DSD Strategic Thrust

The mandate of the Department of Social Development is to provide social protection services and lead government efforts to ensure care, protection and full participation of the most vulnerable individuals, groups and communities in their own development paths.

- *Social Development Meaning (wellbeing of everyone in society as it is linked to development and growth of the country)*

This work is guided by a vision of building "a caring and self-reliant society" and a sole mission of providing integrated, comprehensive and sustainable social development services.

So our work is primarily centred on the wellbeing of our people, and cuts across different departments and entities of government.

Touching the lives of so many people in the urban and rural corners of our country has earned us the status of being a ***heartbeat of the nation***. Social Development spending is the second-largest spending priority in government accounting for 18.9 per cent of consolidated government expenditure.

Over the past year our budgets for the Departments of Social Development was about include R204 billion in allocations earmarked for specific purposes. This includes R195 billion to continue to pay social grants, R7,4 billion to fund SASSA administration, R216 million to fund programmes in the National Development Agency and R1 billion towards the ECD conditional grants.

- *Skewed allocation more for grants less for NDA*

Programmatic Focus

Our policy and programmatic thrust is based on three key areas:

- Welfare Services
- Community Development
- Comprehensive Social Security

Heightening Social Welfare Services

The NDP 2030 identifies a critical need for the current social welfare system to be reformed in order to deliver better results for vulnerable groups. This includes a revisit and possible review of existing policies and legislations taking into account lived realities of the targeted individuals and communities.

There is a need for us to deepen our partnership with Civil Society to develop a system that is socially equitable, financially viable, structurally efficient and effective in meeting the needs of the most disadvantaged sectors of the population – business also has a critical role to play in this regard. The involvement of communities in the co-creation of innovative interventions and delivery of services remains our top priority. We are also looking at upscaling our work on social entrepreneurship – especially in what we call the care-economy to improve the delivery of critical social services in communities – whether in education health and social development. The opportunities are vast.

Our current service delivery model is heavily reliant on our social partners. This calls for synergised, integrated approaches, re-balancing and re-imagination of our relations and partnership. Collaboration, Cooperation and Co-opting should become defining features of our relations.

Deepening Social Security Provision

Social security (including social assistance) is a Constitutional Right in South Africa. This constitutional right is given effect through the implementation of a legal framework that guarantees coverage of the population against the risks faced throughout their life cycle.

While Government has made commendable progress with the progressive realisation of this right for children, the elderly and people with disabilities. This provides access to social assistance for just over 40% of our population, however the majority of our population, namely the cohort between 18 and 60, do not have adequate access to social assistance. While this gap was there before the COVID pandemic, the pandemic has worsened the situation and exposed this vulnerability in our social protection system, forcing us to implement measure for this age group in a very short space of time.

On the one hand, the working poor have suffered the deepest job losses. On the other, they have not had access to the pre-existing social grants, which are aimed at providing support to people who are outside the labour market – namely children, pensioners and people who are physically unable to work.

Lower-level workers who lose their jobs generally have only very limited savings to last them over the downturn. As a result, they have very little to fall back on if they lose their income-generating activities, whether paid employment or small and/or informal businesses. This indication serves as a challenge that we must solve for as a collective.

The COVID SRD grant of R350 that government implemented has to a large extent provided the much needed relief to this cohort of the population and we have learnt many lessons from this. It had a major impact on reducing hunger and even poverty and inequality, and to some extend our countries has been better off during the pandemic due to these government interventions.

The challenge though is that these measures were temporary and will eventually come to an end. However, the socio-economic conditions in our country will not change in the short term and remains a major concern that must be addressed. The recent Quarterly Labour Force survey reveals that unemployment has gotten marginally worse, and it is likely that this trend will continue in the short to medium term. But even if it does turn around, it is very unlikely that we will be able to create jobs at a sufficient rate to create employment for more than 11.8 million people in the short term. Hence the issues of poverty and hunger will remain with us for a while and government has to seriously consider more permanent measures to provide a source of income for those that do not have access to labour market income. This is an important human rights issue, and we believe that income support for the 18 to 60 group is long overdue.

Sustainable Development Framework

The Department of Social Development plays a pivotal role in the implementation of poverty alleviation initiatives through the Branch: Community Development

The Department has a moral and constitutional responsibility to protect poor and vulnerable people from falling deeper into poverty by providing social protection services. As part of Poverty Alleviation and broader social protection services, DSD is providing food to poor and vulnerable people in two approaches; food parcels or Social Relief of Distress (SRD) and cooked meals through centre-based feeding centres called Community Nutrition and Development Centres.

DSD is using the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach and the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Approach to address the challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality. These approaches are central in ensuring that communities are capacitated and empowered to initiate poverty alleviation initiatives with minimal support from outside stakeholders. It is increasingly becoming clear that government's allocation on social protection is gradually getting over-stretched and therefore requires innovative thinking along the lines of social entrepreneurship.

This Framework and hopefully what will emerge from this deliberations needs to ensure that our people are able to rely less on government support and tap more on the creative power resident in most communities. This is central in the realization of the National Development Plan (NDP) which advocates for promotion of active citizenry.

The Department is open to ideas that will assist in Linking Social Protection Beneficiaries to Sustainable Livelihoods. This must target beneficiaries of social grants, especially the Child Support Grant (CSG), the R350 Covid-19 Relief Grant, beneficiaries of the Community Nutrition and Development Centres (CNDCs) and people between the ages 18-59 who do not have access to any form of income support. The recent civil unrests demonstrated that we all need to think deeper, wider in our strategies. Youth and women should remain on top of the priority list in these interventions. Our initiatives need to find expression in the District Development Model (DDM) which is the central pillar of government work.