



Report: Western Cape Food Forum

25 February 2021

Introduction

The Western Cape Economic Development Partnership (EDP) convened a Zoom call on 25 February 2021 to share a packed agenda – food and nutrition is high on the agenda for many organisations at the moment!

Agenda

1. Emerging agenda for collective action: consolidated feedback from six Food Forum working groups
2. Promoting collective impact in food system public events in 2021
3. Food relief programmes update
4. Feedback on engagement with Municipal Managers
5. WCG Nourish to Flourish programme
6. Presentation and discussion on Child Gauge 2020 - Stop the Slow Violence of Malnutrition
7. Knowledge sharing and learning/ forthcoming events
8. Date of next meeting: 25 March 2021

1. Emerging agenda for collective action: Consolidated feedback from six Food Forum working groups

Since the last meeting of the Forum, each of the six working groups have met (Coordinating Food Relief, Strengthening Local Food Economies, Food and Nutrition Awareness and Security, Reducing Food Waste, Enabling Urban Agriculture/ Food Gardens, Creating an enabling public sector environment) to brainstorm potential focus areas, public sector interaction, and potential relationships moving forward.

A few themes cut across all working groups

- Accessing and sharing information within and between working groups and participating organisations
- The need to build better relationships of trust with the public sector and broadly within the food system

Forum members are encouraged to participate in the working groups as an opportunity to get into more focused and detailed discussions than is possible at the Forum level. If you'd like to get involved with a working group, please email jennysoderbergh@gmail.com with your name, email address, and desired working group.

Now that we have had the first round of working group meetings, the operational aspects, especially the challenge of modest resources from members and EDP to support the working groups, will be assessed by the EDP team before suggestions are presented to working groups on how we move forward.

2. Promoting collective impact in food system public events in 2021

On February 24th, EDP invited 15 organisations (combination of activist, practitioner, research, policy advocacy and public sector) involved in convening food systems public events and dialogues at different levels (grassroots, local/regional, global) in Cape Town and the Western Cape to participate in discussion about how we can collectively plan and sequence our activities in a way we create collective impact. This approach does not imply any attempt to centralise control of organisational activities, rather, by sharing information we can find ways to amplify, support and align each other's work. A few outcomes emerged:

- Openness to working together to support each other's programmes, and to co-create public events and dialogues.
- Support for idea of creating and maintaining a public events calendar, that can be shared with the WC Food Forum and other networks.
- Started useful discussion on how to promote and facilitate more grassroots access and participation to events and dialogues.
- Also touched on the need for 'difficult dialogues' involving diverging and conflicting power interests in the food system. Challenge: Those who hold the power don't always want to engage and participate and be held accountable.
- The group will meet again to take the discussion forward and is open to any other organisations who wish to participate to establish a 'network of networks' to promote knowledge sharing and learning in the food system.

3. Food relief programmes update: CoCT

Luzuko Mdunyelwa provided an update on phase 1 and 2 of the humanitarian relief aid process from the City of Cape Town. While the process went through many hurdles for phase 1, including opposition from the CFO and legal department, the R10 million should be distributed to the participating organisations by the beginning of March. These organisations were asked to take on additional wards so that the funding could cover some of the 50 wards that didn't have any applicants. The phase 2 application is currently open (closing soon) and Luzuko is hopeful that the process will be smoother than phase 1.

120-140 organisations attended training to work through the application requirements together, learn about government process and evaluations, and give feedback. There is a team ready to work with organisations that are applying for phase 2 to make sure their applications qualify. They have also asked council to

include humanitarian relief as part of the grant in aid program so don't have to go to council every time there's a need for grant in aid.

Forum participant questions and comments:

- Why did the City decide to allocate to every ward? Surely humanitarian aid to prioritise areas of greatest vulnerability and need? Were there any attempts to link to CSO feeding mapping exercises from last year?
- The state has tied itself in knots. The public sector in SA has become so constrained by its own rules, it no longer fits its own purpose of a developmental state. Very narrow interpretations of mandates, an intensely political system, and the inability to easily support informality are all challenges that need to be dealt with.
- It could be useful if the Forum could start a dialogue with the Auditor General on the public sector compliance culture that inhibits responsiveness to community needs.

4. Feedback on engagement with Municipal Managers

Through the quarterly platform, MinMayTech, EDP briefed all of the Municipal Managers in the Western Cape on short term food relief efforts by government and civil society, the need to transition from food relief to food security, the role of the WCG Food Systems working group, and the role of the WC Food Forum. The Municipal Managers confirmed the devastating effects of the pandemic and the lockdown on local communities in terms of hunger, poverty, loss of livelihoods and jobs. The EDP encouraged the municipalities to participate in the WC Food Forum.

5. WCG 'Nourish to Flourish' programme

Tristan Gorgens gave a quick update on the transversal Western Cape Government Food Systems Working Group. The group is meeting tomorrow to agree on how to operate as a group, after that there should be greater clarity on how the group will engage with a wider group of stakeholders – including the Food Forum Working Groups. There is a hope that shared dialogue will develop into learning and collaboration. The need for government and civil society to work closely together was endorsed by Mogale Sebopetsa, convenor of the WCG working group.

