



4. Because social development is about the people, the success of this year's programme will be evident in the portfolio's interventions:
  - 4.1 resonating with the priorities of the people in the communities where they are being carried out (in other words, active citizenship is the key ingredient because there is nothing about the people without the people);
  - 4.2 being relevant to the communities where they are being implemented while being also being responsive to the felt needs of these communities; and
  - 4.3 the deployment of programmes pursuant of this year's Social Development Month must mark the material shift and realisation of the One District, One Budget and One Plan in the fifty-two district and metropolitan municipalities (in other words, the resources for the implementation of the relevant programmes must shift to the concerned municipalities).
5. The theme "*United in the Fight Against Poverty and Other Social ills*" must consist in the national and provincial spheres of government capacitating, devolving the necessary resources to, and entrusting the district and metropolitan municipalities to fight poverty and the social ills that the communities within their jurisdictions are experiencing.
6. The Social Development Month takes place during the month when we are also commemorating the Mental Health Month. This is the month wherein the global community is observing the International Day for Older Persons; the World Food Day; the World Rural Women's Day; and the International Day of the Eradication of Poverty.
7. It is against this backdrop that we are urging for the necessary resources to be entrusted to the district and metropolitan municipality sphere of government for them to, owing to their proximity to the people, attend to these and related social challenges.
8. In support of our society's socio-economic reconstruction and recovery following the series of social, health and climate change shocks, we affirm our support of programmes and people-public-private-civic-academic-multilateral partnerships that are carried out towards the full realisation of the capabilities and prospects of each and every South African.
9. Noting the shocks that South Africans have just experienced, our partnerships must attend to the rising mental health phenomena that result in concerning levels of anxiety, fear, panic, depression, uneasiness, trust deficit and a range of related insecurities among the people. Yes, resilient families and communities are the foundation of a prosperous and inclusive South African society that we envision.

10. This month the Social Development portfolio will engage on various community outreach programmes that mainly focus on social security, active ageing, child-headed households and address social ills such as gender-based violence, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, human trafficking and homelessness.
11. During this month we will also showcase the various services that we render in various districts and metropolitan municipalities and communities throughout the country. I am also going to conduct an *Imbizo* where, together with the Deputy Minister and senior programme managers, I will be having conversations with ordinary South Africans on various issues that are relevant to the Social Development mandate.
12. As a build-up to the Presidential Summit on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide that is taking place next month, the portfolio will, working together with civil society organisations, be conducting a series of interactive public conversations. This will be in line with our implementation of Pillar 4 of the GBVF National Strategic Plan which focuses on the provision and strengthening of an integrated community and institutional response, care, support and healing to GBVF survivors and their families.
13. Still this month, the portfolio will be hosting the Shelter Indaba to engage and highlight the importance of protecting women against the oldest pandemic known to humanity, namely gender-based violence and femicide.
14. We will close the month by hosting the annual Active Ageing Week. Aimed at ensuring that our senior citizens lead active and productive lives, Active Ageing is a year-long programme.
15. I now proceed to updating you on the implementation of the CoVID-19 Social Relief of Distress, and the Child Support Grant Top-Up.

### **CoVID-19 Social Relief of Distress**

16. To begin with, we would like to apologise to all the applicants and beneficiaries of the CoVID-19 Social Relief of Distress (SRD) for the challenges that you experienced with the end of the provisions of the national state of disaster under the *Disaster Management Act*, and the switch over to the regulations of the *Social Assistance Act* that facilitates the implementation of this benefit. These challenges point to the design and implementation difficulties that government programmes face in their formative stages.

17. We regret the pain and hardships that these challenges occasioned for many of you for whom this intervention is the difference between, on the one hand, hunger and indignity, and on another, leading a dignified life. This is noteworthy at this juncture when the country is on course with the implementation of the economic growth interventions that are designed to immediately lead us into a territory where more jobs can be created and more people can be gainfully employed or self-employed.
18. Whereas the *Disaster Management Act* enabled for us to pay the CoVID-19 SRD to 10.5 million beneficiaries within a short space of time, the lifting of the National State of Disaster in March 2022 challenged the Department to immediately develop new regulations under the *Social Assistance Act*. These changes necessitated that the provisions of the *Public Finance Management Act* be brought into effect in so far as the use of allocated budgets is concerned. Consequently, the continued payment of this benefit required that additional qualifying criteria be introduced.
19. On the premise that the *Public Finance Management Act* requires us to stay within the allocated R44 billion, we introduced additional qualifying criteria. These included the introduction of the means test threshold of R350 for all applicants. This was implemented by checking the bank accounts of each applicant monthly to establish if they are having income flows valued at R350 (or more) into their bank account from other sources.
20. The implementation of this provision proved that it needed more time for it to be realised in practice. Moreover, it was very challenging because we had to enter into negotiations with the banks for them to perform this means test (this is because banks are the custodians of their clients' accounts). Consequently, in the first three months of implementing this benefit, we experienced very serious challenges whose net effect was implementation delays.
21. The most important challenge that we continue to experience is the low up-take of the benefit by less than 50% of the budgeted amount. For us as the Social Development portfolio this is very serious indictment because we continue to see the growing numbers of hungry and distressed people in the communities where we work.
22. Applicants of the CoVID-19 SRD are encouraged **not** to change their bank details frequently because every change requires that the new account be verified. Once your bank details are loaded or updated, please wait for a response from your bank before changing your details.

