



social development

Department:  
Social Development  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



# Design Evaluation of the National Food Security and Distribution Hybrid Model

## EVALUATION REPORT FULL REPORT



# A design Evaluation of the National Food Security & Distribution Hybrid Model

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## Executive summary

### Introduction

The national Department of Social Development (DSD) commissioned a design evaluation on 3 September 2021 to formulate and design a well-informed food distribution hybrid model, taking both national and international best practices into consideration. The evaluation was carried out between September 2021 and May 2022 using mixed methods of data collection and analysis. This report presents the findings of the evaluation.

### Main purpose or objective

The main purpose of the evaluation is to provide substantial information to inform the design of the Food Distribution Hybrid Model. In addition to this objective, the evaluation is expected to provide empirical evidence on the root causes of the inefficiencies in the current models of food distribution and, ultimately, provide the evidence on which to base a strong theory of change and design for a new solution.

### Methodology

Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected and analysed to provide an in-depth understanding of the food distribution model and its dynamics. The application of mixed methods allowed for a critical and systematic review of literature and documentation relating to the study, and an intense engagement with various stakeholders from national departments, provincial and local government, and the beneficiary communities.

In line with the participatory approach, and to ensure that all stakeholders were included, the project team and the core DSD project team conducted a stakeholder mapping exercise on 16 September 2022. The views of the beneficiaries were also included through surveys and interviews to ensure that the recommendations were sound and based on what was really happening on the ground.

Purposive sampling was used to identify key stakeholders to engage with to understand the performance issues in the current system, making valuable inputs into the design of the programme. The National Food and Nutrition Programme covers all nine provinces, while six of the nine provinces were sampled. These were Gauteng, the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, the Northern Cape, North West and the Western Cape. Two district municipalities were identified in each province.

Qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis. Problem tree analysis, underpinned by a diagnostic approach, was used to understand the nature of issues relating to the existing Food and Nutrition Distribution Model, as well as the root causes of these issues. Information from the literature and a document review was used to craft a skeletal problem tree, which was further interrogated at the stakeholder workshops. The objective tree was used to identify the desired ends, and eventually a logical frame was used to derive a Food Nutrition Hybrid Model theory of change to guide the evaluation.

Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics and presented using tables, graphs and charts. Options formulated were analysed and evaluated using value for money analysis, cost benefit analysis and a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis.

## Key evaluation findings

The following are the summary conclusions in terms of the evaluation questions.

### I. To what extent does the Food Distribution Hybrid Model contribute to the DSD's strategic objectives/plan and the government's strategic objectives/plans?

#### Conclusion

The evaluation sets about assessing the possibility of transforming the current food security and distribution system, which depends heavily on the use of food parcels, into a hybrid model that involves the use of food vouchers or cash transfers. By finding more efficient ways to deliver food assistance at a reduced cost with improved efficiency, and dealing with systemic issues identified in such a model, an appropriate hybrid model has significant potential to improve programme delivery, targeting and coverage.

According to the evidence in the literature explored, an efficient hybrid model, which makes use of vouchers, will ensure timely, cost-effective, flexible assistance to beneficiaries in a more dignified manner. The evaluation therefore concludes that the provision of short-term or long-term food access to impoverished citizens will expedite the achievement of the DSD's mandate as the custodian of ensuring social protection and social relief of distress. The long-term capacitating of beneficiaries to produce their own food or gain skills to earn enough income to afford nutritious food will contribute significantly towards reducing hunger. This will contribute to government's Medium-term Strategic Framework (MTSF) Priority 3 of skills development, Priority 1 of a capable developmental state, Priority 2 of economic transformation and job creation, and thereby contribute to the realisation of Priority 7, a better South Africa, Africa and world.

### II. Is there alignment of the different legislations and policy? If not, how can we go about making the required changes to ensure alignment?

#### Conclusion

South Africa, like many other countries, has prioritised the provision of social relief assistance to its vulnerable citizens. Similarly, the National Development Plan (NDP) highlights the need for social protection. The core intention of the Food and Nutrition Security Programme is to ensure that there is adequate access to nutritious food as part of the DSD's social relief of distress and social protection in general, thereby fulfilling the basic right of citizens, as enshrined in section 27 of the Bill of Rights.

### III. To what extent will coordination, management, planning and budgeting be improved?

#### Conclusion

**Coordination can be improved** by first setting up a platform through which all relevant stakeholders of the programme can regularly interact with each other and foster collaborative alliances by delivering on common interventions.

**A centralised beneficiary registration and management system may be required to improve programme coordination.** Most departments and organisations are currently working with their own populated databases. This is seen as resulting in a duplication of efforts. Having a common system where all services provided to a particular beneficiary can be made available is critical to collaborative efforts among stakeholders. The design of an electronic database system to which all relevant departments can be linked



to input data and view relevant data is paramount to the improvement of coordination efforts. The national DSD can consider adopting the National Integrated Social Information System (NISIS) or a similar system for these purposes.

#### **IV. Is the target group clearly identified and how can it be better defined? Is the basis for measurement clearly defined?**

##### **Conclusion**

**Collaboration between the national DSD and technological companies is crucial** to find innovative technological models for designing digital voucher systems, with an efficient, but cost-effective distribution and monitoring system that is user-friendly and error-free. Adaptation into local languages may be considered to increase comprehension by the rural and less literate beneficiaries.

There is a need for tight monitoring and control measures for such voucher systems to ensure their correct use. One of the ways to do this is to create enough awareness and education on how the vouchers are to be used, and penalties for their abuse.

#### **V. What is the current situation with the delivery of services to address food and nutrition security?**

##### **Conclusions**

- The literature review and programme documentation iterated the relevance of the food security programme to the national objective of the Food Nutrition and Security Programme to the needs of the country in terms of eradicating hunger and providing equal access to quality and nutritious food. Some 17.5 million beneficiaries, including 12.2 million children and 3.4 million older persons, receive social relief grants. These grants form the main social safety net, valued at about R160 billion in South Africa.
- It is also noted that South Africa is not entirely new to the use of digital systems for providing social assistance. The South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) and other organs of state have been using digital methods to provide social grants for beneficiaries for quite some time now. They have also put efficient systems in place to deliver cash to beneficiaries' cell phones.
- Most provinces, such as the Northern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape, Gauteng and the Western Cape, have already implemented – or at least piloted – some form of a hybrid model where food parcels were provided to beneficiaries during emergency cases, such as in the COVID-19 pandemic period, combined with the provision of cooked meals, community nutrition development centres (CNDCs) and community soup kitchens. In most provinces, the provision of food parcels was either once off, or only provided intermittently, in some cases once a month or twice a year, depending on the availability of funding.
- Findings from the survey show that most people who access food assistance are from poor backgrounds, with lower levels of education and skills, although some of them (at least 50%) have acquired some form of formal education. Most of these respondents are not employed and do not earn a regular income. At least half of them rely on some form of social grant to make ends meet. Household expenditure is dominated by food-related expenditure, which unfortunately 70% of respondents indicated has increased significantly during the COVID- 19 pandemic.
- Currently, food assurance provision is dominated by cooked meals at CNDCs and community soup kitchens. Food parcels are also provided by government and in municipalities where there are no CNDCs.
- The evidence also shows that food vouchers and cash vouchers are mostly preferred by beneficiaries compared to food parcels. The least preferred form of assistance is cooked meals.

- Most of the respondents can use a cell phone of some sort, which paves way for the implementation of digital voucher systems. For those who do not have cell phones, the provision of physical vouchers may be more conducive.
- The provision of vouchers has the advantages of speed, larger coverage, and the potential to increase the quality of the food provided. It also has the potential of abuse by recipients as they avoid buying what the vouchers are intended for. This further necessitates the strengthening of monitoring systems.
- **For long-term household food security and sustainability, a basket of alternative options, including farming methods, should be investigated and applied or made available** for adoption in accordance with the resources and circumstances of households. For instance, while some households may engage in farming activities such as crop production where there is access to arable land and water, others can engage in poultry farming or piggeries where the land is not arable. This may need collaboration between stakeholders such as the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working at grassroots level.
- **To boost local economic participation**, a list of local shops may be identified, sourced and approved for the redemption of vouchers. There is the possibility of opening procurement to local shops. This can be done at district level, with DSD offices conducting the procurement process for implementation. This also has the potential of cutting down the cost of redeeming vouchers in relation to travel time, where beneficiaries have to commute to larger mainstream retail stores in nearby towns to redeem their vouchers.

**VI. What are the proposed roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders within the Department, as well as in other national and provincial departments, local government or other agencies, in undertaking the programme?**

**Conclusion**

The programme is currently being coordinated by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), and the national DSD and its agencies, with support from sector departments such as Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Education, Health, Home Affairs, Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, and various NGOs and faith-based organisations as implementers. An efficient communication plan and working agreement between these stakeholders is critical and should be embedded into the implementation plan of the hybrid model.

**VII. What are the root causes that contribute to food and nutrition insecurity? How do existing services relate to the underlying problems?**

**Conclusion**

From the problem definition and analysis, the core problem relates to the systemic inefficiencies of the current model. Root causes include **inadequacy or inefficiencies in** administrative processes that emanate from bureaucracy and red-tape practices in government, the high **operational cost of handing physical delivery mechanisms, time delays**, issues with security, the **vulnerability** of the system to manipulation, and issues regarding the **sustainability** of the model as it is, especially relating to handling large volumes of physical food parcels, which raises the question to what extent can government go on feeding large numbers of beneficiaries on a regular basis as the population becomes impoverished. Generally, historical issues of poverty, lack of skills and lower levels of education among the rural poor, compounded by the recent COVID-19 pandemic, made matters more serious.

The issue of a duplication of efforts, leading to inefficiencies in coordinating food relief efforts across the various stakeholders, is hinted at to also relate to the lack of properly coordinated systems across the social sector. Resolving this issue could enable collaboration between various service-providing institutions and the government.

#### VIII. What evidence exists from other countries on solutions that are working? Are there lessons that can be learnt from these countries to develop workable solutions?

##### Conclusion

Evidence from countries such as India, Indonesia and some parts of Europe indicate that the transition from heavy reliance on physical methods of providing food assistance to voucher systems not only improved targeting and access, but also reduced operational costs entirely.

As seen in the case of Indonesia's transition from the Rastra targeted social assistance programme to the BPNT non-cash food assistance programme, the quality of food provided also increased, as vouchers allow citizens to make their own, but guided choices in acquiring what they truly need. The digitalisation of food distribution systems and vouchers has its advantages and disadvantages.

## Recommendations

From the discussions of the findings and the conclusions presented, the following recommendations are put forward for consideration regarding the various aspects of the programme.

1. From both the perspectives of the beneficiaries and the programme officials, the first option of assistance is cooked meals to deal with short-term food provision and access to food. This is also quite useful in emergency situations, such as disasters, where households may have lost their homes, including their means of preparing the food. In the medium term, voucher solutions can be introduced, but with tight monitoring systems to accompany the flexibility of choice to beneficiaries.
2. Food and nutrition awareness creation on the suggested basket of foods the voucher is intended for should be included in the communication plan of the hybrid model.
3. **A hybrid model could encompass vouchers (digital and paper vouchers), food parcels and cooked meal portions in remote areas, where access to technology and an e-voucher system is difficult.**
4. **Food parcels can be provided to those beneficiaries in remote areas**, where the cost of travelling to redeem the vouchers may be significantly higher (the value of the voucher is financially costly, as is the time it takes to travel).
5. In the long run, the system should aim to **capacitate individuals to graduate** from dependency on the programme to be able to sustain themselves either by **producing their own food** or **earning enough income** to have access to nutritious food. The model implemented by Meals on Wheels and other NGOs can be adopted and **scaled** to a national level where capacity building and food production components are added.
6. To ensure the successful implementation of all aspects of the programme (from the short-term provision of food to the long-term empowerment of recipients), the participation of all stakeholders is crucial.
7. **Intensive coordination at national and provincial levels, and stakeholder participation** is crucial. An **integrated approach** by all spheres of government, as well as NGOs and the community, must make sure that all parties work together to improve the programme reach and targets, and understand the community's needs.
8. The programme is currently being coordinated by the DPME, together with the national DSD and its agencies, with support from sector departments such as Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural

Development, Education, Health, Home Affairs, Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, and various NGOs and faith-based organisations as implementers. An efficient communication plan and working agreement between these stakeholders is critical and should be embedded into the implementation plan of the hybrid model.

9. This institutional structure should also be modelled at the provincial level to ensure the efficient operationalisation of the model. The Office of the Premier may be better positioned to provide an oversight coordination function in the provinces. This may need to be facilitated by the DSD and DPME.
10. **Monitoring and reporting systems** should be strengthened. **Evaluation and research** should be costed alongside the implementation process.
11. A digitalised system of identification, **monitoring and management of beneficiaries is needed to ensure the smooth running of the hybrid model.**
12. **Developing a single beneficiary registry**, which will provide beneficiary profiles and records of government social protection services data that can also be available in real time on the status of beneficiaries. This will also provide an overview of the programme coverage and gaps. Furthermore, this will assist in achieving **better coordination** and **reduce the duplication** of efforts and a more efficient **use of resources**, while also **improving targeting** and **coverage**.
13. Ensure the **strengthening of administrative social protection data systems** across government that involves the **National Integrated Social Protection Information System (NISPIIS)**.
14. **Legislative reviews needed for the implementation of the system** should be undertaken as a priority to pave the way for efficient implementation.
15. The national DSD, in collaboration with local offices and agencies, should consider drafting criteria or guidelines that local stores should meet, in accordance with the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) and other procurement regulations that will increase the participation of these stores in the bidding process, and which can include technological capacity.
16. **Collaboration between the national DSD and technological companies is crucial** to find innovative technological models to design digital voucher systems that can host national voucher platforms with efficient, but cost-effective distribution costs, that can be integrated with a monitoring system and that are user-friendly and error-free.
17. Adaptation into local languages may be considered to increase comprehension by the rural and less literate beneficiaries.



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## List of acronyms

ACRONYM	MEANING
CBO	Community-based Organisation
CDP	Community Development Practitioner
CNDC	Community Nutrition Development Centre
CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
DPME	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
DSD	Department of Social Development
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programme
FBO	Faith-based Organisation
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HBC	Home-based Care
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IT	Information Technology
MTSF	Medium-term Strategic Framework
NDA	National Development Agency
NFNSP	National Food and Nutrition Security Programme
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NIDS-CRAM	National Income Dynamics Study – Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey
NISIS	National Integrated Social Information System
NISPIS	National Integrated Social Protection Information System
NPO	Non-profit Organisation
NRF	National Research Foundation
NTWG	National Technical Working Group
PDS	Public Distribution System
PFDC	Provincial Food Distribution Centre
PMT	Proxy-means Testing
SASSA	South African Social Security Agency
SRD	Social Relief of Distress
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TPDS	Targeted Public Distribution System
WCEDP	Western Cape Economic Development Partnership
WHO	World Health Organisation



# 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

## 1.1 Introduction

The national Department of Social Development (DSD) commissioned a design evaluation on 3 September 2021 to formulate and design a well-informed food distribution hybrid model, taking both national and international best practices into consideration. The evaluation was carried out between September 2021 and May 2022 using mixed methods of data collection and analysis. This report presents the findings of the evaluation.

The announcement of COVID-19 as a pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and related developments within the Republic of South Africa, instituted by the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, led to the declaration of a national state of disaster in terms of section 27(1) of the Disaster Management Act, 2002. The national DSD has been involved in the implementation of a food and nutrition intervention to some 13 million people who have inadequate access to nutritious food, and an additional 7 million citizens who are impoverished because of the national lockdown.

The severity of its impacts, and the magnitude of the spread of the coronavirus since 2020, coupled with the associated lockdown, highlight the complicated nature of the existing model of food and nutrition distribution, necessitating a need to explore other ways of providing access to food that are more efficient, faster and more reliable, particularly ways that involve the introduction of food vouchers rather than the physical distribution of food parcels.

As part of evidenced-based decision-making processes, the DSD commissioned a design evaluation to provide the necessary evidence on how to go about developing a suitable and robust food distribution model that will better respond to the needs of beneficiaries to address the broader issue of food insecurity and hunger. The hybrid model intends to make implementation easier and more effective.

## 1.2 Overview of the current model

### 1.2.1 What is the current food and nutrition distribution model?

The DSD's current Household Food and Nutrition Security Model (presented in Figure 1.1) briefly entails allocating donated or procured food to community food depots for distribution to vulnerable households. These foods are sourced through local food producers and are dispersed through provincial food distribution centres (PFDCs). The food is either provided as a hot meal at community nutrition development centres (CNDC) or provided as a food parcel to households. It can also be distributed through feeding schemes provided by different organisations, including the DSD and its agencies in the provinces, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and faith-based organisations (FBOs).

From discussions held with programme officials at the inception meeting, it was made clear that the purpose of the hybrid model was also to maintain and improve on those aspects of the model that were still working, such as the CNDs and soup kitchens, where hot meals are prepared and served. The model would add an additional component, such as a voucher system. This would replace the food parcels, to an extent, which are deemed to be problematic, especially in times of disasters and crises.

## Household Food and Nutrition Security Model

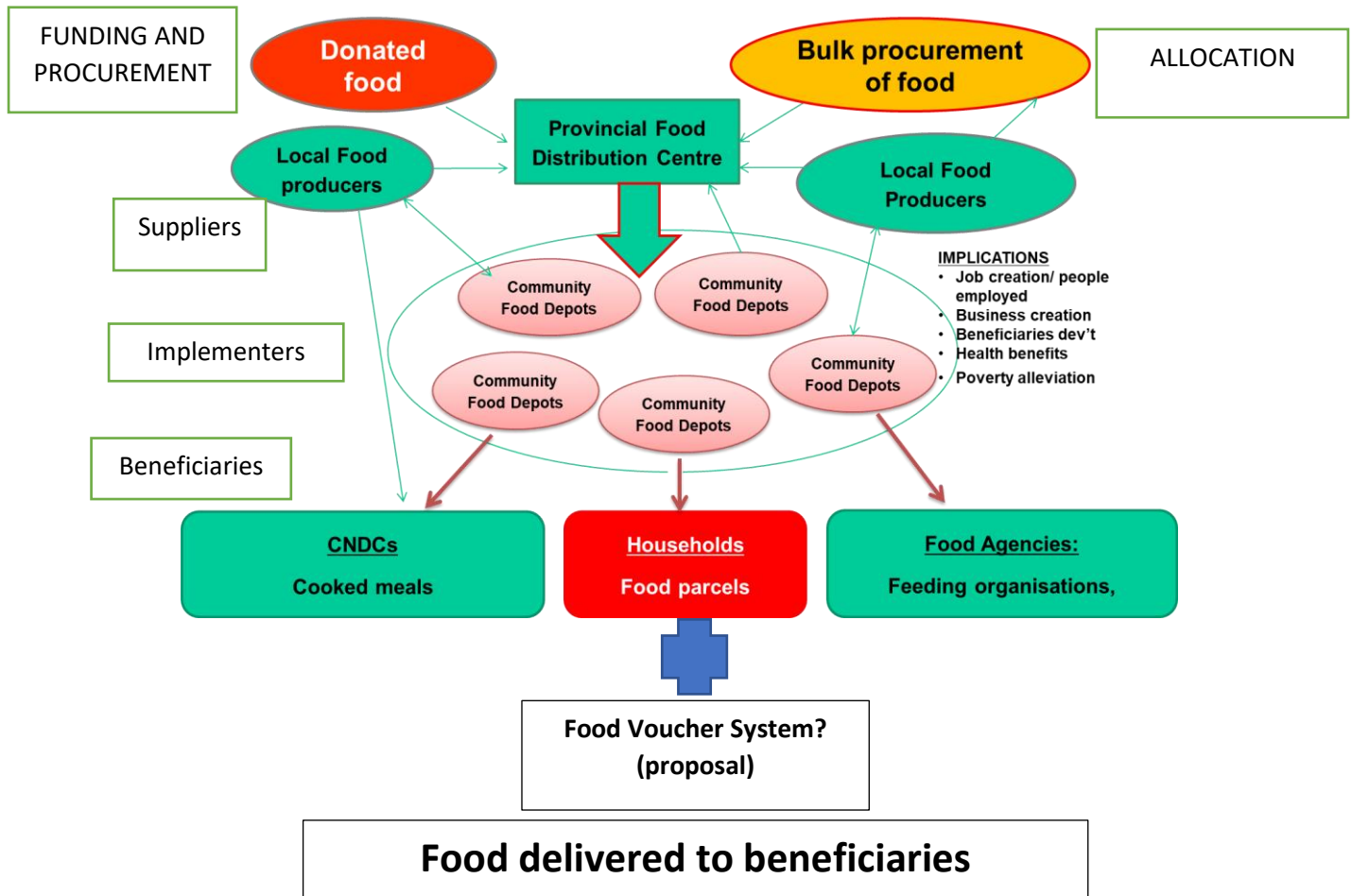


FIGURE 1.1: THE EXISTING FOOD DISTRIBUTION MODEL

The limitations of the physical handing of food parcels in large quantities or for large programmes were also noted as they were exacerbated by the restrictions on contact imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The vouchers will thus largely replace the procurement, packaging and delivery of the actual food, packaging and distribution by government and its implementers. This shifts the responsibility from the implementers to the beneficiaries. The modification will thus be from cash to a voucher, which will be transferred to beneficiaries electronically, and then redeemed at approved or designated redemption centres. It was noted that, although the cost and responsibility of handling the food parcels may be shifted from the provider, the beneficiaries have to go to the redemption centres to receive the food. This may bring about some other costs, but may also offer the beneficiaries the possibility of choice about what to buy. The conceptual illustration of the voucher component and possible issues to consider are presented in Figure 1.2.

### The proposal (additional component/modification to the existing model)

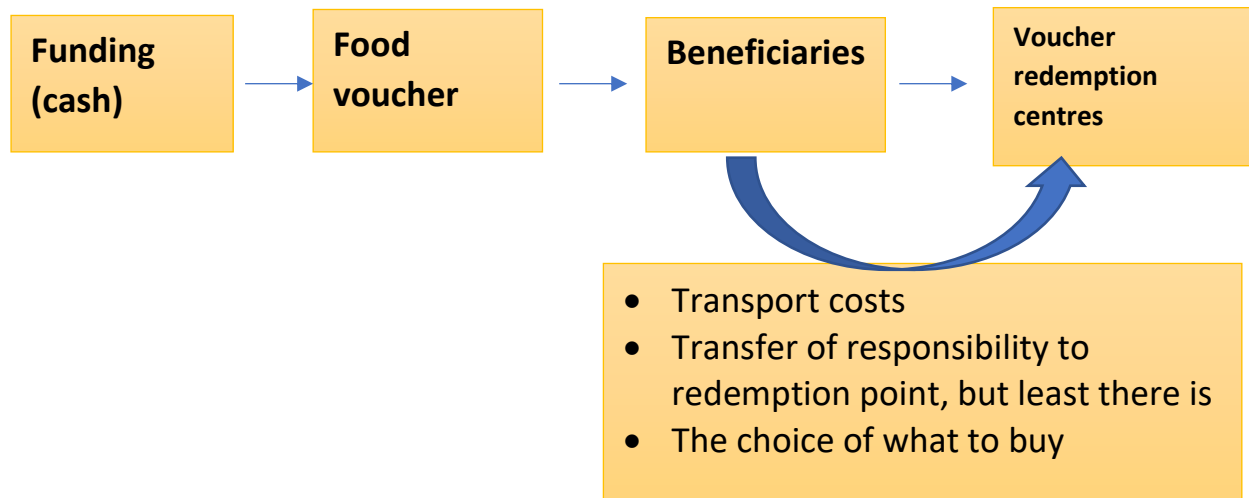


FIGURE 1.2: THE PROPOSED ADDITION OF FOOD VOUCHERS TO THE EXISTING MODEL

In view of the above, the DSD intends to migrate from food parcels to a solution that will provide e-vouchers and physical vouchers as a method of awarding food relief. This approach is expected to improve the efficiency of the business processes, improve the accessibility of services, tighten security, reduce leakages, improve controls over various aspects, improve response times, increase reach or coverage, and improve impact.

The DSD, in accordance with the Terms of Reference of the evaluation, seeks to evaluate aspects of an e-voucher solution and food parcels as a hybrid model for food relief, intended for persons who are in dire need of food assistance, who are living outside the current network of centre-based feeding programmes, and who are experiencing undue hardship.

## 1.3 Purpose of the evaluation

### Main purpose or objective

The main purpose of the evaluation is to provide enough evidence to inform the design of the Food Distribution Hybrid Model. In addition to this objective, the evaluation is expected to provide empirical evidence on the root causes of the inefficiencies in the current models of food distribution and, ultimately, provide the evidence on which to base a strong theory of change and design for a new solution.

### Specific objectives

The evaluation design of the Food Distribution Hybrid Model for the project will bring about a better e-voucher and food parcel distribution solution. Furthermore, it has the following specific objectives:

- Determine the extent to which the Food Distribution Hybrid Model will contribute to the DSD's strategic objectives/plan and the government's strategic objectives/plans.
- Distinguish the relationship between the different legislations and policy, and bring about the required changes to ensure alignment.
- Determine the cost benefit of the Food Distribution Hybrid Model.
- Investigate to what extent coordination, management, planning and budgeting will be improved.

