



LIMPOPO

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



Budget Speech 2026/27

A Caring and Self-Reliant Society

**2026/27 FINANCIAL YEAR BUDGET VOTE SPEECH
FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT – VOTE 12**



**DELIVERED BY THE MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE
COUNCIL,**

Ms FLORENCE RADZILANI

TO THE LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE

14 MAY 2026

A Caring and Self-Reliant Society

Honourable Speaker and Deputy Speaker
Honourable Premier, Dr Phophi Ramathuba
Esteemed Members of the Executive Council
The Chief Whip of the governing party
Leaders of the opposition parties
Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee
Honourable Members of the Legislature
Members of the media,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen
The people of Limpopo
A blessed Morning to you All

The Department of Social Development is riding a new tide of change which I am proud to affirm today during this occasion. What was once a steady current - has now become a powerful wave propelling us forward. Our collective efforts have set us on a trajectory where social justice, protection and empowerment are no longer just aspirations but tangible realities for every citizen. Faced with the colossal mandate of caring for the needs and upholding the rights of our most vulnerable members of society, we have stood unrelenting marching gallantly forward, undeterred by the storms that once threatened to overshadow our path.

Let me take this immense opportunity, on the special occasion of tabling budget vote no 12 for Department of Social Development, to dedicate it to the frontline workers who serves as the vanguards of building a comprehensive and caring society for the vulnerables; the torchbearers of hope for the downtrodden and destitutes who benefits to the services of our department, most notably at the month country and the world marks significance of worker's contribution towards emancipatory struggles.

I also want to table this budget vote caring the hopes of our people, with highest honour, to specially dedicate this vote once more to the daughter of the soil, revered commissar, trailblazer of struggle against injustice and racial dominance, a nation builder who did not

A Caring and Self-Reliant Society

only fought for freedom and democracy but played a major role building people's government, I talk of Manana Happy Joyce Mashamba, who played a major role in this august house, amongst other served as the deputy Speaker and MEC for Social Development to mention few.

Inspired by the spirit of our glorious movement, and driven by the unwavering resolve of our people, we have turned the tide. What was once a brief moment of doubt and gloom has now given way to renewed vigor, an invigorated spirit that propels us ever forward, eager to fulfill our sacred duty with renewed strength and purpose. Today, we stand resilient, proud and ready to forge a brighter future, because we are on the rise, and nothing shall stop us from serving our people with dignity, compassion and unwavering commitment.

Honourable Speaker

For many years, our department has operated under challenging circumstances, including depleted staff complements, with the majority of our strategic senior positions, including the Head of Department, filled on an acting basis. We are no longer a department operating with a skeleton crew. We now have a near-complete senior management team, led by our recently appointed Head of the Department, Ms. Thembeni Elphie Mhlongo.

Thanks to her leadership and the capable team she has assembled, we have begun turning the tide. The department is now on the rise, and our service delivery indicators are being refined and improved consistently. This transformation could not have been achieved without the unwavering support and leadership of our Premier, Dr. Phophi Ramathuba. Premier, your commitment and support in this journey of staffing and strengthening our department has been truly invaluable and we thank you sincerely.

I am also delighted to highlight that our department has achieved a significant milestone in gender equity within the Senior Management Service. Currently, women occupy 55 percent of SMS positions, totaling 16 out of 29 posts. This is a testament to our

commitment to creating an inclusive and representative leadership. No women, No revolution, in this quest to empower and transform plight of women, we derive courage from the words of Thomas Sankara, when he said “ the genuine liberation of women is the one that entrusts them with responsibilities, that involves them in productive activity and in different fights our people face”.

Honourable Speaker

Beyond staffing, our department remains deeply committed to the health and well-being of our employees. We recognize that our social workers and staff are exposed to secondary traumatic incidences daily, which can take a toll on their emotional and mental health. To support them, we have created a caring environment where employees can receive prompt psychosocial support. Since 1 of September 2025, we introduced a comprehensive clinical service including counselling and debriefing based on the critical incident stress management model. To date, 26 employees have accessed these services, with 35 follow-up sessions conducted, ensuring that those affected receive the necessary support within prescribed time frames.

Honourable Members,

For many years, our department has operated with a compromised and diminished identity. We lacked our own independent offices, sharing space with the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture. While we are deeply grateful for the hospitality and generosity extended by our sister department providing us with office space, this arrangement has inadvertently affected our image and a sense of identity. It has fueled unwarranted perceptions that we are a small or subordinate department, which is far from the truth.