23. Having noted the public outcry regarding the qualifying criteria that was introduced during the third iteration of this benefit, on Tuesday, 16 August we published the amended regulations that simplified some complexities that were arising from the qualifying criteria. These simplified regulations have had the desired effect in that the number of applicants that SASSA received increased to more than 12 million.
24. Most importantly, we increased the means test threshold from R350 to R624 that is in line with the estimated Food Poverty Line for 2022. These amendments received the concurrence of the Minister of Finance. We may have to consider a further adjustment to the threshold to enable more applicants to qualify for the benefit.
25. Today we can announce that nearly 7.5 million people are receiving the benefit on a monthly basis. As we are approaching the levels of support and coverage that we committed to, namely 10.5 million people, we also need to be cautious not to over-commit government to levels of funding that are beyond the allocated budget. In order to clarify public matters that relate to the CoVID-19 SRD, I asked SASSA to conduct ongoing and responsive communication and publicity through media that is accessible to the population that is in question.
26. With regards to payments, we are still having challenges with beneficiaries who upload incorrect bank details. We also urge all approved applicants who are not yet paid to check the status of bank verification, and if needs be, correct their banking details.
27. We note that it is in the interest of the income-less, un-employable and vulnerable sections of our population for the implementation of the CoVID-19 SRD to improve. Equally, we note that the vast majority of South Africans prefer to be in employment. Until such time that the economy has sufficiently grown, we cannot helplessly sit by and watch the people lose their dignity.
28. Because the decisions that are relevant to this benefit have profound implications either way, we opt to err on the side of caution where changes are being effected to the CoVID-19 SRD framework. This is indeed responsible than being found to have mismanaged public resources.
29. To our academic and research partners, the CoVID-19 SRD continues to generate truly interesting data upon which exciting social policy research projects may be initiated towards, for instance, refining our reading of official poverty statistics. I am certain that researchers will investigate the relevant demographic and policy discrepancies and nuances in these data. Researchers who are interested in studying poverty data will be able to reflect on these data and provide us with informative analyses and reflections. In this regard, the Social Development portfolio is waiting to hear from interested research projects with whom public-to-public partnerships can be entered into.

## Child Support Grant (CSG) Top-Up

30. With respect to the Child Support Grant Top-Up: Last week we informed South Africans that the Department is encouraging all relatives who are caring for orphaned children to come forward and apply for the Child Support Grant Top-Up at their nearest SASSA offices.
31. It is important to mention that the Child Support Grant Top-Up is not a new grant. The additional R240 to the standard R480 is enabled by a 2015 Cabinet-approved policy. The provisions of this policy enables me as the Minister of Social Development to introduce the higher value child support grant top-up for orphans. As a result, on 01 June 2022, and with the concurrence of the Minister of Finance, I introduced the Child Support Grant Top-Up.
32. By 'Top-Up' we mean an additional amount of R240 that supplements the standard Child Support Grant amount of R480. Only relatives caring for an orphaned child can apply for and receive the Child Support Grant Top-Up of R720 per child per month.
33. All caregivers of orphans should know that the Child Support Grant Top-Up is available at all SASSA offices for them to apply. No Social Worker's report or court order are needed to access the Top-Up. This is designed to improve the accessibility of the CSG programme to, as best as possible, meet the basic needs of orphans.
34. South Africans should keep in mind that the only caregiver who needs to see a social worker before they can approach SASSA are children under 18 years who are looking after their orphaned siblings in child-headed households. Before they approach SASSA, they need to see a social worker who will assess their situation, complete a form in terms of section 137 of the *Children's Act*, and provide them with the extra support that they need due to not having an adult in the household.
35. Therefore, increasing the amount of the Child Support Grant for orphans is government's latest investment that is aimed at creating a better life for children living in poverty. The only additional proof that is required from the caregiving relatives is that the child is an orphan in that both parents are deceased.
36. The turnaround time of this application process, verification and payment should be within one month.

## Conclusion

37. This media briefing provided you with the outline of the Social Development Month that we are commemorating under the theme “*United in the Fight Against Poverty and Other Social ills*”. You have also received detailed updates of the CoVID-19 SRD as well as the Child Support Grant Top-Up.
38. As I conclude, we depend on the members of the media to duly disseminate this important message across the length and breadth of our country so that South Africans know what is coming to their communities this Social Development Month.

I thank you

