



Report: Western Cape NGO-Government Food Relief Coordination Meeting

28 May 2020

Introduction

The Western Cape Economic Development Partnership (EDP) convened a Zoom call on 28 May 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.

This was one of a series of such weekly calls. Detailed reports on the previous calls were produced and circulated to all participants, and copies of these reports are available on request.

Agenda

The agenda for the call included the following:

1. An update on the Western Cape Government (WCG) humanitarian efforts, including the COVID-19 hotspot strategy, food relief, and the role of civil society in the next phase of the response to the virus
2. Feedback from NGOs on food needs in vulnerable areas and with vulnerable groups
3. An update on www.fooddistribution.co.za, the food relief database.

Introduction

The chairperson thanked everyone for their collective efforts in addressing the challenge of hunger during the Covid-19 crisis.

The timing of this call was particularly appropriate, taking place as it did on World Hunger Day. The Community Chest has published an in-depth look at human rights, inequality and securing food systems to mark the day. Click here for the link to this publication: https://issuu.com/eltena/docs/world_hunger_2020_25052020_final?fr=sMjVjNjE0NTkwNzA

On the call on 21 May, the purpose of this forum was re-stated. For information or for new attendees, this document is included in this report as *Attachment 1: Purpose of this forum*.

1. WCG humanitarian efforts

Jacqui Boule of the WCG provided an update on the Provincial humanitarian efforts, which included details on the approach to the different phases of response to COVID-19, and on the role of civil society in this response.

The presentation is included as *Attachment 2: Humanitarian cluster NGO presentation*.

Jacqui Boulle emphasised the following points:

- We are entering a different phase of local transmissions and of lockdown.
- We need an integrated approach, not just food, or health.
- We need a targeted approach, with a focus on hotspots identified through health data.
- We need a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach. This is based on a) clarity on who needs to do what, and b) how we do this together.

In response, a number of issues were raised about the SASSA COVID grant.

It was noted that payments have been extremely slow to date. This has led to issues for some NGOs who have assisted people to apply, and who are now at some risk from frustrated applicants.

It was further noted that an additional issue stems from the stated position that people will only be paid from the date of their application, without the possibility of back payment; applicants in June will therefore not have access to the full potential 6 months of payment.

Theresa Edlmann from the Black Sash confirmed that the process has been an issue, and that the Black Sash are assisting up to 60 organisations around the country to help people to apply.

Participants who require assistance in this regard are encouraged to contact Theresa at theresa@blacksash.org.za or Abigail Peters at abigail@blacksash.org.za.

Concerns were also raised about applicants not having data for the application process. *It was stressed that the USSD method of application does not require data, and that this should therefore be recommended in such situations.*

Jacqui Boulle also noted that the WCG is aware of the issue caused by slow payment of the grants. Their responses have included exploring an emergency plan to cover the potential timing gap between food relief and payment of the grants, as well as providing additional call centre support.

Note: updated information from SASSA subsequent to the meeting. The verification process is complicated. **6 million** applications have been received nationwide, and more applications are expected. All applications first need to be checked against the social pension system, UIF, student bursary schemes and SARS systems. Successful applicants **with** bank accounts then need to have their bank account verified by their bank. If this is successful, payment follows. If bank account verification is not successful, the applicant will be requested to open a Post Bank account. For successful applicants **without** bank accounts, banks will assist to create E-wallet accounts, whereupon payment will be made. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified.

Processes for some applicants have been completed and payments have commenced. The Minister of Social Development is expected to announce shortly how many people per Province have been paid.

The financial constraints being faced by the various spheres of government were also explained. The higher-than-expected number of infections in the Western Cape has meant that the Provincial budget has had to be reframed to accommodate increased Health costs. In addition, the National budget has had to accommodate the COVID-19 grants, and so similarly has less available for food relief.

A number of questions were asked about isolation processes and facilities. Jacqui agreed that the need for isolation facilities is going to increase. However, more facilities are now available.

Participants who have questions or suggestions about isolation facilities (such as Wesley Moodley, wesleymoodley32@gmail.com, who raised the possibility of utilising churches as isolation centres if they are not being re-opened for Phase 3, and who offered to liaise with the Religious Leaders Forum in Bishop Lavis) should contact Jacqui Boule (Jacqueline.Boule@westerncape.gov.za) in this regard. Similarly, participants who are aware of people who are self-isolating and who need assistance should also feed their information to the WCG.

