Official reply: 06 June 2016

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION 722/2016**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

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**722. Mr W M Madisha (Cope) to ask the Minister of Social Development:**

Whether her department has regularly issued free (a) blankets, (b) household items and (c) food parcels to (i) all indigent communities and (ii) those that were ravaged by fire, flood or any other disaster on an annual basis during the period 1 July 2009 to 29 February 2016; if not, why not; if so, in each specified year (aa) who were the recipients, (bb) what were the circumstances that required communities to receive immediate departmental assistance, (cc) on which dates were selected communities given parcels, (dd) what items constituted the aid parcel and (ee) how many special parcels were given out in each specified year? NW838E

**Reply:**

The social relief of distress is an on-going, legislated programme which is implemented every year in every province in response to identified needs. This programme has been implemented annually for the period from July 2009 to February 2016. Social relief of distress is a programme which provides material assistance to citizens who experience a crisis, which is beyond their ability to deal with within their own resources. The assistance is provided for a temporary period only. This period may vary from one to three months, which may be extended to six months, under certain circumstances.

SASSA manages the social relief of distress programme in line with the provisions as legislated in the Social Assistance Act, 2004 (as amended). The legislation empowers SASSA to provide social relief of distress to South African citizens, permanent residents and refugees, where they meet certain criteria. One of the criteria is that social relief of distress may be provided where communities are affected by a disaster, even where that area is not declared a disaster area. This enable SASSA to respond to localized incidents such as floods, fire and other disasters.

Social relief of distress may be issued in various forms, depending on the reason for the issuing of the social relief of distress, as well as the specific arrangements made in the affected province. The social relief of distress may be issued in the form of food vouchers, food parcels, school uniforms or cash. Where social relief of distress is provided as a response to disasters, the assistance may take the form of pre-cooked hot meals, meal packs, blankets, dignity packs and/or mattresses. The actual assistance provided will depend on the specific needs of the affected communities. In addition to the immediate humanitarian assistance provided, in instances where the affected community lost all their possessions, for instance in the case of fire, the families may be provided with a once off cash amount when they are ready to return to their homes. This is to assist in buying some of the household items which were lost in the disaster. However, SASSA does not provide household items as part of the social relief of distress programme.

For every citizen assisted with social relief of distress, there is an application process followed, to ensure eligibility for the assistance. For humanitarian assistance provided in response to disasters, SASSA provides the relief off lists provided by the local disaster response team in the municipality.

While information on the numbers assisted each year since 2009, the table below reflects the amounts spent on social relief of distress for the years under review:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Budget amount** | **Amount spent** |
| 2009/10 | 184 412 001 | 152 916 474 |
| 2010/11 | 178 813 600 | 164 857 431 |
| 2011/12 | 187 925 000 | 179 304 562 |
| 2012/13 | 255 181 000 | 250 430 329 |
| 2013/14 | 556 606 000 | 549 847 373 |
| 2014/15 | 501 835 000 | 460 569 541 |
| 2015/16 | 450 212 000 | 433,443,842 |