

15 May 2020

MEDIA STATEMENT

MINISTER LINDIWE ZULU RESPONDS TO ALLEGATIONS OF ATTEMPTS TO PROHIBIT FOOD DISTRIBUTION PARCELS BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

Pretoria, 15 May 2020: The Minister of Social Development, Ms Lindiwe Zulu, has noted with grave concern the false allegations in the media that the Department intends to prohibit the distribution of food parcels and cooked food to households and communities that are most in need of humanitarian relief.

The Non-Profit Organisations Act, which the Department of Social Development is a custodian of, states that we ensure access to food security for the poor - especially during this critical time,

“We are grateful to the private sector, aid agencies and civil society organisations for their generous donations of food to those most in need during this difficult time,” said Minister Lindiwe Zulu.

South Africa has one of the most progressive legislations in the form of the acknowledgment of essential services contributions of the civil society sector, which represents a fundamental part of our democracy.

To comply with social distancing guidelines, the Department has changed its modus operandi of serving cooked food at community centres to the door-to-door delivery or knock-and-drop system of pre-packed food to families. However, over the last past weeks, the Department has recognised and has been informed of several incidents of long queues and overcrowding at food-parcel distribution areas across the country.

The current uncoordinated situation of the distribution of food parcels creates an environment for the spread of this deadly virus amongst the most vulnerable. Protecting our people against the possible infection of this deadly virus is as important as providing food relief.

To avoid the recurrence of such incidents and to comply with the lockdown regulations, the Department drafted directives on coordination of food donations and other humanitarian relief efforts. The rationale for these directives is that humanitarian responses to a crisis of this magnitude often involve large numbers of national and international organisations who work in the same geographical areas.

Failure to work together amongst these organisations can lead to gaps in coverage

and duplication of humanitarian relief efforts. For this reason, the Department has drafted directives to ensure the finality of the collaboration and coordination of our relief efforts.

The objectives of the directives is to ensure that the distribution of food parcels is done in a dignified manner that does not expose them to possible infection.

It is for this reason that we encourage organisations that are involved in humanitarian assistance to work jointly with the Government to ensure that there is a coordinated response and to eliminate opportunities for corruption and manipulation of these efforts.

The need for collaboration and coordination of all humanitarian relief efforts between government and civil society organisations is premised on the understanding that the Department alone cannot meet the unprecedented socioeconomic challenges brought about by this global pandemic.

There are more benefits to all of us working together to strengthen our national response and to reach those most in need wherever they are, than working in silos.

The Department has a long-standing partnership with civil society organisations. In many parts of our country, the Department is working jointly with the sector to address the needs on the ground.

I take this opportunity to once again, salute the speedy and courageous efforts of civil society organisations that continue to meet the basic needs of those most in need during this unprecedented times.

ISSUED BY THE NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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