



Coordination of Government-NGO food relief efforts in Cape Town and the Western Cape

23 April 2020

Introduction

An online meeting, convened by the Western Cape Economic Development Partnership (EDP) was held on 23 April 2020 to discuss the coordination of food relief efforts between Government and NGOs in Cape Town and the Western Cape, and to find a common approach to the strategic challenges emerging in this area.

Agenda

The agenda for the call included the following:

- An overview of the mapping of current food relief efforts
- Gaps in food relief programmes, and constraints to these efforts
- An update on the Western Cape Government (WCG) Humanitarian Response Plan
- Recommendations, requests and next steps

Participants

The list below, taken from the meeting invitation, is not necessarily a complete reflection of the participants on the call, as a number of people not originally on the invitation list took part in the discussion. Recipients of this report are encouraged to share it with those not on the distribution list.

Organisation	Participant
Afrika Tikken	Marc Lubner
Cape Town Together – Community Action Networks	Jared Rossouw, Marcela Guerrero Casas
Community Chest	Colleen Brocker, Susan Thevar
FoodForward	Andy du Plessis
Gift of the Givers	Badr Kazi
DAG, VPUU and CORC (ISSP network)	Michael Krause (VPUU), Charlton Ziervogel (CORC), Adi Kumar, Crystal West (DAG)
Islamic Relief	Yusuf Mohammed
Mustadafin Foundation	Ghairunisa Johnstone
Peninsula School Feeding Association	Patrina Pakoe
Red Cross	Fernel Campher
South African National Zakah Fund	Shireen Kamaldien
The Lunchbox Fund	Sue Wildish
The Warehouse Trust	Wendy Lewin
DHL logistics support	Dirk van Doorn

Western Cape Government	
	Brent Walters (Convenor, WCG Covid-19 Humanitarian Response)
	Hildegarde Fast
	Jacqui Boulle
	Karen Shippey
	Bridget Hannah
	Siham Salie-Abrahams
	Isac Smith
	Lionel Arnolds
	Gray McGuire
City of Cape Town	
	Johan Minnie
	Charlotte Powell
	Tamsin Faragher
	Kayleen Simpson
	Nenha Singh
	Alistair Graham
	Peta Barnard
	Riaan Van Dyk
	Mark Van der Merwe
EDP	
	Gill Cullinan
	Andrew Boraine
	Libby Ferrandi

Overview of the mapping of current food relief efforts

The WCG has developed a database to map food relief programmes from NGOs, which reflects current and planned food relief activity, its geographical location, and the timing of this relief. The aim of this database is to allow sharing of information, and – crucially – to increase the efficiency of food distribution efforts in a transparent manner. It was also noted that the website could lead to the more intangible benefit of creating a broader community of those involved in food relief.

The data currently on the database has been provided directly by those NGOs involved in these efforts. A few points were made related to the data:

- It is important for the various fields to be completed as accurately as possible (e.g. municipality, ward, type of assistance – food, humanitarian, etc.).
- NGOs are able to update information on food relief through a Mobi-site.
- The value of the assistance was discussed. It was felt that, where possible, the cost of assistance should include transport costs, to allow for a realistic view of this cost of this kind of support. There was also a recognition that this level of data may not be available from all working on food relief. There is currently no facility for detailing transport costs separately on this database.
- It was noted that one of the current assumptions on this site is that assistance to one household affects four individuals.
- While the database is owned and will be managed by WCG, it was stated that the information belongs to the community, and should be used to increase food relief efficiencies.
- The database is not limited to NGOs registered with the Department of Social Development; all unregistered CBOs, FBOs and NGOs are able to register on the site and provide live information on their activities.

There are plans for including a facility for people wanting to offer help to contribute to the website.

The WCG has also mapped, separately, where government assistance is also being provided, e.g. national DSD, SASSA, the Solidarity Fund, provincial DSD and WCED, and municipalities. This is being overlaid with their data on mapped areas of historic vulnerability (based on DSD data) and categories and areas of emerging vulnerability, for example, economic sectors that have been most affected by COVID-19.

The issue of confidentiality of information about government and NGO efforts was made. It was agreed that aggregate data, both of government and NGO efforts, should be made public. Detailed data, however, should only be available through controlled access (via user IDs and passwords, for example), thus preserving NGO confidentiality while still allowing informed, real-time decision-making and transparency.

It was reiterated that including the timing of the assistance is crucial in any database: the gaps between requests and delivery of assistance are a key part of the planning process.

Gaps in food relief programmes, and constraints to these efforts

A number of issues were raised related to NGO programmes to provide food relief.

