



MINISTER  
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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## **Remarks by the Minister for Social Development, Ms Lindiwe Zulu, MP On the Occasion of the Launch of the Child Poverty and the Child Support Grant Review Report**

Friday, 06 October 2023

**Nelson Mandela Foundation, Houghton**

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Programme Director and Acting Director-General of the Department of Social Development, Mr Linton Mchunu;

Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, Mr Verne Harris;

Country Representative of UNICEF South Africa, Ms. Christine Muhigana;

Our Partners from the Children's Institute of the University of Cape Town;

Senior Specialist Scientist from the Medical Research Council, the celebrated Dr Wanga Zembe-Mkabile;

Representatives of partner institutions present;

Chief Executive Officer of the South African Social Security Agency, Ms Totsie Memela-Khambula;

Senior Managers from government departments and entities present;

Distinguished guests; and

Ladies and gentlemen.

1. As we approach the end of the first thirty years of a democratic South Africa we are keenly aware of the fact that we do so as a society that is profoundly traumatised by the stubborn and structural continuities of colonialism, apartheid, violence, racism, sexism, un-development, poverty and inequality.

2. Therefore, from time to time as we reflect on the social policy challenges that the majority of children and youth are encountering in communities throughout the country today, we must not be remiss of the elaborate institutions behind Hendrik Verwoerd's infamous words when he said [I quote]

What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice?  
[Unquote].

3. Yes, owing to their vulnerabilities and defencelessness children were among the prominent demographic groups whose prospects were intentionally impaired by the structural complex of social institutions that I have just mentioned.
4. Mandated with bringing our society out of the deepest darkness of subjugation, oppression and indignity know to humanity, when we ushered democracy in 1994 we embodied hope in the country's institutions of governance. Centuries before this the majority of the people lived in unmistakable despair.
5. From this point onwards, every child was constitutionally guaranteed to enjoy the right to be provided with nutritional food and social assistance where their families were unable to support them. It is for these reasons that, since 1994, every Administration of the African National Congress had comprehensively been strengthening the implementation and accessibility of social assistance for millions of South Africans who are unable to provide for themselves.
6. Also worth noting is that eleven years ago the *Child Support Grant Impact Assessment* report highlighted the broader positive outcomes that social policy is having on children with respect to health, education and nutrition. From this approach, since its inception the Child Support Grant (CSG) was documented to be among South Africa's most successful poverty alleviation strategies.
7. In fact, and as recently recognised by the International Social Security Association (ISSA), the CSG stands as the single known social assistance programme that has the greatest impact on poverty in the country. This is the undeniable backdrop against which the *Review Report* should be read.

8. As a result, the *Review Report* not only serves as a barometer, but it is an invitation to found, strengthen and activate a people-public-private-civic-academic-multilateral partnership that will undo child poverty in all communities. The Review Report is a challenge to all of us to inspire hope and thereby ensuring a brighter future for all children.
9. To reinforce the CSG's continued relevance, the Department is currently working on a policy through which we will be integrating the receipt of children's grants with government's other basic services in the very near future. This policy will ensure that these beneficiaries — namely, children — will benefit from receiving the diverse bouquet of government's interventions that will necessarily improve their human development and dignity.
10. Accompanying the advent of CoVID-19 was the greatest gift that all of society re-learns the ethos of working together in the face of shocks, disasters and crises. Most importantly, these phenomena mobilised the State into innovating people-responsive policies that were not in place earlier.
11. Consequently, this *Review Report* owes its life to civil society formations' advocacy work for government to top-up the value of the CSG to R500 as part of our CoVID-19 response measures. The evidence that was presented showed that the value of the CSG was below the lower-bound poverty line of R624 per month.
12. As a result, the CSG was increased by R300 per child in May 2020, and then by R500 per CSG caregiver for the next five months. Subsequently, several independent research studies stated that these interventions successfully protected the most vulnerable children from sinking into deeper poverty. To this end, the *Review Report* is providing further nuanced evidence with respect to approximately 1.2 million children who were rescued from falling below the lower-bound poverty line.
13. Owing to the limited duration of these child-targeted interventions during CoVID-19, CSG caregivers could, as of August 2021, apply for the CoVID-19 social relief of distress (SRD) if they were unemployed and met the income threshold criteria.

14. At the end of August 2023, more than a third of all CSG caregivers — namely, some 2.6 million people — were receiving the CoVID-19 SRD of R350 for their basic livelihood needs. Thus, CSG caregivers make up 31% of the total 8.6 million CoVID-19 SRD beneficiaries. In other words, the CoVID-19 SRD is reaching households with children.
15. As announced earlier, into the future we will continue working tirelessly to ensure that the CoVID-19 SRD is extended beyond March 2024 to provide for the livelihood needs of over 8 million unemployed and incomeless adults. We ask for all of your support to help us achieve this in these difficult financial times.
16. Another group of children who were also in need of additional support are orphans who are in the care of relatives. For this category we introduced a top-up to the CSG whose value is R480. As a result, from June 2022 the top-up increased this to R720 per orphaned child. At the end of August 2023 there were just over 50 000 orphans on whose behalf relatives were receiving the CSG top-up that is valued at R750 for their direct care.
17. This government is concerned by the high child poverty rates that were uncovered by the *Review Report*. The cumulative cost of children who live in poverty and those who experience hunger will only be realised in the future.
18. That cost will be carried by the whole economy: while these children's learning and life experiences are being shaped today, their social and economic participation prospects are likely to be dimmer in the future. Consequently, they are likely to: experience stunted growth; remain on social assistance; and be unproductive citizens. In this regard, we call upon developmental partners to intensify and better target the necessary interventions.
19. We take it upon ourselves to share this report with the relevant mandates of government, and further champion a whole-of-government approach for the eradication of experiences of child poverty within the next thirty years of our democracy.

20. As I conclude, please allow me to invoke the words of President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela when he said [and I quote]

We do not want freedom without bread, nor do we want bread without freedom. We must provide for all the fundamental rights and freedoms associated with a democratic society. [End of quote]

21. I thank our partners — the Children’s Institute; UNICEF; and the Nelson Mandela Foundation — for being with us throughout this *Review Report*. Thank you all for your invaluable support.

Thank you.