- e) Determine if the target group is clearly identified and how it can be better defined. Is the basis for measurement clearly defined?
- f) Identify the current situation with the delivery of services to address food and nutrition security, and identify the proposed roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders within the Department, as well as in other national and provincial departments, local government or other agencies, in undertaking the programme.
- g) Identify the root causes that contribute to food and nutrition insecurity, and analyse the existing services relating to the underlying problems.
- h) Identify evidence from other countries on solutions that are working, and evaluate lessons that can be learnt from these countries to develop workable solutions.

## 1.4 Key evaluation questions

In alignment with the above objectives, the following key questions need to be addressed to deal with the problem:

- I. To what extent does the Food Distribution Hybrid Model contribute to the DSD's strategic objectives/plan and the government's strategic objectives/plans?
- II. Is there alignment of the different legislations and policy? If not, how can we go about making the required changes to ensure alignment?
- III. What are the costs and benefits of the Food Distribution Hybrid Model?
- IV. To what extent will coordination, management, planning and budgeting be improved?
- V. Is the target group clearly identified and how can it be better defined? Is the basis for measurement clearly defined?
- VI. What is the current situation with the delivery of services to address food and nutrition security?
- VII. What are the proposed roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders within the Department, as well as in other national and provincial departments, local government or other agencies, in undertaking the programme?
- VIII. What are the root causes that contribute to food and nutrition insecurity? How do existing services relate to the underlying problems?
- IX. What evidence exists from other countries on solutions that are working? Are there lessons that can be learnt from these countries to develop workable solutions?

## 2. EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected and analysed to provide an in-depth understanding of the food distribution model and its dynamics. The application of mixed methods allowed for a critical and systematic review of literature and documentation relating to the study, and an intense engagement with various stakeholders from national departments, provincial and local government, and the beneficiary communities.

To ensure that all stakeholders were included, the project team and the core DSD project team conducted a stakeholder mapping exercise on 16 September 2022. Stakeholders to be included in the evaluation, and in the planning and implementation of the hybrid model, were identified. A functional stakeholder mapping exercise was undertaken to determine the roles such stakeholders currently play, their expectations from programme implementation, and what roles they could play in implementing the development and execution of the proposed hybrid model. In addition to the provincial officials assisting in the planning and collection of the field data, the inputs of programme managers from the DSD, the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), the National Development Agency (NDA) and sector departments such as Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Education, Health, the Office of the Premier, and the provincial Monitoring and Evaluation units were sourced during the data collection and input sessions. The views of the beneficiaries were also included through surveys and interviews to ensure that the recommendations were sound and based on what was really happening on the ground.

### 2.1 Data collection

Fieldwork was undertaken between 17 October and 12 December 2021, covering six selected provinces. One-on-one computer-assisted interviews or surveys were conducted with programme beneficiaries using structured questionnaires loaded on the Dooblo Survey to Go application. Field workers were then trained on the use of this scripted questionnaire in each of the participating provinces.

### 2.2 Sampling population and sample sizes

Purposive sampling was used to identify key stakeholders to engage with and to understand the performance issues in the current system, making valuable inputs into the design of the programme. The National Food and Nutrition Programme covers all nine provinces, while six of the nine provinces were sampled. These were Gauteng, the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, the Northern Cape, North West and the Western Cape. Two district municipalities were identified in each province. As shown in Table 2.2, a minimum of 100 beneficiaries were targeted for the survey in each province, with at least three programme officials to conduct the interviews. Apart from Gauteng, where 37 beneficiaries were sampled for the pilot and 46 additional beneficiaries were targeted during the full roll-out, data collected in each province exceeded the target of 100 beneficiaries (see Table 2.2). This could mostly be attributed to the anxiety of beneficiaries gathered in the CNCDCs to relate their stories.



TABLE 2.1: SAMPLE SIZES

Sample units/participant categories	Sample sizes		
	Interviews	FGDs	Surveys
Provinces covered: <b>Gauteng, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Cape, North West, Western Cape</b>			
<b>DSD national programme officials</b>	3	-	-3
<b>Provincial programme officials</b>	2 per province (12)	-	-12
<b>Beneficiary communities</b>	-	6	728 recorded
<b>NGOs/NPOs/implementing agents of food distribution programmes</b>	1 per province (6)	3	surveyed +37 piloted
<b>Any additional units</b>			-
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>765</b>

TABLE 2.2: NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES SURVEYED

Answers	Target beneficiary samples	Beneficiaries' data	Percentage	Officials target	Officials	Shop owners
				<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	
<b>Gauteng (pilot)</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>37</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	
<b>Gauteng</b>	<b>100</b>	46	6.32%	3	4	
<b>Eastern Cape</b>	<b>100</b>	192	26.37%	3	3	
<b>KwaZulu-Natal</b>	<b>100</b>	137	18.82%	3	3	
<b>Northern Cape</b>	<b>100</b>	122	16.76%	3	5	
<b>North West</b>	<b>100</b>	116	15.93%	3	4	
<b>Western Cape</b>	<b>100</b>	115	15.8%	3	3	
<b>Total interviews</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>728</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>10</b>

## 2.3 Ethical considerations

At high level, a letter of introduction for the research and research team was circulated by the national DSD's Evaluation and Research Director's office to all heads of department in the provinces to notify them of the evaluation and to request permission for the evaluation team to work in the provinces. A consent clause was incorporated into the data collection instruments, which was implemented during the data collection process. The study was explained to each respondent beneficiary and they were asked about their willingness to participate. Only when the participant agreed, could the interview proceed. COVID-19 protocols were observed during the evaluation process, and in engaging with the various participants. Online engagements were also used where possible to minimise in-person contacts.

## 2.4 Quality assurance

Quality assurance measures were built into the evaluation process at various stages. The participatory approach ensures that the information gathered is validated and triangulated using mixed methods. At inception, the objectives were clarified and agreed on by the team and the DSD's technical committee. Data collectors were trained efficiently, and the data collected was properly cleaned prior to analysis. Validation workshops and input sessions were also used to ensure a high-quality process and evaluation output.

## 2.5 Data processing and analysis

Qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis. Problem tree analysis, underpinned by a diagnostic approach, was used to understand the nature of issues relating to the existing Food and Nutrition Distribution Model. Information from the literature and a document review was used to craft a skeletal problem tree, which was then further interrogated at the stakeholder workshops. The objective tree was used to identify the desired ends, and eventually a logical frame was used to derive a Food and Nutrition Hybrid Model theory of change to guide the evaluation.

Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics and presented using tables, graphs and charts. Options formulated were analysed using value-for-money analysis, cost-benefit analysis and a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis.

### 3. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS

#### 3.1 Problem definition and root cause analysis

A one-day problem analysis workshop was organised with key stakeholders on 27 September 2021 at the Birchwood Hotel Conference Centre in Boksburg. The workshop was also held virtually to accommodate participants who could not participate physically. This was a prelude to the design of the theory of change that attracted the interest of the various and diverse stakeholders of the hybrid model.

##### **What are the core problems with the current system and its operation, if any?**

The core problems identified pivot largely around the perceived inefficiencies of the current model. These can be broken down into eight core problems, which include **inadequacy or inefficiencies in** administrative processes resulting from bureaucracy and red-tape practices in government, the high **operational cost, time delays**, issues with security, the **vulnerability** of the system to manipulation, and issues regarding the **sustainability** of the model as it is, especially relating to handling large volumes of physical food parcels, and the extent to which government can go on feeding large numbers of beneficiaries on a regular basis as the population becomes impoverished. There are, however, some aspects of the current system that are working, such as food delivery through centre-based feeding schemes, such as the CNDs.

The inefficiencies or inadequacy in administrative processes is noted to be largely caused by inefficiencies due to bureaucracy and administrative bottlenecks in government operations, rooted in the cumbersome procurement processes that need to be followed. It was also noted that some of these issues could be in contrast with some policy aspects, such as the interpretation and application of Circular 21. This leads to a slow turnaround time in the delivery of services, and a slow response time to pressing situations that demand resource allocations. This administrative process also results in the delayed transfer of funds to implementing units, which should take place as quickly as possible, especially in times of crises. This results in further slow response times to crises, sometimes leading to higher operational costs. A problem tree analysis is used to present the identified issues from a systems thinking perspective, illustrating the interconnectedness of these issues (Figure 3.1). At the workshop, the participants used the solution or objective tree approach to set the ideals of what a new hybrid model should achieve (Figure 3.1). The theory of change was propounded at the next day of the workshop to map the path of how these changes could be brought about. These somehow provided or became an analytical framework, and were tested on aspects of the evaluation and to gather the necessary evidence to test their practicality towards refining the model, where necessary, based on evidence from the reality on the ground. These also guided the primary data collection at subsequent stages of the evaluation.

#### 3.2 Food Distribution Hybrid Model theory of change

The diagnostics analysis has clearly identified the issues inherent in the existing food and nutrition model, for which some changes are required. This recognises the need to take advantage of innovative and time-relevant solutions, and drive towards sustainable remedies for the inefficiencies identified in the system. Using a logical approach, the theory of change of how to get to the ideal state was collectively put forward by the stakeholders at the workshop who were drawn from various departments and organisations.

##### **Aim, goals and impact statement**

Emanating from the overall problem analysis are two main dimensions or impacts expected from the hybrid model: to create an improved system that provides immediate access to food for vulnerable citizens in the short term, and to create a way of capacitating individuals and households involved towards self-sustenance models.

The main impact statement is captured as to have “an improved, integrated sustainable food distribution model that increases accessibility to vulnerable beneficiaries at community level and eventually leads to a sustainable livelihood”. The key emphasis is on the actual delivery of food in the short term as part of the social protection mandate, and satisfying the constitutional right of all citizens, but being cognisant of the need for long-term sustainable solutions.

### Key outcomes

To provide immediate access to food for the vulnerable, the problem analysis revealed that an overhaul of the food distribution system is needed to bring about efficient, timely and cost-effective means of food delivery. The following main long-term outcomes were identified:

- **The design of an improved hybrid model that ensures adequate food delivery at household level:** At the core of this objective is the fact that the system fundamentally ensures that the food is provided adequately to all destitute individuals and households, whatever the number might be, whether through normal economic hardships or disaster emergencies.
- **Long-term sustainability of the food and nutrition model:** Another immediate outcome of the system emanating from the need for a sustainable solution is a hybrid model that ensures sustainability of access to food, not through handouts, but by aiming to empower communities to produce their own food. To do this, there is a need for a system that improves targeting and beneficiary identification to ensure that those who really need the support are receiving it, and to have a system of profiling beneficiaries to know those who can be capacitated. This will enable departments and the programme to plan what form of assistance can be given to empower them to either produce their own food or to earn enough to afford the available food on the shelves.
- **The issue of rigidity in the current system, which does not permit beneficiaries to choose what is most relevant for them and what assistance is more practical:** While a solution is to substitute parcels for vouchers in addressing the challenges identified, the issue of the cost of redeeming those vouchers by some beneficiaries in remote areas was raised. In cases where the cost of redeeming the voucher by travelling long distances to redemption points and incurring costs that intrude significantly into the value of the vouchers, it is rather more prudent to provide food parcels to such remote beneficiaries. This will necessitate the identification and profiling of who will receive food vouchers and who will receive food parcels. This may also require the development of guidelines and legislative procedures on targeting to accompany the operationalisation of the hybrid model. The idea of giving beneficiaries the chance to register for what is most convenient for them is to be explored and incorporated into the targeting of beneficiaries so that it does not become an administrative nightmare.
- **Efficient and adequate administrative processes:** To improve the turnaround time of food delivery, it is paramount that some administrative processes and standard procedures be improved. The current system is noted to be working. However, areas were identified that can be improved upon to ensure coordination and reduce administrative bottlenecks between line departments and other units within the DSD. This also needs the support of appropriate legislation and guidelines that allow easier communication and workflow through communication and coordination. For instance, efficient arrangements should be made to ensure that documents are signed on time to increase the speed of processes such as procurement, the transfer of funds and other related processes.
- **Improved system security and integrity:** The current model, which is largely based on physical food delivery, is noted to be time consuming, intensive and vulnerable in terms of the risks associated with transport and storage. By introducing a voucher system, the need for the physical movement of goods will be largely reduced. This is likely to make the system less labour intensive and less risky. A voucher system is also expected to result in a reduction in operational and handling costs.

The caution is clearly reflected in that a less labour-intensive process may reduce employment for those who were engaged in physical activities along the operation line. An appropriate combination or balancing may need to be explored to reduce the opportunity cost of the digitisation of the delivery process.

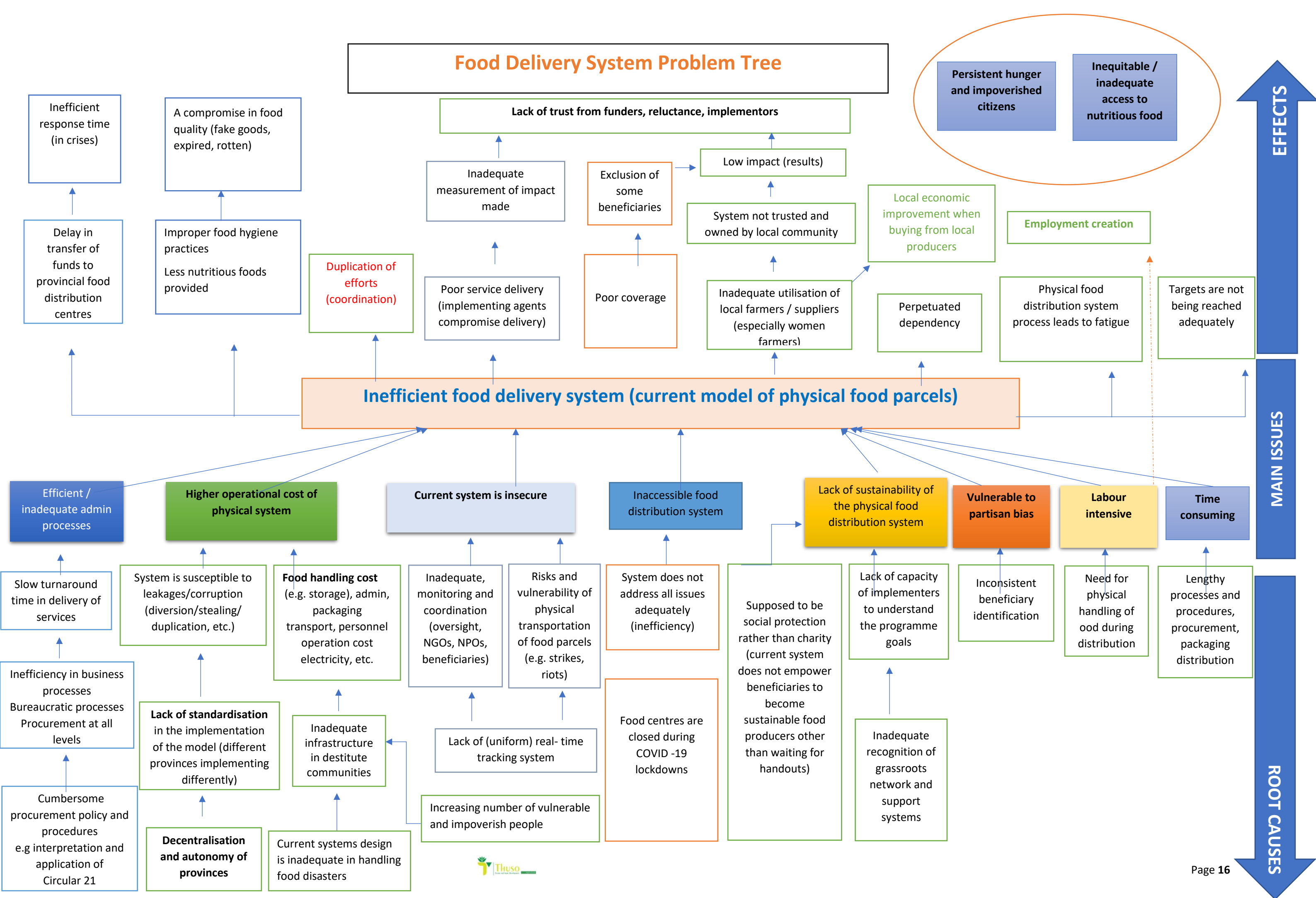
- **Good governance (accountability, trust, transparency):** In relation to the need for the improvement of accountability, trust and transparency, the hybrid system's monitoring and evaluation function will need to be strengthened. The monitoring and adequate collection of data, and adequate maintenance of real-time databases and data collection processes are key to ensuring transparency and accountability in the long run.

### Outputs and activities

As depicted in the theory of change diagram (Figure 3.2), each outcome has its associated outputs and activities. Key among these is the physical delivery of the food, whether in the form of cooked meals, parcels or vouchers. This needs to be preceded by the correct identification of beneficiaries and all approval processes, and securing the necessary funding. It is also highlighted that the database needs to be regularly updated, so that the obsolescence of data can be reduced. The need to integrate the various databases used by various organisations and government agencies at the grassroots level is key to eliminating the duplication of efforts, leaning towards complementary synergies. At the heart of the voucher system is the digitisation of the various databases, and the development of appropriate user interfaces to link all relevant and verified stakeholders.

**Key inputs** include adequate funding for all the required processes. The availability of adequate community development practitioners (CDPs) and social workers is noted as being crucial to the identification of beneficiaries in the communities. The development of guidelines will be based on the available enabling legislative framework. The availability and adequacy of staff is also crucial to the execution of the entire programme. A diagrammatic presentation of the theory of change is depicted in Figure 3.2.





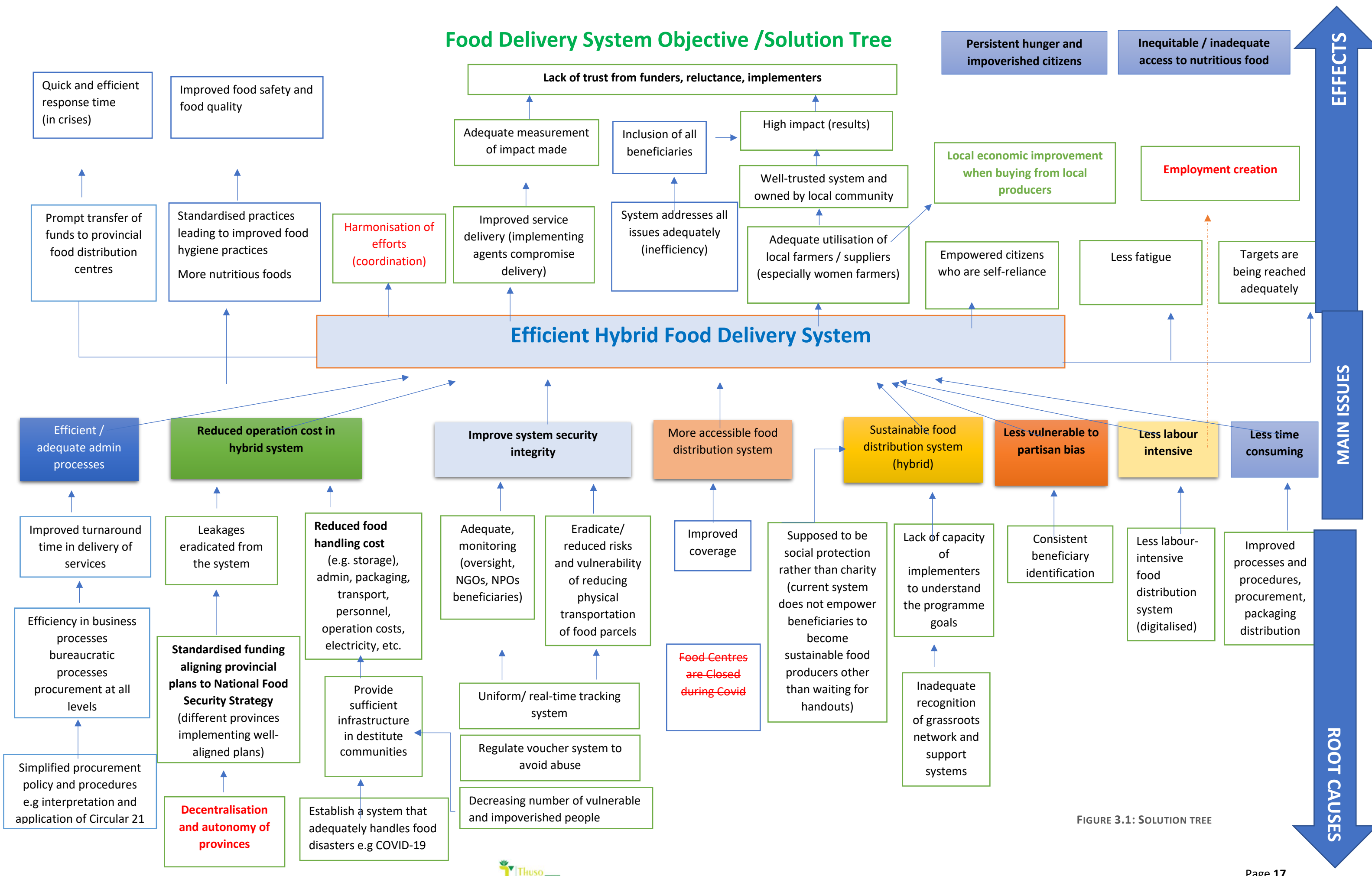


FIGURE 3.1: SOLUTION TREE

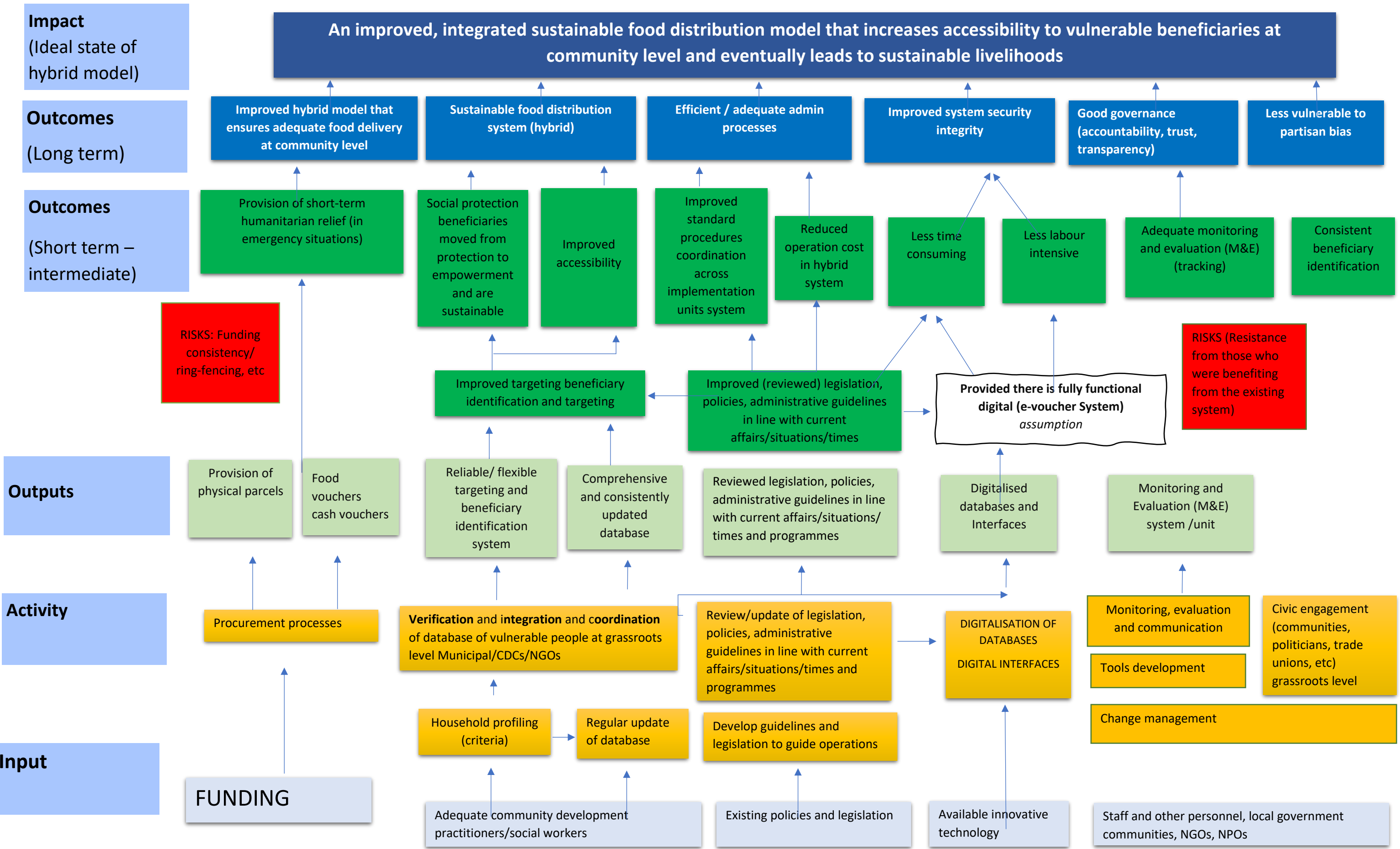


FIGURE 3.2: THEORY OF CHANGE

What are the proposed roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders within the Department, as well as in other national and provincial departments, local government or other agencies, in undertaking the programme?

### 3.3 Key stakeholders' mapping and analysis

A stakeholder mapping exercise was undertaken during the two-day workshop on 16 September 2021.