1. There is a lack of clarity on whether permits for food distribution are required for NGOs providing food relief. It was reported that SAPS have tried to close down some operations for the lack of such permits.
2. There are safety and security issues associated with transporting food relief to vulnerable communities. While SAPS assistance is being received in some instances, this is not universally reported, and support from the SANDF is reported as being sporadic and unreliable.
3. Similarly, there are concerns about the safety of food while it is warehoused.

Brent Walters undertook to obtain clarity on the permitting issue, and to raise the safety and security issues with the security cluster.

The option of utilising the services of City of Cape Town law officers was also mooted as a potential solution.

4. It was noted that the Security Cluster require daily information on where distribution is going to take place, in order to provide the required protection. However, there is currently no clearly understood mechanism for providing all of this information to any central database.

In this instance, Jacqui Boulle of WCG offered to act as an email conduit to the Prov Joints for all deliveries on Friday, 24 April, for those on the call. Her email address is: jacqueline.boulle@westerncape.gov.za.

5. The identification of beneficiaries remains a problem – determining who requires assistance, avoiding duplication, and reaching all those requiring help (including the newly-poor, as well as the historically vulnerable). This requires a clearly-communicated set of beneficiary criteria.

The role of ward councillors was discussed in relation to this, and clarity provided that they should be providing on-the-ground information on beneficiaries, but should not be involved in the distribution of assistance.

6. Communication with citizens is key to these efforts. Accurate messaging needs to give a clear understanding to communities about the economic and social relief is available, both now and in the future, what the criteria for accessing this relief are, and who to source the relief from. It was noted that different messages might be required for different areas and different types of assistance.

Jacqui Boulle undertook to liaise with the CANs to start addressing this.

7. Feedback loops are required, between communities and those coordinating assistance (both government and NGOs), to improve both distribution and communication. It was suggested that the Community Action Networks (CANs) and other CBOs should be mobilised specifically to assist with this, in addition to municipal staff, ward councillors and NGOs.
8. It was stated that there is a general lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities within the food assistance value chain. It is proving difficult for NGOs to know where to source information, process help, etc. It would be useful to have a flow diagram to explain institutional responsibilities.

WCG Humanitarian Response Plan

Hildegard Fast of the WCG provided an outline of the Provincial Humanitarian Response Plan. These slides will be distributed to participants after being signed off by Cabinet on 24 April 2020.

The WCG plan is based on a 'whole of government approach', namely, that government on its own cannot provide all the solutions and needs to work in partnership with different sectors of society.

The WCG approach is based on 'adaptive management', i.e. don't wait for the perfect plan, step into action, review, learn, adjust and adapt. This approach requires constant feedback from partners.

Recommendations, requests and next steps

1. There is a need to get clarity on the health requirements for the provision and distribution of cooked meals through community kitchens.
2. A number of participants stated that the crisis is forcing them into food distribution, which is not an area where they have previously operated. One participant requested assistance with practical guidance, beneficiary identification, etc. It was felt that this level of information is likely to be needed by others, and some way of linking those requiring assistance with NGOs currently operating in this space should be set up.
3. An appeal was made for NGOs to capture beneficiary data wherever possible. This data could include ID numbers, cellphone numbers, and electricity meter numbers as the first priorities.
4. It was suggested that, in order to help break the dependence on food parcels from third parties, seeds and pulses to encourage recipients to grow their own food could be included in food parcels. Marc Lubner from Afrika Tikkun is piloting this next week, and offered to share their learnings and insights. The WC Department of Agriculture is also working in this area and should be included in these discussions.
5. It was noted that a hybrid model of food assistance is preferable to food parcels alone: e-vouchers, unconditional cash transfers, etc. allow recipients a degree of agency and

choice. A number of digital food voucher pilot schemes are in place, and their learnings can be made available to this group. (Some of these learnings include, for example, the need for a social compact with retailers who are included in these schemes, to prevent price increases, etc.)

6. The Community Chest is working with Eat Out on a programme involving restaurants doing bespoke cooking for vulnerable communities. They are currently exploring ways of operating within the by-laws, and their progress should be reported to this group.
7. In general, the interaction and communication between municipalities and NGOs needs to be improved.
8. The participants also agreed that there was real value in this discussion, and that the group should reconvene regularly. The next discussion was set for **Thursday, 30 April 2020 at 2:30 p.m.** Invitations will be sent out; participants are encouraged to nominate other role-players in this area who would benefit from, or contribute to, the discussion.

For further information or questions about this report, contact Andrew Boraine of the Western Cape Economic Development Partnership (EDP) at Andrew@wcedp.co.za.