SOUTH AFRICA
YEARBOOK
2024/25

Social Development

The department of Social Development (DSD) ensures protection against vulnerability by creating an enabling environment for the provision of comprehensive, integrated and sustainable social development services. The department provides social development services and leads government's efforts to forge partnerships through which vulnerable individuals, groups and communities become capable and active participants in their own development as well as in society.

As part of the broader mix of government's social protection measures, the department provides social welfare services and social development programmes through local and regional services, and administers long-term social grants that benefit the elderly, people with disabilities, and children. It also makes short-term cash transfers and in-kind support for households in distress or with insufficient means.

Over the medium term, the department will continue to provide social welfare services and income support to the poor and most vulnerable through various social grants; reform social security and prevent fraud in the administration of social grants; minimise the impact of social ills on society; and assist in building sustainable communities to alleviate poverty.

Departmental budget and priorities

The department's total budget over the period ahead is R801.7 billion, of which transfers and subsidies account for 99,6% (R798.9 billion) over the medium term. Transfers to social assistance grants make up the bulk of the department's spending, amounting to R774.4 billion over the next three years, while the remainder is spent on transfers to entities. Cabinet has approved reductions to the department's budget amounting to R1.8 billion over the period ahead.

Of this, transfers to the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) will be reduced by R1.5 billion, while the department's spending on goods and services is expected to be reduced by R226.3 million. To mitigate the impact of these reductions on performance, the department plans to curtail spending on goods and services such as travel and subsistence, consultants, and venues and facilities. The SASSA plans to reduce spending on contract payments.

Providing social welfare services and income support

Social welfare services are provided through social service practitioners in partnership with community structures, including non-profit organisations (NPOs). Services include care and support for the elderly; child services, including the provision of places of safety, safe adoption and foster care services, and child and youth care centres; support services for people with disabilities; social behaviour change programmes; and psychosocial services, such as providing support for victims of gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF).

Through provincial social development departments, spending on social welfare services is estimated to be R68.4 billion over the period ahead. Social assistance grants are disbursed through the Social Assistance programme, allocations to which are set to increase at an average annual rate of 1%, from R252.1 billion in 2023/24 to R259.8 billion in 2026/27.

This nominal increase is in line with inflation-related adjustments to grant values and only a slight increase in beneficiaries over the period. In 2025/26, the social assistance budget decreases to R248.4 billion due to the discontinuation of the COVID-19 social relief of distress grant. This termination is expected to result in a reduction in the total number of grant beneficiaries, from an estimated 27.8 million in 2023/24 to 19.7 million in 2026/27.

To enable the administration of these grants through the South African Social Security Agency, R23.4 billion is allocated over the MTEF period to the Social Grants Administration subprogramme in the Social Security Policy and Administration programme.

Reforming social security and preventing fraud

The department aims to complete an extensive review of social security policy. It plans to do this by ensuring that proposed reforms are able to be implemented given the department's constrained resources. Accordingly, a White Paper on Social Security is expected to be finalised over the MTEF period. In addition, after the decision to extend the COVID-19 social relief of distress grant until the end of 2024/25, the department will finalise policy options on the replacement of the grant, taking into consideration the need to strengthen employment pathways and means for sustainable livelihoods.

To carry out these activities, the Social Security Policy Development subprogramme in the Social Security Policy and Administration programme is allocated R204 million over the period ahead. The department has allocated R114.3 million over the next three years to the Appeals Adjudication subprogramme in the same programme. These funds are intended to strengthen the department's systems, including its records management system, to enhance its responsiveness in addressing social assistance appeals through the Independent Tribunal for Social Assistance Appeals. Accordingly, the department aims to increase the percentage of appeals addressed within 90 days, from 80% in 2023/24 to 95% in 2026/27.

Fraud prevention is critical to ensuring the sustainable administration of social assistance. In seeking to address the debilitating effects of fraud in the administration of social grants, the department will continue to play a proactive role in helping SASSA with its fraud prevention initiatives. For this purpose, R237 million is allocated over the medium term to the Social Grants Fraud Investigations subprogramme, which is also in the Social Security Policy and Administration programme.

Mitigating social ills

Over the MTEF period, the department will continue to monitor the implementation of the intersectoral protocol on the prevention and management of violence against children, child abuse, neglect and exploitation; provide psychosocial services; and implement social and behaviour change programmes, including life skills and awareness programmes on HIV and AIDS, substance abuse, GBVF, teenage pregnancy, gangsterism, violence against children and other forms of social crime. These activities will be carried out through the Welfare Services Policy Development

and Implementation Support programme, which is allocated R955.1 million over the next three years.

The high rate of substance abuse in South Africa remains a critical concern. Through the Substance Abuse subprogramme in the Welfare Services Policy Development and Implementation Support programme, the department will intensify education and awareness campaigns on substance abuse in collaboration with relevant stakeholders such as institutions of higher learning and civil-society organisations. The subprogramme is allocated R61.3 million over the medium term to carry out related activities.

The department is a key role player in the implementation of the national strategic plan on gender-based violence and femicide, which is in place to combat GBVF. In carrying out its responsibilities as part of the strategy, over the medium term, the DSD intends to create capacity for stakeholders in identified hotspots to provide psychosocial services and implement an integrated sheltering policy.

The purpose of these activities is to identify the different approaches required to cater for various victims, including uneducated or unemployed young women who will need to be linked to skills programmes or economic activities. These activities will be carried out with allocations amounting to R245.9 million over the medium term in the Social Crime Prevention and Victim Empowerment subprogramme in the Welfare Services Policy Development and Implementation Support programme.

