



## **Report: Western Cape NGO-Government Food Relief Coordination Forum**

**17 September 2020**

### **Introduction**

The Western Cape Economic Development Partnership (EDP) convened a Zoom call on 17 September 2020, to discuss the ongoing work being done by NGOs and the Western Cape Government (WCG) to provide Covid-19 food relief and humanitarian support, and to consider options for the future role of the Forum.

### **Agenda**

1. Forum Impact Assessment: Feedback from NGO member survey
2. Building Back Better: Discussion on future role of Forum
3. Updates: City of Cape Town and Western Cape Government
4. Information on food system workshops and webinars
5. Next steps

#### **1. Forum Impact Assessment: Feedback from NGO member survey**

The members of the Food Relief Forum who were able to complete the NGO member survey were thanked for their input. The full response to the survey to date is attached in Attachment 1 : Food Forum survey results September 2020. Further responses are still being received: these will be incorporated into the results, and the final, full set of responses will be posted on the EDP website and the link sent to all Forum members.

Highlights from the responses, relating to the impact of the Forum and its potential future role(s), include the following:

# Impact of the Forum



## Creating new connections

- 85% connected with organisations that they hadn't before



## Bridging the gap with government

- 66% connected with government in a new way
- 85% got a better understanding of government plans, processes and responses



## Taking action

- 59% were better able to implement the mandate and strategy of own organisations
- 79% collaborated better with other members on new or existing projects and processes
- 85% were able to adapt actions of own organisations in response to information received in the Forum

n= 34



## Maintaining new connections

97% would like to continue to collaborate with organisations or government officials from the Forum

... so where to from here?

Input from Forum Chairperson Andrew Borraine:

- It is important not to squander the relationships of trust that have been built over the past six months. It is vital to build on the willingness to work together that was evidenced, to address both the post-Covid recovery as well as development challenges in new ways.
- A clear message emerged for public sector colleagues: that collaboration with civil society should not only take place during times of crisis, only to revert to type during a return to 'normality'.
- In the spirit of 'doing things differently', we need to find ways to shift the public sector community engagement approach from 'participation' - mainly commenting on government policies and plans - to 'partnering', which involves co-planning and co-implementation. The Food Forum has demonstrated that government and civil society are able to work together in a structured way to improve governance outcomes.
- A message from Richard Lundie of Common Good was echoed by a number of other institutions: "Thank you for allowing me to represent Common Good at these important Forums. We have ended our COVID-related food relief initiatives and are returning to our regular work in Education, Employment and Early Life. Many thanks for your work in coordinating this forum to see effective impact across our city." There are, therefore, NGOs whose first work is not food-related, and who stepped up to help with the food crisis, who are returning to their usual roles.
- This is therefore an appropriate moment in time to bring this 'chapter' of the Food Forum to a close, namely, the coordination of food relief during a time of crisis, and to look to continue collaboration in new ways as we focus on wider food system change and better nutritional outcomes.
- In transitioning to possible new roles and structures, we need to formally record the collective efforts of government, civil society and private donors, the farming community, etc., as well as the specific role of the Food Forum, over the past six months. **The EDP will compile a 'close out' report in the form of a discussion document, for circulation and feedback, recording the issues, themes, and challenges that we have addressed, and the partnering lessons we have learned.**

There was general agreement that the forum has been very useful as an information-sharing platform, as well as a mechanism to create new linkages. There was also consensus around the idea that retaining some form of platform to continue these linkages would be helpful.

It was noted that any future role for the Forum would require a 'refreshing' of its mandate, as the Forum's original mandate was specifically to assist with the coordination of food relief during the height of the Covid-19 food crisis.

## 2. Building Back Better: Discussion on future role of Forum

Forum members who participated in the survey were very generous with their ideas and actions about building back better. The full set of responses is included in Attachment 1.

