

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 1

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

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*PROCEEDINGS OF EXTENDED PUBLIC COMMITTEE – E249*

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Members of the Extended Public Committee met in the E249 Chamber at 14:03.

The Acting Chairperson Mr M R MDAKANE took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayers or meditation.

**APPROPRIATION BILL**

Debate on Vote No 12 – Statistics South Africa:

The MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY: Sound Check! How are you, hon members? Is it fine? Ok. Hon Chairperson, Ministers, Deputy Ministers, hon Members, the hon Acting Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee, members of the Portfolio Committee, Deputy Chairperson of the Statistics Council, Statistician-General, Mr Risenga Maluleke, the Secretary of the National Planning Commission, Mr Tshediso Matona, the Director-General

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249**

**WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018**

**PAGE: 2**

of the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Ms Mpumi Mpofu, the Commissioners of the NPC, our distinguished guests in the gallery ladies and gentlemen, I am humbled to deliver this budget vote at the time when we are celebrating the centenary of one of our best stalwarts. It is also a centenary of the Bantu Women's League league.

And, of course, we know that that organization has produced many heroines that I am going to talk about later. But it also undertook campaigns that became national campaigns - like the anti-pass laws campaigns and many others. I just want to say that it is worth noting that despite the role that women have played in the liberation struggle, they sometimes get edited out of history.

This year is also the centenary of Mama Albertina Sisulu and Tata Nelson Mandela. Mama Albertina Sisulu's contribution to our humanity is so invaluable and we will also remember that she was a member of the House of the National Assembly, the first Parliament. She was a very disciplined member of that Parliament. She served in the Portfolio Committee for Health and it was a great pleasure to work with her. We learnt a lot, but we also learnt a lot in her leadership in struggle and in her commitment to the women's emancipation.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 3

Secondly, we also want to pay tribute to another stalwart, Nomzamo, Winifred Madikizela-Mandela. We will always remember her as a tireless fighter who was persecuted, banished and yet through it all, never cowed. She remained strong in the struggle and in the rights for her people. Her contribution will forever be etched in our history.

We also remember former Minister, Zola Skweyiya who introduced in the civil servants, the concept of uBuntu among civil servants. Last but not least, it is the centenary of Tata Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, the first President of the democratic Republic of South Africa.

Let me echo President Ramaphosa's sentiment as expressed in the State of the Nation address when he said: "We have dedicated this year to his memory and we will devote our every action, every effort, and every utterance to the realisation of his vision of a democratic, just and equitable society".

It is important that as a nation we derive inspiration from this entire rich legacy and from the heroines of our struggle. So that we can be inspired by them and carry on where they left of.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 4

Before I delve into the body of the debate, let me acknowledge my predecessor, hon Jeff Radebe, who has been overseeing Stats SA over the past years and we will continue building on the foundation that he left.

I wish to take this opportunity to recognise our recently appointed Statistician-General, Risenga Maluleke. As I do so, I wish to underline my personal belief that there is an inextricable relationship between building a better life for all South Africans and the urgent need for accurate and credible information. It is thus imperative that we reflect seriously on this matter and find ways to support Statistics South Africa in order to ensure that its work remains relevant. But even more than that we need to talk about how we as policy makers and implementers utilise the data that they produce.

It is very important to also remember that citizens must know their country and understand the dynamics so that their decisions as well are informed. An informed citizenry is the foundation of a true democracy. Why do statistics matter? In simple terms, it is the evidence on which policies, decisions and planning is done. Without good statistics the policy

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249**

**WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018**

**PAGE: 5**

development, planning and decision-making process is a blind one. We cannot learn from our mistakes, and the public cannot hold us accountable. Statistics help us to understand and learn from the past, make sense of the present, and make inferences into the future. So, we need evidence-based approach to planning and decision making and this has been gathering momentum over the years - not only in South Africa but on the continent and in the world because it improves the efficiency and effectiveness of making decisions, making policies and focusing on what works.

It can also reduce government expenditure which may otherwise be directed to ineffective policies or programmes which could be costly, time consuming but have no impact. So statistics help us. Evidence based approach ensures that decision making is consistent with the democratic and political processes which are characterised by transparency and accountability. Evidence based approach highlights the current problem which forms the basis of long term planning for better outcomes.

Hon members, official statistics the world over are driven by the United Nations Fundamental Principles of official statistics and in Africa, by the African Charter on Statistics. Our nation prides itself on the Statistics Act

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249**

**WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018**

**PAGE: 6**

that guarantees confidentiality at all times. The methods through which our national statistics are collected, processed and analysed remain independent from any undue influence. Stats SA is ranked among the best in the world when it comes to the progressive framework for statistics, good practice and transparency.

Our National Development Plan, NDP, still remains the beacon of hope to our country and to our people. It points to matters that need urgent attention at national and sub-national levels. Furthermore, it remains a link for our development as a nation with Africa and the world.

At a continental level, Agenda 2063, the Africa we want is our rallying point. The global post 2015 development, as encapsulated in the Sustainable Development Goals. Statistics anchor us as we wade through the seas of unknown territories. As we attend to national and continental challenges and indeed those of the world. We should ensure that the numbers do not become abstract to an extent that whatever they illuminate becomes meaningless. Measurements and facts should always relate to human life as well as whatever successes they record or challenges they face. Empirical evidence continues to tell us that Black Africans and Coloureds face many challenges in

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249**

**WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018**

**PAGE: 7**

our country. The NDP reminds us that we should track the lower bound poverty line in our fight against the triple scourge of unemployment, poverty and inequality.