Building sustainable communities to alleviate poverty

NPOs are critical partners in the delivery of social and other services. They are regulated by the NPO Act of 1997, which promotes the effective and fair regulation of NPOs. Over the MTEF period, the department plans to enhance the registration and oversight processes of NPOs by developing a policy framework, improving the turnaround time for registrations, and improving compliance monitoring. For this purpose, R131.1 million is allocated over the period ahead in the Registration and Monitoring of NPOs subprogramme in the Social Policy and Integrated Service Delivery programme.

The Community Development subprogramme in the same programme supports the implementation of interventions that are geared towards empowering communities. This is done through strengthening capacity and creating structures that facilitate sustainable community development. Over the period ahead, the department plans to finalise a comprehensive policy for community development. As part of this, households and communities will be assisted to identify challenges as well as measures that could be put in place to strengthen capacity, solidarity and social capital in communities.

Through the programme, the department also intends to link 2% of all grant recipients to sustainable livelihood opportunities. To fund the department's sustainable livelihoods projects, an amount of R26.6 million is allocated to the subprogramme over the medium term. An amount of R654.5 million is allocated to the National Development Agency through the Social Policy and Integrated Service Delivery programme over the medium term to contribute towards poverty eradication. The agency will support this by providing grants to civil society projects that focus on the development needs of the poor.

Social security

According to StatsSA General Household Survey (GHS), the percentage of individuals who benefited from social grants steadily increased from 12,8% in 2003 to approximately 31% between 2017 and 2019, before increasing sharply to 39,4% in 2023. This growth was tracked closely by that of households that received at least one social grant.

The percentage of households that received at least one social grant increased relatively consistently from 30,8% in 2003 to 45,5% in 2019, before rising to 52,4% in 2020 due to the introduction of the special Social Relief of Distress Grant (SRD) COVID-19 grants. The percentage of households that receive at least one grant has, since then, declined to 50% in 2023.

Grant beneficiaries were most common in the Eastern Cape (52,9%) and Limpopo (50,4%), and least widespread in Western Cape (24,4%) and Gauteng (26,9%). Households that received at least one type of social grant were most common in the Eastern Cape (64,9%) and the Free State (63,9%), and least common in Gauteng (36,6%) and Western Cape (38,6%).

The SRD grant of R350 per month was introduced in 2020 in an attempt to offset the impact of COVID-19. Since then, the percentage of individuals in the age group 18-59 years who received the grant has increased from 5,3% in 2020 to 12,4% in 2023.

About 27,8% of all individuals and 38,9% of all households in metropolitan areas received some kind of social grant (compared to 39,4% of individuals and 50,0% of households nationally). Individual grant receipt was highest in Mangaung (41,4%), Buffalo City (38,0%) and Nelson Mandela Bay (37,0%) and lowest in Cape Town (21,7%), Tshwane (25,4%) and Ekurhuleni (26,4%).

A similar pattern is evident for households at metropolitan level. The receipt of one or more social grants was most common for households in Mangaung (59,4%) and Buffalo City (53,8%) and least common in Tshwane (33,6%), Johannesburg (35,4%), and Cape Town (36,2%).

Legislation and frameworks Several pieces of legislation determine the mandate of the DSD:

- The Children's Act of 2005, as amended, which gives effect to certain rights of children as contained in the Constitution, and sets out principles and processes relating to their care and protection;
- The NPOs Act, 1997 (Act 71 of 1997), which establishes an administrative and regulatory framework within which NPOs can conduct their affairs, and provides for their registration by the DSD;
- The Older Persons Act, 2006 (Act 13 of 2006), which is aimed at maintaining and promoting the rights, status, wellbeing, safety and security of older people. It provides for older people to enjoy quality services while staying with their families and in their communities for as long as possible, and to live in residential care facilities;
- The Prevention of and Treatment for Substance Abuse Act, 2008 (Act 70 of 2008) and associated regulations, which provide a legal framework for the establishment, registration and monitoring of in-patient treatment centres and halfway houses;

- Social Assistance Act, 2004 (Act 13 of 2004), which provides a legislative framework for providing social assistance. The Act sets out the different types of grants payable, as well as their qualifying criteria;
- The Social Service Professions Act, 1978 (Act 110 of 1978), which provides for the regulation of social service professionals;
- The 1997 White Paper for Social Welfare sets out the principles, guidelines, policies and programmes for developmental social welfare in South Africa. A new White Paper for Social Development is currently under review;
- The 1998 White Paper on Population Policy for South Africa is aimed at promoting the sustainable development of all South Africans by integrating population issues with development planning in all spheres of government and all sectors of society; and
- The 2015 White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which focuses on putting in place measures to reduce the exclusion and inequality experienced by persons with disabilities. This includes contributing towards fighting poverty among people with disabilities and their families, and providing policy guidelines on building capacity in the public sector to deliver equitable and accessible services to them.

Entities

National Development Agency

The NDA is a schedule 3A public entity established in terms of the National Development Agency Act of 1998. Its primary mandate is to contribute towards the eradication of poverty and its causes by granting funds to civil society organisations to implement development projects in poor communities. Over the period ahead, the agency plans to implement its turnaround strategy that was approved by its new board in July 2023.

The new approach envisaged in the turnaround strategy seeks to empower impoverished communities by supporting the establishment and funding of sustainable enterprises and cooperatives to reduce poverty and reliance on social grants. The agency plans to support and fund the establishment of 600 community-owned enterprises that will provide income to 6 000 community members over the MTEF period.

The agency has allocated R5 million per year over the MTEF period for this purpose. In line with its aim of reducing poverty and developing communities, over the next three years, the agency plans to partner with research and academic institutions to produce nine research publications and host 15 development policy dialogues to engage with relevant stakeholders. Spending on these activities is expected to amount to R31.8 million over the MTEF period.

