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**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NUMBER: 1376**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 22 APRIL 2022**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NUMBER: 14 - 2022**

**1376. Ms L H Arries (EFF) to ask the Minister of Social Development:**

What steps and/or measures has her department put in place with regard to the lack of spending of the allocated budget in the Eastern Cape, where the provincial department of social development returned R67 million in unspent food aid to the National Treasury? NW1666E

**REPLY:**

The unspent budget that the Honourable Member is referring to is part of the 2021/22 Social Relief of Distress (SRD) roll Over allocation totalling R134 million in the Eastern Cape which was approved and confirmed by the National Treasury on 15 November 2021. The tender was only advertised on 10 December 2021 and the closing date for the adverts was scheduled for 21 January 2022 as a result of Provincial Treasury directives for Tenders not to close in the month of December but be extended to January 2022.

After the finalisation of tender processes, the actual distribution of food parcels to the intended beneficiaries only commenced on 2 March 2022. By 28 March 2022, only 22 787 beneficiaries were able to receive food parcels constituting 26% of the total target of 85 741 beneficiary households. This is attributed to other various factors in addition to the stringent time frames that are related to Service Provider challenges with capacity to deliver as expected including unnecessary demands made by local truck drivers in the various local municipalities.

The Department through the Internal Audit Unit is currently exploring appropriate internal control systems and Risks involved in considering the operationalisation of the SRD Programme as transfers in future utilising a Zero Monthly Fee Digital Account as a Bank Card System possibly with no Bank Charges.

The Department remains convinced that exploring the utilisation of an Easy Zero Bank Card system is the most efficient and cost-effective mechanism to enable SRD beneficiary family households' easy access to food.

This system and/or mechanism remains the best option for the operationalisation of the SRD Programme in the Eastern Cape, given its largely rural terrain and thus difficult to access particularly during rainy days.

The Department has further initiated a process of preparing a submission in the form of a motivation to Provincial Treasury for the approval of additional allocation of funding to the Social relief of Distress Programme as a specialist and most urgent intervention to enable the 62 954 beneficiary family households to have access to food as well as to address immediate needs of hunger, child poverty and malnutrition amongst the Eastern Cape poor and vulnerable groups of family households who are mostly falling under the category of No Income Households.