**Coordination can be improved** by first setting up a platform through which all relevant stakeholders of the programme can regularly interact with each other and foster collaborative alliances to deliver on common interventions.

**The oversight function** is performed by custodians and oversight role players. While the National Food and Nutrition Security Programme (NFNSP) is spearheaded by the national DSD, the Office of the Deputy President/the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) provides key oversight (including evaluations) and strategic direction in terms of the Food and Nutrition Plan 2018–2023.

**The planning and operationalisation of the plan** lies with the Technical Working Group, which consists of all main sector departments that meet regularly for the planning and operationalisation of the programme. These include the departments of Small Business, Health, Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Basic Education, Home Affairs, and Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs. The Technical Working Group orchestrated the development of the current National Food and Nutrition Plan.

**The actual implementation** of the NFNSP lies mainly with the DSD and various line or internal departments, including Social Welfare, the Disaster Relief Fund Board, the Poverty Alleviation Unit, the Food and Nutrition Security Coordination Unit, Social Relief of Distress, the Early Childhood Development Unit, Comprehensive Social Protection, SASSA and the NDA and their provincial counterparts. The national DSD, through SASSA and its provincial counterparts, assists in providing direct assistance in the form of Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grants, food parcels and vouchers to beneficiaries. The NDA plays more of a facilitator role, although it is not directly involved. The NDA supports the value chain of food distribution and food access by working with civil societies (providing funding) to distribute food, and funding producers.

**The Office of the Premier** in the various provinces also plays a critical role in ensuring the provincial implementation of the programme by providing provincial oversight and distributing funding.

**Many private sector role players** were noted to form part of the programme's implementation circle. Chief among these are non-profit organisations (NPOs) such as the Gift of the Givers, the Red Cross, Food Forward South Africa, Meals on Wheels, the Solidarity Fund and the South African Council of Churches, including the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, the Christian Revival Church and the Mahlasedi Foundation. The Banking Association of South Africa is working with the DSD in tracking where the food parcels go. Praekelt also works with the DSD and the Solidarity Fund in tracking food vouchers (redeemed and unredeemed). Tshikululu helps track and report on vouchers, and to monitor the reporting of food parcels: where they are and how they are distributed. Grow Great assisted with maternal food nutrition and issued food vouchers to maternity groups during COVID-19.

**Key funders** of the programme include National Treasury, the Solidarity Fund, the Disaster Relief Fund Board, the Old Mutual Foundation and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

**Information technology (IT), communication and financial institutions** are pivotal stakeholders who are addressing the need to develop a hybrid system. These institutions include IT/communication institutions such as Vodacom, MTN, Cell C and Telkom, and the banks that play a key role in cash transfer modalities that relate to banking issues (interest, licensing, bank charges, negotiations). They also work with SASSA on payment-related issues.

**Food producers**, such as small-scale farmers, commercial farmers and the food producer associations linked to various provincial food distribution centres play a key role as key nutritional information, food information, and the cost of production and quality need to be disseminated at production levels to ensure nutritious food products or outputs.

**Key suppliers** include the CNDCs, which receive and deliver food to beneficiaries, and community merchants, who are registered with, accredited or appointed by SASSA (e.g. Boxer stores, spaza shops, community shops, general dealers and supermarkets), and who also participate in the supply and delivery of the needed food products through various aspects of the programme. The inclusion of these role players in the value chain, especially local shops, is critical in improving local economies within rural areas. These also play a significant role in reducing the cost of travel to nearby towns to access food products.

Other role players include entities such as the Consumer Goods Council of South Africa, an organised supplier organisation that represents all retailers in South Africa regarding the distribution of food. These retailers include Tiger Brands and Shoprite. It is noted that, while some of these local suppliers and organisations are well organised, others are not necessarily registered organisations. Other organisations, such as Go Great, Family Tree, Kaphoras and the Greater Johannesburg Business Council, are also worth noting.

**Beneficiaries** are critical stakeholders in providing insights into what is working and what is not, as well as their expectations and challenges, to help shape the programme to meet their needs in as practical a manner as possible. This group consists of individuals and communities (CNDCs), food parcel beneficiaries and agricultural input recipients, who receive food parcels from the CNDCs, and other funders such as the Solidarity Fund, who sponsor food vouchers.

**Academia** (universities and research institutions) is expected to provide research and information on theories, and to provide empirical evidence on what works and what does not. Key among those that have been working with the programme include the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the University of Pretoria, the University of Zululand, North-West University, the University of the Western Cape, the University of Johannesburg, the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and National Research Foundation (NRF).

#### **Towards improving programme coordination**

From the stakeholder discussions, it is important that all these stakeholders find a proper way to work together and not in silos. A centralised beneficiary registration and management system may be required to facilitate this and to improve programme coordination. Most departments and organisations are currently working with their own populated databases. This is seen as resulting in a duplication of efforts. It is important to have a common system where all services provided to a particular beneficiary are critical to collaborative efforts among stakeholders. The design of an electronic database system to which all relevant departments can be linked to input data and view the relevant data is paramount to the improvement of coordination efforts. The national DSD can consider adapting the National Integrated Social Information System (NISIS) or similar systems for such purposes.



**To what extent will coordination, management, planning and budgeting be improved?**

Evidence from the various discussions at the two workshops on problem definition and analysis, as well as the theory of change deliberations, together with the interviews with the key informants, presents some insights into how coordination, management and planning can be improved. Chief among these include the following:

- I. **Setting up of a good governance structure** is critical to programme coordination. Currently, the DPME plays the critical role of oversight and leadership of the programme. The National Technical Working Group (NTWG) set-up is noted as being key in coordinating the programme and advising the provinces on what to do. It is also indicated that the NTWG meets monthly and quarterly. It provides a platform for common deliberation and reports on programme progress. It was found that, for other international programmes, where governance is weak, programme coordination suffers. Hence, the existence of the NTWG is fundamental for improving the coordination of the programme, and guiding provinces to cascade these same structures. Where possible, it was noted that the Office of the Premier was well placed in most provinces to provide the oversight and coordination roles of bringing sector departments together, in collaboration with the provincial DSD.
- II. **From discussions at the workshops, and key informant interviews of provincial programme officials, coordination can also be improved** by first setting up a platform through which all relevant stakeholders of the programme can regularly interact with each other and create collaborative alliances to deliver on common interventions.
- III. **A centralised beneficiary registration and management system may be required to improve programme coordination.** Most departments and organisations are currently working with their own populated databases. This is seen to result in a duplication of efforts. Having a common system, such as the National Integrated Social Protection Information System (NISPI) which already exists, where all services provided to a particular beneficiary can be recorded and made available to all those who need such information for planning, is critical to collaborative efforts among stakeholders. The design of an electronic database system to which all relevant departments can be linked to input data and view the relevant data is paramount to the improvement of coordinated efforts. The national DSD can consider adapting the NISIS, NISPIS or similar databases for these purposes.
- IV. **Ring-fencing the programme budget may** be needed to discourage variability in service delivery. The swinging of the food security and delivery budget to other programmes may lead to disruption and uncertainty in long-term planning and fund allocation.
- V. **Efficient and reliable data** for forecasting programme demand and cost is crucial to improving budgets and costing. An efficient monitoring and evaluation system to manage the hybrid system is critical to ensure improved and real-time planning (including budgeting), coordination and reporting.

What evidence exists from other countries on solutions that are working? Are there lessons that can be learnt from these countries to develop workable solutions?

### 3.4 Local examples and case studies

A review of the available local and international literature shows that various forms of digital and non-digital hybrid systems of providing access to food exists. Some of these local players were invited for a one-day roundtable discussion to share their examples and experiences on such systems. The roundtable discussion welcomed presentations from local institutions and implementing organisations, such as SASSA and the NDA, who fund research on hybrid models, and NGOs such as Meals on Wheels, the Solidarity Fund, the Western Cape Economic Development Partnership. Country presentations were also received from the Netherlands, the UK and India, where critical insights and lessons were shared. Insights from these discussions and a review of the literature show that, in South Africa, these digital systems are largely in the pilot stages, while internationally, the transformation from physical food distribution systems to digital forms seems to be entrenched. Highlights from some of these are presented below.

#### 3.4.1 Meals on Wheels Food Distribution Model

Meals on Wheels is a local welfare NPO founded in 1964 by Dr Dennis Baird. It has been at the forefront of food delivery for the impoverished masses in South Africa. It was established as a welfare organisation in terms of the Non-profit Organisations Act, Act No. 71 of 199,. It is owned and operated by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Southern Africa Union Conference, which provides humanitarian community service and disaster relief assistance, irrespective of culture, gender, orientation or religion. Meals on Wheels currently operates six area offices, serving the nine provinces of South Africa through 181 community kitchens.

The model's focus is not only on feeding the vulnerable, but also on becoming a channel of economic empowerment by capacitating the people to produce their own food. Underpinned by the philosophical paradigm "give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime" and aimed at a "hunger-free South Africa" in the long term, the model capacitates or trains volunteers at its community food production centres who have themselves been beneficiaries, with a view to converting them into food producers by training them to farm and grow food crops, which they would then harvest to feed their families, and sell the surplus back to the organisation for cash. This approach shows that the production of food is a sustainable strategy. Creating community food production facilities and converting food recipients into food producers is a great possibility that can be explored and replicated on a larger scale to achieve a sustainable solution to households' food insecurity issues.

#### 3.4.2 Western Cape Economic Development Partnership Food Vouchers System: A tool for food relief and economic growth

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 lockdowns, the Western Cape Economic Development Partnership (WCEDP) noticed an increase in difficulties in terms of distributing food parcels to the needy. As a result, it saw the potential of digital vouchers as an alternative tool to physical aid.

Digital vouchers were directed to the beneficiaries' cell phones and could be redeemed at Shoprite/Boxer stores. In partnership with mobile money service providers at community levels, "flash vouchers" could be redeemed at spaza shops (local community shops) to inject cash into the local economy. Fewer kitchens were supported over a longer period to ensure predictable sustained support, where a regular R1 000 voucher was given as support to existing soup kitchens.

Having the voucher sent directly to the beneficiaries' cell phone reduces the risk of the voucher being stolen. The voucher has a validity period, and if it is lost (due to the theft of the cell phone) or is not redeemed, it can be re-issued. A partnership was formed with the initiators of a pilot programme that was using e-vouchers to distribute food to the destitute. The collaboration included community kitchens and individuals, as well as the DG Murray Trust (another NPO).

**Various advantages are attributed to digital vouchers** sent via cell phones. They provide a way for the social relief of distress without the costs and risks associated with the distribution of food parcels. The digital voucher gives the beneficiaries a choice within the parameters of the voucher being spent on items like nutritional food, electricity or data. The beneficiary can choose what they need most within the scope of designated items, which allows for choice, privacy and dignity to beneficiaries. The digital vouchers ensure that the beneficiaries receive the full amount, with no delivery or logistical costs. This satisfies donors or funders, who want to know that all their funding is reaching the intended recipients.

**A few challenges** were encountered as some spaza shops were not selling fresh fruit and vegetables. Others were found to charge a commission to redeem vouchers. This is illegal and in contravention of the contract agreements. It also became apparent that most people found it hard to redeem e-vouchers sent to them in the form of a mobile short message system (SMS) due to issues such as beneficiaries losing their cell phones, the elderly not necessarily being tech-savvy, or a lack of transport to the nearest towns where the vouchers could be redeemed for food. Some even complained of the technology not being efficient and always breaking down when attempts were made to redeem the vouchers.

**Key lessons** include that the system needs to be robust and scalable, but inevitably there will be some implementation challenges as it is scaled up. The use of local NGOs already known and trusted by the DG Murray Trust provides confidence that the funds will be used as intended. For such systems to work, there is a need for innovation, collaboration, information, accountability and the ability to learn fast and react to problems as they emerge. Consistency in funding the programme is also important as any hiccups encountered, whether it is government bureaucracy or funds drying up, resulted in the closure of kitchens.

### 3.4.3 Solidarity Fund: Unity in Action Food Relief Programme

The Solidarity Fund's first humanitarian disbursement on 18 April 2020 was about R120 million of funding commitment to provide emergency food relief to over 250 000 distressed households across South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic, where solutions were needed to reach the most marginalised and remote communities across South Africa in the shortest possible time. Food parcels ranged from R350 to R430, including the cost of delivery. Many different means were used to distribute the food through a four-pillar system, which included the DSD's CNDCs, food banks, NPOs and FBOs.

The DSD's CNDCs service about 59 433 households through 235 CNDC sites across the nine provinces, which distributed more than 59 811 parcels within the 2020/2021 period. The national DSD contributed R20 million and the Solidarity Fund contributed R23.5 million to reach these households. Agreements were drawn up with provincial implementing agents. Large food donations to NPOs serviced 154 276 households across the nine provinces through four large food NPOs. Some 151 276 parcels (close to R56 million) were distributed through a network of over 400 community-based organisations (CBOs) (including churches, early childhood development centres and feeding programmes) within their networks.

Some 23 500 vouchers are distributed in partnership with the South African Council of Churches. Through this partnership, the Solidarity Fund seeks to achieve two goals: to provide food relief to households and to help build a scalable model that can be used by other relief organisations in the future to reach households digitally. The vouchers are distributed across all nine provinces and are focused on beneficiaries who have not been reached by other relief efforts.

The Solidarity Fund actively manages the monitoring and evaluation of the food relief programme, which ensures its success and efficient implementation. The Solidarity Fund's team collated data across all four pillars and put together consolidated reports three times a week, which made provision for the tracking of deliveries and solving problems related to delays. Each partner was expected to produce a close-out report at the end of the contract, which included a list of beneficiaries served.

### Challenges of the model

Through the one-month period of delivery, the Solidarity Fund recorded a number of challenges in the delivery of food parcels:

- Safety and security during deliveries in the context of need far surpassed existing allocations. This makes some community members agitated. This slowed down trucks making deliveries to warehouses, as well as last-minute deliveries.
- Challenges in keeping a wide variety of stakeholders continuously informed, given the pace and scale of the effort in a short time frame.
- Supply chain stock-outs – particularly of maize meal and lentils – causing delays in deliveries and substitutions in the food parcel items.

Key lessons learnt that should inform future humanitarian efforts:

- CBOs and NGOs have a critical role to play in identifying beneficiaries and reaching them with their capacity for last-mile distribution. While there is a risk of duplication with many NGOs distributing food, they are critical to achieve the reach and scale of any humanitarian effort.
- There were challenges with transporting vegetables, particularly butternut, even if purchased locally. On average, parcels are in transport or storage for five days before deliveries are completed, which can make distributing vegetables challenging.
- Coordination with government at district level could have been undertaken sooner than it was. While many partners worked with the DSD to ensure that many of the beneficiaries on their lists were served, this process could have been more consistently streamlined across all provinces.
- The Solidarity Fund prioritised getting support to as many households as possible and had good reasons for choosing a R400 food basket. However, feedback received shows that the parcels' contents were inadequate to serve larger families. Should there be another food relief effort, it will need to take this feedback into consideration.
- The Solidarity Fund is cognisant of the fact that future food relief solutions should focus on supporting local economies and supply chains. This includes connecting smallholder farmers to the market and supporting the food commons.

## 3.5 International case studies

### 3.5.1 India: The targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) and its evolution to the E-Rupi system

The public distribution system (PDS) was established in 1965. In the 1990s, it was criticised for failing to reach the needy efficiently, being urban-skewed, having significant leakages, a lack of transportation, a lack of sufficient stock and ineffective delivery mechanisms.

The PDS has undergone several changes in the last decades. In June 1992, it was amended to boost coverage, particularly for individuals living in poor, distant or difficult-to-reach communities. In June 1997, it was restructured again to specifically target lower socioeconomic populations. The goal of the targeted public distribution system (TPDS) was to streamline the PDS to better target the poorest segments of the population, particularly elderly citizens and pensioners over the age of 60, as well as widows/widowers and people suffering from illness or disability. The National Food Security Act of 2013 was promulgated in India as a positive step in strengthening the PDS, notably to ensure poor people's right to food in up to 75% of poor rural communities.

The approach to food security evolved from a welfare to a rights-based system, and the TPDS became a targeted system, with eligible beneficiaries receiving 5 kg of grains per person per month at subsidised prices. The TPDS had been fully digitalised by August 2020, covering 650 million citizens in 24 states. The scheme now allows 80% of all ration card users to withdraw their entitled quota of food grains from certain fair-price shops around the country.

The acquisition of food grains directly from Indian farmers at minimum support prices, which is the foundation of the TPDS, is also part of the digitisation drive. The Indian government passed three farm bills in September 2020: the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, the Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill and the amendment to the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, which deregulated cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onions and potatoes.

### 3.5.2 India: The transition from TPDS to e-Rupi in 2016: Digital base e-vouchers using QR codes

The e-Rupi was launched in August 2021. After the passing of the Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies Benefits and Services Act (known as the Aadhaar Bill) in March 2016, the integration of biometric identification into anti-poverty programmes was legally ratified. The e-Rupi voucher is a digital voucher that a beneficiary gets on their phone in the form of an SMS or QR code. It is a digital prepaid voucher, which one can redeem at any centre that accepts it. It is designed to target the purpose and person(s) for a particular transaction. The e-Rupi promises to plug theft in welfare schemes, minimise delays and facilitate beneficiaries' access to benefits.

It is the largest safety net programme in India, and is funded solely by the government. Over 800 million beneficiaries are receiving subsidised grain from 500 000 retail shops in India that are benefiting from this programme (Alderman et al., 2018).

#### Lessons learnt

- Although they do not solve all problems, digital mechanisms offer new ways to reform price subsidies and implement efficient pricing.
- Digital mechanisms help government to know the identities of beneficiaries, communicate with them and pay them efficiently, accountably and without leakage.
- Digital governance mechanisms based on the ubiquitous use of unique identification break the delivery silos across sectors.
- Digital mechanisms identify the portion of people who were not eligible to receive assistance, but who were included by mistake because of inefficiencies.
- Corruption declined from 58.6 to 43.1 in 2011/12.
- Provinces that were poor, with a lower income, received the largest share of food grain compared to those with a higher income.
- The inclusion of the poorest continues to be lacking.
- Coverage is high with low leakage.



### Disadvantages and limitations

India does not have a data protection law, hence a legislation lag was imminent during the delivery of the digitisation voucher programme. Furthermore, biometric authentication architecture creates a natural firewall. This has a bearing on sharing information with other providers (departmental firewalls for sharing beneficiary information across programmes).

### 3.5.3 Indonesia: Transition towards the e-voucher non-cash food assistance programme

In 2017, Indonesia began reforming Rastra, its largest in-kind food aid programme, by replacing it with the non-cash food assistance programme, BPNT, presently known as Programme Sembako, a voucher programme. In the Rastra version, qualifying households received 10 kg of free rice every month, which was delivered door-to-door by local officials. On the BPNT programme, households receive a monthly voucher of IDR110 000 (US\$8), which is added to a debit card supplied to the household's female adult.

The programme identifies eligible households through proxy-means testing (PMT), which is used to predict consumption distribution by collecting information on households' assets and composition. In order to receive the transfer, households must have a PMT smaller than or equal to 30. Information on cost showed an annual budget of US\$1.5 billion in 2012.

### Challenges

Rastra was well known for its high levels of overall leakages and low quality of rice. Many non-poor households received rice, and eligible households only received a fraction of their entitlement.

### Transition towards e-vouchers as a form of non-cash food assistance

The following lessons were learnt<sup>1</sup>:

- Better targeting: the change from in-kind food transfers to vouchers led to an increase in subsidies received by eligible households.
- Poverty fell by 20% among the poorest households.
- Vouchers also allowed households to purchase higher-quality rice and led to the increased consumption of egg-based proteins.
- The administrative costs of the Rastra programme corresponded to about 4% of the benefits disbursed.

### 3.5.4 Cote D'ivoire

In Cote D'ivoire, when compared to cash-based manual methods, electronic payment distribution systems improved transparency and accountability, while also reducing leakage. However, both when offered by government or programme staff, and when outsourced to one or more third-party (private or public) payment service provider, digital payment services require high-quality procedures and controls, including managerial oversight and continuous monitoring.

### 3.5.5 Highlights from the World Food Programme on hybrid models

The World Food Programme highlights examples from hybrid models from many dissimilar countries, mainly India, Indonesia and the USA. Although these countries could be too different to be comparable, these contrasting case studies have been examined precisely because they can yield important information on processes and outcomes of trends towards transforming food assistance and social welfare in complex geographic locations within the provinces.

<sup>1</sup> [https://youtu.be/BBnxZ452\\_TE](https://youtu.be/BBnxZ452_TE) Summary presentation of the Indonesian Model



For example, Indonesia was chosen because it is vulnerable to disasters. Therefore, its context would be best modelled to contexts that present such dynamics. India had a public distribution system, which, over the years, has drawn a lot of criticism for its ill-conceived design and implementation, and its failure to ensure food security to the poor and destitute – the primary motive with which it was implemented. Rather, it has served to grease the pockets of corruption. Moreover, India bears a similarity to South Africa in that, at the national level, the country has a food surplus, while at household level, a different story is told. Now, it is one of the countries that is championing digital utilisation, while countries in Europe were not so keen on the programme. Now they are all utilising it to curb hunger and be inclusive in ensuring that all have access to food and other basic needs. The USA was chosen because it is a country that advocates for access to diverse foods, ensuring that food is of a good quality rather than offered in sufficient quantities.

### The paradox of a single type of social protection offering

There is an ongoing debate that cash transfers are more cost-efficient than direct food transfers or vouchers. Thus, it is necessary to better understand the circumstances in which cash transfers, vouchers or in-kind transfers may be more effective. According to the research, what makes one modality more effective than another is determined by elements such as the **characteristics of the target audience** and the **capability of local marketplaces to participate**, among other **factors**. These will identify what is possible and feasible in each context, and what is acceptable for beneficiaries to ensure that the chosen transfer modality is the most appropriate option. The different delivery modalities are presented in Table 3.1.

TABLE 3.1: FOOD ASSISTANCE DELIVERY MODALITIES (SOURCE: WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME, 2014)

Transfer modality	Distribution model	Delivery mechanism
Cash transfers	Immediate cash	Cash collection
		Cash delivery
	Cash account	Individual bank account
		Group bank account
		Bank card/prepaid cards
Voucher transfers	Paper vouchers	E-money
		Paper vouchers
	E-vouchers	Scratch cards
		Bank cards/prepaid cards
		SMS/e-transfers
Food in-kind distribution	Distribution of food rations	SCOPECards

According to the literature, cash transfers have the lowest cost per beneficiary, followed by vouchers and in-kind food distribution. Hence, we are interested in finding ways to combine diverse interventions, such as blended interventions or cash plus interventions. Nevertheless, there are no differences in food security outcomes between assistance based on cash, vouchers or food distribution.

### Cash transfers

Assistance in the form of cash is justified primarily. After all, it generates the largest welfare gains because it allows beneficiaries to use the transfers as they see fit. They can choose the spending that best fits their needs if they are given unrestricted income. The beneficiaries who use the cash transfer system turn to looking for bargains when buying food. A household that is using a cash transfer is likely to increase its purchasing power at many retailers without compromising the quantity of food purchased (Boston Consulting Group, 2017). Many take advantage of free-market bargains to ensure food security. In Ethiopia, the cash transfer was used to provide enough money to purchase cereals and pulses per household per month. Moreover, it is argued that less stigma is attached to cash transfers, which, compared with in-kind or near-cash transfers such as vouchers or food stamps, are less visible to non-beneficiaries. Cash transfers are also perceived to be less costly to administer.

### In-kind transfers

In-kind transfers are advantageous because only those truly in need will take up in-kind benefits. Consequently, in-kind transfers may be less distortionary than cash transfers. However, in-kind transfers do not allow people to maximise their utility through choice. The public distribution system is an in-kind food subsidy programme whose basic principles were laid down in 1942. It is regarded as one of the most stable elements of India's food policy.

### Voucher transfers

Vouchers take two forms. On the one hand, "value-based" vouchers provide access to commodities for a given monetary amount. On the other hand, vouchers can be "commodity-based" or tied to a predefined quantity of given foods. Therefore, vouchers are a hybrid form of transfer that display features of both cash (value-based vouchers allow for some level of choice, although it is limited to the commodities available in the chosen location) and in-kind food (the implementation of commodity-based vouchers can closely resemble that of public food distribution systems).

### In summary

The literature signifies that one of the most popular types of social welfare programmes in the world are targeted food programmes, which aim to offer nutritional support to low-income households. Governments can choose between providing in-kind transfers, such as food baskets, or vouchers that can be used to buy food on the open market when implementing such schemes. In comparison to in-kind transfers, vouchers typically provide more flexibility for beneficiaries' consumption choices, allowing households to modify the mix of commodities consumed. In-kind food transfers, on the other hand, could lower total prices compared to voucher programmes, especially in distant and inaccessible locations.

What is the current situation with the delivery of services to address food and nutrition security?

