



The Contribution of Civil Society Organisations to Food Relief in the Western Cape in June/July 2020

Report for the Western Cape Economic Development Partnership (WCEDP)

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Introduction

The WCEDP commissioned ikapadata to collect and analyse the available data on food relief efforts by the largest non-government food relief providers in Western Cape since the start of Covid-19 lockdown. The task is a repeat of a previous exercise where a combined voluntary effort of different organisations and individuals resulted in the first dataset on the civil sector's contribution to food relief during the first period of the lock (March to June). This data was processed and analysed by ikapadata and presented to the WCEDP, the Western Cape NGO-Government Food Relief Coordination Forum, and government. This second round of data collection and analysis was paid for by WCEDP and carried out by ikapadata.

The results presented in this report are based on the submissions from 17 organisations that had previously been identified as significant contributors to food relief in the province as well Somerset West CAN which does not source food from the intermediaries. Because they typically supply the smaller community-based organisations on the ground they are called the "intermediaries". The analysis covers the 53 days between 8 June 2020 and 31 July 2020.

The organisations included in the analysis are¹:

- Afrika Tikkun
- Breadline Afrika
- Community Chest (food parcel data for July missing)
- DG Murray Trust
- Extreem Soupathon
- Ikamva Labantu (data for June missing)
- Ladles of Love
- Feed the Nation
- Rotary
- Service Dining Rooms
- Stellenbosch Unite
- The Warehouse Trust
- Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrade (VPUU)
- Mustadafin
- Philippi Economic development Partnership (PEDI)
- The Brewers Soup Collective - Mother Soup Project
- Somerset West CAN

The analysis of the available data shows that the civil sector's contribution to food relief in the province has not diminished after the first period of lockdown: on average, the sector fed **40,571 individuals per day** over the 53 day period under review. The average for the first period of lockdown from March to the beginning of June was 41,635 individuals per day.

¹ The only organisation from the original list of providers to be included in the analysis but that was ultimately excluded is UCOOK because they are primarily a supplier to many of the other organisations in the list and we wanted to avoid double-counting.

Methodology

The intermediaries were first contacted by Andrew Boraine from WCEDP with the request to submit the relevant information via email. The email included a data capture template and guidelines for using the template. The organisations were encouraged to use the template but it was also emphasised that they could submit the data in a format of their preference as long as it included the necessary information (organisations and areas where food was delivered, dates of delivery, quantities of food parcels/meals/vouchers/bulk deliveries, and the contents of the food parcels, if applicable). After this initial contact, ikapadata's outreach staff followed up with each organisation via phone and email until the correct data had been sent.

The incoming data was cleaned by ikapadata's data assistants and analysts before it was uploaded to a relational database in Airtable. In the database, observations were linked to a recipient organisation and area, and food parcel and bulk contents were linked to nutritional information to calculate calorie contents. During this phase of data cleaning we could also identify and eliminate double-entries (e.g. one organisation in the list supplying another in the list) and non-qualifying records (e.g. shipments to areas outside the Western Cape). The cleaned and processed dataset was then exported into Stata for scripted data analysis.

Units and Measurements

The intermediaries were asked to submit data on food relief in four different categories: food parcels, meals, vouchers and bulk. In order to be able to aggregate and compare quantities across the different categories we worked with a unit called **person day** (in plural: **people days**), which effectively measures quantities of food as the number of days they would feed a single adult. For example, food for one person day means that the food would feed an adult for a single day. Fifty people days means that the amount would feed one person for 50 days (or 50 people for one day each, or 25 people for two days each, etc).

It is important to note that we could only measure the overall impact of food relief in terms of quantities of food, but not the total number of people who were impacted by those initiatives - i.e. the number of people who benefitted from a hot soup cooked at a community kitchen or from a meal that included ingredients from a food parcel. To illustrate this point in relation to the meaning of a person day, it is possible to imagine a scenario where one person receives a food parcel with enough food for one person for ten days, and another scenario where two people each receive a food parcel with enough food for one person for five days. The amount of food in terms of people days would be the same in both scenarios (10 people days) but the number of people impacted would double from one person in the first scenario to two people in the second scenario. So one can say that people days measure the overall impact of food deliveries but as a measure of number of people being affected it can only serve as a minimum estimate **while the actual number of people who benefitted from these food deliveries is almost certainly significantly higher than the number of people days**.

