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MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
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VOTE NO 19 - SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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PROCEEDINGS OF MINI-PLENARY SESSION - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Members of the mini-plenary session met at Committee Room M46 at 14:00.

House Chairperson Ms Z Majozi took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayer or meditation.

APPROPRIATION BILL

Debate on Vote No 19 - Social Development:

The MINISTER OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: Hon House Chair, Deputy Minister of Social Development, Mr Genief Hendricks, chairperson and members of the Portfolio Committee on Social Development and other members, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen and fellow South Africans, good afternoon. Hon Chair, thank you for the opportunity to table the Budget Vote

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19 of the Department of Social Development for the 2025-26 financial year.

As we table this budget, let us unite in solidarity to remember and honour the lives lost during the recent devastating floods in the Eastern Cape. Our thoughts and prayers are with all the affected families as they rebuild their lives. We also call to mind the countless victims of gender-based violence and femicide, whose pain echoes is a call for justice for Olorato Mongale, Tshegofatso, Pule, Nosicelo Mtebeni. These are just a few of some of the known victims of gender-based violence. We remember their names as a constant reminder of the work that remains to be done. We mourn the passing of the former Deputy President of the ANC, the Deputy President of South Africa, Mr David Mabuza. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family, friends and his organisation, the ANC, during this difficult time.

Hon Chair, this Budget Vote coincides with the celebrations of Tata Nelson Mandela, one of the most enduring and inspirational icons of our time. Madiba continues to inspire our people around the world to work in pursuit of a more humane society. On that, it would have been Madiba's 107th

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birthday. We are reminded of his pertinent words: "As long as poverty, injustice and gross inequality persist in our world, none of us can truly rest". Madiba's legacy continues to inspire us as we host the G20 Summit, a historical first for the African continent, under the theme: "Solidarity, Equality and Sustainability". South Africa's G20 Presidency will amplify Africa's voice in global governance, whilst ensuring that the development priorities of the continent and the global South finds expression on the agenda of the G20.

The Department of Social Development portfolio is participating in the Development Working Group and all the preparations of the G20 Social Summit scheduled for November this year.

Budget Vote 19 takes tune from the President Cyril Ramaphosa's state of the nation address and the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, MTEF, plan, both of which set out a clear path to build a humane society. As we reflect on the 70th anniversary of the Freedom Charter and 31 years of democracy, we take great pride in how far we have come as a nation. We remain steadfast in our commitment to the Freedom Charter's

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aspirations that: "The people shall share in the country's wealth".

This budget honours women pioneers who stood strong, sacrificed selflessly. No words can repay the debt we owe, but through this budget we commit ourselves to fulfil their aspirations of making our world a better place for all. I am grateful to stand on the shoulders of giants and pioneers of women like Mama Charlotte Maxeke, whose legacy for social justice resonates profoundly with our mandate. Her lifelong sacrifice is a reminder that the fight for equality and dignity for all is never easy, but always with it.

A year ago, I delivered my maiden Budget Vote Speech and pledged my unwavering commitment to join hands under the learner of the Government of National Unity to restore the dignity of our people. Since then, Deputy Minister and I have traversed the length and breadth of our country, listening and taking stock of what we must do better; responding to the lived experiences of our people. Looking back, I am proud of how much we have achieved. We have lived up to our commitment to stabilise the department and its entities. We have now filled the critical post of Deputy Director-General for

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Welfare Services and Chief Financial Officers in the department. We have advertised and we will soon fill the post of executive director for the inspectorate. We have filled the post of Sassa CEO and are now on a course to fill all vacant posts of Sassa regional executive managers.

The NYDA board is in the process of filling the vacant post of a CEO and a financial officer. Chair, I am also pleased to inform this House that the gender-based violence command centre is now fully operational. Members of the public can reach social workers via a 24/7, 365 days emergency line on 0800428428. The centre forms part of our mandate under Pillar 4 of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-based Violence and Femicide.

The progress made the progress made to date by our people and this department, we feel proud in that we are covering things that has not been done and that we articulated before. The financial year of our budget allocation is R294 billion. Of this amount, R284 billion is allocated for monthly direct transfer to R27 million social assistance beneficiaries. This constitutes 96% of our total budget. An amount of

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R24,7 billion rand is allocated to Sassa for grant administration over the MTEF period.

The national Department of Social Development has set aside an amount of R52 million as a transfer to 22 national councils. At the heart of our collective response lies the social grant system, a vital and consistent lifeline that reaches millions to ensure that no one is left behind every month. More than R19 million social grants are paid without fail. These grants continue to support those who are at risk of falling through the cracks.

A further R34,9 billion is added to the social assistance programme for COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress, a vital form of support for millions of unemployed and vulnerable South Africans. Approximately more than 18 million beneficiaries between the age of 18 and 59 years are reached every month. Our plans to modernise and transform Sassa into an efficient future ready organisation are fully on track. In this financial year, Sassa will continue to roll out the queue management system, self-service kiosk, scanning of beneficiary files and biometric systems. These ambitious services innovations are completed by the roll out of integrated

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community registration outreach programmes. Targeting the most vulnerable communities, we have allocated over R29 million to conduct R516 across the country.

Hon Chair, we remain vigilant to protect the integrity of our social assistance system and in this regard, we are currently conducting a review process in line with the social assistance regulations. It is not new as the previous review focused on public servants, this process is intended to ensure that we pay social grants to eligible beneficiaries. As we say: "Paying the right social grant to the right person at the right time and place,...

IsiZulu:

... njalo.

English:

The impact of the process has been substantially resulting in an annual saving of R1 billion. On this note, let me be very clear, we have not stopped or suspended any ground without due process. I wish to appeal to all beneficiaries who have received correspondence to visit Sassa offices and undergo a review process.

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Chair, we are forging ahead with processes to replace COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress with a permanent measure in the form of a basic income grant. Accordingly, we intend to re-table a policy proposal to Cabinet. The additional element of this policy proposal is to link beneficiaries to employment and sustainable livelihood opportunities. We will draw on the successes of the pilot projects underway in collaboration with the FinMark Trust.

We will continue to put Sassa on the best possible footing to meet the fraud threats we face, as well as those that will probably emerge in the future. To this end, we have allocated over R200 million over the MTEF period to detect, prevent and eliminate any form of fraud and corruption. We have completed the pilot of the beneficiary biometric system in four offices. Plans are underway to cover all Sassa offices by the end of this financial year. We are determined to ensure that those who steal money meant for the poor to feed their greed, are exposed and held accountable.

An amount of R216 million is allocated to the National Development Agency, NDA, in the current financial year for grant funding to civil society organisations. Given the high

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rates of unemployment, we need to support initiatives that promote local economic development, create job opportunities and reduce poverty. The NDA's extensive engagement across 22 wards has resulted in the establishment of 9 community-owned enterprises. The turnaround strategy has revitalised the agency, which has seen it successfully raising over R60 million to augment its budget.

We have commenced with the deregistration of noncompliant NPOs as per the provision of section (18) (1) of the NPO Act. To date, we have issued over 50 000 notices and deregistered over 15 000 NPOs. But may I hasten to add that not all NPOs are non-compliant, as we have seen an uptake in the number of those submitting their reports.

We welcome the Cabinet's recent decision to re-establish the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Gender-based Violence and Femicide in support of the 90-Day Acceleration Programme. This will give much-needed impetus to our national efforts to combat the twin challenges of gender-based violence and substance abuse. We will continue with the expansion of shelter services with a focus of 30 gender-based violence and femicide hotspots. Of the 52 districts, six districts do not

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have shelters yet. In this regard, we have allocated R102 million to accelerate the recommendation of the second Presidential Summit on Gender-based Violence and Femicide and the National Shelter Indaba.