Expenditure is expected to increase at an average annual rate of 1%, from R222.2 million in 2023/24 to R228.9 million in 2026/27. Spending on compensation of employees is the agency's main cost driver, accounting for 69,8% (R466 million) of its total budget over the medium term. The agency is set to derive almost all its revenue over the period ahead from departmental transfers, amounting to R654.5 million.

South African Social Security Agency

The South African Social Security Agency Act of 2004 provides for the establishment of the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), whose broad objectives are to ensure the effective and efficient administration, management and payment of social assistance to qualifying beneficiaries. The agency provides social grants to eligible individuals who are unable to support themselves and their dependants. It also provides temporary assistance to people in crisis situations such as declared and undeclared disasters, and relief for household distress such as loss of a breadwinner.

Bank charges for the payment of social grants contribute to a significant portion of the agency's operational expenditure. For this purpose, R1.4 billion is set aside over the medium term in the Benefits Administration Support Programme. The agency continues to make progress in increasing social grant uptake among eligible beneficiaries. The number of grants, including grant-in-aid and excluding those receiving assistance from the Social Relief of Distress Grant (SRD), is expected to increase from 19.1 million in 2023/24 to 19.5 million by the end of 2024/25, representing a year-on-year increase of approximately 2%. By 2026/27, the number of social grant recipients is expected to increase at the same rate to 20.3 million, at an estimated cost of R259.8 billion.

Over the MTEF period, the agency plans to automate most of its business processes. This entails streamlining its operations to ensure, among other things, that the majority of applications for social grants are processed within five days from the current 10 days. The agency will continue to prioritise interventions such as improving its financial management system to address negative findings from internal and external audits; implementing measures to reduce the cost of administering social assistance; building management capacity to help fight fraud and corruption; and migrating to a web-based internal system. An estimated R26 million is allocated over the MTEF period for spending on these activities.

The upgrade of the beneficiary biometric identification solution will also be prioritised over the MTEF period at an estimated cost of R14 million. The planned upgrades will include facial recognition as an additional biometric identifier, and high-performance search and matching capabilities to efficiently scan beneficiary fingerprints in the database to identify potential duplicates and thereby reduce fraud. Given the negative impact of load-shedding on grant disbursement processes, the agency plans to acquire alternative energy solutions such as solar panels, inverters, batteries and generators over the period ahead.

Accordingly, more than 200 local offices have been identified for improvements, including the installation of alternative power supplies, at a total cost of R14 million. Total expenditure is expected to amount to R23.7 billion, decreasing marginally by 0,4%, from R8.2 billion in 2023/24 to R8.1 billion in 2026/27, due to Cabinet-approved reductions of R461.8 million in 2024/25, R491.8 million in 2025/26 and R521.3 million in 2026/27. The agency will be required to find efficiencies to absorb these reductions. The agency is set to derive 99,9% (R23.6 billion) of its revenue over the next three years through transfers from the department. Revenue is expected to increase at an average annual rate of 2,4%, from R7.6 billion in 2023/24 to R8.1 billion in 2026/27.

Programmes and projects

Social Assistance

Over the medium term, the DSD will continue to transfer funds to SASSA for the provision of social grants to the elderly, children, war veterans and persons with disabilities. Social grants account for an estimated 94,3% (R175.3 billion per year on average) of the department's total budget over the MTEF period. Spending on grants is expected to increase at an average annual rate of 7,5% over the medium term. Mostly due to inflationary adjustments to the value of the grants and growth in the number of beneficiaries.

The elderly population – people older than 60 years, is growing by 3% per year. As such, the number of beneficiaries who receive the old age grant is expected to increase. As the child population grows, the number of beneficiaries who receive the Child Support Grant (CSG) is also expected to increase. The high level of unemployment and poverty levels in the country, combined with high wage inequality and low labour market participation, are contributory factors to the growth of social grants to children. Furthermore, the continuing trend of generally low wages paid to those who are working means that a high proportion of working parents do not earn sufficient wages to adequately provide for their children.

For the foreseeable future, the Social Assistance programme will continue to be an important lever in government's arsenal to tackle poverty and inequality. In the immediate future as the country battles the COVID-19 pandemic, the social assistance system has become even more important as a key response to mitigate the severe impact on incomes and livelihoods of vulnerable workers and their households. The economic fallout of the pandemic continues to reverberate across the economy, necessitating urgent intervention including the increased allocation of R40 billion to augment the social grants budget.

The allocation provided R250 increases for the Older Person's Grant, Disability Grant, Foster Child Grant and the Care Dependency Grant, alongside a once-off R300 boost to the CSG and a five-month R500 monthly payment to caregivers. To support those aged 18 to 59 who ordinarily do not receive social grants, a temporary COVID-19 SRD grant of R350 per month was introduced.

Social Security Policy and Administration

The programme aims to amend the Social Assistance Act of 2004 and the Fund-Raising Act, 1978 (Act 107 of 1978), to address existing gaps and inconsistencies in the legislation. Specifically, the Social Assistance Amendment Act, 2020 (Act 16 of 2020) introduced a provision to empower the Minister of Social Development, with the concurrence of the Minister of Finance, to augment the CSG benefit provided to orphaned children residing with relatives. This is intended to reduce the demand on the foster child system by reducing the number of children entering the foster care system purely to access the Foster Child Grant due to the large differential in value between this grant and the CSG.

The Act will also enhance access to administrative justice by reducing the time it takes for appeals to be adjudicated from 180 days to 90 days. The DSD expects the workload of the tribunal to increase once the Act is passed, since all complainants will be able to come directly to the tribunal without first approaching SASSA. When proclaimed, the Act will also pave the way for the establishment of an inspectorate for social assistance appeals, which will be tasked with ensuring and promoting the integrity of the social assistance framework.

