVID-19 vaccination



Messages

2



Platforms

	Protecting against COVID-19	COVID-19 vaccination
TV news or current affairs	88%	86%
Radio news/ current affairs	80%	77%
Word of mouth	79%	77%
TV ads	77%	77%
SMS	74%	74%

3

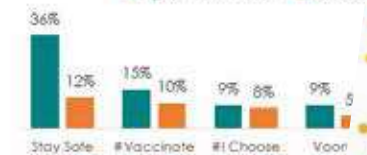
Build communication in E Cape

Campaigns

Message take out:

Protect yourself. Protect your friends. Vaccines are safe : Vaccines

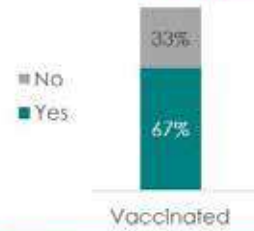
Spontaneous Aided



#ROLLUP YOUR SLEEVES SA CAMPA

- Overall, 9% awareness
- Understanding of campaign: Encourage people to vaccinate 57%

Action



Build take-up among Root City Seekers

Government Commu

STAY SAFE
VACCINATE TO SAVE SOUTH AFRICA
PROGRESS ON COVID-19 COMMUNICATION

GCIS Research Webinar on Vaccination Roll-out

Value and importance of scientific research evidence and data: Effective Communication on COVID-19 vaccination roll-out plan.

Date: Monday, 06 September 2021 Time: 10:00 – 12:00

PROGRAMME

Opening remarks: Ms Jane Simmonds (Moderator)

Opening address: Ms Phumla Williams (DG-GCIS)

Presentation on Research Findings: Ms Andrea Rademeyer (CEO: Ask Afrika (Pty) Ltd)

Solidarity Fund as a supporting partner for the research and communication on vaccination roll-out: Ms Wendy Tlou (Exec Head: Humanitarian Response & Behaviour Change Pillars, Solidarity Fund)

Importance of social research- and science based communication on vaccination roll-out: Prof Mosa Moshabela (Acting Deputy Chancellor of Research and Innovation – UKZN)

Questions/discussion

Closing remarks: Ms Jane Simmonds (Moderator)

Speakers:
Jane Simmonds (Moderator)
Phumla Williams (DG-GCIS)
Andrea Rademeyer (CEO, Ask Afrika)
Wendy Tlou (Exec Head: Solidarity Fund)
Prof. Mosa Moshabela (Acting Deputy Chancellor UKZN)

government communications
Department of Communication and Information Systems
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

2019 NDP

Our communication approach was informed by local and international research related to the management of the pandemic. It allowed us to understand the social and public health implications of the pandemic in order to manage communication.

Research findings offered guidance on strategies and policies for effective preparedness and response efforts. These research findings from the GCIS's Directorate: Research allowed the department to adjust its communication strategy and respond to the communication needs of citizens.

The GCIS commissioned and used research-tracking studies to measure the impact of government communication as a whole. For example, a partnership with the Solidarity Fund allowed the GCIS to conduct more focused research on the



uptake of government messages on preventative measures as well as the vaccination programme.

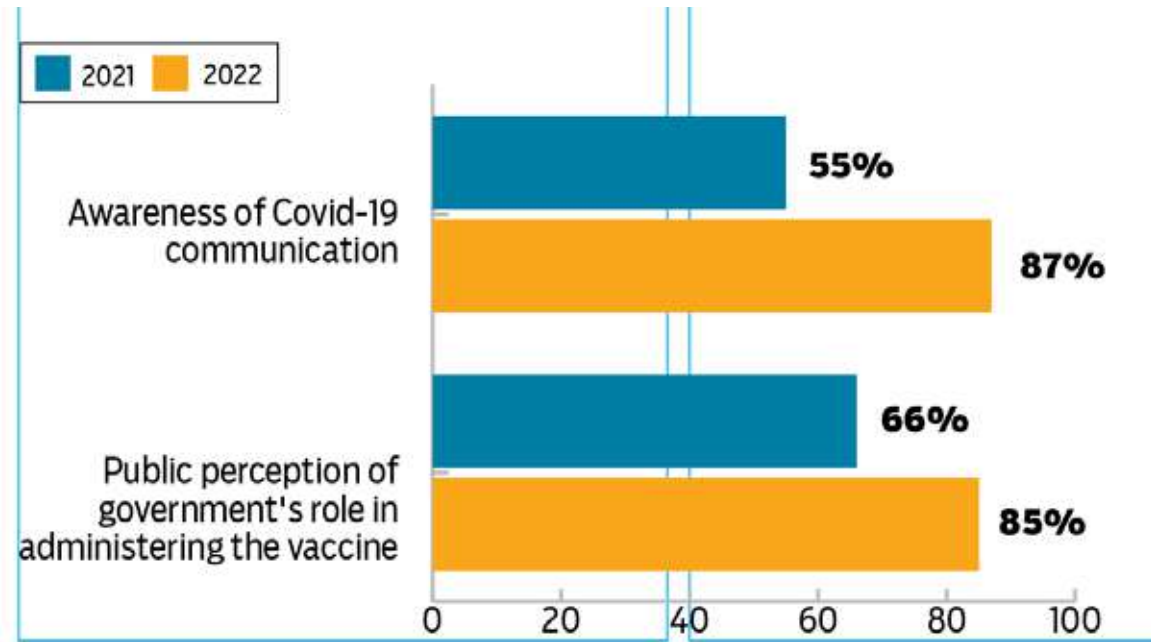
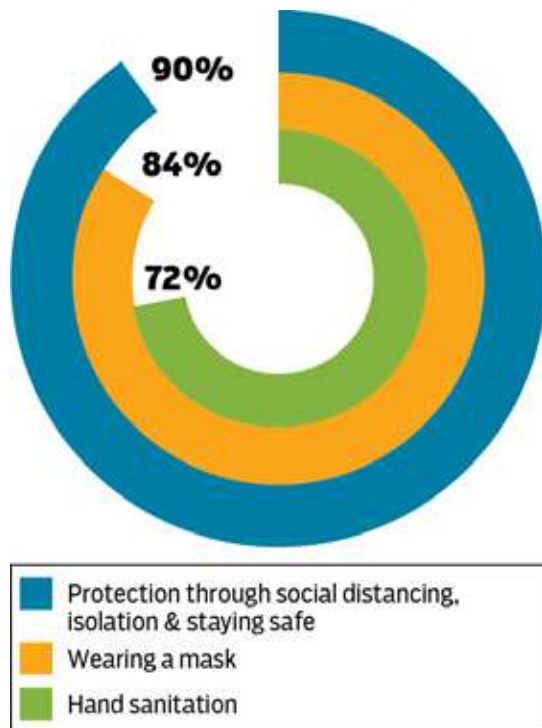
The research was instrumental in shaping how we crafted communication and met the information needs of our citizens. Research by Ask Afrika showed that the majority of South Africans across all segments of the population felt that government handled the COVID-19 pandemic well.

South Africans perceived government positively in the management of the COVID-19 pandemic (74%) and vaccination programme (75%). The main reason for the positive perception was due to government's communication efforts, including educating citizens on how to stay safe. The positivity rate of the COVID-19 curve flattening and provision of social relief also influenced the positive sentiment.

Research showed that the majority of South Africans (90%) recalled messages about protecting oneself against COVID-19 through so-

cial distancing; isolation and staying safe (Vaccinate and Save South Africa). The wearing of a mask (84%) and hand sanitising (72%) were also amongst the top recalled messages, as part of our “Stay at Home” campaign.

The consistent messaging – as part of a collaboration between government and

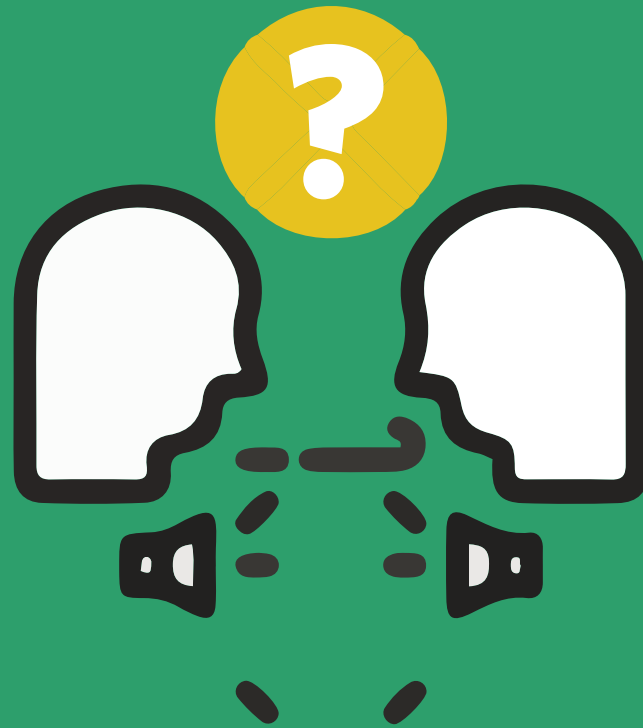


social partners – resulted in awareness of COVID-19 vaccination communication improving drastically from 55% in 2021 to 87% in 2022. Research showed that the most recalled vaccination messages were protect yourself, protect your friend, followed by vaccines are safe and vaccines save lives.

Public perception about government’s

role in administering the vaccines had a significant increase from 66% in 2021 to 85% in 2022. This was linked to government securing enough vaccines for all who wanted to be vaccinated and made sure vaccines were delivered to sites on time. The GCIS held webinars and online meetings to share research insights and findings.

HOW THE GCIS TRACKED COMMUNICATION AND **PINPOINTED GAPS**





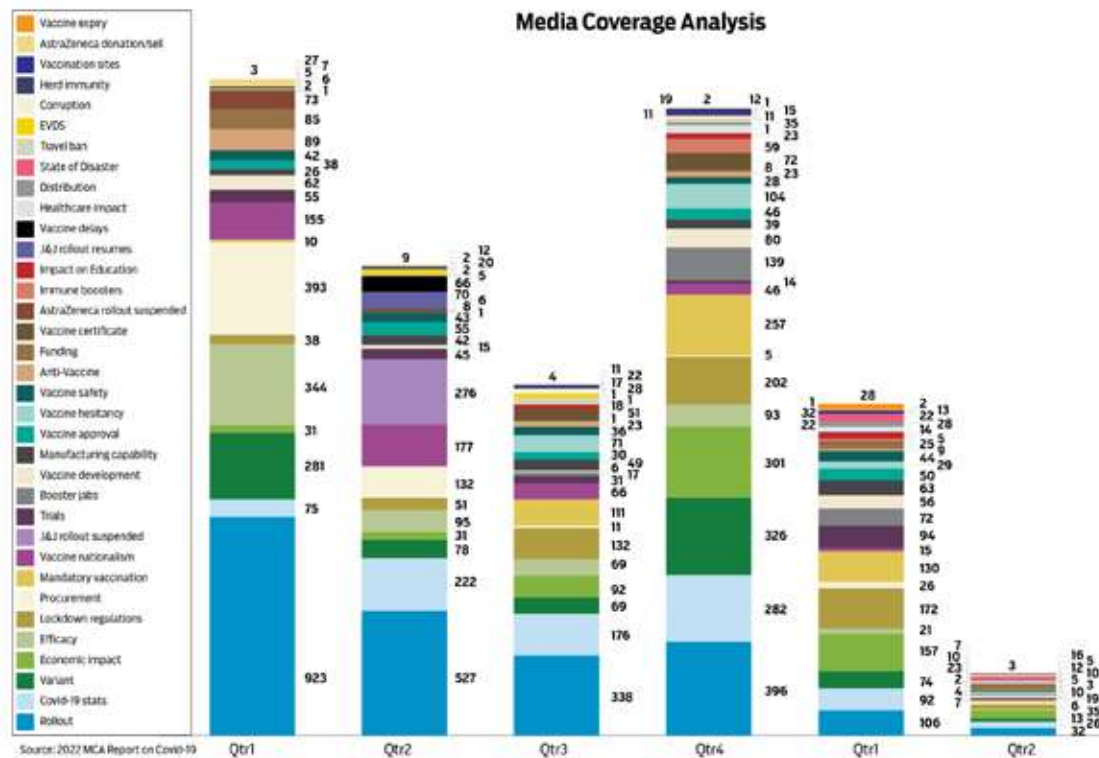
The GCIS, through its media monitoring and analysis, allowed government to stay on top of key issues arising in the environment. By tracking the trends and patterns of media coverage, government was able to refine its COVID-19 communication efforts.

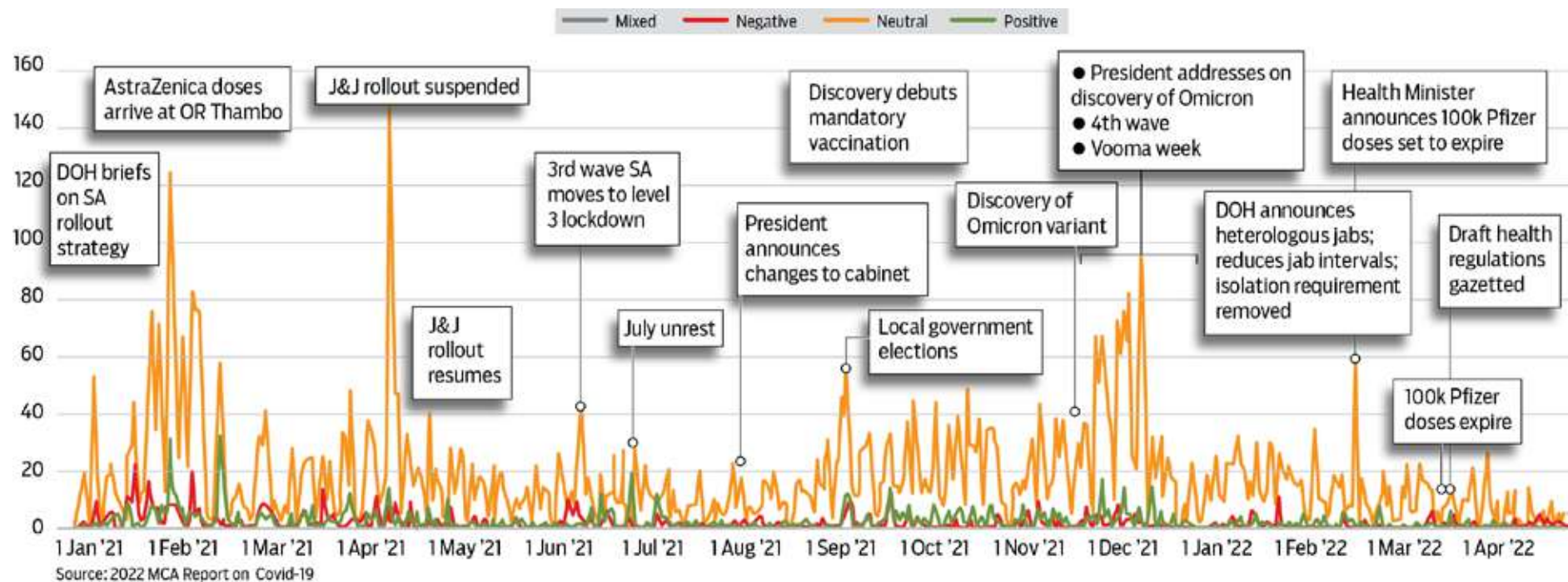
The media analysis offered a reliable assessment of the media environment to ensure that government was cognisant of the challenges in the communication space. It also closely tracked how govern-

ment messaging was carried in the media in order to manage misrepresentation of government efforts.

