**DA PROPOSAL ON EMERGENCY FOOD RELIEF**

**Background**

On 23 March 2020, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced a measure to combat the spread of the Covid-19 virus in South Africa – a three-week nationwide lockdown with severe restrictions on travel and movement, supported by the South African National Defence Force – from midnight on Thursday, 26 March, to midnight on Thursday, 16 April.

This Lockdown was extended to 1 May 2020, at which time the President introduced a risk adjusted strategy, placing the country on level 4. This, however means that, despite a new approach, thousands of people in the North West Province were still unable to work due to the extended lockdown.

Businesses that have been closed, resulted in large-scale job losses, increased poverty and unexpected hardship. While the full extent of the impact of the lockdown is not known, thousands of people are unable to buy food.

The Department of Social Development (DSD) is mandated to provide relief during this time.

Social relief of distress is a temporary provision of assistance intended for persons in such a dire material need that they are unable to meet their families’ most basic needs.

This could be due to any of the following factors:

* Need for assistance while child grants are being processed;
* A crisis or disaster has occurred (e.g. house has burnt down);
* Not qualifying for a grant and in a desperate situation;
* Inability to work for a period of less than six month due to being medically unfit;
* Not receiving child maintenance;
* The breadwinner in the family has died;
* The breadwinner has been sent to prison for a short period of time (less than six months);
* Affected by a disaster, but the area or community of residence has not been declared a disaster area.

**Social relief as a possible solution**

The social relief of distress may be in the form of a food parcel or a voucher to buy food. Some provinces give this assistance in the form of cash. Social relief of distress is a short-term solution, usually providing relief for up to three months, which may be extended for another three months.

**The DA’s findings on the current emergency food relief plan**

* The Department of Social Development is struggling to keep up with the demands of social relief, which has resulted in a backlog. This is evident from the brief report presented to the Portfolio Committee on Social Development stating that a mere 2108 parcels have been distributed;
* On face to face contact, social workers are considerably short staffed;
* Food parcels are procured at a cost of R1603 per parcel;
* Distribution challenges include shortage of vehicles. In JB Marks, for example, the Disaster Management unit provides assistance with vehicles;
* Of 600 households submitted by the DA, no progress has been made on the requests.

**The DA’s solution**

1. The Department’s current number of funded vacancies, should be filled. This will ensure that the workforce is increased;
2. Additional “fixed term” social workers should be employed. This will address the dire shortage of social workers and frontline staff;
3. The system of identifying, profiling and distribution should be improved by conducting a needs analysis on the nutrition requirements of families. Assistance should be rendered at regular intervals;
4. The distribution plan should be adjusted to meet increasing demand;
5. Applications for food relief should be processed within 48 hours;
6. Beneficiaries should be provided with cash into their bank account/e-wallet or food vouchers;
	1. This translates into more food for the amount.
	2. Not all beneficiaries have the exact same need of relief - many consist of extended families.
	3. This will reduce the time between application and receiving the food parcel. It will empower beneficiaries to buy what they need and curbs the misuse of food parcels for political gain.
7. The delivery of food parcels should be considered a last resort, as it will:
	1. Reduce delivery time
	2. Reduce need for transport
	3. Reduce costs
8. The Department should improve working relationships between Government and the NGOs, through a structured co-ordinated response;
	1. The Western Cape Model put a system of collaborative solutions in place, which resulted in at least 8 000 NGOs working together, under the direction of the Western Cape DSD to alleviate the burden.
9. Politicians should be removed from the distribution of food parcel plan;
10. The Department should improve its communication systems and introduce an online application portal, coupled with a Whatsapp system.