**DRAFT BUDGET DEBATE: STATISTICS SOUTH AFRICA**

1. House Chairperson, an entity like Statistics South Africa exist for a strategic and practical purpose. It does not exist as a by-the-way or a nice to have, it exists because we need reliable data to inform policies and programmes.
2. Businesses, civil society, political parties and many other stakeholders rely on competent and well resources Stats SA to give us credible data to make decisions, implement programmes and assess the impact of these programmes we implement.
3. You need reliable information to know how to allocate limited resources when you table a budget.
4. However, it appears that there is a well-coordinated and deliberate effort to collapse and reduce Stats SA into a weak institution.
5. Since we arrived here in Parliament in 2014, we have consistently raised our concerns with all the budget cuts that Stats SA has suffered.
6. The organisation has a more than 20% vacancy rate because it can not compete with the private sector to attract the best social scientists, economists; planners, geographers, statisticians and many other professionals it needs to continue to do its work.
7. In the recent past, we have witnessed many committed professionals opting to leave for the private sector instead of serving the country in such noble professions because of the freezing of appointments and promotions because of budget cuts.
8. House Chairperson, we know that the former Statistician-General Dr Pali Lehohla left Stats SA because he was vocal about this situation.
9. He stood up against political adventurism when the ANC government wanted Stats SA to hide their failures despite the facts of high levels of unemployment, inequality, poverty, alarming gender-based violence and many other social ills.
10. He stood up against senseless budget cuts that rendered Statistics South Africa useless.
11. For the longest time, Stats SA had to cancel and postpone poverty studies.
12. They don’t want a proper study of poverty in a country where more than 18 million beneficiaries of social grants, more than 11 million unemployed people and many other millions who are not accounted for in education, employment and training.
13. In 2021, members of the South African Statistics Council threatened to resign because of these budget cuts.
14. When the Minister of Finance tabled his 2022 budget, we were told that there is money that will be made for StatsSA to conduct an income and expenditure Survey. This is the survey that will be able to paint a clear picture of poverty:
15. We were also told that Stats SA will be able to hire new people and promote those already inside its ranks.
16. We find this very difficult to believe when the proposed budget today for the 2023/2024 financial year is essential going back to the budget of R2.6 billion, the same as it was in the financial year 2020/2021.
17. We know that in November 2022, Stats SA announced that they have commenced with the Income and Expenditure Survey. We don’t believe that the study will be credible if the Minister of Finance, the National Treasury and this Parliament are still playing games about funding for Stats SA.
18. We don’t have a good understanding of killings in KwaZulu-Natal because Stats SA does not play any role.
19. We don’t have a good understanding of the levels of hunger and the people who go to sleep with empty stomachs because Stats SA does not have enough funding to do proper surveys.
20. We don’t understand the levels of gender-based violence, patterns and character because Stats SA does not go into that space. This is made worse by police statistics that depend entirely on dockets.
21. There is a lot we don’t know that Stats SA should be telling us.
22. When we say we reject the proposed budget for Stats SA by the Minister of Finance, we don’t mean that we don’t want any money allocated to Stats SA, we mean that we reject budget cyst and the failure to allocate adequate resources to Stats SA.