



**BUDGET VOTE SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE MEC: FINANCE ACTING
ON BEHALF OF THE MEC: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT,
MRS. S.H. NTOMBELA TO THE
FREE STATE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE**

18TH MARCH 2015

Honourable Speaker of the House

Honourable Premier

Members of the Legislature

Executive Mayors and all leadership from Local Government

Leadership of the ANC and the alliance partners

Traditional leadership

Head of Department

Heads of provincial Social Development agencies, SASSA and NDA

Members of civil society organizations who are our partners

Leadership from business fraternity

Distinguished guests

All our valued clients

People of this beautiful province

Honourable Speaker, it is appropriate that I congratulate you on your deployment as the Speaker of this important institution and to convey our appreciation for the sterling work done by the Deputy Speaker whilst he was acting in this position.

I must also pay tribute to the memory of the late Cde Sisi Mabe, former Speaker, Member of the Executive Council, Member of the National Executive Committee of the ANC and the ANC Women's League, comrade and friend. Our lives are poorer at the loss of her young, vibrant soul and her memory lives on in our hearts and minds.

The unquestionable political will and commitment of the African National Congress, our people's movement, to gender parity and recognition of the significant contribution women are making in building and moving this country forward is again illustrated by your election to the position of Speaker. Let us be reminded of the wisdom of Kofi Annan's statement; "Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance." We are fully confident that you will steer the Legislature with firm direction and commitment towards excelling in the execution of its core mandate of oversight, accountability, legislation and public participation.

Honourable Speaker as we gather here today, we are fully aware of our people's expectations that our pronouncements will bring about tangible change and improvement in their lives. This Legislature and the ruling party continue to be the only institution and political movement that serve as the legitimate symbol of hope to deal decisively with legacies of structural poverty and inequality. This is evident from the fact that the overwhelming majority of the voting population in this province returned the African National Congress to government last year to continue with the

implementation of our programmes, aimed at realizing our vision of a better life for all.

Hon. Speaker, we understand the moral and difficult task of sustaining the hopes, pride and dignity of our people by turning the tide of poverty. I want to emphasize this right from the beginning. Neither the garments we adorn, nor the number of “points of order” we shout in the Legislature, create modern day revolutionaries. The Legislature is not a theatre of fantasy and mending of broken dreams. *I phalamende indlu yowiso mthetho.*

On the 9th February this year, the women of this province came together in prayer. We prayed that our democratic institutions of government must remain grounded on values which espouse respect, diligence, accountability, order and decency. They must shun darkness and continue to be the leading light and torch bearers of human dignity and a better life for all. Honour and sanity must prevail above narrow political interests which are nothing else but weekend special hit songs.

We shoulder the greatest responsibility of carrying and sustaining the torch of the Freedom Charter. The Freedom Charter remains a rallying and unifying point for our people. As we mark 60 years of the Freedom Charter, let us do it by strengthening our institutions of governance, our service delivery capacity and with humility to listen and working with the people.

The spirit of the Freedom Charter is captured in our constitution, in the formulation of our social policies and the broad developmental agenda of government. In 1955, the masses declared that **there shall be houses,**

security and comfort. This was a call for a decent life with government providing houses, health care and all other basic social amenities. It further proclaimed that the aged, the orphans, the disabled and the sick shall be cared for by the state.

In 2013, our Honourable President Zuma announced the adoption of the National Development Plan which formed the basis for the inclusion of social protection as the thirteenth priority outcome of government. The social protection outcome responds directly to the people`s call for security and comfort. Its introduction is meant to galvanize and fast-track the delivery of integrated services to address all forms of deprivation and vulnerability. The main objective of social protection is to ensure that our people do not live below the basic standard of living. The Department therefore completed a comprehensive review of its Strategic Plan and Annual Performance Plan and is confident that alignment with the NDP and Medium Term Strategic Framework has been achieved.