More than 70 Media Coverage Analysis (MCA) reports were produced weekly and quarterly. Media coverage of the var-

Media Coverage Analysis





Our endeavour to improve our communication performance through benchmarking and evidence-based decision-making during COVID-19 saw the department piloting the innovative Government Communication Excellence Tool (G-CET) at the height of the pandemic.

Developed by the GCIS, the new tool

monitored the communication efforts of 32 national departments between March 2020 and March 2022 for the attention of HoCs, DGs, NATJOINTS and the NCCC.

The G-CET data showed an exponential rise in government communication of close to 138 000 outputs from 32 national departments. The output reflected the

heightened crisis communication that the GCIS led by ensuring that content was coordinated and further communicated to the public. The communication outputs averaged almost 6 000 per month over a 24-month period to bolster government’s fight against COVID-19. The graph below depicts the communication output from

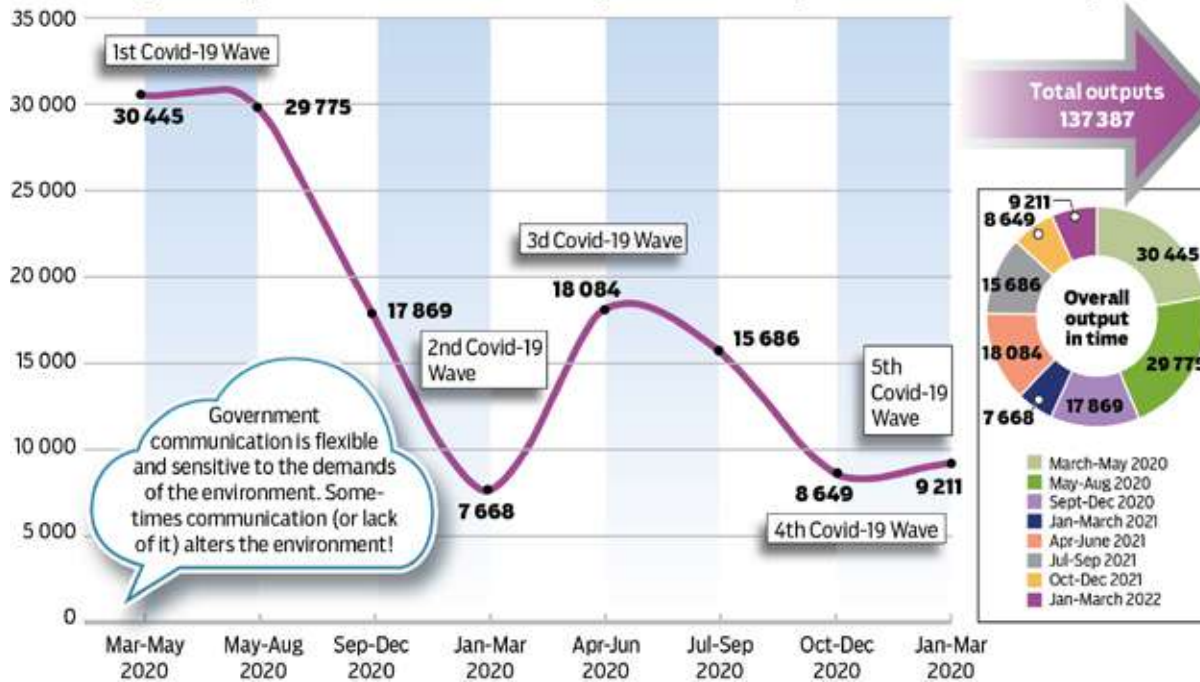
government over the various phases of the pandemic.

Importantly, the G-CET also confirmed that government communication was diversified and integrated across a wide range of communication platforms as the GCIS sought to spread the message in the fight against COVID-19 to all South

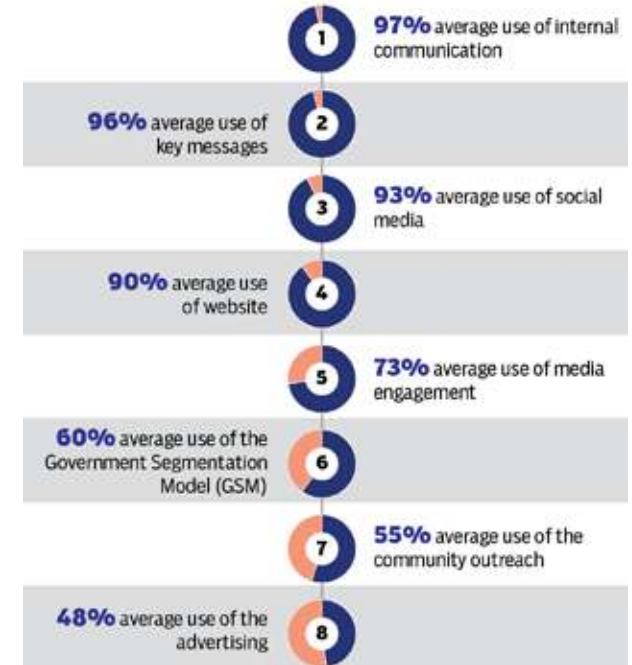
Africans in all their various segments.

Uploading communication messages online in social media and departmental websites, which are accessed by millions of South Africans, resulted in the platforms being the most used in government communication.

Sample analysis: communication output over time (Mar 2020 - Mar 2022)



Since 2020



Therefore: Noticeable usage of communication functions/ platforms/services/functions can be observed

COMMUNICATION TRAVERSED THE DIVERSE **SOUTH** **AFRICAN LANDSCAPE**



The GCIS embraced new ways of communicating with the public and used all platforms to extend the reach of the government message. Our communication messages, products and all information about COVID-19 were distributed through campaigns, using all available channels and platforms.

Various platforms were used to ensure that our messages and communication resonated across a broader spectrum of the South African population.

Our work was guided by our unique GSM, which targeted the specific needs of each sector of our population and allowed government to speak to each and every South African in a language or medium they understand.

Our platforms traversed the diverse South African landscape; we reached citizens at the top end of the market



with innovative WhatsApp bots, while simultaneously ensuring those without media access were well informed. For example, the GCIS provincial offices, in partnership with other spheres of government and agencies, used loudhailing to communicate directly with some communities. **Our picture of a communicator on**

a donkey cart using a loudhailer to communicate the message to a rural community has by now become iconic.

GCIS research showed that TV, radio and word of mouth were the key drivers of COVID-19 message awareness. SMSs, clinic posters, posters in shops or malls, nursing staff and social media were



amongst the top media platforms for the recall of messages. Media platforms for message recall of vaccination are the same as those of COVID-19 general messages.

Government set up a number of communication outlets, including several hotlines and as well as a dedicated WhatsApp information service. The **COVID-19 24-hour Hotline: 0800 029 999** served as a valuable source to guide citizens with queries and assisted with emergency

support. The department in partnership with telecoms providers sent awareness messages to its customers through SMS and the **Government WhatsApp number: 0600 123 456**.

While a number of platforms were used, there was a strong shift to digital platforms such as national portals, mobile apps and social media to accelerate the spread of information that reached South Africans with access to the internet.

During the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the GCIS used online mediums to inform and educate South Africans on the virus, how it is spread and the necessary precautions to limit its spread.

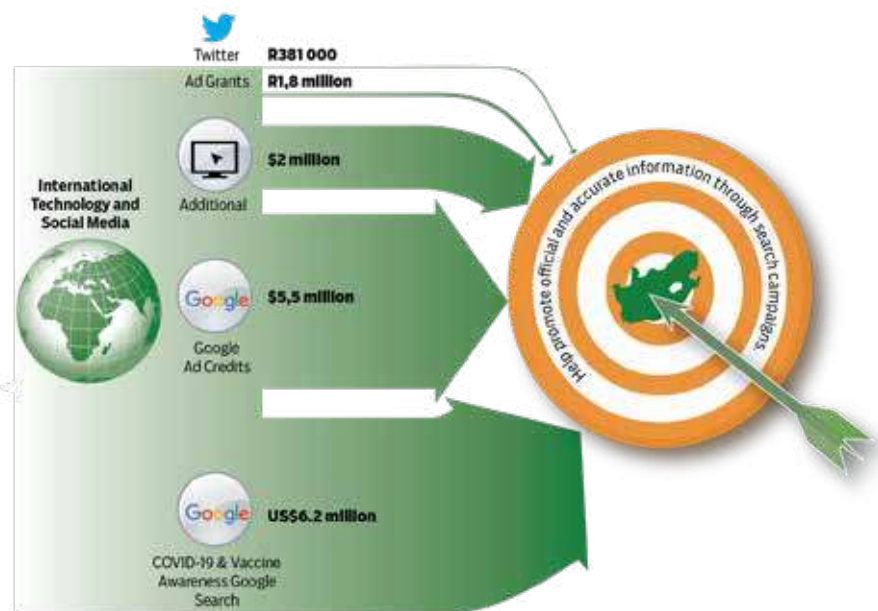
South Africans could also get vital information about the COVID-19 pandemic by visiting the website, www.sacoronavirus.co.za, which was zero-rated by major telecommunications companies to ensure free access. Hosted by the DoH, it pro-

vided trusted and accurate information about the COVID-19 pandemic.

In support of www.sacoronavirus.co.za, the government website, www.gov.za, also hosted and collated all COVID-19-related information from the South African Government. The government website had become the first port of call for South Africans looking for information on the virus and government support.

- To ensure ease of use, the homepage was redesigned to highlight COVID-19 content with an additional 47 content pages created to support content on the pandemic.
- Content on these pages included COVID-19 regulations (300), speeches (2 150) and statements.
- From January 2020 to August 2021, the total page views were 128,2 million.
- The most popular content accessed on the site was the Social Relief of

Promoting official and accurate information



Distress Grant; lockdown regulations and travel restrictions.

Social-media platforms – including the official Government Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram – played a critical role in disseminating information, while also providing room for engaging with the public to answer their questions and concerns. South Africans were also

able to watch live streams of press briefings and announcements by government on the Government Facebook page.

The GCIS collaborated with international technology and social media companies Google, Facebook and Twitter to promote official and accurate information. Through the Google Search campaign, user questions were directed to

the correct government websites containing the relevant information. Ad-grants received from these companies were used to promote official and accurate information through search campaigns.

- Around R1,8 million in ad-grants had been received since April 2020.
- Twitter donated R381 000 in ad-grants to the GCIS to boost COVID-19 and vaccine-related information on the platform.
- US\$5,5 million ad credits were received from Google for use in a search campaign from May to December 2020.
- Additional US\$2 million was received in January 2021, which extended the campaign until the end of 2021.

The COVID-19 and Vaccine Awareness Google Search campaign brought in US\$6.2 million worth of traffic to the www.gov.za website, with a total of 59.2 million impressions and 14.3 million clicks.

Additionally, several other GCIS social media accounts helped increase the reach and impact of the messages to citizens. These included the *Vuk'uzenzele* Facebook page, SA Government News Twitter and Facebook accounts, and GCIS Media Liaison Twitter account.

Our suite of communication tactics also included the use of news outlets, commercial media, community media and public service announcements (PSAs).

News outlets were mainly used to com-



municate daily updates on lockdown measures, changes in policy, government interventions and responses to rising infections as well as measures being implemented by the DoH.

The GCIS media partners provided value-added offerings through screens, billboards and mall bathroom screens across the country. The department also negotiated significant discounts with the various media owners, including the SABC.

TV was used to broadcast messages regarding strategic decisions, reminders and information regarding health facilities, statistics and most notably lockdown procedures. Government also broadcast live most of the media briefings to community radio stations that reached far-flung rural areas in the country.

- **Leaflets:** More than three million leaflets from the DoH were distributed. Some 27 071 of these leaflets and

250 booklets were distributed by the GCIS provincial office during community taxi rank and roadside activations, Thusong marketing programmes and community stakeholder liaison visits.

Remaining leaflets were shared with national departments such as the DoH (168 000), Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) (2 400), Transport (48 000), Department of Higher Education and Training (4 800), South African Police Service (508 800), Department of Social Development (DSD) for the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) pay points (393 600) and South African National Defence Force (134 400).

- **Online dissemination** of infographics, media statements, radio scripts, recorded audio messages, announcements and Ministerial video clips, GCIS Government News bulletin and My

District Today newsletter.

- **PSAs:** Produced for radio and placed on SABC Public Broadcast Services stations with additional airtime on partner community radio stations. All PSAs were produced in 11 languages. Over 9 000 PSAs were broadcast across these radio stations.
- **Community radio:** Weekly shows coordinated by district communica-



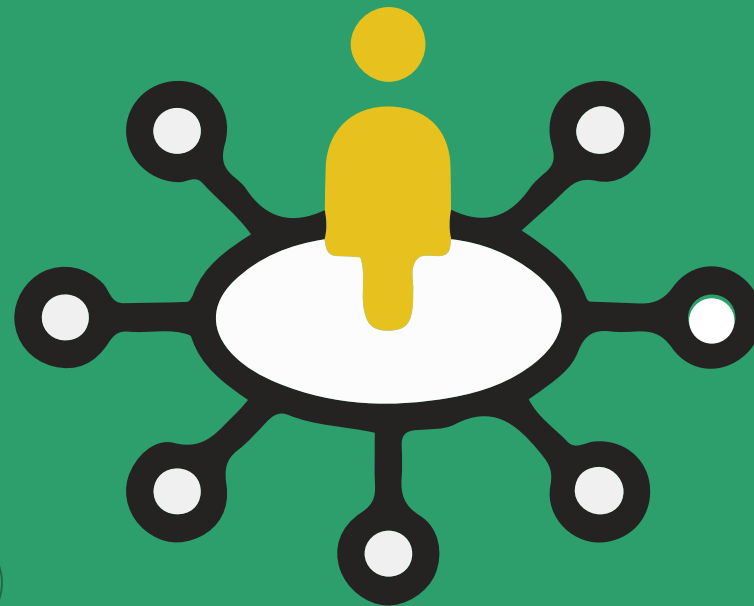
tors, community stations broadcast 10 to 15-minute weekly features. The GCIS undertook 41 community media engagements – 39 were radio programmes and two community TV.

- **District communicators:** Some 27 district communicators from 22 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were recruited in priority districts. District communicators were trained to communicate on public platforms and serve as reliable sourc-

es of information within their communities.

- **Community outreach:** Nine (9) outreaches were undertaken. These included support to The Presidency, Ministers, members of the Executive Council (MECs) and mayors.
- **Community activations:** The GCIS undertook 34 community activations. These included taxi (12), roadside intersections (11), malls and schools (11) and seven community dialogues.

EMPOWERING SOUTH
AFRICANS IN THE FIGHT
AGAINST **COVID-19**
THROUGH MESSAGING



Effective public communication is the successful delivery of a message to a large group of people and where each individual is impacted in such a manner that they are moved to action. At the heart of achieving this effective communication is honest, simple, coherent and targeted messages.

The GCIS messaging team was activated from the onset of the pandemic to ensure the information needs of citizens were met through targeted messaging that guided, empowered and reassured citizens. The messaging team drafted daily key messages, talking points and other supporting content.

