



COMMUNITY OUTREACH PARTNERSHIP
HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTE OF SOUTH AFRICA (HURISA) & ACTIONAID INTERNATIONAL SOUTH AFRICA (ACSA)
REPORT



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Acronyms

HURISA:	Human Rights of South Africa
COVID19:	Corona Virus
SASSA:	South African Social Security Agency
CSO's:	Civil Society Organisations
ACSA:	ActionAid International South Africa

Background

COVID19 pandemic has exacerbated food insecurity and hunger to millions of people in South Africa, especially those living in deplorable communities characterised by abject poverty, underdevelopment, overcrowding, squalor, health risk and battle for basic social services such as water, sanitation. Many have lost jobs, income, livelihoods due the precautionary measures imposed to curb the pandemic. The right to have sufficient food and water is constitutionally guaranteed, including the state duty to *provide appropriate assistance to individuals if they are unable to support themselves and their dependents (Section 27 (1) (a) & (b))*. Distribution of food parcels to help desperate families and individual is not a new phenomenon in South Africa. South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) established a lifeline to help needy people with no means to meet basic needs¹. The government responded positively in considering providing emergency grant relief and food parcels in the form of stimulus packages to individuals and families harshly impacted by the national lockdown². However, many qualified indigent individuals, families and communities continue to suffer in hunger, malnutrition in the face of those responsible to assist. This is due to among others, increased unemployment rate and largescale corruption in state institutions responsible for coordination and distribution of food parcels and relief grants to needy individuals. Statistic SA also showed the rise of unemployment rate to 32.5 % in the fourth quarter of 2020. This affected budgets for humanitarian aid because more people are socially and economically destitute.

It is based on this background that HURISA decided joining CSOs distributing food parcels with a view of preserving human dignity of individual, families and communities. HURISA has since diversified its strategies to advocate for realisation of fundamental right to sufficient food and government's duty to help where individuals are unable to support themselves and their dependants, amid the pandemic.

Introduction

HURISA got involved in distributing food parcels for distressed families in the light of drastic COVID 19 preventative measures. Donors, benevolent individuals are helping the organisation to fulfil this noble role since August 2020. Food parcels had been distributed in severely impacted communities in the Central of Johannesburg in Alexandra Township, Northern suburb of Johannesburg in Cosmo City, Diepsloot, the East of Johannesburg in Kwa-Thema, Tsakane and in Soweto. Action Aid South Africa supported HURISA to continue playing this phenomenal role in these communities from February 2021. Even though these efforts are like a drop in the ocean, HURISA has reached over 400 families and individuals in disadvantaged communities since August 2020.



¹ Toll freeline as launched far back in 2014. SASSA CEO Virginia Peterson had indicted the agency hands out social relief of distress or food parcels to qualifying people with adopted criterion and means test.

² On 22 April 2020 President Cyril Ramaphosa announced a R500 billion economic relief package, which includes grant increases for all beneficiaries. Child grant support was granted additional R300 and R500 until October 2020. While unemployed citizens R350 and other grants beneficiaries received additional R250 also until October 2020.

Human rights situations in impoverished communities

The human rights situation has deteriorated in many communities and abject poverty has worsened due to the unemployment rates exacerbated by COVID19 measures. The organisation will highlight summaries of the plight of breadwinners in these communities to secure sufficient food for households and barely surviving from begging and help by others in the community. The cost of living has gone up, food price is high, so is fuel, water and electricity costs are unaffordable to people that barely survive from hand to mouth. Crime, pandemic, le to meet daily demands. meals to children, the sick, people with disabilities, elderly and other vulnerable in the society. This situation is deplorable, morale is low and hopeless.



Street leading to Marikana Ext 3 Kwa-Thema

Distribution of the Food Parcels in disadvantaged Communities



HURISA collaborates with community focal points that are the eyes and voices of communities and understand the lived socio, economic and political dynamics in communities. These local community focal points play instrumental roles between HURISA and recipients of food parcels. They provide particulars of individual, families in the community and verify their eligibility as be assisted with food parcels.

