

**SOCIAL CLUSTER SECTOR MEDIA BRIEFING DOCUMENT:
09 MARCH 2009**

Introduction

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of the Social Cluster Ministers I would like to present some highlights of the achievements of the Cluster.

In presenting this report this morning, I will be focusing on the following key areas as they relate to the Departments constituting the Social Cluster.

- Comprehensive social security
- Promotion of national identity and social cohesion
- Comprehensive health care
- Housing and human settlements
- Food security and nutrition
- Access to and quality of education
- Comprehensive anti-poverty interventions

Comprehensive Social Security

Social security plays a very critical role in the lives of millions of our people given the twin challenges of poverty and underdevelopment that we are still faced with.

On the issue of the implementation of a common tool to assess disabilities, the implementation of this tool has been put on hold pending the amendment of the Social Assistance Act in the 2009 Parliamentary cycle. In the meantime though, the Department of Social Development has appointed a 40 member panel of Tribunals to deal with appeals submitted for all grants. In addition, the South African AIDS Council has been exploring the issue of a grant for chronic diseases. Let me say that whilst the need for support for people with chronic diseases is clear – as many people with chronic diseases are poor and that having a chronic disease often pushes people further into poverty

much more work and further consultation is needed before a proposal can be tabled to Cabinet.

Access to health services as well as affordability and equity between the private and public health sectors are all matters that we are considering in our discussion of the form and shape of a national health insurance system (NHI). The Department of Health is currently preparing a discussion document on determining the costed alternatives for a basic benefits package that could be covered under the NHI, following the presentation to Cabinet in August last year.

On our interventions to reach vulnerable children over the age of 14 years and to increase the age of child support grant beneficiaries to 15 years, Cabinet has approved the extension of the Child Support Grant from 14 – 18 years and implementation will be phased in during 2009/10 starting with 15 year old children. The Department of Social Development has established an Intersectoral Child Care and Protection Forum. One of whose functions is to address the gaps in service delivery to children of all ages, including children in the age cohort of 14 to 18 years.

As you may know Government allocated R500 million towards the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant in November last year. The monies paid out for the SRD increased from R13,6 million in November 2008 to R57,2 million in January 2009.

The total number of beneficiaries for all types of grants is 12,6 million. The total number of recipients per grant type is: Old Age grant – 2 344 595; War Veterans grant – 1 611; Disability grant – 1 370 195; Foster Care grant – 474 012; Care Dependency grant – 106 073; Child Support grant – 8 523 741. Due to the age extension from 14 to 15 years the number of children receiving grants aged 14-15 years is 75 591. Since July 2008 the number of older men aged 63 and 64 years that are in receipt of the older persons grant is 72 635 as at February 2009.

Promotion of national Identity and Social Cohesion

National identity and social cohesion constitute a crucial pillar of our state.

A national conference with the theme “Building a caring nation” which will look amongst others into aspects of social cohesion and nation-building is being planned for 2009. There are also plans to implement Social Mobilisation Campaigns aimed at building solidarity, improve safety of communities and strengthen social cohesion. This campaign will be piloted in KwaZulu-Natal and will be launched during the planned national conference that I just referred to.

Regarding the intensification of the installation of flags in schools and other public buildings, we are happy to announce that the project is now in its second phase. 2000 flags were installed in all provinces in the first phase. And a further 1250 will be installed this year.

On the matter of a synchronized process to create a base slate to change geographic and place names, public hearings were held in Mpumalanga and Eastern Cape in October 2008. Other provincial hearings are planned for later this year.

A revised draft version of the National Schools Pledge has been produced, taking into account comments made during the process of public comment. The revised draft Pledge will soon be presented to Cabinet for discussion and approval.

In relation to developing a plan on the prevention of and treatment of substance abuse (illegal drug use and alcohol abuse), the Prevention of and Treatment for Substance Abuse Bill was presented to the National Council of Provinces and to the Portfolio Committees of Health and Social Welfare in all provinces. In addition, Substance Abuse Awareness Raising Campaign was conducted through different forms of media.

