

Speech by honourable Minister Suzan Shabangu, (ANC) MP; Minister of Social Development on the occasion of the Department of Social Development's Budget Vote 17

Old Assembly Chamber - Parliament, Cape Town, Wednesday, 09 May 2018

Honourable Chairperson

Honourable Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee Ms Zoleka Capa

Honourable Members: Henrieta Bogopane-Zulu

Distinguished Guests

I would like to take this opportunity to pass condolences to the Bangani Family in Taiwane, an informal settlement in Cape Town, who lost eight family members in a fire earlier this week. This tragedy is a constant reminder of the stubborn persistence of inadequate Human Settlements and access to land for the poor and the destitute.

Together with the National Department of Human Settlements, we have intervened to meet the challenges faced by this family. We will assist in addressing their plight, including the provision of social workers and counselling. The DA Western Cape Government continues to turn a blind eye on the plight of the poor in this province.

It is to these and other tragedies that we have a moral responsibility to respond in assisting our communities.

Chairperson

In April we have lost Winnie Mandela, George Nene and Zola Skweyiya. It is also in April that we are reminded of the cruel murder of comrade Chris Hani, the passing away of Oliver Tambo and the hanging of Solomon Mahlangu. These were struggle heroes who committed themselves to the cause of our freedom.

We pay tribute to one of our own, former Minister of Social Development Dr Zola Skweyiya who fell this April. In him, South Africa had a committed visionary who appreciated the primacy of accountable leadership. He instituted the Batho Pele principle which should continue to guide our service delivery approach. Are we able today to attest to the commitment of public servants to this principle?

To his memory we commit to the upliftment of the downtrodden and the vulnerable amongst us.

This year we are celebrating 100 years of the life of our icon Nelson Mandela. He embodied our struggle and we are grateful of his leadership and commitment he made to the cause of freedoms that we all enjoy today. It was in 1995 at the United Nations World Summit for Social Development, that President Mandela cautioned:

"More often, however, the need to pursue the good of all has been subsumed under the narrow interest of the self or the corporate unit. The endless cycle then becomes: better circumstances for a few, precarious ones for many, and indeed, worse for the majority."

"You know what it means to be a midwife? You have got to carry a big suitcase full of bottles and for your lotions that you are going to use, and bowls and receivers, and we used to carry those suitcases on our heads."

Those of us who were born before modern technologies can relate to the experience and commitment of these midwives of which Ma Sisulu was one of them.

Chairperson

The Department of Social Development is well-placed to translate the commitment of these fallen heroes to social justice through the preservation of dignity and the provision of social security in a manner that helps alleviate poverty and suffering.

Our programmes are structured to ensure South Africans are protected against vulnerability through provision of a comprehensive, integrated and sustainable development services.

In his State of the Nation Address this year, President Ramaphosa acknowledged that public finances have been constrained limiting the ability of government to expand its investment in economic and social development. We are therefore mindful of the economic challenges confronting us.

We have taken measures to reduce the cost of living, especially for the poor. Government's free basic services programme currently supports more than 3.5 million indigent households.

Administration R383 million

Social Assistance allocation of R163 billion is a transfer payment to the South African Social Security Agency

Social Security Policy and Administration R7.9 billion

Welfare Services, Policy Development and Implementation Support R1.28 billion

Social Policy and Integrated Service Delivery R392 million

The Department also transfers R200 million to the National Development Agency.

I wish to underscore the fact that the Department has received an unqualified audit for the Financial Years 2015/2016 and 2016/17 respectively. We will continue to strive to achieve clean audits for the remaining final years of this term.

Chairperson

In line with the National Development Plan, for the balance of the Medium Term Expenditure Framework, the Department will focus on the following sector priorities:

Reforming the social welfare sector and services to deliver better results;

Improving the provision of Early Childhood Development;

Strengthening community development interventions;

Deepening social assistance and access to social security; and

Strengthening coordination, integration, planning and monitoring and evaluation services.

