



GAUTENG PROVINCE

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT

TO: ALL MEDIA

ATTENTION: NEWS EDITORS

DATE: 14 FEBRUARY 2024

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE "CALL FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AS 13 SENIOR OFFICIALS ARE SUSPENDED" BY DA MPL REFILOE NT'SEKHE ON THE ONGOING INVESTIGATIONS.

The Gauteng Department of Social Development notes with great disappointment the statement by DA MPL Refiloe Nt'sekhe, who reveals a lack of comprehension for the totality of content in the reports before her.

The Department confirms that the Gauteng City Region Urban Poverty and Elimination Strategy remains the lodestar pillar in driving the provincial elevated priority of eliminating poverty and inequality for the poor and vulnerable citizens in the province.

To this end, an array of food security programmes which are not only limited to food within our food banks are being implemented.

Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) are tasked with the care and aid of the elderly, HIV/Aids patients, the homeless and indigent through our Community Nutrition and Development Centres (CNDCs) as well as our Drop in Centres.

These NPOs provide daily nutritious warm meals and food parcels in line with our approved dietary standards to these beneficiaries.

While these facts are laid bare in the reports, Member Nt'seke deliberately applied selective memory to drive a political agenda by falsely claiming that the vulnerable groups were left without food.

Steadfast to its commitment to the vulnerable groups, the Department of Social Development and the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment embarked on a food expansion programme which saw the establishment of backyard gardens and the provision of food for the needy in December 2023.

On the food banks, it was indicated to the Portfolio Committee of which Ms Nt'seke is a member, that following the recent Stats SA data which revealed growing poverty and unemployment levels in the province and country, the Department took a strategic decision to alter the specifications in the food parcel tender to also include the supply of seeds for beneficiaries to be self-sustainable and upskilled.

This necessary change is premised on the fact that whilst the Department has been providing food parcels to many for years, their socioeconomic status has not changed, evident in the StatsSA data.

This is largely due to the fact that the Department can only provide each household food parcels for a period of three months and is compelled to move on to the next set of families due to the large demand.

By integrating seeds within the food parcel for planting, it will enable our beneficiaries to have sustainable means to eradicate poverty.

This strategy migrates our beneficiaries from the phenomenon of handouts to hand ups, thereby restoring their dignity.

The Department remains committed to sustainable development and will ensure the revised tender process is concluded speedily in order to refill our food banks. In the meantime, our NPOs will continue to ensure that the vulnerable are taken care of and food is further procured through a deviation in line with financial prescripts.

ON THE SUSPENSION OF OFFICIALS

It's further disappointing for Ms Nt'seke to claim that the Department lied in stating that four officials were placed on precautionary suspensions, when referring to a media statement we issued over a month ago.

At the time the statement was issued, the Department relied on the then status update available on precautionary suspensions. However, as the investigation progresses, more individuals were added.

Currently, the Department will not divulge any further information on suspensions pending finalisation of the investigations.

More importantly, we are pleased to inform the public that measures have been put in place to ensure that the suspensions will not compromise service delivery.

The Department remains committed to good and ethical governance and believes that the investigation will eradicate malpractice and ensure that funding is directed to hard working and committed NPOs who share its vision of developing this great province.

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Issued by the Gauteng Department of Social Development

For Media Enquiries, Members of the Media May contact Mr. Themba Gadebe, Office of the MEC of Gauteng Department of Social Development, Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment on 081 522 6616.