

Speech by Hon H I Bogopane-Zulu (MP), Deputy Minister of Social Development Budget Vote 19

16 Jul 2014

House Chair, Honourable Minister, Honourable Members, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

“As each has received a gift, employ it in serving one another, as good managers of the Grace of God in its various forms (1 Peter 4:10)

For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve others and to give His life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45)

President Zuma in the State of the Nation Address delivered on 25 May 2014, committed this term of office to radical socio-economic transformation to push back the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment which continue to affect the lives of many of our people.

This reminded me of the words of the former Minister of Social Development, Mr Zola Skweyiya, when he reflected that “the paradigm shift from a welfarist to a social development perspective is premised on the notion that people are the masters of their own destiny and, instead of helping the poor in the traditional way with handouts, it moves on to the development and empowerment of individuals, groups and communities, teaching them to be self-reliant”.

In the ten years following the release of the Social Development Integrated Service Delivery Model, in the words of Paulo Freire, we need to ask ourselves whether we have simply „walked over the words’, or whether we indeed managed to „grasp the soul of them’?

Radical socio-economic transformation requires that we, individually and collectively, grasp the soul of the social development perspective if we are to break the chains of poverty, inequality and unemployment.

It requires of each and every-one of us to interrogate the manner in which we deliver services, the manner in which we "care", how we target interventions, who we partner with, and how we advocate for the rights of children, young people, persons with disabilities, women and older persons.

Chairperson,

Allow me to extend a special word of welcome to my mother, Ma Poppie, who is with us in the House today.

Not only did she have to contend with being a black rural woman in apartheid South Africa, but she had to survive eking out a living as an unemployed woman in a rural village in the then Bophuthatswana Bantustan.

Added to this was giving birth to a baby-girl with a disability in 1971, at a time when there was no information and no services available on how to parent a disabled child in Phokeng, where disability was linked to witchcraft. This dictated the community response and interaction with our family henceforth.

Ma, but thanks to your dedication, your I don“t give up“ attitude and your willingness to " sacrifice", you actioned the soul of Ellen Goodman's words when she said, “The central struggle of parenthood is to let our hopes for our children outweigh our fears.”

I also wish to pay tribute to my father, who stood by his family in these early years, and I challenge all fathers to remain active in their children's lives, whether disabled or not.

Ma, I can but only imagine the extent of your anguish on your journey back home after you left me alone as an 8 year old at a special school far away from home.

I want say thank you, and thank you once more.

In 1990, when I gave birth to Kealeboga, who was born blind, I was a teenage single mother forced to drop out of school. I still had, similar to my mother, very little access to information or support services to guide me in bringing up my daughter in Phokeng, but I had self-knowledge of growing up as a blind child, which enabled me to seek information and resources, albeit it at high cost at times.

By 2003, almost ten years into democracy, Zanele was born with the same disability. There was a visible change in the attitude of nurses, neighbours and family to the birth of Zanele. I was now married, a Member of Parliament and we lived in an urban centre. Service-related information was available at the click of a button through the internet, but this of course required computer access and literacy. I suddenly had choices of whether to enrol Zanele in an inclusive or special early childhood development programme and school.

This right to choice for what I deemed to be in the best interest of my child, was as a direct result of the policies of the African National Congress-led government, which took decision in 1994 that persons with disabilities belonged in the communities where their families live.

Honourable Members, I have taken time to illustrate my personal journey as it depicts the progress made over the past twenty years of democracy. It also points us in the direction of action required to accelerate the radical socio-economic transformation agenda.

The economic benefits of investing in children have been extensively documented. Investing fully in children today will ensure the wellbeing and productivity of future generations for decades to come, breaking the vicious cycle of poverty, inequality and unemployment, and declaring a demographic dividend.

Our government has acknowledged this reality and has committed to shift significant resources to early childhood development services.

Our challenge firstly is to guarantee access by putting mechanisms in place to ensure that these services reach every child equally, irrespective of geographic location, disability, health or socio-economic status and/or gender.

Our second challenge is to ensure that we place empowerment of our children at the centre of these programmes. This should include providing them with platforms through which they can represent themselves, thereby giving effect to meaningful child participation.

Empowerment of children is about more than stimulation programmes, it is also about attitudes and relationships as well as life skills.

Chairperson,

Allow me to pay tribute to my Grade 1 teacher, mme ma Shebe, whose guidance and the respect she afforded me, made an indelible imprint on my future.

It is public servants such as mme ma Shebe, who believes in the potential of all children, irrespective of

their disability, gender or health status, who provide us with the platform through which we can achieve the National Development Plan 2030 vision.

I call on all those who work with children, to unlock their potential by tapping into their hopes, creativity and abilities through active engagement.

Our third challenge is to ensure that early childhood development programmes invest in parent empowerment and support, as well as information services to parents. In the words of Eva Feder Kittay in her book *Love's Labor*, "In a just society, mothers of children with disability can mother, and they, their children, and other needed caregivers will be adequately supported".

Honourable Members, The purpose of developmental social services is, among others, to enhance social functioning and human capacities, and to promote social inclusion through empowerment of those who are socially and economically excluded from the mainstream of society.

This places a particular responsibility on the shoulders of every stakeholder involved in community development, to ensure that programmes do not unintentionally discriminate in the extent to which all our citizens have access and are able to participate.

It requires of every duty bearer across the service delivery value chain to

- acknowledge the factors which contribute to exclusion and inequality of outcome;
- put in place measures that remove barriers and which strengthen equitable access and participation;
- ensure that these measures are budgeted for and implemented; and, at the end of the day
- report on the extent to which programme outcomes was equitable for everyone.

Developmental social services also require that we put our individual egos aside and that we compromise for the attainment of our 2030 Vision of reducing inequality, alleviating poverty, creating jobs and fighting unemployment.

It requires that we work together as units, as departments, as spheres of government, social partners, disability organisations, parents organisations, young persons, women and men, persons living with HIV and AIDS, communities, and as leaders.

Chairperson, allow me to thank the corporate sector partners who have, over the years, never failed to heed the call to contribute to the socio-economic development agenda. These are partnerships we value, as they focus on empowering communities, not polishing the egos and pockets of individuals. On behalf of those communities, thank you, realeboga, siyabonga, baie dankie.

Honourable Members,

In conclusion - sustainable and radical socio-economic transformation requires that we focus on

- Breaking access and participation barriers;
- Reducing compounded vulnerability;

- Empowering children, young people, women and men, and persons with disabilities;
- Supporting sustainable independent living in the community for persons with disabilities as well as older persons;
- Strengthening the representative voices of children, young people, persons with disabilities, women and older persons; and
- Building a women, child, youth and disability rights-responsive public service towards the building of a caring, inclusive South Africa.

Our Constitution, together with the international human rights treaties ratified by South Africa, provide the guiding words, but it is now up to us to individually and collectively ensure that we do not walk over the words contained in these instruments, but that we give effect to the soul of them.

In the words of the late Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela,
 "It always seems impossible until it's done."

I thank:

- my husband and children for their unwavering support,
- my family for giving me the space to serve,
- the Minister for her leadership in steering this ship forward and a very warm welcome we received,
- the team in my office,
- the DG and officials in the Department,

Working together moving South Africa forward in building a fully inclusive society free from unfair discrimination, inequality, abuse and exploitation.

"Let gratitude be the pillow upon which you kneel to say your nightly prayer.
 And let faith be the bridge you build to overcome evil and welcome good." (Maya Angelou)

Issued by: [Department of Social Development](#)