While poverty had declined between 2006 and 2011, from 51% to 36.4%, it has risen slightly to 40% in 2015. South Africa's Gini coefficient, which is the most commonly used measurement for inequality, at 0.67 is amongst the worst in the world. Our wealth inequality index is 0.9, making us one of the most skewed societies in the world.

Women in general and Black rural women in particular, are affected the most by poverty. It is encouraging that the multidimensional poverty index, MPI, which is an index of access to services and goods, continues to decline, largely as a result of the intervention that our government has made since 1994. The MPI has declined from about 18% in 2001 to 7% in 2015. Because, we know that more than 17 million people are on grants and 20 000 schools have been declared fee-free schools.

Young people are most affected by unemployment. About 30% of young people aged 15-24 years are neither in employment, nor in education and training. Last year, the African Union

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249**

**WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018**

**PAGE: 8**

adopted the demographic dividend through investing in youth as a running theme. The demographic dividend occurs when there is a potential for economic growth that is driven by positive shifts in the age distribution of the population. The demographic dividend is only possible if you make the prerequisite investment in the youth, especially in skills and health. Unfortunately, statistics show that in the first 20 years of democracy, we have missed the first wave of the demographic dividend. We have a lot more work to do in making sure that we achieve a better life for all, especially for the youth and women.

Any nation may benefit from their demographic dividend if it registers an increase in the proportion of the working age population while registering a decline in the dependency ratio. When a demographic dividend is realised, it propels economic growth. We know that our youth remain a motive force to benefit from the economic development but ensure that the African continent can compete equally with other regions of the world in future. Credible statistics can therefore not be separated from the total emancipation of our people, for they should continue to guide us and whether we make progress or otherwise in the search for a better life for humankind.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249**

**WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018**

**PAGE: 9**

Hon members, let me look internally into Stats SA, the organisation will be focusing on the following key priorities to fulfil this mandate, maintaining basic statistics, institutionalising the integrated indicator framework, integrating, innovating and modernising the statistics value chain, transformation and organisational reform, Planning for Census 2021; and driving legislative reform, maintaining basic statistics. basic statistics form the foundation of any national statistics system.

Over the past 10 years, the organisation has invested a lot of time and effort in raising the quality and proficiency of economic and social statistics. Stats SA produces more than 250 publications and reports each year, covering various aspects of the South African economy, society and the environment. This information is critical to informing government, businesses, investors, workers and the public on the state of the economy to facilitate informed decision making.

A key project that Stats SA will undertake relates to measuring the economic value of environmental resources, a joint project between Stats SA and the South National Biodiversity institute. The project forms part of an

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249**

**WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018**

**PAGE: 10**

international pilot programme involving the United Nations, the European Union, Brazil, China, India and Mexico to develop appropriate valuation methods.

An integrated indicator framework has been developed that aligns policy agendas at global, continental, and national level, the National Development Plan, NDP, Medium Term Strategic Framework, MTSF, PGDPs, DGDPs and Integrated Development plans, IDPs, as the basis of what needs to be measured in the national statistics system. These indicators will provide a clear basis for understanding the problem statement to be addressed in planning, as well as monitoring progress and evaluating results and will form the bedrock of the information contained in the central repository that the Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, DPME, and Stats SA are planning to develop.

The world is on the threshold of the fourth industrial revolution, which demands that we think differently about the future and the way we have doing things. To answer these demands, Stats SA is in the process of transforming the collection of data from a paper-based approach to digital collections. To ensure that quality is not compromised this is being done in a phased-in over time.

During 2018-19, Stats SA will be rolling out the digital data collection solution for all household surveys which will generate efficiency savings over the medium term. The digitisation of work methods will enable the organisation to deliver faster, smarter and more cost-effectively.

The big programme is going to be planning for Census 2021. Conducting a population census is the biggest statistical survey any country and national statistics agency can undertake. Planning for South Africa's next population census, which is scheduled for 2021, will commence in this year, 2018-19.

Census 2021 will be the first of its kind in South Africa to be conducted using an electronic data collection methodology. Computer Assisted Personal Interviews This will improve the quality of data collected and reduce the time-lag between data collection and the dissemination of results.

In relation to Legislative reform: Stats SA will be delivering an amended Statistics Act that will drive statistical reform in the country, with particular emphasis on statistical co-ordination, statistical geography, the data revolution, a

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249**

**WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018**

**PAGE: 12**

state-wide statistical service and institutional arrangements. Co-ordination between organs of state is essential for consistency and efficiency in the statistical system. The Statistics Act provides for the Statistician-General to participate in international statistical activities and build relations with international statistical agents and players. South Africa continues to contribute to the continental integration agenda and to the improvement of the African Statistical System based on the African Charter on Statistics and the Strategy for harmonisation of Statistics in Africa. In addition, Stats SA is in the forefront of initiatives aimed at shaping the future of statistics in response to the global post-2015 development agenda, the Africa Agenda 2063 and Data Revolution. Stats SA does this by providing statistical leadership and technical support.

The Acting CHAIRPERSON (Mr M R MDAKANE): Please conclude hon Minister.

The MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY: I beg your pardon?

The Acting CHAIRPERSON (Mr M R MDAKANE): Please conclude.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 13

The MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY: Ok, I am about to. Hon members, we recognise the importance of fully funding the statistical functions. So, we are currently engaging with Treasury. But we would like this House to support the budget. I could not find a more appropriate way of concluding this budget vote speech than to reflect on Ben Okri who says: "We have not yet arrived, but every point at which we stop requires a re-definition of our destination."

I would like to thank the portfolio committee, its Chair and all the members of the department and Stats SA.

