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**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NUMBER: 578**

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**578. Mr K Ceza (EFF) to ask the Minister of Social Development:**

What measures did her department undertake to ensure that priority is given very early to the (a) rural areas and (b) informal settlements during the lockdown to curb the spread of COVID-19? NW769E

**REPLY:**

**Eastern Cape:**

**Departmental Interventions**

As part of intervention strategies, the Department of Social Development has implemented the following activities to Rural Areas and Informal Settlements:

* The Eastern Cape Department of Social Development teamed with South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) and co- ordinated the lists of destitute people from all Local Municipalities who were forced to stay at home, as per COVID- 19 Regulations and were not able to do their temporal work for their living. These lists were submitted to SASSA for assessment and received Social Relief of Distress in the form of food parcels from their budget.

* Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in the form of face masks, hand gloves and sanitizers were provided by Provincial office to all Department of Social Development (DSD) offices in order for Social Service Practitioners to be able to interact with all communities in their sphere of operations and continue the services during lockdown as essential service workers.
* The Department formed part of the COVID-19 Ward-Based Rapid Response Teams which were created by Eastern Cape Provincial Government that aimed at prevention, outreach and educational programmes to the rural and informal communities through joint operations with other stakeholders such as Department of Education and Health on the learner support programmes for the Grade 12 learners (e.g. coping mechanisms and family support programmes).

* Community Nutrition Development Centres (CNDC) were closed as per the national directive however food parcels were provided to all 33 CNDCs in 6 District Municipalities and 2 Metropolitan through “Knock and Drop” for CNDC participants to prepare food from their homes and not eating from the centre in order to apply social distancing.
* Psycho- Social services in the form of In-Depth Telephone Interviews and Counselling Services were provided to people infected and affected by COVID- 19 living in Informal Settlements and Rural Areas including those referred by Department of Health and Department of Education. The service was later extended to contact sessions with the change of levels of lockdown.
* The Department established 19 Shelters for the Homeless People in the 6 Districts and 2 Metropolitans Municipalities for the vulnerable individuals that were found homeless around Towns, Cities and Informal Settlements. Homeless People were provided with food, accommodation and psychosocial support during their stay in the Shelters. Social Service Practitioners also unified some of the homeless people with their families after being screened for COVID-19.
* The Eastern Cape Department of Social Development has spent R5, 239, 000 from Social Relief of Distress (SRD) budget on food parcels for 3,362 households/ families who are needy especially those staying in Informal Settlements and Rural Areas. The Department has also received additional budget of R78million on SRD to cover families in need. The Department is considering provision of food voucher or bank generated coupons amounting R750 per family and discussions are at an advanced stage between Provincial office and the bank for implementation to take place.
* Early Childhood Development Centres (ECD) centres were closed as per the national directive ever since 26 March 2020 when Lockdown started. The Department funds 2, 933Early Childhood Development Centres from the Equitable Share amounting to R219, 704, 000 and 1310 ECD centres from Conditional Grant amounting to R123, 817, 000. Households with ECD learners within Rural Areas and Informal Settlements were prioritised for provision of Food Parcels under Social Relief of Distress. The DSD has embarked on the process of assessment and verification of ECD centres, in preparation for supporting their opening which revealed that most of them were not ready due to unavailability of PPE.
* The steep rise of Gender Based Violence statistics after the National Lockdown, necessitated the Department of Social Development to re-open Victim Empowerment Programme (VEP) Centers to back up Social Service Practitioners with all volunteers who were recruited under VEP in May 2020. Volunteers together with Social Workers were providing Psychosocial Support and Counselling to the infected and affected individuals in the rural and informal communities.

**Free State:**

At the time of responding to this question; the province had not yet provided their response.

**Gauteng:**

The Department funds NPOs across the Province. These NPOs targets risk areas with high rates of poverty, unemployment and social related issues. These areas include informal settlements and rural areas, noting that Gauteng demographics is characterized by semi-rural / urban areas.

Whilst ECDs remained closed during the Lockdown, all other NPOs rendering services to vulnerable groups were provided with 1st Quarter subsidy payment to assist the NPOs in putting the necessary safety compliance measures in place to ensure minimal disruption in service delivery and curb the spread of COVID-19.

In addition, the Department had firstly partnered with the Church of Scientology to decontaminate residential facilities (Old Age Homes and Homes for Disabled) and Homeless, secondly facilitated and supported NPOs with the procurement of Personal Protective Equipment, and thirdly guided and provided training on safety protocols.

In all of the above interventions, the Department targets all areas where there is a need for services whilst ensuring safety measures are in place at all times.

**KwaZulu-Natal:**

KwaZulu-Natal Social Development suspended operations in the ECD Centre, Community Care Centres for the elderly, rehabilitation programs for people living with disability, CND’s including youth academies operations were suspended during lockdown to curb the spread of covid19.

The Department further suspended public visits to residential facilities and gatherings targeting more than 50 people.

In the main, a large proportion of services provided by the department target communities in rural areas, per-urban areas including informal settlements and townships therefore the suspension of these services was a way of curbing the spread of covid19 in communities mentioned above.