### 3.6 Findings from the surveys and interviews with beneficiaries and programme officials

#### 3.6.1 Introduction

A total of 728 beneficiaries were interviewed from the six provinces visited, in addition to the 34 beneficiaries piloted in Gauteng. Due to challenges in integrating the pilot's results into the results of the full roll-out, the pilot's results have been excluded from the analysis presented. In addition, a few questions were modified or removed, hence it was more appropriate to exclude the pilot and analyse it separately. This brings the total sample analysed to 728 instead of 762 beneficiary respondents: 46 (6.32%) were from Gauteng, 192 (26.37%) were from the Eastern Cape, 137 (18.82%) were from KwaZulu-Natal, 122 (16.76%) were from the Northern Cape, 116 (15.76%) were from North West and 115 (15.8%) were from the Western Cape. About 24 in-depth interviews were also conducted with programme management and implementation staff in provinces and at national level. The results were integrated into the findings presented here. More than half the respondents were from rural areas (59.2%), while more than a third (40.79%) were from peri-urban dwellings or townships (Figure 3.3).

TABLE 3.2: PROVINCIAL BENEFICIARY SAMPLES

Answers	Data
Total interviews	728
No answers	0
Gauteng	46
Eastern Cape	192
KwaZulu-Natal	137
Northern Cape	122
North West	116
Western Cape	115

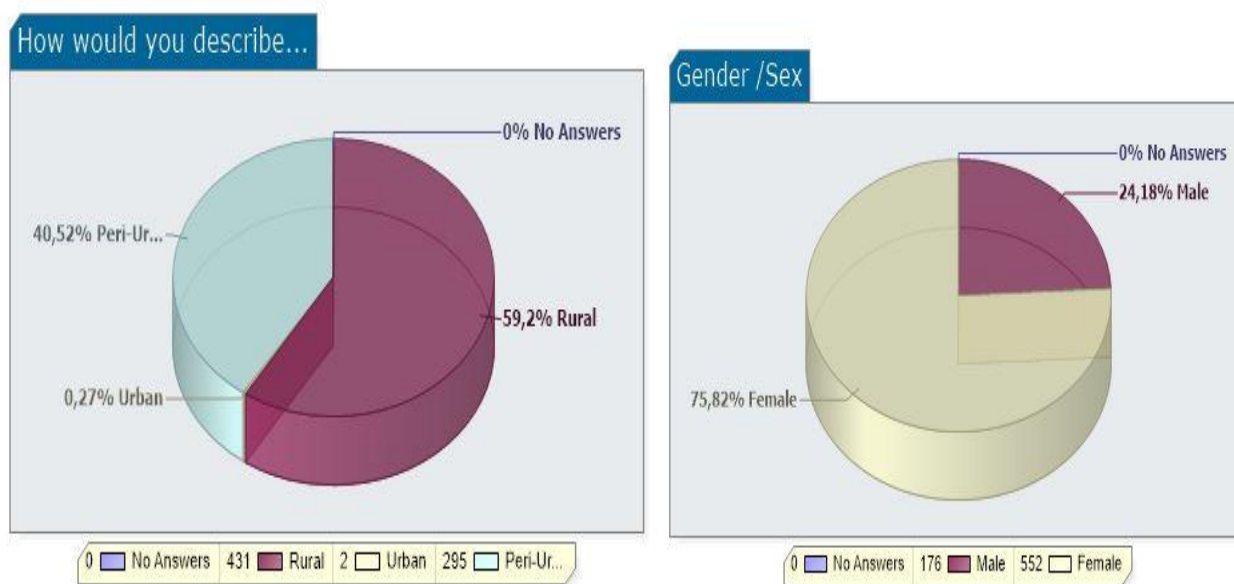


FIGURE 3.3: GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING OF RESPONDENTS

### 3.6.2 Demographic data of respondents

#### Gender of respondents

Of the 728 respondents who turned up for the interviews, 500 (68.68%) were female and 228 were male (31.32%), as shown in Figure 3.4. This was also because women mostly turn up at the CNDCs to take food parcels for the entire family.

#### Age of respondents

Figure 3.5 shows that, of the respondents, only nine were teenagers and 231 were youth. The majority (322) fell within the adult range, while 154 fell within the retirement age range of 61 to 80 years. Only 12 fell in the old-age category. This implies that the majority of those who turned out at the CNDCs were within the active workforce. This points directly to the fact that they are unemployed.

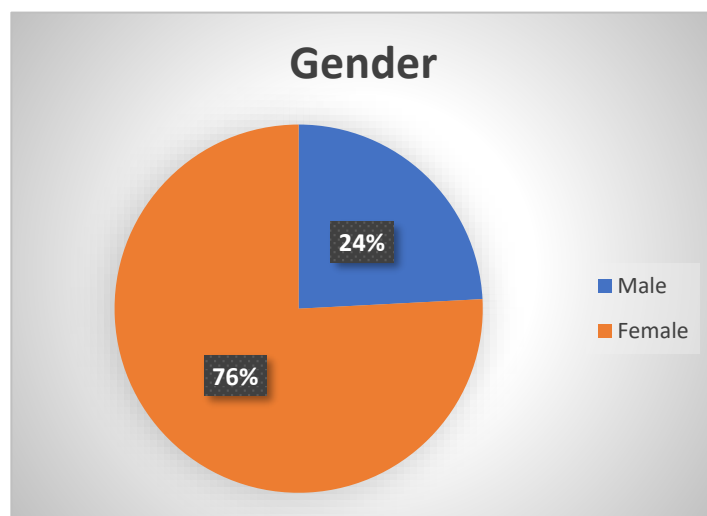


FIGURE 3.4: GENDER OF RESPONDENTS

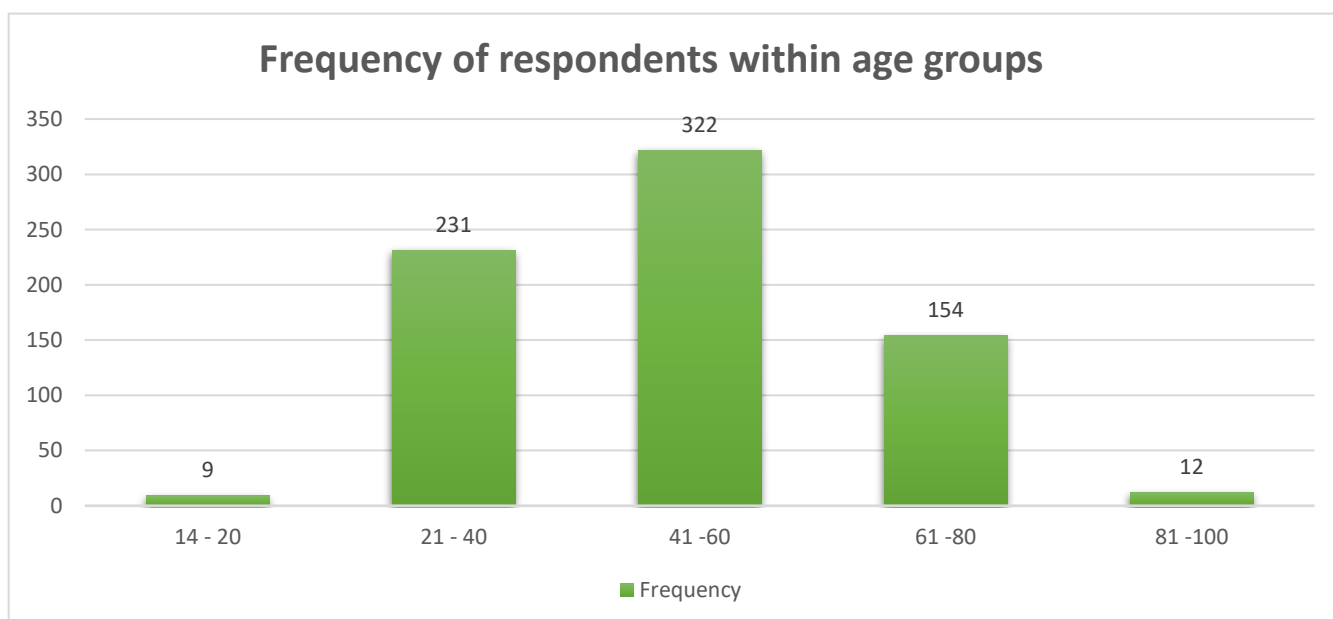


FIGURE 3.5: AGE OF RESPONDENTS

### 3.6.3 Household background information

#### Participants who are heads of households and the gender of heads of households

Of the individual respondents interviewed, 517 (71.02%) were heads of their households, while 211 (28.98%) were not. There were more female-headed households (68.8%) than male-headed households (31.2%) represented during the interviews. These are graphically represented in Figure 3.6.

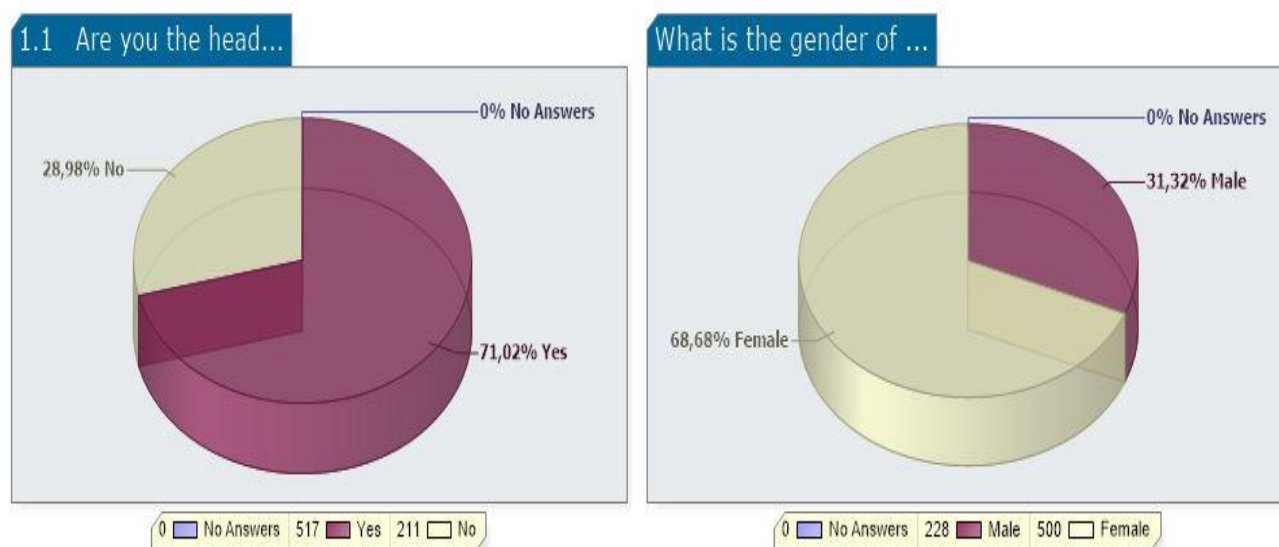


FIGURE 3.6: HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS AND GENDER

#### Marital/cohabitation status

To gauge the level of dependency or support through family coherence, respondents were also asked about their marital status. More than half of participants responded that they were single (53%), with the remainder being either widowed or divorced (22.52%), or married or cohabiting (23.77%).

#### Type of shelter inhabited

More than two-thirds (72.66) own the houses in which they live, while in about 26% of respondents, it was noted that at least 116 of the 728 respondents (16%) neither own nor rent their dwellings. Some other specifications include staying with their parents or other relatives, and living with friends or boyfriends.

TABLE 3.3: MARITAL STATUS

Marital status	Data	Percentage
Total interviews	728	
Single	391	53.71%
Married	138	18.96%
Not married but living together	35	4.81%
Divorced/separated	36	4.95%
Widow	128	17.58%

TABLE 3.4: TYPE OF DWELLING OF RESPONDENTS

What shelter do you live in?	Data	Percentage
Total interviews	728	
Owned house	529	72.66%
Rented house/apartment	83	11.4%
Other (please specify)	116	15.93%

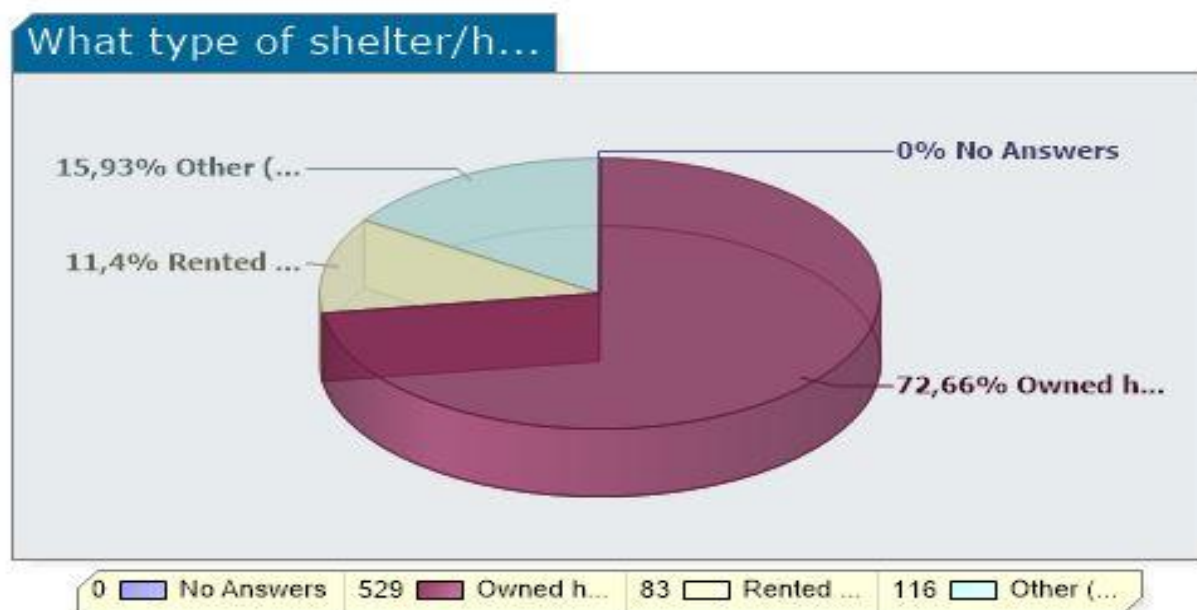


FIGURE 3.7: TYPE OF OWNERSHIP OF SHELTER OF RESPONDENTS

### Educational level (schooling)

More than 85% of respondents had completed some form of primary or secondary education (50.82%). Less than 2% (14 out of 728) had acquired a university qualification. Educational level may be an indicator of skills and employability as the higher the educational level, the higher the chances of gaining employment. Lower levels of education mean more unemployed people if primary and production industries are not around to absorb the unskilled labour. This may also have implications for skills development and training needs.

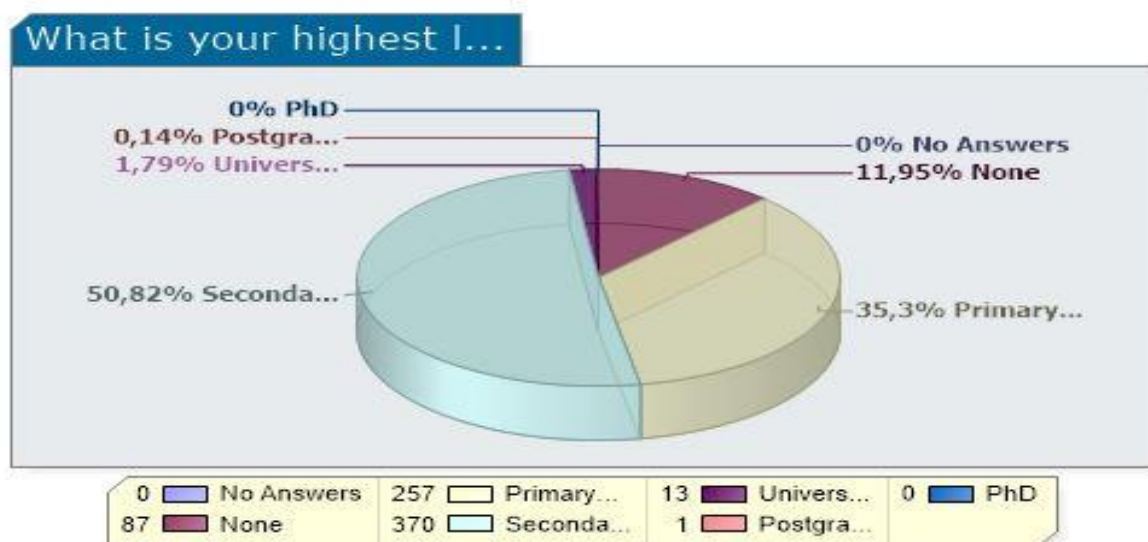
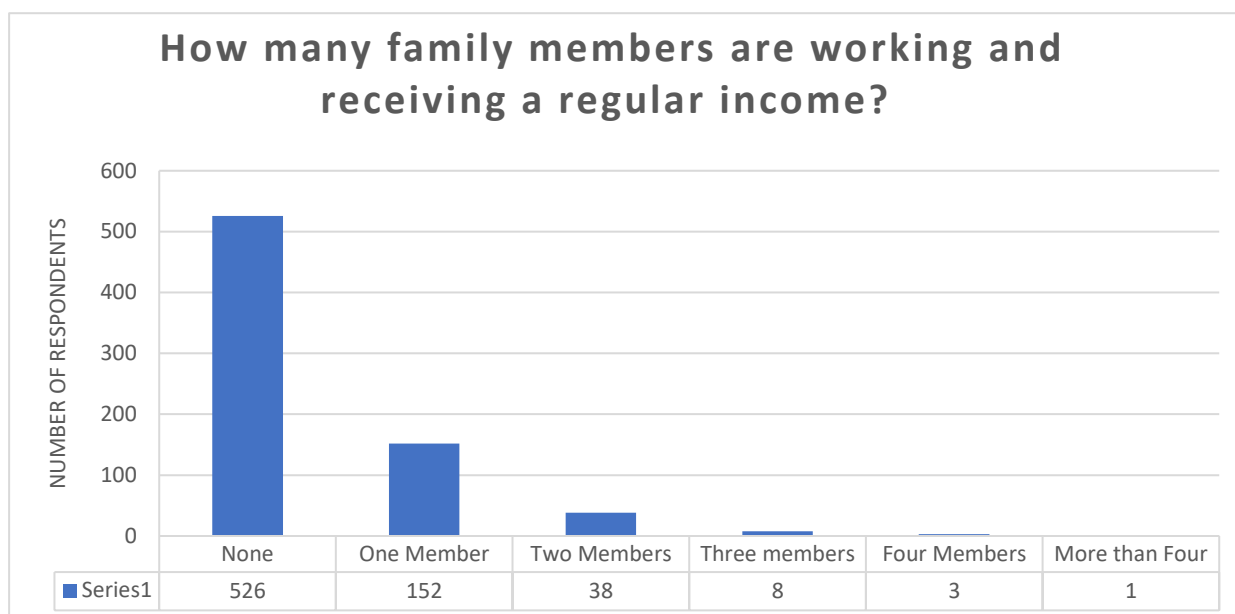


FIGURE 3.8: EDUCATION LEVEL OF RESPONDENTS (SCHOOLING)





**FIGURE 3.9: EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF RESPONDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES**

As shown in Figure 3.9, despite the fact that almost half of the respondents indicated that they have some secondary or primary school education, nearly 72% (526) of respondents are fully employed and receiving a regular income or have nobody at home that is. Only 20% responded to having at least one person earning some regular income. Less than 7% have two to four household members working and earning a regular income. This high level of employment sets the precedence for food insecurity.

#### **Composition of what households typically spend the most on**

Participants were also asked about their dominant monthly expenditure to have a sense of what they currently need the most. A list of options was provided for them to choose which items they spend the most on. From the responses, food continues to be the most dominant household expenditure, being selected by 35% of the respondents. This was followed by the selection of about 5 to 10% on household essentials, such as utility bills, education, hygiene products, transport, health and debt settlement. What is interesting, if not alarming, is that most households currently spend a large proportion of their earnings on food, yet they are still food insecure and in need of assistance. This indicates or buttresses the depth of the current food situation.



### Households that experienced an increase in food-related expenditure during the COVID-19 period

For most respondents, the amount of spending on food has increased tremendously during the last two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost 90% of respondents reported in the affirmative to increased spending on food. This is one of the major reasons why access to food needs to be created.

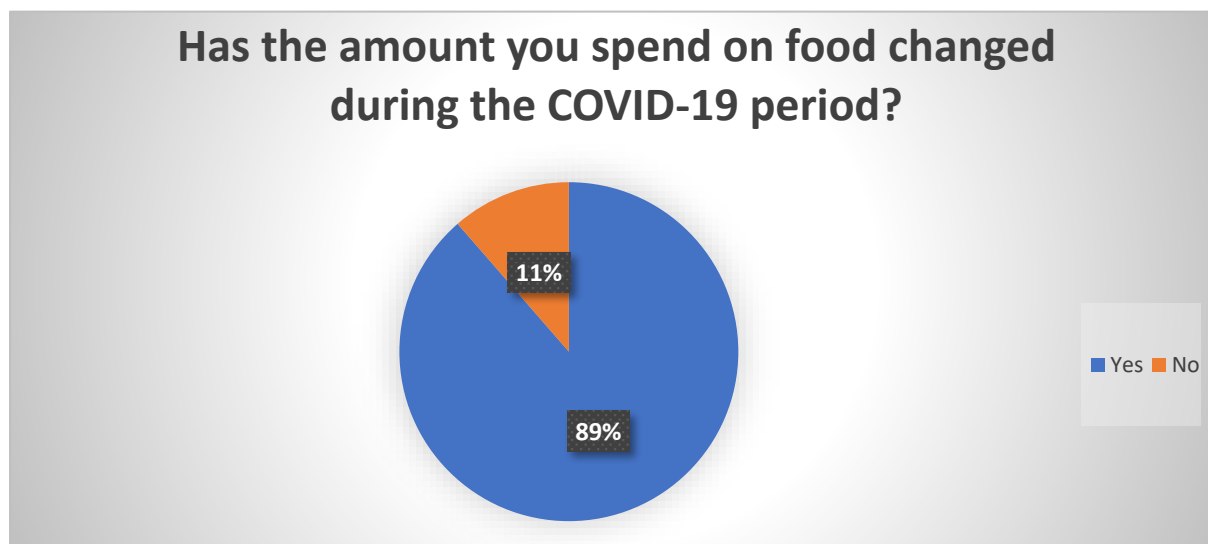


FIGURE 3.12: PARTICIPANTS' FEEDBACK ON CHANGE IN SPENDING ON FOOD

However, due to low levels of employment, some respondents and their families resorted to depending on government for their livelihoods. Yet, there are still those who do not have anyone in their families currently receiving any grants. Figure 3.13 shows that more than 80% of respondents have up to three members of the family receiving food-related assistance or grants, such as the SRD Grant of R350 and others.

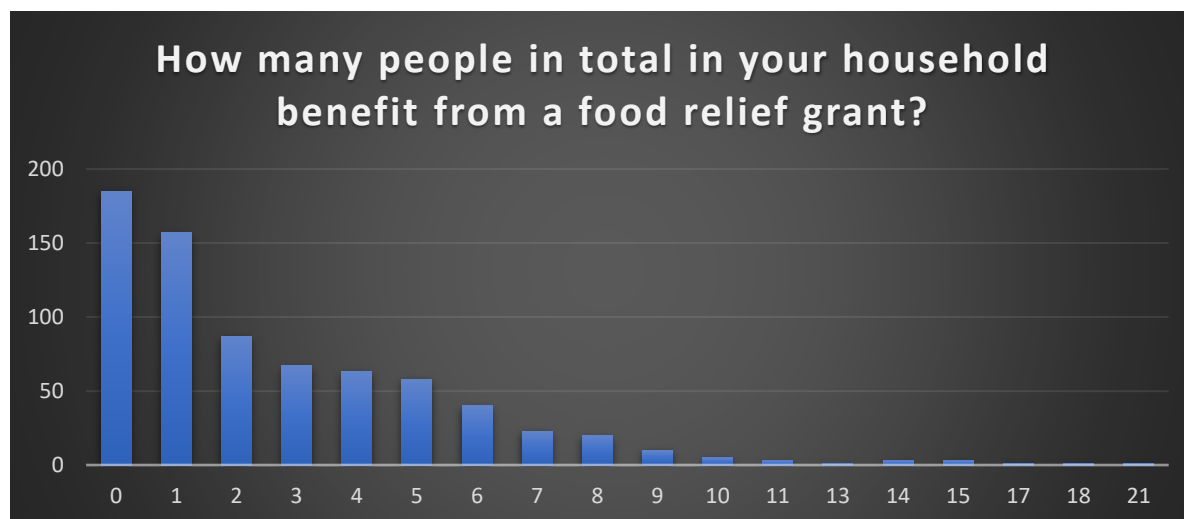


FIGURE 3.13: NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS AND NUMBER OF FAMILY MEMBERS RECEIVING GOVERNMENT AND FOOD RELIEF GRANTS

For those who receive some form of government grant, a thematic analysis of the qualitative responses indicated that the predominant grants received are child support and related grants, with a few disability grants, older persons grants and SRD grants, among others. A thematic visualisation of the types of grants received is presented in Figure 3.14.



Is the target group clearly identified and how can it be better defined? Is the basis for measurement clearly defined?

### 3.7 Scope of social relief assistance provided by government

The National Household Food and Nutrition Security Plan stipulated several interventions towards addressing food and nutrition insecurity and social protection.

A typical scope of services provided may vary from province to province. However, the components are similar across all provinces. All provinces provide intermediate food assistance through **cooked meals** served at the CNDs and through soup kitchens. **Food parcels** were mostly provided during times of disaster, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. A few provinces and NGOs also piloted vouchers, but in a limited volume and mostly just as once-off interventions.