*IsiZulu:*

Nk R M M LESOMA: Masizibongelo Sihlalo waleNdlu ehloniphekile, sibingelele kwiNingizimu Afrika yonkana, sibingelele uNgqongqoshe uDokotela uNkosazane Dlamini-Zuma nethimba lakhe lasehovisini, siphinde sibingelele amalungu aleNdlu ahloniphekileyo ngokuphelele, sibingelele nomndeni oholwa uBaba uMpahlele engizwile ukuthi akekho namhlanje kodwa siyabingelela kwisekela lakhe ongusihlalo we-Statistics South Africa Commission, bese siphinda sibingelela u-statstician-general uMnumzane u-Maluleka nethimba lakhe ngokunjalo, manene namanenekazi, sinibingelela kunyaka obalulekile ikakhulukazi kule nhlango ebusayo kepha kusizwe sonkana okuwunyaka wowaye

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 14

nguMongameli u-Nelson Mandela noMama u-Albertina Sisulu ase ukunaba kabanzi uNgqongqoshe ngabo. Ngifisa ukudlula Sihlalo ungivumele ngisho ngithi ngesiqubulo esithi, ...

*English:*

... statistics is the backdrop of democracy, has respected trusted tools to measure government's performance as to use good stats from a reliable source which is authorised to provide official stats in the country. Scientifically sound internationally recognised methodologies for collection and processing storage and presentation of statistical data on wide range of economic, social and population statistics.

In return, it gives guidance in the policy formulation of suitable policy options that the country should take. I am standing before you hon members, colleagues and invited guests on behalf of the Portfolio Committee on Stats SA, Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation and Department of Public Service Administration.

Let me put it this way that I will focus mainly on the observations and the recommendations that the committee made. We have considered the 2018-19 annual performance of Stats SA as well as looking at the incoming year which is 2018-19

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 15

budget as well which amounts to ... let me just quickly go to the amount so that I can be accurate. Okay, I will come back to the amount. No I will come later, let me deal with this issue. No, I will come to it later, I know why, just hold your horses.

The committee noted Stats SA has discontinued certain projects but we are quite aware that we are also not supposed to champion budget request for the department, they must do their own logging. However, in our process of doing our oversight role, we felt that we must emphasise the point that in their quest and engagement with Treasury they must ensure that they also appreciate the importance and added responsibilities that have been given to the them; such as the one that was given to the IEC but sponsored back to the them in terms of the individual households addresses which then does need some resources of some form.

The portfolio committee had been allocated R2,2 billion for the year in question. Hon Chair and hon members allow me to put more emphasis on the Stats SA to report mainly on the observations and recommendations as I said earlier on that we met as the portfolio committee for Budget Vote 12. The

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249**

**WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018**

**PAGE: 16**

committee considered and welcomed the annual report performance plan of 2018-19 of Stats SA.

The committee further noted that Stats SA has discontinued some of the projects which I outlined earlier on. We further encourage Stats SA that instead of them saying they are discontinuing some of the projects and activities; rather they use the little that they have to ensure that their core mandate is achieved. I am happy to say that there was a sense of comfort that they would do their level best in that space to ensure that such poverty estimates and completely the other projects that are very crucial for the country and the nation at large are implemented.

In terms of the legislative reforms, we spoke to this one and noted basically for the reason that Stats SA in terms of what is expected, noting that the country in few years adopted the National Development Plan, NDP and Stats SA must respond to the NDP's requirements and expectations as it were. So there should be legislative reforms that they need to take hon Minister through your booth Chairperson; that we have said the progress thus far in terms of the intention to amend Stats SA Act should be speed up.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249**

**WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018**

**PAGE: 17**

Noting that we are about to go to the elections, we must deal with it on that space. I am not too sure whether we would be able to accommodate that but we raised a concern and observation that it should be dealt with accordingly. But further to ensure that the co-ordination between organs of state for the purpose of enhancing efficiency and statistical system; Stats SA must also review its definition within the Act because some of the definitions are very outdated that they don't talk to the current expectations.

We further noted that over 104 staff members have left Stats SA in 2017-18 financial year which totals to 173 vacancies. The main reason is the urging work force that they have, not necessarily because they didn't feel comfortable to work for the government or Stats SA. But when the vacancies open they have to refill those vacancies by default there are those 170 vacancies I have just outlined.

Most importantly, Stats SA by its nature is a highly specialised technical space that needs equally skilled people who would have been re-trained, readily to occupy those places or the counting times of the skills that it has at its disposal. They are readily going to see the test of the interview and processes to fill up those vacancies. I am sure

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249**

**WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018**

**PAGE: 18**

that in that space we would try to engage the Department of Higher Education and Department of Basic Education to ensure that they prioritise the technical skills which then would in future seek to compensate the shortfall which has resulted in 170 vacancies which will be a working process.

The committee further noted that Stats SA has senior positions in acting capacity that in return as I said earlier on which we also applaud because it encourages the high mobility that should take place in senior positions. However, it also puts an overload of work to those individuals. We are a caring South Africa - we are a caring government so that as the committee, we must speak to that so that the work skills plan of Stats SA must talk to that in terms of ensuring that the performance of those individuals is not compromised.

The committee further raised a concern and noted the risk of losing competent staff to other sectors as it has an impact on the ability to conduct surveys and results in the department being compromised and we derived in the long term to rebuild such capacity which can't be realised in this year; it can only be realised in two years to come. We are rising that the department work on that one to ensure that it does go to two years so that we realise that challenge or shortfall.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 19

Of course we are also very mindful of the constraints resources as it were. The committee asked Stats SA that it gradually moves away from manual data that the Minister has spoken about to more advanced electronically data collection that is affordable, quicker and faster without also compromising the quality aspect on the statistically data. During the transition of the manual data collective to computer assistant personal interview, we have encouraged to re-skill and re-train on electronic data collection so that there is a smooth transition which is going to be overlapping.