**Limpopo:**

The Limpopo Department of Social Development has put in place the following measures to curtail the spread of COVID-19 in rural areas:

* Provision of directions prevented members of the public from visiting residential facilities and our institutions
* Psychosocial support services to the infected and affected members of the community
* Appointment of Covid-19 compliance officers in all institutions
* Training by Department of Health to the Covid-19 members of the screening committee
* PPE’s provided to our facilities and institutions
* Strategies and protocols have been developed on the management of COVID-19 in residential facilities and service points in the rural areas.
* Capacity has been built on officials working in communities such as Social Workers and Community Development Practitioners and those working in facilities of care for ability to self-protect and that beneficiaries in facilities.
* Ongoing plans in place to monitor facilities of care and to ensure that measures are in place to prevent spread of the virus in line with national regulations.

The facilities have been provided with PPE’s for all officials as well as all beneficiaries.

**Mpumalanga:**

* All services that required direct contact with clients were suspended to curb the spread of COVID 19.
* The Department operated as a nerve centre at Provincial, District and Local level to coordinate and provide services to clients in distress.
* The Department also opened a call centre for clients to call and or send sms and please call me for services required.
* The Department worked closely with other stakeholders to ensure proper referrals for clients who needed services.

**North West:**

The Department of Social Development in the North West implemented the following measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in rural areas:

Developed strategy and protocols on management of COVID 19 in residential facilities for older persons and Persons with Disabilities.

Training provided to 96 on the strategy and protocol to employees in the Department and those working in residential care facilities so that they protect themselves in their respective communities and the residents / beneficiaries in facilities.

61 x Residential care facilities monitored to ensure that measures are in place to prevent the spread of the virus as per the protocols.

61 x facilities provided with PPE of 2x5lt sanitizer and 2 x boxes of 50 pcs of mask per facility.

Intervened in 15 residential care facilities that had outbreaks of COVID 19 to ensure that protocols are complied with to curb the spread of the virus.

**Northern Cape:**

(a)(b) Rural areas and informal settlements. All officials were available to intervene in the following:

* Reported cases of Child abuse, Elderly Abuse or Neglect as well as Gender Based Violence.
* Victims were removed and placed in Child and Youth Care Centres, Old Age Homes or Shelters for Victims of GBV.
* Homeless persons were accommodated in temporary shelters and re-unified with family members as soon as possible.
* DSD took responsibility for transporting persons from these areas to the appropriate facilities and also linked with the Department of Health for assistance when needed.
* Officials received PPEs and were informed about the protocol to be followed when interacting with community members to limit the risk of infection with the Corona virus.
* Quarterly subsidies were paid for April - June 2020 to all funded organisations to pay the salaries of their professional and support staff including volunteers and caregivers and administration costs. From July 2020 the normal subsidy payment process applied.
* Monthly subsidies are paid to ECD Centres from April - September 2020 despite being closed. It is applicable to those who are subsidized, registered and submitted business plans and they receive 60% of the subsidy (40% for salaries and 20% for administration).
* Social Relief of Distress (Food Parcels and Clothing vouches) were provided to families assessed to be unable to meet their basic needs and are victims of disasters e.g. houses or belongings destroyed because of fires and floods.

• In essence the DSD services are rural biased. Out of a cohort of 143 Nutrition Centres, a total of 123 Nutrition Centres are located in rural areas and rendering food provision services in these rural areas.

• The Department took a deliberate decision not to open the Nutrition Centres, as that would have caused the convergence of people at these centres (creating a conducive environment for the spread of the virus).

• The Department instead worked with its DSD District Offices and Local Municipalities on rendering food provision services to DSD beneficiaries and indigent households on their indigent registers/beneficiary lists. The majority of the municipal indigent households are residing in rural areas and informal settlements and received food security services in the form of food parcels.

• To date 58 136 households received food parcels and to facilitate social distancing and to ensure that the poor and vulnerable are not exposed to risks associated with Covid-19, these food parcels were hand delivered/door-to-door to individual households.

• Officials from the Department were also provided with PPEs to protect themselves and household members to whom food provision services were rendered.

**Western Cape:**

* Protocols have been put in place between the WC provincial DSD and the Department of Health with regards to referrals of COVID-19 outbreaks at old age homes.
* Guidelines were also developed for Disabled Homes, Homeless Shelters and Shelters for Abuse Women
* Guidelines were developed for rendering statutory services related to child protection services.
* All NGOs contracted by the Department of Social Development was still paid a monthly subsidy and all NPOs received their full subsidies during the lock-down period in Western Cape. This ensured that NPOs could continue supporting vulnerable groups.
* Funds were made available to old age homes for the management of COVID19, providing of PPE, relief staff and covid 19 health training and support to the staff.
* Funds have been made available for disabled Homes for the management of COVID 19
* Funds were made available for PPE in preparation for the re-opening of ECD partial care facilities
* ECD facilities were assisted in the self-assessment of readiness for the re-opening after lockdown level 3.
* Additional masks, sanitizers, soap and hygiene products have been distributed to 117 old age homes, 40 Disabled Homes, 26 Homeless Shelter, 6 Foster Cluster Care Homes and 20 Shelters for Abuse Woman.
* Various NPOs rendering child designated work were also provided with masks for the Social Workers. The PPE’s were donations from private companies.
* Child Designated NPOs and DSD local offices continued providing psycho-social support to children and their families.
* DSD also facilitated the deployment of volunteers to deep-clean old age homes, disabled Homes, Shelters and inpatient treatment centres – with a focus on facilities in vulnerable communities, hotspot areas and rural areas
* Food parcels were distributed to communities
* WC Department of Education continued with their school feeding schemes during lockdown
* ECDs also provided food to children during lockdown
* Drop-in-centres and Isibindi Sites provided food during lockdown.