Each one of us has an important role to play in confronting head on the harmful social norms that perpetuate this scourge in supporting survivors and holding perpetrators accountable. The burden of social ills has brought the need to employ more social service professionals, which five years remaining before 2030, we are off track in achieving the NDP target of employing 55 000 social work service professionals in the sector due to financial constraints. On this note, we condemn the killing of social workers who have become easy prey for criminals because of the nature of their work. On the legislative front, we intend to introduce the Victim Support Services Bill and the Children's Amendment Bill in this financial year.

Let me conclude by extending my appreciation to the Deputy Minister, Mr Ganief Hendricks, all members of the Portfolio Committee on Social Development, led by our chair, the MEC for Social Development in all provinces, the Director-General of

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the Department of Social Development, the CEO of Sassa, the acting CEO and the board of the NDA, and all staff in the department and agencies in the frontline for their hard work and services to our people. It is now my singular honour to table this Budget Vote 19 for your support. I thank you, hon Chairperson. [Applause.]

Mr K S RAMAILA: Chair, hon Minister and Deputy Minister, fellow South Africans, let me also join the Minister as the ANC keeps its banner in mourning the passing on of our Comrade, former Deputy President, David Mabuza. Today, we rise to speak in strong support of Budget Vote 19 for Social Development, a testament to our unwavering commitment to building a caring and inclusive society as we support the advancement of welfare services and community development, we must first acknowledge the explanatory leadership of our sector under the stewardship of Minister, C C Tolashe, her appointment as Minister represents the profound transformation of our movement, which has achieved as a liberation movement to a governing party that places women at the forefront of social transformation. Minister Tolashe's leadership exemplifies how women leaders can drive meaningful change while ensuring the efficient and prudent use of our limited resources. And within 12 months we

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must applaud the hon Minister for having ensured that within this short period of time, the Minister was able to appoint the Director-General, was able to appoint the CFO and was also able to appoint the CEO officers and many other strategic vacant positions. You are doing very well, Minister.

Hon Chair, we celebrate a significant legislative achievement with the committees' recent passage of the old Persons Amendment Bill. This Bill, which has now been sent to President Ramaphosa for signature, represents a crucial step forward in strengthening protection mechanisms for older persons in our country. The Amendment Bill introduces new definitions to improve interpretation provides for monitoring and evolution of services to older persons and significantly allows for the removal of older persons to temporary safe care without a court order under specific conditions.

Our department has demonstrated remarkable progress in protecting our most vulnerable citizens through comprehensive awareness campaigns on elder abuse, which directly aligns with the enhanced protective framework established by the Amendment Bill. The implementation of the Older Persons Act of 2006 has

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created a protective framework that ensures our elders live with dignity and security.

This legislative foundation is further strengthened by our policy coherence across vulnerable populations, particularly linking our work with children through the ongoing Children's Amendment Bill processes. While the Children's Amendment Bill faces implementation challenges, our department remains committed to ensuring policy alignment that protects both children and elderly persons as part of our comprehensive approach to social protection. The allocation of R319 for welfare services, policy development and implementation support enable us to monitor and strengthen services to the elderly, implement prevention programmes and build capacity across provinces. This investment reflects the ANC commitment to Ubuntu.

The principle that we are all interconnected and responsible for each other's well-being, our commitment to persons with disability extends beyond rhetoric to concrete action. The development of costing and funding mechanism for respite care services and the submission of the police of Social Development services for people with disability to

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demonstrates our systematic approach to be inclusive with R1,1 million disability grant beneficiaries. we will ensure that no one is left behind in our journey towards an inclusive society. Honourable Chairperson, the universal treatment curriculum is now being implemented in 12 public substance abuse treatment centres, ensuring standardized evidence-based treatment across the country.

This system approach to capacity build reflects our understanding that substance abuse is not merely a criminal justice issue, but a public health challenge requiring comprehensive intervention. However, we must acknowledge that central drug authority faces significant constraints that limit its effectiveness in fulfilling its mandate. The CDA has highlighted major challenges, including inadequate funding and capacity constraints, poor coordination across government departments with a silo mentality and the barriers to accessing affordable quality substance abuse treatment services. These challenges are further compounded by the CDC's placement with a single department, which affects its authority and ability to coordinate effectively across the sectors to address these realities. We are committed to

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strengthen the CDC's capacity and enhancing its authority to respond to the complex problem of substance abuse.

The need for a new, more integrated and evidence based five-year National Drug Master Plan requires enhanced support for coordination mechanism. We recognize that without addressing these structural constraints. Our efforts to combine substance abuse will continue to face significant obstacles.

Hon Chairperson, the implementation of the National Strategic Plan of Gender-based violence and femicides represents one of our most critical interventions. While we have made progress in establishing 134 dedicated GBVF desk at police stations in hotspots district, we must present a balanced assessment of our implementation efforts. The monitoring of psychosocial services, police implementation in 15 identified hotspot district demonstrates our data-driven approach to combating this scourge.

However, we acknowledge the implementation challenges that we have emerged. The delay in establishing National Council of Gender based violence and femicide has significantly hindered our efforts to enhance accountability and effectively address

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GBVF. Despite some progress in legal frameworks and service provision, challenges remain in financial reporting multi sectoral coordination and the establishment of key institutions.

The allocation of R21 million over the medium-term for GBV interventions underscores our commitment to addressing what President Ramaphosa has termed our second pandemic. However, we recognize that adequate funding must be coupled with effective coordination and implementation of mechanisms to achieve meaningful outcomes, and I must say hon Minister here has demonstrated a thorough and announced comprehension of the scarcity problem by ensuring the application of the theory of opportunity cost and this theory. It means the Minister was able to use limited resources to address limited resources of limited unlimited ones and needs of the society. The value the zero of opportunity costs deals with the value of what you give up by making a specific choice. By supporting this this vote, hon South Africa, hon members in South Africa, we are saying Minister must continue to pay the grants, must continue to pay the 2nd and 50 for children must be able to continue to pay the R370 for the unemployed. Must be able to intervene in the areas of disasters like she has intervened in the Eastern

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Cape has intervened in the KwaZulu-Natal and all other places we support this budget. Thank you. [Applause.]

IsiZulu:

Nk N A MTSHWENI: Sihlalo ohloniphekayo, asithobe kubanikazi bomhlaba, amakhosi, sihloniphe ubuholi obungabafundisi, bese sihlonipha umholi wamabutho woMkhonto weSizwe, uBaba uNxamalala, inkunzi yakithi eNkandla yemidwa yidwa, ekade kwasa beyidwengula ... [Ihlombe.] Sihloniphe amabutho onke oMkhonto weSizwe, aholwa ubaba uThumbeza, namalungu ahloniphekileyo ale Ndlu esikuyo, ngiyanibingelela.

Sihlalo ngizithola ngime lana egameni loMkhonto weSizwe ngenhliziyo ebuhlungu kakhulu. Ngiphokekile ukuthi ngingasemukeli isabelomali seshumi nesishagalolunye. Hhayi ngoba singathandi ukuthi abantu bacoshe openi bokuphila kodwa ngenxa yokuthi isabelo sincane kakhulu ukuhlangabezana nezidingo zokuphila kwabantu. Yonke into ekhona ezweni lakithi amanani ayo ayanyuka kakhulu. Okuphazamisa umuntu osebenzayo, oholayo, kakhulu kangakanani lo ongaholi ndawo othembele kulesi sabelo kuphela.

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Lo Mnyango uza lapha nezethulo ezinhle kakhulu, kodwa inhlupheko iyaghubeka idla lubi kubantu bakithi. Inhlupheko, nobubha, nokweswela, sizwa isililo nkalo zonke kubantu bakithi, noma lesi sabelo sesethuliwe. Ngokuqonda kwethu umsebenzi waloMnyango ukuguqula izimpilo zabantu. Umbuzo uthi: Ngokweqiniso ngempela phambi kukaNkulunku nakonembeza bethu lesi sabelo sanele yini ukuguqula izimpilo zabantu? Mhlawumpe ezinye izimpilo siyaziguqula kodwa siziguqulele ekuhluphekeni. Ngoba uMnyango wakwazi ukuthatha isinqumo sokususa izikhungo zokuholela eduze kwabantu.