Taking note lessons that there has been ... [Inaudible.] from KwaZulu-Natal Province on citizen satisfactory survey that was conducted using technology to collect data. So there is a template and the lesson that can be taken from that. We further noted and made an emphasis on this space, that the importance of the role of statistical releases in influencing decisions in government planning, prioritising and allocation of resources is critical. It is therefore the role and responsibility of the Department of Monitoring, Planning and Evaluation to ensure that Stats SA information finds its expression in policy decision making of government, priorities and align such data in a long term and short term as it were in its planning.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 20

The committee further made the following the recommendations that which are very precise and we agreed that we are going to monitor it in quarterly basis. Stats SA should speed up the amendment of the Statistics Act of 1999 to drive statistically reform infrastructure planning. The amendment would also assist and firmly respond to the involving environment data revolution and stats watts statistical service and institutional arrangement. The perceived or the mooted amendment should also unable the country to respond to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal, the Africa Agenda 2063 and the NDP as it were.

The TEMPORARY HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr M R MDAKANE): Please conclude hon member.

Ms R M M LESOMA: We further wants to conclude by saying that the Stats SA should emphasise the efforts to plan for the census for 2021 as the Minister has alluded to; but also talking to the technical skills that is needed to achieve that exercise. The National Treasury working with the Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation should ensure that Stats SA is accordingly provided with the resources that it needs. In conclusion, the ... [Inaudible.]

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 21

Mr Y CASSIM: The DA would like to thank the former Statistician General Dr Pall Lehohla for his 17 years of distinguished service to Statistics SA and the nation and welcome the new SG, Mr Risenga Maluleke. Mr Maluleke you sir have a very important, yet difficult task ahead of you and your shrinking team.

On that note Chairperson, I am certain that much of today's debate will centre on the continuous budget reductions applied to Statistics SA and the consequences thereof. This is entirely valid as it compromises both the aim and purpose of Statistics SA.

The aim of Statistics SA is to provide relevant and accurate statistics in line with internationally approved practice to inform users of the dynamics of the economy and society.

According to the Statistics Act, the purpose of official statistics is to assist organs of state, business, other organisations and the public in planning, decision-making, and monitoring or assessment of policies.

We are living in a global information society where the amount of information and its flow to society is increasing.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249**

**WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018**

**PAGE: 22**

Statistics plays a major role in shaping and providing scientific information that is useful in almost every aspect of human life. Modern decision making, whether done by a national government, potential investors or an international agency, is increasingly using statistical methods to improve the quality of information and decision making.

Increasing appreciation of the role, power and importance of statistics should lead to a higher priority attached to statistical capacity development.

Yet the budget before us stands at R2,22 billion for the 2018-19 financial year, this is a significant reduction compared to the R2,49 billion budgeted in the 2016-17 financial year.

These budget cuts have particularly compromised the ability of Statistics SA to fill, attract and retain necessary skills. Its staff complement has been reduced with a significant decrease of funded posts in the current financial year. Whilst it should have access to the best skills in the market to embody a modern, cutting edge utility, vacancies stopped being filled from October 2016, 170 staff have left and the vacancy rate has increased to 13%.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 23

More worrying hon Chairperson, is that this situation will continue to decline for the foreseeable future under the current government priorities with Cabinet approved reductions of R15,1 million for the 2019-20 financial year and R15,9 million for the 2020-21 financial year.

The consequence being that staffs are overstretched and are more prone to errors, there is a declining skills base with Statistics SA not in a position to fill critical vacancies and basic statistics are at risk with a declining quality over time. Some of the key indicators at risk include the following: The GDP, gross domestic product, poverty and service delivery; the CPI, Consumer Price Index; fertility and mortality; employment and population estimates.

The risks to the population estimates alone will have significant consequences to the Division of Revenue Amendment Bill.

Hon Chairperson, it thus becomes incumbent on us to ask why this important institution would be put in such a perilous position going forward given its importance to the nation and to the work of government.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249**

**WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018**

**PAGE: 24**

Last year in this very debate, I spoke of the need for government to make use of evidence-based policy making in realising the goals set out in the National Development Plan.

In simple terms, evidence-based policy making is a means by which policies and programmes intended to improve lives are based on clearly defined, time-bound, and measurable milestones.

This allows timely modification, consolidation or change of policy as the case may require, thus ensuring urgent responses to challenges. It is in this context that statistics become part and parcel of evidence-based policy making, statistics understood here to mean more than a routine collection and storage of numbers, but rather as credible and scientifically derived evidence intended to evaluate the impact of policy making.

Our statistics will remain meaningless and perhaps not that important until and unless they are embedded in the key priorities of government and become part of planning tools used by the three spheres of government in directing resources and informing the amendment of efforts towards achieving the

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 25

goals set by the National Development Plan, NDP, in the manner prescribed by the NDP.

The lives of our people will not improve, Chairperson, when faced with the government that in practice enact and in funding does not recognise the importance of a strong well funded and resourced utility that will produce accurate statistics and the value of its use in its every day work.

A DA government would do so differently. We will cherish this institution and utilise the valuable information produced to bring total change to all the people of South Africa. No, you can hackle now, its fine. But this is the reality. This is the reality, Chairperson. We will use it to combat inequality, make our communities safer, skill our youth, bring in investment and create jobs, combat illegal immigration, confront apartheid spatial planning and improve the health services of government. This is not currently happening. If we continue down this road that we are going - if we are putting this institution that has performed so well for so many years of this democratic era into such peril then I promise you Chairperson, future generations will live to regret the decisions we make here. [Applause.]