On the issue of improving programmes aimed at rehabilitating communities in line with TRC recommendations, a Draft Policy on Exhumations has been developed.

The Department of Sports and Recreation has engaged national sports federations, including SA Rugby and SAFA, regarding the use of the King Protea as the sole national sports emblem. This was done with a view to unite South African sport behind one emblem for all sports federations to contribute to nation building. Consensus was also reached with SA Rugby regarding the use of the Springbok emblem.

The 2010 Mass Mobilisation campaign has been initiated to galvanise communities around the hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup. This programme is complemented by the social legacy campaign that aims to increase the capacity of local youth. This programme aims to use sport to improve the social environment through the use of sport as a development tool.

The launch of the 2010 Mass Mobilisation road show took place on 27 January 2009 at Galeshewe Stadium in Kimberley. This launch was followed by road shows in the Eastern Cape where two events were hosted at the Chris Hani District Municipality and the Ukhahlamba District Municipality on 27 and 28 February 2009.

Comprehensive Health Care

This component of our Programme of Action entails a number of critical elements but in the interest of time we would like to focus on only a few of these.

A task team has finalized a draft government-wide integrated comprehensive programme on health promotion targeting the youth. This will be processed through the Cluster system and taken to Cabinet for discussion and adoption

so that we have greater coherence across government of programmes that target the health of our youth.

We are encouraged by the fact that all provinces have adopted the Health Lifestyles initiative. Peer educators are working under supervision of professional nurses to ensure that all public health facilities are Youth Friendly.

Regarding the expanding the number of health promoting schools from 3500 to 5000, by the end of this financial year there will be 4100 health promoting schools. In addition all our schools are now implementing tobacco control policies within the context of national legislation geared at curbing tobacco use especially amongst the youth.

With respect to progress in strengthening our interventions on non-communicable diseases I can report that the implementation framework for the long-term care service model for people with non-communicable diseases is targeted for publication in the 09/10 financial year and the Diabetes Declaration implementation plan will be used by 9 of the 18 priority health districts during 2009/10 to strengthen the management of diabetes.

HIV and AIDS continue to be amongst the biggest public health challenge facing us. Among our targets is to increase the percentage of adults who have ever had an HIV test from 25% to 35%. To expand access to voluntary counseling and testing 93% of our primary health facilities provide counseling and testing. However, we wish to encourage everyone to 'know your status'. This will contribute to risk avoidance as well as improving treatment seeking behavior. The number of people tested for HIV (excluding pregnant women) is 2 430 300.

In terms of people on treatment (ARV programme), more than 690 775 patients have been initiated on ARVs since the commencement of the programme. The Free State province has been in the news recently with respect to their inability to fully fund their ARV programme. We have been

working with the province with assistance from our development partners to find ways to ensure that the programme is not interrupted.

Prevention of HIV especially amongst the youth is very important to decrease the incidence of HIV in South Africa. In one programme that focuses on the youth 1 630 young men and women were trained as 'groundbreakers' or peer role models for the youth. This is an example of collaboration between government and civil society – in this instance the Department of Sports and Recreation and loveLife.

TB remains another public health challenge and this has further been complicated by drug resistant TB. In terms of reducing the defaulter, we are encouraged by the fact that we been able to decrease our defaulter rate from 10% to 7.9%. In addition our TB cure rates have increased from just over 50% to over 60%.

A total of 844 health workers have been trained on Drug Resistant TB Management infection control, 567 on electronic TB register and data management and 4279 have been trained on TB management, leading to a total 6441 health personnel trained to help us manage TB in our country.

Since November last year we have seen a significant increase in the number of cholera cases especially in Limpopo and Mpumalanga. Through collaboration across national government departments and working closely with our provincial counterparts we have managed to limit the number of fatalities as well as gradually decrease the number of new cases in both provinces.