Lokho ke kwasidalela izinkinga ezinkulu kakhulu ngoba kwafanele ukuthi abantu bagibele bahambe amabanga amade, ukuyolanda lokho okufanele baphile ngakho. Nalapho sebeyile lapho kwakhuphuka amazinga obugebengu. Kwezinye izikhathi ogogo babuya bempumputheka bengaphethe lutho. Sebegetshengiwe kulezo zindawo ezikude abaholela kuzo. Ngabe uMnyango wakubuka kanjani lokhu uma uzisusa izikhungo lapho abantu abadala nabantu abaphila nokukhubazeka ababekwazi ukufika khona kalula? Kulezi zinsuku nje imigqa ibimide kakhulu. Babuye bengaphethe lutho belambatha, kuthiwa imali ayikho.

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Lolu hlelo lobuchwepheshe lubakhinyabeze kakhulu abantu ngoba bathi uma befika lapha ya kuthiwe imali ayikho. Kuloluhlelo olwasuswa ezikhungwini ezaziseduze nabantu, kunemindeni eminingi eyayiphila ngalokho. Lolo hlelo lwaluzale izifundiswa eziningi ngesikhathi abantu begijima ngasemuva kwezingqola zomholo abantu bedayisa. Bakwazi ukwakha amakhaya akwazi ukusimama. Kodwa ukususwa kwalezo zikhungo kwenza ukuthi kulanjwe, umnotho womuntu omnyama wasuswa ezandleni zakhe. Umnotho womuntu omnyama wasiwa konxiwankulu. Abantu bazithola besemadolobheni, emabhange, bazithola besezitolo ezinkulu, o-Spa no-Shoprite nezinye izitolo lapho kufanele bayohola khona.

Kanti ngesikhathi beholela ezikhungweni kwakusizakala nalaba bantu bezitolo zasemakhaya. Lezo zitolo njengoba ngikhuluma nje zavalwa. Lokho kusho indlala enkulu kakhulu kumuntu onsundu. SinguMkhonto weSizwe siyakhuluma nabanikazi bezitolo ezavalwa, nezi-spaza, namasonto namakhosi ngezinkantolo zawo, siyafisa ukuthi kubuyelwe kuwo. Isabelo asanele sincane kakhulu ngoba lesi sabelomali esikhuluma ngaso siya emndenini la intsha eningi ingasebenzi khona. Lesi sabelomali esiya kumuntu omdala, kuloyo muntu omdala unezingane eziyisihlanu ngaphakathi endlini ezineminyaka engaphezu kweminyaka

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engamashumi amathathu ezingasebenzi, ezincike kuso leso sabelomali.

Ake sibheke lokhu kancane, ngonyaka wezi-2025-26 uMnyango uhlangoze R276,3 bhiliyoni nemali engaphezu kuka R254 bhiliyoni yezibonelelo zikaHulumeni ngo-Sassa. Nokho njengoba izinombolo zibonakala zizinhle kangaka emaphepheni, amanani ezibonelelo awanele ukubhekana nezindleko zokuphila. Lesi sabelo esitholwa abantu abadala ngenyanga asanele ngenxa yokuthi ubhasikidi wokudla ubiza ngaphezulu kwesibonelelo. Isabelo esitholwa yizingane asanele, isabelo esitholwa abantu abaphila nokukhubazeka asanele ngenxa yokuthi izindleko zokudla nokuphila ziphezulu kakhulu, zidla amagalani.

Ake ngikhumbuze le Ndlu ngezethembiso ezenziwe ngo-2024, ezingazange zifinyelele ndawo ukusebenzela abantu bakithi okuyibona abacindezelwe kakhulu ubuhlwempu. UMnyango wathembisa ukuphuthula inqubomgomo yesisekelo semali okuzolekelelwa ngaso. Uma silalela izethulo zoMnyango ngama-APP, siyezwa ukuthi akukabibikho mali ehlelelwe lokho. U-Sassa wathembisa ukufaka izicelo kuhlelo lobuchwepheshe ukuze kunganyulwe imigqa emide, kodwa kuze kube manje imigqa isemide kakhulu ngaphandle kwamahhovisi ka-Sassa.

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Sihlalo angifinyelele esiphethweni, u-NDA wasungulelwa ukuthi uvule amathuba emisebenzi, ukhiphe abantu ohlelweni lokuhola imali yesibonelelo, wandise amathuba emisebenzi. Kepha uma sibuka isabelo sika-NDA sisibona sisincane kakhulu. Simenza u-NDA abeyisigqala, abeyinkomazi enganalo ubisi. Kanti ngokwethu besifisa ukuyibona le nkomazi ibhonga ezinkalweni nasezigodini, ihlangabeza inhlopheko yomuntu onsundu ngokuthi U-NYDA akanikezwe imali, isabelo esizomenza akwazi ukufinyelela kwinhlopheko yomuntu onsundu. Angithokoze kakhulu, Sihlalo. [Ihlombe.]

IsiZulu:

Nk B S MASANGO: Ngiphendula ngesikhaya ngoba ngimzwile ukuthi ukhulume kanjalo.

English:

Hon Chairperson, hon Minister and Deputy Minister of Social Development, hon members, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. I hope this reflection on the revised Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, MTEF and its implications for our social development agenda prompts the department to assess whether it is truly fulfilling both the letter and the spirit of its mandate. Amid challenging fiscal conditions, we

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acknowledge National Treasury's efforts to uphold social protection. However, concerns remain that funding gaps and implementation hurdles could jeopardise support for the vulnerable communities this budget seeks to protect.

The continued prioritisation of social grants is welcome. These instruments are not merely income transfers; they are developmental interventions. They provide dignity, stability and in many cases, they prevent destitution. But we must now turn our focus to where systems are falling short. Conditional allocations to SA Social Security Agency, Sassa must be rebalanced for feasibility and fairness. R8 billion has been provisionally allocated to Sassa's 2025-26 financial year. However, this amount is heavily conditional.

Hon members, we must scrutinise the feasibility of these conditions. While the DA supports measures to prevent fraud and enhance verification, let us be very clear, conditional allocations that hinge on interdepartmental systems not yet fully functional risk harming the very people Sassa exists to serve. Sassa is operating at less than 50% staffing capacity. Oversight visits confirmed that local offices are overburdened. Digitisation remains uneven in co-ordination

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with other entities, is still evolving. To predicate funding on flawless integration with these databases, without providing operational support or transition measures is setting us up Sassa for failure.

We therefore call for a phased support-based implementation of conditional funding mechanisms so that reforms proceed without interrupting the critical function of grant disbursement.

Fraud must be fought, yes, but not at the cost of survival.

The migration of the Office of the Rights of the Child must be implemented without delay. The absence of a dedicated line item or operational plan for the Office of the Rights of the Child is concerning, given the hon President's 2023 announcement that the Office of the Rights of the Child, ORC would migrate to The Presidency.

This office plays a pivotal role in co-ordinating child rights across departments. The lack of progress in its migration not only undermine policy coherence; it also signals a worrying disregard for the urgency of children's rights and issues. At the time when child poverty, violence and malnutrition are worsening, we can ill afford institutional drift. Both the department and The Presidency must finalise the migration of

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the ORC and allocate sufficient resources to ensure that the office functions with real authority, co-ordination and impact.

The Central Drug Authority cannot remain unfunded and marginalised. Substance abuse is now a crosscutting social crisis. It contributes directly to school dropouts, gender-based violence, unemployment and preventable deaths. The Central Drug Authority is the structure mandated to co-ordinate government response. Yet, once again we find no funding and no implementation framework for the Central Drug Authority, CDA in the MTEF.

