

Press Release

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South African Institute of Race Relations

The power of ideas

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Emergency Covid-19 Isolated Care Vouchers offer solution to saving #LivesAndLivelihoods – IRR

The Institute of Race Relations (IRR) notes with great concern the confusion arising from amendments to, and sometimes contradictory statements on, lockdown regulations.

The absence of clarity risks creating dangerous confusion. Equally, the IRR is concerned about regulations inflicting unnecessary and avoidable harm on the lives and livelihoods of South Africans. The statement by the Minister of Justice and Correctional Service severely restricting the ability of people to book themselves into various forms of accommodation is such a case.

The tourism and hospitality industries have suffered a severe blow due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and it would be wrong to impose further unnecessary hardship on this sector. These industries have already been made victim of the government's indefensible race-based criteria for the provision of government assistance to businesses, as stated by the Minister of Tourism in March. All such damaging measures must be urgently revised.

In particular, the IRR urges policymakers to consider its proposal for Emergency Covid-19 Isolated Care Vouchers as a means both of protecting the livelihoods of those who are dependent on industries such as tourism and hospitality, and of providing safety from unnecessary exposure to people vulnerable to Covid-19 but unable to afford isolation measures.

The Emergency Covid-19 Isolated Care Vouchers are one of many constructive proposals contained in the IRR's [Friends in Need](#) report, published last week.

Such vouchers would enable private sector hospitality facilities to collaborate with the government in providing isolated care to poorer South Africans who cannot afford the costs associated with drastic of 'social distancing' or more stringent forms of isolation from possible carriers of Covid-19.

Emergency Covid-19 Isolated Care Vouchers could be issued to businesses and facilities to fund the admission and care of poor people who qualify, based on specific criteria of vulnerability. These vouchers would provide a direct remuneratory link to the Department of Health – or any other government agency or entity – to enable appropriate compensation. The objective is to ensure that vulnerable people can receive quality healthcare in the event of the public health system being overwhelmed, and also to mitigate the risk of such an outcome by placing those most at risk in safer living conditions.

Rather than taking counterproductive and damaging regulatory steps that put livelihoods at risk, government should implement creative and fair policies that will enable the private sector to play a powerful and constructive role in this time of crisis. Now is the time for solutions to save both #LivesAndLivelihoods

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