Housing and Human Settlement

Despite the many challenges that we continue to experience in this area, we are encouraged by the strong collaboration that we see between government and our financial institutions. As far as the monitoring of the use of the R42

billion committed by Financial Institutions, to date, over R40,5 billion has been released for financing housing development and/or ownership.

We are also encouraged by the work being done around the transformation of the NHFC and the increase in lending to lower income groups. The final steps in the transformation of this body (NHFC) are being implemented within the context of a government-wide review of the Development Finance Institutions.

On the introduction of measures to ensure affordable and sustainable home ownership, well over 100 000 units are planned in mixed income and multiple use projects. The subsidy voucher system design for building materials in rural areas to support the self-build initiative is complete pending policy decision and is due for implementation this year.

The housing delivery programme for 2008/09 has yielded over 133 000 units of the planned 265 000 units to house occupants of informal settlements and backyard dwellers.

Just over 3 million housing subsidies were approved and just over 2 million units have been completed. This brought homes to 9.9 million citizens.

As most of us would know, sanitation is another critical element is far as housing and human settlement is concerned. A total of 906 bucket sanitation units were removed, reducing the backlog to 10 395 at the end of December 2008. The water delivery target for 2008/09 is 450 000 households and by December last year a total of 771 884 households were serviced.

During the current term of government we have provided additional 1.465m households with basic access to water supply thus increasing access from 80% to 91% measured against the 2004 base. With regard to sanitation we can report that and additional 1.16m households were served with basic sanitation thereby increasing access from 66% to 74% measured against the 2004 benchmark.

We have also increased the number of electricity connections to households within the same period by an additional 727 777 connections. There are currently 6.7m households are currently receiving have their refuse removed once a week throughout the country.

The schools programme has served 51 schools with water facilities and 125 with sanitation in the last financial year. Though implementation was slow initially, progress has improved and the remaining 3035 schools are to have been addressed by December 2010. This will mean that all schools in this country will have basic access to water and sanitation.

Whilst acknowledging the significant progress we have made with regard to the provision of basic access to water and sanitation, electricity, collection of refuse from households; government is still concerned about the number of households who still do not have access to these basic services and Cabinet decided in January 2008 to integrate all the targets and work towards Universal access by 2014.

Government is fully committed to the 2014 universal access target and as the social cluster we are working across departments and other spheres of towards the achievement of this target. Some departments, like the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry have decided to allocate an additional budget to the current Municipal Infrastructure Grant and the Bulk Infrastructure Grant. DWAF will be providing an additional R 500m in 09/10 in order to deal with some of the immediate challenges we face in the provision of water and sanitation.

Food Security and Nutrition

This is one of the critical areas of our work as the Cluster and a number of interventions have been introduced to strengthen food security. With the exception of the North West all provinces have launched the Ilima-Letsema

programme. This programme distributes agricultural starter-packs to poor households and support small scale farmers.

The household food production programme which provides seedlings, seeds, fertiliser, pesticides and other production inputs to beneficiaries has benefited about 30 000 households this year. In the 2008 supplementary budget the household food production programme was expanded by an additional R76 million which will assist us in reaching the targeted 70 000 households.

At the school level, 6 503 schools in our country have vegetable gardens. We have also trained school communities on tree planting as well as planting fruit trees in schools as part of "Plant Million Trees Campaign".

The National School Nutrition Programme supports about 5,6 million learners in approximately 18 000 schools. The minimum norm is to feed learners in quintiles 1, 2 and 3 on all school days at an average cost of R1.50 per learner per day. This programme has received an additional R4 billion for the new financial year to enhance sustainability of the programme.

The issue of high food prices has been discussed and addressed at the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC). To further probe for workable solutions in this regard, the IMC held a symposium on High Food Price to open dialogue with all industry players and consumer representatives to develop common strategies that will address this issue.

Access to and quality of education

Access to quality education and training remain the key drivers of our economy and skills. As a cluster, we have increases the allocation of resources to provide financial assistance to trainees in FET colleges to help us expand the availability of scarce skills.

560 298 learners wrote the first National Senior Certificate examinations in 2008 with a 62.5% pass rate nationally.