As an overview, these inputs have been grouped into three themes, each with a range of sub-headings:

### Input for Recovery: Themes

<p><b>From Food Relief to Food Security</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government buy-in and support</li> <li>• Food access and availability</li> <li>• Community/backyard gardens</li> <li>• Access to resources</li> <li>• Employment, entrepreneurship, and job creation</li> <li>• Planning and mobilization</li> </ul>	<p><b>"Building Back Better"</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entrepreneurship</li> <li>• SMMEs and small local suppliers</li> <li>• Economic development for all</li> <li>• Working with informality</li> <li>• Empowerment and ownership</li> <li>• Livelihoods</li> <li>• Trust</li> <li>• Reduced corruption</li> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Accurate data</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Environmental sustainability</li> <li>• Social programmes</li> <li>• Safety and security</li> <li>• Health and wellness</li> </ul>	<p><b>Supporting &amp; Enabling Community-Led Recovery</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating new markets</li> <li>• Holistic community development</li> <li>• Connecting funders and fostering social enterprise</li> <li>• Supporting CSOs and community structures</li> <li>• Creating relationships and networking</li> <li>• Creating enabling environment</li> <li>• Resuscitating economic activities</li> <li>• Driving information flow</li> <li>• Training and education</li> <li>• Research and advocacy</li> </ul>
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"Support for those community organizations on the front lines that rely heavily on local volunteer support- many of our community distribution partners are having to limit their programmes as more people return to work or experience burnout"

n= 34

"Continuing to connect the relevant parties to help social enterprise happen- removing red tape, introducing funders to the forum, connecting business to new initiatives"

A process proposal, to determine the future role of the Forum, was made.

Food system work is much wider than food relief, involving rural and urban production, processing, distribution, consumption, access, affordability, and waste management, amongst others. Building back better, and supporting and enabling community-led recovery, covers an even wider set of issues and actors.

Given that a convening and partnering role works best when there are clear mandates from the relevant stakeholders and potential partners, it was proposed that **the EDP needs time to consult on the future role of the Forum** with public sector partners, who are involved in their own recovery planning processes, a wider group of civil society organisations than those involved in food relief, and food system research and policy networks who have been working on these issues for many years.

As a cautionary note, it is known that government priorities and processes do not always match community and CSO expectations and priorities. There is therefore often a need for a 'translation' service between the public sector and CSOs. In addition, the public sector

fiscal crisis has been exacerbated by the pandemic, which means that public resources are much scarcer than ever before.

The second part of the process proposal is therefore that **the Forum reconvenes, probably with a wider group of role-players, in a month's time**, to discuss the outcome of the consultations, and to make proposals on possible new forms and processes of collaboration. This meeting is set for 22 October.

Both the Western Cape Government and City of Cape Town representatives on the call indicated that their respective institutions supported this proposal, and reiterated their willingness to play an active role in consultations and engagements that might arise from this process.

Some additional suggestions were flagged for consideration:

- One of the themes that has emerged over the past six months is the gap between the formal and the informal sectors of the economy and society. The heavily-regulated public sector system means that it is almost impossible to channel public resources (funding, land and building leases, etc) to community organisations that are not 'formalised' and 'registered'. Yet the majority of community-led initiatives – food kitchens, community gardens, ECD centres, as well as the traders and spazas in the local food system, are informal and unregistered, and therefore often 'unseen' in the eyes of the authorising environment.

There are some interesting examples of NGOs that have the capacity to comply with the public sector regulatory system that partner with the informal organisations and initiatives, thus providing a channel for public resources to where they are needed. There could thus be a possible future role of the Forum in the form of a panel of registered NGOs that span the gap between formal resources and informal community initiatives.

- The Forum could expand its mandate beyond food aid to form a rapid response task team for formal Economic Recovery plans (given that many of the relevant stakeholders are already represented in the Forum).
- It was also suggested that there should be some exploration of ambient products for food relief, i.e. those that have long shelf life, do not always require fuel to be prepared, and yet have high nutritional value.
- It was also suggested that a particular effort should be made to include additional CANs in the broader meeting on 22 October, as an expansion of the Forum's networking activities.
- While there was agreement that government is regulated by authorising systems, it was felt that this should not lead to a belief that policies and regulations could not be changed, or that there should be no advocacy for change. This Forum, with its experience and data, could be part of such advocacy processes.
- The Forum should also follow up on the activities of the Garden Route Food Pantry – a partnering initiative between the eight municipalities that make up the region.
- It was also suggested that the Forum establish two special-purpose sub-groups: one to ensure that the food relief environment is not politically-driven, and another to promote food system policy change within a fragmented public sector environment.
- Continuing the role of the Forum in clarifying food relief data was also suggested. A number of other Forum members, such as SA Harvest, the Peninsula School Feeding

Scheme, and Mustadafin, agreed to contribute the progress that they have made in this sphere. It was also noted that there is an opportunity to collate data on what food-related CSOs are planning, in order to increase resilience in the event of a future crisis.