The messaging set the tone for the nation's fight against the spread of infections by sharing the work of government to prevent the spread of the virus. It continuously updated and educated South Africans on preventative measures

Government Segmentation Model GSM 2nd Edition					
% of SA Adult Population:	48% Rooted Realists	25% City Seekers	10% Safely Suburban	11% Metro Mobiles	6% Cosmopolitan Capital
27.8 Million People They are mostly unemployed, with low education levels. Some try to remain positive and acknowledge that they have come a long way. However, their optimism is challenged by difficult financial circumstances and most rely on government grants. They long for financial independence, permanent employment and improved living conditions.	14.4 Million People People in this segment are city dwellers who are familiar with the demands of a competitive urban life. They are generally hopeful, ambitious, career-oriented and constantly looking for opportunities to improve their lives and that of their families. Despite the day-to-day challenges they continue looking for job opportunities because they see this as the answer to a better future.	5.9 Million People Safely Suburbans are of the view that their quality of life has declined. They identify their lack of appropriate education as an obstacle to accessing employment or getting better jobs. For this segment, the high cost of living, labour cost and investment are critical areas of concern. They are safety conscious and highly protective of their physical, social and economic environment.	6.1 Million People Metro Mobiles are interested in keeping a particular lifestyle. They are on the lookout for ways to improve their lives, be it financial aid to start a business or upskilling themselves. These people see themselves as inspirational, role models and influencers. They are concerned about drugs, unemployment, corruption, crime, the economy and basic service delivery.	3.6 Million People These people are mostly affluent, professional and independent. They have the highest amount of disposable income, highest proportions of tertiary education, employment. They are influential, business-focused and concerned about anything that would negatively impact the economy and consequently their independence and their net worth.	
Live:	Non-metro traditional settlements (63%), 30% non-metro urban informal settlements, Eastern Cape 24%, Limpopo 20%, KZN 18%, Mpumalanga 11%.	Metro (91%) and mainly in informal (52%) and formal (43%) settlements, Gauteng (47%), KZN (37%), Western Cape (35%) and Eastern Cape (15%).	The majority (81%) live in non-metro urban and mainly in formal dwellings, Western Cape 18%, KZN 15%, Mpumalanga 12%, North West 11%.	They live in metro areas and mainly in formal dwellings, Gauteng (44%), Western Cape (22%) and KZN (19%).	100% Metro, Gauteng 62%, Western Cape 22%, KZN 9%.
Age:	30% are 18-34 yrs, 15% are 35-49 yrs and 14% are older than 50.	34% are 18-34 yrs, one-fifth are 35-49 yrs old and 13% are 50+ yrs.	18-34 year olds make up 30%, one-fifth are 35-49 yrs and a fifth are 50 yrs+.	18-34 year olds 31%, 22% are between 35-49 yrs old and 21% are 50 yrs+.	26% are 18-34 yrs old, 25% 35-49 yrs old and 26% are 50 yrs+.
Gender:	Females 52%, males 48%.	Females 49%, males 51%.	Equal male and female split.	Females 51%, males 49%.	Female (52%), male (48%)
Race:	94% Black, 5% Coloured.	Predominantly Black 90%, Coloured 9%.	Black 52%, White 29%, Coloured 9%.	Black 54%, 21% Coloured, White 13%.	White 51%, Black 34%, and Indian 9%.
Home Language:	93% speak an African language - Isizulu 28%, isiXhosa 17%, Sepedi 15%.	Majority speak African languages (87%) - Isizulu 34%, isiXhosa 19%, Sesoto 11%.	Largest proportion speak Afrikaans (30%) followed by English 20%.	English 34%, Afrikaans 22%, Isizulu 20%.	Mainly English (47%), Afrikaans (17%) and Isizulu (11%).
Education:	One-in-ten have not completed high school, 4 in 10 have some high school education, 29% completed matric.	40% high school completed and 37% did not complete high school.	High Education levels: 36% completed high school, 21% completed higher education.	43% completed high school, 22% did not complete high school and 14% completed higher education.	High education levels: 33% have matric and 38% have higher education.
Employment:	High unemployment - about one-in-ten have fulltime employment.	High unemployment - 42% are unemployed.	29% full time employment, 12% self-employed, 23% unemployed.	27% employed full time, 13% self-employed and 26% unemployed.	43% employed full time, 18% self-employed and 10% unemployed.
Annual Household Income:	Low income - 45% (R0 - R39 504), 31% (R39 505 - R65 320), and 25% (R65 321 - R138 821).	Low income - 20% (R0 - R39 504), 38% (R39 505 - R65 320), and 42% (R65 321 - R138 821), 25% (R65 321 - R138 821).	Majority (83%) in middle income bracket - R138 822 - R472 504, 25% (R65 321 - R138 821).	Middle income - 35% (R138 822 - R237 593), 65% (R237 594 - R472 501)	Lower income - 41% (R472 502 - R616 852), 32% (R616 853 - R798 172), 19% (R798 173 - R1 053 843) and 8% above

to reduce the spread of infection and encouraged responsible behaviour as restrictions were eased.

To ensure that our COVID-19 messages resonated with the intended audience, the Government Segmentation Model

(GSM) - a model developed by GCIS to enable researchers and communicators to have a better understanding of South African citizens - was used to target the specific needs of each sector of our population and speak to each and every



South African in a language or medium they understand. It enabled government to better engage with citizens on this important national issue, and to create greater alignment between citizens' concerns and messages.

At the heart of government's messaging was to instil hope, confidence and draw South Africans into united action against a common enemy. Importantly, honest, concise and continuously updated government messages played a key role in

building public trust.

Key messages on COVID-19 were translated into all official languages and where possible, sign language interpreters were used for government media briefings and TV interviews. The GCIS Language Unit was at the forefront of making information on COVID-19 timeously available in all official languages. It also facilitated translations into the two dominant Southern African Development Community (SADC) languages, Portuguese and French.

On 15 June 2022, the Pan South African Language Board awarded the Multilingualism Award in the Government/Public Sector category to the GCIS. The certificate and trophy were "for an effective service delivery campaign, project or programme in the public sector that seeks to promote multilingualism or any of the 11 official languages, including Khoi, Nama, San as well as South African Sign Language."

The COVID-19 Infodemics Observatory Report of March 2020 ranked South Africa second for the most reliable COVID-19-related news and information. Research showed that government was among the most trusted sources of information for COVID-19 and the first port of call for South Africans seeking information on the virus.

An important aspect on the messaging was educating South Africans on pre-

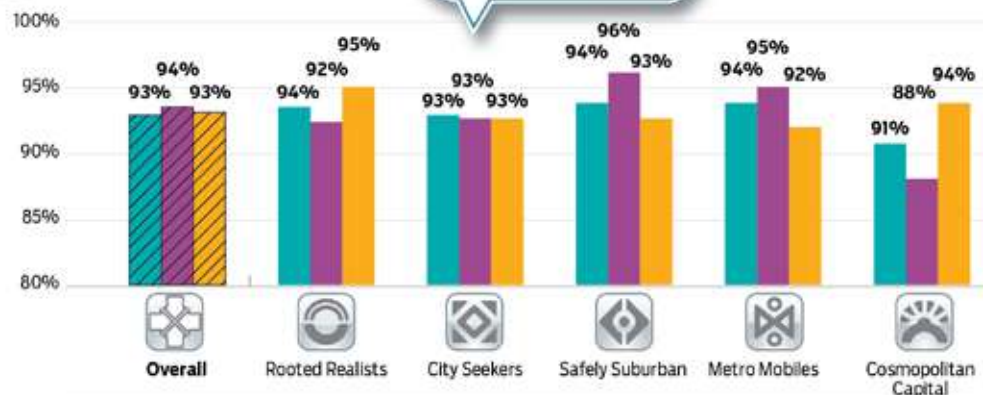
Awareness of communication on Covid-19



Have you seen, heard or read any communication about the Coronavirus or Covid-19?

Open ended response/
Unprompted response
11-18 May n=592
19-25 May n=590

Covid-19: Week 7 and 8
Overall 11-18 May 19-24 May



→ Generally awareness of communication on Covid-19 is high.
→ Almost all South Africans are aware of communication regarding Covid-19.
→ The findings also indicate that efforts to reach the information deprived segment of the population resulted in a positive outcome, given that 95% of the Rooted Realists indicated to have heard, seen or read any communication about the Covid-19.

ventative measures to empower them with information to fight against the spread of COVID-19. The preventative and safety measures heightened through government messaging played an important role in helping limit the spread of the virus.

Messaging teams worked until late in the evenings to provide updated messag-

es to government communicators following the address by President Ramaphosa on the country's response against COVID-19.

After briefings by Cabinet Ministers to outline the President's address, the messaging was also updated to reflect the additional supporting content. The messaging also played an important part in

simplifying complex regulations into an easy-to-understand format for citizens.

The GCIS Impact Assessment of Government Communication about COVID-19 (April - May 2020) showed government messaging was highly effective. As detailed in the graph, greater compliance among citizens was attributed to better access to messages.

Government messaging followed the various phases on the pandemic and the country's response to the virus. During the vaccination phase, messaging focused on the new sense of hope abounding across our nation following the arrival of life-saving COVID-19 vaccines that strengthened our fight against the pandemic

To assist communicators to effectively communicate the country's vaccine roll-out programme, the GCIS had developed COVID-19 Vaccination Messaging Guidelines.

GCIS COMMUNICATION SUPPORT ACROSS **GOVERNMENT**



The communication skills in the various sections of the GCIS and the expanse of the government communication system were used to support other departments and stakeholders in their communication efforts in the fight against COVID-19.

This often meant that GCIS staff had to go over and above the call of duty, working late into the evening and over weekends. Many of the department's personnel had since the start of the pandemic not taken leave throughout the period in order to meet the demand for heightened communication.

For example, the GCIS Media Engagement team played a supporting role in media briefings hosted by departments, various Ministers, clusters and The Presidency. The GCIS had not only provided logistical support in preparing for the briefings but also strategic direction.



GCIS MEDIA ENGAGEMENT:

As the leader of government communication, the GCIS was drawn into the process to spearhead communication related to the repatriation of South African students and other citizens stranded in Wuhan, China. At this point media enquiries were

overwhelming. Questions on how many people would be on board the plane, what would happen on the plane, along with where the repatriated people would be housed, were received.

To take control of the narrative and deal with the fearmongering, the GCIS



Media Engagement team announced the protocols to be followed, publicised health regulations and made known the strict procedures that would be initiated to safeguard patients and officials.

This also included providing the official photos of the repatriation, facilitating media access to the Ranch Resort Hotel in

Limpopo where those repatriated would be quarantined, and positioning of media to record the arrival of the plane and the buses at the hotel.

The steady flow of information changed the narrative from panic to one of receiving our citizens who had families and loved ones waiting for them at home. In-

formation sessions with the NICD were facilitated to brief the Limpopo provincial communicators and provincial executives where the students were to self-isolate.

The repatriation of our citizens from Wuhan showed that media at the time had limited information and understanding of the virus. Journalists had been search-

ing for content and grasp of the medical technicalities of the mysterious virus.

One of the first endeavours of GCIS Media Engagement was to provide credible information to the media on the virus. A session was arranged between editors, health officials and medical experts on the nature of the disease. It resulted in a shift in reporting along medical lines.

At the height of the pandemic, GCIS Media Engagement coordinated with the South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF) and the DoH on how media would operate within the lockdown regulations to carry out their duties to keep South Africans abreast of developments in the nation.

Steps were implemented to reduce the number of media in press briefings through a pool system and call-in telephone lines for journalists. The unintended consequence was that ordinary

citizens and dissidents would call into the briefings, which turned it into public meetings rather than assisting journalists in their work. Moreover, GCIS Media Engagement officials were also inundated with enquiries from the general public on their personal numbers.

The GCIS switched to the WhatsApp platform where journalists could pose questions online for briefings and receive updates. The WhatsApp group continued to serve as a platform for journalists who were not at a briefing to continue to pose questions.

Throughout the pandemic, GCIS Media Engagement was central in coordinating communication, interviews and PSAs. It hosted two briefings a day at the height of the pandemic, and recorded video and audio clips in different languages to be circulated.

GCIS Media Engagement Chief Director,





Mr William Baloyi, said: “We would liaise with the DoH and other stakeholders to

ensure we had updated information for citizens. It was a continuous mission and GCIS Media Engagement was at the forefront. When we would leave for the day, we would still continue to monitor the situation from home.”

The media briefings were not only important for South Africans but to the SADC region as testing facilities in South Africa were used by neighbouring countries.

GCIS Media Engagement also played a central role in coordinating government communication of the nine provinces.

While local, regional and international media were the main partners, it also forged

strong relationships with business formations, faith-based organisations (FBOs)

and civil society. Media statements, media invites and content were disseminated to these grouping for circulation among their members.

Partnerships with the broadcasters allowed GCIS Media Engagement to roll out government briefings across the main radio and TV stations, including the 7am weekly Friday briefing by the DoH.

When vaccines arrived, GCIS Media Engagement worked together with SANEF and the DoH to ensure that journalists on the frontlines were a priority group.

The GCIS was responsible for the administration process, including the verification of journalists and loading them on the EVDS. Smaller associations such as the African Independent Publishers were also included.

The key lesson learnt through COVID-19 was the need for strong coordination, the need to adapt to any situation, be inno-

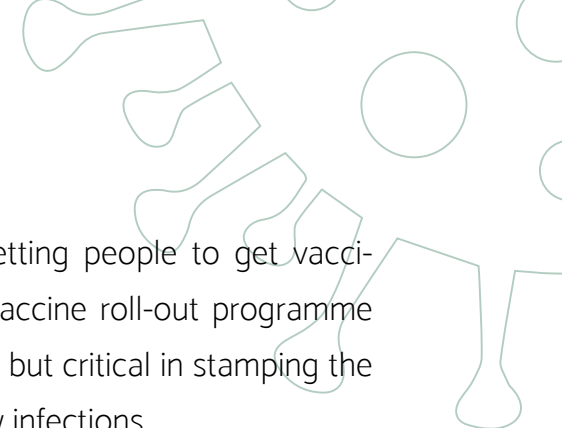


vative and embrace different ways to engage with the media. For example, webinars such as the Africa Series launched by GCIS Media Engagement engaged with journalists, communicators, World

Health Organisation leaders and country officials on the continent.

This allowed communicators in the country to tap into the communication expertise of communicators across Africa

who had first-hand knowledge of dealing with epidemics such as Ebola and Malaria. Many African nations in their fight against epidemics were already familiar with vaccine communication and shared



their insights which assisted communicators in our nation's vaccine roll-out.

For GCIS Media Engagement, the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that although technology could enhance and simplify the work of media engagement

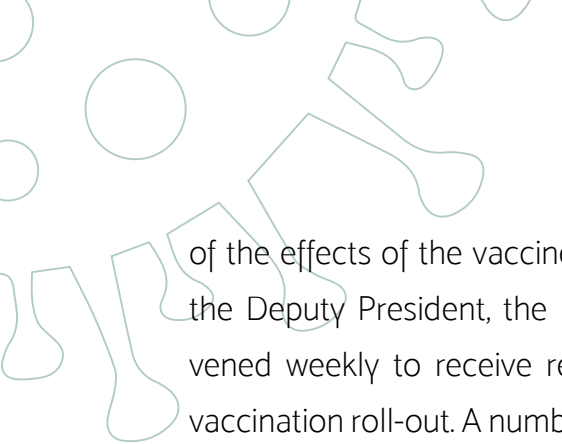
professionals, the basic principles of media engagement will always require interpersonal relationships and consultation.

