

DEPUTY MINISTER OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT MOGAMAD GANIEF EBRAHIM HENDRICKS:
CABINET LEKGOTLA

July 2024

Address by the Deputy Minister of Social Development, Mr. Mogamad Ganief Ebrahim Hendricks on the occasion of the Cabinet Lekgotla

The Presidency

Leadership representing all spheres of government - Ministers, Fellow Deputy Ministers, Premiers, Directors-General and leadership of the South African Local Government Association;

Programme director;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen:

We stand on the cusp of a new era. This is indeed a seminal moment for our country, where, at this First lekgotla of the new cabinet, we are poised to chart the way forward for the GNU – and we do so, upon uncharted largely territory.

We acknowledge the immensity of the task which lies ahead. The policies we will be adopting will set the government’s priorities over the next five years.

As the Deputy Minister of Social Development, it is fully acknowledged that the concept of developing the capabilities of our people takes centre stage in addressing these challenges, and they remain key factors in our pursuit of overall development.

Key to building these capabilities, is to raise the social protection floor, which includes social assistance, in order to improve living standards to the minimum level proposed in the NDP.

Thus, while the objectives of Social Development remains the elimination of poverty and inequality, the means to ensure this must include building and developing the intrinsic capabilities of our people, and in as far as possible, to work towards self-sufficiency and sustainable outcomes on a social, household and individual level.

Key priorities therefore must include an increase in social investment and the removal of the barriers which hinder the sustainable development of our people.

We will work to ensure that the issue of disability is integrated into all facets of planning and that the outputs would be adaptable to the various specific conditions facing people with disabilities. In line with the priorities of the Plan, people with disabilities must have enhanced access to services.

Another aspect will be to address the increasing vulnerabilities of the elderly within exceedingly harsh economic environments.

Increasing the resilience and promoting protective factors which will ensure the development of our children and youth, particularly those who are most vulnerable, will be paramount.

Then, we recognise that addressing gender imbalances is a cross-cutting issue.

The NDP recognises that poverty is central to women being vulnerable. It is also recognised that Government policies need to address the burden of unpaid care work on women. Therefore, the social protection net must be strengthened and expanded and the notable progress that has been achieved in terms of access to social assistance in the form of cash grants and the provision of basic services to poor households must maintain a positive upward trajectory.

Discriminatory and Unconstitutional policies and laws must be dismantled, where these serve only to leave destitute, and impoverish further, those most vulnerable in our society.

During the 6th Parliament, in my capacity as Member of Parliament, I submitted a Private Members Bill on the Maintenance Act. This Bill pointed out required amendments to the Maintenance Act which is in fact discriminatory against women through imposing financial burdens upon these women which their male counterparts are exempt from.

Whether an oversight or an error of law, this results in situations where women, who are largely the applicants in maintenance matters, do not receive a travelling grant to attend hearings at the maintenance court, as opposed to their male counterparts. No provision is made for this grant in the Act.

Whereas anecdotal evidence indicates that in most maintenance cases, it is fathers who fail in their maintenance duties towards women and children, these women head households with lower incomes and greater levels of impoverishment, due to a range of systemic and structural factors.

Within these households, women often have to make difficult choices between putting bread on the table, ensuring sufficient electricity for household use, or ensuring that she is present at the court hearings. The commute to court means that there is little to no resources left to attend to other household needs. I must also point out that the nature of our justice system and processes associated with maintenance cases, results in a high rate of frequent postponements, which place an increased and skewed burden on women as a result.

Previous studies show that cases in the maintenance court on average took over a year to be finalised. Anecdotal evidence garnered in 2021, tells us that delays of up to 4-years can be expected before finalisation in some cases. This means that women would be in this hardship for up to 4 years with no relief.

The call for a remedy rings clear – women must be provided with the same travel grant for their attendance of maintenance court hearings, in order to ensure Constitutionality of the process and the laws underpinning them.

These focus areas will lay a firm and important foundation for reaching our NDP goals for 2030.

So let us forge ahead with a renewed and revitalised commitment to ensuring the well-being and improved quality of lives for ALL Suth Africans.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you!