The programme further aims to complete the extensive policy proposals on social security reform, ranging from extending social assistance coverage to all, introducing mandatory contributions for retirement, death and disability, creating a platform for informal sector workers to participate in social security coverage, and developing an appropriate institutional architecture for a coherent, efficient and sustainable social security system in the long term.

The severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy and its ability to create jobs has raised new questions about the reliance on economic growth to address unemployment and poverty, and revived interest in the prospect of a basic income grant as another lever to tackle poverty and inequality, and engender a more inclusive growth path.

Ongoing policy development will continue, particularly to address very specific social security coverage gaps in relation to pregnant and lactating women, and institutional

mechanisms and the cost thereof, to crowd in all government interventions to address the social protection needs of children, using the social grants as an entry point. The department will also table the Fundraising Amendment Bill to Parliament, in order to streamline the administration of the various funds established before the democratic dispensation to provide humanitarian relief in times of disaster.

Welfare Services Policy Development and Implementation Support

The purpose of the programme is to create an enabling environment for the delivery of equitable developmental welfare services through the formulation of policies, norms, standards and best practices, and the provision of support to implementing agencies.

This programme consists of the following subprogramme:

- Service Standards, which ensures the transformation and standardisation of social welfare services through the development and coordination of overarching policies and legislation that promote integrated, quality-driven, professional and accountable service delivery;
- Social Work Scholarship, which provides full scholarships for social work students;
- Substance Abuse, which develops, supports and monitors the implementation of policies, legislation, and norms and standards for combating substance abuse;
- Older Persons, which develops, supports and monitors the implementation of policies, legislation, and norms and standards for social welfare services to older people;
- Disability Rights, which promotes the empowerment and rights of persons with disabilities through accelerated mainstreaming of disability considerations and the strengthening of disability specific services;
- Children, which develops, supports and monitors the implementation of policies, legislation and norms and standards for social welfare services to children;
- Families, which develops, supports and monitors the implementation of policies, legislation and programmes for services aimed at strengthening families;
- Social Crime Prevention and Victim Empowerment, which develops, supports and monitors the implementation of policies, legislation and programmes aimed at protecting, empowering and supporting victims of crime and violence; and
- HIV and AIDS, which develops, supports and monitors the implementation of policies, programmes and guidelines aimed at preventing and mitigating the impact of HIV and AIDS in line with the 2017 to 2022 National Strategic Plan for HIV, sexually transmitted infections and TB.

The psychosocial support programmes are meant to build competencies and capacities for these groups to cope with life demands and stresses and manage relationships well. Some of the interventions entail building capacity of social service practitioners to enable mainstreaming of counselling, testing, treatment and adherence support for children and adolescents in particular.

The DSD continues to make significant efforts to improve access to substance misuse treatment services, as seen by the construction of public treatment centres in the Eastern Cape, the Northern Cape, the Free State and North West in 2020/21. In addition, the department received R9 million in financing to build 17 community care centres in the North West, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo.

These centres work to improve service delivery in all beneficiary communities by ensuring that multiple partners provide integrated and comprehensive services in a safe and well-equipped location. Through a collaboration with the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, the DSD was able to secure a state-owned facility to use as the GBV Command Centre.

Social Policy and Integrated Service Delivery

The purpose of the programme is to support community development and promote evidence-based policy making in the DSD and the social development sector. Community development programme implementation is geared towards empowering communities through capacity enhancement and creation of structures. Poverty and inequality continue to ravage communities as they are experienced through multiple deprivation and vulnerabilities, which include poor nutrition, unemployment, poor education and poor health outcomes. The department plans to intensify its effort to ensure that vulnerable households and communities are profiled to determine their socio-economic needs. It will conduct community capacity enhancement in all nine provinces to bolster social cohesion.

Functional community structures will be created as part of preventing and addressing social ills in communities. Out of 19.1 million grant recipients, the department intends to target 2% to link the beneficiaries to sustainable livelihoods. Through the programme, the department will facilitate the implementation of the NPO Funding Policy and Partnership Model, thereby ensuring uniformity in the sector. The programme will also ensure the formulation of the overarching Community Development Policy that will harness implementation of community development in the country.

Through the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), the DSD will continue to create meaningful work opportunities as a social protection safety net for vulnerable individuals over the MTSF period. This is in line with government's commitment to job creation as contained in the Phase 4 EPWP Business Plan. The department also administers the NPOs Act of 1997 and has identified the following outputs: NPO Policy Framework, turnaround time on NPO registration, NPO compliance monitoring and NPO education and awareness programmes as pillars that will ensure that the outcome – reduced levels of poverty – is achieved.

This is hoped to be achieved by increasing public trust and confidence through effective yet fair regulation of NPOs. Reducing poverty levels requires contributions from NPOs in delivering programmes that support the achievement of set outcomes. This requires that NPOs understand legislation and compliance thereof in order to be credible and accountable entities that can deliver on their respective mandates. The planned outputs on the provision of education and awareness programmes to NPOs will lead to an empowered and strengthened sector that is able to deliver quality services to vulnerable and poor communities, thus improving the quality of life.

The DSD will, in the next MTSF, implement the National Food and Nutrition Security Plan for South Africa. The plan seeks to ensure implementation of food and nutrition security initiatives targeting vulnerable individuals and households. This will be accomplished through the coordination of the DSD's food and nutrition interventions which include all centre-based feeding programmes providing nutritious food to the poor and vulnerable in partnership with civil society organisations, social partners and agencies.

