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Speech by the Minister of Social Development, Ms Nokuzola Sisisi Tolashe, MP on the occasion of the tabling of Budget Vote 19 of the Department of Social Development to the National Council of Provinces

Wednesday, 16 July 2025 | Cape Town

Honourable House Chair;

Deputy Minister of Social Development, Mr Ganief Hendricks,

MECs for Social Development here present;

Chairperson and all Members of the Select Committee on Social Services

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen, and

Fellow South Africans

Introduction

1. Honourable Chair, with a great sense of responsibility and honour that I rise to table Budget Vote 19 of the Department of Social Development for the 2025/2026 fiscal year to this august House.

2. We table this budget fully aware of the weight of the expectations from the public and this august house. Social development is a concurrent function, and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) plays a very crucial role in strengthening the link between national policy and service delivery at the provincial level. Guided by the theme: ***"Restoring Trust, Deepening Impact: Reigniting the Role of the Family in a Renewed Commitment to Dignity and Inclusion"***, this budget is being presented at the first anniversary of the 7th administration under the GNU.
3. Indeed, it is just over a year ago, when the people of our country gave us a mandate to reach across party lines to form a GNU and to act in the national interest our people. This is the core of our portfolio and the higher purpose we serve. A year ago, we outlined several priorities that we set to achieve in the portfolio. Chief amongst these, was to stabilise the department and its entities, improve operational efficiency and ensure that the portfolio can effectively deliver on its mandate. This we did by swiftly filling the critical vacant posts of the Director-General, the Deputy Director-General and the Chief Financial Officer in the Department. We have recently advertised the post of the Executive Director for the Inspectorate for Social Assistance.
4. With regards to SASSA, we have filled the post of SASSA CEO shortly after it became vacant and we are on course to fill the vacant posts of SASSA Regional Executive Managers for Free State, Limpopo, and

Northern Cape before the end of this quarter. We will fill the posts of REMs for Gauteng and Western Cape before the end of the third quarter.

5. We can now clearly trace the milestones of our journey and take immense pride in how much we have accomplished. But, as proud as we are of these achievements, we remain conscious that we still have a long walk to traverse to fully realise the aspirations of generations of women trailblazers who paved the way for us. We are equally conscious that the hardest part of our journey probably lies ahead of us. We table this budget with confidence that the successes we have realised have become a template to navigate our way forward with determination.
6. The tabling of this budget coincides with the historic landmark anniversary of the 70th anniversary of the Freedom Charter, a pivotal moment in our liberation struggle. In this context, this budget is not just about numbers. It is about wiping away the hunger and the fear on vulnerable children's faces. It is about lifting the despair of poverty from a parent's shoulders. It is about reaching out to the grandmother to ease the many years of pain and scars of humiliation etched into her face. It is about ensuring that we leave no child behind.
7. With this in mind, we will roll out the Sinovuyo Teenage Parenting programme, targeting five districts in Eastern Cape, namely Joe Gqabi,

OR Tambo, Amathole, Alfred Nzo and Chris Hani. In KwaZulu-Natal, we are targeting uMkhanyakude and Ugu districts.

8. Yesterday, I presented the Children's Amendment Bill to the Social Protection, Community and Human Development Cabinet Committee. This Bill seeks to strengthen current measures in our child protection system through a continuum of services, focusing on prevention, early intervention, alternative and reintegration services. More importantly, the Bill reinforces the inclusion of all children with disabilities. I am confident I can count on the support of this house when the Bill is introduced for your consideration. All of us, regardless of party affiliation, have a part to play in protecting our children from abuse, neglect and exploitation. **IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RAISE A CHILD!**

