



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

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Media Statement by the MEC for Human Settlements and Public Works, Hon. Neliswa Peggy Nkonyeni MPL in her capacity as chairperson of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Cluster on Social Protection, Community and Human Development (SPCHD)

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Source: Kiru Naidoo, Ministry of Human Settlements and Public Works, 0829408163

The breakdown in the SASSA payment system for social grants earlier this week was at the top of the agenda of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Cluster on Social Protection, Community and Human Development (SPCHD), which convened on Wednesday.

“The failure to pay the grants on time has caused our elderly and disabled great distress and unnecessary expense. Even though payments are the responsibility of SASSA and not the provincial department of Social Development, as government we must apologise to our people and speedily fix the problem,” said the chairperson Neliswa Peggy Nkonyeni who is also the MEC for Human Settlements and Public Works.

The Social Cluster brings together the MECs responsible for Social Development; Public Works and Human Settlements; Education; Agriculture and Rural Development; Health; Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs; Arts, Culture, Sports and Recreation together with their senior officials. During the COVID-19 state of disaster, its proceedings and decisions are reported to the Provincial Command Council chaired by Premier Sihle Zikalala.

Nkonyeni added that the cluster concept takes government departments out of silos and mobilises government resources more efficiently. The overall framework to speed up service delivery is the District Development Model launched by President Cyril Ramaphosa last September in KwaMashu. The President visited KwaZulu-Natal on Tuesday to inspect quarantine facilities and receive reports on the COVID-19 response.

Senior SASSA officials were forced to account for the payment delays and indicate the steps they were taking to prevent a recurrence. “As MECs, we are at the coalface in our champion districts and our people expect us to have answers. It is simply unacceptable to be told that cash transit vehicles had broken down or that data was not extracted for the payment.” Nkonyeni said that her fellow MECs in the cluster had demanded consequence management and would ask Premier Zikalala to raise the matter in the National Command Council.

There are almost 4 million grant payments in KwaZulu-Natal to 2.7 million beneficiaries of which 726998 are old age pensioners. Disabled people comprise 8% of social grants. The bulk of the payments are in child support grants reaching 1.6 million. Over R3.2 billion is paid out by SASSA in KwaZulu-Natal each month.

Concerns were also expressed about the rollout of R350 grant announced by the President for people in distress. The cluster was informed that the national department was still busy with the process and that a timetable would be announced in due course. “We can be in no doubt that a large number of our people are in a desperate situation and any relief we can provide has to be speeded up,” added Nkonyeni.

MEC for Health, Nomagugu Simelane-Zulu informed the meeting that over 1.8 million people had been screened in the Province while 32000 have been tested for COVID-19. Further details are in the regular updates from the Department of Health.

TRANSNET’s Phelophepa health train is also headed to the Province from Mpumalanga where it is presently stationed. The train is expected on 18 May but could be in the Province as soon as Monday next week. It has state-of-the-art medical facilities and skilled personnel on board and will complement healthcare services offered by the Province.

Another item presented to the cluster was the Human Settlements Sanitisation Programme whose focus is mainly informal settlements. Nkonyeni said that its proposals to supply households with sanitisation and hygiene items will be tabled on Friday at the Provincial Command Council for approval. “We must also ensure that we reach community residential units or hostels and farms with these interventions,” added Nkonyeni.

Individual departments in the cluster tabled Post-COVID 19 socio-economic recovery plans which are presently in draft form. The chairperson said that it was important to be thinking beyond the current crisis to get the country back on its feet.

Ends