According to the World Bank report on South Africa`s economic update, released in May 2013, this country was able to lift 3.6 million people out of poverty in 2010 and 2011 because of its good monetary and social policies. The report further stated that, because of our social security system and free basic services, the poverty rate was reduced from 46.2 % to 39%.

OUR GOOD STORY TO TELL

Hon Speaker in this province there are 954 thousand 833 (**954 833**) needy people who are benefiting from social grants, amounting to over **R7.4**

billion annually. This number of beneficiaries constitutes **35%** of the Free State population.

A budget of **R23,7 million** was allocated for Social Relief of Distress during the 2014/15 financial year. This brought much needed relief to over 10,000 needy households in the form of food parcels and food vouchers. Furthermore over 5 000 malnourished children benefitted from the Zero-Hunger project, whilst over 3 000 needy learners also benefitted from the school uniform project as part of the social relief budget targeting the most vulnerable persons.

Honourable Speaker arm-chair analysts have criticized our social security programmes without offering concrete and best tested alternatives. May I remind the hon. House that the R7.27 billion we spent on social grants, directly impacts on sustaining and growing the provincial economy. Many sectors of our economy, in particular the retail and service SMME`s, benefit a great deal from this programme.

In February 2014, the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) procured 77 new vehicles with the purpose of extending services to communities, particularly to remote rural and farm areas throughout the Free State. SASSA is making efforts to increase access to social grants by expanding its footprint and office infrastructure. Three new offices were established during 2014/15, namely in Ficksburg, Odendaalsrus, and Bothaville. Efforts are underway to acquire eight new offices during the forthcoming financial year, i.e. 2015/16, namely in Vrede, Hertzogville, Bultfontein, Theunissen, Sasolburg, Frankfort, Tweespruit and Dewetsdorp.

Fourteen open space pay points, five in Thaba Nchu, and nine in QwaQwa, are currently being improved at a value of R7 million. These improvements involve the construction of steel structures to provide cover and ensure a dignified service during payments of social grants. The pay points are as follows:

- ***In Thaba Nchu*** – Mokoena, Ratlou, Zone 1, Zone 3, and Selosasha;
- ***In QwaQwa*** – Z. R Mahabane, Sephokong , Monontsha, Boitelo, Lerato, Bluegum-bush, Tsolo, Tebogo, and Letsibolo.

We conducted over 40 door-to-door and outreach campaigns in collaboration with other stakeholders in order to promote community education and awareness on social grants and fight corruption. More operations involving the SA Police Services and National Credit Regulator (NCR) will be conducted to take action against loan sharks engaging in illegal activities and exploiting grants recipients. To date, out of 44 reported cases involving illegal deductions and withholding of bank cards and/or IDs, seven (7) micro-lenders were successfully prosecuted and given sentences included fines or imprisonment.

A strong warning is issued to all syndicates involved in illegal activities relating to micro-lending, insurance policies, falsification of documents; and fraudulent social grants. We are firm in our commitment to cooperate with the Department of Police, Roads and Transport and the South African Police to ensure that arrests are made, prosecutions are successfully completed and justice is done. Members of the public are encouraged to

report any alleged fraud immediately to the police or to call SASSA on its toll free number 0800 60 10 11 or 0800 701 70.

Hon. Speaker, the department continues to leave its footprint through innovation and improvements in service delivery. We remained true to the commitments made in our last budget vote speech. Allow me to highlight some of our key achievements;

- On the 2nd October 2014 the Honourable Premier opened the Thabo Mofutsanyana Secure Care Centre in QwaQwa. In opening this Centre we created permanent positions for 19 people, occupied by persons from local communities and from within the district. Other vacant posts will be filled during the course of the year.
- A provincial food distribution depot was launched in Phuthaditjhaba as part of the intensification of the roll out of the Zero Hunger Strategy. Two district depots were established in Welkom and Thaba Nchu. The depot in Thaba Nchu will be launched by June 2015.
- Sixteen Community Development Nutrition Centres (CNDCs) were sustained at the cost R3,4 million. Food gardens were also established in the CNDC`s. We created 191 jobs through these centers for change agents who cook meals and provide development programmes and after care school services as part of Expanded Public Works Programme. A total of R3,3 million was spent on their stipends.

