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**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NUMBER: 31**

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

In light of the long queues at post offices for persons to receive their COVID-19 grants of R350, what steps has she taken to ensure that there is a better way of distributing the grants, without subjecting persons to the indignity of waiting for hours to be assisted? NW33E

**REPLY:**

When the special relief grant of R350 per month was introduced, it was expected that the majority of the applicants would have the grant paid into their personal bank accounts. The second option was to pay through mobile money to a cell phone. However, on implementation, it was found that the number of clients who provided banking details was relatively small, while the process to positively link a cell phone number to a specific client, as required by National Treasury before any payments could be made to that number, did not yield the desired results.

Of the total approved grants paid to date, approximately 66% are paid through SAPO, 30% through direct deposits into bank accounts and less than 5% through mobile money. This has placed great strain on the post office infrastructure, and has resulted in long queues outside post offices every day.

Initiatives implemented to try and manage the queues at post offices include the following:

* The placement of volunteers at the busier post offices to assist with queue management ensuring that social distancing is maintained, and reminding all to keep their masks on at all times;
* Scheduling clients through sending SMS notifications as to when they should collect their money. The recent SMS notifications have included the name of the post office at which the client should collect, if this information is available from previous collection history;
* Encouraging clients to change the payment method by capturing their bank account details on the SASSA SRD website; and
* SAPO has introduced staggering of collection according the last 3 digits of the ID number, so, for example those whose ID numbers end in 080 and 081 are allocated a specific date; those whose IDs end in 082 and 083 another day, and so on.

With the extension of the grant for a further 3 month period, the communication to clients to advise them to capture their banking details on the website has been strengthened.