



StelCovid Action Group: COVID Station Actions, Vision and Story – by E. Kruger (PhD Anthropology)

Initiation of StelCovid Action Group

StelCovid Action Group started with concerned Stellenbosch residents living on a communal farm in Paradyskloof, and from Enkanini informal settlement and Kayamandi. Together with the Enkanini Research Centre (an *in situ* satellite research facility of the Sustainability Institute, Stellenbosch University established in 2013) they wanted to support residents of Enkanini through the pandemic lockdown, and sourced funding privately to buy soap bars and information posters, which they delivered to Enkanini informal settlement on the 25th of March 2020.

Meanwhile, a private consortium of doctors, Stelkor Doctors, established the COVID-19 GP Network Stellenbosch. One of the doctors, Dr. Tielman Marais, heard about the soap delivery and approached the Enkanini Research Centre with the idea of facilitating the placement of ten containers in under-resourced communities around Stellenbosch, similar to the prototype doctors had established outside their offices in the town centre. The medium-term vision for these containers was for them to become screening and testing centres which would provide much-needed medical support in poor communities in Stellenbosch, and reduce pressure on healthcare facilities which are expected to become overwhelmed.

StelCovid Action Group was formed to facilitate the sourcing of ten containers and resources and thereby provide support for COVID-19 relief efforts of the Department of Health within the Stellenbosch municipal area. An emergency bank account was established with a Kayamandi-based NGO crèche – Lithalethu EduCare Centre, to act as the immediate funding and finance administrative portal. Our vision is to establish at least one permanent clinic or health care facility here after the pandemic has passed.

StelCovid Action Group has already realised three COVID support stations in Enkanini, Khayamandi, and Langrug informal settlement in Franschoek through joint efforts to source funding, and voluntary time and labour. 7000 soap bars, 800 litres of liquid soap, and 100 litres of hand sanitiser have been distributed to about 10 000 people living in Enkanini and Khayamandi from our COVID support stations there. Our staff have been providing information to residents about social distancing and personal hygiene as they wait in queues for soap, along with other COVID-related information.

StelCovid Action Group: COVID Station Concept

The StelCovid Action Group COVID Station Concept is for each container to act at first as distribution centre for soaps and information about COVID-19. It is manned by local individuals, fulfilling the roles of two community healthcare workers, one nurse, two security guards acting as facilitating guardians and one station master who are all trained by a doctor in COVID-19 information, sanitary and hygiene practices and screening. The stations start out initially as educational nodes and places where people can access information for avoiding contracting the virus (physical distancing, hand washing, virus

transmissions). Each station can also be used as a community information hub about any COVID-19 related activities happening in the locale. The idea is that when residents come to collect soaps, they can have their hands sanitised and in the process be educated by security guards and the nurses about COVID-19 sanitary practices, symptoms and so forth. Our community liaisons in Enkanini have emphasised that education through oral communication is essential, she says because very often people do not pay attention to pamphlets and are more receptive to direct address. Members of the StelCovid Action Group also considered that fliers themselves could be vectors for the virus, and that oral communication and posters might be more effective.

As the virus progresses, the station can be used by the Department of Health for screening and testing should they require this kind of support. StelCovid's community healthcare workers and nurse are trained in screening, and can support this. The first two COVID Stations in Enkanini and Khayamandi are already acting as screening centres, and our staff are assisting DOH as community liaisons and healthcare workers to conduct door-to-door screenings.

A three to six-month timeline is projected for the utility of these COVID Stations as the disease progressively emerges, and a detailed budget has been compiled for their implementation.

StelCovid Action Group Consultation with Stakeholders

In order to realise this vision to support the Department of Health's efforts to contain the virus, and support people with inadequate access to healthcare living in informal and impoverished communities, StelCovid Action Group made contact with officials from the Department of Health (DOH), the Greater Stellenbosch Development Trust, Stellenbosch Unite, Stellenbosch Municipality, local street committees and ward councillors to discuss the proposal and ensure that relevant authorities and community members were aware of and endorsed this COVID-19 support initiative. With their support, a first container was delivered at the entrance to Enkanini informal settlement, where there is no clinic to serve the 10 000 residents.

