

**Remarks by the Minister of Social Development, Ms Lindiwe Zulu,
on CoVID-19 Economic and Social Measures that were announced
by President Cyril Ramaphosa**

29 April 2020

14h00

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Programme Director;
Ladies and Gentlemen of the media,
Fellow South Africans, Good morning to you all.

The speech that President Cyril Ramaphosa delivered to the nation on the evening of Tuesday, 21 April 2020 will certainly be among the most memorable of humanity's responses to the novel 2019 Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Equally, the speech provided by the President on 27 April 2020, which is of course Freedom Day, was profound in relation to the new society we need to become.

Allow me to elaborate and provide context. In his speech on 27 April 2020, President Ramaphosa, framed South Africa's **fight against COVID-19 as a collective societal mission**. The President summons every South African to rise to the challenge of protecting our collective interests and wellbeing: especially where these concern the country's senior citizens, women, youth and persons with disabilities in our respective communities.

In the context of announcing government's CoVID-19 economic and social investment measures billed at R500 billion, President Ramaphosa defines South Africans' national mission as follows (**and I quote**),

"The scale of this emergency relief programme is historic. It demonstrates that we will not spare any effort, or any expense, in our determination to support our people and protect them from harm. We will — and we must — do whatever it takes to recover from this human, social and economic crisis. Our country and the world we live in will never be the same. We are resolved not merely to return our economy [and may I add, our society] to where it was before the coronavirus, but to forge a new economy [may I add again, a new society] in a new global reality. (Unquote)

The President further elaborates South Africa's fight against CoVID-19 as a national mission in that our economy and society (**I quote**)

"... must use every resource, every capability and every innovation we have in the service of the people of this country.... Even as we find ourselves at a moment of great peril, even as great sacrifices are demanded, even as we dare not allow our vigilance to waver, we look ahead to a better future." (**Unquote**)

Therefore, noting this mission, the Department of Social Development will deliver unprecedented developmental and sustainability-enhancing social relief and social revitalisation programmes through:

1. intensifying the Department's and SASSA's hunger-targeting food and nutrition distribution programmes;
2. upscaling existing programmes — *and innovating new and responsive ones through partnerships* — that target and mitigate the growing CoVID-19-induced human and social calamity;
3. gazetting directions that will enable the Department and its Portfolio to develop, administer and implement the relevant programme eligibility criteria and benefits;
4. systematically and efficiently designing programme targets and building wastage and misappropriation management mechanisms into them;
5. strengthening CoVID-19-targeted partnerships with private, civic including NPOs, academic-research and multilateral partners; and
6. factoring the need for including social development infrastructure into the forthcoming infrastructure build programme. This is especially noteworthy within the context that the President mentioned that South Africa's economic recovery strategy requires of us to intensify infrastructure build interventions during the post-lockdown and post-pandemic period.

South Africa's fight against CoVID-19 is a society-wide mission because it:

1. at the societal scale, challenges each and every one of us to change our old behavioural patterns and learn new ones; (including practicing social distancing and following hygiene protocols which

include regular washing of hands with soap for at least 20 seconds and wearing of masks)

2. calls for unthought-of-before innovations in a variety of sectors including health, science, IT and through entrepreneurship;
3. asks the Social Development sector to assume a long-term vision of the assumptions that underlie its programme design, outcomes and impact generation towards the post-pandemic South Africa; and
4. demands societal, regional and global responses that combine:
 - 4.1 a shared sense of societal direction [*with*];
 - 4.2 the need to unlock closed and monopolised economic spaces [*and*];
 - 4.3 radical and incremental innovations [*together with*];
 - 4.4 the unleashing of domestic and regional technological and cultural endowments [*as well as with*];
 - 4.5 government-wide cooperation and cross-societal and global collaborations [*and*];
 - 4.6 the support and implementation by all of government's policy statements on our fight against CoVID-19.

