**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**SASSA BRIEFS SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE ON ANNUAL REPORT**

The South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) appeared before the Portfolio Committee on Social Development today to brief the committee on its annual report for the 2021/22 financial year.

During the engagements, SASSA was asked about the slow uptake of the child support grant for orphans. SASSA’s Executive Manager: Grants Administration Mr Brenton van Vrede replied that SASSA will soon launch an awareness campaign about the grant on national community radio stations in collaboration with other departments, such Home Affairs.

 In response to another question about delays in distributing the Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress grant, Mr van Vrede stated that the delays are the result of following the Auditor-General’s recommendation that SASSA check its information before distributing grants in an effort to fight fraud. The problem with this suggestion, however, is that SASSA does not generate its own data, but rather sources it from other government agencies, making verification difficult and some sometimes causing delays in grant distribution.

The committee also wanted to know how many migrants and asylum seeker receive this grant. SASSA does not pay this grant to migrants and asylum seekers, the committee was told, but only to refuges and well over 15 000 receive it.

Updating the committee on what has happened to public servants who unlawfully applied for Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress grants, Mr van Vrede replied that disciplinary processes are being followed and losses to fraud are being recovered. Some cases have also been referred to law enforcement agencies for criminal prosecution.

The committee also wanted to know what SASSA plans to do about recurring adverse findings against it from the Auditor-General. SASSA General Manager Mr Hlengani Bila replied, “We are in the process of acquiring external quality assurance for some of our findings that date back to the previous tenures of the agency. We are doing this with the assistance of the National Treasury. But also, we are looking at improving our own internal audits instruments.”

Of 900 financial misconduct cases, 829 of them have been finalised. This is a significant step in resolving the breach in procurement regulations and supply chain management.

When asked how SASSA intends to instil a culture of consequence management in the agency, Mr Bila assured the committee that management has improved discipline and is finalising cases of fraud against staff. It is also improving supply chain management and is also now conducting pre-audits of tender awards.

**Abel Mputing**
**14 October 2022**