

**Budget Vote Statement by the Minister of Social Development, Ms Bathabile Dlamini,
MP to the National Assembly, Cape Town**

Wednesday, 08 May 2013

Honourable Chairperson,
Honourable Deputy Minister, Mama Bongi Maria Ntuli,
MECs of Social Development here present,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great humility that I rise to present Budget Vote 19 in this august house. The budget I am presenting today builds on the strong foundation we have laid to date, towards a fully democratic and an inclusive society envisioned in the Freedom Charter.

This budget, which is the last in the current administration before the next general elections in 2014, focuses on the journey we have traversed since 2009 and on the work we will undertake over the MTEF period.

The budget takes its cue from the State of the Nation Address and the ANC's 53rd National Conference held in Mangaung in 2012 and it is presented under the theme: "Protecting and Optimising Development Outcomes for South Africa's Children".

In line with this theme, we have invited caregivers from Khayelitsha and a group from child-headed households, who are seated in the public gallery.

I would like to extend a very warm welcome to them, and I look forward to meeting and engaging with them this afternoon and in the coming days. Chairperson, this Budget is presented against the backdrop of landmark developments that have given fresh impetus to the work of the social sector and government as a whole.

In December 2012, the 53rd National Conference of the ANC adopted the National Development Plan (Vision 2030) to guide united action by all South Africans. The ANC sees the NDP as a common planning framework that will enable us to consolidate our democratic gains and continue to build an inclusive society.

Honourable Members, since 1994, we have embarked on an extensive programme to attack poverty on all fronts. Numerous institutions, amongst them, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) acknowledged the notable progress we have made.

Today, unlike under the apartheid regime, all our children, black and white, from the young girl in Muyexe, Limpopo, to the teenage girl in uMsinga, KwaZulu-Natal, have access to educational opportunities and a social safety net.

The social assistance programme, now reaches over sixteen million beneficiaries. I must emphasize that eleven million of these beneficiaries are children, having started from a very low base of about 30 000 in 1998 when the Child Support Grant was introduced. These considerable achievements can be attributed to the extension of social security coverage to

previously excluded and marginalised groups in line with the Constitution.

By putting money directly in the hands of the poor, particularly women, we have empowered them to make positive life choices that have improved the lives of South African children, particularly on important matters such as improved nutrition, better educational outcomes, healthcare and activation of job-seeking behaviour.

These solidarity based policies, ensured that the impact of the on-going global economic melt-down and financial crisis was less severe in South Africa.

While more work remains to be done, particularly, to address inequality in our society, I am confident that the measures and plans in this Budget Vote represent a solid foundation upon which to consolidate further momentum and success.

This year, the department received a budget of One Hundred and Twenty Billion Rand. Of this amount, One Hundred and Thirteen Billion Rand is allocated for the payment of social assistance grants, which comprise 93 percent of the total budget allocation.

Chairperson, at the beginning of our term of office in 2009, President Jacob Zuma said:

“For as long as there are children who do not have the means nor the opportunity to receive a decent education; we shall not rest, and we dare not falter, in our drive to eradicate poverty”

Pursuant to this commitment, and as part of our quest to fight the root causes of poverty, in particular intergenerational poverty, we identified the provision of Early Childhood Development (ECD) as key to our success towards achieving Vision 2030 goal.

The adoption of the first 1000 days campaign by the ANC demonstrates a serious political commitment to optimise the development outcomes for millions of our children. This will ensure that we focus on the most critical period of a child’s life, beginning with the mother’s pregnancy to the age of two years.

In 2010, we committed ourselves to expand the coverage of ECD services. Many of the changes we promised have since been implemented. To date, over nine hundred thousand children benefit from this programme and we are on course to deliver on our mandate to provide universal ECD services by 2014.

Following the diagnostic review report and the resolutions of the ECD conference held in 2012, we have approved a five-year integrated programme of action, which identified the urgent need to improve rural infrastructure, human resource capacity, a new comprehensive funding model, and amendment of the Children’s Act. Accordingly, we will finalise a national policy, which will define the ECD service package and make it a public good.

Consistent with the theme of this budget, I am pleased to inform this house about the new partnership with the Department of Communication to roll out the information communication technology strategy, targeting fourty ECD sites in rural areas this year.

In line with our target of 10 000 Child and Youth Care Workers over five years, I am also pleased to announce that we have recruited 3 150 Child and Youth Care Workers from local

communities and have begun with the training programme for the roll out of the Isibindi Model in 260 sites.

