

The desperately needed relief measures, including expanding the zero-VAT-rated food basket, that government should take immediately to alleviate the negative impact of the inflating cost-of-living crisis on South African households

Honourable Chairperson, one doesn't have to look far to find the devastating impact of the crippling cost-of-living crisis in South Africa. According to the Eastern Cape provincial office of the South African Human Rights Commission's August 2022 inquiry into child malnutrition and the right to food, child malnutrition in the Eastern Cape should be declared a disaster in terms of the Disaster Management Act and government should intervene immediately and decisively.

As part of this urgent and chilling call, the inquiry affirms the repeated calls by the Democratic Alliance for the Department of Social Development to increase the child support grant above the poverty line. The DA supports the SAHRC's call for the Departments of Social Development and Home Affairs to collaborate on a registration campaign targeting unregistered children.

Chairperson, these calls should not come out of reports by the SAHRC because they are at the centre of the Department's core mandate. If the Department is not doing the above, what is it doing?

Chairperson, as far back as 2016 and beyond, the Democratic Alliance has been calling for demonstrable reforms to avoid the crisis we are now experiencing as a country. A country like South Africa, which my colleague Dr Dion George referred to recently as a rich country with a government that is mismanaging its resources, should not have

- 81% of its households skipping at least one meal a day;
- 27% of children stunted in their development; or
- millions of hungry school children not being able to concentrate and learn.

These children who are our future. This government should invest in them to be the best they can be.

Chairperson, researchers and economists agree with the Democratic Alliance that the social cost of ignoring this crisis will far outweigh the cost of intervening to bring relief.

It should be clear to everyone that although some interventions will cost the fiscus directly, the indirect cost in terms of productivity losses, learning losses, the cost of dealing with diet-related diseases will cost South Africa more.

So why is it that the uncaring ANC government has simply ignored our thoroughly researched, implementable and tangible solutions. The hunger crisis is deepening, it is urgent, and it is ravaging to the most poor and vulnerable, leaving a trail of devastation throughout the country, especially in remote rural areas.

The ANC government has neither considered our solutions nor come up with its own. The lack of care and a diminishing political will has become the ANC's hallmark.

Covid-19, drought, floods and other unpreventable disasters that the country went through made the resulting challenges such as unemployment and homelessness worse, but these have not been matched by a sense of urgency in coming up with tangible and implementable reforms from the side of the ANC government.

In the wake of Covid-19, governments around the world responded swiftly with bold relief packages because they know it is in everyone's best interest. Not the ANC government.

Honourable Chairperson, the right to food and life is enshrined in South Africa's Constitution. The DA will not let up until South Africa's cost of living crisis is addressed. This is because the DA cares, and we have the solutions to prove it.

South Africans can look forward to their best interest being prioritised in 2024 when the DA governs this country with care, respect, honour, and dignity.

Thank you, Chairperson.