These interventions are targeted at the vulnerable populace at different levels or stages in their lives, from childhood to schooling, adulthood and old age, as well as those in need due to unforeseen circumstances such as disasters and pandemics. From interviews with provincial officials, the assistance that government provides varies according to the situation at hand, but mostly it is crafted along the social protection continuum for households and individuals, as depicted in the example in Figure 3.16.

#### Targeting various groups of the population with different modes of interventions

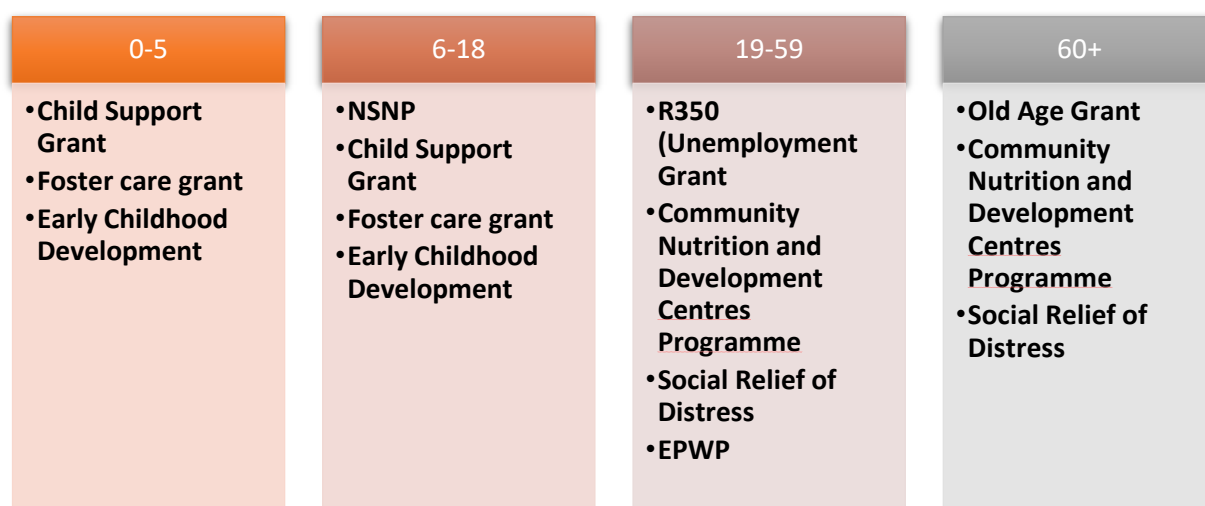


FIGURE 3.16: THE SOCIAL PROTECTION CONTINUUM OF SERVICES OFFERED  
(SOURCE: KZN INPUT DOCUMENT REVIEW)

Through these programmes, different interventions are provided. For instance, it is reported that, through the provisions of the Social Assistance Act, Act No. 13 of 2004, 17.5 million people are benefiting from social grants to the value of about R160 billion. In addition, government provides social relief of distress funding of about R170 million, which benefits about 306 901 people. There are about 2 960 registered early childhood development (ECD) centres across the country, providing child nutrition and feeding support. Similarly, at household level, the National Food and Nutrition Security Programme makes provision for the short-term provision of food to distressed beneficiaries. A summary of some of the key programmes is presented in Table 3.5.

**TABLE 3.5: SELECTED SOCIAL RELIEF PROGRAMMES CURRENTLY BEING DELIVERED BY GOVERNMENT**  
**(SOURCE: KZN INPUT DOCUMENT REVIEW)**

Key programmes	Reported progress
1. Social Grants	The Social Assistance Act, Act No. 13 of 2004, has made it possible for 17.5 million beneficiaries, including 12.2 million children and 3.4 million older persons, to receive social grants. This forms the country's main social safety net to the value of about R160 billion. About 2 billion grants are paid out monthly in KwaZulu-Natal.
2. Social Relief of Distress	Another 306 901 beneficiaries benefited from the SRD Grant to the value of R170.31 million. It is expected to be extended to R200.4 million.
3. Early Childhood Development	2 960 ECD programmes are registered 96 311 children are accessing registered ECD centres 84 855 children are subsidised through equitable share 32 789 children are subsidised through the ECD Conditional Grant 50% of the ECD Grant is for nutrition support to ensure the appropriate feeding of children in ECD centres
4. Household Food and Nutrition Security Programme	A network of 49 CNDCs are located in poor and deprived areas across the province, and provides nutritious food to 12 250 beneficiaries.

The food and security interventions within the DSD vary in scope. Different provinces have also adopted these programmes according to their specific needs. For instance, in KwaZulu-Natal, the focus of the Food and Nutrition Security Programme is mainly to provide access to food. This is done through the provision of cooked meals through CNDCs, luncheon clubs, the SRD Grant, ECD centres, home-based care (HBC) and, in some cases, through cash transfers. The typical programme scope of Mpumalanga, like other provinces, includes the provision of short-term food through community development centres and other nutrition and health-related programmes, with elements of job creation and the linking of beneficiaries to capacity-building centres. NGOs, NPOs and FBOs have been part of the implementation of these programmes, as presented in the earlier hybrid model examples. In terms of social relief of distress, most households typically receive assistance through different forms of grants.



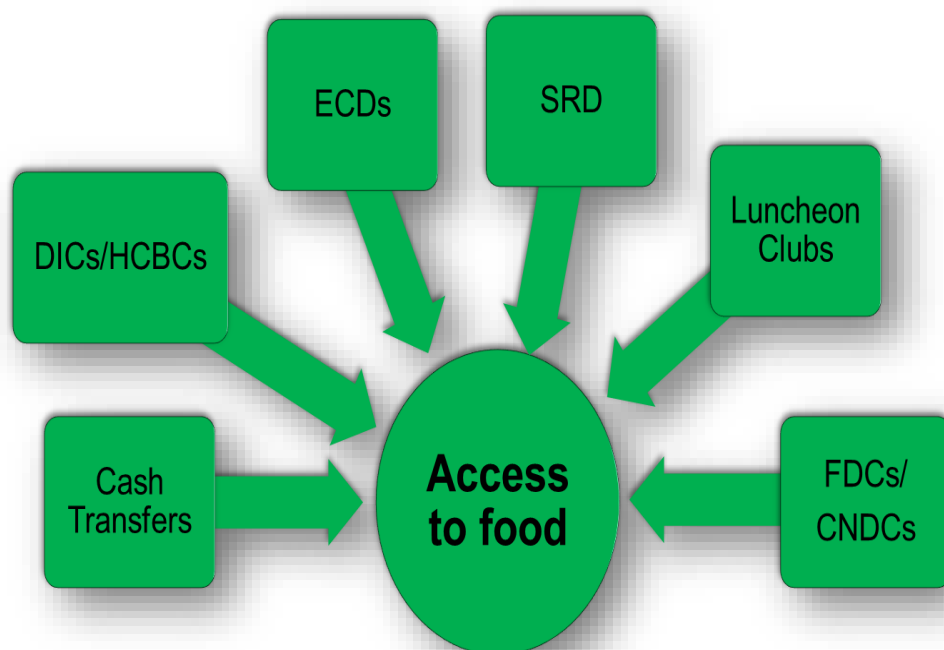


FIGURE 3.17: EXAMPLE OF PROGRAMME SCOPE IN KWAZULU-NATAL

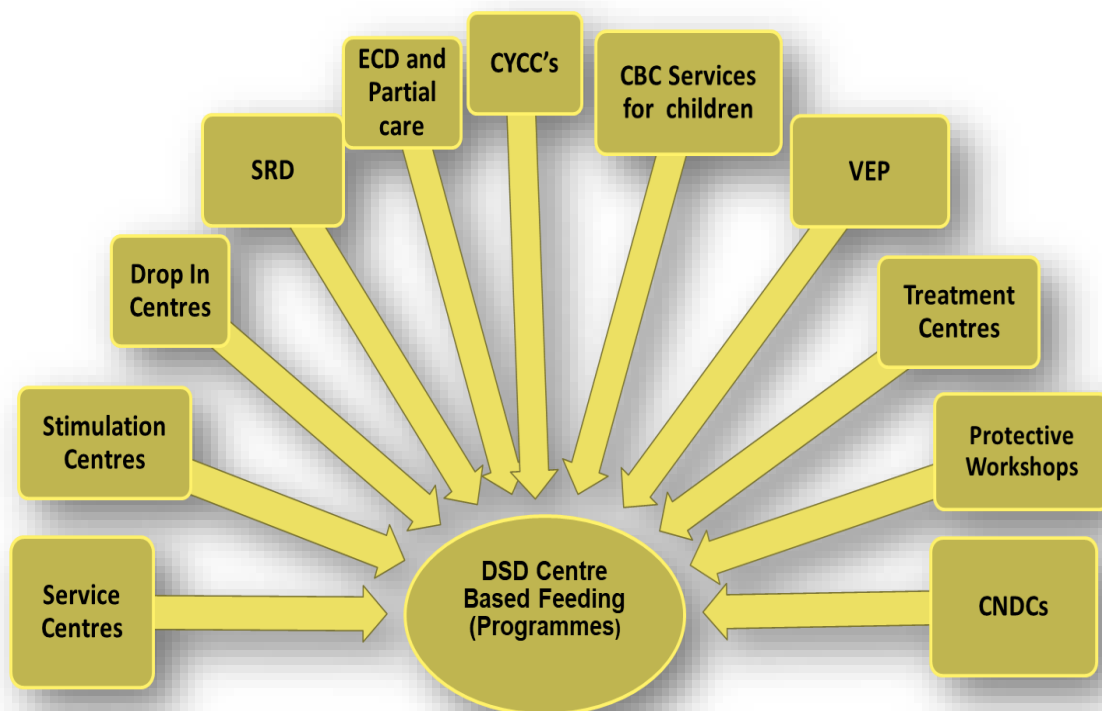
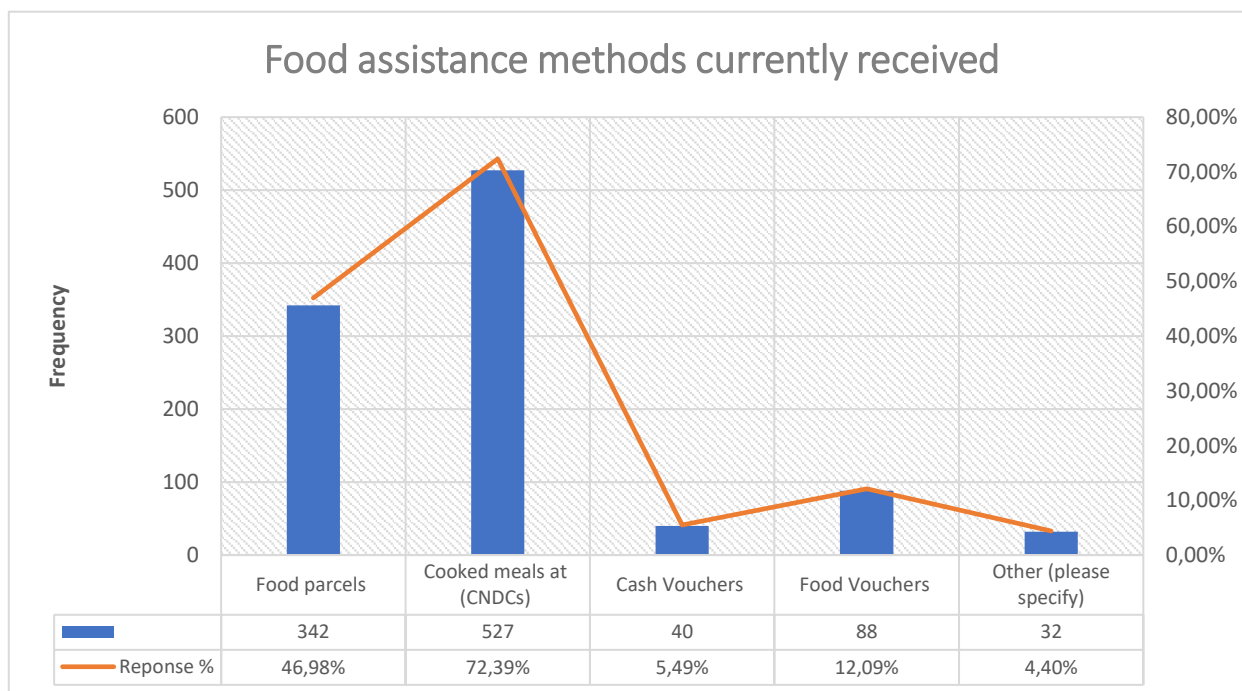


FIGURE 3.18: EXAMPLE OF PROGRAMME SCOPE IN MPUMALANGA

### 3.8 Food assistance types received by respondents

Most of the respondents reported being on different government food and nutrition relief assistance programmes. Typically, most of the respondents are recipients of daily cooked meals at CNDCs. Given that the food parcels are, in most cases, given once-off, the CNDC becomes a safe haven for providing access to food. The type of food assistance received most by beneficiaries is presented in Figure 3.19. From the responses, 527 (51.2%) beneficiaries are receiving cooked meals from the CNDCs and soup kitchens, while 46% benefitted from food parcels at some point. About 17% were also provided food and cash vouchers.



**FIGURE 3.19: FOOD RELIEF TYPES RECEIVED BY BENEFICIARIES**

It appears that cooked meals are convenient. This is attributed to the fact that it is the most common form of service offered, with the existence of CNDCs in several communities. This spike in number may be partly due to the fact that the interviews were conducted at the CNDCs. In some provinces, such as Gauteng, some programmes only offer food parcels and food vouchers, and not cooked meals. It was, however, a little more challenging to contact these recipients as they were scattered in different places and not necessarily collectively accessible as those who had come to the CNDCs.

**Food parcels were provided, but intermittently, as reported by beneficiaries and officials in some districts.** Some 342 of the 728 (46.98%) respondents have benefitted from food parcels that were given either as a once-off or continue to be given at irregular intervals, in some cases every six months. For instance, a respondent stated: *"We go every day in the week for cooked meals. Food parcel was only one time"*. Others also say they received the food parcels twice two years ago, three, four times two years ago, which all suggests it was during the COVID-19 lockdown.

**Very few people receive food vouchers.** When asked specifically whether respondents received any form of food vouchers, only 16.3% responded in the affirmative, while the majority (83%) indicated not having received assistance in voucher form. For those who receive vouchers, most of the vouchers were redeemed at normal retail stores, such as Pick n Pay, Spar and Boxer, while less than 1% was redeemed at the local spaza shops and 6% at designated centres such as the Post Office or government offices.

**TABLE 3.6: SOURCES WHERE FOOD PARCELS ARE TYPICALLY REDEEMED**

Do you receive food /cash vouchers?		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Yes	119	16.3%
	No	609	83.7%
	Total	728	100.0%

If yes, from which food retailers did you buy the food items? (Where do you redeem your vouchers?)		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Local/spaza shops	7	1.0%
	Normal retail shops (Pick n Pay, Spar, Boxer)	103	14.1%
	Designated redemption centres	6	0.8%
	Other (please specify)	3	0.4%
	Total	119	16.3%
Missing *(do not receive vouchers)		609	83.7%
Total		728	100.0%

Table 3.6 shows that the issuing and redemption of vouchers is skewed in favour of larger and well-established retail shops, with less participation by local shops, largely because the vouchers are normally issued by the mainstream retail stores. A few reasons are provided for this.

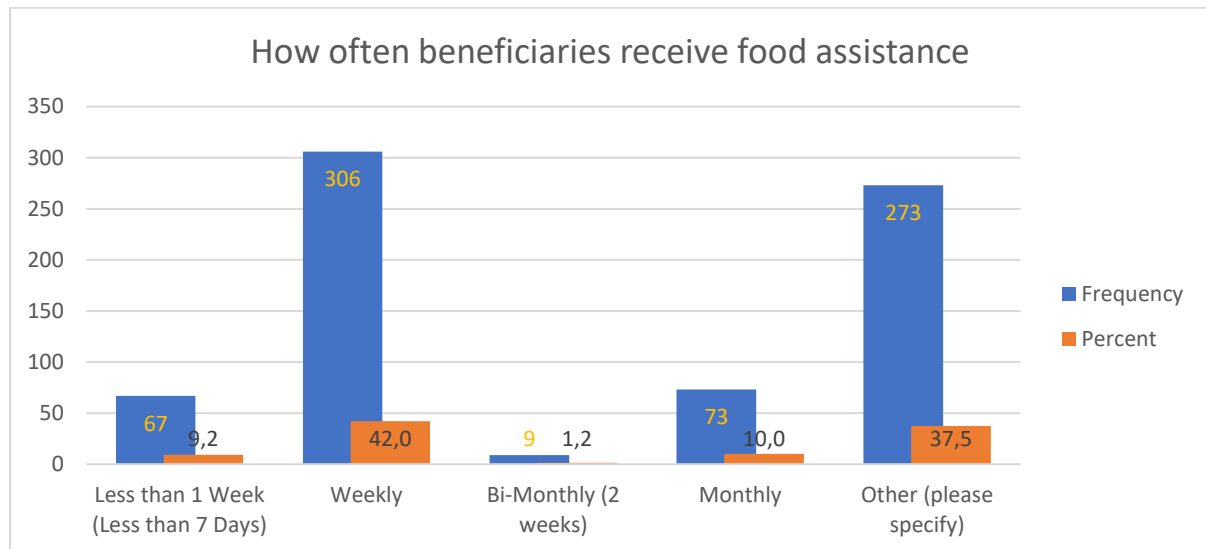
- These shops have the resources and capacity, and are able to issue such vouchers.
- Government is only able to do business with the mainstream shops, and not necessarily with the local spaza shops because of regulated procurement processes.
- Mainstream shops have prestige and trust, as well as the variety and quality of foods available in the mainstream shops. As one respondent puts it: *“Everybody likes to go to Spar or Boxer because you know you’ll get what you want, in good quality”*.

In alignment with the objectives of the Food and Nutrition Security Programme, the intention is to use this food distribution system as a local economic empowerment vehicle by procuring from the local economy. This is, however, not yet happening if the local shops cannot participate in the process until they are registered and formalised. Most of the spaza shops are also noted to be owned by foreign merchants in the communities, and are sometimes not reliable as they move around too often, even though they seem to provide more affordable goods and are convenient to go to in terms of proximity to beneficiaries.

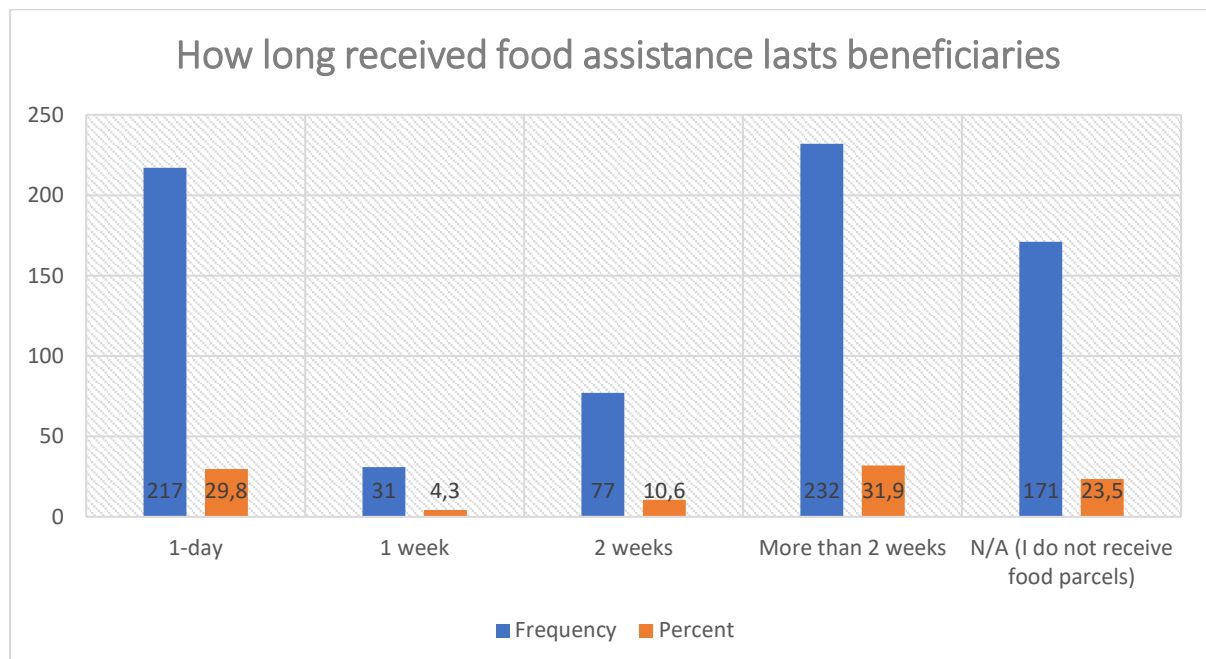
### 3.9 Frequency of food assistance received

Almost half of the respondent beneficiaries (51.2%) receive food assistance weekly (most of which are cooked food for beneficiaries who receive daily food assistance). Almost 10% receive food assistance at least once a month. About a third (37.5%) does not receive food assistance regularly. Most of them who responded “other” indicated receiving once-off assistance or assistance twice in a year when food parcels are distributed.

The summary response is presented in Figure 3.20. Figure 3.21 presents how long it takes for beneficiaries to finish utilising each food assistance received. Almost a third responded one day, mainly because they receive cooked meals from the CNDs on a daily basis. Food parcels typically last more than a week (mostly two weeks or more).



**FIGURE 3.20: FREQUENCY OF FOOD ASSISTANCE RECEIVED**



**FIGURE 3.21: HOW LONG IT TAKES FOR EACH ASSISTANCE TO BE EXPENDED BY RECIPIENTS**

### 3.10 Level of satisfaction with current food assistance received

Beneficiaries also expressed their level of satisfaction with the food delivery services received, and the content of such food packages received. Generally, there seems to be a high level of satisfaction with the food service received. Almost 65% of respondents were satisfied with the food relief assistance provided to them. About 20% were not satisfied, while at least 5% were sometimes satisfied, and sometimes not (Figure 3.22).

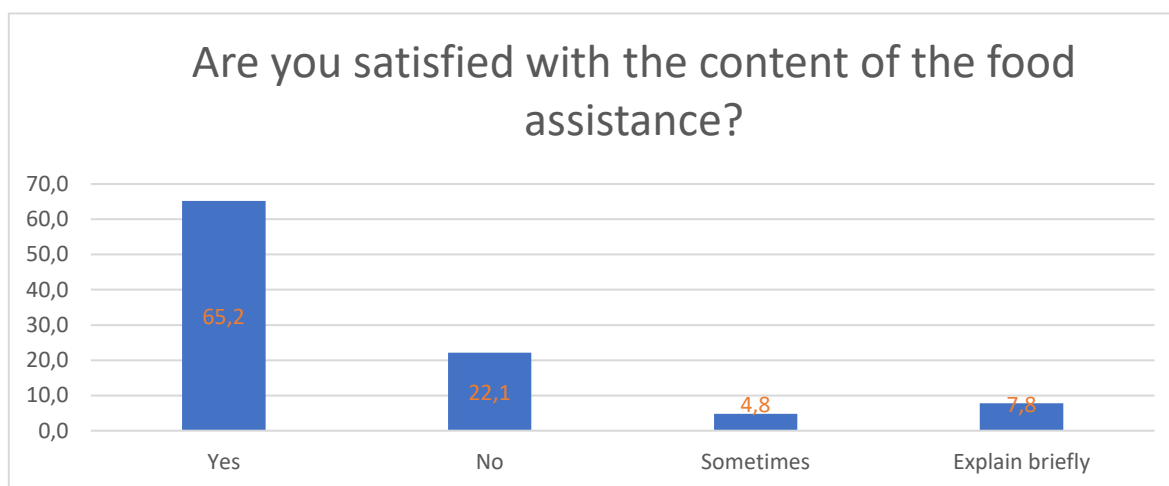


FIGURE 3.22: LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH FOOD ASSISTANCE RECEIVED

From the responses, it appears that, in the absence of any other alternatives for the majority of respondents, having a place to go and get some food each day is a great relief to them.

However, some of them expressed dissatisfaction with the process. Some of the **reasons provided for the dissatisfaction included the following:**

- **The volume of food on the plate is too small.** Some respondents complained about the plate sizes they were provided with being too small and would request more food, and also greater variety. It was observed that a typical food bowl will contain some pap or rice, and curry with meat and some cooked vegetables. In some cases, fresh fruit was added.