- The renovations at the Makoane Youth Centre and Botshabelo Haven – a residential facility for the elderly - are on track and will be finalized by June 2015. The Department is utilizing local labour for these renovations. The Department of Public Works has also assisted us to rebuild the frail care unit for the elderly unit at the Boiketlong Old Home. We will be announcing details of the re-opening and launching of these facilities during the course of the year.
- The Freedom Charter says the **Doors of Learning and Culture shall be Opened**. Four ECD's have been built during year under review in Petrus Steyn, Heilbron, Cornelia, and Odendaalsrus. Two fully equipped containers were procured for Boshoff and Frankfort to be used as ECD Centres.
- We have also built two centres for children and adults with disability. Itekeng Disability Centre in Ficksburg was officially opened by the Premier of the Free State on 23 September 2014. Tlhokomelong in Frankfort was opened by the Minister of Social Development, Ms Bathabile Dlamini, and the MEC for Social Development Ms S. H. Ntombela on the 3rd of December 2014. We also launched, in collaboration with Disability Children Action Group (DICAG), a support group for parents with children with disability. These events were done in celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.
- We provided computers and printers to 6 ECD centres in Heilbron, Steynsrus, Cornelia, Viljoenskroon, Virginia and Odendaalsrus in

support of the “SA Connect “policy. Promoting ICT literacy and connectivity will be included in our priorities henceforth.

Furthermore;

- We established 15 Isibindi sites and four safe parks and trained 222 Child & Youth Care Workers (CYCW). Isibindi is a programme which renders care and developmental child and youth services to orphans and vulnerable children (OVC`s). Safe parks are parks, equipped with toys and play equipment, which uses play for therapy and assessment of children with emotional problems.
- 10 mobile retailers in Botshabelo were funded.
- Funded a bakery in Odendaalsrus for a group of ex-offenders.

We appointed 49 Social Work Graduates with effect from the 1st of August 2014 at the cost of R7.3 million and placed a further 100 young people on two learnerships for Social Auxiliary Work and Child and Youth Care Work.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Honourable Speaker, allow me to table the plans of the Department of Social Development for the 2015/16 financial year. This I do with hindsight that the positions we occupy must be used with a sense of purpose and responsibility to change and positively impact on the lives of our people.

Our road, as social development, is less travelled. It is not filled with glamour but by the pains of orphaned children, the trafficking of young girls,

and the violation and rape of women and the elderly and the persistent and pervasive hunger faced by families on a daily basis.

Our service delivery agenda will continue to be guided by Social Protection priorities which are outlined in the Medium Term Strategic Framework for 2014-19. The priorities in the MTSF are meant to respond to the overarching goal of the NDP which is to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030. In the new financial year we will give particular attention in addressing critical gaps and escalating services focusing on dealing with basic poverty.

I want to assure you that our targeting of areas as per our plans is determined by the needs we experience and identify on the ground and the directives of this Executive Council to prioritize rural areas and economically depressed small and rural towns.

REFORMING THE SOCIAL WELFARE SECTOR AND SERVICES TO DELIVER BETTER RESULTS

Honourable Speaker, we have a bigger challenge of transforming and levelling the playing field within the sector of Non-Profit Making Organizations. These are our key partners in service delivery. Our initial strategic area of focus will be on matters of governance and accountability. The department will implement the following interventions.

- Resuscitate and strengthen coordinating structures of Non-Profit Organizations (NPO`s) by making resources available for their work

and administration. This will enable us to effectively engage with the sector in addressing challenges and collectively map out strategies and plans to deliver better results and be accountable.