In order to normalise people days across different categories, assumptions for each category had to be made.

Food Parcels

We managed to obtain the contents of all the different types of food parcels that were distributed by the participating organisations. With the help of nutritional tables we could then establish the calories content of every parcel and calculate the people days per food parcel using the World Food Programme's (WFP) standard of 2100kcal as a daily ration per adult

for calculating food parcel sizes.²

It is important to note that during the previous round of data collection we measured food parcel sizes by asking the question “How many people does one food parcel feed for how many days?”. We now know that these self-reported quantities tended to be inflated, often quite significantly. If we would have continued to use this method, the total number of people days would have been likely to be significantly higher than the more accurate one reported here.

Meals

Meals are probably the most difficult to measure because of the great variability within the category; they range from a bag of fruit to sandwiches and soups and substantial cooked meals. We tried to measure the calorie contents of meals by obtaining lists of ingredients and recipes of meals from intermediaries but were only successful in some cases. We therefore stuck to the same method we used before, according to which an uncooked meal and porridge count $\frac{1}{6}$ of an adult’s daily food requirements (person day), and cooked meals, such as soups and stews, count $\frac{1}{3}$.

In some submissions we received from the intermediaries, soups were measured not as individual meals but in litres, and each litre was assumed to cover the requirement of an adult for one day (which means that one litre of soup counts as three meals).

Based on the ingredient lists and recipes we did get, the people days from meals are likely somewhat overestimated, if one were to apply the same assumption of 2100 kcal being the minimum requirement. But, as discussed later, meals tend to cover a broader range of nutritional requirements than food parcels, which should be taken into account if one revisits these assumptions.

Vouchers

Intermediaries were given the opportunity to provide information both for cash and other types of vouchers (e.g. meal vouchers) but in the end all vouchers were reported as cash vouchers (Rand values). We were aware that some types of vouchers were distributed to CBOs (e.g. community kitchens) while others were given to individuals, and some vouchers could be redeemed only at specific outlets or in exchange for certain food items. Ultimately, we did not take these distinctions into account and instead assumed that the equivalent of a R15 voucher value would translate into a single person day of food, i.e. an adult would be able to buy a day’s worth of food with R15. This estimate is roughly based on StatsSA’s national food poverty line of R585/month (about R19 per day).

Bulk

Some intermediaries reported the amount of food they distributed to CBOs in bulk (e.g. 100kg of tomatoes, 300 loaves of white bread etc). In these cases we followed the same method as with the food parcels and calculated the calorie contents of those deliveries divided by 2100kcal.

Limitations

Despite the use of a standardised data capturing template, not all organisations captured their food relief efforts in a consistent manner. Where such idiosyncrasies were detected, and efforts to correct the data were unsuccessful, we had to make certain assumptions. These assumptions were applied consistently across organisations with similar data inaccuracies.

² <https://www.wfp.org/wfp-food-basket>

Following is a list of some of the transformations we made in order to correct the data:

- Organisation A provided data that included soup served to individuals. This data was initially provided in litres of soup rather than as individual meals served. We assumed that 1 litre of soup translated into 3 meals.
- Organisation B provided data on total soup meals served, but did not disaggregate the data by area. We assumed that all areas served the same amount of soup and therefore divided total soup meals equally between areas. While this does not affect the results presented in this report, it does affect the spatial mapping of food relief efforts.
- Organisation C provided data on their food parcels, but upon further enquiry it turned out that items were added on an ad hoc basis depending on requests from recipient organisations and the food items that were available at the time. We therefore created different types of food parcels for that organisation in the database and tried to assign the correct type to the relevant entry based on the notes provided in the data capture sheet. The same organisation also reported unusually large amounts of meals delivered but only aggregated for the entire period from early June to end of July, per area.