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 26

Ms E N NTLANGWINI: Hon Chair, I want to dedicate today's Budget Vote to the late mama Winnie Mandela with one of her quotes where she said, and I quote, "There is no longer anything I can fear. There is nothing the government has not done to me. There isn't any pain I haven't known." Rest assured mama, the EFF will keep your memory always alive.

This is one of the few Budget Votes that the EFF supports and we support this vote. Statistics SA has always remained independent and partisan staying clear from political interference. It has always met its targets, used budgets correctly and has seen little or no irregular, wasteful and fruitful expenditure. For this leadership of Statistics SA as well as the staff, we must give credit where it is due. We want to congratulate the Statistician-General and head of statistics Mr Maluleka on the good work they are doing. Now, some few concerns for the EFF that we are worried about: We are disturbed by the statistics budget that is shrinking. In 2018-19 financial year Statistics SA will receive R200 million less, than it did in 2016-17 financial year. How is it meant to keep up the good work, and also increase its data collection and analysis when we have a growing population and there is an increase and need for credible data which is vital in the financial or the information age we live in

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 27

today? Budget cuts will lead to skills, employees and overall capacity being lost, and will negatively impact the quality and quantity of information and data Statistics SA can produce.

Data we will need when the EFF needs to expropriate the land. We will need it to know who on how we are going to allocate and redistribute the land. Data we need to determine how many school toilets we need. Data we need to determine how many nurses are still required to provide our people with quality health care mama. Quality health care.

Data is needed so that we know how many houses our people in South Africa currently need. Statistics SA also need a large budget so that information it has is more accessible to ordinary South Africans.

It must be easily accessible to students, in schools and institutions of higher learning so that we know that all the information is credible, so that future generations have the proper and credible information that they will need in future. It is not for maybe perhaps your kids or grandchildren are not in university right now because of your age, but our kids still need credible information.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 28

It must be easily available in areas and in all languages so that we can access it in all languages in South Africa. It must not be or not only be in English that we can access data in English, all languages must be accessible. That is why we support this Budget Vote because of the importance of it and we will want an increase on this budget. I thank you, Chair.  
[Applause.]

Mr E M BUTHELEZI: Hon Chairperson, we live in a very digital world, where information is constantly changing the face of the world. Many industries use data for their core functions. Statistics SA is very useful in this regard. It serves as the official statistic hub and it is through the work of this institution that the information which they collate into commendable reports is used to conduct business in our country.

The work of Statistics SA is incredibly important as it is the custodian of all raw data and analysis which inform the very work that we do as Members of Parliament.

Census is definitely important. Our whole representative democracy is based on it. It ensures that each community gets

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 29

the right number of representatives in government because representation is based on population and therefore an up-to-date tally is crucial and accuracy being of the utmost importance in this regard for effective governance.

Hon Chairperson, statistics also helps with the equitable distribution of public funds including educational programmes, health care, law-enforcement, etc. It is therefore particularly important that the department makes considerable efforts to ensure that they improve inaccurate capturing and producing population and social statistics in rural and underdeveloped areas so as to inform the relevant departments of the depth and breadth of poverty stricken people in order to facilitate better service delivery.

Evidenced-based policy making remains key to the country's success. However what is also key are the statistics consulted. One can find statistics to support almost any argument. Key would be to know which ones to consult and formulate government policy around, as we do live in an era of fake news.

The last census conducted in 2011 was a great success and we trust that the department and the director-generals, DGs, are

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 30

busy with their forward planning for the next census in 2021. We look forward to hearing from the Minister in this regard.

Hon Chairperson, as the Minister said here whilst she was delivering her speech that she asks this House to adopt this budget. The IFP wishes to place on record that we do not oppose. Thank you.

Mr M L D NTOMBELA: Hon Chairperson; the Minister for Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, the hon Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma; hon members; Chairperson and Statistician-General for the Statistics South Africa, distinguished ladies and gentlemen.

It is indeed a great honour to once again stand on this august House to debate the Budget Vote 12 of Statistics South Africa for the financial year 2018-19. Let me take this opportunity to appreciate the reporting alignment made thus far by government for ensuring Statistics South Africa and the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation report to the same ministry.

Evidence-based development requires well-coordinated statistical information and data that serves planning, monitoring and evaluation.

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249**

**WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018**

**PAGE: 31**

In October 2017, the committee was officially informed about the retirement of the former Statistician-General Dr Pali Lehohla who served the organisation with distinction during his tenure. Allow me to take this opportunity to say to the former Statistician-General, we will always miss your contributions and your passion every time when presenting statistical releases with your yellow suits. Let me say to Dr Lehohla that now you have no excuses for not having enough time for posting selffies with your grandkids. Sir, I am congratulating you on your retirement.

As it has been said before, official statistics are the bedrock for socio-economic policy formulation and decision-making. It plays a critical role in illuminating policy choices and program design, monitoring policy and program implementation as well as evaluating the impact of such policies.

Evidence-based policymaking enhances transparency and accountability in the policymaking environment. It is very critical for citizens to know why and how decisions that affect their lives are taken. Knowledge of such processes is important for good governance in that they provide a basis for

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 32

equity and efficiency, especially in emerging democracies that are building from fledgling institutions. That gives the millage for credibility.

Furthermore, accountability requires credible data which should be freely available and presented openly. The availability of information makes it easier for citizens to monitor the performance of those in public office. Statistics, official or otherwise, that is, guarantee independence from political interference thus giving credence to the policymaking process in pursuit of democracy.