- During November 2014 we introduced Operation Compliance Campaign aimed at ensuring proper and full accounting for public funds transferred to NPO`s. The second phase of the campaign will be implemented in the new financial year. This will entail conducting of planned and unannounced visits to audit organizations and quality assure services delivered. Quarterly reviews on compliance reporting, as per the requirements of signed Memoranda of Agreement, will be conducted.

Operation Compliance will also include conducting anti-fraud and corruption awareness campaigns and participating in the annual Fraud Awareness Week. Twelve sessions targeting staff and NPO`s will be conducted. We will extend our collaboration with the Provincial Treasury in realizing these objectives.

- Management Boards will be established for the three secure centers namely: Matete Matches, Winkie Direko, and Thabo Mofutsanyana by the end of October 2015. The establishment of these boards is a legislative requirement.
- Our partnership with the Faith Based Community will be restructured and strengthened. Our Sub Programmes, namely Special Programmes, Families, as well as Population and Development will

work together to ensure effective coordination and development of a clear programme of action with Ministers of religion in the service of municipalities. Our work in this area will also be aligned with the broader objectives of the Moral Regeneration Movement.

- We have reviewed the stipends for people working with children with disabilities in Day Care Centres. The stipend for Care Givers and Matrons will be increased with effect from the 1st April 2015.
- Hon. Members, I must make mention of the fact that the litigation between the Department of Social Development and the National Association of Welfare Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations (NAWONGO) was finalized after a protracted period of 4 years. During August 2014, the High Court ruled in favor of the Department of Social Development and approved the departmental costing model and relevant amendment to our Financial Award Policy. This will set a legal precedent on similar cases for the Social Development sector. We are, however, pleased that this matter has now been concluded and we can continue our partnership with the NPO-sector in a constructive manner to advance the services we extend to our clients.

Hon. Speaker, we will also address identified strategic needs and gaps in social welfare and restorative services. These will respond to priorities and the programme of the Social Cluster and the Executive Council.

- We have already started with the building of the Victim Empowerment Center in Clarens. We have set aside R1.2 million for current renovations and R2 million for operationalization. This centre is named Beyers Naude Victim Empowerment and Rehabilitation Centre. This project will create 28 jobs for people in the district municipality.

This will be coupled by a dedicated focus on strengthening the delivery of programmes dealing with human trafficking. Social workers will be trained on the identification and assessment of human trafficking. Victim Empowerment Shelters will be trained on the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act (Act 7 of 2013). Five awareness and education sessions on Human Trafficking will be conducted in Harrismith, Bloemfontein, Zastron (Makhaleng), Ficksburg and Ventersburg.

- We have allocated R6.5m in the 2015/16 financial year for the construction of a Substance Abuse Dependency Treatment Centre in Botshabelo. This is a multi –year project which will be completed by the financial year 2017/18.
- Regarding the escalation of the roll out of the Isibindi Programme, the Department will have established 7 new sites by the end of 2015/16 in the following towns: Botshabelo, Clarens, Zastron, Masaleng, Cornelia, Dealesville and Rouxville at the cost of R7 million. Furthermore, 3 safe parks will be established in Cornelia, Zastron and Clarens. A total of 404 Child & Youth Care Workers will be recruited to render services in these facilities.

- Funding will be allocated to an organization to provide services to street children through the province. Services provided will include overnight facilities, outreach and working with the children on the streets.
- Working with the Department of Education we have committed to taking street children back to school in Bloemfontein. Children who are targeted have already been assessed and will be taken to a school in Thaba Nchu and the Jimmy Roos School of Industry.
- We equally undertook to address the problem of commercial sex workers. Currently there are 87 workers from Bloemfontein, Ventersburg, Welkom and Harrismith have been identified. The Department of Education has initiated the process of assessing their aptitude.
- We shall host an Older Person`s Parliament in July 2015 in order to escalate concerns of the Older Persons. This Parliament will produce a plan of action which must be monitored the Social Cluster. We look forward to working with the Free State Legislature on this matter.
- We shall continue working with Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation in hosting the Golden Games during September 2015.

