

## **Report: Western Cape Food Forum**

**28 January 2021**

### **Introduction**

The Western Cape Economic Development Partnership (EDP) convened a Zoom call on 28 January 2021, to recap on the Forum activities during 2020, to provide an update on food relief activities and some local food initiatives, and to initiate working groups for joint action in 2021.

### **Agenda**

1. Recap on Food Forum activities for 2020
2. Food Relief update
3. Update on local food initiatives
4. Food Forum working groups
5. Knowledge sharing and learning
6. Next steps

#### **1. Recap on Western Cape Food Forum activities for 2020.**

One highlight in the area of food relief and food systems in 2020 was the collective effort by grassroots communities, CSOs, private citizens, donors, firms, farmers, and government officials – as seen in this Forum.

In addition, this Forum provided a (possibly unique) opportunity for civil society to engage with government and have its voice heard on an ongoing basis. One of the questions for the Forum this year is how to deepen this engagement and make it more productive in 2021.

The ground-breaking data collection that was driven by the Forum was another highlight: for the first time a *combined* view of the efforts of civil society in terms of food relief in the Western Cape was produced. However, regular and systematic data collection, e.g., on a monthly basis, is a costly undertaking, and the Forum will need to see how it can assist in finding the funds for this in 2021.

The theme – of government regulatory processes and systems not working for communities, for civil society organisations, and indeed, for government itself – was constant, throughout the time that the Forum has been active, and will continue to be an area of focus in 2021.

A decision was taken towards the end of 2020 to shift the work of the Forum from short-term crisis relief to longer term sustainable food systems, and to focus on four objectives:

1. Bridging the gaps between diverse stakeholders in the food and nutrition system.

2. Promoting joint action and implementation between stakeholders.
3. Prioritising relationships with the public sector, and creating an enabling environment for community-led initiatives.
4. Continuing with food relief coordination aimed at vulnerable populations, and with food relief and vulnerability data mapping.

For those new to the Forum, an overview of the work of phase one of the Food Forum from April – September 2020, with a timeline, is available here: <https://wcedp.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Western-Cape-NGO-Government-Food-Relief-Forum-Report-October-2020.pdf>

## **2. Food Relief update**

Since the last meeting of the Forum in December 2020, we have been through a second surge of the pandemic, resulting in increased deaths, hospitalisations, and psychological trauma. We are still in a heightened state of lockdown, which has impacted negatively on economic activities, jobs, and livelihoods.

### ***Participants' update:***

Participants in the meeting shared their insights on the current situation in terms of food relief. Across the board, there was consensus that while the need for food relief has not decreased, and in fact has increased in many areas, CSOs are experiencing extensive donor and volunteer fatigue, and even lethargy at the corporate donor level. "People simply want to move on and get on with their lives." Mental health was also identified as a constant concern: "people are very despondent, this time around". Similarities to June/July 2020, at the end of the first lockdown, were noted.

A reluctance in some communities for even severely ill people to go to hospital for treatment of Covid-19 was also noted.

The role of this forum is to amplify these messages and try and assist in making connections to try and help resolve issues.

Some positive reports of assistance from organisations such as VPUU were noted, as well as the establishment of vegetable and herb gardens in the Cape Flats communities. The Red Cross Hospital facility board is also establishing a food garden.

### ***City of Cape Town update:***

Luzuko Mdunyelwa provided the following update on the City of Cape Town Food Relief Fund prior to the meeting: "The latest is that last week Thursday MAYCO resolved to recommend the report to Council. We are confident that the Council will approve the report on 28 January 2021. I have been reliably informed that even the R15m will also be approved in principle, pending the submission of a fresh report which will include the smaller service providers. Unfortunately, there is no Council meeting in February, so this report will be tabled only in March."

### ***Western Cape Government update:***

Mzwandile Hewu of the Western Cape Government Department of Social Development (DSD) provided an update on the Provincial food relief efforts. It was noted that these will need to be dovetailed with the City of Cape Town interventions when the latter are in place.

Community Kitchens wishing to connect with organisations that are designated recipients of this DSD funding should contact [manu@saharvest.org](mailto:manu@saharvest.org) or [dk1@amprop.co.za](mailto:dk1@amprop.co.za).

Forum members queried the requirements for, and processes, surrounding, the recipient registers that are required at kitchens funded via the DSD. Mzwandile confirmed that recipients' names, gender, and ID numbers are required, but that there are existing solutions for those who do not, for example, have ID numbers. He also confirmed that the registers have been simplified to allow Community Kitchen managers to sign off on recipients once a week, once a recipient register has been established. DSD staff are available to assist kitchens, *in situ*, with issues surrounding these registers.