Mathematics is one subject that we identified as being key to achieving some of the goals we have set ourselves and you will recall that we committed ourselves to doubling the number of matric maths passes to 50 000 by 2009. A total of 63 038 learners passed mathematics at a higher grade level in 2008. A total of 15 038 passes were learners from our Dinaledi schools. This therefore indicates that the Dinaledi schools contributed 24% of the high level passes in mathematics in 2008.

In line with our campaign to improve literacy, the Kha Ri Gude campaign was officially launched in April last year and the current rate of participation indicates that the campaign will reach 100% of its learner targets.

We are also continuing to work closely with universities to double the output of universities in priority sectors by aligning the NSFAS and subsidy funding with scarce skills. To this effect, the Department of Education has allocated R439 million to improve facilities at disadvantaged institutions for the support of key skills areas including the faculties of engineering and technology.

We are aware that fees in our schools continue to be a challenge. We have committed ourselves to eliminating compulsory school fees in 60% of primary and secondary schools. As of January this year, 60% of learners are attending no-fee schools.

In order to popularise and implement measures for the prevention and management of Learner Pregnancy, tools for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy have been made available to all public schools. In September and October 2008, the first two of a three series insert to the Teacher newspaper called *Generations* were published. *Generations* focuses on providing support to teachers in managing and preventing learner pregnancy.

To popularise and implement Guidelines on Sexual Harassment and violence in Public Schools, the Guidelines for the Prevention and Management of

Sexual Violence and harassment in public schools have been finalized and printed, and are currently being distributed to schools.

Comprehensive anti-poverty interventions

Poverty remains one of the key challenges facing our people. It undermines our democracy. As a Government therefore, we have in place a number of interventions geared at minimizing its impact on our people. By the end of 2008, government had formulated a draft anti-poverty strategy and a national plan to implement this strategy as part of fast tracking our efforts to lift more people out of poverty.

A draft poverty matrix has been drafted through the identification of key projects in the social and economic clusters. This matrix will be completed once the development of the national database of households living in poverty has been completed.

A 'Credible Indigent Policy Assessment Framework' has been developed and is being used by the Department of Provincial and Local Government to assess the credibility of municipal indigent policies and registers. By the end of this month, we will have completed the Indigent Policy and Register Assessment workshops in all 39 targeted municipalities to help accelerate household targeting and indigent support initiatives.

In linking up 10 000 unemployed graduates with economic opportunities, 1050 unemployed graduates trained through the Graduate Development Programme. A total of 447 unemployed youth were placed in employment opportunities through the JOBS Programme. In order to Intensify the National Youth Service Programme, since Jan 2008 12,785 unemployed and unskilled young people participate in NYS Category 1 projects.

On the issue of expand the reach of enterprise development initiatives such as business support and microfinance services resulting in sustainable economic opportunities for about 65 000 youth.

In relation to expanding access to Early Childhood Development by doubling the number of children enrolled in Early Childhood Development to over 600 000 through 1 000 new sites with more than 3 500 practitioners trained and employed, and increasing the number of care-givers. For the period April to September 2008 nationally 595 new ECD sites have been registered bringing 32 185 new children into the system.

With regard to Implementing the Rural Transport Strategy for South Africa by establishing an Integrated Rural Transport Development Programme (RTDP) in six rural districts, Rural Transport Services and Infrastructure Grant Framework for Rural District Municipalities has been finalised with National Treasury. An amount of R8.9m has been transferred to the relevant municipalities to implement the projects indicated on the Special Project Box. Out of 26100 Shova Kalula Bicycles earmarked for distribution for 2008/2009, 19109 have been distributed to provinces.

Conclusion

Generally, the Cluster is encouraged by the progress made in the implementation of government's PoA.

Despite this progress though, we are mindful of the many shortcomings that we continue to experience, some of them have to do with resources (financial and human) and others that relate to system challenges.

Minister Barbara Hogan, MP

Minister of Health and Co-Chair of the Social Sector Cluster