

The poor and the young are invisible to the ANC government

By Alexandra Abrahams MP - DA Member of the Portfolio Committee on Social Development

The Department of Social Development services the most vulnerable of South Africans. The poor and destitute. The addicted and aged. Women and children.

These South Africans seems to be treated like secondary citizens.

We see this in the monetary value ascribed to them by Government.

Women shelters and ECD subsidies, SASSA pensions and other grants are barely enough for these destitute South Africans to survive on.

Can the ANC government elaborate on the measurement tool used to determine a child's worth; a woman's worth; a gogo's worth?

The Government seems to think that tackling gender-based violence in provinces means simply handing over buildings meant for shelters without designating money from the national budget to run it and staff it.

Children seem to be invisible to the ANC. Is it because they cannot vote?

Is that why you decide to keep their schools and creches closed; stopped their feeding programmes; to regulate them from playing at beaches and parks? And in some provinces, like the Eastern Cape, to stop paying ECD subsidies all together.

Is that why you took the R64.5million which was meant for ECD infrastructure and used it for PPE?

Hopefully this money will **not be used** to procure **alcohol free** hand sanitizer as the department did earlier this year.

The challenges facing this Department were common knowledge prior to Covid-19 and the argument that "*no one could have known*" is deceptive. We are now forced to reprioritize budgets not because of the Covid-19 pandemic, but because of years of systemic mismanagement and corruption bleeding the coffers dry.

Take CPS – the previous service provider of SASSA. The Constitutional Court ruled in February that CPS must pay back the R316 million plus the interested accrued, approximately R500 million.

Minister, have you forgotten about this?

Instead of addressing systemic failures and making sure there is meaningful impact on the ground, the Department has chosen to dangle a political carrot by the announcement of a **possible** Basic Income Grant.

This is nothing more than a ploy to distract South Africa from the failure which is the special Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress grant of R350 and the fact that the ANC cannot create jobs.

The Basic Income Grant is an empty ANC election promise. One which they have been campaigning on since 2002 when it was called a Comprehensive Social Security System by the Taylor Commission.

Perhaps in another 18 years it will make its appearance.

It is important that South Africans understand what the term repurposed or reprioritized actually means. It means that critical social welfare programmes and its targets must be cut and deleted. It means only 180 social workers will be trained and capacitated instead of 500.

The ANC will continue to take the poor and destitute for granted. They will keep South Africans dependent on their handouts, increasing your dependency on state welfare. Taking away your power.

I hope the reenergized behavioral change programmes will have deep impact as the moral social fabric of our country seems to be severely lacking. We saw this when residents stoned and destroyed a Dial-a-Ride van with passengers on board earlier this week along the N2 in Khayelitsha.

Perhaps these programmes can also be rolled out in ANC caucuses across the country.

In a few years, the invisible children of today, will become eligible to vote. And hopefully by then, the nostalgia of what the ANC was 26 years ago will be both a fairytale and horror story they tell their children.

This budget is as fictional as the Covid-19 food relief parcels which millions of destitute South Africans are still waiting to receive and the DA cannot support such a budget.