Ilitha Labantu have developed a number of solutions to simplify the process.

A smaller working group will meet next week to consolidate the learnings and best practice around these registers and share this with the Forum.

A number of participants reflected on the need to link small-scale farmers with community kitchens.

- Ilitha Labantu have, in the past, worked with the NDA in regard to local cooperatives and farmers, and are currently in talks to deal with rural farmers. Forum members that may wish to make contact with regards to creating a supply chain for rural kitchens should contact [sikhulule@ilithalabantu.org](mailto:sikhulule@ilithalabantu.org).
- Suppliers of fresh produce should also contact the CTT Food Growers Initiative Facebook Group. They can also email Erica Inches directly at [zerica1968@gmail.com](mailto:zerica1968@gmail.com).

### **3. Local food initiatives**

One regular theme of the Food Forum is to give a platform for local food initiatives and networks to share their work.

At the December 2020 Forum meeting, an update was provided by Michael Krause on behalf of the VPUU, about building a circular neighbourhood economy in Hanover Park, Manenberg, Gugulethu, Nyanga, Harare, Kuyasa, Monwabisi Park and Bonteheuwel.

Prior to this meeting, an update was also provided on the work of the Garden Route Food Pantry, an interesting initiative involving a partnership directly with the local authorities: <https://www.georgeherald.com/News/Article/General/garden-route-food-pantry-on-course-202101271127>

Vuyani Qamata provided input on behalf of the **Gugulethu Urban Farming Initiative (GUFU)**.

13 gardens were started under the GUFU auspices between May and September 2020.

These efforts were supported by a number of key partnerships:

- The Atlantic Seaboard CAN has been helping with strategic direction & planning for GUFU. There has been a two-way learning process on seed saving, rainwater harvesting, etc. Assisting with the process of GUFU becoming a legal entity is also part of this partnership.
- The US Fulbright alumni, who, in partnership with the Seaboard CAN and GUFU are focused particularly on youth, and on introducing them to permaculture.
- There is a new partnership with VPUU, which is providing support not just with infrastructure, but also training on how to transform these gardens into business entities.
- The existing City of Aachen – City of Cape Town partnership may also provide support.
- Similarly, partnering with Ladles of Love, and with the City of Cape Town, is being investigated.

Along with other food relief efforts, GUFU is also feeling the effects of donor fatigue. When questioned about what was key to the establishment of the gardens, Vuyani said that a

focus on working the soil is critical and should remain at the heart of these programmes. Allied to this is the development of a clear operating system for the market gardens and finding a way to allow them to run as business entities.

#### **4. WC Food Forum working groups for 2021**

One of the aims of the Forum is the finalisation of participation in working groups for joint action in 2021 and identification of theme champions and convenors. To this end, a Survey Monkey has been prepared for participants to indicate which Working Groups they can contribute to. These can be completed as a group or as an individual, by **Monday 1 February 2021**, mid-morning, at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/H7GZD6V>

The themes identified at the last Forum meeting of 2020 were:

1. Strengthening local food economies
2. Enabling urban agriculture/ food gardens
3. Reducing food waste
4. Creating an enabling public sector environment
5. Food and nutrition awareness and security
6. Coordinating food relief
7. Other? (opportunity for new issues to emerge)

These working groups will only be established if there is a need, based on levels of interest. They will rely on self-organising champions and convenors, supported by the EDP. They are not intended to duplicate existing networks and initiatives, but to specifically enhance the quality of engagements with the public sector. To that end, the survey asks respondents if they are already participating in similar groups or networks, and to list them if so, to help promote joint action and implementation.

#### **5. Knowledge sharing and learning**

- The Centre for Excellence in Food Security has three policy briefs being completed, on urban agriculture, the role of civil society organisations, and informal food economies.
- Rotary District 9350 (Western SA, Namibia, and Angola), representing 58 clubs, has raised some R20m supporting Covid food relief. This is, however, not sustainable, and they are now embarking on food garden projects. A kick-off webinar for this initiative is scheduled for 6 February and all are invited. The registration link for this webinar is: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcrodIopz0jGdRG13fGoUlu0J-ABVanm-IH>

#### **6. Next steps**

- The result of the City of Cape Town Council decision(s) on food relief funding will be communicated to the Forum as soon as possible.
- The WCG DSD presentation on Provincial food relief will be shared with the Forum as soon as possible.
- A smaller group will meet next week to collate and communicate best practice on the registration processes required for recipients of food relief at kitchens funded by the DSD.

The next meeting of this forum will take place on **25 February 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](mailto: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](mailto:Andrew@wcedp.co.za).

**Attachment 1: Food Forum attendance 28 January 2021**