Fellow South Africans,

The advent of the CoVID-19 pandemic will result in irreversible changes in our daily lives for many years to come. It is precisely for this reason that, as announced by the President, our government is investing up to ten percent (10%) of South Africa's gross domestic product (GDP) to CoVID-19-targeted economic and social recovery measures. In arriving at this decision, the National Command Council (NCC) on CoVID19 had an explicit interest to cushion poor and vulnerable South Africans from the impact of the pandemic and its aftershocks.

We are going through a difficult time and many in our country are anxious about: where their next meal will come from; theirs and their loved ones' wellbeing and future prospects; and their possible exposure to the virus.

Today marks the 34th day since the national lockdown was declared, and the Social Development Portfolio has — *first-hand* — been witnessing the development of CoVID-19-induced “deepening [of] poverty and increase [of] hunger” as well as “devastating... and catastrophic human and social” effect that President Ramaphosa spoke about. We have been at the forefront of addressing requests to rescue our people from these as well as to provide them with nutritional relief.

WITH REGARDS TO THE DEPARTMENTS FOOD AND NUTRITION PROGRAMMES:

I have been having regular meetings and discussions with all MECs for Social Development, the latest being yesterday and I wish to thank all MECs and their staff and that of our agencies for continuing to soldiering on and delivering services to our people. **Our heartfelt prayers go out to the family of one of our staff members of SASSA in the Zwide Local office in Nelson Mandela Metro Municipality in the Eastern Cape who passed away earlier this week.**

The National Departments allocated a sum of R20m whilst the Solidarity Fund allocated R23m to provide emergency food parcels to the value of R700 per household. In total, over 58 000 households and close to 250 000 people have already started receiving these food parcels through our Community Nutrition Development Centres (CNDCs) through a Knock and Drop deliveries. Our Provinces are coordinating these and we are looking at scaling up this programme.

I want to highlight the eligibility criteria through this programme it includes all current beneficiaries of CNDCs; beneficiaries of all closed centre feeding programmes like drop in centres, home community based care and lunch on clubs qualify for the CNDCs emergency food parcels. These also include households in need of food assistance which are not supported through the Social Relief of Distress Fund (SRD) and any other feeding programmes. For further information on this programme citizens can consult the Provincial Departments of Social Development.

We note with great appreciation and thank all donations in kind, especially from the Private Sector and NPO's that have been made to us through this and other programmes which work with our 235 CNDCs.

With regards to Shelters for the homeless: we have one hundred and sixty-three (163) shelters for the homeless wherein we are accommodating over fourteen thousand (14 000) homeless people

countrywide. This number fluctuates as some are running away with some coming back and some not. Within these shelters, we are providing personal protective equipment (PPEs), dignity packs, food, sanitisers, sleeping mattresses and blankets. Additional to these, we are providing substance abuse and psycho-social support services.

We have started to expose the beneficiaries in some provinces, to some soft skills development and family re-unification programmes. These will increase the prospects of the beneficiaries to reposition their lives in the post-lockdown and post-pandemic periods. The outcomes relating to these beneficiaries are being closely monitored. We have noted that the introduction of screening and assessment, in these shelters is having significant effects among drug-using beneficiaries in that the use of drugs among them has dropped considerably and most of them will be referred for treatment.

The department in discharging its responsibility of providing psychosocial support we have deployed psychosocial support 276 teams at district level to assist with trauma debriefing to affected and infected individuals and families, including those coming from quarantine. Nearly ten thousand (10 000) people have received psychosocial services from the Department of Social Development in relation to CoVID-19 to date.

In this regard, we reiterate our appreciation for the support that Vodacom and the State Information Technology Agency (SITA) are giving to our field-based psychosocial support practitioners in the form of two thousand three hundred (2 300) smartphones through which data is captured and sent to the nerve centre at Council for Scientific and Industrial Research where it will form part of a bigger analysis about South Africa's handling of the pandemic.

We have seen a rise in the number of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) incidents and we have strengthened the capacity of our GBV Command Centre by adding additional qualified social workers to attend to gender-based and family violence cases that are happening during this period.