IMC ON VACCINES: When we finally managed to get the vaccines in the country, communication had to support the

process of getting people to get vaccinated. The vaccine roll-out programme was voluntary but critical in stamping the spread of new infections.

Communication had to deal with an avalanche of misinformation and fake news





of the effects of the vaccines. Chaired by the Deputy President, the IMC was convened weekly to receive reports on the vaccination roll-out. A number of communication interventions had to be made to educate communities on the efficacy of the vaccines.

FAMILY MEETINGS: The COVID-19 pandemic introduced a new concept affectionately termed by South Africans as the “Family Meeting” with President Ramaphosa. The President regularly updated South Africans on COVID-19 regulations and the status of the country’s fight against COVID-19.

Through these engagements, the President led communication from the top, communicating strategic direction on government’s response to COVID-19.

The “Family Meeting” address also set the tone on messaging. Following the

address, media reportage was more focused and detailed on the country’s fight against the pandemic.

The President’s update to the nation was followed by newly released alert levels and regulations by the Ministry of CoGTA, while various Cabinet Ministers also provided updates on their areas of influence.

These formed the focal point of communication throughout the pandemic. The GCIS played an important role in preparing for the “Family Meeting” by providing logistical support for The Presidency.

The morning following the address, the GCIS developed messaging on the key announcements by the President to help communicators further articulate and emphasise the pronouncements.

The regularity and frank nature of the engagements had fostered a sense of

family and solidarity. The “Family Meetings” were crucial in ensuring that all people knew the latest regulations and the rationale behind them.

They were also used to reassure South Africans that we were in this together and that we would prevail by standing as one. The frequent feedback to the country built high levels of trust, which was the bedrock of behaviour change. The frankness that accompanied the address and taking citizens into confidence, inculcated a level of public trust and appreciation when things went right and understanding when things went wrong.

Moreover, research had shown that that South Africans across all races and segments of the population trusted and supported President Ramaphosa to lead the nation during the pandemic.

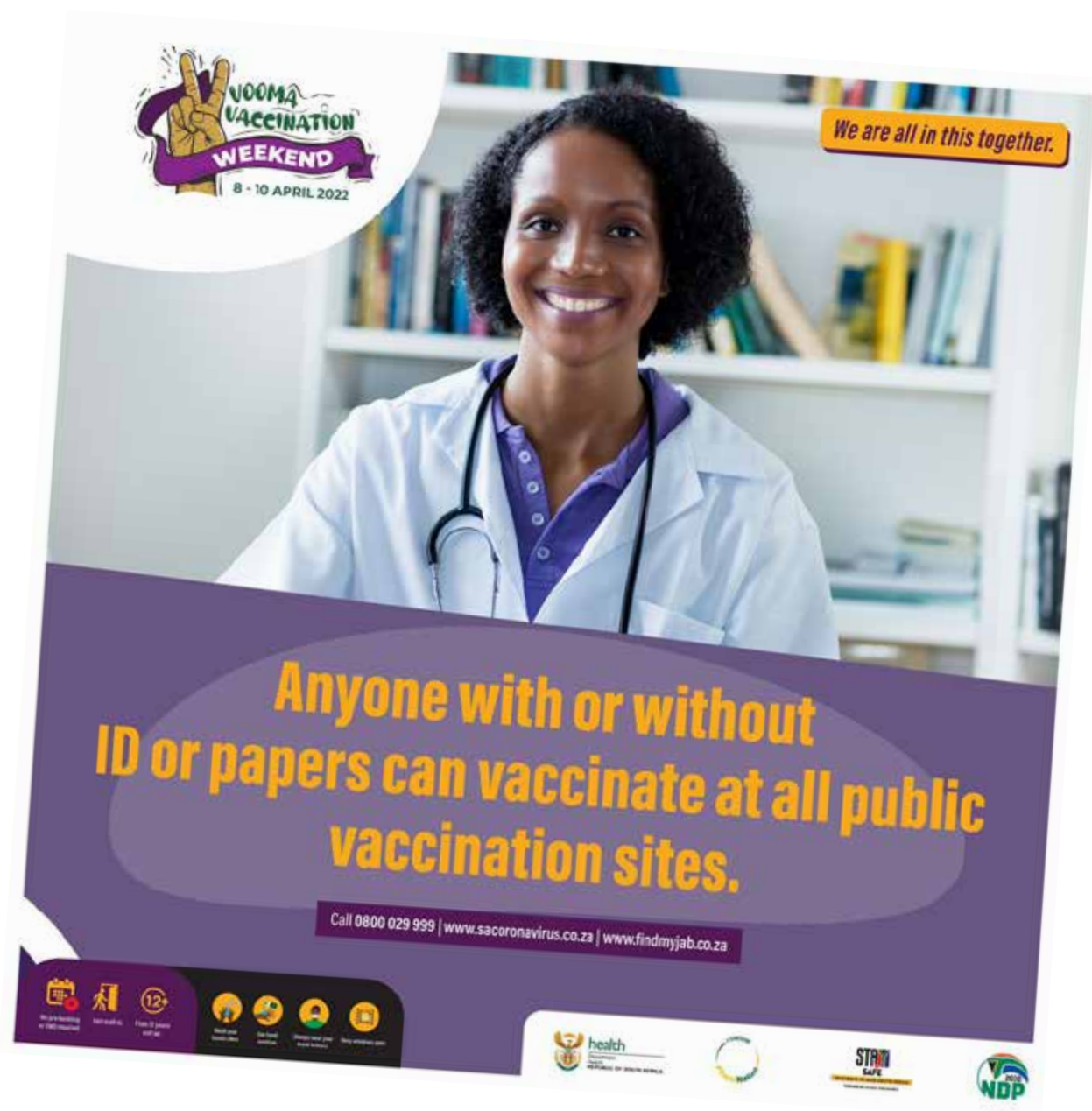
PARTNERSHIPS



In developing effective communication in the face of the pandemic, an important element was fostering partnerships with civil society organisations, in particular those working on the ground to ensure that people are informed.

The GCIS, together with the DoH, had taken this collaborative approach to communication because we knew our success in defeating the virus lay in each one of us doing our part.

While the forging of partnerships was a key factor in the fight against COVID-19 and saving lives, the very first stakeholder meeting held at the GCIS Head Office was attended by a number representatives from businesses and companies. They were in search of urgent information on the virus and how their businesses should respond. It highlighted the critical need to



bring all stakeholders together in a united front.

The extent of available COVID-19 content had placed government in a unique position to become the source of reliable and credible information to our partners. It was agreed with all partners that government would provide them with relevant and verified information to expand on their various platforms and through their communication channels.

The GCIS and DoH crafted COVID-19 content such as infographics and messaging for partners. While this communication initiative was led by government, its success hinged on the support of the partners.

The partnerships assisted in the quick adoption of measures to prevent needless exposure to the virus. Our stakeholders would also become powerful agents



to inform people about the risks of the virus.

The GCIS brought together business, labour, and civil society under the auspices of the NCP on COVID-19 and vaccine roll-out in January 2021. The NCP was responsible for managing communication activities between the private, public sectors, civil society and organised labour on the



response to COVID-19 and the vaccine roll-out.

The department convened the partnership weekly to plan and execute the vaccination communication. Since the start of the partnership in 2021, the GCIS convened close to 50 weekly meetings until ended in mid-2022. As part of the NCP,

a Civil Society War Room was established to create communication products, provide advice, share relevant information around the vaccine roll-out and maximise communication to various constituencies, particularly through community-based outreaches.

In one instance, the NCP was faced with the issue that despite mass communication on the availability of vaccines, people were still not coming forward to be vaccinated.

After deliberations within the NCP, it was recommended that communication must focus on speaking to people one on one in their communities.

Young doctors were roped into communities to explain how vaccination works. They also addressed some of the myths on vaccines to help convince people.

Through the NCP, various regional activities were coordinated to maximise the impact of each event by sharing resources and drawing local media attention to these collaborative events.

NCP members were involved in a number of activities, including stakeholder engagement to influence and encourage their constituencies to stay safe, practice non-pharmaceutical interventions and to vaccinate.

“We forged these partnerships on the premise that each partner would run with their own campaigns. We wanted a mul-

titude of campaigns to help reach more South Africans and get the message across, and it worked,” said GCIS Policy and Research Chief Director, Ms Tasneem Carrim.

Government and civil-society partners participating in the War Room implemented a total of 1 011 activities over the period of the partnership. There was also training the trainer to capacitate community members with more information about the virus.

The GCIS mobilised resources within the government communication system to further the work of our partnerships. Through its coordination of intergovernmental communication, the department was quickly able to reach all parts of our country, particularly communities at local level through various forums, platforms and stakeholders across the government communication system.



There were a number of partners who embraced the call from across civil society, volunteer groupings, NGOs, FBOs and business. For example, religious formations such as the South African Council of Churches (SACC) spearheaded the Vax-uMzansi Campaign and Train-the-Trainer workshops that advanced vaccine literacy.

The Solidarity Fund provided funding for community-outreach campaigns and offered paid-for advertising to disseminate messages. It also funded communication research projects.

In partnership with NEDLAC and the Solidarity Fund, the Vaccination4Men was hosted to look into the reasons why South Africa had a slow uptake of men getting vaccinated. The Community Constituency Front (CCF) assisted with compiling the Traditional Healers and Leaders' Guide/Manual and People's Vaccine Campaign

of South Africa (PVC-SA) training of community leaders to empower their constituencies.

Business for South Africa (B4SA), the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the mining industry and FBOs assisted with content and message dissemination using their own platforms.

CovidComms, a network of volunteer communication professionals, used content provided by the department and other stakeholders to package it in formats that were easy to distribute across platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook. The team at CovidComms was instrumental in the design of animation and infographics to drive the COVID-19 message.

The GCIS, together with several government departments, CovidComms, NGOs, the Red Cross, United Nations Children's Fund and the Real411 came together in the Risk Communication and Communi-



ty Engagement (RCCE) Social Listening Group to deal with misinformation and disinformation. There were weekly social listening meetings that discussed developing trends and possible issues that may arise.




The reports presented at these meet-

STAY SAFE
VACCINATE TO SAVE SOUTH AFRICA
TOGETHER WE CAN KEEP OURSELVES SAFE

MAN-TO-MAN VACCINE TALK

COVID-19 AND SEX	MYTHS ❌	REAL FACTS ✅
<p>Can COVID-19 vaccine cause erectile dysfunction? NO.</p> <p>COVID-19 vaccines do not cause erectile dysfunction or infertility. On the other hand, getting infected with COVID-19 can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cause erectile dysfunction and infertility in men. • increase your risk of developing erectile dysfunction by nearly six times. 	<p>Myth: COVID-19 vaccines kill.</p>	<p>South Africa has passed the 22 million milestone of vaccinations administered.</p> <p>No vaccine-related deaths have been found.</p> <p>Vaccines reduce the risk of serious illness, hospitalisation and death related to COVID-19.</p>
<p>WHY MEN DIE THE MOST?</p> <p>More (older) men than women die of COVID-19 infection because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men are biologically more susceptible to COVID-19. • Men may not seek medical help soon enough. • Fewer men than women are getting vaccinated. <p>Let us encourage our fellow brothers and friends to get the jab so that we can keep ourselves and our loved ones safe.</p>	<p>Myth: You can get COVID-19 from the vaccine.</p> <p>Myth: I am not at risk for severe complications of COVID-19, so I do not need the vaccine.</p>	<p>No! You cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine because it does not contain the virus.</p> <p>Vaccines reduce your risk of severe disease, but you can still contract the disease and spread it to others, so it is important to get vaccinated.</p>
<p>HOW TO VACCINATE?</p> <p>If you are 12 years or older, do not wait any longer! Go and get vaccinated at a site near you. You do not even have to wait for an SMS telling you when and where to go.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring your ID, passport, asylum or refugee number. • Any questions? Call 0800 029 999. We are here for you. 	<p>Myth: The vaccine will alter my DNA.</p> <p>Myth: The vaccines are the mark of the beast – 666.</p>	<p>Vaccines do not alter your DNA.</p> <p>Vaccines are based on the best science and have no connection with any religious or spiritual matters.</p>

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sacoronavirus.co.za

 REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



ings pointed to a need to provide communication on vaccine safety. The GCIS together with the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority, NICD and the DoH formed a Vaccine Safety Communication Task Team to address issues emerging around vaccine production, procurement and administration. Webi-

nars and expert interviews were arranged and recommendations were made to the Minister of Health to include particular experts in his Friday briefings.

The GCIS partnership with the media fraternity played an important role in disseminating information and educating South Africans on vaccinations. Many me-

dia houses carried government's messages, content and infographics across their platforms and pages for free. Through this partnership, government increased public awareness on vaccination and assisted the journalists at the coalface of reporting to be vaccinated.

Provinces, traditional leaders and churches did considerable work in extending the government content. The National House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders were part of efforts to reach all sectors of society and were encouraged to spread the word about COVID-19 prevention and get the COVID-19 vaccines with their constituencies.

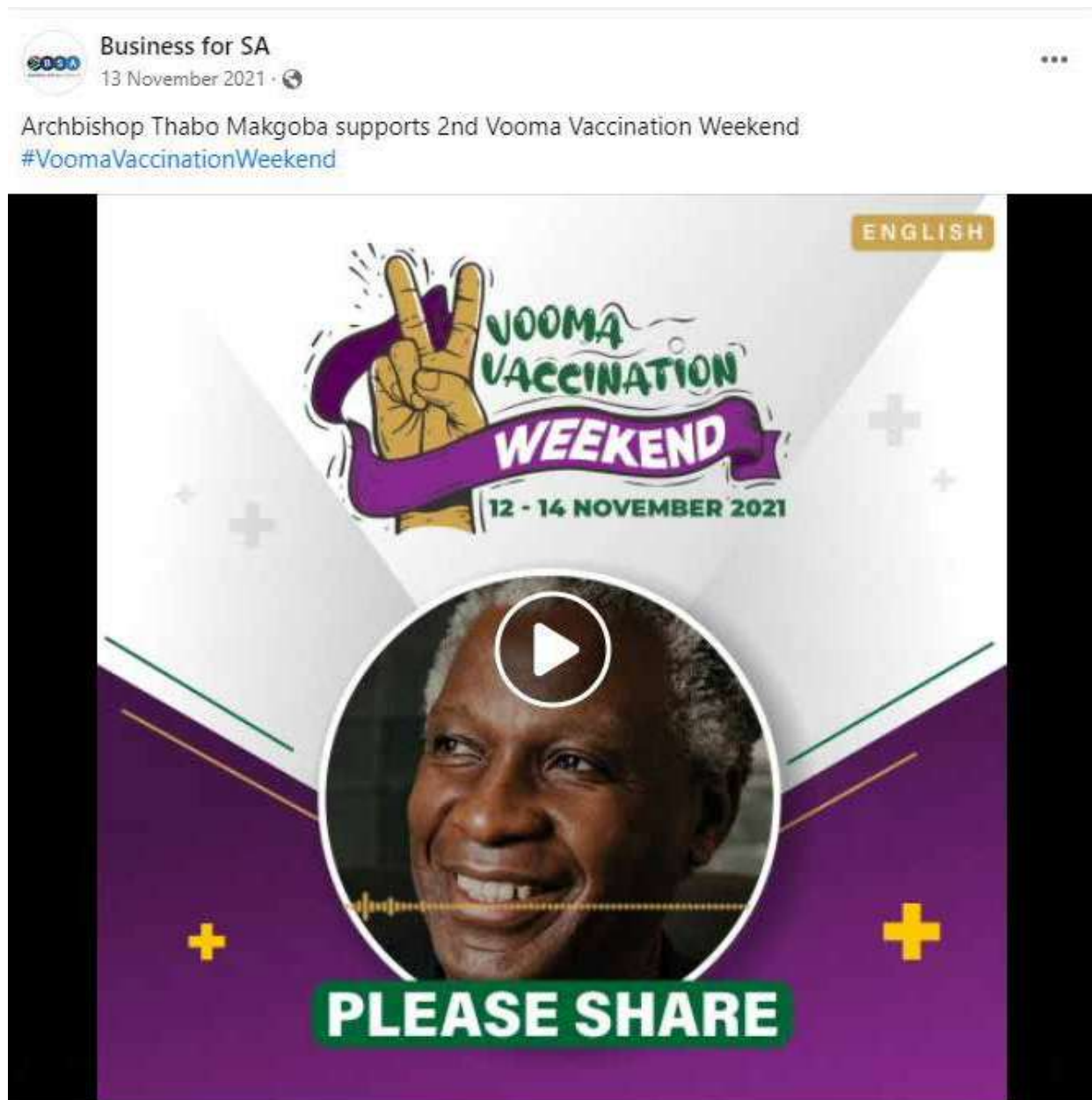
Engagements were also held with the SACC and Demand Acceleration Task Team (DATT) Dialogues. The GCIS held 11 roundtable dialogues in seven districts with 50 religious leaders and youth leaders in attendance. Through the SANTACO

KwaZulu-Natal Conference, more than 300 participants including a representative from the Royal House, were engaged to encourage citizens to vaccinate.