2025/2026 Budget Allocation

9. Hon Chair and Members, the total budget allocation for this financial year is **Two Hundred and Ninety-Four Billion Rand** comprising of:
- **Two Hundred and Eighty-Four Billion Rand** for monthly direct transfers to support children, older persons and persons with disabilities. Budget vote 19 remains faithful to the vision and ideals as expressed in Section 27 (1) of our Constitution.
 - **Over Two Hundred Million Rand** to detect, prevent and eliminate any form of fraud and corruption over the MTEF period

- An amount of **Twenty-Four point Seven Billion** Rand allocated to SASSA for grant administration over the MTEF period.
- **Fifty-Two Million Rand** as transfers to provide financial support to Twenty-Two National Councils.
- **Thirty-Four point Nine Billion Rand** for the continuation of the COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress until end of March 2026,
- **Two Hundred and Sixteen Million Rand** allocation to the National Development Agency (NDA) for grant funding and capacity building for civil society organisations
- **One Hundred and Two Million Rand** to accelerate the implementation of Pillar of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide. The total budget allocation for the Victim Empowerment Programme, inclusive of the provincial equitable share is over **Eight Hundred Million Rand**.

10. Hon Chair, allow me now to turn the attention of this august to the portfolio's strategic priorities outlined in the annual performance plans for this financial year. The Deputy Minister will elaborate on the functions I have delegated to him, which includes HIV and AIDS, substance abuse, older persons and persons with disabilities, families and parenting, amongst others.

South African Social Security Agency (SASSA)

11. In 1994, the ANC Election Manifesto, the Reconstruction and Development Programme, identified poverty as its priority. The Manifesto stated that [and I quote] ***An election victory is only a first step. No political democracy can survive and flourish if the mass of our people remain in poverty, without land, without tangible prospects for a better life. Attacking poverty and deprivation must therefore be the priority of a democratic government*** [close quote].
12. Pursuant to this declaration, the former Minister of Social Development, Dr Zola Skweyiya became the chief midwife who delivered the birth of what is today known across the length and breadth of our country, and I dare say across the globe, as SASSA. In its daily work, SASSA continues to play a crucial role, drastically lifting millions from the devastating clutches of extreme poverty. Indeed, **SIXOSHA INDLALA!**
13. Consistent with this, we have implemented above-inflation increases across all major grant types in this financial year. The Old Age, Disability, and Care Dependency grants now stand at **Two Thousand Three Hundred and Ten Rand** per month, with a further increase due in October. These adjustments, well above the Consumer Price Index, reflect our unwavering commitment to cushion the impact

of the cost of living on the most vulnerable. This is a central pillar of the Medium-Term Development Plan.

14. Nineteen years since its founding, SASSA remains the vanguard of our government's enduring efforts to tackle poverty, with over **Thirteen Million** children on the Child Support Grant and over **Four Million** older persons on the Old Age Grant. Across the hinterlands of our country, the COVID-19 SRD continues to be a critical lifeline for over **7 million** eligible beneficiaries. Most of our social grants are consumed by four provinces, led by KwaZulu-Natal with over **Four point One Million**. Gauteng follows with over **Three point One Million**, Eastern Cape with **Two point Nine Million** and Limpopo with **Two point Seven Million**. Together, these four provinces account for **Sixty-Seven** percent social grants payment every month.
15. Notably, women remain the majority recipients in every province. So, we are putting money directly in the hands those heading households and participate in the informal economy. Our youth, too, are turning to the SRD grant in large numbers, with the 20–24 age group alone accounting for over **Three point Four Million** applications.
16. This is a result of significant challenge of youth unemployment confronting our country. The latest Quarterly Labour Force Survey reveals a troubling situation. The majority of young South Africans aged 15-35 are currently not in education, employment or training.

These figures represent more than just numbers, it reflects a generation whose dreams have been deferred. The situation is particularly concerning for women, particularly young black women.