As information becomes available on the proposal currently with the Provincial Treasury for funding of R200 per bed in isolation facilities, it will be fed back to this forum.

- **Feedback from NGOs**

A number of shared issues were raised by NGO representatives on the call.

- Facilitating community behaviour change and communicating in general. A number of participants expressed concern about their inability to drive home the importance of wearing masks or asked for assistance in ending “double-dipping” by recipients of relief. Increased links between government (both provincial and local) and influencers such as religious leaders were felt to be essential to these efforts.
- The role of SAPS and the army was raised, as in previous calls. It is felt that they should be able to play a larger role both in crime prevention and in community behaviour change, as well as supporting and protecting NGO humanitarian efforts.
- A number of participants expressed concern about assisting the homeless. Despite there being a number of organisations working on this, there is a great deal of need that is not being met.
- Feeding schoolchildren, given the reopening of schools on 1 June, was also raised. It was confirmed that parents’ fear of sending their children to school, either for food prior to reopening, or after reopening, is widespread.

The point was made that there will, from 1 June, be more funding available for school feeding schemes, as the National Grant will then be applicable. Schools have been issued with PPE and behaviour guidance; children going to school feeding schemes are to be at no greater risk than from going to any other soup kitchen.

- Communication and coordination between relief organisations in their areas was also raised as a key point, particularly in the light of the need for a broad-based response to the crisis. It was noted that municipal assistance with these efforts is essential.

Luzuko Mdunyelwa (Luzuko.mdunyelwa@capetown.gov.za) of the City of Cape Town confirmed that the establishment of Ward Based Teams has been approved. These teams are intended to serve exactly this purpose: to bring together ward councillors, NGOs operating in a ward, business forums, religious leaders – effectively everyone with influence – to act as a conduit between the community, the City of Cape Town, and the WCG.

- Zukile Ngqeza from The Warehouse requested that any organisations participating on the call who have access to potential beneficiaries should contact him at zukile@warehouse.org.za. He stated that The Warehouse is a processing centre for food vouchers.

3. An update on www.fooddistribution.co.za

Sam Vos of U-Turn provided an update on the website that has been developed to enable the collation of data on food relief efforts.

A number of improvements have been implemented:

- Clarity has been provided on the principles on which the website is based (as requested in the call of 21 May). These principles can be found at <http://fooddistribution.co.za/about-food-distribution/>.
- It was noted that the 'Neighbourhood' field now drives the population of a number of other fields, to make data capture easier.
- When recording data, food relief organisations need to differentiate between food parcels, meals, and vouchers.
- The 'Results' section of the website is now searchable, which will enable easier determination of need.

Participants on the call were again encouraged to register and to enter their food relief data as often and timeously as possible.

Next steps:

- The issue of local area communication and coordination is becoming increasingly important. It was proposed that the City of Cape Town's Ward Based Teams be tested, potentially in Delft, and that initial results be supplied to the next meeting of this forum. The approach will also be tested in the Grabouw area in the Overberg.
- Feedback on the Mayor's Relief Fund should also be given at the next forum meeting.
- A meeting of the larger networks of food suppliers to smaller NGOs and organisations will be set up before the next forum meeting, with the aim of finding areas of over-servicing and under-servicing.
- The WCG will provide finalisation of the arrangements for the provision of isolation beds at community level.
- Theresa Edlmann will provide an update from the Black Sash on their efforts to facilitate the SASSA COVID grant processes and applications.
- Further engagements are required to address:
 - The issue of support for the homeless
 - Ways to connect NGOs to larger suppliers and industrial kitchens, as well as to the private sector.
 - The production and distribution of cotton 3-ply masks.

A final word of caution was sounded: as South Africa moves to Level 3 on 1 June, all the dangers of infection and transmission will increase. This is particularly important for organisations providing food relief, and additional vigilance – and encouraging the appropriately cautious behaviour – is essential.

Participants are also encouraged to email Andrew Boraine with any questions, comments, or suggestions.

This group will reconvene on **Thursday, 28 May 2020 at 2:00 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.

Attachment 1: Purpose of this forum

Attachment 2: WCG Humanitarian Cluster NGO presentation

Attachment 3: Attendees 28 May Food Relief Forum