The GCIS also engaged with third-party endorsers such as experts and prominent personalities to promote government messages.

In a move to reach South Africans over 60 years to be vaccinated, the South African Medical Research Council identified social-grant queues. It began working with SASSA, the DSD and the DoH to take the vaccine directly to people in grant queues. However, there was no protocol for vaccination in queues and this had to first be developed.

The initiative resulted in a strong public-private partnership with supermarkets chain stores such as Boxer, Pick n Pay, Spar, Shoprite and Massmart stores where people collected their social grants. These partners made their stores available and together with clinical operators funded by the Solidary Fund, they were



used for pop-up vaccine sites.

By taking vaccines to where people lived, a million people were vaccinated in nine months. Together with telecoms operators SMSs were sent to people within a 15-km radius of the pop-up vaccine site encouraging them to be part of the nation's vaccination drive.

Partners to the NCP used the following activations to profile the country's vaccination drive.

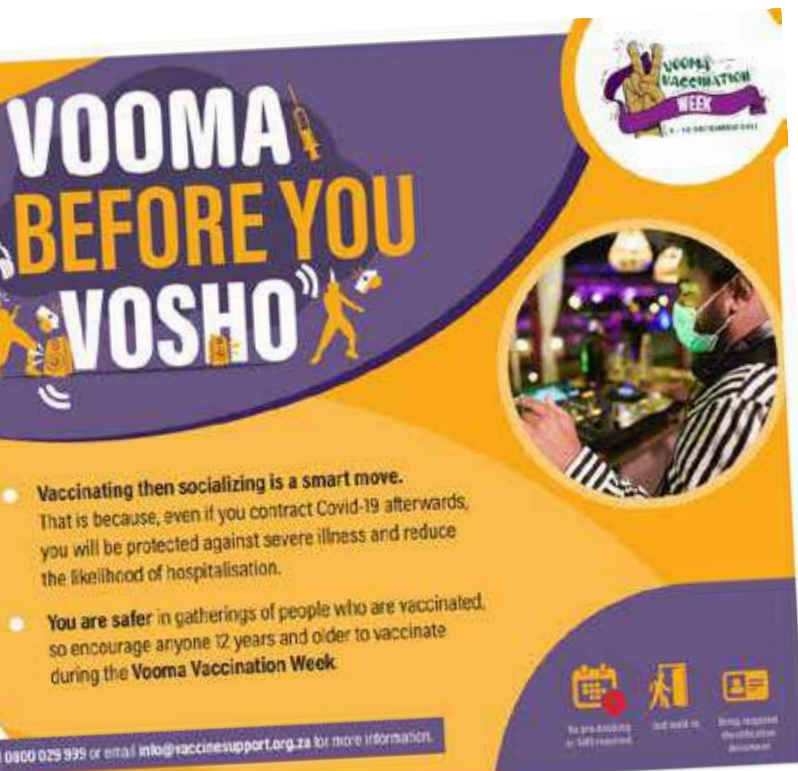
- **Vooma Vaccination Weekends** – Vooma Vaccination Weekends mobilised South Africans and help accelerate demand for vaccination. Led at a Presidential level, these were implemented in 3 phases: Vooma 1: 1-3 October 2021; Vooma 2: 12-14 November 2021 and Vooma 3: 2-4 December 2021.
- **Vooma Transport** – SA Taxi provided eight 26-seater buses for transport



as part of the Vooma Transport Trial. Passengers were from the youth and 60+ cohort in Gauteng.

- **VaxuMzansi Campaign** – VaxuMzansi was presented to SACC member

churches and networks' meetings. The SACC played an active role in promoting the vaccine uptake with the aim of vaccinating at least 70% of congregations.



- **Train the Trainer Workshops** – Vaccine Literacy and Mobilisation was held in November 2021 and included SACC member venues across the country.
- **Mobilisation and Vaccine Events** – Events were held across the country such as dialogues in Kwa-Nomzamo,

Kouga District, in the Eastern Cape.

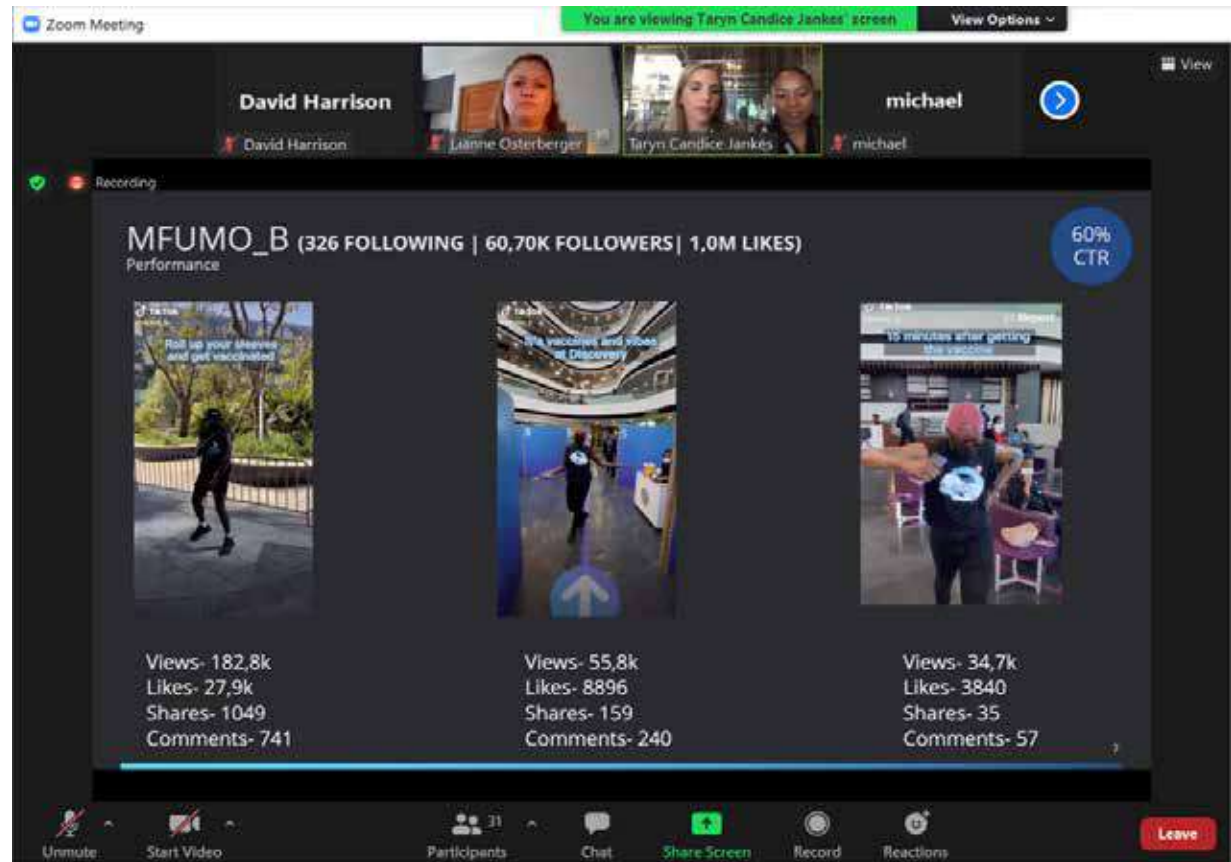
- **Vax Champs** – This campaign was aimed at inviting everyone to be an ambassador for vaccination. Launched on 12 November 2021, it aimed to educate people about vaccines and encourage them to promote vaccination to others. Over 34 000 people registered as Vax Champs as the campaign ran on social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat.
- **Vaccination4Men** – A hybrid event held on 6 November 2021 in partnership with NEDLAC and the Solidarity Fund. The event looked into the reasons why South Africa has a slow uptake of men getting vaccinated, as well as explore the conversations needed to encourage vaccination

uptake. About 30 men attended the physical event.

- **Traditional Healers and Leaders' Guide/Manual** – The CCF assisted with compiling the guide/manual, which provides key messages and facts on vaccines.
- **Youth Vaccination Campaign** – KeReady Campaign by the DATT targeted vaccination among young people (18-34 year olds) media coverage for the KeReady reached 4 581 304 online and 40 781 156 through broadcast.
- **PVC-SA** – Training of community leaders to empower their constituency resulted in 33 Train-the-Trainer sessions, 739 trainers trained, 362 vaccine literacy workshops held and a total of 8 222 community members trained.
- **TikTok campaign** – Discovery

Health used social media to drive the vaccination message to younger cohorts and dispel the myths about vaccinations using influencers.

- **Mining industry and faith-based conversations** – Government, B4SA, mining industry and FBOs met on the vaccination roll-out process as a structure for reflection.
- **Solidarity Fund** – Campaigns included “Don’t be a Mampara”; “When we Come Together” RollUpYourSleeves, CCF for the Vaccination of Men Campaign, CovidComms (two projects), C19 (one project) and SACC (two projects).
- **COSATU Worker Vaccination Drive:** It rallied workers to participate in the nation’s vaccination drive.
- **Religious Forum against COVID-19:** Played an active role in pro-



moting the vaccine with the aim of vaccinating at least 70% of congregations. Participating religions included Hindu, Muslim, Judaism and Christian.

- **Also soccer fans** – The Department of Sport, Arts and Culture and South

African Football Association initiative, and schools vaccination programme by the Department of Basic Education.

MESSAGES FROM PARTNERS



“The GCIS played an important role in acknowledging there would be different players and helping facilitate the different players.”
– Ms Jane Simmonds, South African Medical Research Council.

“The GCIS was central to the coordination of COVID-19 messaging, bringing coherence during a time of national crisis, and also played a vital role in bringing communicators from all four social partners together in the NCP; a unique communications social compact.” – Mr Chris Vick, CovidComms.

“To deliver a national vaccination programme we needed government, business, labour and a broad spectrum of civil-society organisations to share resources and quickly cascade credible information to our constituencies and the public. So, working with the GCIS and others we created the NCP as the primary forum for communications and vaccination campaign collaboration.” – **Mr Timothy Schultz, Lead: Communications, Stakeholder and Advocacy, B4SA.**

“We walked and worked with the GCIS to ensure that we all sang the same COVID-19 hymn book. The commitment to collaborate and cooperate through the platform of the NCP between government, business, labour and community stakeholders was sustained because the GCIS was the glue that held us tightly together. The GCIS was an artistic con-

ductor that made all of us sing like a perfect choir using our different voices to sing one COVID-19 song. As the CCF our voice and our contribution counted.” – **Mr Mabalane Mfundisi, CCF Convener.**

“The NCP is living proof that we are stronger and better together. Many of us could not have achieved our goals at the extent we did without this platform. It was a world where business, government, civil society, and faith networks shared their resources, collaborated together and strengthened each other without any expectation of return. We just wanted to see each other win! I am grateful for the experience and the relationships built. This platform renewed my hope that the South Africa We Pray For is possible.” – **Ms Mathume Masha, SACC HoC and Programmes.**

“I joined the NCP initially as one of the participants from B4SA, where I was assigned by Anglo American as a Project Manager – our role went beyond minute-taking to supporting a cohesive spirit within the team, assigning and ensuring that resolutions taken were implemented, connecting members on tasks to ensure a collaborative teamwork, and securing speakers and people to chair whenever there was a need. I can safely say the NCP was like a maestro that managed to successfully assemble unfamiliar voices on the spur of the moment from government, civil society and business spheres at a dark time in our history when we desperately needed a unified voice to keep our people informed, responsive, responsible and hopeful. I am grateful I was part of the NCP and for the people I got to meet.” – **Ms Nomalizo Xabana, B4SA Project Manager.**

PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION

National call to all Public Servants

Volunteer to contribute to the Solidarity Fund to fight COVID-19 in South Africa

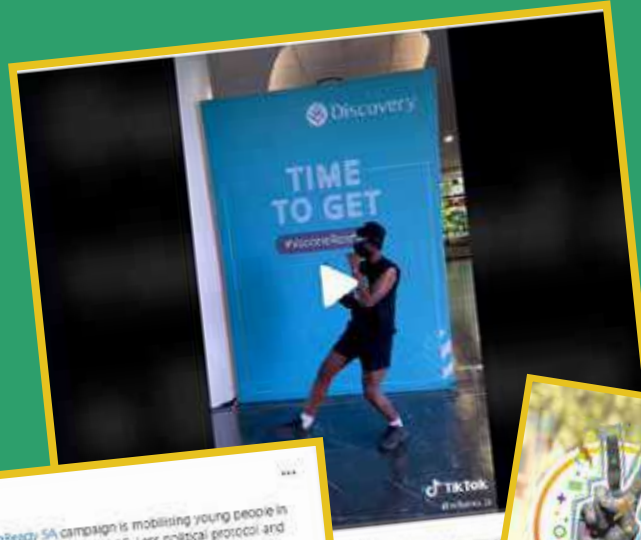
The Forum of South African Deputies General (FOSAD) is making a call for all public servants in national and provincial departments including in public utilities to donate voluntarily to the Solidarity Fund in an effort to support the containment of COVID-19. In support of this call, FOSAD has decided that all FOSAD members will contribute a sum of R20 000 per member to the fund, which shall be deducted over three instalments over a period of six to nine months.

Public service employees, in heeding the call, may contribute what they see fit and may elect to have their contributions deducted from their salaries, alternatively they may make such contributions directly to the fund.

To make your request to the Solidarity Fund, please use the following banking details, visit www.solidarityfund.co.za or EFT & Credit Card options on: 148.44 or 0800-004 001.

Bank: Standard Bank
Branch: Sandton City
Account Name: Solidarity Fund
Account No.: 025070003
Account Type: Current Account
Branch Code: 000200
SWIFT Code: SBAZJAJJ

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0800 029 999
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Don't take COVID-19 on holiday.