Working with civil society we have developed referral pathways during the lockdown, to faster assist victims of GBV to link up with relevant authorities at this time which is also linked to the Gender-Based Command Centre. We continue to condemn Gender-Based Violence in all its forms and we will continue to strengthen partnerships with Civil Society and other key stakeholders in the fight against Gender-based Violence.

With regards to the movement of children: We have received numerous calls and concerns about the movement of children during the lockdown. In terms of the regulations published by Minister of COGTA Minister Dlamini-Zuma on 17 April 2020, for the extended lockdown for an additional 14 days, provision was made for co-parental rights and responsibilities to be exercised by those parents with joint co-parenting responsibilities, with a court order and / or a parenting plan registered with the office of the family advocate. We have made proposals to include a form that will facilitate permission for the movement of children inter-provincially that will also include children with parents/caregivers with informal co-parenting arrangements. This will be gazetted soon.

Another challenge we experienced is that of the movement of Children. The regulations currently do not cover for the movement of children who have visited their family members and now need to return to their parents during the current lockdown. We have made proposals to this end to amend such regulations to allow those children to return back to their parents. These will also be gazetted soon.

We appeal to all parents/caregivers to put the interests of the children first and to ensure that these are protected against the transmission of CoVID-19 at all times.

We are also looking at returning social workers at Local DSD Offices by ensuring delivery of critical areas such as; foster care; child protection services; gender-based violence; substance abuse and to strengthen existing teams that provide psychosocial support, especially to families infected and affected by COVID19. This is on condition that all DSD Offices have adequate Protective Personal Equipment in line with health protocols. We encourage all Provinces to procure their cloth masks from health standard compliant DSD and NDA supported cooperatives to afford them access to economic opportunities during these difficult times.

WITH REGARDS TO THE WORK BEING DONE BY OUR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY:

To complement our ongoing national effort at a community level, the National Development Agency (NDA), has activated a network of fifty-two (52) civil society organisations across 52 metropolitan and district municipalities of the country. These will enhance the reach of the Social Development Portfolio where people live.

Moreover, an initial five hundred and twenty (580) volunteers have appointed for a period of six (6) months to assist in the identification of households that are eligible for our targeted interventions in the 52 metropolitan and district municipalities.

These volunteers will work jointly with community- and faith-based organisations to ensure that the needed nutrition relief does reach those most in need of support. The volunteers are conducting community health education and advocacy in all local languages as per health regulations as well as data collection on households as part of profiling which will be analyzed to establish the impact of government interventions in responding to Covid-19.

As a custodian of the national database of Civil Society Organisations, the NDA is also linking sewing cooperatives that are producing cloth masks with various departments and donors to procure from them to ensure that they benefit on economic opportunities during this pandemic.

I echo President Ramaphosa's sentiments in condemning with the strongest possible terms the politicisation of government's nutrition relief resources that should benefit the poor and vulnerable. South Africans should not be divided along political or any lines for that matter when they need to be united. Equally strong is government's stern warning to those who steal and profit from nutrition relief packages that are destined for the poor!

The Department of Social Development has received several enquiries on the change of NPOs to NGOs. I wish to highlight to the public and especially the NPO sector to be vigilant of a scam that purports to *"accredit and convert NPO certificate to NGO certificate to qualify for an international funding worth millions of Rands"*. To date, a number of NPOs registered in terms of the NPO Act (Act No. 71 of 1997) have fallen prey to this elaborate scam which seeks to fraudulently gain access to organisations' finances.

The scammers prey on the NPOs desperate for funding and charges certain amount for conversion of their certificates to NGO certificates – there is no such – these are scams. These scammers have re-created a fake NGO certificate in which they ask registered NPOs to submit ID copies of members, their proof of residence, tax exemption letter, bank account, bank confirmation letter and a photo of the NPO Director.

Once an NPO provides such information and the amount charged, the scammer disappears. We want to encourage that you report such to law enforcement agencies as a matter of urgency.