Community development will seek to ensure development of the National Community Development Policy Framework, with an emphasis on the creation of vibrant and sustainable communities. The department will also prioritise the linking of recipients below 60 years to sustainable livelihoods opportunities. The Community Development branch will continue with the development of a policy framework, guidelines and tools to enhance community development within the country.

Ten-Point Plan

The strategic plan of the DSD is informed by the 10-Point Plan, which represents the priorities to be addressed by the social development sector. These are:

- Rebuilding of family, community and social relations: Restoring the ethics of care and human development in all welfare programmes. This requires an urgent rebuilding of family, community and social relations in order to promote social integration.
- Integrated poverty eradication strategy: Designing an integrated poverty eradication strategy that provides direct benefits to those in greatest need, especially women, youth and children in rural areas and informal settlements.
- Comprehensive social security system: Developing a comprehensive social security system that builds on existing contributory and non-contributory schemes and prioritises the most vulnerable households.
- Violence against women and children, older persons and other vulnerable groups: Responding to the brutal effects of all forms of violence against women, children, older persons and other vulnerable groups, as well as designing effective strategies to deal with perpetrators.
- HIV and AIDS: Programmes include a range of services to support community-based care and assistance for people living with HIV and AIDS. Particular attention will be given to orphans and children infected and affected by HIV and AIDS.
- Youth development: Developing a national strategy to reduce the number of youth in conflict with the law and promoting youth development within the framework of the National Crime Prevention Strategy and in partnership with the National Youth Commission.
- Accessibility of social welfare services: Making social welfare services accessible and available to people in rural, peri-urban and informal settlements, and ensuring equity in service provision.
- Services to people with disabilities: Redesigning services to people with disabilities in ways that promote their human rights and economic development and working with people with disabilities to ensure that their needs are met without further marginalising them.
- Commitment to cooperative governance: Work must be based on a commitment to cooperative governance that includes working with different spheres of government and civil society.
- Train, educate, re-deploy and employ a new category of workers in social development: This includes the re-orientation of social service workers to meet the challenges of South Africa and link these to regional and global demands.

Expanded Public Works Programme

The EPWP is a nationwide programme under the auspices of government and state-owned enterprises. The programme provides an important avenue for labour absorption and income transfers to poor households in the short to medium term. It is also a deliberate attempt by public sector bodies to use expenditure on goods and services to create job opportunities for the unemployed. The EPWP projects employ workers on a temporary or ongoing basis either by government, contractors or NGOs under the Ministerial Conditions of Employment for the EPWP or learnership employment conditions.

The Vuk'uphile Learnership Programme is an EPWP Contractor Development Programme. It is a subprogramme of the EPWP infrastructure sector which is aimed at training and developing emerging contractors within the construction industry. The programme develops the administrative, technical, contractual, managerial and entrepreneurial skills of the learners within a learner-contracting entity. The Vuk'uphile Learnership Programme uses labour-intensive methods of construction.

The EPWP Knowledge Management Committee is composed of various national government departments such as Social Development, Environmental Affairs, and Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, with the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) leading the committee. While the DPWI must continue with its role of coordinating the EPWP nationally, the DSD drives the implementation of the projects in the social sector space.

War on Poverty Campaign

The Cooperative Shop Project is aimed at combating poverty by linking social grant beneficiaries, particularly the caregivers of children receiving the CSG and other vulnerable groups, to meaningful socioeconomic opportunities. The DSD and its entities identify cooperatives that need support, with the intention of developing skills of the members of the cooperative to ensure they are able to produce goods of quality.

The project is in line with government's developmental agenda and could be seen as an addition to the grants that are provided. The primary intention is not to take people out of the grant system but to provide opportunities for grant beneficiaries to supplement their income.

Food for All Programme

The DSD is tasked with facilitating and monitoring the implementation of the Food for All Programme. To this end, distressed households are being provided with food through the DSD and the Food Forward SA programme. While this provides short-term relief for poor households, government recognises that longer-term solutions are needed. Government is committed to improving its efforts at ensuring food security for all in the country, starting with vulnerable households and communities. To this end, households have been assisted in establishing food gardens to produce their own food, thus participating in their own development.

National Family Policy

The DSD is tasked with implementing the National Family Policy, and provides training in family-preservation services, marriage preparation and enrichment, parenting/primary care-giving and support for families in crisis to service providers in the area of family services. The 2013 White Paper on Families emphasises the need for all to build strong families that protect the most vulnerable members of society. The purpose of the White Paper is to provide a platform for all South Africans to engage and exchange views on how to build stable families. It also addresses some of the challenges faced by individuals in families, including the abuse of women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities.

National Minimum Wage (NMW)

The NMW came into effect in January 2019. In March 2024, the NMW for each ordinary hour worked was increased from R25.42 to R27,58. The adjustment provides exceptions for several worker groups, including:

- workers employed on the Expanded Public Works Programme are entitled to a minimum wage of R15.16 per hour; and
- Workers who have concluded learnership agreements contemplated in section 17 of the Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act 97 of 1998) are entitled to allowances contained in Schedule 2.

The minimum wage is a tool to ensure that vulnerable workers do not fall below the poverty line and it is designed to reduce inequality and huge disparities in income in the national labour market.

HIV and AIDS Youth Programme

Isibindi is a programme which deploys child and youth care workers in communities to assist children in vulnerable homes. Isibindi has a special focus on Grade 12 learners. The assistance by Isibindi child and youth care workers ensures that children remain in school and attend classes. The child and youth care workers support these children and make sure that they are relieved from household responsibilities, including being parents to their siblings while they are trying to pass Grade 12.