During interaction with programme officials on the size of plates of food, it was explained that, initially, the cooks were serving everyone that comes with larger food portions. However, some people did not eat all of what was served. This was resulting in a wastage of food in large quantities. The decision was then taken to reduce the size of the food served. If people still wanted more after finishing the food on their plates, they could come for more after others had been served. As one district programme supervisor expressed:

*“Some people don’t come back because they are shy to come back for more, so they just leave. The days where we have more food left, we give it to people to take it home. But we also try to cook according to the number of people who are coming here to eat. Some days they come, other days they don’t come. So, we start with serving standard then later we try to give more. We also try to work according to budget, but we make sure people are satisfied. Maybe only a few will complain, but mostly they are good and happy when they leave the CNDC.”*

(CNDC supervisor, North West)

- **Eating cooked meals but unable to help those who remain at home.** Others who were eating in the CNDCs also expressed the concern that, while some of them can come to the centre with their families, especially their children and grandchildren, to eat, there are others who cannot and do not come with their families, as in the case of husbands. After eating, they go back and sit with their remaining hungry family members.
- **Content of food is not necessarily what is preferred.** As some beneficiaries indicated, in the case of food parcels, the content of what is included is not necessarily what they prefer. In some cases, some of the content is irrelevant to their current needs. For cooked meals, some of the comments relate to the lack of vegetables in the food, and the food not being what was preferred, but had to be taken due to a lack of choice.
- **Fear of stigmatisation.** It was also said that, although eating in the CNDCs is eating in an organised manner, not all community members who are really in need come to the centre to eat. In one of the CNDCs, the managers described the issue as follows:

*“I think it is also about pride and dignity. Some people do not want to be seen going to queue in the centre and to be labelled as poor and hungry. So, they don’t come. But what we observe, these same people, if you go into their houses, the situation is serious. They do not have food and you can see they are suffering.”*

The irony here, however, is that, during stakeholder engagement and problem analysis, one of the key objectives of the programme is to provide food to people in a dignified way. Having community members come and sit at a table and eat a decent meal, as they would in a restaurant, was intended to be more dignifying than hovering around in the street. However, for families who were not well to do and have gained some respect and pride in the community, it appears to be somewhat difficult for them to access food through the cooked meals channel. For these people, it was expressed that food parcels were better.

- **Dependency syndrome of food assistance.** From the official’s perspective, the feeding of households is a necessary social relief intervention, especially as an interim measure. However, concerns were raised that people may become dependent on this assistance and may not find alternative solutions to their food inadequacy issues. The urge, therefore, is for government to ensure that people are fed temporarily, but are afforded the chance to have long-term solutions where they are capacitated to provide for themselves and build resilience over time.
- **The risky nature of physical/in-kind food distribution:** The physical distribution of food parcels carries quite a risk. Officials’ accounts of experience confirm that the delivery of food parcels, although useful in reaching remote communities, is quite risky, especially in populated or dense communities, where the demand far exceeds the available supply and targets. It has been reported on a few occasions that officers were attacked during food distribution, and the food parcels were stolen. In a few instances, the warehouses that were in the communities were broken into and the goods looted, as officers from the Northern Cape, Eastern Cape and North West narrated in their qualitative interviews. The following extract from one of the officials captured the situation:



*“Sometimes we, the officers, have to take the food in the vans and bakkies (pick-up trucks) and go to beneficiaries. Sometimes this is very risky, because some community members like the neighbours of target households will come and also want to collect. Like sometimes we can call the South African Police Service to accompany us to these communities to avoid riots after our previous experience where people just jump into the bakkie and take the food. Sometimes it is also the local councillors, who want to give the food to those that they like, not necessarily those that really need the food the most. So, I think the voucher system will help. But they must put measures in place to ensure they will not be abused.”*

### 3.11 Beneficiary preference of food distribution methods

The purpose of the study was also to ensure that beneficiaries are included in the decision-making process so that the solutions will be to their advantage. Knowing what their preference is will aid the DSD’s decision-making process as to what type of service to invest in.

This insight may give an indication of the sustainability of the programme, as beneficiaries are more likely to own and participate in their preferred assistance type. From the responses gathered, **most respondents preferred either food vouchers (33%) or cash vouchers (29%) compared to food parcels (28%) and cooked meals (8%),** as presented in the results in Figure 3.23.

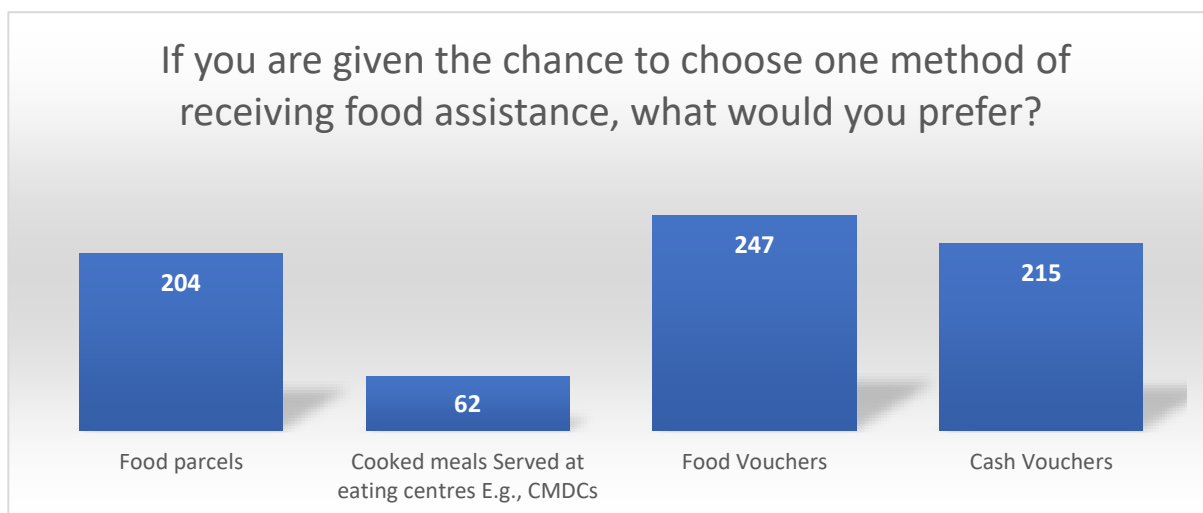


FIGURE 3.23: FOOD ASSISTANCE METHOD PREFERENCE

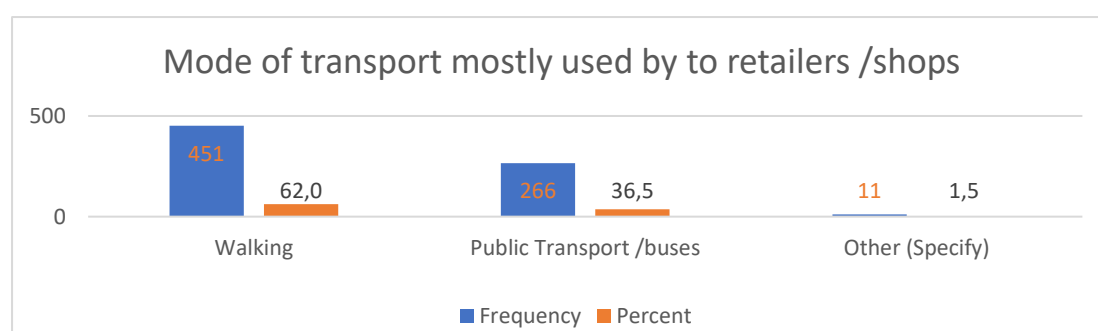
Interestingly, as much as 70% of respondents would **prefer the vouchers to be flexible**, to allow them to choose which items to buy when redeeming the vouchers. This is in line with the intention of feeling dignified when shopping “just like everybody else” and not being stigmatised or feeling limited. Some 17% of respondents believe that the vouchers should be restricted to specified items out of fear that they may be abused and not used for their intended purposes.

**TABLE 3.7: CHOICE OF VOUCHERS' FLEXIBILITY OR RESTRICTION**

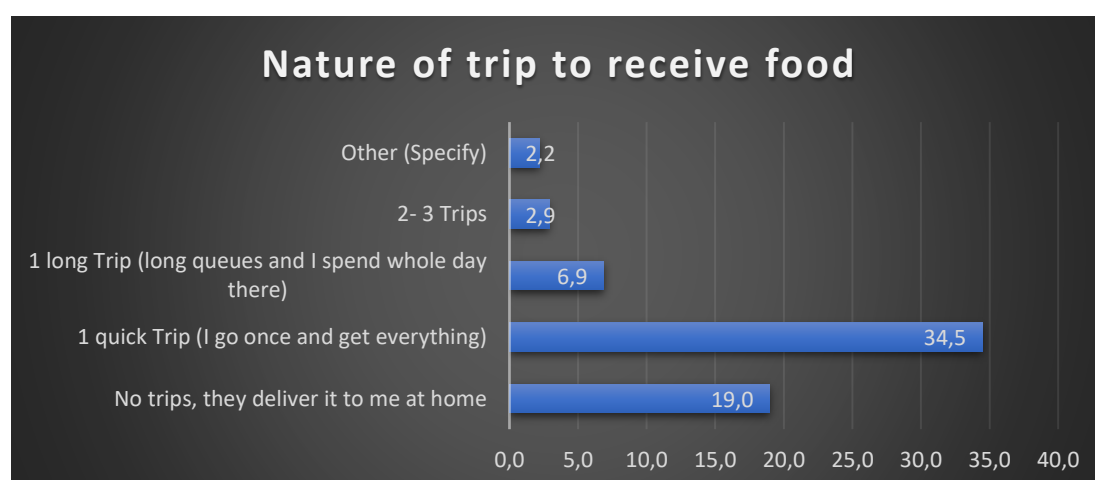
Would you prefer the vouchers to be flexible? (to be used for other things other than food)	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	512	70.3%
No	126	17.3%
It does not matter (any one will do)	90	12.4%
Total	728	100.0%

### 3.12 Mode of travel to shops

Most respondents (62%) walk to buy food from shops near to them. About a third uses public transport, such as mini-buses. A few others get lifts from private transport owners.

**FIGURE 3.24: HOW BENEFICIARIES TRAVEL TO SHOP FOR FOOD**

For the majority of those who travel to shops (34%), the shopping is mostly done with one quick trip. Only 50 of the 728 respondents (6.9%) take long trips, mostly taking the whole day to do their shopping in the nearest town, where retail stores are located. From observations and further interactions during fieldwork, those in typical rural areas and small villages make once-off trips, which are often long, to the nearest town, e.g. some beneficiaries from Mooi Nooi travel to Rustenburg in the North West to do their shopping, which includes food. The nature of trips is summarised in Figure 3.25.

**FIGURE 3.25: NATURE OF TRIPS MADE FOR SHOPPING BY RESPONDENTS**

### 3.13 Cost of transportation for a typical shopping trip

For about 20% of the respondents, transport for each trip is between R5 and R25. Another 10% spends between R30 and R100. Less than 2% spends above R100 per trip. From the qualitative interviews, some of these respondents would like to shop in town, but because they mostly do not have enough income, they have to buy from the shops nearest to them. However, these local shops are reported to be mostly owned by foreign nationals, with only a few owned by locals, so they do not issue vouchers of any kind. This is noted to be either because they do not meet procurement requirements, or it is primarily associated with their inability to offer large amounts of credit as working capital, which is considered critical for their operations, and they cannot be locked up for a long time if it takes longer to claim for the vouchers through government procurement processes.

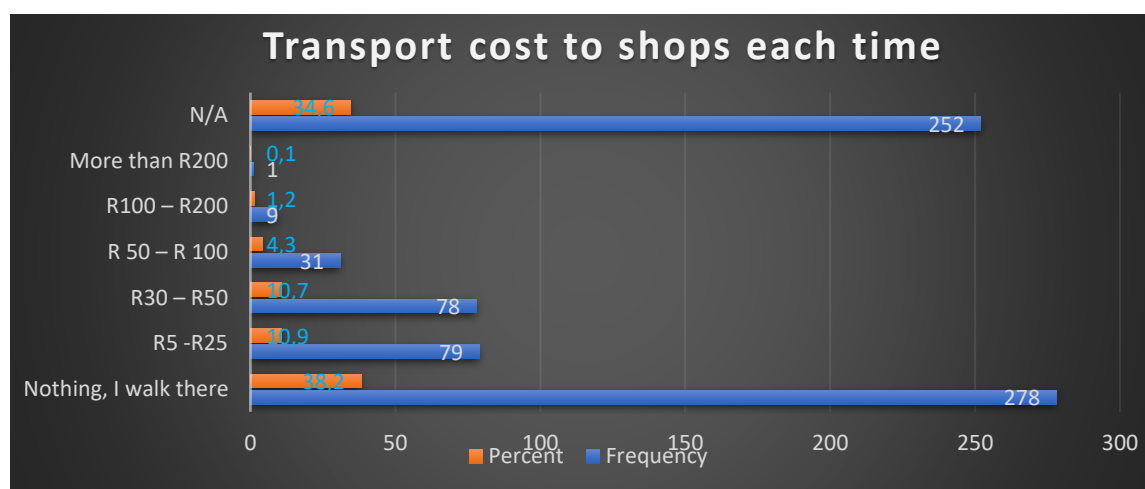


FIGURE 3.26: TYPICAL TRANSPORTATION COSTS TO SHOPS

### 3.14 The nature of income-generating activities engaged in by respondents

Almost 70% of those interviewed reported not having any other source of income. This again highlights an underlying reason for the perpetuation of hunger and malnutrition among the populace. Fortunately, basic services, such as water and electricity, and medical facilities, such as clinics, are reported to be available in most communities, as reported by 93% of respondents.

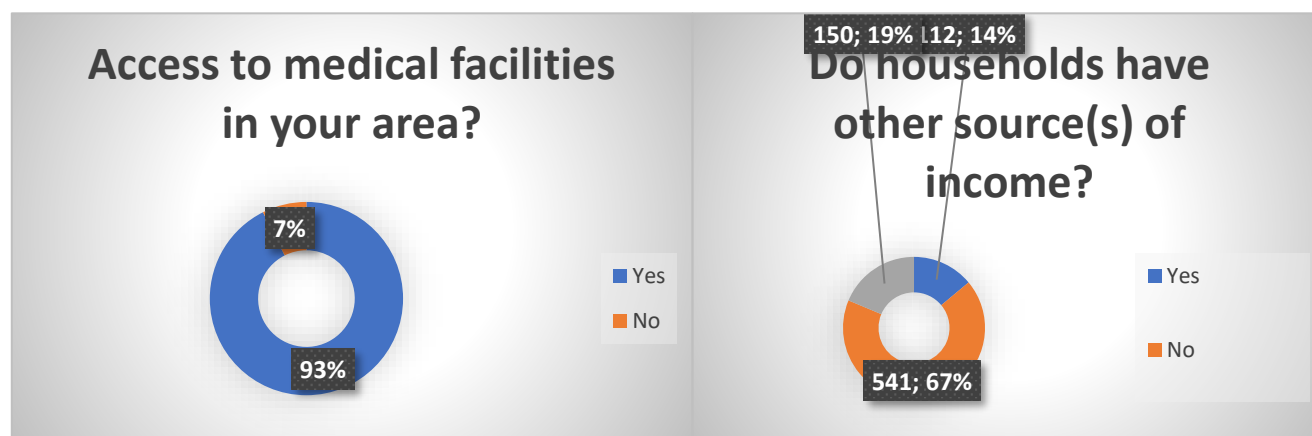
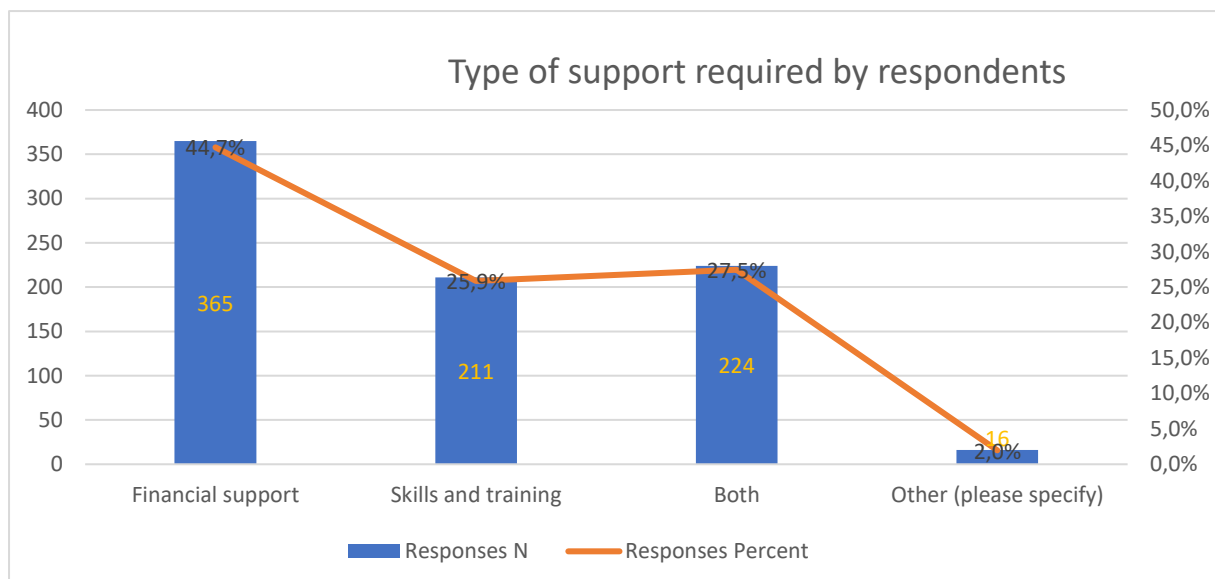


FIGURE 3.27: ACCESS TO MEDICAL FACILITIES AND OTHER SOURCES OF INCOME



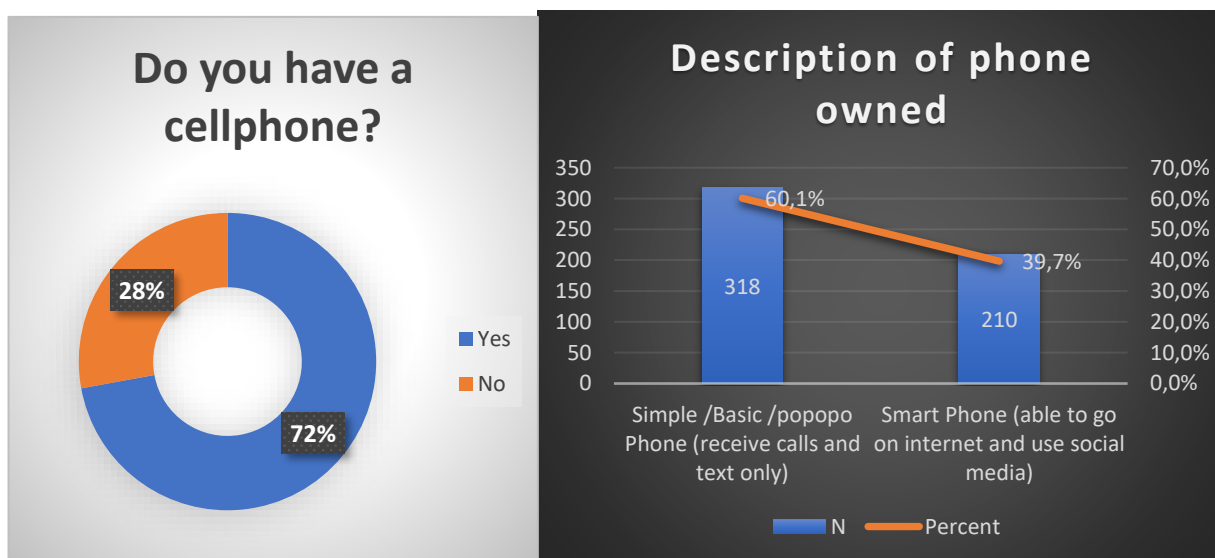


**FIGURE 3.30: TYPES OF ASSISTANCE EXPECTED BY BENEFICIARIES**

### Technological inclination – availability and usage, as well as cell phone access level

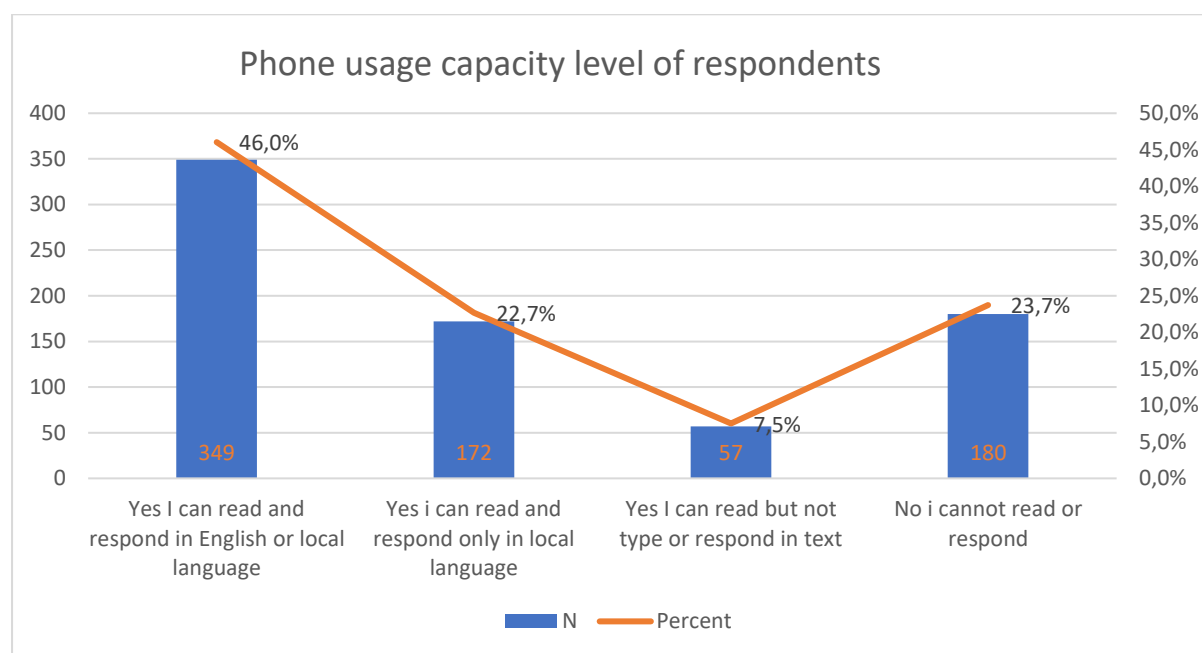
With the recent evolution of technology, the use of cell phones to deliver digital vouchers is becoming quite popular. The success of any digital voucher may also depend on whether the research tests the preparedness of the respondents in terms of the availability of cell phones and related gadgets, as well as the level of advancement of such phones' functionality. Almost two-thirds (72%) of the respondents has access to cell phones. Almost a third of those who have cell phones, (60%) uses phones with the basic functionality of making calls and reading messages (SMSs). Only 40% uses smartphones. This may have implications for the types of messages delivered.

Almost half of the respondents can read and respond to messaging on their cell phones, although about 22% can only do that in their local languages. This response is positive for the possibility of issuing digital vouchers to the phones of approved beneficiaries.



**FIGURE 3.31: ACCESS TO CELL PHONES AND LEVEL OF PHONES' FUNCTIONALITY**

Although this seems to pose exciting prospects for using digital vouchers, respondents, especially programme managers, caution that there may be a need for more awareness creation so that recipients do not mistake the vouchers for scam messages. According to a district manager in North West, some vouchers issued in a pilot programme were deleted by beneficiaries because they thought that they were scam messages. Some of those vouchers had to be reissued after explaining the authenticity of the vouchers to such recipients. For others, the vouchers could not be redeemed as beneficiaries had either changed phones or used the phones of friends who were no longer accessible to the approved beneficiaries.



**FIGURE 3.32: PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS AND LEVEL OF PHONE USAGE CAPACITY**



## 4. DISCUSSIONS AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Introduction

For whatever reason, indigent people are unable to afford food to the extent that requires government or external intervention. Two broad types of efforts are possible: providing meals to feed people temporarily, or capacitating them to earn their own food.

At this level, the option of creating access to food includes providing short-term food relief to households through feeding schemes and vouchers. The second option is to capacitate individuals and households to produce their own food or afford the available foods being sold. The hybrid model can be understood as a combination of the interventions needed to address food and nutrition security.

From the information reviewed, food assistance can be provided through short-term and long-term models or interventions. Short-term interventions of food assistance may include different choices, such as in-kind food assistance, which comprises cooked meals and food parcels, or vouchers, which are either food vouchers that beneficiaries can only use to redeem food items, or cash vouchers that beneficiaries can redeem as cash or as food. The third short-term modality involves cash transfers directly to beneficiaries through their bank accounts and cell phones.

### 4.2 Formulation of distribution modalities/options for the hybrid model

From the proposed theory of change, the two broad objectives are to **create access to food for the vulnerable in a dignified manner**. This can be done through the continued feeding of households as a short-term measure. Second is the empowerment of households to either produce their own food or to earn enough income to be able to afford the available food, with the assumption that government ensures that there is enough food production and food made available on the shelves.

#### Options on the level of interventions

The possible options are examined in terms of creating access to food and distributing food. Various combinations and scenarios are postulated for evaluation and consideration.

The main options or implementation scenarios considered are the following:

- **Option 1:** The status quo: Providing cooked meals at CNDCs and community soup kitchens with some level of food parcels from food banks.
- **Option 2:** Hybrid Model 1: Cooked meals at CNDCs and digital vouchers, and a limited number of food parcels (70:30).
- **Option 3:** Fully digitised e-vouchers: Food vouchers and cash vouchers.
- **Option 4: Intensive capacity-building/empowerment:** To enable beneficiaries to earn their own food 100% (no short-term food handouts or vouchers).
- **Option 5:** Intensive Hybrid Model 3: Cooked meals at CNDCs and digital vouchers, and a limited number of food parcels (70:30) as a short-term measure, while, in addition, providing long-term capacity-building assistance to enable beneficiaries to produce their own food or earn an income that enables them to access food.