WITH REGARDS TO SASSA:

The payment of all social grants remains a critical safety net for the poor during this time. In this regard, we will continue to ensure that all those who are due to receive their social grants do so without any hindrances.

The proposed relief measures target people who are already receiving social grants in the form of Top-up to existing social grants and new grants for people who have no other income at all. In summary though we will implement;

- Increase of **R300 for the Child Support Grant** to be paid in (only) **May 2020 per child**. Thereafter from June – October 2020, a **R500 grant will be paid to caregivers of the Children on the Child Support Grant. The amount per child will revert to R440 per month from June**. All existing caregivers will automatically qualify and receive this benefit along with the existing **CSG** monthly benefit.
- All other existing social grants (are increased by **R250** per month from May to October 2020.

In this regard, I wish to acknowledge all the proposals and input we received on how we should augment the social grants during the COVID crisis. One of the key contributions was the call for an increase in the child support grant by R500 per child.

Now that we have clarified the allocations, wherein the child support grant will be increased by R300 per child in May, and R500 per caregiver from June to October, many organisations are arguing that we have short-changed the children. While I acknowledge that all the proposals were sound and well-motivated, we were unfortunately not able to provide the necessary funding to accommodate every one of the proposals.

For example, the proposal to increase the Child Support Grant by R500 per child per month resonates with us. However, such an intervention would have cost R38 billion for six months. Clearly, this would have left very little room for the other interventions to be implemented, especially for the millions of unemployed adults and those working in the informal sector.

We agree that the children are the most vulnerable, with the lowest grant of all available grants, and this is why we have allocated the bulk of the budget towards households with children. We have allocated R21,8 billion, which is the lion's share of the total funds allocated by National Treasury towards households with children who receive the child support grant.

We are also in conversation with our Treasury and other parts of government to examine how we can improve the support that we provide for children, including how to address the gap that has been created by the suspension of the feeding programmes we were providing at ECD centres and schools.

The total amount of R20 billion will be paid during the May payment cycle to 11.3 million recipients – thus benefiting 18.6 million people including children. This includes the increased amounts mentioned above. In many poor households, social grants are the only source of income and these increases will go a long way to ensure that these families do meet their basic livelihood needs.

From May onwards, we will be staggering the payment of social grants to avoid large numbers of people at South African Post Office premises, retailers and ATMs. This is in line with the disaster management plan regulations. I must also at this juncture appreciate the retailers and banks for their support and continued cooperation during this time. We will be requesting the Minister of Transport to consider relaxing transport regulation during the first week of the payment cycle for social grant beneficiaries. We will also request the security cluster to assist with crowd management during the peak payment period. We will also request the Minister of COGTA to relax regulation for use of community halls for social grants payments.

We have engaged with retailers and the Post office to assist with ensuring that social distancing, and sanitizing requirements are implemented at all access points, while all staff dealing with the public have masks and gloves and the necessary PPE. SASSA is also negotiating with retailers and other stakeholders for assistance with the provision of masks for older persons who will be in queues.

As a result of the challenges experienced in April 2020, SASSA engaged critical stakeholders in the payment industry and civil society to find the possible solutions to relieve overcrowding and inconvenience especially to older persons and persons with disabilities.

In this regard, we have since separated the payment dates for older persons and persons with disabilities from the other social grants beneficiaries. Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities, will receive their social grants on the third of every month or the nearest working day after this date when the third falls on a weekend or a public holiday.

This means that for the Month of May, Older Persons and Persons with disabilities can start collecting their money from the 4th of May since the 3rd falls on a weekend. For all other grant payments, money will be available from the 6th of May onwards for May payments.

SPECIAL COVID19 SOCIAL RELIEF OF DISTRESS GRANT:

With regards to the Special COVID19 Social Relief of Distress Grant, the amount to be paid to qualifying applications will be R350 per month from May – October 2020. The Special COVID19 Social Relief of Distress Grant will be implemented in terms of the existing avenue provided for by the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) channel, which is administered in accordance with the provisions as set in the Social Assistance Act, 2004. In terms of Regulation 9 (6), social relief may be provided to South African citizens, permanent residents and refugees who have been affected by a disaster. This framework is currently administered through the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) however with limitations.