Almost 300 Isibindi projects have been replicated across South African provinces, serving over 100 000 children who would otherwise have fallen outside of the care and protection matrix. Including quality assurance mechanisms and a community development approach, the Isibindi model has received public acclaim, and is currently being scaled up through a South African government initiative. Additional components of the model include a young women's empowerment programme, a young men's empowerment programme, a non-centre based ECD model and a disability model – all of which enable progressive realisation of a wide range of children's rights and protection needs, through effective deployment of community-based child and youth care workers.

HIV and AIDS Advocacy, Awareness and Outreach Programme

Achieving a meaningful and clear understanding of the scientific facts about HIV and AIDS will lead to individual self-management regarding the risk of HIV infection. The awareness programme has four main pillars – disclosure, communication, rights and facilitation. The programme also deals with the physical and emotional consequences of HIV and AIDS. It addresses the following challenges:

- The lack of accurate and current information on HIV and AIDS;
- The lack of access to care, support, treatment and new healthcare developments; and
- Discrimination against the infected and affected.

The programme aims to involve people living with HIV and AIDS in initiatives that directly help affected and infected people to alleviate stigmatisation.

Victim Empowerment Programme

South Africa's Victim Empowerment Policy is based upon the concept of restorative justice. Victim empowerment is a means of facilitating access to a range of services for all people who have individually or collectively suffered harm, trauma and/or material loss through violence, crime, natural disaster, human accident and/or through socioeconomic conditions. It is the process of promoting the resourcefulness of victims of crime and violence by providing opportunities to access services available to them, as well as to use and build their own capacity and support networks and to act on their own choices.

National Directory on Services for Victims of Violence and Crime

The National Directory on Services for Victims of Violence and Crime is updated annually in collaboration with the provincial Victim Empowerment Policy managers or coordinators and their provincial counterparts. As part of its prevention and treatment efforts on substance and drug abuse, the DSD runs Sobriety Week is a national campaign aimed at creating awareness among the general South African public, particularly the youth, women and pregnant women about the adverse effects of liquor abuse.

Sobriety Week incorporates International Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Day, which is observed internationally on 9 September every year to highlight the irreversible damage caused to unborn babies when their mothers consume alcohol during pregnancy. Government recognises challenges such as unemployment, which result in people using and abusing alcohol.

Children and youth

The Home Community-Based Care Programme is the centrepiece of government's interventions to build a protective and caring environment for vulnerable children. Most services to orphans and vulnerable children are rendered through home community-based care and include early identification of vulnerable children and their families, referrals, training of community caregivers, and psychosocial support and material assistance.

This approach is geared towards keeping children within their families and communities. It is aimed at providing comprehensive care and support, which is complemented by proactive action at community level. This includes linking families with poverty alleviation projects and other services in the community, such as food security initiatives and ECD services.

Child Labour Programme of Action

The Child Labour Programme of Action is a national partnership initiated by government and civil-society partners comprising organised business, organised labour and NGOs. It is led by the Department of Employment and Labour. It is South Africa's roadmap towards the prevention, reduction and eventual elimination of child labour. The programme was first adopted in 2003, after extensive consultation within government, with a wide range of organisations outside government and with groups of teenage children involved in different forms of child labour. The programme sets out specific actions to be taken and assigns responsibility for these actions.

Childline South Africa

Childline offers a 24-hour toll-free crisis line (116) to children and families across South Africa. It provides immediate assistance to children and families in crisis who need counselling and information. Childline is an NPO that works to protect children from all forms of violence and creates a culture of respect for children's rights. Programmes delivered through the provincial offices include:

- A crisis line;
- Child rights and education;
- Training and education of volunteers;
- Training of other professionals who work with child protection services and children;
- Therapy for abused and traumatised children and their families;
- Court preparation of child witnesses;
- Networking and coordination;
- Lobbying and advocacy; and
- Analysis of law and policy.

National Child Protection Week

National Child Protection Week is commemorated in the country annually to raise awareness of the rights of children as articulated in the Constitution, 1996 and the Children's Act of 2005. The campaign is led by the DSD in partnership with key government departments and civil society organisations rendering child protection services.

The Constitution has the highest regard for children, their protection and non-violation of their rights. Protecting children from violence, exploitation and abuse is not only a basic value but also an obligation set out in Article 28 of the Constitution. Government has put in place various early intervention programmes that focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights, such as an Integrated Programme of Action that responds to teenage pregnancy by coordinating the work of all stakeholders. It ensures that resources are directed to the hardest hit areas with a focus on prevention and early intervention.

The National Integrated School Health Programme strengthens key interventions towards dealing with teenage pregnancy. The Policy on the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy in Schools is grounded in supporting learners who fall pregnant and is aimed at reducing the increasing number of learner pregnancies at schools. The DSD's Sinovuyo Parenting Programme helps build the capacity of teenage parents to care for their children, and life skills programmes such as Yolo, ChommY, Boys and Men Championing Change and Ezabasha are helping develop young people.

The DSD has a 24-hour call centre dedicated to providing support and counselling to victims of GBV:

- The toll-free number to call is 0800 428 428 (0800 GBV GBV) to speak to a social worker for assistance and counselling.
- Callers can also request a social worker from the Command Centre to contact them by dialling *120*7867# (free) from any cell phone.
- Other numbers to call are Childline South Africa on 0800 055 555 and Child Welfare South Africa on 0861 4 CHILD (24453)/011 452-4110.

COVID-19 Rapid Needs Assessment Report

In October 2020, the DSD and the United Nations Development Programme officially launched the COVID-19 Rapid Needs Assessment Report after the department commissioned the agency to conduct a rapid assessment of the COVID-19 situation, with a specific focus on vulnerable groups. The results revealed the deeply ingrained socioeconomic challenges such as poverty, unemployment and inequality. The human impact of the pandemic has been devastating, with income loss estimated at between R41 and R53 million for 9.5 million affected formal sector employees, and 2.5 million informal workers and owners of small, micro and medium enterprises.

