Official reply: 07 June 2016

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION 640/2016**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

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**640. Ms N P Sonti (EFF) to ask the Minister of Social Development:**

(a) What amount has her department budgeted for food parcels for 2016, (b) how many of the food parcel projects are planned for the period 1 May 2016 to 31 August 2016 and (c) what steps has her department taken to dispel the notion that her department allegedly disburses food parcels as a mechanism to buy votes during election periods? NW753E

**Reply:**

1. An amount of R500 000 000 has been made available for the social relief of distress programme for the 2016/17 financial year. Social relief of distress is a comprehensive programme which aims to meet the immediate material needs of citizens who experience a crisis. Food parcels are only one component of this programme. Social relief of distress may be provided in the form of food parcels, food vouchers, school uniforms, humanitarian support in times of disasters and/or cash, under certain circumstances.
2. The social relief of distress programme is a needs driven programme, in that citizens who find themselves in such dire circumstances that they are unable to meet their or their family’s basic needs may apply for this assistance at SASSA offices and service points. In addition, where SASSA becomes aware of a disaster which has affected community members. The current drought is one such example of a natural disaster which may prompt the provision of social relief of distress.

It is therefore difficult to know in advance how many people will apply for this form of support. In terms of the Annual Performance Plan, SASSA has targeted to provide social relief of distress to 400 000 people. Of these, 160 000 are targeted for assistance in the first 2 quarters of the new financial year. However, it should be noted that these are projected numbers – the actual numbers will only be known when people come forward in response to a crisis situation. The numbers may be affected by natural disasters, which cannot be predicted, or economic circumstances in the country.

1. Any social relief of distress is provided to South African citizens, permanent residents and refugees, who meet the criteria as set in the Social Assistance Act, Act 13 of 2004 and its Regulations. This means that every person who receives social relief of distress has gone through a screening and application process. These applications are available for audit.

The criteria which applicants must meet before they are considered for social relief of distress are that, in addition to the citizenship criteria, the applicant must have insufficient funds, and: meet one or more of the following-

Is awaiting payment of an approved grant;

The breadwinner has been assessed as being disabled for a period of less than 6 months;

The breadwinner of that household has died and application is made within 12 months of the death;

The breadwinner of that household has been admitted to a private or public institution for at least one month;

Where the refusal may cause undue hardship; or

The household has been affected by a disaster.

Social relief of distress is an on-going legislated programme which is budgeted for and implemented every year.