Members of StelCovid also attended a meeting on 14 April 2020 with Department of Health officials, ward councillors, SAPS representatives, healthcare workers and doctors. Here it was emphasised by health officials that there was a great fear amongst informal settlement residents about being taken away for testing, and that communication was paramount ahead of screening efforts. Even the screenings, we were informed, needed to be renamed 'interviews' to avoid generating fear amongst people. StelCovid Members engaged with the group to inform them about the stations, and heard about the Department of Health's intention to begin first screening in Stellenbosch town in Enkanini the next Monday. It was here that arrangements were made with the DoH Dr. Lawson Eksteen to provide training to the healthcare workers providing support at the centre in Enkanini. Since then, StelCovid members have been assisting DOH employees in the screening process around Khayamandi and Enkanini.

StelCovid Action Group: COVID Station Steps

StelCovid Action Group rolled out an incremental plan, which is the following:

1. Consult with local residents to gain consent and identify a location for a COVID support centre
2. Place container
3. Source and train local staff whom residents are familiar with
4. Source soaps, hand sanitizers, cleaning materials, PPE, DOH educational materials etc. required for the centre

5. Provide information and sanitation support to residents in under-resourced areas

The station could then take following step depending on the needs of the Department of Health and the communities.

6. Provide screening and/or testing facilities

With the support of the Greater Stellenbosch Development Trust, Stellenbosch Unite and in collaboration with the private COVID-19 GP Network, local residents, Department of Health and the Stellenbosch Municipality, StelCovid Action Group hopes to provide an additional 7 COVID support stations of this kind in Stellenbosch and surrounds. A longer- term desire is to convert the Enkanini COVID-19 support into a more substantial healthcare support centre for the Department of Health and a willing NGO to take charge of.

The StelCovid Action Group volunteers

Our core group consists of 9 volunteers with various academic backgrounds, collectively holding 17 degrees, with various skill sets and expertise. Their shared vision is to stop the spread of the Coronavirus and to implement at least one long term health care facility. They are:

Mikhail van der Hoeven – Technical and Logistical Support. Micky has extensive experience in permaculture design and environmental teaching. He is a fire mitigation Programme Implementer at Casidra (SOC). He grows plants and build furniture in his spare time.

Emma Raysman – Bookkeeping and Finances. Emma is a successful life coach helping people through trauma and advising them on better life style practices. Emma makes art, dances and plays with numbers in her spare time.

Vuyokazi Luxande – Station Master Coordinator and Lithalethu Educare. Vuyo is a PhD candidate focussing on development and entrepreneurship at VUT. She enjoys cooking for her family and engaging with the community when she is not reading and writing.

Martin Menge – Website Management and Coordinator. Martin studies politics, philosophy and economics at UNISA. He loves to reason and to think critically on making the world better.

Charlie de Lange – Social Media and Design. Charlie studies criminology and she has a great interest in child rehabilitation through nature. She home schools her young son Fysh and she loves baking.

Yondela Tyawa – Station Master Coordinator and Enkanini Research Centre. He currently works with Stellenbosch Municipality and University on the Amanzi Yimpilo and EU Waterspoutt projects. He is passionate to improve peoples lives while he supports his wife and two children.

Berry Wessels – Group Leader. Berry is a social scientist at Stellenbosch University. Berry also works at Casidra as a Programme Implementer, assisting farmers with sustainable practices. He runs sheep in Stellenbosch town and he used to be a veterinary technologist.

Elizabeth Kruger – Social Anthropologist, strategic support and writer. She is doing her post-doc at UCT on water governance and she writes for an animal welfare NGO. She designs upcycled plastic art works.

Tom Lillyman – Procurement and Records. Tom is finishing his Masters in Sustainable Development with Enkanini as his case study. Tom loves music, especially listening to local artists.