### 4.3 Description of possible options/hybrid modalities and scenarios

**Option 1:** The current model (the status quo): Providing cooked meals at CNDCs and occasional food parcels at provincial food distribution centres, no vouchers (fully manual/physical handouts)

This entails the provision of short-term food assistance through PFDCs (food banks) and cooked meals at CNDCs, with occasional food parcels to beneficiaries and no vouchers. Food parcels are also provided in emergency situations, such as in times of natural disasters, or extreme cases of identified hunger and malnutrition. This option excludes the pilots for vouchers that are currently being undertaken by various organisations and government institutions.



FIGURE 4.1: OPTION 1: THE STATUS QUO

**Option 2:** Hybrid Model 1: Cooked meals at CNDCs and digital vouchers, with limited food parcels (70:30)

This entails the provision of short-term food assistance through PFDCs and cooked meals through the CNDCs and soup kitchens, with 70% digital food vouchers and 30% food parcels to remote areas over a long distance and to those who may not be able to access food vouchers. This is informed or underpinned by the evidence of beneficiaries that at least 70% have access to cell phones. The implication is that government can target 70% of beneficiaries for e-vouchers, while providing the remaining 30% with paper-based vouchers, direct food parcels or other forms of vouchers. These numbers may differ in cases of emergencies where the majority do not have access to cell phones, for instance in the case of the flooding in KwaZulu-Natal, where people lost their cell phones.

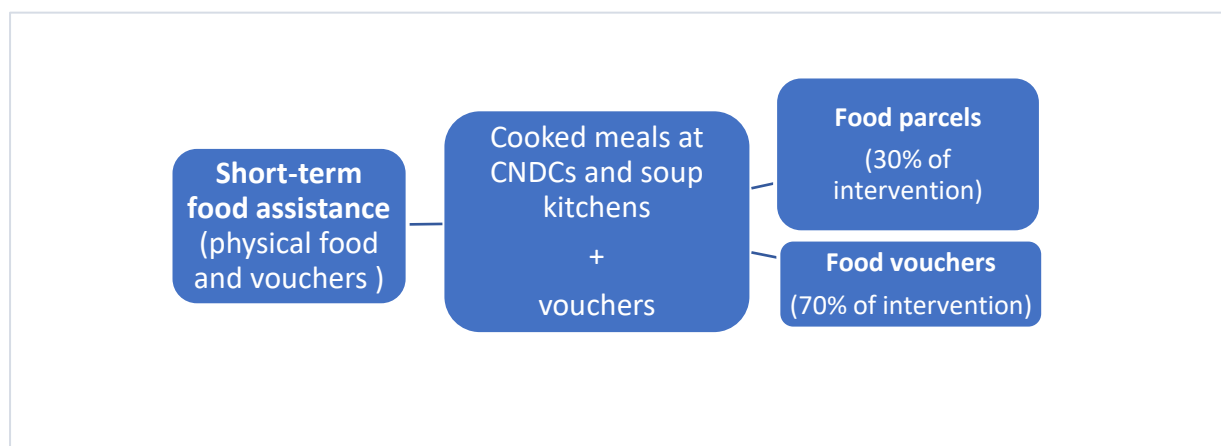


FIGURE 4.2: OPTION 2: HYBRID MODEL 1

### Option 3: Fully digitised e-vouchers

The fully digitised model will include issuing food vouchers to all identified beneficiaries. These vouchers can be paper-based or digitised vouchers. The option of a fully digitised system implies that such a system is available that can be accessed by all beneficiaries through cell phones or tablets.

This option looks at the scenario where the entire food assistance programme utilises digitalised food vouchers in combination with cash transfer models. This excludes the option of using any form of in-kind food assistance modalities such as food parcels, cooked meals and soup kitchens. While this may benefit from the advantages of digitalisation, in terms of speed and convenience, it might exclude some segment of the population that may not have access to working cell phones. Unless the cost of travel is included as a variation for those in rural and remote areas, the cost of accessing and redeeming such vouchers may place such beneficiaries at a significant disadvantage. In emergency situations, providing vouchers may be quicker, but where households do not have the means to prepare food, fully digitised systems may be limiting. Doing away with centre-based systems may also lose the advantages of ready access to beneficiaries on a regular basis, as in the case of CNDCs.

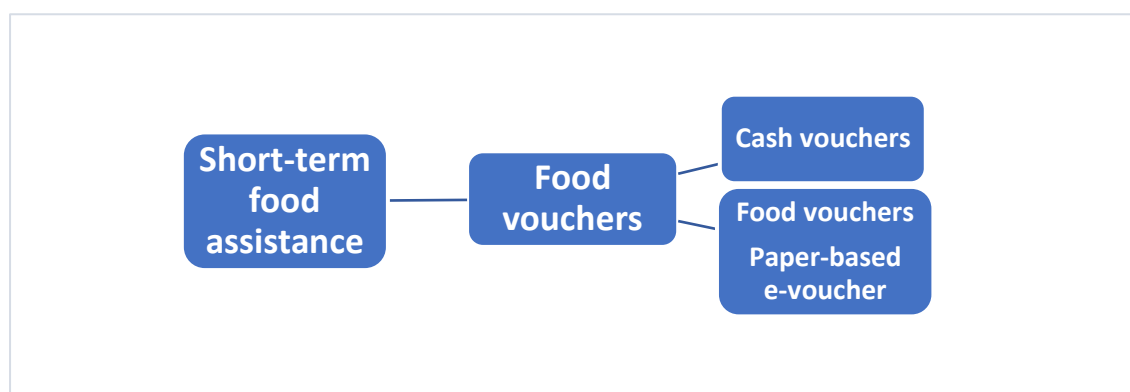


FIGURE 4.3: OPTION 3: FULLY DIGITISED E-VOUCHERS

### Option 4: Intensive capacity-building/empowerment: fully digitised with production capacity

This option is similar to the third option, where all short-term assistance is provided through vouchers and cash transfers. However, profiled beneficiaries can be grouped together and provided with some form of training and capacity building to ensure that they can produce their own food or at least earn enough to afford the available nutritious meals.

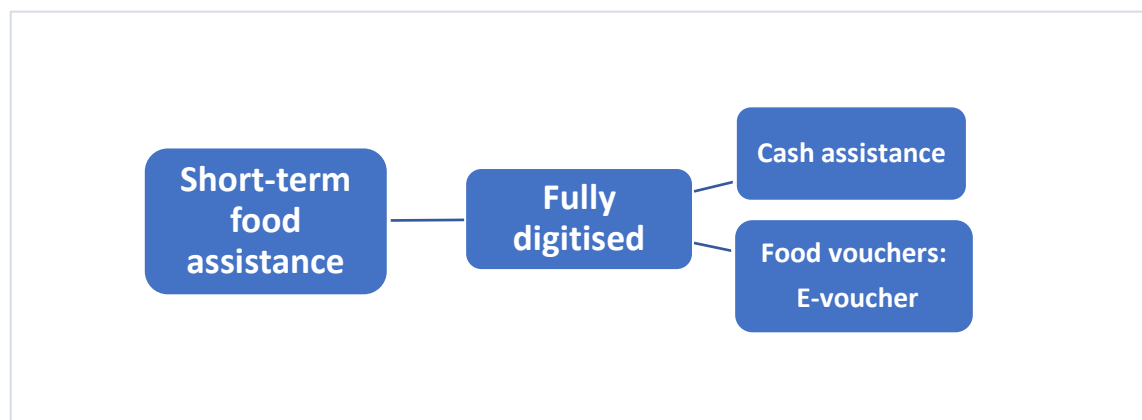


FIGURE 4.4: OPTION 4: INTENSIVE CAPACITY-BUILDING/EMPOWERMENT

**Option 5: Intensive Hybrid Model 3: Cooked meals at CNDs and digital vouchers, with limited food parcels (70:30)**

This model includes the continued provision of short-term food intervention through cooked meals at CNDs and food vouchers, with capacity-building components (agricultural inputs and support, training and skills development, household and community gardens, linkage to industrial jobs, entrepreneurial skills development and set-ups).

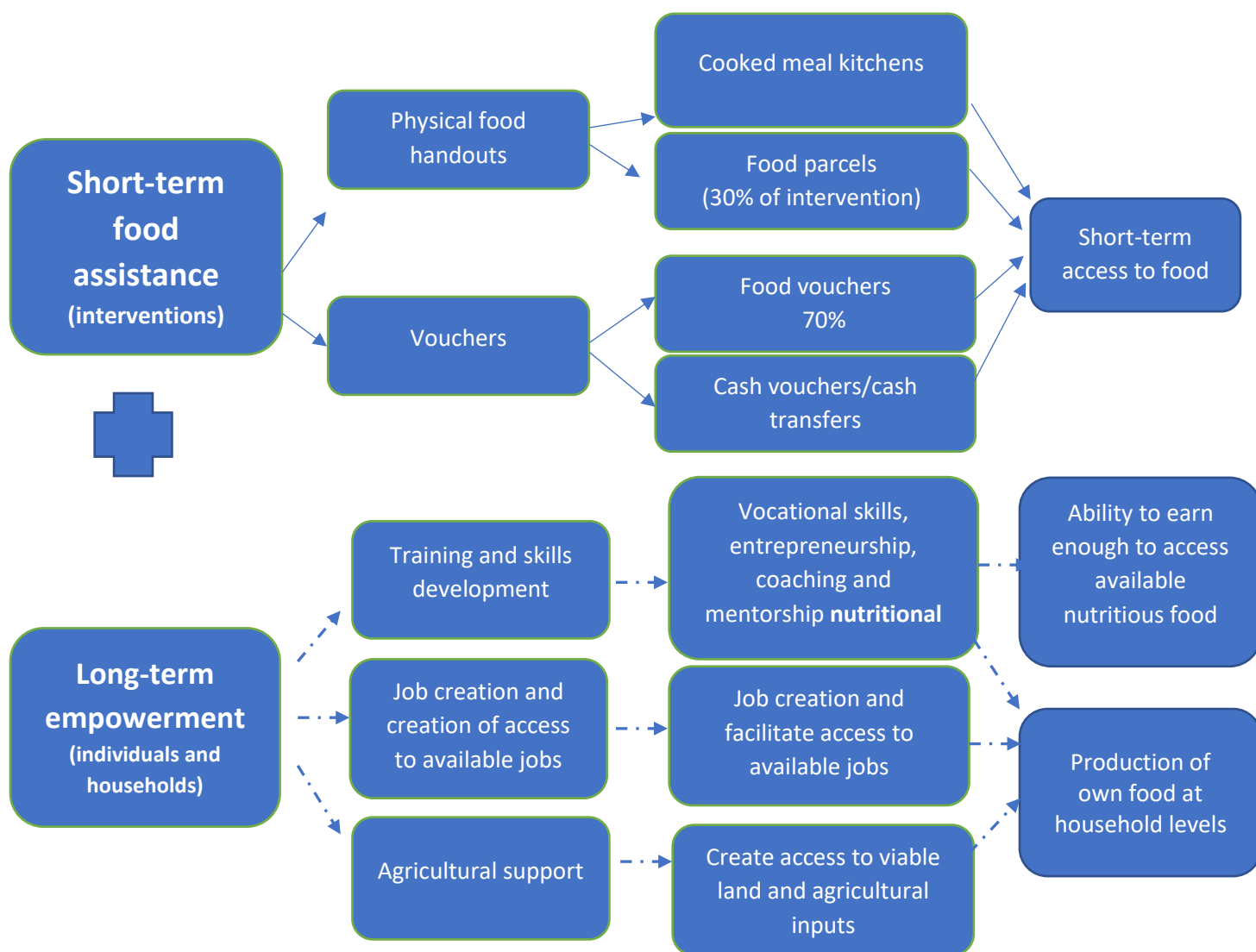


FIGURE 4.5: OPTION 5: INTENSIVE HYBRID MODEL 3

#### 4.4 Evaluation of different systems based on their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

Model	S	W	O	T
The provision of cooked meals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides direct food access to beneficiaries</li> <li>• Provides trust and assurance</li> <li>• Is less costly to beneficiaries (no transaction cost/fees)</li> <li>• Reduces corruption as only hungry people will come to the CNDCs</li> <li>• Reduces the possibility of political bias</li> <li>• Community members could feel dignified as they come and sit and are served in the soup kitchens and CNDCs just like at normal restaurants</li> <li>• Offers an improved/assured coping mechanism/strategy</li> <li>• Provides employment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty</li> <li>• Inconsistent funding could result in CNDCs idling while waiting for funds, leading to beneficiary despondency</li> <li>• Improper staffing, e.g. unqualified cooks could jeopardise food quality</li> <li>• Beneficiaries may boycott food that is not to their preferred taste or that is not well cooked or is unpleasant, which could lead to waste.</li> <li>• Food contamination and food poisoning if improperly stored</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy to identify beneficiaries through referrals from clinics and walk-ins</li> <li>• Low levels of technological awareness or access</li> <li>• Opportunity for community cohesion/ social cohesion</li> <li>• Opportunity for economic capacity building for beneficiaries: e.g. people gathered in one place could be capacitated to collectively produce food through food gardens and skills development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of dignity due to judgement from other community members by being identified as poor</li> <li>• Threat of stigmatisation for beneficiaries receiving food parcels</li> <li>• Security and confidentiality of participants are not guaranteed.</li> <li>• Suffers from inbuilt Inefficiency in business processes</li> <li>• Bureaucratic processes</li> <li>• Procurement at all levels</li> <li>• Potentially results in wastage of food if not properly managed or if people are not happy with the food cooked</li> <li>• Possibility of creating a dependency syndrome among beneficiaries</li> <li>• Potential of food being stolen in storage/ misappropriation of funds</li> </ul>

Model	S	W	O	T
The provision of cash transfers cash assistance/bank accounts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quick and efficient response time (especially in times of crises)</li> <li>• May cut down on leakages due to distribution costs</li> <li>• Reduction of stigma for beneficiaries and preservation of dignity as they go to shop like anyone else</li> <li>• Offers the freedom of choice</li> <li>• Security and confidentiality of transaction</li> <li>• Relatively lower distribution cost for government</li> <li>• Provides shopping experience and taking advantage of special discounts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulnerable to abuse and mismanagement</li> <li>• Risk of being robbed</li> <li>• Cash may lead to buying non-food items if not monitored</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May provide scope for support of local production and consumption</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme may be used for political opportunism and may not reach intended beneficiaries</li> </ul>



Model	S	W	O	T
The provision of food parcels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides direct access to food</li> <li>• The initial costs of development are not expected to be large given that there are employees within the Department already performing the functions</li> <li>• Provides employment at the food banks and distribution centres</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inflexible due to the parcel contents being predetermined</li> <li>• Lack freedom to choose food items</li> <li>• Significant transport costs for beneficiaries to go to designated pick-up areas</li> <li>• Significant distribution costs for government</li> <li>• Goods may not be acquired at market-related prices, which causes value to be transferred from beneficiaries to suppliers</li> <li>• Slow turnaround time in the delivery of services/labour intensive</li> <li>• Does not provide a platform for adequate monitoring</li> <li>• Food parcels are susceptible to loss/theft during distribution</li> <li>• Lengthy processes from procurement to distribution, no timely satisfaction of need</li> <li>• Mismatch of food items in parcel packaging</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If low levels of technological awareness, this method is the most efficient way of programme reach</li> <li>• Opportunity of instigating local economic flow when procurement is through local shops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stigma for beneficiaries receiving food parcels</li> <li>• Security and confidentiality of participants are not guaranteed</li> <li>• Suffers from inbuilt Inefficiency in business processes</li> <li>• Bureaucratic processes</li> <li>• Procurement at all levels</li> <li>• Threat of political interference and bias, e.g. manipulation of beneficiary list</li> </ul>

Model	S	W	O	T
The provision of vouchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May cut down on leakages due to distribution costs</li> <li>• Provides a platform for monitoring what is being bought to confirm if the food was bought and to monitor nutrition</li> <li>• May allow monitoring of the price charged by merchants</li> <li>• Platform development could be used for future programmes</li> <li>• Reduction of stigma for beneficiaries and preservation of dignity as they go to shop like anyone else</li> <li>• Security and confidentiality of transactions</li> <li>• Flexibility in terms of pick-up options</li> <li>• Quick and efficient response time (especially in times of crises)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant on-boarding and learning time required</li> <li>• Significant initial costs to develop tailor-made infrastructure</li> <li>• Voucher is a bearer document that can be redeemed without further validation</li> <li>• Cost of redeeming the voucher</li> <li>• Longer turnaround time for payment of shops by government may inconvenience local shops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May provide scope for support of local production and consumption</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant time required to teach participants</li> <li>• Acceptance of e-voucher could take time given the level of scams in the country</li> <li>• Low levels of technological awareness could compromise privacy, confidentiality and allow other unintended beneficiaries to redeem voucher</li> <li>• Programme may be used for political opportunism and may not reach the intended beneficiaries</li> <li>• Shops may overcharge those buying with vouchers</li> <li>• Lack of proper infrastructure/poor infrastructure may result in difficulty</li> <li>• Resistance from beneficiaries due to lack of trust, e.g. fear of scams</li> <li>• Participating shops may monopolise and kick non-participating shops out of business</li> <li>• Possibility of system failure due to lack of back-up</li> <li>• Shops may run out of voucher-specified vouchers</li> <li>• Price manipulation</li> </ul>

### What are the costs and benefits of the Food Distribution Hybrid Model?

#### 4.4.1 Cost-benefit analysis

##### Market price considerations

From the programme data that is available for the implementation of the delivery of the food parcels, it could not be established if the food parcels procured were acquired at a market-related price. Value might be transferred from government to the suppliers if the procurement price is not monitored.

The distribution of food vouchers is conducted at a market-related and arms'-length price as the beneficiaries redeem the vouchers at supermarkets and grocery stores, who will charge the beneficiaries the same price as they would charge the normal cash buyers. It is noted from round table engagements that, where the suppliers of the groceries are relatively smaller, they might charge a higher price to the beneficiaries of food vouchers, thus transferring value from the beneficiaries to the shop owners.

##### Programme costs, variance analysis and budgetary implications

###### i. Total programme costs

Table 4.1 illustrates the total programme costs for 2020/21.

TABLE 4.1: <sup>2</sup> TOTAL PROGRAMME COSTS FOR 2020/21		
Source	Amount	Purpose
National Treasury	R500 000 000	Million food relief allocated to provinces
Solidarity Fund	R23 500 000	Assist the Department to respond to the food security challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic through the donation of food parcels
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints South Africa	R24 000 000	Assist the Department to respond to the food security challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic through the donation of food parcels
Old Mutual	R5 675 000	Assist the Department to respond to the food security challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic through the donation of money to buy food parcels
Spar Group Pty (Ltd)	R12 624 000	Assist the Department to respond to the food security challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic through the donation of money to buy food parcels
<b>Total food relief expenditure</b>	<b>R565 799 000</b>	
Total expenditure as per Programme 5: Social policy and integrated service delivery	<b>R318 322 000</b>	
<b>Percentage of food relief budget over total programme expenditure</b>	<b>178%</b>	

<sup>2</sup> Source of data for calculations: Department of Social Development Annual Report 2020/21

The Food Relief Programme is conducted under Programme 5: Social policy and integrated service delivery. Given that the total expenditure under the Food Relief Programme is 178% of the actual total Programme 5 costs, this may throw significant doubt on the sustainability of the Programme 5 budget in meeting the Food Relief Programme as necessitated by COVID-19. The extent to which the deficit is not sustainable depends, in part, on the ability to estimate the demand for food assistance and the likely period for which beneficiaries will rely on government for assistance. The effects of the pandemic could still be lingering in South African households given the initial and sustained shock waves it sends in the economy in terms of reducing food security and sustainability. In fact, as also cited by the Solidarity Fund<sup>3</sup>, the National Income Dynamics Study – Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey (NIDS-CRAM) Synthesis Report Wave 1 reports that, in April 2020, 47% of households ran out of money to buy food.

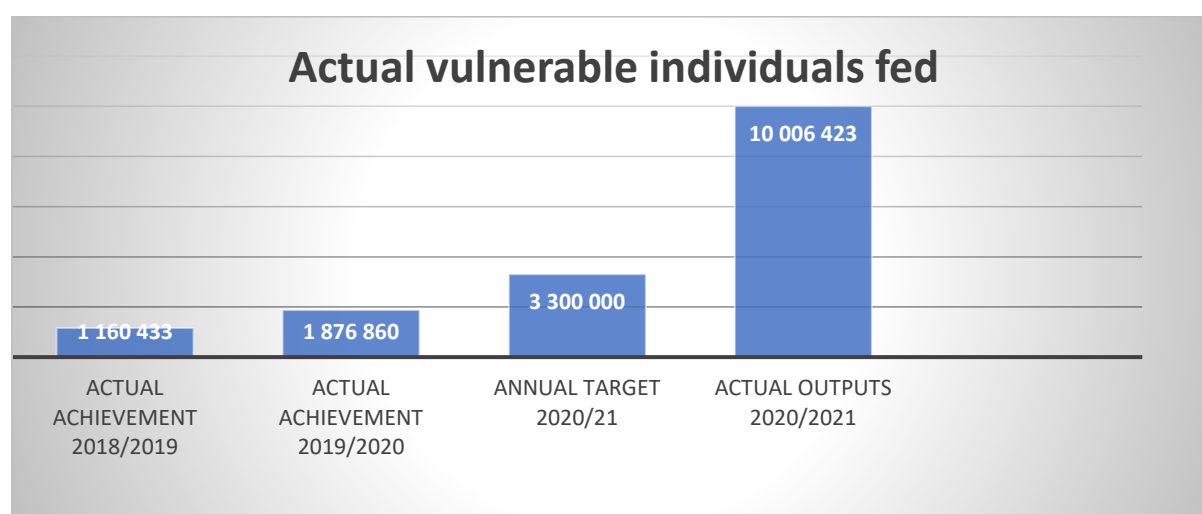


Figure 4.6: Trends in individuals fed from 2019 to 2021

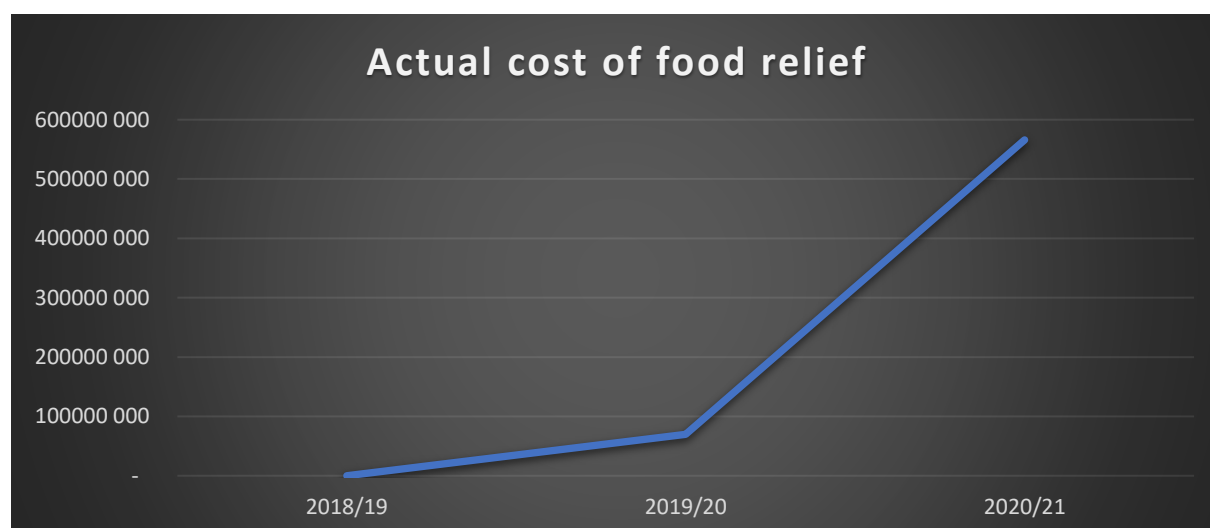


FIGURE 4.7: TRENDS IN ACTUAL COST OF FOOD RELIEF FROM 2019 TO 2021

<sup>3</sup> Solidarity Fund Interim Report Final 30 September 2020

## ii. Cost per food parcel

Table 4.2 reflects the cost of each food parcel and the consequent rationale behind the calculation.

TABLE 4.2 <sup>4</sup> : AVERAGE COST OF A FOOD PARCEL	
Source of funds	Cost per food parcel
Solidarity Fund	R700
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints South Africa	R923
Old Mutual	R791
Spar Group Pty (Ltd)	R526
<b>Average cost per parcel</b>	<b>R735</b>

The following are noteworthy in the above calculation:

- The cost of only the external donors have been utilised in the calculations as the budget allocated to the DSD was specifically and solely used for food parcel distribution. This allows for the isolation in the cost of the food parcels for consideration in the development of the hybrid model.
- The external donors account for 12% of the total budget of R565 799 000 and sponsored the distribution of 115 918 food parcels during the 2020/21 financial year. The number of households is less than 115 000, given that some of the programmes were implemented more than once; thus one household could receive the parcels more than once.
- An exclusion of the R500 000 000 was done from the calculations of the food parcels as a current indeterminate amount related to the hybrid model implemented in providing food relief. The DSD's Annual Report states that "food emergency response was provided in the form of food parcels, take-home rations and later introduced the food vouchers", implying that a hybrid model was in use during the implementation of the programme. Relatedly, the metrics available for the total budget of R565 799 000 is reported on per family fed (2 348 848 families fed). This provides a cost per family of R241, which further needs to be disaggregated to parcels per family if one is going to use the total cost to measure the cost per parcel. The fact that the cost per family is lower could be because of the measure not being disaggregated or it could mean that there are efficiencies to be gained when the hybrid system is employed, as was the case with R500 000 000 of the total budget.

