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**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NUMBER: 1576**

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**1576. Mrs G Opperman (DA) to ask the Minister of Social Development:**

With reference to the State of the Nation Address on 11 February 2021 in which the President, Mr M C Ramaphosa, stated that the Government was going to forge ahead with efforts to provide greater opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in the economy and in society in general, (a) what are the exact details of how the SA Social Security Agency (SASSA) envisages bringing about economic liberty for persons living with disabilities and (b) on what specific plans will SASSA embark to achieve the goal? NW1782E

**REPLY:**

a) SASSA currently links all children benefiting from social grants who are in matric to the Departments of Basic Education and Higher Education, so that they can be considered for NSFAS funding for further education. This is done in an effort to foster economic independence and break the inter-generational dependence on social grants.

With regard to citizens who receive disability grants, the ability to link them to opportunities is slightly more challenging. One of the qualifying criteria for a person to receive a disability grant is that the disability must be such that it prevents the person from being employed or able to support him/herself. The persons who receive permanent disability grants are effectively excluded from the open labour market. However, those who receive temporary disability grants, where the condition is likely to improve to the extent that it does not prevent the person from being employed, should be the target for opportunities.

In addition to SASSA interventions, DSD continues to support Persons with Disabilities in improving their socio-economic conditions with the following programmes:

* **Protective Workshops**

This programme seeks to improve and enhance the quality of life for persons with disabilities through socio-economic development programme, in order to ensure their full and equal inclusion into mainstream society and economy. The key elements of this programme are psycho-social developmental services, inclusion of persons with disabilities as important role-players in mainstream socio-economic growth and development and promoting income generating programmes through business partnerships between government departments, the business sector and protective workshops, functioning under the auspices of the NGOs.

* **Residential Facilities**

Residential facilities provide protection, support, stimulation, skills development and rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities who are unable to live independently, making provision for the ultimate re-integration back to the community, where possible. Most residential facilities have protective workshops empowering residents and persons with disabilities from surrounding communities through psycho-social programme, skills development and business skills. DSD will continue to support and subside these protective workshops, residential facilities and Independent Living facilities and Supported Living facilities through the country.

* **Disability Mainstreaming**

This programme is implemented through a two-pronged approach:

* The provincial departments implement disability mainstreaming services within the Welfare services to facilitate the mainstreaming of disability across all services.
* Through a technical cooperation project implemented since 2012 in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to develop approaches on the empowerment of persons with disabilities and disability mainstreaming (the DEM approach) towards the promotion of social participation of

Persons with Disabilities in South Africa.

* The above-mentioned DEM project engages key departments, including local government and other stakeholders to identify and address disabling barriers, negative attitude and exclusion, as well as ensuring that persons with disabilities play central role in creating an inclusive society as change agents in order to improve their quality of life in line with the vision of the National Development Plan (NDP).
* **Capacity Building/Training Programme on Covid-19**

Children with disabilities and their parents have faced difficulties in accessing significant information such as COVID-19 news, especially in rural areas. As a measure against COVID-19, DSD in collaboration with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) plans to conduct training for children with disabilities and their parents to deliver information effectively on COVID-19 in a train-the-trainer format.

**b)** The creation of opportunities for persons with disabilities is not a SASSA or Social Development sector responsibility alone, but requires a whole of government response.

Applicants for the R350 social relief grant who self-declared disabilities totalled 1 405 824. An initiative which has already been implemented is to try and link the applicants for the social relief grant who are aged between 18 and 35 with opportunities through cooperation with the Presidency. A project has been implemented in cooperation with both the public and private sector to list opportunities for employment and training for youth on the Youth.mobi website. SASSA sent approximately 6,5 million SMS notifications to the youth who had applied for the social relief grant (including those who self-reported disabilities) to advise them to register on the website.

The other initiative to provide opportunities for persons with disabilities is through direct employment. SASSA has a target to ensure that a minimum of 3% of the labour force comprises people with disabilities. We currently have achieved a total of 2.2%.

In addition to SASSA’s interventions, DSD has several plans including the following to enable persons with disabilities to achieve economic liberation:

* **Protective Workshops and Residential Facilities**

DSD has developed a Delivery Model for Protective Workshops that recognizes a need to identify beneficiaries’ barriers impeding their development and growth. An experiential learning will be conducted in nine provinces focussing on the following components of this Model:

* Psychosocial and Personal skills, including assessment, social services, self-care, life skills and assistive devices.
* Workplace Skills Development focusing on technical skills, job coaching, vocational, ABET, financial management, business skills, entrepreneurship and simulations.
* Supported Employment, including job placement, internships, job coaching, contract work, apprenticeship and learnership.

The key determinant factor for the successful implementation of the delivery model is collaboration with key and relevant stakeholders such as the Departments of Health, Trade and Industry, Small Business Development, Education, Labour, disabled people’s organizations and private sector partners.

DSD plans to identify residential facilities that have good practice protective workshops that have established partnerships with the private sector implementing economic empowerment programmes and contributing to the independent living of persons with disabilities in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons Disabilities.

* **Disability Mainstreaming**

DSD is planning to roll out the DSD/ JICA’s Guidelines on Empowerment of Persons with disabilities and Disability Mainstreaming (DEM) that were implemented Limpopo, KZN, Eastern Cape, Free State in Northern Cape and Mpumalanga provinces in 2021-2022 financial year, as follows:-

* Create a platform to roll out disability mainstreaming through supportive partnerships and cooperation among provincial governments, municipalities, relevant departments, NGOs, Disabled People Organizations (DPOs), national and international organizations.
* Empowering persons with disabilities through leadership training and strengthening the capacity of disabled people organizations and mainstreaming through creating barrier free environments to ensure the active participation of persons with disabilities in society.
* Establishing partnership with government departments that have shown interest in utilising the DEM guidelines to enhance the integration of disability considerations in government services.
* Consultation with SALGA and COGTA to develop a programme to train municipalities on the Guidelines are at an advance stage.
* **Training in Covid-19**

The planned DSD/ Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Covid-19 Training project for 9 provinces will focus on obtaining knowledge and skills on prevention, containment and management of COVID-19 and consists of the following two capacity development programmes:

* Training of Trainers for social workers in DSD and NGOs.
* Workshop for persons with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities.

Capacitated persons with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities will be able to share knowledge and skills obtained with their families, friends and communities, including participating in the rolling out of the training. They will subsequently be able to participate and benefit from mainstream economy, despite the adverse impact of this pandemic.