We acknowledge that we are operating on a 2015 provisionally agreed structure. One of the primary tasks is to conclude the structure in consultation with the Department of Public Service and Administration together with National Treasury.

We want to assure Parliament and the Portfolio Committee that we will be coming back in the near future with a proposed structure towards bringing stability to the Department.

Chairperson

When I took office on the 26th of February this year, I was confronted by the SASSA tender matter. This

included the process of a tender for beneficiaries that receive their social assistance in cash.

A cash tender was advertised by SASSA in January 2018. However, the tender has been suspended due to identified challenges in the process and the suspension has been reported to the Constitutional Court. A final decision on the status of the tender will be made in due course.

I want to assure South Africans that we will comply with the Constitutional Court order to ensure that our beneficiaries continue to receive their social grants at all times.

In 2013, the Constitutional Court ruled that the tender awarded to CPS by SASSA was invalid. However, the Court suspended the invalidity for a period of five years until 2017 when SASSA was expected to report to the Court on corrective measures.

The five-year extension did not produce the desirable outcome. In the failure of corrective measures, the Court granted a further extension of the CPS contract for the payment of social grants. The Court further extended the suspension of the declaration of invalidity of the contract for a period of 12 months, ending 31 March 2018.

Currently, SASSA is working in partnership with the South African Post Office for a seamless card-swap from SASSA into SAPO Cards. The process of card swap started in April this year at SAPO branches.

Chairperson

On 23rd April, I appointed Mr Abraham Mahlangu, currently employed as the Chief Information Officer of SASSA as the Acting CEO.

Cabinet appointed an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Comprehensive Social Assistance chaired by Minister in the Presidency, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. This Committee plays an oversight role in ensuring that the department meets its obligation.

It is the responsibility of the Department of Social Development to provide social welfare services to the most vulnerable members of society. We have set ourselves the strategic goal to achieve the following by 2019:

Strengthen social welfare service delivery through legislative and policy review;
Promote, protect and empower persons with disabilities through the development and implementation of legislation, policies and programmes.

The Deputy Minister will elaborate further the empowerment of persons, HIV/AIDS and victim empowerment and disabilities in her Budget Vote Speech.

Integrated workforce planning has been the neglected area in the sector leading to poor planning, undefined work profiles, uncoordinated training, recruitment, development and retention of the workforce.

In response to all of these challenges, the Department of Social Development conducted a national analysis of the geographic distribution and workload requirements of the Social Service Practitioners across all provinces.

We are attending to the challenges faced by Social Workers in the country. There are currently, 3 864 unemployed Social Work graduates while there remains a need for their services across various sectors. The Department will continuously help explore opportunities for the absorption of these social workers into the workforce.

We recognize the critical role played by social work veterans in improving the image of social work the profession and in providing mentorship to young social workers through supervision. We continue to rely on social work veterans in our responses to disasters at national and provincial levels. We will continue to engage their structures to improve our capacity to deliver services by working with other government departments such as Basic Education, Higher Education, Correctional Services and Health.

Early this year, we have had to respond to the trafficking of young children as young as two years-old across our borders. We have had to manage the repatriation of unaccompanied and undocumented children back to their country of origin. The Children's Act, which came into operation in 2010, has been amended to clearly define Adoption Social Workers and their responsibilities.

In October 2017, the Department held a colloquium to address lack of coordination amongst government departments and proper documentation of separated and unaccompanied migrant children which prevents children from accessing their full human rights. In particular, the colloquium considered practical mechanisms to deal with migrant children from the point of arrival to documentation family tracing and procedures to return to their country of origin.

Further, the Department conducted capacity building exercises for social workers who have been identified by the respective provinces to equip them with skills and competencies to make them ready to render adoption services.

Chairperson

The white paper review process is informed by the principles and the agenda set in the National Development Plan (NDP) which provides the long term vision for development and an agenda until 2030 for South Africa that replaces that of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) of the nineties.

There is a need to reach consensus on what this vision and agenda means for social development in terms of the proposals put forward in the White Paper of 1997, therefore the new draft white paper aims to clarify the concept of developmental social welfare (DSW) that serves as the underlying concept for the White Paper's proposals.