This omission is not new. We cannot continue to ignore the pleas of communities grappling with addiction, nor can we expect results without resourcing. The R34,9 billion allocated for the social relief of distress grant is welcome. However, the Basic Income Support policy framework must be finalised as a matter of urgency, to be scrutinised as to whether it will provide long-term certainty and respond more adequately to structural poverty and youth unemployment.

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While we note the National Development Agency's efforts to strengthen community-based livelihoods, increased transparency in the National Development Agency's profiling and funding of civil society organisations, especially around performance monitoring is needed. The long-delayed regulations to the Fundraising Amendment Act remain critical to ensuring rapid mobilisations of resources during disasters and humanitarian crises. The department must expedite this process without further delay.

The DA will continue to exercise oversight with diligence and integrity. A caring state is not judged by how much it allocates, but by what it delivers and to whom. We will hold departments accountable where promises outpace plans or where priorities are announced without budgetary backing. Let us move forward with urgency, with coherence and with compassion. Thank you, hon Chair. [Applause.]

Ms P MARAIS: House Chair, greetings to the commander-in-chief, the President of the EFF, commissars, fighters and fellows and Africans. The EFF categorically and equivocally rejects this proposed budget on the social development, as it is not the budget designed to lift the poor out of hunger, unemployment

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and despair. Instead, it is a cold bureaucratic exercise, an administrative illusion designed to pacify the masses, while protecting the pockets of their politically connected.

What we have is a budget that exists only on paper. In theory, it speaks of social relief, development, welfare, but in reality, it functions as a mechanism to enrich the inner circle of this ruling elite. Those who continue to live in comfort of former liberation credentials, while ordinary South Africans starve.

We must ask ourselves the following questions: How can the department tasked with the wellbeing of the most vulnerable, the elderly, children, the disabled, abuse survivors and the unemployed, continue to underspend on food programmes, delayed payments to non-governmental organizations, NGOs, that distribute food to the vulnerable and mismanage grant distribution while inflating administrative costs?

The delays in child grant payments, the underfunding of shelters for abused women and children, and the chronic neglect of person with disabilities are all indication of the

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department that has lost its moral responsibility and development compass.

It is a department that has surrendered its constitutional obligations to the hyenas and vultures, who, for the longest time, have enriched themselves through corruption and fraud.

One of the most alarming realities facing South Africans is a rising cost of living, worsened by the recent increase of the petrol levy. This is not simply a technical adjustment, it is a direct blow to the livelihoods of those who can't at least afford it.

Petrol price hikes lead to increased food prices, transport fees, electricity fees and water bills. Yet, while the cost of living of everything rises, social grants and essential service remains stagnant and are being cut.

Older persons, many of whom rely solely on state pensions, are being forced to choose between food and medicine.

Parents receiving child grants are watching the value of those grants shrink, while there are rising cost of living. People

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living with disability face an impossible challenge of surviving without adequate support.

This budget is not adequate, it is cruel in its impact. It reveals a painful and lingering truth in the time of rising costs and deepening poverty. This budget cuts where it should invest. It leaves millions exposed to hunger, hardship, hopelessness and despair.

Moreover, the very institutions created to serve the vulnerable are failing in their mission. The National Development Agency, NDA, mandated to alleviate poverty, has become ineffective. Communities do not see or feel its presence. Its programmes are disjointed, and its impact is nearly invisible.

The Central Drug Authority, CDA's means to combat youth substance abuse is failing. Instead of leading target interventions, it has become a salary paying structure lacking direction, engagement and action. Meanwhile, children fall into addiction as those responsible remain idle.

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The situation at SA Social Security Agency, SASSA, is a national disgrace. The Social Relief of Distress, SRD, grant meant to provide emergency aid is now riddled with fraud. Criminals exploit the system using stolen identity documents, IDs, while genuine beneficiaries are denied help. This is a direct result of a weak system, poor oversight and political neglect. These failures reveal a broken unaccountable system.

The budget prioritizes cuts over dignity, bureaucracy over impact and silence over accountability. To restore dignity, to rebuild the just society, serious reforms are needed. Social grants must increase in line with the cost of living.

SASSA must eliminate fraud and ensure grants reach the rightful recipients.

Institutions like NDA and CDA must reform with clear measurable performance standards rooted in the community needs.

Free transportation must be provided for pensioners, persons with disability and orphans to access grant payments.

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A nation should not be judged by its economic figures alone, but how it treats most vulnerable, those who cannot fight for themselves.

The 2025-26 Social Development budget fails the test. It is our duty to change that, not next year, not next term, but now.

EFF rejects this proposed budget.

EFF wants to take this opportunity to invite each and everyone to come to our 12th year anniversary at Khayelitsha Rugby Stadium to celebrate with us the 12 years of unbroken service to the needy and the vulnerable. Viva EFF. [Applause.]

Ms B E MACHI: Hon House Chairperson, the IFP notes this crucial budget vote as it truly speaks directly to the heart of our democratic promise, to protect the most vulnerable among us, to advance dignity and to reduce poverty.

The Department of Social Development, through its budget and annual performance plan, APP, for 2025-26, showed us a

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profound responsibility in achieving these constitutional and moral obligations.

The IFP acknowledges the R294 billion allocation to the department for 2025-26, a 5,7% increase. This modest growth is welcome, while noting that more ought to be done to address the growth social demand of the nation grappling with high unemployment, deepening poverty and rising social ills.

Social grants remain the cornerstone of income support in South Africa and the IFP welcomes the increases in the old age and child support grants.

However, the IFP maintains that while grants are vital for alleviating poverty, they must be linked to sustainable livelihood, skills development and job creation to break intergenerational cycles of dependency.

We remain deeply concerned about the real ... [Inaudible.] ... decline in the disability grant and foster care grant allocations. These are some of our most vulnerable populations, and reducing support undermines inclusive development.

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We welcome the department's commitment to submit the basic income support policy to Cabinet.

The IFP has long called for an inclusive and sustainable social protection mechanism for those aged 18 to 59, who are currently excluded from other grant systems. However, we urge the department to ensure this policy is fiscally responsible and accompanied by clear exit pathways linked to skills, entrepreneurship and employment.

The department's plan to strengthen the psychosocial support services, combat gender-based violence, GBV, and substance abuse, and protect the rights of children and persons with disabilities are aligned with our national priorities.

However, we urge the department to ensure that these targets are not merely in numerical; implementation must be visible, measurable and impactful.

South Africa's deepening inequalities, poverty and social vulnerability demand more than incremental change. It requires transformative, inclusive and accountable social policy.

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The department must not only meet its targets, but do so in a way that restores dignity, empowers communities and builds pathways out of poverty.

In light of all matters raised above, the IP supports this budget vote. I thank you. [Applause.]

Ms S PETERS: Hon House Chair, hon Minister, Deputy Minister and hon members, on behalf of the PA, I express our support for Budget Vote No 19 of Social Development. This budget is a critical instrument in advancing the social welfare of our people, particularly the most vulnerable in our society. We acknowledge the department's five-year strategic plan, which outlines a clear vision for addressing the pressing challenges of poverty, inequality and social exclusion.

Allow me to address a few key areas that have been addressed. The department's three strategic priorities: eradicating poverty, building resilient communities and strengthening social protection systems are aligned with the urgent needs of our nation. We note with appreciation the strategic focus areas outlined in the plan, which include expanding access to comprehensive social security, enhancing community-based

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interventions to tackle social ills, and strengthening partnerships with civil society and other stakeholders to deliver inclusive development.

However, what is most key is the creation of over 280 000 jobs within the Expanded Public Works Programme, EPWP, and that is most important. These priorities are not just aspirations, but essential commitments that must be realised through effective implementation.

With an overall budget allocation of just over R294 billion, the department carries a significant responsibility to ensure that every rand is spent efficiently, transparently and in line with the identified priorities. We call upon the hon Minister to institute strict control measures to prevent wastage, corruption and the misallocation of funds.