MINERALS COUNCIL SOUTH AFRICA

Get vaccinated before you leave

Travel in small groups

Open windows when travelling

Wear your mask in public

Give yourself and those you love the gift of health this festive season.

#MakingMiningMatter

#koready2flex CHALLENGE

Draw it. Dance it. Act it. Sing it. Whatever your talent, flex it!

15 winners each week
R100,000 in weekly prizes

WhatsApp the word "Flex" to submit your creative work about vaccination

060 019 0000

#koready

- CV
- Visa
- Passport
- Vaccination certificate

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ENSURING BUSINESS CONTINUITY TO MEET **COMMUNICATION** NEEDS



Ms Phumla Williams
Director-General at the
Government Communication
and Information System,

INVITATION
AFRICA'S
WEBINAR
ON COVID-19

STAY SAFE
PROTECT SOUTH AFRICA
TOGETHER WE CAN BEAT THE CORONAVIRUS

LEADING THROUGH COMMUNICATIONS, THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

Africa-Webinar(2)_Invite_Video 2020-08-22



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commodate the increase in internet traffic to the department's websites caused by citizens seeking government information during the pandemic.

This meant that GCIS staff had to quickly adapt to the new reality of online and remote working. Communicators were called on to continue to work from home and had to navigate around the new technology to ensure the work of the department continued unabated.

A migration to the State Information

The pandemic changed us all. People are now much more comfortable with the idea of interacting with government online. This placed a massive responsibility on the GCIS to be the conduit that allowed open interaction with government. The GCIS aligned its operational plans

to ensure that it spoke to the daily realities of the pandemic. The department relied more heavily on social media and cloud-based technologies to disseminate information for public consumption.

GCIS web servers were allocated additional bandwidth to ac-





Technology Agency Virtual Private Network remote access (VPNra) connectivity tool allowed staff to work remotely and access the internal GCIS enterprise systems and automated processes. Additional bandwidth and data were made available for staff to work remotely and ensure business continuity.

Staff who did not have GCIS-provided

connectivity were provided with work-from-home Wi-Fi allowances to enable them to work remotely with their home WIFI as soon as possible to avert the delays in sourcing additional GCIS remote connectivity.

The department had also prioritised the upskilling of its workforce through training initiatives aligned to the occupational

demands associated with the Fourth Industrial Revolution to address Hard-to-Fill Skills related to the GCIS's core functions.

It accelerated the adoption and increased the use of online learning. The department embraced e-Learning platforms and encouraged employees to register for online courses.

The new environment also propelled the GCIS to quickly transition its physical corporate channels to the digital space. For example, the department automated its memo-approval processes through its e-memo system. The new innovation allowed the department to continue in its work to service the communication needs of South Africans. Meeting packs and documents were accessed electronically through the VPNra from the GCIS Enterprise Content Management System.

The GCIS Employee Health and Well-

ness unit updated and supported GCIS staff members psychosocially on issues related to the pandemic. The unit assisted employees to be protected from chronic stress and poor mental health during the pandemic. Staff members who tested positive for COVID-19 received telephonic psychosocial and wellness support services during their recovery.

The GCIS reviewed and refined its mitigating strategies and plans to ensure that it addressed any potential risks as they were identified to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Staff were encouraged to continue taking precautions to safeguard themselves, use available technology and

avoid physical gatherings.

The department has been widely applauded for its versatility to ensure business continuity during the various levels of the national lockdown.



FIGHTING FAKE NEWS



During the COVID-19 pandemic, many false or misleading stories circulated on social media about the virus, which created unnecessary panic.

The GCIS had become the vanguard in protecting citizens from the rampant spread of fake news. One approach against misinformation was achieved by explaining misleading or manipulative argumentation strategies to people. It includes a warning that people may be misled, followed by a pre-emptive refutation of the misleading argument

Communication called on everyone to think twice before simply sharing or reposting content received. We impressed on citizens their duty to act responsibly and in the interest of society as there was no place for news or social media content that promoted hate speech, anarchy and chaos or infringed on the dignity of others.

South Africans were encouraged to ask critical questions and consult widely available resources to verify information. It included a simple Google search on a topic or occurrence which quickly revealed if the information shared was fake or false. Similarly, a reverse image search on Google will reveal if a picture has been used before.

The GCIS profiled resources such as <https://africacheck.org/>, which contained a wealth of information on spotting fake news and What's crap on WhatsApp <https://www.whatscrap.africa/> which helped identify and report fake or false information shared on WhatsApp.

The official government website, www.gov.za, was identified as the one-stop portal for news and information, and had a wealth of additional resources. The Real 411 <https://www.real411.org/> was promoted as a resource where citizens could report digital offences such as disinformation, hate speech, incitement to violence and journalist harassment.

The was also sensitive to the fact that every time misinformation was addressed, someone else's agenda was profiled. Before spending time and resources on addressing specific misinformation, it is also important to know whether it is re-

ally having an impact or is likely to have an impact.

The GCIS adopted an early warning system that included monitoring key accounts that enabled the early identification of fake or misleading news. The department collaborated with external departments and partners through the RCCE Social Listening Group to deal with mis- and disinformation. Weekly social listening meetings discussing developing



trends and possible issues that may arise. The department also worked with social media companies such as Facebook and Twitter to identify fake accounts of departments and Ministers. These together with posts on fake information were reported to the platform owners for removal. On Twitter, keywords and phrases were set that would send links and answers to fake/misinformed tweets.



INTERNATIONAL SPEND ON **COVID-19** COMMUNICATION



South Africa – The 2020 Special Adjustment Budget resulted in an additional allocation of R60 million for the GCIS. This enabled the department to drive the COVID-19 Communication Strategy in a more meaningful and effective manner.

The country’s communication spend was supported by the Solidarity Fund campaigns which accounted R119 million. The

Citizens in Solidarity campaign was implemented from March to December 2020 and was a national, multi-pronged communication initiative that educated South Africans to come together and practice behaviours to help to manage the pandemic.

United Kingdom (UK) – The UK Government invested over £184m on commu-

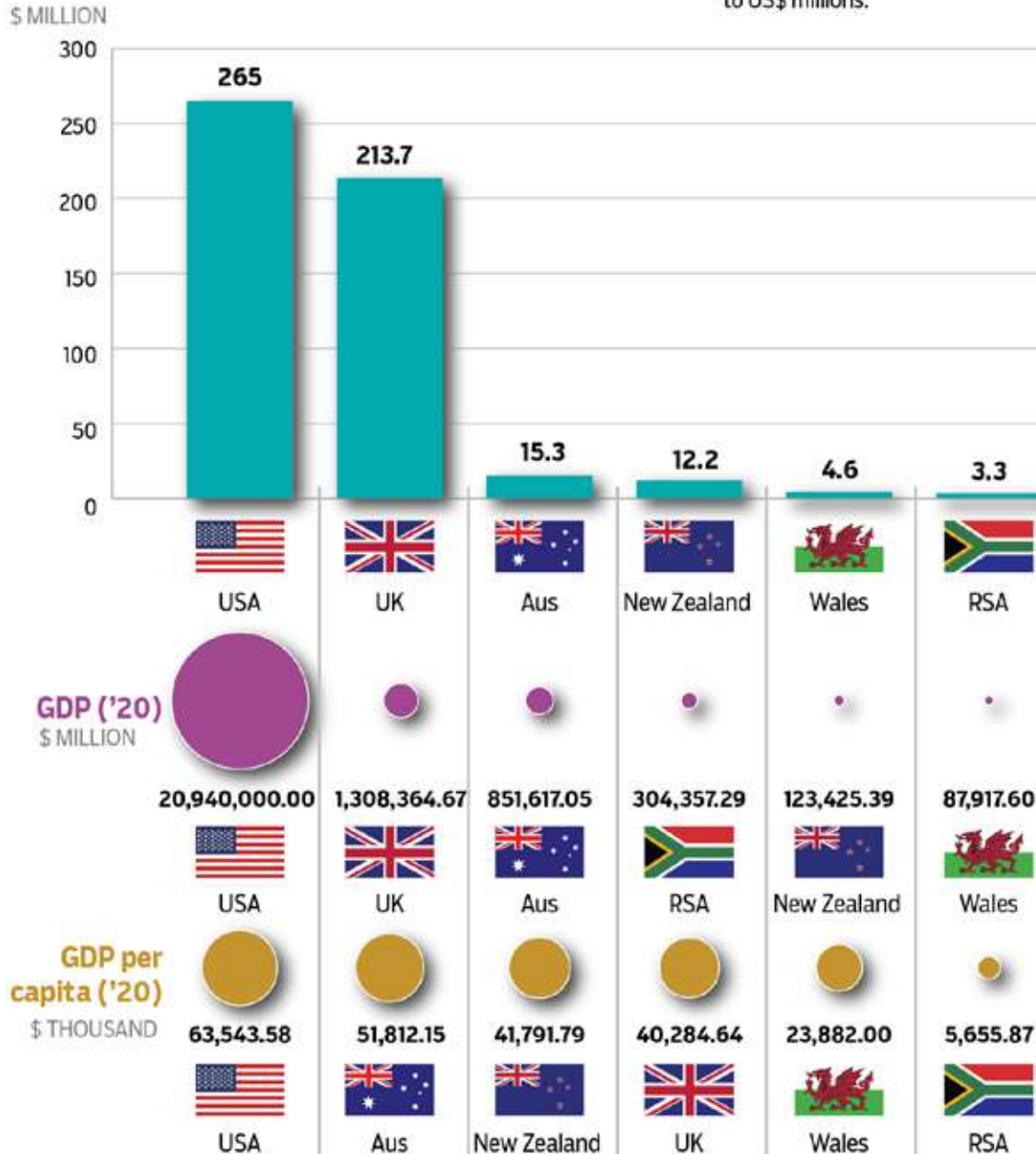
nications relating to COVID-19 in 2020.

- £171.9m was spent on media activity.
- £12.2m was spent on COVID-19 advertising.
- UK GDP for 2020: 2.04 trillion pounds (2.708 trillion USD (2020)).
- GDP per capita: 40,284.64 USD (2020) – Google from World Bank.
- Population: 67.22 million (2020).

International Spending comparisons*

COVID-19 Communications

*Amounts have been standardised to US\$ millions.



The government of the UK's total managed expenditure as a share of gross domestic product was 51.6% in 2020/21.

'Social Protection' and 'Health' together account for more than half of all of central government's own expenditure on services. In 2021/22 spending on social protection increased to £243.5 billion compared to £242.8 billion in the previous year.

Australia – The Australian Government spent A\$23.9 million on its 2021 COVID-19 vaccination information campaign.

- Australia's GDP for 2020: 1,327.84 billion US dollars.
- GDP per capita: 51,812.15 USD (2020) (Google from World Bank).
- Population: 25.69 million (2020).

New Zealand – The government spent nearly US\$21 million on COVID-19 advertising as of 30 June 2020. The advertising cost, which included ads on TV, radio, newspapers (print and online), so-

cial media, bus stops and billboards, was US\$18.3m.

- New Zealand GDP for 2020: 212.5 billion.
- USD (2020) (Google from World Bank).
- GDP per capita: 41,791.79 USD (2020).
- Population: 5.084 million (2020).

Core Crown expenditure was US\$5.2 billion lower than forecast at US\$114.0 billion. The COVID Response and Recovery Fund (CRRF) was also created during the 2019/20 year. At 30 June, US\$26.0 billion had been allocated from the CRRF to support the early COVID-19 response.

The three largest areas of total Crown expenditure for the 2019/20 financial year were:

- Social security and welfare: US\$49.9 billion
- Health: US\$20.5 billion
- Education: US\$17.6 billion

Wales – Total cost of all advert and

asset production, media buying, public relations, stakeholder and public engagement for the Keep Wales Safe (COVID-19 public information) campaign and Test Trace Protect (COVID-19 testing) campaign. These costs exclude VAT.

- 2020-21: £3,985,446.67.
- 2021-22: £6,815,802.10.
- Wales GDP for 2020: 75.7 billion British pounds.
- GDP per capita: 23,882 British pounds.
- Population: 3.17 million (2020).

United States of America – In the summer of 2020, the US Department of Health and Human Services began a US\$265-million campaign to promote COVID-19 prevention and encourage vaccine acceptance.

- USA GDP for 2020: 20.94 trillion USD (2020) (Google from World Bank).
- GDP per capita: 63,543.58 USD (2020).
- Population: 329.5 million (2020).

In fiscal year (Financial Year) 2021, the government spent US\$6.8 trillion.

Mandatory spending by the federal government totaled US\$4.6 trillion in 2020, of which US\$1.9 trillion was for Social Security and Medicare.

Mandatory outlays by the federal government totaled US\$4.8 trillion in 2021, of which US\$1.8 trillion was for Social Security and Medicare.



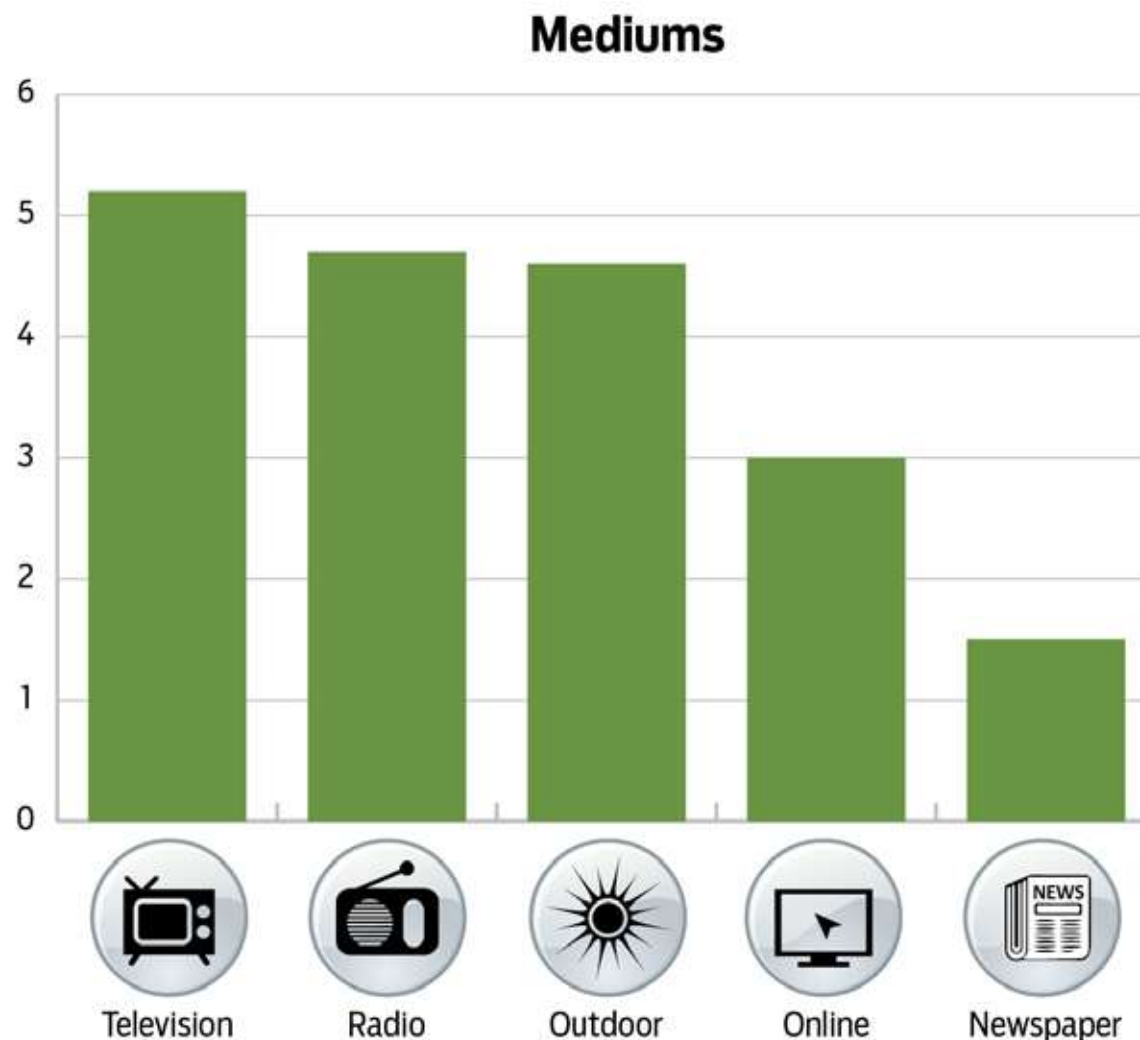
DRIVING HOME THE COVID-19 MESSAGE THROUGH **ADVERTISING**



While social media was used to spur communication at the onset of COVID-19, research continued to point to broadcast media as being the preferred platform by citizens to receive information.