17. Given the foregoing, we cannot rest because the responsibility for restoring their hopes and aspirations rests on the shoulders of each and one of us in this room. Our programme for sustainable livelihoods is central to this. Accordingly, we have commenced with the roll out of a pilot called **Generating Better Livelihoods for Child Support Grants Recipients** in collaboration with the FinMark Trust. The early findings of the pilot in Free State, Gauteng and KZN show promising results and potential success for scale up.
18. We continue to look for ways to meet our people's needs and expectation. In this regard, we have completed a pilot for the queue management system in **One Hundred and Eighteen** SASSA offices. **Two Hundred and Sixty-Nine** are targeted for this financial year. Additionally, we have set aside over **Twenty-Nine Million Rand** to conduct **Five Hundred and Sixteen** ICROPs across the country.
19. Honourable Chair and Members, we are entrusted with the stewardship of public funds for the benefit of the citizenry. SASSA is no exception. Accordingly, we are currently conducting a nationwide review. This is not new, and this requirement is consistent with the regulations for the Social Assistance Act. Previous reviews were

focused on public servants, resulting in annual savings of over **One Billion Rand** to the fiscus.

20. Once again, I take this opportunity to appeal to all beneficiaries who have received notifications to respond to the letters we have sent to them. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL IT IS TOO LATE!** I also want to ask you Honourable Members, to please help us to spread this message in your constituencies.

Fighting fraud and corruption

21. Our unrelenting fight against fraud and corruption continues. To this end, we have allocated over **Two Hundred Million Rand** over the MTEF period to detect, prevent and eliminate any form of fraud and corruption. This will be complemented by the roll out of the biometric system in all SASSA offices by the end of this financial year.

Basic Income Support

22. With regards to Basic Income Support, we intend to table the policy for approval by the end of this financial year. This policy builds on the developmental benefits of existing social grants. Empirical evidence, including modelling from the Expert Panel and The Presidency's Basic Income Task Team, show that the COVID-19 SRD has significantly reduced food poverty and supported job search efforts. The temporary nature of the current intervention places the missing middle in a very precarious position.

National Development Agency

23. The NDA turnaround strategy is now beginning to steer the ship in the right direction, with increased visibility, engagements and collaborations with key stakeholders in the development landscape. This is crucial to enable the portfolio not only to contribute to generating sustainable job opportunities but also foster social cohesion by bringing people together around a common goal.
24. I am pleased to inform this house that the agency has successfully established nine community-owned enterprises to date. One such is Imbadu Community Bakery Primary Cooperative based in Khayamandi, Stellenbosch here in the Western Cape. The NDA has provided financial support to the tune of Two point Three Million Rand through grant funding. Imbadu runs a community bakery, a saving and credit cooperation and a sewing project that have created the much-needed job opportunities—another key strategic priority in the MTDP.
25. We are slowly but surely turning the tide. The agency will continue this positive trajectory this financial year and beyond, setting itself an ambitious target of raising an amount of **Eighty Million Rand** to augment its budget. This is proof that with support and the right people at the helm, the NDA can and is now finding its niche. To maintain this momentum, I have directed the Board to fill the vacant posts of CEO and the Chief Financial Officer before the end of this financial year.

Confronting the twin challenges of Gender-Based Violence and Substance Abuse

26. Hon Chair, South Africa's first national study conducted by the HSRC highlights the stark reality of gender-based violence. The seeds of this violence are deeply rooted in the patriarchal culture that subjugates women and reward toxic masculinity. There are no more safe places for women and girls as homes have become graves, and places of worship have become safe havens for false prophets and charlatans who prey on the vulnerable.
27. We therefore cannot afford to rest until we behead the monster of patriarchy and until we can ensure that all women and girls in South Africa are and feel safe in their homes, in schools and in every aspect of their lives. We owe women and girls of this country that much!
28. This is what we are doing under the leadership of President Ramaphosa as guided by the NSP on GBVF. Our focus is to expand access to shelter services, targeting the thirty GBVF hotspots. An amount of **One Hundred and Two Million Rand** has been allocated for this purpose. On this note allow me to revoke the powerful words of Mother Teresa who said [and I quote] "We ***know only too well that what we are doing is nothing more than a drop in the ocean. But if the drop were not there, the ocean would be missing something*** [close quote].

