

## **SAPO and SASSA has failed to provide dignified services**

### **Speech by Bridget Masango MP, DA Shadow Minister of Social Development**

Honourable Chairperson,

In keeping with righting the wrongs of Apartheid and ridding people of South Africa of the inhumane, undignified way of living, Parliament, in 2004 established the SASSA Act to, among other things “ensure the effective, efficient and economical use of funds designated for payment to beneficiaries of social security;

the promotion and protection of the human dignity of applicants for and beneficiaries of social security; the protection of confidential information held by the Agency other than as is contemplated in section 16;

honest, impartial, fair and equitable service delivery; mechanisms to regulate community participation and consultation;  
and financial penalties for non-compliance with the provisions of the agreement.”

Instead of the above and in total contravention of the Act that established the Agency, the following are some of the responses to questions we have been asking to the honourable Minister of social development:

- The total potential loss over the last ten years is projected at R536 683 179.12. Some of the cases are not yet finalised to come to the full determination of the actual loss.
- R215 million in potential loss in 2018-19 and R109m in 2013-14.
- 82 084 Sassa cards were stolen in the past five years and R23 million was stolen from the cards since 2018.

The questions yielding these responses are triggered by enquiries we are fielding as members of the portfolio committee, from applicants and beneficiaries of social grants who, after not receiving their grants on published dates, have had to endure long queues repeated over days as they are not assisted for one reason or another.

The chaos that has accompanied grant payments in South Africa over at least ten years shows that the Department and SASSA have not learnt any lessons from the series of lapses in the grant payment system.

Chairperson, serious observations and possible solutions have come from civil society, the opposition parties like the Democratic Alliance and all these have fallen on deaf ears. Today's debate is a direct and desperate attempt to seek measures that will save the lives and livelihoods of beneficiaries who are on the receiving end of daily closures of Post Offices. The measure we continue to bring to the table is the institutionalisation of the grant payment system in South Africa. The legislation that established the agency is clear on this matter. I don't have time in this debate to recount the challenges that have had dire effects on individuals and families who are recipients and beneficiaries of social grant.

It is sufficient to state that the legislation, for the most part has not been adhered to and the result of that is the mayhem experienced by people who, by category are vulnerable and should be protected from further vulnerability from a government they installed to govern them.

In a February portfolio committee meeting SASSA officials themselves told MPs that SAPO had failed to provide dignified services, adequate equipment to comply with norms and standards, and adhere to a payment schedule time.

This is a direct contravention of the SASSA Act and is a clear but disturbing demonstration of SASSA throwing their hands in the air about their failures to deliver on their constitutional mandate to, “act, eventually as the sole agent that will ensure the efficient and effective management, administration and payment of social assistance”.

It is very concerning and frustrating to have to hear about how SAPO or Postbank are not doing their work. The beneficiaries did not apply to SAPO or Postbank for social grants, they applied to SASSA, the agency set up by an act of Parliament to pay grants.

It is for this reason that as the Democratic Alliance, we call upon the Department of Social Development to consider, without delay, putting systems in place to institutionalise the payment of grants as outlined in the SASSA Act as the partnering with other entities, also in the Act, has proven to be ineffective and a source of indignity and dishonour for many millions of South Africans.

The Democratic Alliance will ensure that it institutionalises the grant payment system when it governs in 2024.

Thank you