It is also necessary to emphasise that this report does not account for all food relief efforts in the province, but only those that were channelled through the 17 participating intermediaries. While we estimate that these cover the majority, **the real extent of civil society's contribution is likely to be significantly larger.**

Results

Number of People Fed

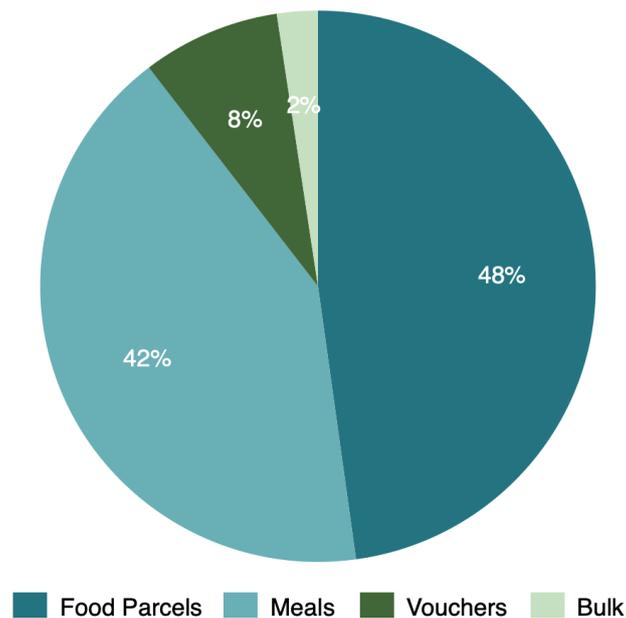
In total, the distributed amount of food covers **2,150,263 people days** over the period of **53 days**. This translates into **40,571 individuals being fed per day**, on average. As noted earlier, the actual number of beneficiaries is likely to be significantly higher as not the same 40,571 individuals received a full ration every day. Instead, in most cases the distributed food likely supplemented other food sources. To use an example: if one individual received three warm meals on one day and the next day, it would count as two people days. But if the same person received the three warm meals only one day, and her neighbour three warm meals the next day, this would still translate into two people days, but two instead of one person would have benefitted.

For comparison: during the first 74 days of lockdown we counted 3,080,998 people days of food, which translates into an average of 41,635 people fed per day. This comparison is not entirely accurate though as a) we were able to include a larger number of organisations during the second round of data collection, b) we moved from counting numbers of days and people for food parcels during round one to counting calories in round two, and c) we included bulk deliveries in round two.

The combined civil society food relief effort over the two periods, i.e. from end March to end July 2020 comes to 5,231,261 people days, a considerable mobilisation and distribution of humanitarian resources to poor and vulnerable areas in the Western Cape during the Covid-19 pandemic.

During the period under review, to get a full picture of humanitarian aid, the civil society contribution would need to be combined with the Western Cape Education Department's school feeding programmes, the City of Cape Town's Mayors Relief Fund (approximately R13m of food aid distributed by 61 NGOs at a ward level) and the SASSA special Covid grant paid to eligible individuals.

Types of Food Relief



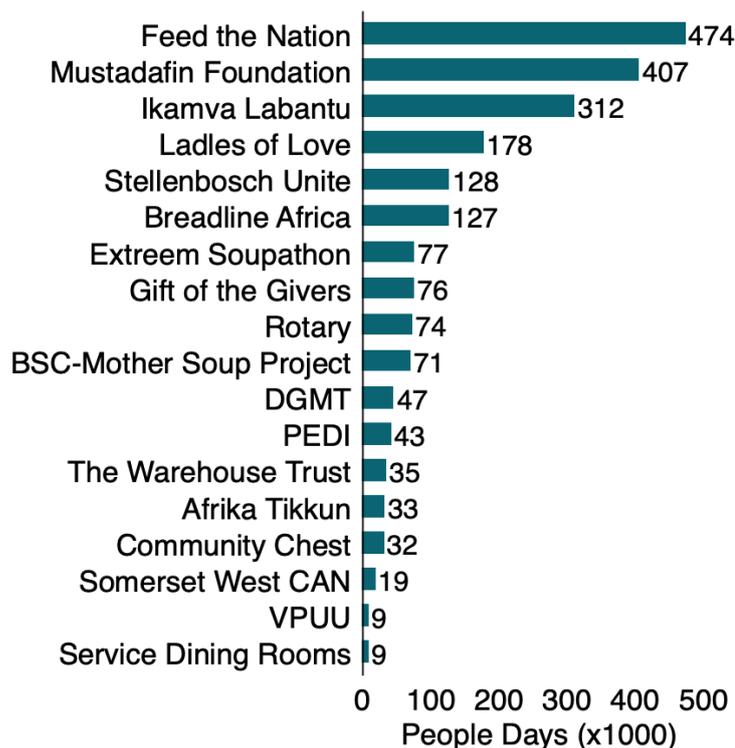
Graph: Percentage of different types of food relief, measured in People Days