6. Presentation and discussion on Child Gauge 2020 - Stop the Slow Violence of Malnutrition

The team from the UCT Children's Institute (Julian May, Lori Lake, and Chantell Witten) presented the sobering findings of the recently released Child Gauge 2020 and the theme of stopping the slow violence of malnutrition. The team will also be presenting to the coordinating committee of the National Food and Nutrition Security Plan on Monday. A full recording of the presentation and the full report are available to the forum, key takeaways included:

- The slow violence of malnutrition begins from before a child is conceived through the early years of childhood – maternal health impacts a child's likelihood to be born underweight and stunted, which impacts both physical

development and cognitive development and predisposes the child to adolescent malnourishment and obesity, which in turn predisposes them to noncommunicable diseases as adults and the likelihood of giving birth to underweight children – an intergenerational cycle

- Often in healthcare, solutions are oriented towards individuals instead of the systems that they inhabit – this is especially crucial for children, and includes their access to food, water, sanitation, and healthcare facilities, as well their caregiving arrangements. There is a need to create supportive environments so that families can support optimal health and nutrition
- There is a need to look at the impact of COVID-19 and how it has deepened patterns of disadvantage and inequality e.g. through closure of schools and ECD programmes, failure of safety nets, lack of access to routine healthcare services, rising food prices, withdrawal of caregiving and top up grants in October
- Given the high rates of stunting, malnutrition, and obesity in SA, there was hope that the child support grant would be raised - but it was only raised R10

Calls to action for the forum include placing mothers and children at the centre of all work (whether it is food aid or food waste) and supporting nutritional education and proven interventions (e.g. breastfeeding). Collectively, society needs:

- Leadership and accountability to move the agenda
- Data, monitoring and surveillance to make decisions at a local level
- Intersectoral collaboration to build synergy and reap benefits of investment
- Capacity building to be able to document and share best practices through contextual learning

Forum participant questions and comments:

- Civil society has been holding the line up until now – and is tired and tapped out!
- Could we advocate to help with an ICC case on crimes against humanity in terms of malnutrition as violence against children?
- We need social support for pregnant and all breastfeeding women (e.g. a food basket for pregnant women - in the UK during the war all pregnant women received a pint of milk a day, more recent initiatives have included providing an egg a day. In Chile, children for ECD are enlisted antenatally pre-birth via their pregnant mother's antenatal visits to health facilities and sustained until they are 4 years of age)
- If social support is provided, it must be healthy, nutritional and consistent over the development stages of children. Do not make pregnant and breast feeding moms the dumping sites of unhealthy food
- Food deprivation, food insecurity/hunger is a societal shame. Hunger is not only associated with food access and affordability, but also with bad diet quality. On the latter, the biggest barrier to healthy diets is price. Healthy food is expensive, overly processed food is cheap. We simply have to depoliticize food, unbundle the complexities of the food system, transition to healthy, local food systems and treat food as a common, as opposed to a commodity. But it requires transformational leadership. Not only government but various food actors.

- The Garden Route Food Pantry has been working to fight against malnutrition and had CPU develop a recipe for a fortified cookie, which cost about R100 000 in development - but ensures a healthy supplementary boost to recipients
- For any orgs represented that have successfully applied for City's Humanitarian Relief - what will data capturing practices be? Have asked kitchens to count Adults vs Children, but after this meeting perhaps need to also note New Mothers, Pregnant women etc.

7. Knowledge sharing and learning/ forthcoming events

a. Past events:

- i. Launch of Garden Route Food Pantry, a public-private partnership (19 Feb): see [here](#) and [here](#). Forum members can also follow the Garden Route Food Pantry on [Facebook](#)
- ii. Food as a Commons - A Joint Discussion (24 Feb) a co-research initiative between researchers and members of the community, Nomonde shared next steps including potential dialogues hosted by and for members of communities so that diverse perspectives can be shared beyond the usual voices in a setting that is built for community members rather than by others
- iii. Centre of Excellence for Food Security Community of Practice Meeting: Retail governance opportunities to promote transitions to sustainable, diverse food systems (25 Feb)

b. Forthcoming events:

- i. Mini market – Seaboard CAN, Gugulethu Urban Farming Initiative, Ladles of Love, Souper Trooper (Sunday, 28 Feb Sea Point Promenade)
- ii. [Dullah Omar Institute at UWC webinar](#): The link between access to safe and nutritious food and non-communicable diseases in South Africa, (2pm, 18 March)
- iii. Download new Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) report on [Urban Food Systems Governance](#)

Date of next meeting

The next meeting of this forum will take place on **Thursday 25 March 2021 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. If any attendees were participating for the first time, are not on the contact data base, and would like to receive regular invitations and reports, they should provide their name, organisation and contact details to Rhonda Snyders of the EDP at rhonda@wcedp.co.za.

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: Food Forum attendance 25 February 2021
Attachment 2: Child Gauge full report
Attachment 3: Working Groups focus areas