Chairperson, in May last year, I outlined plans to roll out the new biometric-based payment solution for social grants. As part of the transition to the system, we embarked on a national campaign to re-register all grant beneficiaries. Today, I am pleased to report that a total of 20, 7 million people have been successfully re-registered into the new system.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all beneficiaries who heeded our call for their cooperation in ensuring a seamless transition to the new system. SASSA will implement this programme in accordance with the provisions of the Promotion of Access to Administrative Justice Act (Act No. 3 of 2000). I would also like to assure all South Africans that no qualifying beneficiaries will have their grants cancelled.

To assist us in this regard, I urge all beneficiaries who have not re-registered to visit their local SASSA offices to respond to the letters we have sent to them. I also want to ask you honourable members, to please help us to spread the message in your constituencies. Just a year after its implementation, we are already witnessing the positive spin-offs of the new biometric payment solution. For example, through beneficiaries approaching SASSA, over a hundred and fifty thousand social grants were cancelled. This has led to a saving of One Hundred and Fifty Million Rand per annum.

Chairperson, in 2010 I promised to root out fraud and corruption in the social security system. We are delivering on this promise. During the financial year 2012/2013, we have registered about seven thousand seven hundred cases of fraud. More than fifty five percent of these cases have been finalised and closed.

In an effort to clamp down on unscrupulous micro lenders who exploit social grant beneficiaries, SASSA will not be processing any other deductions, except for funeral deductions that do not exceed ten percent of the value of the grant in line with regulations. Once again, I would like to appeal to all social grant beneficiaries that they must not give their SASSA cards and pin codes to micro lenders.

Chairperson, it is worth pointing out that the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA), in a unanimous decision, overruled the decision of the North Gauteng High Court which found that the awarding of the social grants payment tender to Cash Paymaster Services was "illegal and invalid".

The SCA dismissed the highly publicised allegations of corruption and irregularities which were granted prominence by an all-too-negative segment of the media. The losing bidder has now made an application to the Constitutional Court to set aside the ruling of the SCA. We are opposing this application as there is no merit to their case. We remain determined in our resolve to ensure that no vulnerable person is denied access to their grants due to unnecessary legal challenges.

While celebrating these successes, we cannot be complacent and think our job is done. Honourable Members, INDE LENDLELA ESIYIHAMBAYO. I will be appointing a Ministerial Advisory Committee that will investigate and advise me on the best payment options for Social Security.

Another important task in this regard, will be to address the identified policy gaps in relation to the old age grant. The administration of the means test for the old age grant in its current form has the unintended consequences of penalising senior citizens who have saved for their retirement.

Chairperson, in so far as the Old Age Grant is concerned, 2013 will go down in the history of our country as a memorable year. In February this year during the Budget Speech, the Minister of Finance announced for the first time, plans by this government to phase out the means test for the old age grant by 2016.

This is indeed a watershed moment and a giant leap forward in our quest to ensure a secure and dignified retirement for our senior citizens. The universalisation of the Old Age Grant will be a fitting tribute to the memories of the late Mama Winkie Direko, Father Elliot Mgojo and Tom Boya, who all campaigned long and hard over the past years for this cause.

As part of honouring our promise to promote and protect the rights of all our senior citizens, I am pleased to inform this house that the President's Coordinating Council has endorsed our proposal for the establishment of Older Persons Desk in the Offices of Premiers in all provinces.

We believe that every senior citizen deserves a secure, healthy, and a dignified life. For this reason, we strongly condemn unwarranted acts of violence and abuse against our senior citizens.

Let me take this opportunity to convey my profound regrets and dismay on the tragic loss of life Ms Elimina Mbhele who lost her life during the attack at a SASSA pay-point at Lindelani, in KwaZulu-Natal.

Chairperson, we attach great importance to the contributions of older persons, to national development, particularly in the context of nation building, promoting social cohesion, strengthening families and caring for orphans and vulnerable children. For this reason, we welcome the recent ruling of the South Gauteng High Court which gave clarity that grandparents who care for their grandchildren are eligible for foster care grants.

This will go a long way to providing them with the much-needed financial support to undertake their caregiving role. In turn, this will facilitate educational access and achievement for orphans and vulnerable children, as well as improve health outcomes, for children under the care of older persons.

Research tells us that families are the building blocks of a strong, stable, and cohesive society. The White Paper on Families aims to bring a seamless approach in the provision of services to families, with a particular focus on early intervention and family support services. We recognise that without strong and resilient families, our goal to build safer and non-violent communities will come to nothing.