Food parcels accounted for 48% of all food relief, followed by meals with 42%. Vouchers covered 8%, and bulk deliveries 2% of all deliveries.

During the first phase of lockdown, food parcels still accounted for 64% of all food relief, meals for 34% and vouchers for 2%. It is worth pointing out again though that the calculation of food parcel sizes changed between the first and second rounds of data collection; whereas during the first round we accepted the organisations' self-reported estimates of their food parcel sizes ("How many people for how many days?") at face value, we took the calorie count per parcel as the basis for the calculation of food parcel sizes during round 2. This shift is reflected in the average food parcel sizes, not accounting for food parcels provided by Feed the Nation (whose food parcels are unusually big at 67 people days): the average food parcel size in June/July was just over 20 people days. During the first round of data collection it was 24 days.

Nonetheless, it is safe to assume that the shift away from food parcels to meals does at least partly reflect the reality on the ground. Aside from Feed the Nation and Ikamva Labantu who, combined, were responsible for 63% of all food parcel deliveries during June and July, most other organisations seem to be shifting away from food parcels as a form of food relief. Equally, while the contribution of food vouchers to the overall picture is still relatively small, the increase from 2% to 8% seems to reflect a strong incentive for organisations to embrace new avenues in distributing food relief digitally. (Note that many vouchers were provided to kitchens, not individuals, thus further increasing the overall number and percentage of meals provided).

People Days by Organisation



Graph: Percentage of organisations' contributions to food relief, measured in People Days

Three organisations supplied 56% of the entire food relief in June and July: Feed the Nation, Mustadafin Foundation and Ikamva Labantu. Both Feed the Nation and Ikamva Labantu achieved this primarily via food parcels. In Feed the Nation's case it was particularly the unusually large size of the parcels, measured in calorie content, that enabled them to supply such large quantities.

In contrast, Mustadafin Foundation secured its place by being the largest distributor of meals in the province. It must be mentioned though that the organisation's data in that respect was relatively coarse as only aggregated figures for the entire period, per area, were provided.

The largest provider of vouchers was DGMT, followed by Ikamava Labantu.

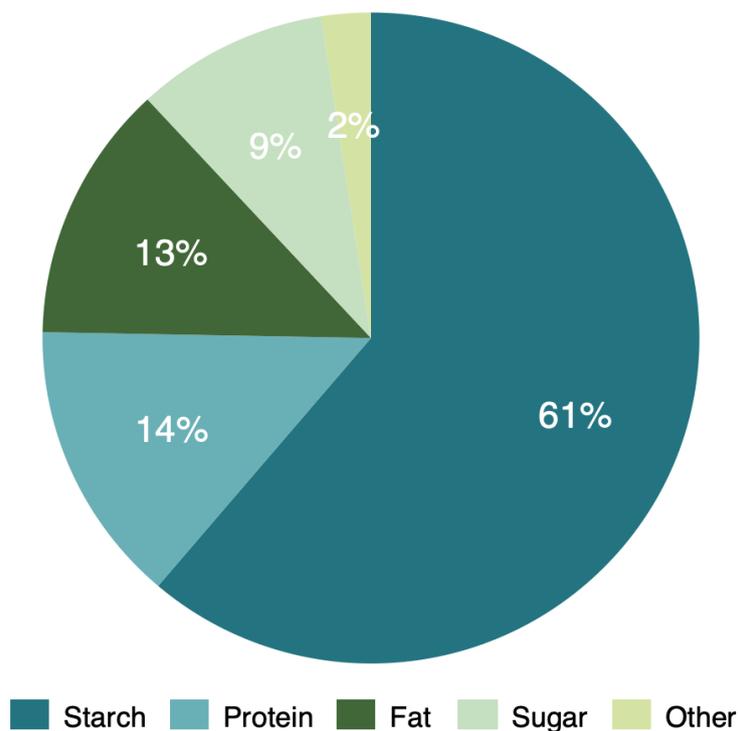
Some of the most prolific providers of food relief during the early phase of the lockdown, such as PEDI, Afrika Tikkun and especially Community Chest, have significantly reduced their food relief efforts during this more recent period.