The people of South Africa cannot afford inefficiencies. Every cent must translate into tangible improvements for our society. We have taken note of the issues raised during the committee's deliberations, including concerns about service-delivery gaps, administrative bottlenecks and the need for stronger monitoring and evaluation. We appeal to the Minister

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to ensure that a concerted effort is made to address these concerns. It is not enough to simply note the recommendations in the committee's report. There must be a dedicated, accountable mechanism to oversee their implementation.

We welcome the National Development Agency's, NDA's, strategic focus on the District Development Model as a key mechanism to eradicate poverty through localised, integrated planning. The success of this model depends on meaningful collaboration with all stakeholders, government, civil society and the private sector. We urge the Minister to ensure that the NDA is sufficiently capacitated to drive this agenda effectively.

Hon Minister, the PA supports this Budget Vote, but our support is not unconditional. We expect visible progress, strict financial discipline and unwavering commitment to the strategic objectives outlined in the department's plan. The people of South Africa are watching and they deserve nothing less than a government that delivers on its promises. Let this budget be a turning point where plans become action and commitments become a reality. We support Budget Vote No 19.

Afrikaans:

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Mnr P A VAN STADEN: Agb Voorsitter, ons land se bejaardes, kinders en weerloses moet ten alle koste beskerm word – ons bejaardes omrede hulle die land opgebou het sodat die jeug van vandag die vrugte van hul harde werk kan pluk en geniet; ons kinders omrede hulle hierdie land se toekoms is en sonder 'n toekoms is daar nie 'n Suid-Afrika nie; ons weerloses wat weens die hoë werkloosheidsvlakke wat tans in Suid-Afrika heers, nêrens het om te gaan nie.

English:

Statistics SA's newest statistics show that 95 000 South Africans have lost their jobs in the period March 2024 to March 2025. A total of 95 000 people that don't have an income, 95 000 people that very soon will probably be homeless and children who will go to sleep every night on an empty stomach.

In July last year, I stood here and said that the inadequate funding of nonprofit organisations, NPOs, like children's homes and homes for people with disabilities constitutes a violation of the basic human rights of this part of our society. Yet, this problem is ongoing. The problem regarding the funding of welfare organisations in Gauteng is still not

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resolved. We must act fast to solve this problem once and for all.

This is a crisis. This, while the Gauteng department had to give back R102 million to National Treasury for money that had not been spent during the 2024-25 financial year. This, while chief executive officers, CEOs, of state-owned enterprises earn up to R42 400 per day ... R15,5 million a year.

Take note that more than R400 million is spent each year on salaries for executives. This, while every single day we see children begging for food and money at intersections in cities throughout South Africa. Instead, they should be learning in school, but they must do it in order for them and their families to survive.

Afrikaans:

Ons bejaardes in ons tehuise kan nie net van vergeet word nie. Daar sal mooi na hulle gekyk moet word. My bekommernis is dat as ons hierdie soort probleme met ons kinderhuise ervaar, watter probleme is daar nie met ons tehuise waarvan ons nie eers weet nie.

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English:

We have seen the chaos with regard to the implementation of the new SA Social Security Agency, Sassa, cards that has not only caused delays but also confusion and distress among our beneficiaries. We saw what a negative impact the COVID restrictions had on the elderly, children and the poor of this country in 2019-20, and we cannot allow anything to put such stress on these communities once again.

Afrikaans:

Ongeveer 11 jaar gelede het ek in hierdie einste departement se debat in die Gauteng wetgewer gewaarsku dat Suid-Afrika in 'n welsynstaat gaan ontaard weens die staat wat in die pad van die private sektor staan om werkseleenthede en 'n groeiende ekonomie te skep met die rasgebaseerde wette wat nog op die wetboeke van hierdie land is.

Ek het ook gewaarsku dat geen regering werkseleenthede kan skep nie. Slegs die private sektor kan dit doen. En, hier staan ons nou vandag. Suid-Afrika is nou 'n welsynstaat.

English:

I thank you, Chairperson.

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Ms M P KOBE: Hon House Chair, the Minister, the Deputy Minister, hon members, fellow South Africans that are joining us online, please accept my greetings as we delve into Budget Vote No 19 of Social Development.

Action SA recognises the critical mandate of the Department of Social Development in protecting South Africa's most vulnerable. We acknowledge the department's ongoing work in providing social assistance and implementing programmes intended to uplift the poor, the unemployed and the marginalised.

However, as this House considers Budget Vote No 19, we are compelled to register our deep concern. While the budget reflects a nominal increase of 5,7%, the real increase is a meagre 0,9%. In truth, most core programmes – social security policy, welfare services and community development suffer real-term declines. This would be troubling in any year, but this year especially in 2025, with the rising cost of living, worsening social instability and persistent unemployment, it is devastating.

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What is most alarming is the department's plan to reduce the number of social grant beneficiaries from 27,7 million in 2024-25 to just 19,3 million in 2027-28. Hon Minister, that is a staggering reduction of over eight million people that would no longer receive this vital support.

These are not just statistics. These are mothers who will no longer be able to put food on the table, grandparents who will no longer be able to afford chronic medication, young people whose only income while desperately looking for work is this grant. Cutting it back in these desperate times sends a chilling message to millions of South Africans. You are on your own.

While we acknowledge the importance of rooting out fraud and inefficiency at Sassa, we must balance this with compassion. Beneficiaries are already being made to travel long distances, sometimes paying over R150 just to wait in lines at underresourced offices. Many are sent back home empty-handed. Minister, we are turning a system of protection into a system of punishment for the most vulnerable.

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On the ground, communities are pleading for urgent help in the face of drugs, gangsterism and despair. Yet, the department's targets for prevention and treatment are simply inadequate. The fight against substance abuse cannot be won with slogans and budget cuts. We need funding for real, localised, people-powered solutions.

We are also disappointed by the persistent delays in implementing sector-funding policy, which is meant to support NPOs doing vital work in the front lines, and the slow progress in establishing the Inspectorate for Social Assistance, which should also rebuild trust in this system.

South Africans need a social development budget that is bold, people-centred and responsive to the scale of crisis that our people are facing. In light of the above, we would need to take the budget under serious consideration ... whether we vote in favour of it or not. Thank you, House Chair.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: Hon Chairperson, all protocol observed, before commenting on the budget, let me state that eight months ago I received key delegations from the Minister of Social Development the hon Minister Sisisi

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Tolashe. These delegations are HIV/Aids, Substance abuse and families parenting and older persons and persons with disabilities. These functions largely form part of welfare services which is Programme 4 in the national Department of Social Development's budget.

Welfare services are concurrent functions with provinces, and the provinces are responsible for the implementing government's policies and the delivery of services. In the build up to this budget I went to the streets. I went on a dozen community engagements to tell them about this budget and unlike the fighters they supported this budget.

As regards each of these, whenever I needed assistance, I could call upon the Minister who unselfishly granted her time advising and assisting me.

Hon Chairperson I have been allocated a R109 million to carry out my delegations. However, I stand firm to assist the Minister with the billions under her control.

Allow me to unpack briefly how much money the department must use in some of my delegations. Starting with, the budget we

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get R44 million for HIV/Aids and R20 million we give to the SA National Aids Council. We also allocate money to the SA National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence and the SA Depression and Anxiety Group.

My other budget we allocate a portion to the Association for Dementia and Alzheimer and also the SA Older Persons Forum.

For families and parenting, the budget is R10 million and we allocate to the Suid Afrikanse Vroue Vereeniging nearly a million rand and Tumelong R1,3 million.

Now the budget for persons with disabilities is R18 million, of which the Deaf Blind SA is allocated just under R2 million. Autism SA R1,7 million, and other foundations substantial amounts.

Allow me to make the point that since I will be implementing these delegations, which is guided by the five-year 2024-2029 Medium-Term Development Plan, MTDP, only two-thirds of the budget is used by the Department of Social Development. We allocate one-third of our budget to Non-Profit Organisations, NPOs that are aligned with government policies. It has been a

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long-standing practice that welfare services are rendered by the government in partnership with nonprofit organisations and NGOs in a unified system that benefits all the vulnerable individuals and groups in our society.

