

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **The gift of freedom of movement**

***To ensure that patients with mobility impairments continue to receive support and enjoy freedom of movement, Novartis recently donated 100 wheelchairs to the Unjani Lotus Gardens clinic in Pretoria.***

Healthcare inequality is a stark reality in South Africa.<sup>1,2</sup> According to the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation & Entrepreneurship, the annual per capita healthcare expenditure in the private sector is approximately \$1,400 USD per patient, compared to only \$140 per patient in the public sector; which is responsible for the needs of the majority of the population.<sup>1</sup>

This inequity is further heightened among people living with disabilities, especially those in rural areas, who are prevented from accessing vital services due to accessibility and mobility barriers.<sup>2</sup>

Derrick Ellan, Head of Public Affairs at Novartis South Africa, urges all South Africans to consider the ways in which we can contribute to addressing the needs of underserved and marginalized communities to support and promote quality healthcare for all. “To achieve sustainable, inclusive economic growth and social development, all spheres of South African society must work together to eliminate inequality. For Novartis, our particular focus is on equitable access to healthcare and healthcare services,” says Ellan.

“We are acutely aware of the social and health injustices that many South Africans still face on a daily basis. Notably, the limited access to essential services and products, including medications. So, as a global corporation, we have learned, adapted, and implemented strategies that are tailored to the needs of our local population, whilst working together with multiple stakeholders to address disease burdens of varying forms.”

### **Bridging healthcare gaps**

Novartis’ medications reach more than 740 million people worldwide every year.<sup>3</sup> However, not all individuals and households are able to access the level of healthcare services and medications needed. According to Ellan “This is due to varying factors which could include

affordability physical barriers, and a lack of awareness. As such, our commitment to saving lives and improving treatment outcomes extends far beyond manufacturing critical medicines.”

With this said, earlier this year, Novartis proudly partnered with Unjani, an organisation providing quality yet affordable primary healthcare services to under-served areas in South Africa. After understanding Unjani’s priority needs for patients, Novartis donated 100 wheelchairs to support those with mobility challenges. This aid would hopefully allow for easier access in and around the clinics while restoring patient independence, and more importantly, their sense of human dignity.

“At Novartis, we understand the interconnectedness of access to healthcare and necessities to improve lives and attain a safer, healthier, and more equitable society. The delivery of quality healthcare and other basic services in South Africa will continue to depend on ongoing strategic public-private partnerships, to which Novartis is unwaveringly committed,” concludes Ellan.

## **ENDS**

### **References:**

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