Table: Type of food relief by organisation

Organisation	Food Parcels	Meals	Vouchers	Bulk	People Days
Feed the Nation	78%	22%	0%	0%	473 864
Mustadafin Foundation	29%	71%	0%	0%	406 572
Ikamva Labantu	87%	0%	13%	0%	311 739
Ladles of Love	26%	60%	0%	14%	177 845
Stellenbosch Unite	24%	63%	13%	0%	128 251
Breadline Africa	2%	98%	0%	0%	126 810
Extreem Soupathon	0%	100%	0%	0%	76 856
Gift of the Givers	71%	29%	0%	0%	76 349
Rotary	63%	2%	0%	35%	73 928
BSC-Mother Soup Project	0%	100%	0%	0%	70 934
DGMT	0%	0%	100%	0%	46 775
PEDI	100%	0%	0%	0%	42 688
The Warehouse Trust	0%	0%	100%	0%	35 491
Afrika Tikkun	100%	0%	0%	0%	33 261
Community Chest	32%	0%	68%	0%	31 797
VPUU	0%	0%	100%	0%	9 401
Service Dining Rooms	0%	100%	0%	0%	8 843
Somerset West CAN	0%	100%	0%	0%	18 859
People Days	1 018 998	909 233	171 375	50 657	2 150 263

Nutrition

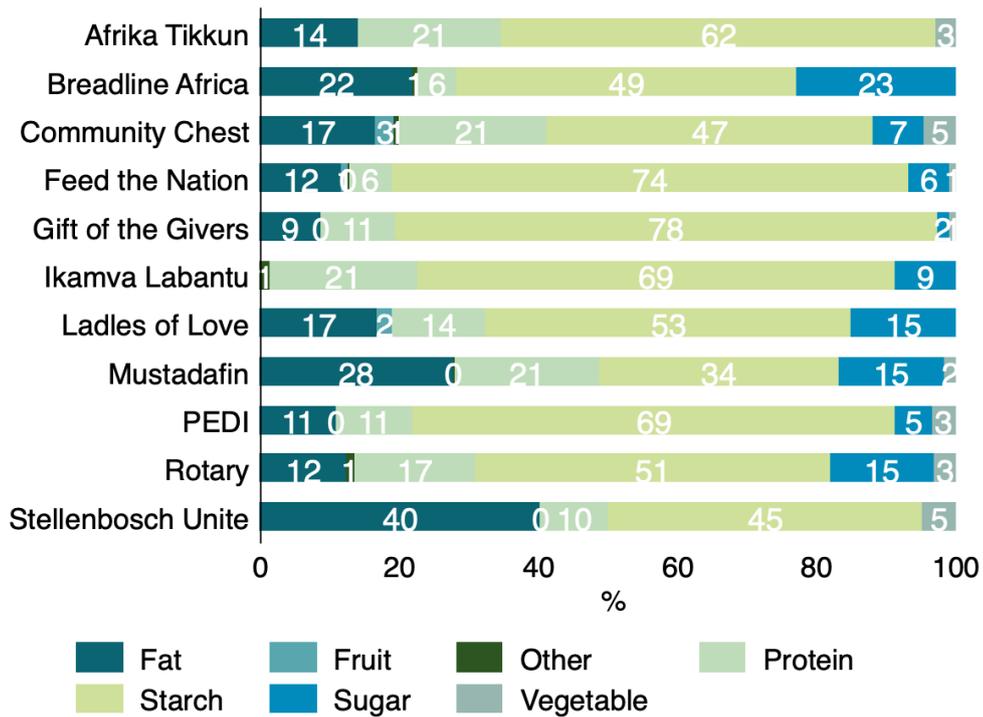
The following graph breaks down the content of food parcels by food group.