The report also revealed that 740 616 informal workers were at risk of falling below the upper poverty line during the extended lockdown due to COVID-19, while 900 000 households had severely inadequate access to food. The report recommended that the country needed to prepare for the long haul. The key recommendation included raising the COVID-19 SRD grant from R350 to at least R560 per month.

Role players

Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities

The Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities is situated in The Presidency. The department derives its mandate from Section 9(3) of the Constitution. It is required to champion socioeconomic transformation and the empowerment and participation of women, youth and people with disabilities through mainstreaming, advocacy, and monitoring and evaluation. The NDP envisages economic participation, education and skills development for women and other vulnerable groups, and the elimination of violence against women and children.

This vision is given expression through Priority 1 (economic transformation and job creation), Priority 5 (social cohesion and safe communities) and Priority 6 (a capable, ethical and developmental state) of government's 2019 to 2024 MTSF. The work of this department is directly aligned with these priorities through facilitating the planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, and auditing processes responsive to gender, youth and disability rights across the state.

Accordingly, over the medium term, the department intends to focus on reducing GBVF, and strengthening the national gender machinery; making interventions for economic empowerment; engaging in responsive government-wide planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation; ensuring compliance with international commitments; promoting the rights of people with disabilities and supporting the development of young people.

Persons with disabilities

The 2016 DSD White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (WPRPD) takes its cue from the Constitution and a number of international instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, and the sustainable development goals, which reaffirm the human rights of people with disabilities. The White Paper is a crucial step along the journey of improving the lives of people with disabilities and moves the country closer to a fully inclusive society.

The White Paper:

- Updates South Africa's 1997 White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy;
- Integrates obligations of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and in the Continental Plan of Action for the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities (both of which South Africa has signed), with South Africa's legislation, policy frameworks and the NDP;
- Endorses a mainstreaming trajectory for realising the rights of persons with disabilities;
- Provides clarity on and guides the development of standard operating procedures for mainstreaming disability;
- Guides the review of all existing, and the development of new, sectoral policies, programmes, budgets and reporting systems, to bring these in line with both Constitutional and international treaty obligations;
- Stipulates norms and standards for the removal of discriminatory barriers that perpetuate the exclusion and segregation of persons with disabilities; and
- Outlines the responsibilities and accountabilities of the various stakeholders involved in providing barrier-free, appropriate, effective, efficient and coordinated service delivery to persons with disabilities, and guides self-representation of persons with disabilities.

It is intended to accelerate transformation and redress with regard to full inclusion, integration and equality for people with disabilities. South Africa must collectively contribute to the empowerment of people with disabilities through accessible disability information services, inclusive ECD opportunities and accessible rehabilitation services.

This would enable people with disabilities to take up the opportunities created in much larger numbers, improving performance in achieving equity targets. People with disabilities represent the voice of the sector in institutions such as the South African Human Rights Commission, the Commission on Gender Equality, the Board of the South African Broadcasting Corporation, the National Youth Development Agency and many transformation and developmental entities.

The South African experience has also helped to shape the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Continental Plan for the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities. South Africa has been celebrating the International Day for People with Disabilities annually since 1997. The vision of the WPRPD is the creation of a free and just society inclusive of all persons with disabilities as equal citizens. It commits duty bearers to realising the rights of persons with disabilities by:

- Accelerating implementation of existing legislation that advocates equality for persons with disabilities;
- Taking calculated action to ensure that their rights as equal persons are upheld;
- Removing discriminatory barriers to access and participation;
- Ensuring that universal design informs access and participation in the planning, budgeting and service delivery value chain of all programmes;
- Recognising the right to self-representation;
- Acknowledging that not all persons with disabilities are alike, and that personal circumstances, gender, age, sexuality, religious and cultural backgrounds, and geographical location, requires different responses; and
- Embedding the obligations contained in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in legislation, policy and service delivery.

The WPRPD is built on nine strategic pillars:

- Removing barriers to access and participation.
- Protecting the rights of persons at risk of compounded marginalisation.
- Supporting sustainable integrated community life.
- Promoting and supporting the empowerment of children, women, youth and persons with disabilities.
- Reducing economic vulnerability and releasing human capital.

- Strengthening the representative voice of persons with disabilities.
- Building a disability equitable state machinery.
- Promoting international cooperation.
- Monitoring and evaluation.

Blind SA

Blind SA is an organisation for the blind, and is governed by the blind. Situated in Johannesburg, it is aligned with other member organisations throughout South Africa. Blind SA's main focus is to improve the quality of life of all South Africa's visually impaired people by empowering them through education. Its objectives are to protect and promote the interests of people with visual impairment and enable all visually impaired people to achieve their optimal potential through independence, and by providing developmental care for and protecting the rights of those who, owing to circumstances beyond their control, are unable to do so themselves.

Orientation, mobility and skills development for blind and newly blinded people are an important aspects of the work undertaken by Blind SA. The organisation provides, among other things, study bursaries for visually impaired students for further education, Braille publications in all South African official languages, Braille training that entails writing and reading, and orientation and mobility training.

The purpose of Blind SA is to end the cycle of poverty for blind South Africans, empowering them with knowledge and information through education, Braille and developmental services. It aims to break down barriers, provide opportunities and create answers that improve the quality of life for the blind community so that they can live the life they choose. Recent initiatives include Mali-Bhala – a money counter and signature guide. This locally created device comes in two standard sizes that are designed to fit either in a person's wallet or pocket. It is used as an indicator to differentiate between the five South African 'Mandela' bank notes and as a signature guide.

