Democratic Alliance speech by

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Gauteng residents continue to suffer while the Department of Social Development can’t pull itself together

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Thank you, honourable speaker

It’s that time of the year when we debate budgets.

How does one support a budget that doesn’t get spent year-on-year on the same programmes? How does one support a budget that doesn’t talk to the real needs of our people on the ground?

Whilst the department presents a rosy picture, the NGO sector doesn’t support this as they are complaining every month about late payments. This is compromising the work that the NGOs do on behalf of the department which is to look after the vulnerable.

For a few years now underspending on the Programme: Development and Research is attributed to the dignity packs budget not being fully spent. It has now become a norm for the department to present excuses such as failure to appoint a supplier and late finalisation of specifications.

If department officials had to be in the shoes of these girls for a month, I am convinced they would prioritise making sure that a service provider is appointed, and girls receive dignity packs. Care of our girl children is simply absent.

Whilst people continue to starve, the Gauteng Department of Social Development did not meet its’ targets to feed them. The department has failed to ensure that all targeted beneficiaries receive daily meals at Home Community-Based Care (HCBC), particularly when the most vulnerable are in dire need of food.

The Gauteng Department of Social Development truly seems to forget why it exists which is to assist the vulnerable and cushion them against extreme poverty.

With the increasing unemployment, more and more Gauteng residents will turn to the government for food and failing to spend a budget to assist is simply cruel and a violation of people’s dignity.

The objective of the department is to ensure that no one is hungry in Gauteng, yet it constantly fails to meet its targets on poverty reduction initiatives.

The arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic on our shores has made it tougher for poor Gauteng residents as many people lost their jobs.

Whilst the Covid-19 pandemic may have hindered some delivery of services, this department had programme targets that were even more essential during this lockdown period for the vulnerable groups. Therefore, it is not sufficient that the department blames underperformance on Covid-19 and the lockdown regulations. Covid-19’s arrival caught this department with their pants down.

Social workers and auxiliary social workers are the backbone of helping the vulnerable in Gauteng as they are the first contact for community members, yet the department has not gone beyond to ensure that there are enough in the system. Some of the social worker's and auxiliary social workers' working conditions in this province are deplorable.

Welfare to Work is still a programme that has not yielded results. Women from abusive relationships are let down by the failure of the Gauteng Department of Social Development’s inability to develop meaningful programmes that assist women in becoming independent of their abusers.

In a similar spirit, the youth development programmes are letting down the desperately demoralised youth who are not in employment by empowering them with education or training. The scary part is that the youth are a ticking time bomb as they are getting frustrated and, in some cases, there are also those who in desperation turn to drugs.

This department needs to stop playing games with Gauteng residents’ lives and start helping vulnerable people who depend on them to restore and maintain their dignity!

I thank you!

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