Local Community Focal Points

Alexandra Township

Riverpark East Alexandra
Puleng Thobatsi



She is unemployed, she is a survivor of sexual violence which left a big scar in her. She finds it community work healing and fulfilling because she received no counselling. She empowers women in the community to speak out against gender based violence and report police, as well as connecting survivors with social workers. Her community is riddled with many economic and social problems including high, unemployment and crime. Children and dependents suffer from hunger and malnutrition due unemployed parents. She registered 60 individuals to receive food parcels. But the organisation distributed 47 food parcels. Individuals are feeding up 3-5 family members." *I sometime have to cook for needy families whenever an opportunity arises for me to do so*



Puleng Thobatsi,

Alexandra Orphanage & Day Care Centre
Pheladi Makelani



Pheladi is a community worker and has availed her four roomed house since 2015 in impoverished community of Tsotsomane, in Alexandra township as an orphanage and children from disadvantaged background.



There are currently 40 beneficiaries she support through help from salvaged food received from Woolworths which is insufficient to support children adequately. Few parents afford day care services because they are unemployed, while others hold part time jobs which pay little to support their families. *To be honest is tough for the community with the daily needs, they are not surviving at all is tough. I wish they can get food every day, even if the children go to school, they have something in their stomach*".



Regards
Pheladi

Cosmo City & Diepsloot

Poppy Nyakeni from Diesloot near Cosmo City



It has always been her desire to play a positive role in the community. Collaboration with HURISA to distribute food parcels for her community is a great opportunity for her. Her community is severely impacted by COVID19. Most households are in dire need of food. Very few people are economically active and unable to support families, pay rental, and basic services. The community face teenage pregnancy and fathers are usually unknown or fail to maintain their children. *"I have two children and I'm a widow. My husband passed on in 2018 and he was unemployed for ten years. The community resort to borrowing from local creditors (Mashonisa). These are not kind creditors and police are often called to intervene in covering movables attached as collaterals. I pray for things improve for people to be economically stable"*

Margeret Nomvula Ngozi from Diepsloot



Nomvula, fondly called Mamzwakhe is of sometime contacted by other agencies for distribution of food parcels. *I'm passionate to feed the community, and it pains me see many people suffer from hunger. I'm more worried about young girls that become mothers at early age and with no maintenance from fathers of their babies".*

Her husband was retrenched four years ago. Although he's economically active, it has been very hard for him to secure parttime jobs to maintain the household. The food parcel assist 6 members in the family

Kwathema & Tsakane Township

Marikana, Informal Settlement in KwaThema
Nozamile Mabandalo



Nozamile is active commuty member. This is her first time to be resposable as a focal point and not only as a beneficiary. *“I wish to the project continues, because people ate starving in this community, Abantu ba ya hlopheka”*. Churches come assist needy. However their assististance cannot be enough to cover the whole community. *“The community is not developed, we have no infrastructure for water, and use bucket system and pit toilets. We are used to many people of working age to be unemployed and do nothing. There are those that are fortunate to be in casual emplyment and their household able to survive from hand to mouth”*.

Nkwe Street Tsakane
Iris Manana



Her husband was involved in food distribution passed on in January 2021. She has step in his boots to help the needy in her community to receive food parcels. The food parcel is for two people, herself and unemployed son ,

I’m traumatised by my situation, as unemployed, my husband had inadequate insurance for support of our household. I hope my son finds a job to support me , otherwise I forsee an unpleasant situation

Soweto

Tladi Skwetla Informal Settlement Malefu Makoro



She is involved in the initiative with her daughter who is very involved in the community, Tladi Skwetla informal settlement inhabited by over 300 shack dwellers. This is her first time to be involved in this kind of community outreach. She availed her time to collaborate with HURISA because of the importance of the purpose it will serve in the community. There are many people with no formal employment. Most are trolley pickers, domestic workers, garden labourers and barely survive from hand to mouth. Their situation has been exacerbated by the loss of jobs due to the lockdown. This project brought a lot of hope in the homes of this poverty-stricken community. *“I hope the pandemic subsides so that people, especially the youth are able to find jobs” and families are able to put food on the table”.*



