



Food Distribution: Community Report September 2024

Background

Back in 2020 during the COVID lockdown, we all saw the long lines of hungry people queuing for food aid. With the economy on lockdown and most people dependent on ‘no work – no pay’ sources of employment, there was a huge crisis. A crisis across the country and here in Hermanus. People were concerned. There was a humanitarian issue. Malnutrition, sickness, and starvation loomed. There was also the increased risk of unrest and disorder.

For 11 months in 2020 a number of organisations in the Overstrand pulled out all the stops to mitigate the food crisis caused by Covid-19. Amongst these were Red Cross and Food4Love, in collaboration with the Overstrand Municipality’s Disaster Relief Project. Many households, with a particular focus on children and the elderly, were fed each day from formal and informal soup kitchens across the region, and food parcels and food vouchers delivered to them.

The causes of this deeply entrenched food insecurity situation are complex. However, this also means that the strategies for tackling it can also be varied and innovative. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) uses a four pillared framework to define the causes of food insecurity.

1. **Access** – Can people afford to buy food? Can they get to the shops to buy food? Do they know where the food is?
2. **Availability** – Is there enough food being produced? Are there enough food stocks? Is there food aid available?
3. **Utilization** – Is the food safe to eat? How good is the quality of the food? Do people know how to use it? Do they have the resources to keep it cold or to cook it?
4. **Stability** – Is there a risk to the other three pillars caused by political, social, and environmental instability?

What’s food insecurity?

If you can’t afford to refill the fridge, find keeping a balanced diet too expensive, eat too-small portions, skip meals altogether, experience the physical sensation of hunger or lose weight solely due to lacking the money to put food on the table, you’re experiencing food insecurity.

Introduction

In 2023: The Red Cross undertook a mini research survey research project on food insecurity and food provision in two communities in the Hermanus area. While we know that many people are struggling to make ends meet and provide for themselves and their families, we don't have sufficient facts and information on the extent of this problem.

The Red Cross did some preliminary research in the form of a mini survey about hunger and found a staggering 96% of people knew someone who is hungry every day.

Our initial task was to attempt to understand food distribution in Zwelihle and Mt Pleasant in particular, but the scope has increased to incorporate surrounding areas. This we have done by gathering data through a questionnaire and consider whether integrating services is feasible

While there are various role-players working hard to try and alleviate food insecurity by providing meals, they are working separately. The Red Cross has visited local food/soup kitchens to gain a better understanding of what is provided and learn more about their experiences.

Thus, at present our initial aim is to maybe establish a local food forum where different role-players can come together to discuss and work towards solutions. If we better understand the extent and nature of food insecurity as well as an improved coordination to provide food or meals in the community, we can make a greater and more sustained impact in collaboration with the communities.

Current Situation

WhatsApp informer- After the mini survey an event was held to share our findings and explore ways forward. Those who chose to be on the WhatsApp group were informed of developments, and many provided suggestions. Economical menus and dry food mixtures have been provided by dietitian students at the university of Stellenbosch. A Questionnaire was developed to get a picture of who the role players are and what Services are being provided.

Please find a list attached Appendix 1 and below is some additional and relevant information not listed.

Two hubs have ceased after considerable work. One was discontinued as Western Cape Education department were concerned that food was distributed on an Early Childhood site and in the other, the manager retired from this work.

The **2 Elderly Centers**, Siyazama in Zwelihle and Lombardi in Mount Pleasant discontinued for different reasons. However, Mount Pleasant manager has transferred this work to her home for the present time.

The **Recycle Swop Shop** that has been underway for 21 years giving approximately 100 children per week items that may include food in return for delivery of wastage. They may close as new premises are needed as they are near a transitional camp perceived to be unsafe

The **Dutch Reformed Church in Onrus** supply food once a week to a household in Krozani street Zwelihle who serve the soup and bread. They also provide the Siyazama in Zwelihle premises who do likewise. They have not provided written data.

School Meals Theo Krynauw who created Sparkle Kids, introduced us to Alungile Mfaxasi who is on the board of this organisation and is a teacher in Qhayiya senior school in Zwelihle. This was to give us insight into school feeding funded by the government. The food is cooked in the school seems to be one meal that consists of 3 serving spoons: veg, carb and meat/protein. She also mentioned that a number of children had no parents and lived alone in a dwelling and thus very short of food and other types of support.

Rotary Club gives out shopping cards to people in Hermanus.

Challenges identified:

With the cooperation of the people who filled in the questionnaire, we have a better idea of the number of food outlets but are not yet able to establish the extent of unmet needs. We would be grateful for information regarding other food outlets to give us a better idea of food distribution in our communities

Community kitchen operators are making food in their own homes. There is sometimes limited space and equipment, and kitchen design may not be conducive to practical work. The safety of volunteers and those collecting food may be at risk. Thus, Red Cross has started first aid courses and stocking first aid boxes. We may consider talking to the fire department about fire safety at home.

Findings

We have listed 23 food outlets where 10,688 meals are being served per month. Food is being provided largely thanks to individuals who make soup and meals.

It has emerged that these food outlets have been greatly assisted by the supermarkets in the Hermanus area with gratitude.

We have also been assisted by generous individual donors which enable us to continue to supply dry ingredients

Way forward.

Red Cross takes a humanitarian role in Food Insecurity and will continue to support the efforts of all stakeholders providing food to needy people.

We will continue to provide dry ingredients and pass on any donations we receive as long as we can afford to do this.

We would like to explore with the stakeholders whether meeting together would be useful. Is it possible to address food distribution using different approaches. Do others need food. Are the schools able to provide nutritious food to children, what happens during the holidays? Who is perceived responsible to address food distribution? If children are deprived of adequate food in their early years, they will not thrive in primary school.

A map has been developed to pinpoint when and where food is being served.

Appendix 2

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The Constitution of South Africa 1996 is one of the 22 constitutions in the world that specifically includes the right to food, and one of two where the provisions are justiciable (Knuth & Vidar 2011)

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