**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE CONCERNED ABOUT COVID-19 THREATS TO FOOD SECURITY**

**Parliament, Friday, 26 June 2020** – The Portfolio Committee on Social Development has noted with concern reports that over eight million South Africans are at risk of food insecurity as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Yesterday, the committee was briefed by the national Department of Social Development and the provincial departments on the implementation of food distribution and progress on other programmes responding to the Covid19 pandemic.

Committee Chairperson Mr Mondli Gungubele said it was clear that Covid-19 is a huge threat to food security and a large proportion of the population could experience food insecurity as a result of the pandemic.

“The need to feed our people came out very strong in today’s meeting. If we are supposed to feed 14 million people and we are only able to feed just over five million, then it is a serious problem,” he said.

The committee heard that the demand for food far surpasses supply and the government’s ability to assist is limited. Furthermore, the impact of Covid-19 on food security will be prolonged.

Whilst the committee appreciated efforts on the part of national and provincial social development departments, the Chairperson said the most worrying issue is food insecurity among the vulnerable. He appealed to the department to do everything in its power to ensure that children, the vulnerable and people in dire need have access to food.

“It is also important as a committee that we must express a strong appropriation to members of civil society who made contribution to feeding our nation, whether through donations or volunteering,” said Mr Gungubele.

The committee was also briefed on the distribution of the R350 Social Relief of Distress (SRD) fund, as well as plans to reopen early childhood development centres.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, MR MONDLI GUNGUBELE**