29. **Hon Chair, we have said it before and will say it again:** combating the scourge GBVF requires a multi-sectoral approach. We therefore appeal to the private sector to join hands with us to sustain vital services like shelters for survivors. Let me hasten to add that besides money, we need good and honourable men of this house to take a firm stand against GBVF. The phrase: “***the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing***”, could not be more appropriate. If you choose to remain silent, you are guilty of complicity.
30. We welcome the Cabinet’s recent decision to re-establish the Inter-Ministerial Committee on GBVF and Substance Abuse, which I co-chair the IMC with Minister Chikunga. The inclusion of substance abuse in the work of this IMC recognises that alcohol abuse is a significant contributing factor to gender-based violence. This is corroborated by the Quarterly Crime Stats which consistently show a strong correlation between substance use and incidents of violence.
31. Cabinet also approved a 90-day intensification programme to urgently address the surge in GBVF across the country. Spearheaded by the JCPS Cluster, the programme is anchored on six urgent focus areas, including prevention, enforcement, care and support fixing the legal regulatory framework, amongst others for impactful outcomes.

Older Persons

32. Our persons deserve a secure, healthy, and a dignified life. For this reason, we strongly condemn all acts of violence targeting them. The death of one senior citizen due to these barbaric acts is one too many. It is a national shame and a painful indictment of our collective failure to protect the most vulnerable in our society.

Partnerships

33. Hon Chair, I would be remiss if I fail to acknowledge with gratitude, the contribution of our partner organisations, big and small, who stood with us shoulder-to-shoulder during challenging natural disaster response. Key amongst these is the Old Mutual Foundation, Procter & Gamble, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, We Love You Foundation, Q-Link, ISON Experiences, Pernod Ricard, South African Red Cross and Gift of the Givers. We are deeply grateful for your unwavering commitment to provide the much-needed relief and recovery every time we knock on their doors. **Siyabulela!**

Strengthening regional collaboration

34. We will continue to explore strategic partnerships across the globe to advance national interests, particularly with like-minded countries and regions. Special attention will be given to strengthening ties with the African continent.

35. Our participation in progressive South-South Cooperation forums such as the AU Population Experts Committee, Pathfinder Global Alliance to End Violence Against Children, Partners in Population and Development and all UN agencies, amongst others, will continue to receive equal attention.

36.

37. We are strengthening collaborations on the field of social development, with particular interest on pressing issues such as GBVF, youth and women empowerment, services to persons with disabilities and undocumented and unaccompanied minors, known as children on the move. To this end, we are collaborating with countries bordering Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and Mpumalanga through the Cross Border Forum. In April this year, I signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Kingdom of Lesotho and look forward to renewing our agreement with the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Conclusion

38. Since the dawn of our democracy, we have always remained mindful that the long walk that Madiba spoke about in his book of the same title, has many winding turns. Through this budget, we have are navigating this journey and in just a year, we can count several achievements along with the many obstacles thrown along the path to our destination.

39. I would like to conclude by expressing my deepest gratitude to Deputy Minister, all MECs and this house for your support and

outstanding contribution to our work. I extend my sincere appreciation to the Director-General, the CEO of SASSA and the Acting CEO of the NDA for your continued support since my last day of deployment to this portfolio. My special gratitude to all our staff in the Department, NDA and SASSA for your contribution and continued support which remain crucial to our development journey. **Ndithi Ningadinwa Nangamso!**

40. As we celebrate the Mandela Month, there is no better way to conclude the tabling of this budget than to invoke his words 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]

41. Hon Chair and Members, it is now my singular honour to table Budget Vote 19 of the Department of Social Development for the financial year 2025/2026 to this august House for your consideration and support.

Ndiyabulela!