Hon. Speaker, allow me state this hard and bitter pill to swallow. The continued stigmatization, abuse, and isolation of people with disabilities, particularly children, must be a concern to all of us. We are equally guilty of

not doing enough. The Public Service Commission has decried our failure to comply with a simple 2% quota of employment of people with disabilities in the public sector. The fact that our infrastructure is still not accessible to people with disability is a serious indictment which we must address. We will be working with the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure as well as our local and district municipalities to ensure that norms and standards are applied to make our public facilities fully accessible.

The Department is responding to the clarion call by our Honourable Premier Mr. E.S. Magashule, and the National Minister: Ms. B. Dlamini to prioritize services to the People with Disabilities.

Our plans for 2015/16 include the following:

- We will host a two day Provincial Policy Dialogue on the National Disability Rights Policy of 2013. The dialogue will serve as platform for strategic re-orientation of programmes and services for people with disability. The end product of this exercise must be the development of a provincial strategy on disability.
- Working with the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) we have identified the protective workshop in QwaQwa as a pilot site for disability mainstreaming and lastly

- We are partnering with the Disability Children Action Group (DICAG) in a project to realize the establishment of support groups of parents for children with disability throughout the province.

IMPROVING THE PROVISION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Honourable Speaker, the ruling African National Congress declared Early Childhood Education a matter to be pursued in terms of both this government's electoral mandate as well as the achievement of the goals of the National Development Plan. This imposes the responsibility upon us to ensure universal access of children between 0 to 4 years to ECD facilities. The Department is currently providing access to 97 000 children. Since the province has a population of just less than 300 000 children in the age cohort 0 to 4 years, this means that we have a massive backlog of about 200 000 children needing access to education.

In April 2012 the National Development Agency published a research report entitled "**Challenges facing the Early Childhood Development sector in South Africa.**" The report confirms that the key challenges to this sector relates to access, infrastructure, institutional capacity of ECD sites, qualification of ECD Practitioners, conditions of service, and nutrition.

The Minister for Social Development, Honourable Bathabile Dlamini, is leading the initiative to transform the ECD sector. This initiative

commenced with the convening of an ECD Conference in East London. This will followed by national consultative sessions to develop ECD policy and strategy with the objective of ushering in a shift in policy and practices in the field of Early Childhood Development. The province will fully participate in these sessions.

Our plans for the new financial year include;

- Increase our uptake of children in ECD Centres from 97 000 to 99 000.
- Build 3 ECD Centres in Thaba Nchu, Botshabelo and Vogelfontein at the cost of R5,2 million.
- Initiate and implement nutrition programmes for ECD`s in Springfontein, Bethlehem and Qwaqwa.
- Work with partners such as Lottery SA, ABSA and others on the provision of infrastructure, equipment and training of practitioners. This work is already on course. In February we arranged for Lottery SA, to engage with the ECD sector on how to access funding. We are positive that the pledges made during our engagement will come to fruition.

I must also mention that the Department will be working with the Department of Education on modalities and implications as well as plans

for migrating Grade R to the Department of Education. This project must be completed during the course of the year.

Let me also take this opportunity to welcome the relocation of the unit dealing with children from the Office of the Premier to the department. We hope that this will further strengthen our work.

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS

Honourable Speaker the strategic core of our mandate is to affect a decisive shift from dependency to self-reliance of individuals, groups and communities. This important task is however limited by the funding of programmes. In the year 2015/16, Community Development will receive only 5.9% of the departmental budget and 5.25% for Youth Development.

Over the years we have made remarkable achievements, particularly in the areas of human development and income generation through our youth development programme. We have built a multi purposed youth center, funded innovative Spaza Shops and social entrepreneurship and introduced annual youth awards.

As we march forward will shall:

- Establish 5 social enterprises to render child-care services to the Orphans and Vulnerable Children.

