

Social Development on more than three million unemployed South Africans paid the special Coronavirus COVID-19 social relief of distress grant

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As part of the Social Development's response to the COVID - 19 pandemic, the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) has to date paid the Special COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress grant of R350 to over 3 million eligible beneficiaries. This was revealed today as the Department and its agencies briefed the Portfolio Committee on their revised Annual Performance Plan (APP) for 2020/2021-2022/2023.

The Department and its entities had to revise their APPs in order to improve the sector's response to the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic.

Led by the Deputy Minister of Social Development, Ms Hendrietta Bogopane-Zulu, the Department announced that it has reprioritised its funds within the current budget to cushion and to meet the immediate needs of the most vulnerable against the socio- economic impact of the global pandemic. This includes reduced spending on travelling, medical assessment fees, leases, venues and facilities as some projects have come to a halt due to the state of national disaster regulations to contain the spread of the virus.

The Department informed the Committee that non-critical posts for both SASSA and NDA will not be filled during the current financial year as the funds will be shifted towards helping South Africans as they grapple with the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Department also revealed among other things that it had to substantially increase access to food relief from an initial 1.1 million to 3.3 million to ensure food security for individuals and families impacted negatively by the national lockdown.

The Department highlighted that the Special COVID-19 SRD Grant will be paid for 6 months, but the demand for income support for the unemployed and those who have lost their jobs will go beyond this period. To address this, the Department is working on policy proposal on the feasibility of an income support to South Africans between the ages of 18-59 who have no income support. This is a result of the introduction of the Special COVID-19 SRD grant that has revived the discussion of the feasibility of a Basic Income Grant (BIG) as was recommended by the Taylor Report in 2002.

This proposal is in line with the comprehensive social protection system envisioned in the National Development Plan (Vision 2030).

The Department further reported that it will develop a database of Early Childhood Development programmes. This database will capture all ECD information, including identifying all ECDs that require support in order to realise registration.

Social protection continues to be at the centre of South Africa's socio-economic response to the pandemic. In this regard SASSA reported that the advent of COVID- 19 has forced it to expedite the process of using emerging technologies to modernise and transform its operations such as the introduction of electronic and online channels.

The agency will be reassessing all Special COVID-19 SRD grant applications to ensure that where circumstances of beneficiaries' income status have changed, the grant can be suspended. This will be done so that the entity may only continue paying the grant to eligible persons. In order to clear the backlog on outstanding Special Covid-19 SRD grant payments, SASSA will also be processing reviewed Covid-19 declined grants and respond accordingly.

As part of the extraordinary socio-economic measures, SASSA introduced a one month Top-up of Child Support Grant of R250, a R500 special Covid-19 Care Giver Grant and all this formed part of the Department's risk adjusted strategy and interventions against the impact of COVID-19 pandemic.

The following are Figures on Applications for Special Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant as Per Province and Gender as at 6 July 2020:

Province	Female	Male	Total
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Eastern Cape	363,394	639,677	1,003,071
Free State	145,414	247,258	392,672
Gauteng	595,833	1,053,267	1,649,100
KwaZulu-Natal	572,571	1,050,874	1,623,445
Limpopo	343,712	627,288	971,000
Mpumalanga	223,057	400,253	623,310
North West	180,395	315,283	495,678
Northern Cape	58,817	97,286	156,103
Western Cape	278,710	348,960	627,670
Total	2,761,903	4,780,146	7,542,049

The following are figures of Special Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant Applications as Per Citizenship Status as at 6 July 2020:

Province	Citizens	Permanent	Refugees	Total
Eastern Cape	987,289	15,613	169	1,003,071
Free State	380,318	12,259	95	392,672
Gauteng	1,584,917	62,898	1,285	1,649,100
KwaZulu-Natal	1,581,911	40,602	932	1,623,445
Limpopo	939,924	30,883	193	971,000
Mpumalanga	609,210	13,969	131	623,310

North West	484,699	10,905	74	495,678
Northern Cape	152,860	3,210	33	156,103
Western Cape	611,979	14,655	1,036	627,670
Total	7,333,107	204,994	3,948	7,542,049

The following are figures of applicants paid Special Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant as at 6 July 2020

Province	Total Approved	Total Paid	Amount Disbursed
Eastern Cape	606,750	412,918	144,521,300.00
Free State	236,536	159,157	55,704,950.00
Gauteng	961,372	648,423	226,948,050.00
KwaZulu-Natal	998,067	689,722	241,402,700.00
Limpopo	600,807	440,469	154,164,150.00
Mpumalanga	365,209	256,660	89,831,000.00
North West	294,042	197,987	69,295,450.00
Northern Cape	80,833	48,220	16,877,000.00
Western Cape	281,104	165,546	57,941,100.00
Total	4,424,720	3,019,102	1,056,685,700.00

The National Development Agency (NDA) reported that it will enhance its volunteer support programme, develop a mobile application to support the digitization

of Civil Society organisation development initiatives and enhance its grant funding programmes.

The Department and its entities take this opportunity to wish a full and speedy recovery to the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee, Mr Mondli Gungubele who is currently in self-isolation due to COVID-19.

Media inquiries may be forwarded to:

Ms Lumka Oliphant

Cell: 083 484 8067

E-mail: lumkao@dsd.gov.za

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