Graph: Food parcel contents by food group, measured in kcal

Food parcels largely consist of starchy food items, such as maize meal, flour and samp and beans. This explains to some degree their relatively high calorie content compared to meals, which tend to include more fresh produce, such as vegetables, but it also points to a lack of overall nutritional value. This problem is not unique to food parcels provided by the civil sector; the Gauteng provincial government, for example, has come under criticism for the food parcels they are distributing both in terms of calories and overall nutritional value with ingredients largely based on starchy items.³

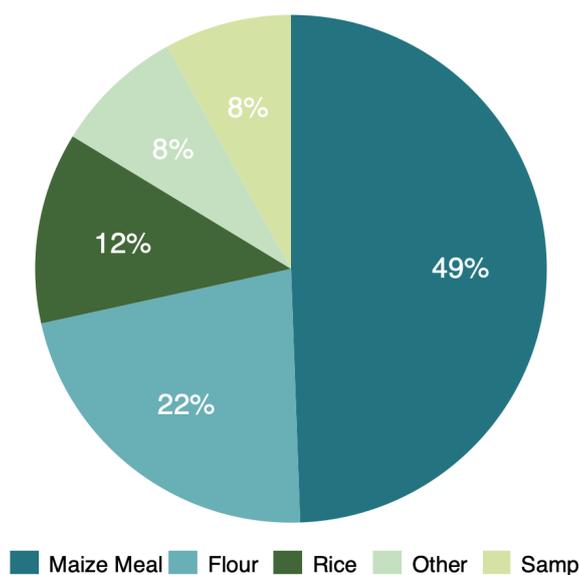
³ <https://africacheck.org/2020/04/24/analysis-are-emergency-food-parcels-from-the-gauteng-government-enough-for-one-month/>



Graph: Food parcel contents by food group and organisation, measured in kcal

The contents of food parcels do differ quite significantly between different providers but generally decreases in starch are offset by increases in the fat category, and this usually means that they contain larger quantities of cooking oil. What they all have in common is a lack of fresh produce such as fruits and vegetables.

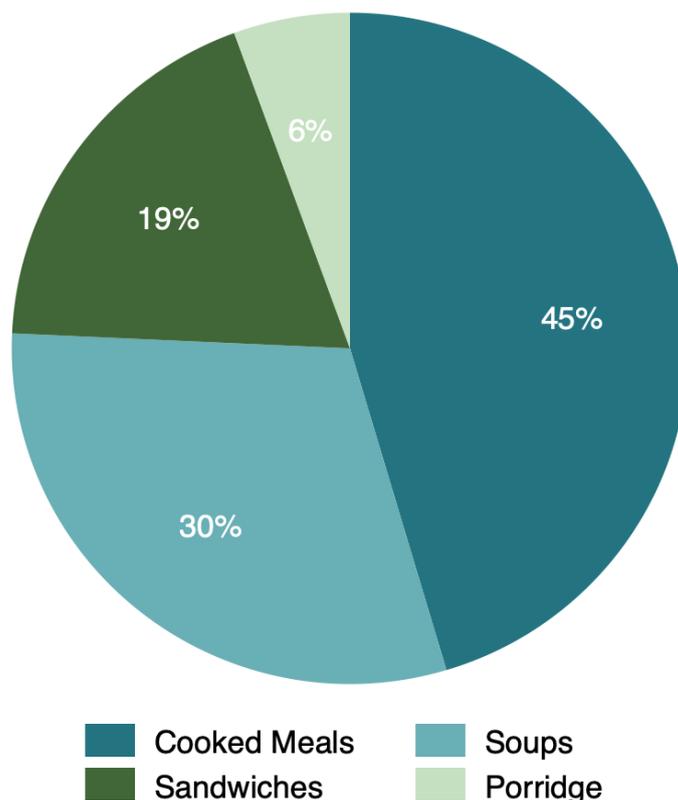
A look inside the parcels reveals what the main category, starch, is mainly made of.