### **3. Updates: City of Cape Town and Western Cape Government**

Luzuko Mdunyelwa of the City of Cape Town provided an update on progress related to the R25 million grant for community kitchens.

To date, 129 applications have been received, of which 68 have been processed. Of these, 5 applications were fully compliant. 22 applications only have one or two missing documents, will be or have been notified, and have until 23 September to rectify their applications.

The remaining 61 organisations are still being processed and assessed for compliance by the City of Cape Town.

Organisations will only receive firm confirmation of success or failure after the Council has met on 29 October. Funds will then be disbursed within two days, after which they will have five months to utilise the funds.

The Forum requested that the City, where possible, keep applicants informed of the progress of their applications prior to this date, to allow for operational planning.

It was acknowledged that there had been significant issues with the processes surrounding the first tranche of the Mayor's Relief Fund, but that the City had learned from this and was making every effort to ensure that this application process is as apolitical and transparent as possible.

Luzuko said that the logistics related to the disbursement of the offer from the German government (below) have yet to be determined. As soon as details are available, they will be shared with the Forum.

- City of Cape Town: "Germany is giving €5m (about R98m) to feed Cape Town families hit hard by the Covid-19 lockdown, but on condition that at least 20% of beneficiaries are foreigners. In addition, the KfW German Development Bank said half the spaza shops where digital vouchers are spent must be owned by foreigners. A deal about the terms of the relief aid was signed at a meeting on Thursday (last week) between German ambassador Martin Schäfer and Cape Town mayor Dan Plato." <https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/2020-09-15-germany-says-foreigners-must-share-in-r98m-covid-19-relief-gift-to-cape-town/>

Jacqui Boulle of the Western Cape Government confirmed that Provincial Recovery Plan is being finalised, and will have three priority focus areas: Jobs, Safety and Wellbeing. The WCG, which is required by National government to effect an additional 11% cut on its budget, will have clarity on its spending priorities by mid-October.

Jacqui requested that Forum members continue to emphasise the importance of wearing masks, to help prevent a further spike in infections, particularly as discipline in this respect is likely to relax at Lockdown Level 1.

She reported that the Department of Health was testing for malnutrition and wasting in poor and vulnerable communities, and that this data could be correlated with food relief schemes.

She also confirmed that the Solidarity Fund will make an additional R70 million available for food parcels and food vouchers throughout the country, with a certain percentage in the Western Cape. Details on this allocation will be shared with Forum members as soon as they are available.

#### **4. Information on food system workshops and webinars**

- Watch a replay of the CAN co-learning session: INSPIRED FUTURES DIALOGUE Wednesday 16 September here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ETXhCijAGmg&fbclid=IwAR3yVUn0GZa8Svx4sUxCSVvk9uvB7DSXcflmbvz-VeFJmMkPKNke6oM0gi8>
- Watch a replay of Tracy Ledger, author of the path-breaking *An Empty Plate: Why we are losing the battle for our food system, why it matters and how we can win it back* and Mark Heywood here: [https://www.crowdcast.io/e/an-empty-plate-why-we/register?fbclid=IwAR2RP2NNXQUc-2qvtMf2DXrOZ54ttmaPZ0KI0q\\_r0yijIIXBOiTs9gjOVjU](https://www.crowdcast.io/e/an-empty-plate-why-we/register?fbclid=IwAR2RP2NNXQUc-2qvtMf2DXrOZ54ttmaPZ0KI0q_r0yijIIXBOiTs9gjOVjU)
- Food Governance Community of Practice Meeting: Managing Food Loss and Waste, 30 September 2020, 14.00 - 16.30, **To register for the Zoom meeting, click this link.** (You will get a confirmation email from Florian Kroll)

#### **5. Next steps**

As indicated above, the key next steps for this Forum are for the EDP to confer with its partners and food system stakeholders on options for the future role of the Forum. The EDP will also distribute a report on this first phase of the Forum's activities for comment.

The next meeting of this forum, to discuss the output of this work, is in four weeks' time, on **22 October 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](mailto:Andrew@wcedp.co.za).

**Attachment 1: Food Forum Impact Assessment and Build Back Better survey results September 2020**

**Attachment 2: Food Forum attendance, 17 September 2020**

**Attachment 3: Updated CSO Food Relief Data Report**