### Analysis of cost per parcel

- The cost of each parcel ranged from R526 to R923 per parcel.
- The range in the prices could be due to a difference in the parcel composition, or it could be explained, in part, by the price differential between the same goods in the parcel.
- An in-depth analysis should be done of the parcel components and pricing so that price and functional efficiency can be realised. The Solidarity Fund mentions in its interim report of 2020 that it strives to maintain the parcel price between R360 and R400 (including distribution costs), yet making sure that the following goods are part of the basket: maize, rice, pilchards, baked beans, lentils, butternut and oil. There is a need to do further research into the adequacy of the foods in the parcel and probably the method used to minimise costs, which are replicated across the programme to increase programme reach.
- If it is not possible to contain the price at R526, as detailed above, an acceptable price would be R735, given that distribution costs are considered to be 6% of the total parcel cost.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Source of data for calculations: Department of Social Development Annual Report 2020/21

<sup>5</sup> Solidarity Fund Interim Report 30 September 2020

### Appropriate mix for the hybrid system of food distribution

- The price of the parcel agreed upon will unlikely be different between options (cash, vouchers and food parcels).
- The difference in the price of delivery will likely be as a result of the distribution and monitoring costs.
- A further disaggregation of the distribution and monitoring costs is required for further analysis. It is noted that, while a voucher system could be simplistic, such as transferring the voucher via SMS, there might be significant monitoring costs depending on the data the Department chooses to monitor to fulfill other key performance areas such as nutrition.
- In our view, the practicality of the hybrid system may depend on the following, given that cost differences may not be significant:
  - Appropriately mapping out the profile of the beneficiaries to determine which parts require food parcels and which have an uptake for digital systems.
  - Lessons from the United Kingdom and Sweden emphasise that governments must design and implement human- and beneficiary-centric interventions that ensure a simplified, portable, universal and easily accessible system, thus helping to create more equitable societies.
  - All known challenges of the digital system must be documented, for example, Carter et al. (2019) have cautioned that a digital system has its own challenges and risks, including increasing costs and complexities related to the inclusion and/or exclusion of communities. Hence, where beneficiary attributes are not well characterised in terms of digital infrastructure, and digital abilities (digital literacy) are not fully developed, especially in rural areas, the intervention might not work.

### Case 1 for the hybrid model of food distribution: Comparison of the base models of food vouchers and e-voucher systems

- The programme carried out by the Solidarity Fund has been used as the private sector comparator to evaluate the cost of the options and the “willingness to pay of the beneficiaries”, thus providing a framework for a hybrid model.
- The Solidarity Fund implemented a food voucher distribution programme with a total envelope size for the Food Voucher Relief Programme, which was R100 million, inclusive of administrative and disbursement fees. The programme aimed to reach 135 000 beneficiaries, who received food vouchers to the value of R700 each<sup>6</sup>.
- Table 4.3 shows the salient relevant metrics, which will be used as part of the variables for modelling the cost of the food parcels and e-voucher system, and thus provide the basis for the appropriate mix between food parcels and e-vouchers.

<sup>6</sup> Source: Solidarity Fund Support of the Food Voucher Relief Programme Summary Report, September 2020



TABLE 4.3<sup>7</sup>: METRICS USED TO MODEL THE COST OF FOOD PARCELS AND THE E-VOUCHER SYSTEM

Organisation	Administration fees	Fee as percentage of voucher amount	To beneficiaries	Total
South African Council of Churches	R70 000	2.0%	R0	R70 000
M4JAM	R1 690 000	12.1%	R14 000 000	R15 690 000
South African National Zakáh Fund	R345 000	5.0%	R7 000 00	R7 345 000
Praekelt	R545 847	1.3%	R42 000 000	R42 545 847
Mthunzi Network	R2 782 125	8.9%	R31 500 00	R34 282 125
Standard Bank	R390 000	1.0%	R0	R390 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>R5 822 972</b>	<b>5.8%</b>	<b>R94 500 000</b>	<b>R100 322 972</b>

TABLE 4.4: ANALYSIS AND CALCULATIONS BASED ON DATA IN TABLE 4.3 AND INFORMATION IN THE SOLIDARITY FUND REPORT ON FOOD VOUCHERS<sup>7</sup>

Thuso's calculations and analysis based on 135 000 vouchers disbursed at a value of R700 per voucher and a budget of R94 500 000 (R100 000 000 including administration costs)						
Organisation	Administration fees	Proportion of cost relative to total disbursed funds	Cost per voucher	Nature of cost: Description per Solidarity Fund report <sup>7</sup>	Allocation of cost: Administration (for distribution)	Allocation of cost: Use of platform
South African Council of Churches	R70 000	0.07%	R0.52	Data and administrative costs	R0.52	
M4JAM	R1 690 000	1.68%	R12.52	On-boarding and platform fees that facilitate higher voucher redemption rates		12.1% of voucher disbursement value
South African National Zakáh Fund	R345 000	0.34%	R2.56	Administrative and distribution costs	R2.56	
Praekelt	R545 847	0.54%	R4.04	Use of the Mom Connect platform	R4.04	
Mthunzi Network	R2 782 125	2.77%	R20.61	Design of the voucher journey, as well as the necessary training and on-boarding of coordinators from sponsoring organisations		8.9% of voucher disbursement value
Standard Bank	R390 000	0.39%	R2.89	Administrative costs of the disbursement and reporting mechanisms	R2.89	
<b>Total</b>	<b>R5 822 972</b>	<b>5.8%</b>	<b>R43.13</b>		<b>R10.01</b>	

<sup>7</sup> Source: Solidarity Fund Support of the Food Voucher Relief Programme Summary Report, September 2020

Taking into account the reason for paying a fee to the above implementation partners, the cost of the distribution of the food voucher is R10 on average. The other costs paid for the implementation relates to the use of the partners' platforms rather than distribution and are thus better analysed with the set-up costs for the parcel distribution option. An alternative analysis has been presented that includes an option where all the costs above are regarded as explicit and implicit distribution costs.

**TABLE 4.5: COST COMPARISON OF THE PARCEL VS VOUCHER DISTRIBUTION**

	Food parcel only model	E- voucher system model (only considering explicit distribution costs)
<b>Common costs</b>		
Gross parcel cost (calculated elsewhere in the report)	R735.00	R735.00
<b>Explicit (implicit) distribution costs</b>	<b>R44.11</b>	<b>R10.01</b>
<i>Food parcel (6% of gross parcel value) (justified elsewhere in the report)</i>	R44.11	
<i>Payments, implementation and integration partners (or 1.3% of disbursed value, thus R8.58)</i>		R10.01
<b>Total explicit (implicit) cost of delivery</b>	<b>R779</b>	<b>R745.17</b>
Total cost differential relative to food parcel cost		R34.10
Percentage cost differential relative to food parcel cost		4%
Differences in distribution cost relative to food parcel		R34.10
Percentage differences in distribution cost relative to food parcel distribution costs		341%

### Conclusion of cost comparison

Based on the comparison between the food distribution option and the e-voucher model in Table 4.5:

- The e-voucher system minimises the transfer of value intended for beneficiaries to service providers
- More resources should be channelled to the e-voucher as it costs 341% (saving of R34.10 per parcel) less to distribute food via the voucher than the food parcel.

The suggestion of a 70:30 split in favour of e-vouchers, as suggested by officials implementing the programmes, appears to be justified.

## Case 2 for the hybrid model of food distribution: Comparison of the three base models of food parcels, CNDCs and e-voucher systems

Some salient financial elements of CNDCs are illustrated in the tables below.

**TABLE 4.6: COSTS OF OPERATION FOR BOTH PROVINCIAL FOOD DISTRIBUTION CENTRES AND CNDCs**

Description	Total 2017/18 <sup>8</sup>	Index linked for inflation to 2021 prices	Nature of cost
Food allocation for nine provinces	R24 248 000	R28 879 756	Food cost
PFDCs' operating expenditure for nine provinces	R15 422 000	R18 367 849	Set-up and operation
CNDCs' operating expenditure for nine provinces	R15 499 200	R18 459 795	Set-up and operation
	<b>R55 169 200</b>	<b>R65 707 400</b>	

The historical cost information for the 2017/18 base year was adjusted for inflation by applying the average Consumer Price Index of 6% to align the costs to 2021 levels to enable comparison with the other costs for food parcels and the e-voucher system, which are stated in 2021 terms.

**TABLE 4.7: NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES, TOTAL MEALS AND PRICE PER MEAL FOR ALL CNDCs**

Description	Number of individuals for 18 CNDCs	Number of meals	Cost per meal
Numbers applicable to 18 CNDCs	R4 500	1 170 000	<b>R24.68</b>

Table 4.7 represents the authors' calculations based on the CNDCs feeding 250 individuals per CNDC among the 18 CNDCs, with five visits per week and over 52 weeks a year.

## The case for the hybrid model of food distribution: The optimal model for food distribution

The following deductions and assumptions, based on the data presented above, were used to scale the costs for the three options:

**TABLE 4.8: ASSUMPTIONS FOR THE THREE-MODEL COMPARISON**

Three-model comparison	
CNDC base number	Basis feeding 250 people per CNDC, i.e. 4 500 for 52 weeks
Parcels and parcels	Basis feeding 250 people per CNDC, i.e. 4 500, equivalently 54 000 food parcels, when each household receives one voucher or parcel per month, and the simplistic assumption that people fed come from different households

<sup>8</sup> The historical cost information (base 2017/18) was obtained from programme reports of the Department of Social Development

TABLE 4.9: QUANTITATIVE COMPARISON OF THE BASE MODELS OF FOOD VOUCHERS AND E-VOUCHER SYSTEMS

The optimal option for food distribution based on scaling to improve commonality			
Description	E-voucher	Food parcel	CNDC
Food allocation	R39 698 644	R39 698 644	R28 879 756
Cost of distribution, operation and set-up	R2 329 020	R2 381 919	
PFDCs' operating expenditure for nine provinces		R18 367 849	R18 367 849
CNDCs' operating expenditure for nine provinces		R18 459 795	R18 459 795
Total comparable cost	<b>R42 027 664</b>	<b>R78 908 206</b>	<b>R65 707 400</b>
Without set-up cost		<b>R42 080 562</b>	
<i>What is the optimal option for food distribution?</i>			
Ranking for Option 1: Food parcel includes set-up cost	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
Ranking for Option 2: Food parcel excludes set-up cost	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
Ranking for Option 3: Food parcel excludes CNDC costs	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
Ranking for Option 4: Food parcel excludes PFDC costs	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>

### Conclusions on the comparison between the three food distribution models

- Based on a quantitative evaluation, the e-voucher system is the optimal method of food distribution. The cost of developing a new system was not estimated for the e-voucher system, but relied on the costs of using an existing platform. Thus, the all-inclusive cost per voucher of R43.13 (Table 4.4) has been incorporated into the model. Similarly, the cost of building new CNDCs and PFDCs for use in the food parcel model has not been estimated. Instead, the current cost of the CNDCs and PFDCs was used, with the running assumption that they also have the capacity to house the food parcel programme.
- The centre-based feeding system has the least leakage in terms of value lost to programme cost (about R10 million) compared to other methods. This is dampened by the fact that it had comparatively high programme running costs, which can be regarded as employment creation opportunities for various stakeholders.
- Quantitatively, a mix between the e-voucher and centre-based feeding appears optimal. However, this should be balanced with the evidence collected during the evaluation about the unwillingness of participants to go to the CNDCs to be assisted. Therefore, the hybrid model could combine the e-voucher system and food parcels for emergency situations, and use the CNDCs in normal situations for food security and nutrition.
- Before such a decision is made, the results of the SWOT analysis needs to be considered in balancing the quantitative and qualitative considerations.

Is the target group clearly identified and how can it be better defined? Is the basis for measurement clearly defined?

### **Inclusion and exclusion error and programme reach/coverage**

Given the 17 163 000 households (as reported in the 2019 General Household Survey) and the 20.6% of households with inadequate access to food, the food relief budget should at least cover 3 535 578 households in the 2020/21 financial year, compared to the 2 348 848 covered by the programme in the same period. There is therefore at least an unmet need of almost 1 200 00 households<sup>9</sup>. This number will be compounded if one adds the April 2020 effects of the pandemic, where 47% of the households sampled could not afford to buy food.

### **Recommendation on budgeting**

- The considerations relating to the possible budget inadequacy indicates that the food relief cost far outstrips the Programme 5 budget. A possible unmet demand requires the scientific forecasting of future budgetary needs so that the response to the after-effects of such crises will not require an emergency budget in future.
- The budget for food relief needs to be ring-fenced to avoid variability in meeting demand.

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<sup>9</sup> The authors note with caution using the General Household Survey and NIDS-CRAM Synthesis Report Wave 1 for extrapolation given that the conclusions in the General Household Survey may not generally be applied to the whole population.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusions

The hybrid model design evaluation sought to collect data from different sources to provide empirical evidence on how the current model could be designed into a hybrid model to include the use of vouchers. Evidence gathered from the literature on the available food voucher and hybrid models was reviewed. The problem analysis on the nature of issues that needed to be addressed to make the current programme more efficient was expounded. Using mixed methods of data collection and an interactive or a participatory approach, different aspects of providing food nutrition security and distribution methods were explored. From the recommendations of both beneficiaries and programme officials, the first option of assistance was cooked meals to deal with short-term food provision and access to food. This is also quite useful in emergency situations such as disasters, where households may have lost their homes, including their means of food preparation. In the medium term, voucher solutions can be introduced, but with tight monitoring systems to accompany the flexibility of choice to beneficiaries.

The following are the summary conclusions in terms of the evaluation questions.

#### I. To what extent does the Food Distribution Hybrid Model contribute to the DSD's strategic objectives/plan and the government's strategic objectives/plans?

##### Conclusion

The evaluation sets about assessing the possibility of transforming the current food security and distribution system, which depends heavily on the use of food parcels, into a hybrid model that involves the use of food vouchers or cash transfers. By finding more efficient ways to deliver food assistance at a reduced cost and with improved efficiency, and dealing with systemic issues identified in such a model, an appropriate hybrid model has significant potential to improve programme delivery, targeting and coverage.

According to the evidence in the literature explored, an efficient hybrid model, which makes use of vouchers, will ensure timely, cost-effective, flexible assistance to beneficiaries in a more dignified manner. The evaluation therefore concludes that the provision of short-term or long-term food access to impoverished citizens will expedite the achievement of the DSD's mandate as the custodian of ensuring social protection and social relief of distress. The long-term capacitating of beneficiaries to produce their own food or gain skills to earn enough income to afford nutritious food will contribute significantly towards reducing hunger. This will contribute to government's Medium-term Strategic Framework (MTSF) Priority 3 of skills development, Priority 1 of a capable developmental state, Priority 2 of economic transformation and job creation, and thereby contribute to the realisation of Priority 7, a better South Africa, Africa and world.

#### II. Is there alignment of the different legislations and policy? If not, how can we go about making the required changes to ensure alignment?

##### Conclusion

South Africa, like many other countries, has prioritised the provision of social relief assistance to its vulnerable citizens, as noted in the requirements of the Bill of Rights, Section 27 of the Constitution. Similarly, the National Development Plan highlights on the need for Social Protection. The core intention of the Food and Nutrition Security Programme is to ensure that there is adequate access to nutritious food as part of the DSD's social relief of distress and social protection in general, thereby fulfilling the basic right of citizens, as enshrined in section 27 of the Bill of Rights.



### III. To what extent will coordination, management, planning and budgeting be improved?

#### Conclusion

**Coordination can be improved** by first setting up a platform through which all relevant stakeholders of the programme can regularly interact with each other and foster collaborative alliances by delivering on common interventions.

**A centralised beneficiary registration and management system may be required to improve programme coordination.** Most departments and organisations are currently working with their own populated databases. This is seen as resulting in a duplication of efforts. Having a common system where all services provided to a particular beneficiary can be made available is critical to collaborative efforts among stakeholders. The design of an electronic database system to which all relevant departments can be linked to input data and view relevant information is paramount to the improvement of coordination efforts. The national DSD can consider adopting the NISIS or a similar system for these purposes.

### IV. Is the target group clearly identified and how can it be better defined? Is the basis for measurement clearly defined?

#### Conclusion

**Collaboration between the national DSD and technological companies is crucial** to find innovative technological models for designing digital voucher systems, with an efficient, but cost-effective distribution and monitoring system that is user-friendly and error-free. Adaptation into local languages may be considered to increase comprehension by the rural and less literate beneficiaries.

There is a need for tight monitoring and control measures for such voucher systems to ensure their correct use. One of the ways to do this is to create enough awareness and education on how the vouchers are to be used, and penalties for their abuse.

### V. What is the current situation with the delivery of services to address food and nutrition security?

#### Conclusions

- The literature review and programme documentation iterated the relevance of the food security programme to that national objective of the Food Nutrition and Security Programme to the needs of the country in terms of eradicating hunger and providing equal access to quality and nutritious food. Some 17.5 million beneficiaries, including 12.2 million children and 3.4 million older persons, receive social relief grants. These grants form the main social safety net, valued about R160 billion in South Africa.
- It is also noted that South Africa is not entirely new to the use of digital systems for providing social assistance. SASSA and other organs of state have been using digital methods to provide social grants for beneficiaries for quite some time now. They have also put efficient systems in place to deliver cash to beneficiaries' cell phones.
- Most provinces, such as the Northern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape, Gauteng and the Western Cape, have already implemented – or at least piloted – some form of a hybrid model where food parcels were provided to beneficiaries during emergency cases, such as in the COVID-19 pandemic period, combined with the provision of cooked meals, CNDs and community soup kitchens. In most provinces, the provision of food parcels was either once off, or only provided intermittently, in some cases once a month or twice a year, depending on the availability of funding.

- Findings from the survey show that most people who access food assistance are from poor backgrounds, with lower levels of education and skills, although some of them (at least 50%) have acquired some form of formal education. Most of these respondents are not employed and do not earn a regular income. At least half of them rely on some form of social grant to make ends meet. Household expenditure is dominated by food-related expenditure, which unfortunately 70% of respondents indicated has increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Currently the food assurance provision is dominated by cooked meals at CNDs and community soup kitchens. Food parcels are also provided by government and in municipalities where there are no CNDs.
- The evidence also shows that food vouchers and cash vouchers are mostly preferred by beneficiaries compared to food parcels. The least preferred form of assistance is cooked meals.
- Most of the respondents can use a cell phone of some sort, which paves the way for the implementation of digital voucher systems. For those who do not have cell phones, the provision of physical vouchers may be more conducive.
- The provision of vouchers has the advantages of speed, larger coverage, and the potential to increase the quality of food provided. It also has the potential of abuse by recipients as they avoid buying what the vouchers are intended for. This further necessitates the strengthening of monitoring systems.
- **For long-term household food security and sustainability, a basket of alternative options, including farming methods, should be investigated and applied or made available** for adoption in accordance with the resources and circumstances of households. For instance, while some households may engage in farming activities such as crop production where there is access to arable land and water, others can engage in poultry farming or piggeries where the land is not arable. This may need collaboration between stakeholders such as the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, as well as NGOs working at grassroots level.
- **To boost local economic participation,** a list of local shops may be identified, sourced and approved for the redemption of vouchers. There is the possibility of opening procurement to local shops. This can be done at district level, with DSD offices conducting the procurement process for implementation. This also has the potential of cutting down the cost of redeeming vouchers in relation to travel time, where beneficiaries have to commute to larger mainstream retail stores in nearby towns to redeem their vouchers.

**VI. What are the proposed roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders within the Department, as well as in other national and provincial departments, local government or other agencies, in undertaking the programme?**

**Conclusion**

The programme is currently being coordinated by the DPME, and the national DSD and its agencies, with support from sector departments such as Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Education, Health, Home Affairs, Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, and various NGOs and FBOs as implementers. An efficient communication plan and working agreement between these stakeholders is critical and should be embedded into the implementation plan of the hybrid model.

**VII. What are the root causes that contribute towards food and nutrition insecurity? How do existing services relate to the underlying problems?**

**Conclusion**

From the problem definition and analysis, the core problem relates to the systemic inefficiencies of the current model. Root causes include **inadequacy or inefficiencies in** administrative processes that emanate from bureaucracy and red-tape practices in government, the high **operational cost of handing physical delivery mechanisms, time delays**, issues with security, the **vulnerability** of the system to manipulation, and issues regarding the **sustainability** of the model as it is, especially relating to handling of large volumes of physical food parcels, which raises the question to what extent can government go on feeding large numbers of beneficiaries on a regular basis as the population becomes impoverished. Generally, historical issues of poverty, lack of skills and lower levels of education among the rural poor, compounded by the recent COVID-19 pandemic, made matters more serious.

The current inefficiencies and inability to properly coordinate food relief efforts across the various stakeholders also relates to the lack of properly coordinated systems across the social sector. Resolving this issue could enable collaboration between various service-providing institutions and government.

**VIII. What evidence exists from other countries on solutions that are working? Are there lessons that can be learnt from these countries to develop workable solutions?**

**Conclusion**

Evidence from countries such as India, Indonesia, and some parts of Europe indicate that the transition from heavy reliance on physical methods of providing food assistance to voucher systems not only improved targeting and access, but also reduced operational cost entirely.

As seen in the case of Indonesia's transition from the Rastra targeted social assistance programme to the BPNT non-cash food assistance programme, the quality of food provided also increased, as vouchers allow citizens to make their own, but guided choices in acquiring what they truly need. The digitalisation of food distribution systems and vouchers has its advantages and disadvantages.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

From the discussions of the findings and the conclusions presented, the following recommendations are put forward for consideration regarding the various aspects of the programme.

1. From the perspectives of from both beneficiaries, and programme officials, the first option of assistance is the cooked meals to deal with short-term food provision and access to food. This is also quite useful in emergency situations such as disasters, where households may have lost homes, including their means of preparing the food. In the medium term, voucher solutions can be introduced, but with tight monitoring systems to accompany the flexibility of choice to beneficiaries.
2. Food and nutrition awareness creation on the suggested basket of food the voucher is intended for should be included in the communication plan for the hybrid model.
3. **A hybrid model could encompass vouchers (digital and paper vouchers), food parcels and cooked meal portions in remote areas, where access to technology and an e-voucher system is difficult.**

4. **Food parcels can be provided to those beneficiaries in remote areas**, where the cost of travelling to redeem the vouchers may be significantly higher (value of the voucher is financially costly, as is the time it takes to travel).
5. In the long run, the system should aim to **capacitate individuals to graduate** from dependency on the programme to be able to sustain themselves either by **producing their own food** or **earning enough income** to have access to nutritious food. The model implemented by Meals on Wheels and other NGOs can be adopted and **scaled** to a national level where capacity building and food production components are added.
6. To ensure the successful implementation of all aspects of the programme (from the short-term provision of food to long-term empowerment of recipients), the participation of all stakeholders is crucial.
7. **Intensive coordination at national and provincial levels, and stakeholder participation** is crucial. An **integrated approach** by all spheres of government, as well as NGOs and the community, must make sure that all parties work together to improve the programme reach and targets, and understand community's needs.
8. The programme is currently being coordinated by the DPME, together with the national DSD and its agencies, with support from sector departments such as Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Education, Health, Home Affairs, Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, and various NGOs and FBOs as implementers. An efficient communication plan and working agreement between these stakeholders is critical and should be embedded into the implementation plan of the hybrid model.
9. This institutional structure should also be modelled at the provincial level to ensure the efficient operationalisation of the model. The Office of the Premier may be better positioned to provide an oversight coordination function in the provinces. This may need to be facilitated by the DSD and DPME.
10. **Monitoring and reporting systems** should be strengthened. **Evaluation and research** should be costed alongside the implementation process.
11. A digitalised system of identification, **monitoring and management of beneficiaries is needed to ensure the smooth running of the hybrid model**.
12. **Developing a single beneficiary registry**, which will provide beneficiary profiles and records of government social protection services data that can also be available in real time on the status of beneficiaries. This will also provide an overview of the programme coverage and gaps. Furthermore, this will assist in achieving **better coordination** and **reduce the duplication** of efforts and a more efficient **use of resources**, while also **improving targeting** and **coverage**.
13. Ensure the **strengthening of administrative social protection data systems** across government that involves **NISPIS**.
14. **Legislative reviews needed for the implementation of the system** should be undertaken as a priority to pave the way for efficient implementation.
15. The national DSD, in collaboration with local offices and agencies, should consider drafting criteria or guidelines that local stores should meet, in accordance with the PFMA and other procurement regulations that will increase the participation of these stores in the bidding process, and which can include technological capacity.
16. **Collaboration between the national DSD and technological companies is crucial** to find innovative technological models to design digital vouchers systems that can host national voucher platforms with efficient, but cost-effective distribution costs, that can be integrated with a monitoring system and that are user-friendly and error-free.
17. Adaptation into local languages may be considered to increase comprehension by the rural and less literate beneficiaries.

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