Direct & Indirect Impact

Cosmo City / Diepsloot community

40 food parcels were distributed to needy individuals and families residing in Diepsloot and on the boarder of Cosmo City. The individuals are mostly single parents living in two – three roomed homes with dependants, and taking care of the sick, injured, elderly, children and unemployed fathers. The food parcel contributes to households with 3-4 family members. The beneficiaries mentioned the trauma of hunger and starvation which attributes to high crime in the society as many people especially the young, have no means of income. The Food parcels don't last for a month because family members struggle to find jobs. The street informal traders also indicated the difficulty in securing livelihoods because many people can't afford to purchase their goods due to high unemployment rate.



Alexandra Township

102 food parcels were distributed, of which 55 was delivered at the Bana Ba Khanya Orphanage situated at Far East Bank of Alexandra Township. Children receive 30 food parcels, and 25 needy community individuals were identified nearby the orphanage to collect food parcels, In River Park Alexandra Extension 47 parcels were distribute to individuals and families.

Children contributed the food to their families. They are mostly raised up by single parents, who are females, grandmothers, that also live with other grandchildren. It is estimated that households in these areas are commonly occupied by 6-7 family members. Families are always in need of food supplies because of many extended family members that live on same property and with no means to contribute towards food. Some parents are economically active and able to find parttime jobs that help them contribute food for households. The situation is heart breaking as communities barely survive from hand to mouth.

The 62 parents are mostly unemployed, while others are living with pre-existing chronic health conditions and non-communicable diseases such as sugar diabetes, hypertension, HIV and always in need of food due to not only to poverty but also because they are on medication which require them to eat before taking medication. Shortage of food is a reality facing the household that need to share to large number of family members. Community has learnt to act in solidarity in helping the poor of the poorest with food. They are expecting further support, as long as unemployment remain high.



Kwathema & Tsakane Community

Food parcels we distributed to needy individuals and families (26 in Kwathema and 14 in Tsakane). The individuals are mostly married persons, widows, divorces and single parents. In Kwathema, needy individuals and families were identified at Marikana Informal settlement. The situation in this community is heartbreaking. It was difficult to distribute food to such small number of people with 3-5 dependents and family members. Food parcels contribute positively to few that were prioritised for distribution. However, one food parcel is definitely insufficient to last a month to families with about 5 members. In Tsakane, the situation is not as harsh as conditions in Kwathema. The beneficiaries contribute to household of 2-4 members. Most bread winners are widows, retired elderly women with many unemployed children and depending on them for support.



Tladi Skwetla Informal Settlement - SOWETO

This is a relatively new informal settlement, occupied by old and the new generation. The community received 37 food parcels for needy individuals and families. There were more people waiting to receive food parcels, although our focal point was requested to identify 36 needy individuals. This is due high number of people struggling to find jobs to earn and support their families. The individuals support 5-6 family members that are made up of parents, siblings, single parents and grandparents. More people were registered but without any promise to return with food parcels. However, the organisation was touched by the suffering and hopeless living conditions and many unemployed, lost jobs due to COVID19. Young people are trolley pickers, run car washes which help them survive from hand to mouth.



Conclusion

This was a noble initiative which HURISA is grateful to assist the beneficiaries with food parcels to survive severe hunger in difficult times. The reality of high unemployment and poverty in disadvantaged communities is rampant and could lead to loss of lives of many people due to starvation. It is true that many families go to bed without food. There's a need for paradigm shift in communities for investments in community economic and social support groups to help needy families. Stokvels, Makgotla and burial societies play significant roles in communities for decades. However, they need to adjust to accommodate evolving developments to support each other in time of need. The government support will always be inadequate as long more people need support.

The growing unemployment rate which is currently over 32.5% is sending a serious message for innovative strategies to sustain food security in the country. HURISA wish to take this opportunity for the kind support ActionAid International provided to assist the government advance constitutional economic and social provision to needy individuals who are unable to support themselves and their dependants. The only challenge we encountered was the timeframe for project implementation was too short. However, we hope this can be amended should there be consideration for more collaboration opportunities in future.