Chairperson, we will not rest until we succeed in our mission to ensure that all people in South Africa are and feel safe. In particular, we must eradicate violence against women and girls in our country.

To address this scourge, we have established an Inter-Ministerial Committee on violence against women and children. A Programme of Action on the elimination of violence against women and children anchored on prevention and protection, response, care and support, will be presented to Cabinet this year.

Working together with the National Council on Gender-Based Violence, civil society organisations and the business sector, the IMC is mobilising all sections of the South African society, to join hands to combat this social ill.

In this regard, I wish to commend the recent men's dialogue convened by Deputy President, Kgalema Motlanthe which pledged to mobilise millions of men to fight violence against women and girls.

Chairperson, there is a recognised link between violence against women and children and alcohol and substance abuse. Last year when I addressed this house, I informed you about the work of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Anti-Substance Abuse. The IMC approved the Draft Control of Marketing of Alcohol Beverages Bill early in February this year. Key amongst others, the Bill aims to restrict the marketing and promotion of alcoholic beverages, and will be presented to Cabinet this year before public consultations.

Other matters that the IMC will finalise this year include measures to enhance law enforcement such as reductions in the hours of sale of alcohol, substance abuse workplace interventions, as well as a proposal that a person who has consumed alcohol should not drive a vehicle at all.

We have appointed new members of the Board of the Central Drug Authority (CDA) to ensure implementation of the National Drug Master Plan (2013-2017), which will be presented to Cabinet for approval before the end of this month. Honourable members, each one of these measures is a step towards reducing the heavy health, social, and economic burden of alcohol and substance abuse in our country.

Honourable members, former President, Nelson Mandela said, "overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity; but an act of justice". In response to this call, the 53rd National Conference of the ANC resolved that we must move with speed to implement the Household Nutrition and Food Security Strategy this year. We have made significant progress since the launch of the Food for All campaign in 2011.

In partnership with FoodBank South Africa, we have to date distributed food supplies to over three hundred and seventy thousand beneficiaries every month. We have set up thirty three Community Nutrition and Development Centres in all nine provinces. This includes revitalising centres that were previously closed down by the Democratic Alliance government in the Western Cape Province.

To demonstrate our commitment, we have set aside One Hundred and Twenty Million Rand over the MTEF period to expand this intervention.

As part of the Department's extension of its work on disability and assisting people with special needs, we will commence interventions in the two highly neglected areas of autism and albinism. Many children and young people in our country who have these conditions and

special needs remain without assistance from government.

With this Budget, we continue our determination to recruit and retain more social work professionals. As part of our endeavours to increase access to quality services and to deal effectively with various social problems, we have awarded financial assistance to eight thousand five hundred and sixty nine social work students.

In the current financial year alone, we have awarded bursaries to two thousand and thirty seven students. The budget allocation for the social work scholarship programme grew steadily from 50 Million Rand in 2007 to 250 million Rand in the current financial year.

I am pleased to announce that we have approved the provincial implementation plans to absorb all newly-qualified social work graduates.

Honourable members, government's mid-term review report showed that while much progress has been made since 2009, implementation of policies remains a key challenge, particularly at service delivery level. To address this, the Department of Social Development together with SASSA and NDA will embark on a nationwide frontline service delivery improvement initiative, focusing on the poorest wards in the country. This will be a face to face engagement with people in municipalities so that we can jointly determine the nature and quality of the services we deliver.

Chairperson and Honourable members, this budget provides an opportunity to accelerate our march towards Vision 2030. We recognise and commend the selfless and dedicated contributions of community-based organisations, faith-based organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations in the many aspects of social development service delivery. Indeed, we view all these organisations as full partners in the work we do.

I would like to conclude by expressing my deepest gratitude to my colleague and comrade, Mama Bongsi Maria Ntuli, and all MECs for their enduring support and outstanding contribution. In addition, I extend my sincere appreciation to the former Director General, Mr Vusi Madonsela, for the excellent contribution he made to the Department of Social Development for over a decade. I also congratulate Mr Coceko Pakade on his appointment as the Director-General of the Department of Social Development.

Finally, I express my gratitude to the CEO of SASSA, Ms Virginia Petersen, CEO of the NDA, Dr Vuyelwa Nhlapo and Chairperson and members of the NDA Board, Special Advisors and all members of the DSD family for their hard work dedicated to the service of our people.

It now gives me pleasure to invite you to support Budget Vote 19.

I thank you.

Issued by the Ministry of Social Development

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