It is high time we recognise the failures in the system although it is helping us and we revisit our practices and partnerships to find ways to build a system that won't fail our people, one that everybody can rely on. We need to fund NGOs that align with government policies. These policies are determined by Parliament and taken forward by Cabinet and signed off by the President.

So, where NGOs and NPOs do not align themselves with the government policies and programmes they must be last in the queue.

I want to hastily add that we depend on the Department of Social Development's Portfolio Committee on Social Development and the oversight they play because they represent the streets.

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We have a chairperson that is vigilant. She gives us a hard time, but we appreciate it and learn from her all the time. We try and accommodate what the streets want.

Overall, my task, hon Chairperson, is to determine policy and programmes; ones that all stakeholders should be involved in. In other words, policies that are determined by the President, the Cabinet, and the Cabinet Cluster as well as the Government of National Unity's, GNU's, leadership forum and also of course Parliament. That said, it is my job to enforce these policies that apply to the Department of Social Development's, provinces, municipalities, NPOs, and Civil Society Organisations, CSOs. Let me underline the fact that I will make a special effort to ask the private sector to agree that when they give funding that these policies be aligned with adopting a 'One Policy, One Plan, One Budget' approach.

At this juncture I want to summarily reflect on some of the mentioned delegations. HIV is very concerning especially amongst children and the youth. At the moment 150 000 children are living with HIV in our country, and each year, is growing by about 10 000. That cannot be that parents like ourselves

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are responsible for our children being infected with HIV because of what we do.

Accelerating efforts of protecting children, I worked side-by-side with the hon Minister Tolashe, during the Child Protection Month. The Department of Social Department reached out to the Limpopo province and other provinces like Jamela village in Tzaneen. The aim was to raise awareness against HIV/Aids as a chronic disease and initiate 'Social Behavioural Change' programmes. So, we do have programmes like Yolo. Yolo means You Only Live Once. Those of us still remember James Bond. So, children only live once. That is why we must make a special effort to assist our children. My department has several other programmes like Chommy and also parenting programmes. So, we are not ignoring the challenges that we have with our children that are infected with HIV and Aids.

This budget, which I am requesting approval - I have already heard a fighter saying no to the budget which is very disappointing - will help us to contribute to the implementation of the National Strategic Plan on HIV/Aids and the pillars associated with it.

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Let me talk about Gender-Based Violence. I went to Atteridgeville and a second-year university student stood up and asked me, Deputy Minister: What are you doing to protect me from the boys at the university? What is government doing? What is Minister Tolashe doing? What is Parliament doing to protect me? At the moment our young girls feel that they are standing alone and there is no one to help them.

I remember when we had the genocide in Bosnia.

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms L S Makhubela): Order, hon members!

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: In one of our community engagements, we then also developed a - do not try and disrupt me.

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms L S Makhubela): Hon Deputy Minister, let me protect you.

The DEPUTY MINISTER OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: We started a boy child Parliament to make sure that we start with the boys so that they do not harm the girls at high school and at university.

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The department is aware of the immense challenges our elders face when collecting their pension; we will have to address that. We cannot allow our elderly people to stand in long queues.

The Family Matters Programme is a very important programme of government.

I want to also conclude by stating that in my build up to this budget I engaged with an International Aid organisation that provides 30 million sustainable livelihoods in their country and other countries of the world. They want to increase to a 100 million sustainable livelihoods. So, we this morning engaged with them to find out how can the assist South Africa. So, we are not moaning and groaning about our budget. We know that we have to top-up our budget by various means. I am please to say that all of you are invited to come and see the programmes happening in many countries all over the world that create sustainable livelihoods. This is what the department is doing. We partner with religious communities, faith communities, with International Aid Organisations and they are ready to come forward to assist us.

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Hon Chairperson and hon members, I stand and conclude that I am in full support of the 2025-26 pro-poor budget of R283 million.

I would like to thank Al Jam-ah for also supporting this budget and those political parties that do not do so. That is the most antirevolutionary thing you can do. Thank you very much. [Applause.]

Rev K R J MESHOE: Hon Chairperson, before I come to my speech let me address myself to Mme[Ms] Tolashe. I saw over the news this day the heartbreaking situation of mothers and children, those who are victims of the floods in Durban, have been thrown out of Bayway Hotel. They spent the night sleeping on concrete floors. It was said that ... because nothing seems to be happening and it looks like they might sleep again on the streets.

I want to appeal to you as a mother even though it is not your line function to address them. I wish to appeal to you to address the member of the executive council, MEC, responsible and the local government. Advise them or assist them so that something can be done for those vulnerable people. It was also

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said that there are children who were born a few days ago, who also slept in the open. The ACDP thank you very much for considering what I am saying, Mme[Ms] Tolashe.

The ACDP affirms the constitutional imperative to care for the most vulnerable in our society, yet the Department of Social Development continues to fall short of this sacred duty. The 2025-26 Social Development Budget allocates R422,3 billion with nearly R285 billion for social grants. While increases to old age disability and child support grants are welcomed, ballooning debt servicing costs of R425 billion raise major concerns about the sustainability of these grants. There is also no funding provision for the Social Relief of Distress Grant beyond March 2026.

The Old Age Grant receives R117,4 billion, a R130 increase per elderly person to R2 350. The Child Support Grant rises by R30 through just R560, not even covering a jar of peanut butter. Disability and Foster Care Grants total R99,5 billion, which we believe will not be sufficient for the ever-increasing needs and challenges of our people. By the department's failure to finalise the spatial housing needs programme

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despite the 2022 approval a glaring indictment ... Thank you.

[Time expired.]

IsiZulu:

Ms M KHAWULA: Kodwa noma ubungamyeka kancane Sthandwa ukhuluma ngento ebalulekile. [Ubuwelewele.]

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms L S Makhubela): Hon member, his time is over by 10 seconds. Order, hon members!

Xitsonga:

Tat S M GANA: Mutshamaxitulu, ...

English:

Hon members and fellow South Africans, let me start here, I think it is good that we are not reading a lot this nowadays in the news that people are not receiving their social grants. Sometimes we take these matters for granted when they happen. If there is a month that the grant recipients did not receive their grant, there will be an issue. So, when they receive we should be able to say that, no, the department is doing well.

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Nevertheless, Minister, this issue between the Treasury and the SA Social Security Agency, Sassa, on this verification I think it is starting to cause panic and we get asked about it. I think better communication from your side will go a long way in allaying the fears of grant recipient in that matter.

So, Minister, last year was standing here and you were sitting there, I raised the issue of gambling addiction and at the time you did not understand where I was going. It is a big problem. I heard the Deputy Minister speaking about the various social ills, but you are not speaking about the gambling addiction. It is starting to affect our schoolchildren. We are having problem gamblers who are learners. However, in your response, your Programme 4, you are not mentioning this particular issue.

Minister, I said this last year. I was standing here and you were sitting there. I raised this particular issue. Minister, there is Reatlegile Matsunyane, she is a student at Rhodes University, she has asked me to convey this message to you having seen the work that we do as Rise Mzansi, and I quote:

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As a country we are facing an epidemic of gender-based violence, gambling, addiction, teenage pregnancy and substance abuse. It is essential for the department to invest in people relationships and spaces that actually develop society, part of this would mean expanding the role of social workers by partnering them with psychology graduates, not just for crisis response but to build trauma informed school-based and a neighborhood-rooted support systems. It would mean funding asset-based programmes that grow people that they already have.

I agree with Reatlegile, Minister, in that in building our country we do need to place young people because we will leave, Minister and Deputy Minister we will leave this country. The generation that will inherit this country must be part of the solution now. We will die, you will also die. The next generation that inherits this country must be part of the solution, now.