Graph: Percentage of food items in starchy food group, measured in kcal

Maize meal alone accounts for about a quarter of all food relief, including meals and vouchers, in the province: food parcels make up about half of the entire food relief efforts and maize meal covers about half of the caloric content of food parcels.

We do not have the same level of nutritional detail of meals that were distributed in the province but we can at least break them down by meal types.



Graph: Percentage of meal types, measured in People Days

It was mentioned earlier that the caloric content of a daily ration of meals would probably not cover the recommended amount prescribed by the WFP. However, the overall nutritional value of a freshly cooked soup or curry or other cooked meal, which make up the great majority of meals provided through food relief, arguably beats a diet primarily built on starchy food items, such as maize meal.

Observations and Recommendations

Transition from Quantity to Quality

As the immediate response to the food crisis shifts from emergency mode to the establishment of a generally more sustainable food system, one can expect to see food parcels lose significance. While they have proven to be an excellent tool to reach massive numbers of individuals swiftly and efficiently, their shortcomings in overall nutritional value due to the lack of fresh produce make them less desirable as a permanent food source for large parts of the population. This is not to say that they cannot continue to provide a source of essential food provisions or that there are not ways to utilise this avenue to channel healthier food, including fresh produce, to households, but the trend will likely favour

community kitchens that can provide healthy, nutritious food as well as vouchers that give agency to individuals and organisations in selecting the food they want.

Public-Private Partnerships

It is probably not a coincidence that the two largest providers of food parcels had the support of commercial food distributors. Feed the Nation is funded and backed by Pick n Pay, while Ikamva Labantu worked with Yebofresh, a food delivery company specialised in township deliveries. Their infrastructure, such as storage containers and freezers, vehicles for transport, and local networks and knowledge probably enabled them to distribute larger quantities of food more efficiently. It is also more cost-effective as the overheads for ensuring safety and transport are absorbed by the scale of their operations. It is probably also not a coincidence that the two organisations were among the first to send their data in a comprehensive and useful format, which points to the benefits of transparency in monitoring and evaluation of food relief efforts. This model of civil-private partnership could also be an opportunity for government. Anecdotally, it costs provincial government R400 to deliver a R700 food parcel, so working with experts in the private sector could improve the cost-effectiveness of its efforts by about 40%.

Smarter Systems

The gathering of internal data on their food relief efforts remains a difficult and time-consuming challenge for many organisations operating in the food relief space. Most of them did not have any or much experience in organising food relief efforts at a large scale at the outset of the crisis and had to build the capacity and tools as they went along. Stock-taking or monitoring and evaluation understandably did not feature as a priority during a time of crisis.

But now, as the need for food relief is becoming a long-term priority, one can see the emergence of more robust and effective data capturing and management tools among at least some of the organisations. One feature of this shift is a move away from ad-hoc spreadsheets to more durable relational databases that enable organisations to link data points between different tables (e.g. assign a delivery to a certain area or organisation). For example, we have observed a few organisations starting to use Airtable, a no-code, user-friendly, cloud-based relations database solution, for managing their food relief activities. There is arguably great potential in documenting such solutions and making them available to other organisations alongside capacity building where required.

Broaden the Scope

Future data collection exercises of this kind will need to look at broadening the scope in terms of the number and type of organisations included in the analysis. For example, CareCompany, an organisation involved in large-scale food relief activities in the Southern Peninsula, and FoodFlow, an organisation that buys fresh produce from local small-scale farmers and fisher and redistributes it to people in need, should probably be added to the list. There is also potential in working with companies such as YeboFresh who act as the logistical conduit for several organisations involved in food relief.