- Engage 100 youth, who attended a national youth camp this year, in a project of household profiling with a monthly stipend for three months and
- Establish a model bakery in QwaQwa in partnership with the Maluti-a-Phofung Local Municipality. An amount of R1 million has been set aside for this purpose.

The Expanded Public Works Programme is yet another instrument of government for addressing poverty through the creation of short term employment. In 2015/16 we have been allocated R 6,2 million which will be allocated as follows:

- Stipend for 105 Isibindi team leaders allocated R 2 155 201 million
- Stipend for 8 Care Givers in Day Care Centres is allocated R 164 205 thousand and
- Stipend for 190 Change Agents in Community Nutrition and Development Centres (CNDs) is allocated R 3 899 887 million.

The total work opportunities created will be 303. We have also set aside approximately R92 000 for capacity building.

IMPROVING HOUSEHOLD FOOD AND NUTRITION

Honourable Speaker, the improvement of household food and nutrition is one of our flagship programmes to deal with the immediate and visible effects of poverty. We want to reiterate and support the declaration by

Honourable President Zuma that no child or family must go to bed with an empty stomach.

The Freedom Charter declares “***There shall be Houses, Security and Comfort for all our people! Food will be plentiful and no-one shall go hungry.***”

On the 11 September 2013, Cabinet approved the National Policy on Food & Nutrition Security. The policy is an integrated document that is implemented by a cluster of departments. The goal of the policy is to ensure the availability, accessibility and affordability of safe and nutritious food at national and household levels. To date, we have funded 23 Community Nutrition and Development Centres and 3 Distribution Centres. We are forging ahead in rolling out our Household Food & Nutrition Security Programme. In the new financial year the following projects will be implemented:

- Establishment of 8 CNDCs in Thaba Nchu, Botshabelo, Vrede, Edenville, Petrusburg, Makgolokoeng, Tweeling and the 2010 settlement in Odendaalsrus.
- A dining hall will be established in Rouxville as part of the outreach service of CNDC.
- Establishment of 1 District Food Depot in Bethlehem.

INCREASING HUMAN RESOURCE CAPACITY FOR THE SOCIAL WELFARE SECTOR

Honourable Speaker I must submit to this hon. House that our office infrastructure does not consistently meet our expectations. As we continue employing staff, we are further compounding the problem of overcrowding. This has serious implications on services rendered by social workers where client confidentiality and other service standards must be upheld. The Department has developed an infrastructure plan aimed at producing optimal work space in the long-term. We have set aside R2 million for the renovation of offices in Koffiefontein and Vrede. We will also be launching Operation Clean Up to ensure that our offices are clean and ensure timeous maintenance.

Allow me to also announce that the Department of Social Development will soon sign a Memorandum (MOU) of Understanding with the Department of Correctional Services. The MOU will focus on critical areas of cooperation such as capacity building, food security and support in the maintenance of infrastructure.

The budget allocated to the department is as follows:

Programme 1: Administration is allocated R 240.515 million

Programme 2: Social Welfare Service is allocated R 18.262 million

Programme 3: Children and Families is allocated R 367.216 million

Programme 4: Restorative Services is allocated R 115.265 million

Programme 5 Development and Research is allocated R 111.816 million

The total budget of the Department for the 2015/16 financial year amounts to R1.020.074 billion, which is 5.43 % increment from the previous budget.

CONCLUSION

In closing I want to thank my colleagues in the Executive Council for their support and wise counsel, the leadership of the department and staff whose shoulders are always at the wheel to ensure that we move service delivery forward.

Equally I want to acknowledge and appreciate the dedication of NPO`s who render service on behalf of this government and people of this province. To the fraternity of the donor community and business sector we could not shine without your support. To all the rest who support our cause, you are the wind beneath our wings.

We can only soar above the sky by walking and learning from the wisdom of towering giants before us. U-Madiba omude wrote:

“I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter; I have made missteps along the way but I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come but I can rest only for a moment, for with freedom comes responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not yet ended” - **Long Walk to Freedom**

I thank you.