



5 August 2020

Joint media statement: Education MECs file school nutrition programme rollout plans that are full of holes, as we write to Minister Motshekga to fix hers

As part of the very important work of monitoring whether the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) is being properly rolled out, we have evaluated the national and provincial NSNP implementation plans.

We have sent a [letter to Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga](#) to express our deep disappointment with the quality of the [plan that she submitted](#) to court on Friday.

Last month, the [court ordered](#) that plans to guide the full roll out of the NSNP must be filed with it by Friday 31 July, by both the Education MECs and Minister Motshekga. The provincial MECs failed to meet that deadline. That the Education MECs only did so at the beginning of this week makes us worry about their ability to meet the needs of the 9,6 million learners who rely on the NSNP.

We are angry that school communities continue to report to us that food is still not being provided to every school and every learner.

We believe that the plan filed by Minister Motshekga is not detailed enough to guide the roll out of the NSNP at this time when learners depend on it more than ever. According to our courts, when it comes to the **qualified** socio-economic rights such as the rights to, healthcare, water and social security, a “reasonable” plan must:

- Make it possible for the right to become a reality;
- Be clear, be in-depth and capable of being implemented;
- Clearly assign responsibilities and tasks to the different parts of government;
- Make available the money and human resources necessary for implementation;
- Be transparent, with members of the public knowing and understanding what the plan says; and
- Meet short-term urgent needs, and medium- and long-term needs.

But the NSNP is designed to fulfil the **unqualified** rights of children to basic education and basic nutrition. The rights to basic nutrition and basic education are fundamental rights which demand more than just a reasonable plan - these rights need a plan capable of making immediate implementation possible.

We are worried that the plan filed by Minister Motshekga is not a clear and logical plan that can be immediately implemented. The plan already makes excuses that there won't be enough money to continue to roll out the NSNP in November and December, but does not mention how her department will solve this. Because Minister Motshekga's plan lacks many important details and does not meet the necessary standards, we have asked her to fix her plan by Friday 7 August.

As school communities and as citizens, we demand better from those whose duty it is to uphold the constitution and to serve us, and who claim to be able to govern.

The cost of poor communication from education officials

It is disturbing that Minister Motshekga's plan says that food is going to waste in some provinces, because learners do not collect it from schools. However, it is unacceptable that food is uncollected and that learners continue to go hungry because they do not know where or when to access school meals or food parcels, or do not know if transport will be provided to do so.

The DBE and provincial education departments should strengthen their communications efforts so that learners and parents/caregivers know:

- That the nutrition programme should have restarted in all schools;
- What the safety protocols are to protect children, school staff, and the nutrition programme staff;
- The names and contact details of the education officials (at the provincial level and the district level) that they can direct questions to and report problems to; and
- When and how transport for learners living far from their nearest school will be provided.

The DBE has, through social media and news interviews, created the false narrative that the NSNP is being diligently and effectively rolled out - but if this was true, then Minister Motshekga and the Education MECs would be able to provide the court with clear and detailed documents to prove it and school communities would not be reporting challenges with the roll out of the NSNP.

Contents of some food parcels are shameful

School communities are telling us that the quality of some of the food parcels being provided is shocking. They do not contain all the necessary food groups (starch, protein and fruit or vegetables) and cannot then be considered nutritious. It is the duty of each Education MEC to implement the NSNP in such a manner that it provides a nutritious daily meal.

Education MECs have lots of homework to do

The plans of the Education MECs are full of holes - with very important information completely missing or with extremely limited information on the number of learners currently receiving school meals (including those learners at home), ways of communicating with learners and their families about

collecting cooked meals or food parcels, providing transport for learners who live far from their closest school, and how provinces are monitoring that all qualifying learners receive meals.

Some provinces claim that all learners are able to get food but their plans do not have information to back up their claims. Some provinces do not say anything at all about the number of learners whose nutritional needs they are meeting.

The [report of the Limpopo Education Department](#) does not say:

- How the roll out is being monitored by the department;
- Which education district official or provincial education official to contact to report a complaint or ask for information;
- The specific food items that are on learners' plates or included in food parcels;
- How the roll out of the NSNP has been communicated to learners and their families, other than through a radio interview; and
- What transport arrangements are in place to help learners get to their nearest school.

It is positive that the [KwaZulu-Natal Education Department's report](#) explains how the department is trying to monitor delivery. But the report does not say:

- Which education district official or provincial education official to contact to report a complaint or ask for information;
- The specific food items that are on learners' plates or included in food parcels; and
- If there will be transport made available by the department for learners who live far from their nearest school.

School communities have alerted us that no food is being provided in Jozini in Northern KwaZulu-Natal - an area that was highlighted in our court case due to the serious desperation of learners and parents.

It is encouraging that [Eastern Cape Education Department's report](#) says that steps have been taken to tighten the oversight of schools by the education district officials. But the report does not say:

- The ways in which schools are letting learners and parents/caregivers know that the NSNP has restarted, and when and how food can be collected, and how the department is supporting that process;
- Which education district official or provincial education official to contact to report a complaint or ask for information; and
- The specific food items that are on learners' plates or included in food parcels.

We welcome that the Gauteng Education Department is providing transport to learners who need it to get to their schools to fetch meals but the [report has too little detail](#). It does not say:

- What the department is doing to ensure that learners and parents/caregivers know that the NSNP has restarted, and when and how food can be collected;
- How the roll out is being monitored by the department;
- Which education district official or provincial education official to contact to report a complaint or ask for information; and
- The specific food items that are on learners' plates or included in food parcels.

Monitors who are in different schools every day have been appointed by the Mpumalanga Education Department, and a provincial monitoring team to do spot checks at least once a week. But [the report does not say](#):

- If all learners that qualify for the NSNP are now able to get food;
- Which education district official or provincial education official to contact to report a complaint or ask for information;
- The specific food items that are on learners' plates or included in food parcels; and
- If there will be transport made available by the department for learners.

The [Free State Education Department's](#) report says that schools were expected to let parents know that the NSNP had restarted, and that the provincial education officials would rely on community radio stations to spread the word. The department's district officials are responsible for submitting monitoring reports to the head office every Monday. However the planning document does not say:

- Which education district official or provincial education official to contact to report a complaint or ask for information;
- The specific food items that are on learners' plates or included in food parcels; and
- If there will be transport made available by the department for learners.

The [North West Education Department plan](#) says that school attendance registers are completed every day, and are sent to education district officials, to monitor the roll out but does not say how many learners were benefiting from the NSNP before the lockdown, or right now. The plan says that "public statements" have been made to let school communities know that the NSNP has restarted. The report also does not say:

- Which education district official or provincial education official to contact to report a complaint or ask for information;
- The specific food items that are on learners' plates or included in food parcels; and
- If there will be transport made available by the department for learners.

The [plan produced by the Northern Cape Education Department](#) says that pamphlets, community radio stations and newspaper advertisements have been used to let school communities know that food is being delivered - we welcome this effort. However, the report has many serious gaps. It does not say:

- How many learners were benefiting from the NSNP before the lockdown, or right now;
- Exactly how delivery of food is being monitored;
- If there will be transport made available by the department for learners;
- Which education district official or provincial education official to contact to report a complaint or ask for information; and
- The specific food items that are on learners' plates or included in food parcels.

We will continue to monitor the situation on the ground and evaluate the implementation plans for the resumption of the NSNP from the Minister and MECs.

We remind Minister Motshekga and the Education MECs, that as our counsel Advocate Tembeka Ngcukaitobi SC said, nothing is more undignified than starvation. And as the [judgment](#) says, hunger is an issue of justice.

[END]

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