The White Paper's clarity of the concept of developmental social welfare (DSW) is an important advance that situated the problems of individuals, families and communities within South Africa's unique socio-political context of institutional racism and socio-economic inequality.

The Department has revised the Draft White Paper on Social Development to affirm the principles of our social developmental approach. In this framework, developmental social welfare is measured by elements such as the promotion of human rights; the use of partnerships to deliver services; the integration of socio-economic programmes to improve service delivery.

It is our commitment to finalise the Draft White Paper in this Financial Year to provide a legal framework for the sector.

In his State of the National Address, The President reminded us that breaking the cycle of poverty requires us to prioritise education of children of the poor. In this regard, government is committed to the attainment of universal access to Early Childhood Development for all children in South Africa by 2030.

Early Childhood Development programmes will continue to support the holistic development of young children underpinned by a strong coordinating mechanism.

Capacity to deliver Early Childhood Development services and programmes is being strengthened through

the development of a Human Resource Plan. This Plan involves the community by encouraging parents and caregivers to participate in developing the potential of their children. Together with National Treasury, we are finalizing a funding model for Early Childhood Development programmes including services for children with disabilities. We are working in collaboration with Basic Education to ensure alignment of our programmes to children.

For this Financial Year, an amount of R491 million has been allocated of which R412 million is for subsidy to reach 44 943 children. An additional R78.7 million has been allocated for infrastructure maintenance to renovate 369 Early Childhood Development centres. Currently, the total number of registered Early Childhood Development centers is 29 000 with a total of 827 338 children benefitting from these centers.

Chairperson

We will also take forward the work already started on the National Drug Master Plan 2018-2022 to ensure that our anti-substance abuse interventions are accessible to communities. The Deputy Minister of Social Development will elaborate further on this work when she presents her speech.

We are responding to the President's call of encouraging our social partners to collaborate in building a social compact on which we will create drivers of economic growth. In this regard, we will convene a social sector summit during the course of this year to engage on solutions towards addressing the triple challenge of poverty, inequality and unemployment.

We are reviewing the Non-Profit Organisations Act of 1997 to ensure that Non-Profit Organisations are able to execute their mandate. This would also ensure compliance with requirements of good governance. The register increased from 172 429 in 2016/17 and we currently have 188 548 Non-Profit Organisations in our register.

We will continue to monitor the use of Non-Profit Organisations to ensure good governance and compliance to the Non-Profit Organisations Act. This year, we will also be implementing a revised funding policy for Non-Profit Organisations. This is part of government's national anti-terrorism strategy. Together with our partners, we will continue our efforts to respond to the challenges related to organisations working in the areas of human and drug trafficking.

Through our programmes, we are responding to the most devastating drought, which has severely impacted on our economy, social services and agricultural production. The most affected of provinces include the Western Cape, Northern Cape and the Eastern Cape.

Chairperson

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of South Africa's White Paper on Population Policy by the National Assembly. During the past twenty years great strides have been made towards the achievement of sustainable human development, which is the central objective of the Policy, especially through social development and health services, and enrolment in basic education.

The Department will complete a comprehensive progress review of the policy this year. This will lead to the convening of a national conference on migration and urbanisation by the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Population Policy with all three spheres of government. This conference will lay the basis for improved data and information on the movement of people in the country.

As part of Population Development, we will continue our work in strengthening sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The Department is a signatory to various international instruments that facilitate the work of the department. We are expected to provide periodical reports to our international commitments both at the African Union and multilateral organisations.

We are committed itself to provide professional services in conformity with International Social Services standards and subject to the laws applicable in South Africa on inter-country cases.

Chairperson

I wish to thank senior management team of the department led by the Acting Director-General; the Acting Chief Executive Officer and the executives of SASSA and the Chief Executive Officer of the National Development Agency. I thank the Deputy Minister for continued support and assistance.

In conclusion, I once again wish to assure all beneficiaries of our social grants programme that this government will pay the right social grant to the right person at the right time.

I Thank You!