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**MINUTES OF SELECT COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES
(NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES)
Wednesday 22 March 2006**

Date : Wednesday, 22 March 2006
Time : 10:00 – 13:00
Venue: Committee Room 2, Ground Floor, 120 Plein Street

Agenda

- Briefing by the Department of Social Development on their Strategic Plan 2006/07 and Budget Vote

Chairperson: Ms J M Masilo (North-West) (ANC)

Present at meeting:

Gauteng Province

Mazibuko, Ms F – ANC
Madlala-Magubane, Ms M - ANC

North- West Province

Masilo, Ms JM – ANC

Western Cape

Lamoela, Ms H – DA

Eastern Cape

Qikani, Ms AND – UDM

KwaZulu Natal

Vilakazi, Ms JN - IFP

Mpumalanga

Tolo, Mr BJ – ANC

Apologies

Thlagale, Mr JO – North West (UCDP)

Sulliman, Mr MA – Northern Cape (ANC)
Setona, Mr TS – Free State – (ANC)
Thetjeng, Mr M – Limpopo (DA) – flight delayed

Summary

The Department of Social Development briefed the Committee on their Strategic Plan 2006/07 and Budget Vote.

The Committee adopted the ~~adopted~~ the outstanding committee minutes of 30 November 2005 and 14 December 2006.

Proceedings

The Department highlighted the following:

Background:

The vision was reworked and the outlook was informed by: the Minister's Ten Point Plan, the Ten Year Review Discussion Document and the Emerging "Five Big Ideas".

The presenter gave a brief description of the department's vision, mission, values and broad goals.

Specific priorities for 2006/07 include:

- Improve the effectiveness of social development programmes to provide cushion of support for those exposed to abject poverty.
- Harness the machinery of the State to discharge its duties effectively and efficiently.
- Improving material conditions
- Taking measures to address poverty, underdevelopment and marginalisation
- The implementation of interventions directed at higher levels of growth and development in support of 6% growth target.

Budget:

- By close of the previous year (2005) financial year over 98% had been spent.
- Budgetary "crowding out" by social security transfers persists.
- The budget allocations for the remainder of the budget are in line with the developmental outlook.
- The ever increasing demand for services as a result of various social and economic challenges such as HIV and AIDS and migration, however resources have not matched demand over the MTEF.
- Administration budget including strategy and oversight is just under 0,2% of total budget.
- Leakages due to fraud and corruption have been minimized beyond international norms.

Programmes

The department presented its six programmes in the categories of: intent, structure, budget, key achievements, challenges and future priorities.

In conclusion the department stated that in going forward the general service delivery challenge continues to be centred around poverty eradication. Since many remain unable to access basic necessities, the department will consolidate all its efforts aimed at improving the Human and Capital capacity at a local and family level.

Clarity seeking, comments and questions

The Committee enquired whether the department is successful in any of its lawsuits against them. The department replied that they are successful in some of the cases brought against them, but further noted that majority of the litigation is regarding administrative flaws e.g. the cancellation of social grants) rather than policy issues. The department stated that the National Department is responsible for the formulation of policies and provincial departments for the implementation thereof.

Members asked whether the allocation of R61,5 billion to social security transfers could perpetuate a welfare system in which beneficiaries become dependent on these grants. The department stated that research has been done that indicated that social grants are developmental. The establishment of the SA Social Security Agency (SASSA) will be a one stop shop and the agency will have to look at the social conditions of people.

The department further noted that the current budget is not sufficient for social workers. The department stated that they do not know the number of social workers needed and if they knew this would have been reflected in the budget. The department stated that provincial departments receive budgets for the delivery of social welfare services and the National Department's budget is directed at monitoring these services.

The department explained that the department coordinates an effective social grants system that recorded leakages due to fraud of 2-5%, compared with the international norm of 9 -33%.

Members noted that the department has 598 posts, of which 399 are filled. The department stated that some of the positions are not funded, and that some of the posts require a high demand of a particular skills e.g. Senior Social Workers, where the department will be introducing learnerships which will be directed at young people in communities. The department said that the provincial departments are responsible for the for payment of social worker's salaries.

The department noted that they do not foresee any problems with the performance of third-party contractors on 1 April 2006.

The department stated that there is no protocol governing SA's relationship with other SADC countries as a relief donor.

Members enquired what the retention strategy of the department is for its professional staff. The department stated that salaries paid to social workers are not competitive and that the department is considering categorizing social workers as a scarce skill. The department are also looking at the working conditions of staff e.g. availability of transport for these staff, to retrain social workers and to free social workers from too much administrative work (which absorbs a lot of time), but to do more statutory work.

Members enquired how efficient the department's process is for placing orphans and vulnerable children in foster care. The department stated that legislation required that foster care grant applications must be processed through the court system, and this is a major concern for the department. The department has begun a pilot, in KwaZulu Natal (KZN), to open the courts on a Saturday to accelerate the process and it is envisaged to implement this in all the other provinces.

With regard to the means test the department stated the means test has been updated to address the shortcomings.

The department stated that the LoveLife campaign, aimed at young people, is part of the HIV and AIDS programme organized by an inter-departmental task team. The HIV and AIDS programme includes community based care projects organized by community based organizations and the department is also collaborating with the spouses of chiefs and kings in rural areas on HIV and AIDS awareness campaigns.

Resolutions:

Outstanding issues to be forwarded by the Department of the Committee:

- The department stated that it completed a detailed study on the socio-economic impact of social grants (Key achievements Programme 2).
- Personnel vacancy list of the National Department and the skills required for each post.

The Chairperson thanked the Department and adjourned the meeting.

Ms JM Masilo
Chairperson: SC on Social Services

Date

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