South African Braille Authority (SABA)

The SABA promotes and advocates for Braille and Braille-related matters in South Africa. Its purpose is to set and maintain standards for Braille in all 11 official languages of South Africa. These standards relate to the development and maintenance of Braille codes; production of quality Braille; the teaching of, access to and promotion of Braille; Braille examinations; and many other Braille-related matters.

Members of the SABA include schools for the blind, consumer organisations of the blind, student disability units, Braille producers and the South African Library for the Blind. Through the SABA, South Africa is a member of the International Council on English Braille. The membership enables the country to stay abreast of and participate in international Braille-related matters.

South African National Council for the Blind (SANCB)

The SANCB is the coordinating body for more than 100-member organisations spanning the full spectrum of services offered to blind and partially sighted people throughout the country. The SANCB comprises four core business areas, namely social development, the bureau for the prevention of blindness, education and fundraising and public relations. To combat as much as 80% of avoidable blindness, the council regularly undertakes tours with its mobile eye care clinics to rural areas for eye screening, referrals and to perform cataract removal operations.

The SANCB provides entrepreneurial training, adult basic education and training, and facilitates skills training such as computer literacy and call centre programmes through its Optima College. It is also affiliated to international organisations, including the African Union of the Blind and the World Blind Union.

Support for the deaf

South Africa's national organisation for the deaf is the Deaf Federation of South Africa (DeafSA). It acts as the national research, information and community action organisation on behalf of South Africans who are culturally and linguistically deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind. DeafSA, formerly known as the South African National Council for the Deaf (SANCD), was founded in 1929. In 1995, the SANCD was transformed into a new democratically elected organisation, the DeafSA. This resulted in a paradigm shift from an organisation for the deaf to one of the deaf.

The changes in the constitution and attitudes also meant that decisions about the services and affairs of deaf people were no longer taken by hearing people on behalf of deaf people – but by deaf people. The organisation has nine provincial chapters throughout South Africa. An estimated 500 000 to 600 000 South Africans use SASL. As sign language has grown in South Africa – particularly baby sign language – an NPO, Sign Language Education and Development, has been formed to promote the language. Signing with hearing babies and children is being promoted through the Signsational Kids website. South Africa has a long-established deaf education system.

The Institute for the Deaf in Worcester operates Deaf College South Africa, which trains deaf people for jobs. In addition, the Bible College for the Deaf in Gauteng trains people to work in deaf ministry. The University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg has a Centre for Deaf Studies. The centre offers programmes in deaf education and focuses on teaching, research and community service. Among other services, the National Institute for the Deaf provides services for the multiple disabled deaf, runs two deaf churches and provides audiological and mental health services.

A Deaf Child Centre at the Department of Paediatrics and Child Health at the University of Cape Town provides pre-school education and community services. This centre also focuses on deafness research. The Carel du Toit Centre, based in Cape Town, provides early childhood auditory-oral education. In addition, the centre engages in community outreaches, helping families with hearing-related needs and more practical needs, such as food.

A similar centre is the Eduplex in Pretoria. It provides auditory-oral pre-school and primary school educational services, teaching hearing and deaf children together, and provides training to prospective teachers, audiologists and therapists. In 2018, Sign Language was administered as a new subject for the first time during the National Senior Certificate examinations.

South African Sign Language (SASL) Charter

In 2020, the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) launched the SASL Charter. As September is Deaf Awareness Month, the launch of the SASL Charter kick-started various activities undertaken by PanSALB in various parts of the country to raise awareness about this initiative. The charter was conceptualised to address issues that relate to communication, access to information, facilities and social justice for the deaf community, including the quality of service provided by SASL interpreters.

The charter articulates the linguistic rights of deaf persons in South Africa and is aimed at creating conditions for the development of SASL. It compels all government departments, and other organs of state, as well as the private sector, to make provisions for SASL interpreting. It also guarantees access to services by deaf persons by ensuring that essential service staff, such as social workers and police officers, receive advanced level training in SASL.

Older people

The DSD promotes a holistic approach to active ageing and wellbeing among the country's senior citizens. A number of initiatives have been rolled out by the departments of Social Development, Health, Tourism, Sport, Arts and Culture, and other stakeholders to promote general health among older persons, especially through sports and activities that promote general wellbeing. In 2008, government implemented a national active ageing programme in line with the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing of 2002.

The Madrid Plan of Action offers a bold agenda for handling the issue of ageing in the 21st century. It focuses on three priority areas – older persons and development, advancing health and wellbeing into old age, and ensuring enabling and supportive environments. The Older Persons Act of 2006 aims to enhance the quality of life and improve the health of older persons by engaging them in programmes that promote social, physical, mental and emotional wellbeing, to prevent or delay the onset of ageing challenges and keep illnesses related to old age at bay. The Older Persons' Parliament takes place annually in October. It gives older persons the opportunity to engage with the executive on critical issues affecting their lives.

Training and skills development

Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Social Workers

The Unemployed Social Workers Database informs the DSD about the number of unemployed social workers who have studied outside the DSD scholarship programme. This aims to address the issue of qualified social workers who are unemployed. Government has mandated the development of strategies to facilitate the recruitment and retention of such scarce skills. The DSD has been the main driver in the implementation of this social policy. In addition, the NDP indicates that 60 000 social workers will be needed by 2030 to serve the population.

Professionalising community development

The Council for Social Service Professions was established in terms of the Social Service Professions Act of 1978.

The key functions are:

- protecting and promoting the interests of the professions, in respect of which professional boards have been or are to be established, and to deal with any matter relating to such interests;
- advising the Minister of Social Development on matters affecting the professions in respect of which professional boards have been established; and
- controlling and exercising authority regarding all financial matters relating to the council and the professional boards; and assisting in the promotion of social services.