The implementation of existing grants (top-ups) is straightforward, as these beneficiaries are already in the SASSA database. SASSA was required to make adjustments to the system to increase the amount for existing beneficiaries for the next 6 months.

The new special COVID-19 SRD grant requires a rather more complex approach, as the beneficiaries are not on the SASSA database or other government grant support programmes. It was therefore necessary to introduce new systems and new qualification criteria, and amend some regulations.

The qualifying criteria for the special COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress of R350 per month for distressed individuals is as follows:

The grant will be available to South African Citizen, Permanent Resident or Refugee registered on the Home Affairs system; who are resident within the borders of the Republic of South Africa;

Applicants must be:

- ✓ above the age of 18;
- ✓ Unemployed;
- ✓ Not receiving any income;
- ✓ Not receiving any social grant;
- ✓ Not receiving any unemployment insurance benefit and does not qualify to receive unemployment insurance benefits;
- ✓ Not receiving a stipend from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme; and
- ✓ Not resident in a government funded or subsidised institution.

Prospective Applicants will need to provide the following compulsory information for processing of their applications:

- ✓ Identity Number/Department of Home permit;
- ✓ Name and Surname as captured in the ID (and initials);
- ✓ Gender and Disability;
- ✓ Banking details - Bank Name and Account Number;
- ✓ Contact details - Cell phone number;
- ✓ Proof of Residential Address;

In terms of Application process, an application for social relief of distress or a social grant may be lodged electronically over and above any other available means of lodging such applications. The measures applicable include sending a WhatsApp message to 0600 123 456 and selecting SASSA or an E-mail to SRD@sassa.gov.za. We are still finalising additional access channels and including SMS, self-help desks and online application process. We will give information on these soon.

For our people with no access to technology; Volunteers will be trained to assist applicants who cannot use technology and will be provided with gadgets to capture details on behalf of applicants. We have already received commitments from the NYDA, NDA and Community Development Workers in some of the provinces to assist. SASSA in the Provinces will further unpack these in consultation with Provincial structures and civil society organisation.

Notification of the outcome for an application for the Special COVID19 Social Relief of Distress Grant will be provided in the same manner in which the application was made.

In terms of payment, this will be made mainly through bank accounts of the applicants and through cash send measures through banks. The benefit/grant will be paid from the date of approval up to the end of October 2020 provided the qualifying criteria listed continues to be met. So if applicants apply in June their payments will be from June and there will be no backpay.

It is important for the applicant to **NOTE** that by virtue of application, all applicants grant consent to SASSA to verify their residency, sources of income and/or social security benefits with government departments and financial institutions; including - All ID/ Permits will be cross checked against other data sources. False applications will give rise to possible prosecution.

Lastly, we will publicize the directions which will provide details on how this grant will be implemented. The system will go live immediately when the regulations are published and we envisage to start making payments by the 15th of May 2020. Those who have applied during the trial run will be contacted to provide further information.

In conclusion, I thank all of the people who are in the frontline of the fight against the CoVID-19 pandemic. Among them are: ordinary South Africans who are suffering from this pandemic, or are caring for a loved one who are infected with it; volunteers in all communities and institutions; social service professionals of all categories at all levels; health professionals in all specialisations and super-specialisations; the man and woman who dispose of the garbage from our homes and offices; the people who prepare, package and hand us the food we eat in our homes; South Africans who make sure that we have been provided with clean water and uninterrupted electricity supply since the beginning of this life-changing fight against CoVID-19.

These and more unnamed South Africans who endure a great deal for South Africa's collective wellbeing. I hereby thank them and their loved ones.

We share the pain of each South African who has experiencing discomfort and grief since the inevitable arrival of this pandemic on our beloved South Africa. We grieve with the families and relations of the deceased. We pray for a national common purpose.

God Bless South Africa! Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrica! Morena Boloka Sechaba Sena!