Herbert George Wells, a renowned English novelist, said and I quote: "statistical thinking will one day be as necessary for efficient citizenship as the ability to read and write".

For most of us, that day has finally arrived based on the factual evidence achieved through data collection.

The late President Mandela said during the launch of census in 1996 and I quote:

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 33

“Now that we know how many of us are in the country and the challenges we face, we can advance our democracy and achieve a better life for all through the commitments we have made”.

The success of the attainment of the objectives of the National Development Plan depend solely on the credible and timeously collected statistical data to inform the planning, policies and budget allocations.

We therefore would like to acknowledge that government is effectively and efficiently, the main user of statistics in its planning. The value of the Statistics SA is also recognised by the private sector because they also rely on official standard that demand for this information.

Now, statistics in the public domain must be of high quality thus responding to the increase demand for high quality information.

On the issue of legislation, our understanding is that, we all know that laws are not carved in stone, as they sometime flow in and out with the tide. They sometimes need to be changed and enhanced for the public good. It is in that regard, we have the Statistical Act 6 of 1999 which is in the process of

amendment I suppose, as the Minister has already alluded to it.

Good policies are impossible without good, reliable, quality and accurate data. If we are to lift our children out of poverty, we must first understand the causal factors. If we are to provide quality education in the public schools, we must have baseline information in terms of the demand, understand the kind of education provided and indicate what kind of intervention learners need.

Integrating statistical concepts and reason from elementary years through to the secondary school should develop a nation of critical thinkers and capable consumers of information that would ultimately benefit social progress.

To teach our school kids to understand effective use of statistical information, teachers need to teach statistical concept and understand their importance. It is fundamental that teachers are skilled readers and interpreters of such concepts, especially those who teach mathematics, science and geography, etc. So, the development of pedagogy to support the teaching of statistics is fundamental to the successful implementation of relevant streams in the school curriculum.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 35

The government has invested more on the Statistics SA to provide the country with statistical information to improve living conditions of the citizens and we still have to do more. For example, they have reported that South Africa's formal non-agricultural sector added 81 000 jobs in the fourth quarter of 2017, bringing the total number of persons employed in the formal non-agricultural sector to 9,8 million. So, the Quarterly Employment Statistics, QES, survey also showed formal sector jobs rose by 18 000.

Imperatively, Statistics SA should continuously provide the country with reliable statistical data to enable planners, policy decision makers and legislators with the information that will enhance and strengthen our socio-economic development. Statistics SA keeps everyone alive with day to day realities in terms of both opportunities and challenges confronting our societies. A nation that is not statistically informed is bound to fail in delivering better life for all. Hence the slogan, the SA I know, the home I understand.

We stand on the brink of a technological revolution that will fundamentally alter the way we live, work and the how we relate to each another. Developing countries had successfully

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249**

**WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018**

**PAGE: 36**

surpassed this period. Now, a Fourth Industrial Revolution is building on the third one, so, the digital revolution that has been occurring since the middle of the last century. The former speaker has already alluded to that.

The resolution of the 54th ANC National Conference enjoins us therefore, as an anchor to our National Development Plan on 4th Industrial Revolution. We have noted the completion of the Citizen Satisfaction Survey piloted in the Kwa-Zulu Natal and that's welcomed.

We have a full understanding and insight into the Budget constraints across the public service and we appeal to the Minister of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation and the National Treasury to ensure Statistics SA is provided with adequate funding to commence with the preparation for the coming Census 2021.

Without allocating sufficient resources to the Statistics SA, will be depriving ourselves an opportunity to understand the real situation in which we find ourselves

With this, let me take this final opportunity to thank the leadership of Statistics SA under the stewardship of the

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 37

Minister of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, the Chairperson of the Statistical Council, Mr Mphahlele and Statistician-General Mr Maluleke and the entire Statistics SA team in doing a great work for the country through production of credible statistics.

Furthermore, I thank members of the portfolio committee in conducting effective oversight over Statistics SA and ensure that the department provide the country with reliable and accurate data and of course members of committee cannot operate alone, our appreciation goes to the Parliamentary staff in this regard.

The ANC supports Budget Vote 12 of the Statistics SA with the amount that has been allocated. We support the Budget Vote.

Thank you

Mr S C MOTAU: Hon Chairperson, if it were possible, we would take their minutes too. [Interjections.] Fortunately, the job I have to do this afternoon is very easy and, in fact, the Minister has anticipated some of the issues I am going to raise, and actually answered them. Before I get to the meat, probably 10 years ago, the Minister and I crossed paths. I don't know if she remembers. We were debating in the run-up to

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 38

the 2009 elections. Now it is the run-up to the 2019 elections. So, welcome, Minister to the ... [Inaudible.] I am going to start by joining all my colleagues by saying that the Democratic Alliance would like to applaud the former Statistician-General, SG, Dr Pali Lehohla, for the praiseworthy job he has done over the years at Statistics SA.

We also wish him the best with his new endeavours.

Furthermore, we would like to welcome Mr Risenga Maluleke, the new SG, and wish him success in his high posting to this very important institution.

It is worth reminding ourselves that Statistics SA has worked very hard over many years to earn local and international respect and recognition as a reputable institution.

This reputation must be jealously guarded by all of us. It seems that we are doing it here. As such, Stats SA must always be free from any political interference in the production and dissemination of official statistics.

While we welcome the commitment of Mr Maluleke and his team to collective leadership responsibility, to enhance high quality performance of the institution, as they informed the

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 39

committee, we would like to caution that this should not stand in the way of individual accountability, where this is necessary, especially when the chips are down.