Xitsonga

Ndza khensa swinene, Mutshamaxitulu. [Nkarhi wu herile.]

IsiZulu:

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Ms M KHAWULA: Shono phela ukuthi uya 'khensa situlo' ...

[Uhleko.] Usukhohliwe.

Mrs N L HLAZO-WEBSTER: Thank you to my one caucus member for clapping. Hon Chairperson, I think one of the things we have to reflect on even as we engage this budget is that the true test of a government is how it treats its vulnerable, and not only how it treats them in moments of crisis, but more importantly, how it helps them in mobility and progress and moving forward. That is what Social Development must be.

It must be a system that not only protects dignity but a system that also enables progress. It's got to be able to not only shield people from hardship but also not trap them there. I think this is where as the country we fall short. The budget exposes this painful truth that we are good at giving people the ability to survive but never enough to rise.

House Chair, over 19 million South Africans depend on social grants to live in this country. There is R266 billion that is allocated to the ... [Inaudible.] ... vital but beyond that what vision exists to help people to stand on their own two feet? What is the scaffolding that turns survival into

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reliance? At age 18 years, the support grant for children ends and with that ends any structured support from the state. So, we cut young people off just as the real struggle begins. There is no skills pipeline, there is no transition and we call this support. However, it is not sustainable. Not socially, not economically or morally.

So, in this regard, we have to speak about the future of basic income support. As BOSA, we support a universal basic income grant. While we welcome the early moves toward a legislative framework, the urgency for that is missing. Instead of building a foundation for dignity and progress, the government is turning income support into a maze with punitive conditions because the Treasury has confirmed that the R370 Social Relief of Distress, SRD, grant is extended. However, no funding is secured beyond that, worse, excess may soon be tied to conditions that have been put in place.

Let us be honest, the problem in South Africa is not that people are not looking for work, it is that work does not exist. So, layering these conditions on top of a broken system does not create opportunities. It blocks that and it traps people once again. The same unsustainability plays out in

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other corners like the nongovernmental organisations, NGOs, sector where there is transfers that are delayed, funding that is inconsistent. If this sector collapses so does our ability to deliver care with dignity and build mobility from poverty.

My time is up. I will say we support this budget but we need to look at the whole system and how we can rise and help people to rise more than just trapping them in vulnerability. Thank you, Chair.

Ms A L A ABRAHAMS: Chairperson, 96% of Department of Social Development's entire budget, R815,8 billion, over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, MTEF, period is allocated to the SA Social Security Agency, Sassa, for social grants.

Currently, approximately 45% of South Africans depend on a grant to survive. One would therefore think that ensuring the security of these grants would be priority number one.

However, Sassa has become synonymous with mismanagement, fraud and corruption. Hundreds of millions of rand gone with little, if any, financial recovery. This is as a result of Sassa's own verification and security measures, including cybersecurity, not keeping pace with the growing demand and the evolving criminal syndicates over the last 25 years. It is therefore no

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coincidence National Treasury has had to intervene, assigning mandatory conditions to the administration of grants to stop the financial bleed - necessary step to ensure grants, taxpayers' money go to the correct beneficiaries, not ghost beneficiaries or criminal syndicates.

It is regrettable that the application of this intervention is having an adverse impact on vulnerable beneficiaries as a result of systemic challenges at Sassa, inaccurate government databases, and beneficiaries not being afforded the 30-day notice period to comply before the grant is suspended due to inefficient communication from Sassa. Sending vulnerable beneficiaries to unmoving Sassa queues without increasing staff capacity, knowing full well that most of Sassa's offices operate at less than 50% staff capacity, is not ubuntu. In fact, it is the opposite. Sending beneficiaries to a Sassa queue is sending beneficiaries to go have their dignity stripped away.

Minister, please consider calling on your civil society organisations, CSO, partners to volunteer as queue marshals and assist in triaging queries. My experience walking these queues is beneficiaries just want information and

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communication and do not need to be subjected to hours of waiting to receive this. The strides made towards capacitating the Inspectorate for Social Assistance are welcome. A necessary mechanism to combat fraud and corruption, as Sassa cannot investigate itself. The quicker fraud investigations, together with the budget, are moved out of Sassa to an independent inspectorate, the better.

Treasury correspondence also indicated that R376,4 million will be removed from social assistance grants over the MTEF period to fund other government priorities because of significant underspending. It further references two policy proposals discussed at Cabinet. On 19 February, the Department of Social Development informed the committee that Treasury shut down the maternal support policy due to financial constraints. What the Department of Social Development failed to mention is that part of the reason was its own underspending.

After years of developing this policy against the backdrop of persistent childhood stunting, children dying annually from malnutrition, and a clear understanding that investing early in our children lead to healthy adults and a prosperous South

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Africa, the opportunity to implement slipped through the Department of Social Development's fingers despite the availability of funds. The allocation and spending of funds must be improved. Hundreds of millions of rand declared as savings or underspending cannot keep being returned to Treasury when it is desperately needed within the Department of Social Development. The maternal support policy is far too important, Minister, and it must be raised at every opportunity as a part of the Department of Social Development's budget priorities because there is no better investment than in our children. It is discouraging that despite the introduction of the child support grant in 2022 and raising this concern numerous times in the committee meetings, the Department of Social Development has still not included this as a designated budget line item.

Why is that? Why is there a grant that exists in regulation and in law, but it does not exist in the budget? The National Development Agency, NDA, has for a number of years been trapped in a recurring cycle of so-called turnaround. It cannot escape this hamster wheel because it continues to cling to the nostalgic memory of what it once was. While its fundraising achievements are commendable, it must exercise

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caution not to hyperinflate this target as an attempt to mask from the glaring fact that the NDA spends 85,6% of its budget on salaries and operational costs, while only 14,4% on its core mandate, which is funding CSOs in poverty-stricken communities and linking participants to economic opportunities. If the Minister was serious about cost-cutting, consideration should be given to bringing some of NDA's functions in-house and assigning others to departments better suited and resourced to deliver the desired impact which is currently lacking.

In closing, we must remember that every grant lost to mismanagement, fraud, and corruption is a grant stolen from the child that goes hungry, from the graduate begging for work, and from the parent praying for their family's safety. It is not a lack of funding that is the greatest obstacle, but the abuse, inefficiency, and complacency in how these funds are managed. The DA will continue to stand with those who serve with integrity and fight against these obstacles to a prosperous, dignified, and caring South Africa. Thank you.

Mr T B MUNYAI: Hon Chairperson, House Chairperson, the ANC rises to unconditionally give unwavering support for Budget

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Vote 19 of the Department of Social Development. Hon members, hon Minister Nokuzola Tolashe, hon Deputy Minister Henricks, and the people of South Africa.

Allow me to use this opportunity to congratulate the appointed director-general Mr Peter Netshipale and the entire Department of Social Development executive management, the appointed group chief executive officer, CEO of Sassa, Mr Themba Matlou and the entire executive, the acting CEO of the National Development Agency, NDA, Thabani Buthelezi and the board are duly acknowledged.

Hon House Chairperson ...

Afrikaans:

... agb Van Staden ...

English:

... stood here at this podium to carry out an unpatriotic propaganda message that South Africa is practising a racist law. It is incorrect because the racist laws were last practiced being institutionalised during the apartheid regime era of Verwoerd, Botha Malan and others.

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Our understanding of national liberation is being determined by our grasp of its antithesis. I'm raising this issue because it is the similar message that is being extended and carried beyond the borders of South Africa to undermine South African sovereignty. All our laws are aligned with the country's Constitution of a democratic state.

The people of South Africa, this year we celebrated the 70th anniversary of the Freedom Charter as it was adopted 26 June 1955. The Freedom Charter reaffirmed our commitment for the advancement of the National Democratic Revolution. And the demands of Freedom Charter constituted the vision for South Africa that is free from colonialism of a special time.