The GCIS ensured that communication on COVID-19 was supported by a mix of communication platforms. An integrated media campaign was implemented using TV, radio, social media and out-of-home advertising such as billboards, screens and wall murals. The graph shows the spread of platforms used by GCIS in the campaign.

The key thrust of the advertising campaigns was to mobilise South Africans to continue the fight against COVID-19 by promoting continued adherence to the non-pharmaceutical health measures. It also advanced the vaccine roll-out campaign to encourage more citizens to vaccinate. Moreover, as restrictions were relaxed, the message of “StaySafe to Protect South Africa” was communicated.

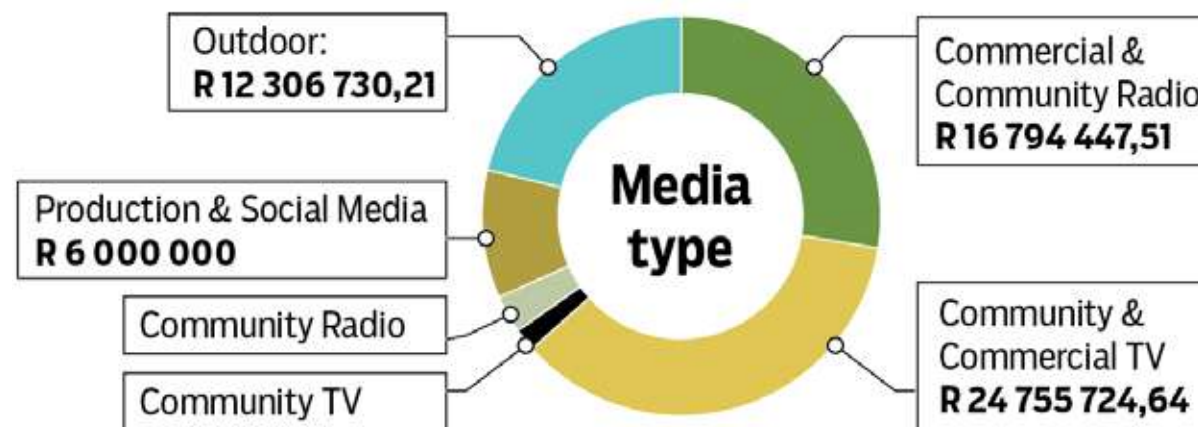


Through the GCIS Media Buying unit, the department aimed to reach people in their different spaces. With most people at home during the start of the pandemic, radio, TV and social media were used to educate and meet the information needs of citizens.

Messages on decisions, reminders and information regarding health facilities, statistics and lockdown procedures were widely broadcast. Radio and TV stations in both commercial and community media were used to flight adverts, news clocks and squeeze-backs during the period.

The GCIS Media Buying unit was allocated R60 million to implement the COVID-19 campaign from April 2020 to January 2021. The chart indicates the total spend on each media type.

To effectively educate and empower all 60 million citizens in the fight against the pandemic, a budget of more than



double the allocation would have been required. To stretch the budget to reach all South Africans, the GCIS Media Buying unit forged partnerships and collaborated with media owners to effect the campaign within the allocated budget.

GCIS CSA Chief Director, Ms Neli Shuping, said: “The project was much bigger than us so we needed support from our external stakeholders. When I negotiated with media owners on this campaign, I said that it was the responsibility of each

and everyone of us to spread the COVID-19 message. We all had a responsibility to educate South Africans on what COVID-19 was and how together we could fight it.”

The added value of R29 755 016.29 was received, which translated into the GCIS implementing a campaign worth R89 566 918.65.

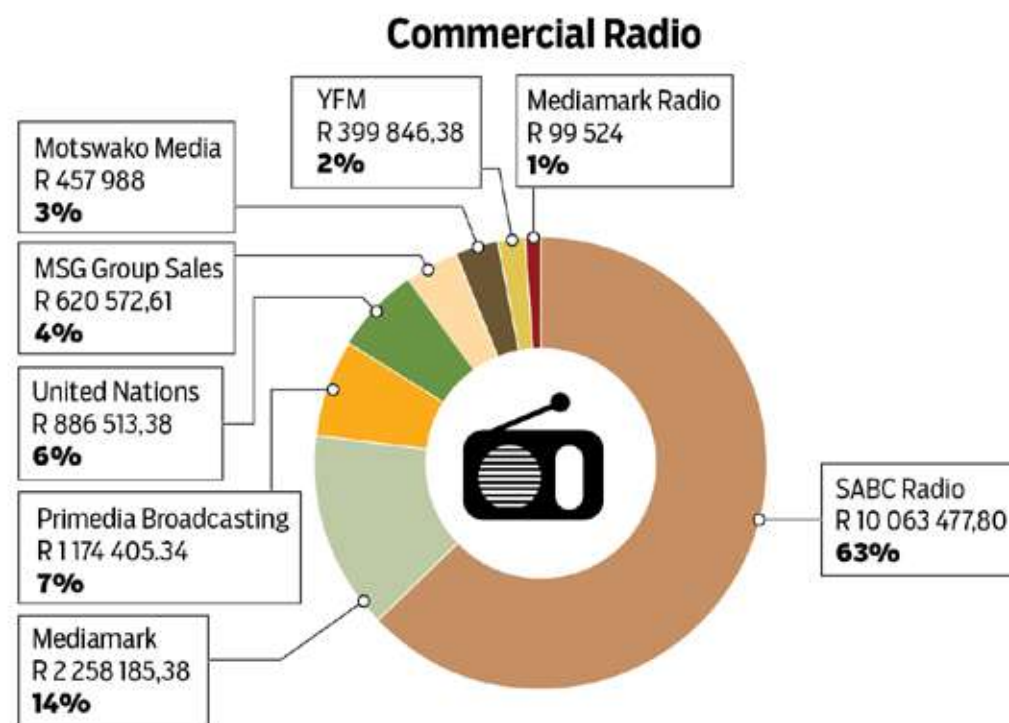
The table below reflects the added value the GCIS had negotiated with all the media owners during the campaign.

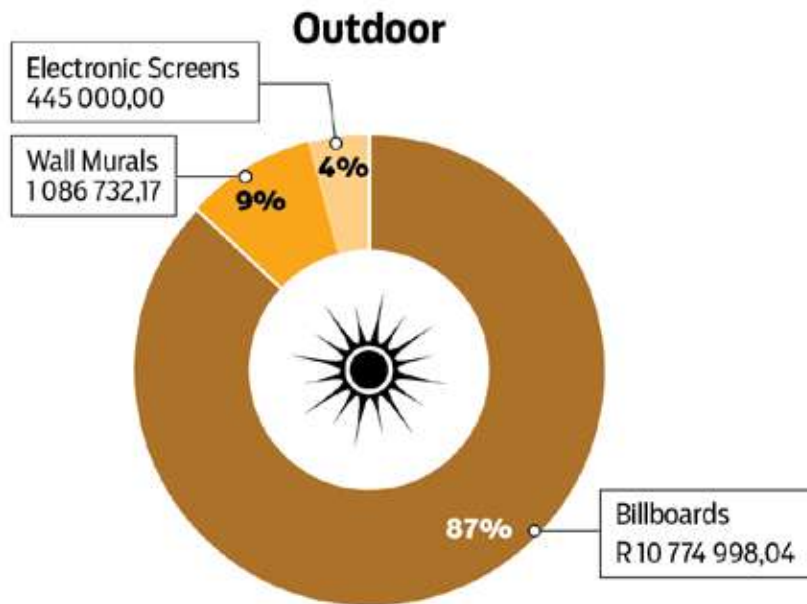
BUDGET ALLOCATION AND ADDED VALUE RECEIVED		
PUBLICATION	APPROVED AMOUNT	DISCOUNT RECEIVED / ADDED VALUE
TV	24 755 724,64	11 673 518,36
Radio	16 794 447,51	13 481 497,93
Production/Creative	6 000 000,00	-
Outdoor (billboards, wall murals and electronic screens)	12 306 730,21	4 600 00.00
TOTAL	59 811 902,36	29 755 016,29

The campaign's performance was extremely successful with the TV campaign reaching 80.1% of the total population with estimated 45 million viewership on an average.

We used TV to reach 167.8 million viewers and the bulk of the viewers were on SABC 1, with 122.6 million viewers recorded. Community TV stations used for the campaign reached over 18 million viewers.

The radio campaign reached 69% of the population with a total of 35.8 million listeners. The GCIS targeted 36 stations – 18 SABC stations, 18 regional commercial stations as well as over 100 community stations. Over 8 000 spots were flighted. Ukhozi FM and Umhlobo Wenene FM had the highest reach amongst all the ra-





dio stations. The graph on page 99 shows the breakdown of spend on radio.

As part of using a multi-platform approach to drive the COVID-19 campaign, the GCIS tapped into the reach of billboards, murals and airport screens. The GCIS procured 133 billboards covering all the provinces to reach people in sub-urban, peri-urban and rural areas.

The billboards were translated into all official languages and reached an estimated 30 million people in different parts

of the country. In areas not covered by billboards, 52 wall murals were procured across five provinces. These were translated into the languages spoken by the local communities.

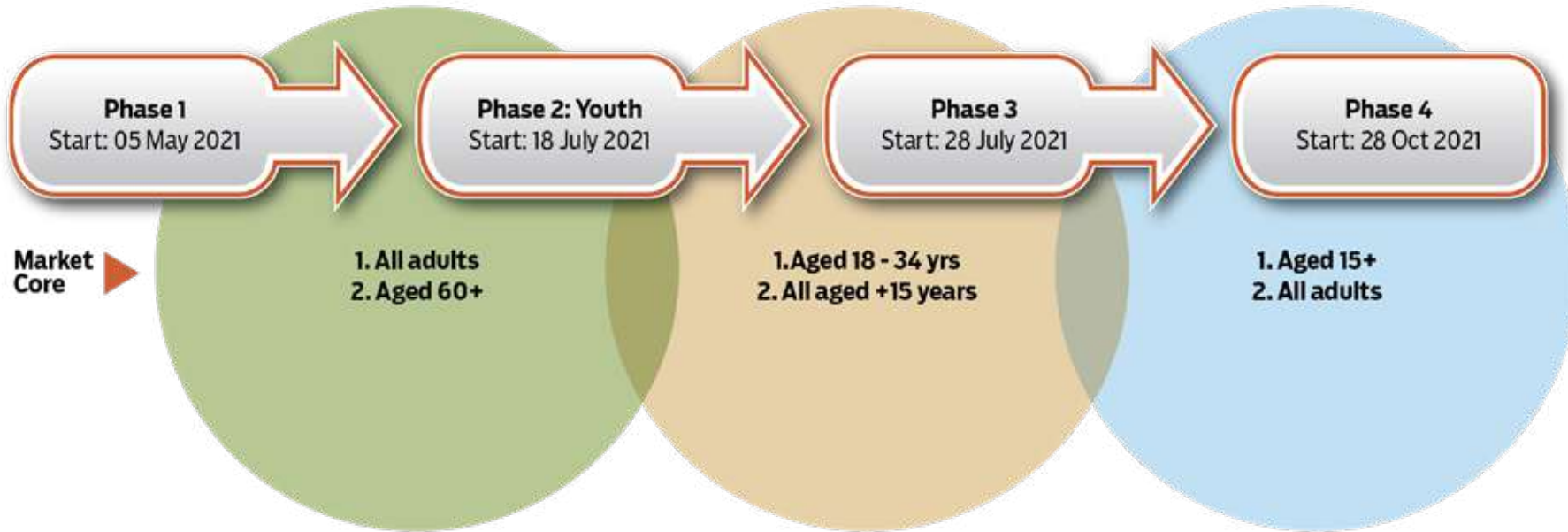
Airport screens flighted 2 832 advertising spots to reach over 2.4 million passengers who used the airports during the campaign period. The graph on the left sets out the spending on billboards, murals and airport screens.

The online campaign – implemented on Independent Online, Times



Campaign roll out

CSA: media buying task to implement an efficient media placement plan to provide maximum reach while building awareness and a quick response in an integrated media approach.



Live and Media24 platforms – reached 3 500 000 impressions. Media24 online magazines, *You* and *Drum*, achieved 5 216 page views.

Moreover, the StaySafe logo was widely used by the private sector and other partners to communicate the message

of COVID-19 protocols. Vodacom, MTN, Telkom and CellC provided support in communicating the vaccine roll-out messages.

The GCIS Media Buying unit was also allocated R50 million to implement the vaccine roll-out campaign from May 2021

to March 2022. The campaign continued under the theme of StaySafe to Save South Africa. This campaign was supported by the production of different elements such as TV and radio adverts, TV squeeze-backs, news clock, infographics, which were placed on various platforms.



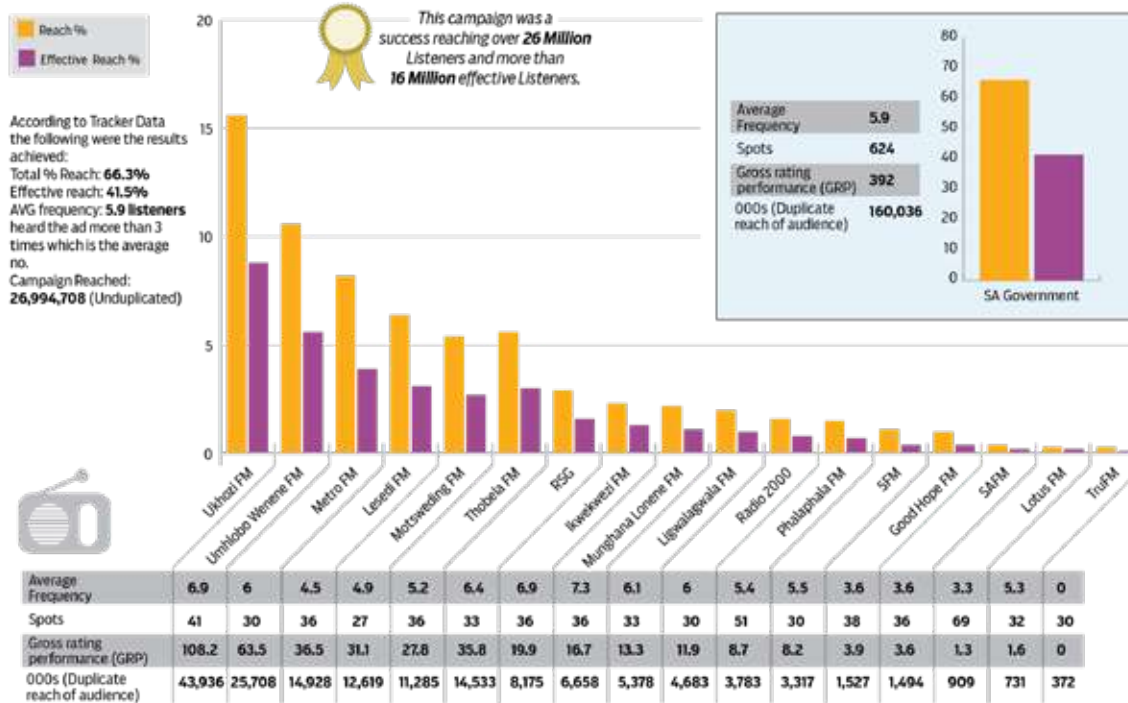
The campaign roll-out took place in four phases as detailed below.