I will go into the budget itself, but because of what the Minister has said, let me go to the end of my speech, conclude and then substantiate why I concluded that way.

Accurate, credible data enhances precise planning and costing, and reduces wastage of resources.

For this reason alone, Stats SA should be provided with adequate tools – financial tools, systems modernisation and digital migration, to ply its trade successfully. Minister, you have indicated that some of these things will be done. As I flesh out, you will see why I would like to emphasise that.

The department has a budget of R2,2 billion, as we have been told, which will increase to R3,3 billion by 2020-21. While this may appear to be significant, the department has some serious budget constraints that have serious negative consequences on staffing and staff morale.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 40

We have been told about the 104 people and the 170 people. And we have a vacancy rate of 13,8%. That, as we all know, should not be the case. The department had a staff complement of 1 352 in 2017-18 compared to 1 408 staff members in 2016-17 – again, a decrease.

Consequently, what the institution has tagged as abuse of sick leave, and that is where you with the other people come in, Minister, continues to plague the department. Abuse of sick leave has a serious negative impact on performance. The committee noted with deep concern that 13 423 days were lost to sick leave, at a cost of R35,7 million during the 2016-17 financial year.

The deep concern for Stats SA is that staff members who leave the department are mostly specialists and technically skilled people who should be retained. An adequate budget for compensation of employees should remedy this problem. However, due to an inability to fill these vacancies since 2016, the problems persist.

In fact, the projected overspending on compensation of employees before virements is expected to be, and quote the numbers that were given in the report, R146 million for 2018-

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 41

19; R181 million in 2019-20, and R194 million in 2020-21, assuming no changes in the MTEF period.

The DA recognises that economic times are tough and that there should be serious belt-tightening, but we would like to caution that the government should not be penny wise and pound foolish in the case of Stats SA.

A major risk to the department is that budget cuts can lead to a decline in the quality of performance, due to staff shortages, as we have heard.

Another significant risk is in relation to Census 2021. I am glad, Minister, that you have referred to that as well. We note that funds are being budgeted for the preparations of this critical, mammoth task. The Census 2021 budget has been estimated at R3,3 billion. If this cannot be provided, the department will have to revert to costly old mode collection of statistics. This is what I want to highlight, given what you have said. This will certainly impact on the timelines regarding the release of the numbers and cost. It is estimated that if the department was forced to revert to old mode collection, it would cost the country R7 billion to get the task completed.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 42

For this reason, the portfolio committee has recommended that National Treasury, working with the Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation on the budget prioritisation framework, which is the mandate paper, should ensure that Stats SA is provided with adequate funds to conduct the important Census 2021.

Now, here is an example, Minister. You might like this one. If any reason were needed to show that Stats SA deserves special attention with regard to funding, the results of the Management Performance Assessment Tool, MPAT, 2016 and the latest available stats, show that this is the case.

In the DA, we just took three of the senior departments here and made a comparison – the Presidency, DPME, and Stats SA. [Time expired.] Thank you very much.

Ms Z S DLAMINI-DUBAZANA: Hon House Chair, hon Members of Parliament, hon Minister, distinguished guests, family from Statistics SA, good afternoon. Hon House Chair, I want to go back to exactly what my colleagues said regarding statistics as the bedrock of the nation. The ANC supports this theme. This is a theme that was brought up by Statistics SA itself.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 43

This is due to the fact that effective and efficient planning, radical transformation and economic outlook can be monitored as scheduled using the data that has been collected by Statistics SA. South Africa Survey 2013 on economy shows that the real gross domestic product, GDP, at market prices recorded 2,5%, agriculture sector 2,3% of the GDP, manufacturing sat at 12,4% of the GDP and mining sat at -4,0%. Hon members and Chair, this macroeconomic information played a key role in planning and strategy during the 5th National Policy Conference of the ANC in Nasrec.

Hon Chair, it is for this reason that the ANC took a strong decision towards radical socioeconomic transformation and the urgency to redress land distribution back to the indigenous people of the country so as to improve their lives and alleviate poverty through agricultural co-operatives. Secondly, hon Chair, these sectors add value to our GDP growth. Hon Chairperson, still at the 5th National Policy Conference of the ANC, this conference identified the following questions, amongst others: What role does land and agricultural reform have in the process of economic transformation? What principles should guide the ANC policy in this regard? What respective roles should the state and private sector play in the process of radical socioeconomic

transformation?

Hon Chair, every individual sitting in this House realises that when the ANC sits and makes policies and principles, they always seek a scientific approach towards developing those policies because the ANC lives and leads. As we lead society, confidence and people's contracts are always acknowledged and respected by the ANC so as to ensure that implementation of these policies and principles are based on measurable and achievable instruments. If there are any bottlenecks during implementation phase, indeed the ANC does not hesitate to acknowledge its weakness and identify an alternative strategy.

Hon House Chair, during the state of the nation address 2018 tabled by His Excellency President Ramaphosa, he said "working group for youth". Hon Chair, the initiative proposed by the President has to have a plan based on facts, and thus requests Statistics SA to provide assistance to the National Youth Development Agency, NYDA, on how to approach the proposed initiative.

Hon Chairperson, the ANC is aware that inequality is still a serious problem in our society, especially for indigenous people on ownership and control of production, sharing of

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249**

**WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018**

**PAGE: 45**

wealth, and entrepreneurship opportunities, particularly in the private sector. We therefore invite the private sector to contribute positively towards closing the gap so as to eliminate these frequent industrial actions we witness.

