

Lindy Wilson: While the Minister is away, a department falls into disarray

The National Development Agency (NDA) will receive R184 million from the Department of Social Development (DSD). Of this, R29 million will be spent on direct Civil Society Organisation (CSO) funding, R4.5 million will be utilised for Direct Community Development Funding and R28.7 million on direct project funding. Much emphasis is put on capacitation and training.

Chairperson, the DSD has planned to train 1200 Community Development Projects and to support 300 Cooperatives. Are these not classified as CSO's?

When members of the Committee asked why both the DSD and the NDA were proposing to fulfil the same functions, the Chairperson advised that this had been noticed prior to the presentations and that the matter had been taken up with the Minister.

The Committee was told that the presentation by the DSD was just a draft, and that at the next sitting the final presentation would be put to us.

Chairperson, when the second report was presented the only real changes were to Programme 1 and absolutely no changes were made in the overlapping APP's.

We called on the Minister, this time last year, to address the lack of convergence between the NDA and the Department of Social Development.

It appears the Minister has chosen to ignore sound advice, yet again.

Chairperson, the Minister must explain the difference between direct CSO funding of R29 million, Direct Community Development Funding of R4,5 million, and R28.7 million on Direct project funding. The NDA could not give us clarification. They sound very similar.

The committee were gobsmacked when the NDA, who were given in excess of R30 million rand for direct project funding in 2014/15, could not advise how many CSO's were funded. Millions are gone but no one can tell us where.

The NDA has budgeted R3.4 million for ECD awards. In the NDA's Annual Performance Plan there is not a single indicator of how many Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres will benefit, and how they will be awarded.

Are we to allow them to spend R3.4 million of the public's money and just accept their report when it says we spent the money, but we did not measure how many ECD's benefitted?

I think not Honourable Minister.

What is going on in this Department Chairperson?

The Minister has only attended two of the eight Portfolio meetings this year which means that its Members have not been able to raise their concerns and questions.

How much time did the Minister spend out of the country instead this year? How long was she in the United States, pray tell?

It appears that the Minister has no regard for the Portfolio Committee or their oversight function. Perhaps the Minister was too busy garnering support for her Presidential Campaign in the Woman's league. Perhaps they have forgotten the Travelgate scandal and her conviction.

Had our Minister been sufficiently involved in the Department she is responsible for, this mismanagement and lack of communication between the Department and its entities could have been avoided.

There is a well-known saying Chairperson: While the cat is away, the mice will play.

In this case the saying should go: While the Minister is away, an entire department falls into disarray.

And the poorest of the poor remain neglected as a result.

Patricia Kopane: Minister Dlamini allows corruption and maladministration to run rife

Honourable Chairperson it is clear to all who wish to see it that the Department of Social Development is in a sorry state.

The social assistance programme for the vulnerable in South Africa remains the largest on the African continent and second largest in the Southern Hemisphere. The reality is that low economic growth has necessitated this level of social intervention.

The DA believes that the vulnerable members of our society must be protected, but that we should also focus on growing the economy to create more jobs so that our people can have the dignity of

being able to support themselves. Research has shown that most South Africans would prefer to be employed with the related financial freedom than to depend on grants.

Honourable chairperson, replies to DA Parliamentary questions have merely scratched the surface of the extent to which this department is falling apart.

One reply shows how the SA Social Security Agency (SASSA) paid almost R316 million, over and above the R10 billion tender to Cash Paymaster Services, for the re-registration of beneficiaries and the administration of social grants.

This extra money paid also works out to a R17 increase to register and administer each beneficiary from R11 in the initial contract. Why did the cost suddenly increase?

How could the original contract not include all registrations of beneficiaries? No approval from treasury was given for this massive irregular spending.

SASSA's long history of mismanagement clearly demonstrates the need for robust oversight to ensure the integrity and accountability of this important body. It is clear that this is not being done.

In the last financial year, both the Auditor General and the Public Protector investigated serious allegations of maladministration, irregular procurement processes and wasteful expenditure by SASSA.

The Minter terminated a SIU investigation into corruption by senior managers at SASSA and allowed SASSA to appoint a private company, illegally, to do the work that was done by the SIU. This is because the Minister wanted a company that she could manipulate to turn a blind eye to corruption. The treasury investigated the appointment of this company and gave the report to the Minister in December 2014. To date she has not acted on the report. The question is, why is the Minister scared of taking action against corruption at SASSA?

If the Minister is serious about fighting corruption at SASSA, why has the Inspectorate for Social Assistance, mandated to maintain the integrity of SASSA, never been established?

Another example of SASSA's wastefulness is the fact that they spent just over R11 million for a private security company to protect officials and their family members. All this money is wasted while the unemployment rate in our country stands at 36% and 66% of those who are unemployed are young people.

Last year during the budget vote speech I asked whether SASSA is an asset or liability to the Department. The answer remains the same. It is a liability.

Today it is clearer than ever that the budget of SASSA will never benefit the poor and vulnerable.

The DA believes that the existence of such a body could have helped to decrease the high levels of social grant fraud and corruption facing SASSA but it seems that the Minister is actively protecting corrupt activities at the body responsible for providing assistance to the most vulnerable in our society.

The Department also appointed a Private Law Firm to hand over documents that the Public Protector requested which cost taxpayers over half a million rand. Departments are entitled to the services of the State Attorney and not entitled to outsource legal work companies unless the office of the state attorney does not have capacity.

From these examples it is abundantly clear that hundreds of millions of rands are being spent by this department to either cover up corruption or due to sheer incompetence. Therefore, it is my contention that a full forensic investigation should be instituted by the treasury to halt this blatant disregard for taxpayer money by those who are mandated to provide for those who are most vulnerable in our society.