The department continued to use multiple platforms – including TV, radio, online,

social media and out-of-home advertising – to reach all segments of the population. The graph below sets out spend on the platforms used.

The vaccine roll-out campaign was carried on national and pay TV broadcasters in the country in a phased approach that targeted different age groups.

SABC Total Radio Performance



On TV, advertising on vaccination included a news clock, TV squeeze-backs on SABC, eTV, eNCA and Newzroom Africa.

The campaign was also flighted on all African language stations, 18 commercial regional stations, national radio stations,

119 community radio stations, including four community TV stations.

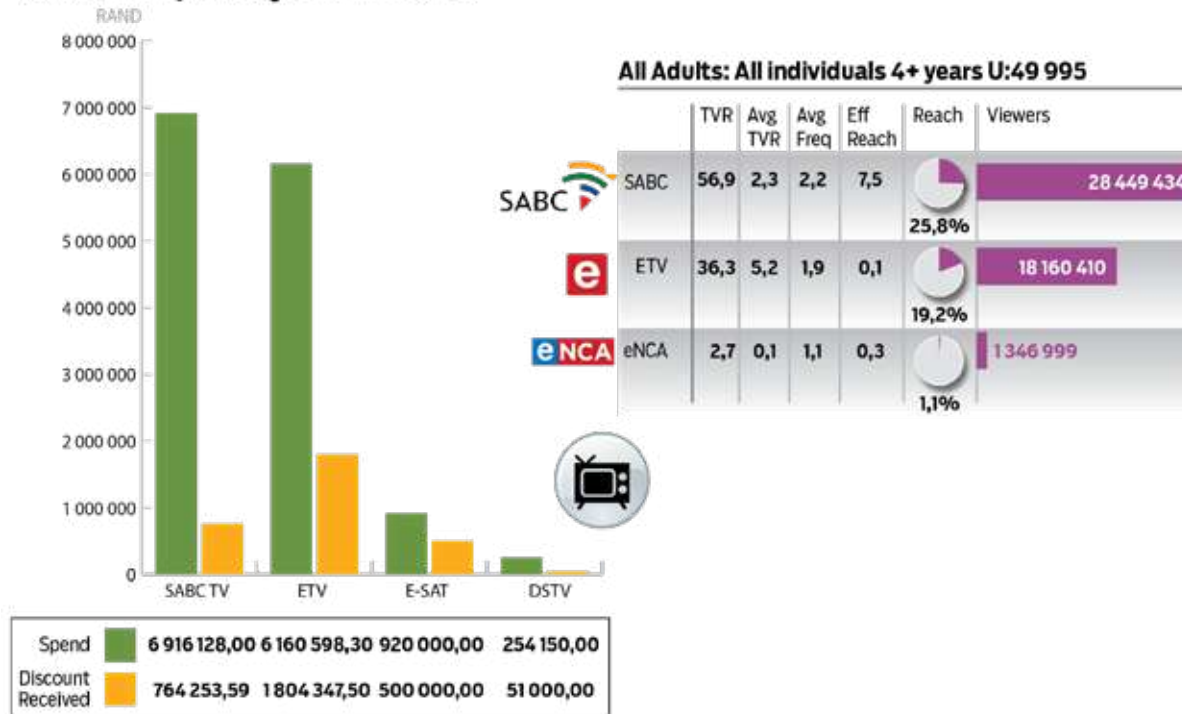
We continued to extend the campaign reach with billboards, wall murals and online platforms. The added value received was flighting on all stations of 48 spots

per stations and four weeks of social media posts on SABC TV and SABC Radio. There were also 407 added value spots including social media posts and interviews with provincial Health MECs on commercial stations.

A total of 256 spots were flighted on SABC 1, SABC 2 and SABC 3. The spots were valued at R4 500 250.00. The campaign had a frequency of 12.3, which meant 26 million viewers saw the advert 12 times.



Television Spend by Performance



The messaging for each phase was aligned to each age group to communicate that vaccines were available to them. To enhance our communication reach, billboards and wall murals were used. The GCIS Media Buying unit had negotiated

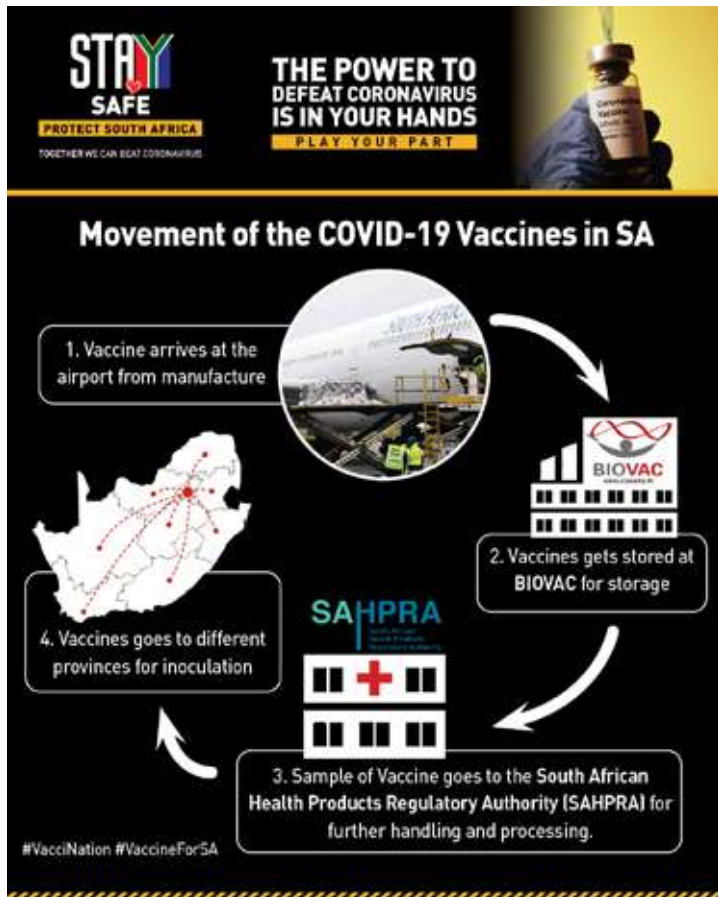
discounts with various media owners of over R20 million.

The campaign was further expanded and enhanced by various social partners such as Pick n Pay, MTN and Vodacom, who used their platforms and retail shops

to communicate the message of vaccination.

A total of 85 roadshows targeting high-traffic sites were undertaken across all provinces to encourage communities to take advantage of government's vaccine roll-out programme. Local influencers were also engaged to educate communities on registration, benefits and potential side effects of the vaccines.

Our Influencer Campaign, which targeted persons aged between 35 and 49 years old, recruited, screened and appointed social media influencers within different industries, to use their social media platforms to share pro-vaccination content to their audiences. Over 2 000 people were vaccinated during the roadshows and a further over 1 000 people were vaccinated during the Thusong Service Centre Week held in September 2021.



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The GCIS developed a digital Corporate Toolkit to provide businesses with digital elements with placeholders for their organisational logos to promote the COVID-19 vaccination key messages in their companies across the country.



ECONOMIC RELIEF MEASURES (UIF Covid-19 Relief Benefit)

DESCRIPTION

- Any UIF contributing business who is unable to pay salaries as a result of the lock down period, and
- Any employee who is a contributor works more than 24 hours a month and there is an employer and employe relationship.

WHO QUALIFIES?

Employees

HOW CAN PEOPLE ACCESS THE RELIEF MEASURES?

Companies are encouraged to apply on behalf of their employees by:

- Visit <https://ufec.labour.gov.za/covid19/>

An email will be sent to your mailbox to indicate successful transmissions.

CONTACT DETAILS

Please call 0800 036 007 for any enquiries. It should be noted that the call centre receives close to 80 000 calls per day, and it takes about 25 minutes for our agents to deal with a call.



ROLLING OUT COMMUNICATION ON THE GROUND



Communication was advanced under the campaign: “Stay home – Stay Safe” in level five of the lockdown and then later “Stay Safe” in latter levels. The mass communication campaign was rolled out to educate the public about COVID-19, mode of transmission, prevention and containment measures.

Through these behaviour change communication campaigns, we disseminated information on the prevention measures such as the wearing of cloth face masks in public and the reorganisation of workplaces, schools, universities, colleges and other public places to limit transmission. Lessons learnt from previous behaviour-change campaigns like the “Abstain, Be Faithful and Condomise” campaign on HIV and AIDS and learning from the private sector the conceptualisation of the campaign.

GCIS provincial offices undertook activa-

tions in partnership with key stakeholders, ward councillors, law-enforcement agencies, traditional leaders and health professionals. The department led drop-and-go activations at taxi ranks, malls and fuel stations to raise awareness.

In support of the country’s COVID-19 vaccine registration campaign, the GCIS rolled out 112 district and metro-based community activations, in partnership with a range of stakeholders.

Customised mobile trucks were used as an innovative and effective way to reach out to communities and disseminate government messages using loudspeakers.

The first leg of the mobile truck community activation roadshow commenced at Maponya Mall in Soweto, Gauteng on Saturday, 29 May 2021 before moving to other provinces. The community activations also used local drama groups to enhance communication.



ACTIVITIES:



- Provincial communicators commenced with communication activities around COVID-19 from 28 January 2020. They included the sharing of soundbites, video clips, infographics and key messages through the distribution networks for further dissemination.
- Information was distributed through community radio talk shows, activations at malls and taxi ranks, street intersections and door-to-door visits in communities; local social media awareness and training of government communicators.
- Internal communicators in government mounted infographics in strategic points in their offices, including restrooms and lifts. An electronic newsletter on Do's and Don'ts was issued to address the stigma on COVID-19.
- A digital and social media plan was implemented with infographics, social media banners, electronic posters, key messages. It also included the engagement of followers and oversaw the management of rumours.
- All GCIS provincial offices conducted community engagements by sharing information with provincial communication core teams and other key stakeholders.
- Loudhailing was one of the most commonly used platforms for mobilisation undertaken by the GCIS district offic-

- es, in partnership with other spheres of government and entities.
- Some 3 189 development communication projects in the form of community activations, dialogues, media engagements and community outreaches were implemented.
 - Some 2 554 stakeholder engagement sessions with community media, government structures, community development workers, traditional authorities, civil society, local business and special formations were implemented.
 - Four (4) Intergovernmental Communication Forum sessions were held to synergise national, provincial and district COVID-19 communication plans. These sessions focused on priority COVID-19 hotspot provinces and districts to support mitigation plans.
 - Some 1.7 million multilingual COVID-19 leaflets supplied by the DoH

- were distributed across the provinces.
- Some 48 200 multilingual hotspot posters were distributed and placed at strategic points. A further 12 340 multilingual posters and 12 200 leaflets on the vaccination campaign from the DoH were distributed across the provinces.
 - Some 85 COVID-19 vaccination mobile truck community activations were implemented across the provinces as part of the GCIS COVID-19 vaccine roll-out drive, covering elements of marketing and branding, radio ads and radio dramas.
 - Health safety messages were shared through procured theatrical drama groups for creative communication and conducted with the maintenance of social distancing.
 - Digital products such as *My District Today* newsletter and the *GovNews*



- bulletin were used internally and externally to support the festive season campaign, COVID-19 behaviour change campaign and vaccination campaigns.
- Content such as infographics, communication toolkits, media statements and daily messages were communicated daily through social-media platforms and the email system.

OUTREACH IN PICTURES





CONCLUSION

The pandemic not only tested our nation's resolve but also the robustness of our communication system. Government communication rose to the challenge and in doing so we gained valuable experience, and saw first-hand what we can achieve as communicators.

The GCIS ensured the achievement of a number of communication milestones within limited financial resources by leveraging the machinery and platforms of the government communication system. Had communication been properly resourced, it would have had a far greater impact. Fully resourced communication accompanied by on-the-ground deliv-

ery has the tremendous power to effect meaningful change.

Despite the constrained resources, communication on COVID-19 has been highly effective, and it played a critical role in reassuring South Africans and guiding their actions through the onslaught of the pandemic.

The cohesive front by government, business, labour and civil society under the NCP allowed for synergies, efficiencies and combining available resources to reach more South Africans.

Communication helped to educate the public about the virus, articulated the country's detailed response to fighting it and reassured citizens that government

was doing everything in its power to safeguard both lives and livelihoods. A key part of our communication during COVID-19 was making people to understand that they were part of the solution.

Our communication began to create togetherness in overcoming this extraordinary situation. Communication helped to strengthen public trust, which was critical in our success in preventing the spread of the virus.

Meanwhile, there is an opportunity for government to continue the partnership with the various stakeholders and apply the communication tactics used during COVID-19 to tackle the country's other pressing socio-economic challenges.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

B4SA	Business for South Africa	EVDS	Electronic Vaccination Data System
CCC	Communication Command Centre	FBO	Faith-based organisation
CCF	Community Constituency Front	G-CET	Government Communication Excellence Tool
CoGTA	Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs	GCIS	Government Communication and Information System
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions	GDP	Gross Domestic Product
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease	GSM	Government Segmentation Model
CRRF	COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund	HoC	Head of Communication
CSA	Communication Service Agency	IMC	Inter-Ministerial Committee
DATT	Demand Acceleration Task Team	MCA	Media Coverage Analysis
DG	Director-General	MEC	Member of the Executive Council
DoH	Department of Health	MP	Member of Parliament

NATJOINTS National Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure
NCCC National Coronavirus Command Council
NCP National Communication Partnership
NEDLAC National Economic Development and Labour Council
NGO Non-governmental organisation
NICD National Institute for Communicable Diseases
PLL Provincial and Local Liaison
PSA Public Service Announcement
PVC-SA People's Vaccine Campaign of South Africa
RCCE Risk Communication and Community Engagement

SACC South African Council of Churches
SADC Southern African Development Community
SANEF South African National Editors' Forum
SASSA South African Social Security Agency
SBCC Social and Behaviour Change Communication
UK United Kingdom
USD United States Dollar
VoIP Voice over Internet Protocol
VPNra Virtual Private Network remote access
ZCC Zion Christian Church



In 2022, the GCIS won the Silver PRISM Award for the COVID-19 Vaccine Communication Campaign. The Pan South African Language Board also awarded the Multilingualism Award in the Government/Public Sector category to the department for upholding multilingual communication, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