Hon Chairperson, the ANC acknowledges the development of the Department of Small Business by the former His Excellency President Zuma. We hope that this department will pay more attention to previously disadvantaged individuals to ensure that their dreams and hopes towards becoming young business people is not diminished by lack of financial support and skills empowerment.

Hon members and Minister, allow me to thank the Minister and Statistics SA led by Mr Maluleke on the clear and succinct Annual Performance Plan for 2018-2019. The plan has 13 statistical themes. These themes were developed by your department. They are so clear and so well-aligned with the National Development Plan, NDP. I just want to give a few examples. I noted the time. The Chair is not going to tell me that I have a minute left; he is just going to say "time".

An efficient, competitive and responsive economic infrastructure network ... This is the Medium-Term Strategic

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 46

Framework, MTSF, outcome tabled by Statistics SA. The question was: How are they going to then achieve that, and how are they going to align this with the NDP target? They said they needed ensure that they assist the department by giving them the data that is going to contribute towards the GDP growth of 5% as tabled by the NDP.

Through you hon Chair, the other issue is your department did very well, Minister. They said the NDP talks about the inflation rate that should be between 3% and 6%. We are saying the outcome should be decent employment through inclusive economic growth. That to us as the ANC means Statistics SA takes recognition of the policies of the ANC when they plan and compile their strategy since the government is led by the ANC.

Hon members, Statistics SA's planning and strategic framework is indeed the one we can respect as the ANC. Having said that, hon Chairperson, yes, we have noticed that there are vacancies within Statistics SA. However, the ANC is aware that those vacancies are for personnel who are scarce human capital resource within our country. These are methodologists and modelling. Because of how much we pay them, we tend to have brain drainage. These personnel go to better places to be paid better. As the ANC, we request the Minister to develop a pool

**UNREVISED HANSARD**

**MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249**

**WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018**

**PAGE: 47**

for these people and a retention strategy thereof. If we don't do that, we are going to keep on complaining.

There is another issue of the depletion of the budget that is being raised, Minister. As the ANC, we are also concerned about that. However, we understand it differently from the other political parties. We understand as the ANC that a budget doesn't come from trees or fruits. It comes from microeconomic factors that need to take place within the country: Firstly, there should be employment; from employment there are savings; from savings there is consumption; and from consumption Sars is able to make a collection. Based on that, Sars will be able to collect enough revenue. Then we will be able to appropriate enough money to the departments. So, let us not look at this like it is the ANC-led government that decided to deplete the money. No! When people have knowledge deficit, they must go school and learn Economics. [Applause.]

They must understand finance. They must understand the things that make the depletion of the budget. Unless you understand these in a scientific way, then you will point fingers for no reason. Understand the microeconomic factors.

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 48

We have to improve; we have to bring the private sector; we have to bring especially you on the other side who are saying serious because you know what you have done right now. We need to bring everybody and say that this is our country. We have a passion. Let us try and provide with the little we have.

Nobody has denied corruption. The ANC has never denied corruption. The ANC has been talking about corruption, and the ANC is doing something about corruption. The only thing I am talking about is the depletion of the budget. So, let us be focused.

Otherwise, hon Chairperson, ...

*IsiZulu:*

... uKhongolose uthi impela uyayixhasa leBhajethi. Ngiyabonga, Sihlalo.

The MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENCY: House Chair, thank you very much to all and the members who have taken part in the debate. Hon chair of the committee, we have noted the report. So, we will pay attention to the issues that you have raised. To hon Cassim: Most of what you said is true and we agree with you. Where we don't agree is when you say the DA would have done a

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 49

different spatial planning. I just want to point out that here, in Cape Town, is the most glaring exemplary place of apartheid spatial planning. That is where the DA runs.

[Applause.]

So, I think before you say you do things differently, just do them, so that we can say yes we can see, they are happening. However, when you compare Langa, Nyanga, Cape Flats, Khayelitsha and Atlantis with Bishop's Court, Camps Bay and others, you can see that what you are saying is just grand standing. You are not practising it here where you have power. Otherwise, as for the rest, I agree with you.

To hon Ntlangwini of the EFF: Yes, I also agree with you that data is very important for all the reasons that you have mentioned. I can't say you are wrong. So, I agree and I am happy that you are supporting the budget. I didn't quite hear the DA but I think they support this budget. [Interjections.] [Laughter.]

Then, to the IFP again: I agree and I take note of your emphasis that the social statistics in the rural and poor areas is important. I am sure the SG is also taking note of that amongst other things. Of course, Baba Ntombela again has

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 50

raised very important issues that we agree with. You can't lead people out of poverty if you don't know where they are, how many they are and what is causing their poverty. So, we agree with him.

Whilst we are still discussing with Treasury, we are also making sure that there is comprehensive reprioritisation process, so that the core basic statistics is not undermined. We also want to say something on the Census 2021. I will just give you how we are planning it as we have already started planning.

This year, we are focusing on developing and testing the methodology chosen as well as consulting with national stakeholders. In 2019-20, we will maintain the focus on demarcating the whole country and also further testing of the innovative solutions that we are bringing. So, we will keep you informed of the plans as we run up to the census.

I agree that we should be concerned about the days of sick leave because ideally it would be nice to have a workforce that doesn't fall sick. However, I also want to assure you that Statistics SA is still below the national average of sick

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY SESSION – COMMITTEE ROOM E249

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2018

PAGE: 51

leave usage. So, we are concerned because we should all be healthy, but we are still below the average.

I think that is all what I really want to say and to thank you again for ensuring that my re-entry into these debates is very smooth and soft landing. Thank you. [Applause.]

Debate concluded.

House adjourned at 15:34.