



21 April 2021

Joint media statement: Education departments are slacking on the court-ordered reporting on the National School Nutrition Programme, while 1.5 million learners are still not receiving meals

Over 1.5 million learners are still not being provided with school meals, while some provincial education departments are repeatedly failing to report on whether they are effectively rolling out the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP), despite a court order mandating them to do so. This slacking in the monitoring of whether learners are receiving meals, undermines the intentions of the court order from our [2020 case](#). The delays and failures to provide reports on the NSNP rollout has limited the ability of Equal Education, Equal Education Law Centre and SECTION27 to monitor the delivery of meals, and ensure that all nine million learners are receiving the food they are entitled to through the NSNP.

We received the last round of monitoring reports from the Minister and the Director-General of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and from the Education MECs of KwaZulu-Natal, North West, Northern Cape and Mpumalanga, **after** the court deadline of 19 March 2021. The reports from the Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng and Limpopo were **not submitted at all**. Even worse is that the DBE and provincial education departments have not submitted the most recent round of monitoring reports, which were due on 14 April 2021.

The one report submitted by DBE Director-General Mathamzima Mveli shows that at least 1.5 million learners are still not receiving the meals. This shows that the NSNP has still not reached 100% of all learners that qualify for school meals - even though it's been over a year since the outbreak of COVID-19 and almost nine months have passed after the court ordered the DBE and provincial education departments to provide school meals regardless of whether learners are in classrooms or at home. This is an unbelievable and terrible neglect of responsibility, that allows children to go hungry. This is an ongoing violation of children's rights, and barriers to learners' getting the school meals they are entitled to must be fixed urgently. Many families have lost their income and slipped further [below the food-poverty](#) line. The impact that this has on children's access to food can and should be addressed at school, through the NSNP.

According to Mveli's report, the number of learners getting meals in March increased from February, in the Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North West, and the Western Cape - but worryingly decreased in KwaZulu-Natal and the Northern Cape. In Gauteng and Mpumalanga, learners are able to collect food parcels for when they are not attending school due to rotating school time tables. However, because we have not been provided with detailed reports from all provinces, it is unclear whether food parcels are being distributed in other provinces as well. We welcome that food parcels are being given to learners, and urge the DBE to help other provinces in setting up food parcel systems.

A survey last month of 300 Equalisers (Equal Education learner members) across the five provinces that Equal Education is organised, showed that 91% of learners received meals on the days that they were at school, but that up to 50% of learners are unable to get meals or food parcels on the days they are not at school because of rotating school time tables.

We have written to the DBE and provincial education departments, to express that it is unacceptable and unjustifiable that NSNP monitoring reports are not submitted on time. We have also reiterated our calls for education officials to:

- o Provide scholar transport to all learners so that they can get meals;
- o Send a circular to all provinces communicating that learners can get meals from the school they live nearest to; and
- o Provide food parcels for learners who are not in school every day.

We will keep determinedly campaigning for basic nutrition for all nine million learners who are eligible for the NSNP.

- Read the latest NSNP reports and our letter to Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga and the Education MECs [here](#). The letter may be published in full.

[ENDS]

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