Today, in the context of this budget, we assess the progress and challenges that we're experiencing or that remain. On social clause of the Freedom Charter hon House Chairperson, it assessed the following.

The age, the orphans and the disabled and the sick shall be cared for by the state. It is not by accident that this commitment of the Freedom Charter, as the lodestar or the living document is enshrined in section 910 and 27 of the

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Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, also emphasised in Chapter 11 of the National Development Plan, the NDP vision 2030.

The people of South Africa, you have to understand that this constitutional commitment characterised the mandate of the DSD or the Department of Social Development to provide social protection, reduce vulnerability, alleviate and ultimately prevents poverty and empowers our people, families and communities through a range of diverse social development intervention programmes.

This financial year 2025-26, R271 billion is budgeted for social grants to fulfil the commitment of the Freedom Charter, that continue to serve the clauses that are outlined in it so that all the people that are listed will be cared for by the state.

This will increase the social grants payment to over 20 million beneficiaries. This will bring a renewed sense of hope and dignity to the most vulnerable members of our society. Without exaggeration, for the past 30 years, the ANC led government made the fundamental strides to fight poverty

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through grants and other programmes that are outlined in the annual Performance Plan, APP that we have adopted.

Guided by the Freedom Charter and the ANC consistently champion the progressive policies aimed at eradicating poverty, reducing inequality and expanding economic participation. We agree, maybe before that, as part of our commitment, the ANC, hon Ministers, we will continue to make a common clarion call and agree with those that say there must be introduction of the a basic income support grant within a strategic and social economic intervention designed to ensure that no South African is left behind in the fight against the extreme poverty.

It is a myth and lack of political science 101 for anyone to convince himself or herself that South Africa is a welfare state. Introduction of the basic income grant, amongst others is not about fostering, in fact, even the provision of the grant is not about fostering dependency. It's not about the handout. It is a direct response to South Africa's structural economic e challenges, particularly the widespread unemployment, job insecurity, poverty, hunger and the rising cost of living.

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It is a response to a scientific condition that we live in because if you don't analyse the challenges facing the Republic, you may argue that we are a welfare state. By providing a stable and guaranteed income, we can empower individuals, create economic opportunities and stimulate the local economics and contribute to a more just and sustainable society.

As per Sona commitment, we again reaffirm our support for Social Relief Distress beyond 2026 as affirmed by the Minister of Finance. House Chairperson, this budget will help us to consolidate the key and central priorities of the Seventh Parliament and seventh administration and will help us to fight against the gender-based violence and femicide which remains in the which remains the ugly face of patriarchy and intertwined with the struggle for women emancipation.

In this context House Chairperson allow me to draw the wisdom of the former President of Mozambique, Samora Machel in 1973, when he makes the point on the women emancipation.

"Woman emancipation is not an act of charity, the result of humanitarian or compassionate attitude. The liberation of

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women is fundamental necessity for the revolution, the guarantee of its continuity and the preconditions for its victory."

In this regard, the ANC welcomes the fundamental progress underscored under the stewardship of the hon Minister Nokuzola Tolashe related establishment of the Inter-Ministerial Committee to end gender-based violence and femicide, which have become endemic and global pandemic.

Then ANC calls on all South Africans and all political parties across the spectrum that we must play agent and practical role to end the gender-based violence and femicide, GBVF. We welcome the progress to strengthen the provision of care and support for the survivors of the gender-based violence and femicide through the provisions of shelters and psychosocial support that you provide as the Ministry. It's only through this intervention that the victims can have a meaningful path and transition to regain their hope and dignity through the treatment from the post traumatic impact of this traumatic experience.

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We welcome the Minister's relentless efforts to work with the United Nations as a multilateral organisation to end GBVF and the subsequent hosting of the United Nation's special envoy to advance the plight of the victim of the monstrous crime of GBVF. Minister, we support this budget. [Time expired.]

The MINISTER OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: Hon Chairperson and members of this House, whilst we will recognize the criticism that has been put before us by the hon members. If hon members can come closer to our Annual Performance Plan, APP, as well as to our speech, wherein we spoke at length on the issues that are being raised here.

Chair, on the matters that are ... [Inaudible.] ... South African Social Security Agency, SASSA, which has been a matter of concern by the committee, we are hard at work once again to make sure that we employ all the systems that are put in place for us to deal with these atrocities.

However, I want to once again emphasize the fact that SASSA does not stop anybody's grant without a due process. And this is why we emphasize that anyone else who's been called upon to appear in the SASSA's office should be assisted to make sure

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that he or she does that. This as you might be aware, is informed by the reports after reports that were directing that SASSA for the longest time is paying the wrong recipients, to an extent of paying civil servants that are in the payroll on other systems. And in making sure that we deal with this matter, we're trying to avoid that kind of a situation.

Chair, we all are aware of the fact that on the issues of the gambling, the new inter ministerial committee, we hope it is going to deal with the matter. We are saying so because these issues are dealt with by the Department of Trade and Industry, which in itself, of course, overwhelmed. And this is why we are interacting closer with them, and they are, fortunately, part and parcel of the inter ministerial committee, IMC, so that together we can resolve this matter.

Chair, on the issue of National Development Agency, NDA's spending patterns, we are hard and work, in trying to implement cost cutting measures, to an extent, we're introducing a system wherein in provinces NDA does not have a reason not to share offices with SASSA or Department of Social Development, DSD, where is possible.

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We are hard at work, talking with the Minister of Department of Public Works as the custodian of the government buildings, especially in the area of Western Cape and Cape Town in particular, for them to unlock some of the buildings that are available. So that we can as SASSA try to assess them whilst other processes that SASSA seek to build new offices, are in the process.

Chair, on the issues that talk to nonprofit organizations, NPOS, hon members, the department implemented the sector NPO funding policy that guides the funding of NPO by all provinces. We are continuing to play oversight in this regard, because remember, this is the matter between provinces and the individual NPOs.

However, since this complaint has been raised, we are interacting with Gauteng, in particular, both politically and the head of department, to make sure that we ease the pressure towards the NPOs, who we all agreed, they are assisting in making sure that service delivery is realized.

On the matters that talks to Central Drug Authority, CDA. This is a very serious matter. Remember the last week the

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honourable House, debate this matter and it raised serious concern. We want to commit to say we are hard at work in trying to review the Prevention and Treatment Act with the intention of repositioning CDA. We are strengthening and collaborating so that we can address the issue of alcohol and drug abuse.

Indeed, for this reason, we agree that the money that is assigned to them by Treasurer is limited. Hence, we are repositioning it.

Chair, as I said, we are, we do acknowledge the need to improve communication to the people. But we are still saying already, we have actively communicated with our people, and we have sent back of short messages service, SMS's where we're already sending to our people and this amount of number goes to 140,000. These SMS are the one that direct or advise people to present themselves in the SASSA offices.

We appeal to this august House to please assist us in this regard. As you are doing what is expected to do, we are adhering to Auditor-General South Africa AGSA's

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recommendation, but we are making sure that we pay the right person at the right time.

Yes, we also agree the fact that the closure of the pay point was in still a sore point. However, on the other side of the reason, remember what our people were exposed in when those bakkies of us of ours, as SASSA, were distributing money. The kind of violence that we experience when our people, especially the most vulnerable, were short at daylight with huge ammunitions. And the elder people died. This is the fact that our country is going through serious violence which needs to be addressed to an extent we have to take decisions that are not so good for our people, who are supposed to be in the recipient's side, but we had to take those decisions, in order for us to avoid what is the problem.

On the matter of management of long ques ... Thank you very much. [Time expired.]

The CHAIRPERSON (Ms L S Makhubela): Order, order, hon members! Hon members, you are reminded that there are two debates that are continuing at the hour of 16:30, which are Electricity and Energy in Good Hope Chamber and Basic Education in the same

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committee room that we are in, M46. Hon members, that concludes the debate for the mini-plenary and this mini plenary may rise.

Debate concluded.

The mini-plenary rose at 15:46.

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