

Mandela Day in a time of social distancing: 5 ways to make a virtual difference

By [Joanne van der Walt](#)

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Covid-19 put inequality in the spotlight. With millions of people without jobs and forced into poverty, the work of NGOs has never been more crucial. And there has never been a more crucial time to help them.



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It's around this time of year that corporates prepare for [Mandela Day](#), stocking up on paint and gardening supplies to uplift local charities. But this year, under social distancing, corporates need to get creative in how they support the social organisations that have taken the brunt of the Coronavirus impact – without being physically present.

The Nelson Mandela Foundation appeals to us to do what we can, while keeping ourselves and others safe. Here are a few ways to do that.

1. Ask before you donate

Ask your charity what they need right now to make things easier. Maybe it's food, maybe blankets, maybe a contribution to their electricity bill. [Their request may be surprisingly simple](#) and easy to make it happen. A fridge, for example, can be delivered to a soup kitchen in a few clicks, and is more useful to the charity right now than a massive food donation with no cold place to store it.

2. Your trash is another man's treasure

Lockdown forced many businesses to upgrade their technology to support remote teams. Consider donating your old computers and smartphones to schools, NGOs, or other learning institutions, like [Afrika Tikkun](#), which develops and uplifts young people in underprivileged communities. And, if remote working suits your business model and you're considering downgrading your office space, these organisations will gladly accept your furniture, appliances, and stationery, for a more comfortable learning environment.

3. Partner, partner, partner

I can't stress this enough. [Effective social engagement](#) is about long-term relationships and commitment. It takes time and sustained effort to make a real difference to the organisations you partner with. The best way to have a long-lasting, sustainable impact is to build supportive partnerships on trust and collaboration. Check in with your charity regularly to understand the challenges they face, not just in their organisation but also in the wider community.

4. Money is always appreciated

Yes, you could donate to the broader fight against Covid-19, by supporting initiatives like the Solidarity Fund, but you may never see the impact of your contribution. According to the [National Small Business Chamber](#), only 6% of small businesses that applied for relief funding were successful. If registered, tax-compliant businesses are having a hard time accessing funds, how challenging must it be for a non-registered, community-based NPO?

In donating directly to these organisations, you see the impact in front of you. It's tangible, raw, and emotional. What's

more, you'll have a genuine impact in the community, since most NGOs support local businesses and provide employment.

5. Don't have money to give?

There's so much you can do for very little or no money at all, like offering your services, pro bono, to your chosen charity. NGOs would be grateful for help with their finances, a website, legal advice, or mentorship.

You could also help your charity by setting up a Given Gain page. The average fundraiser connects with 15 donors and raises R10,000 simply by creating a project and sharing it with friends and family. Another way to contribute is to buy extra groceries and drop them in the [Each1Feed1](#) box at participating retail stores.

The world needs a virtual hug

Life is hard for a lot of people right now. Millions are suffering and millions feel helpless and anxious, including your own people. But through the act of giving and being part of something bigger, we can contribute towards our local communities in ways we never thought possible.

And, in doing so, we reap many mental health benefits: we're [happier](#), [healthier](#), and may even [live longer](#).

In fact, in re-educating and engaging with our colleagues, they said they wanted to volunteer more during this time. It was important to them that we continued to support our partner charities. Many of our colleagues involved the whole family in initiatives like Rainbows for Hope.

At Sage, we're committed to doing business the right way, by investing and supporting non-profit partners that are helping people reach their true potential. South Africans have come together on a scale never seen before, to help vulnerable people in need of support during Covid-19.

I'm excited to see what we can collectively achieve this virtual Mandela Day.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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