Recognizing this, we embarked on an intensive engagement with the provincial executive to secure our own offices, an important step toward reclaiming our identity and dignity. Today, I am proud to announce that, through the support and approval of Premier Dr. Phophi Ramathuba, we have acquired new office spaces for our head office and Capricorn District staff.

A Caring and Self-Reliant Society

It is with immense pride and humility that I also share a special moment: our new head office, located at 76 Schoeman Street in Polokwane, will be named after one of our greatest heroines Mme Happy Joyce Mashamba whose legacy is etched into the fabric of our history as already alluded to.

Honourable Speaker

We have invited her family to be part of this historic occasion, to witness and celebrate the official announcement of naming the new head office in honour of their beloved mother and wife to our veteran leader, Oom George Mashamba. This is more than just a name; it is a symbol of our commitment to service excellence, inspired by her legacy. Our pledge is clear: the services delivered from the Joyce Mashamba building must be fit for purpose, efficient, effective and of the highest standard. We will not dishonour her memory by providing substandard service.

Furthermore, the Capricorn District will be relocating to 78 Hans van Rensburg Street, where we trust that with these improved facilities, our service delivery will be more streamlined and impactful. I am pleased to further announce that we have already commenced occupancy of the two buildings. Our transition is proceeding in phases, with the remaining staff scheduled to relocate by June. The landlords are currently finalizing renovations to ensure the spaces better suit our needs.

Honourable Speaker

The Department has taken a monumental leap forward in leveraging technology to enhance our service delivery across the province. This significant progress was made possible through the generous donation from Vodacom, a leading technology company, which provided our dedicated social workers and community development practitioners in the Sekhukhune district with 100 tablets and data packages. In the past, these vital officials had to rely on manual data capturing, often facing delays and inefficiencies that hindered their ability to serve the community promptly. With these new gadgets, their work is set to be transformed enabling them to operate more efficiently, respond swiftly to the

needs of our people and deliver professional and timely support. This advancement underscores our commitment to empowering those on the frontlines of social development, ensuring that our communities receive the quality care and attention they deserve.

Honourable Speaker

At the heart of our strategic vision lies the enduring National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF), which continues to serve as the cornerstone of our comprehensive response to one of our nation's most urgent social crises. This plan calls for a harmonized, multi-sectoral approach, one that bolsters prevention, enhances protection and amplifies support for survivors, while holding perpetrators accountable.

Guided by its pillars, our budget prioritizes bold investments in community-based programmes, awareness campaigns and the expansion of safe spaces recognising that sustainable transformation demands both immediate action and profound cultural change. Our allocations this year will elevate survivor-centred services and deepen partnerships with grassroots civil society organisations that serve as the vanguards of advocacy and change.

We are pleased to acknowledge the generous donation of a vehicle from CARA to Khuseleka One Stop Centre, which will facilitate the transportation of our beneficiaries to court and other essential service centres. Additionally, we express our sincere gratitude to MTN for their contribution of a state-of-the-art computer laboratory, enabling our beneficiaries at Khuseleka One Stop Centre to access online training programmes aimed at enhancing their skills and improving their quality of life.

We developed the Social Welfare Services Ethics Protocol, ensuring that all social service professionals uphold the highest standards of conduct, thereby safeguarding the integrity of our service delivery. We capacitated officials through targeted training, filled vital social work supervisor posts, and crafted the Provincial Supervision Guideline standardising supervision practices to guarantee competent, compassionate and professional social work that truly serves the best interests of our communities.

A Caring and Self-Reliant Society

Honourable Speaker

In the past year, our department took decisive action to address the critical issue of unregistered facilities that posed significant risks to vulnerable populations. We successfully closed several such facilities which we mentioned in this august house. With the invaluable support of affected municipalities and other government departments, we ensured the safe removal of beneficiaries, reuniting many with their families and referring others to registered, compliant facilities where they could receive the care and protection they deserve.

Recognizing that closing facilities alone is not enough, we are committed to building sustainable solutions. To this end, we continue to capacitate some of the identified unregistered facilities, providing them with the necessary support and guidance to meet the required Norms and Standards.

Additionally, we have developed a Provincial Guideline on the Management of Unregistered Facilities, which clearly outlines the procedures to be followed when closing such facilities ensuring that all actions are taken responsibly, ethically and in the best interests of the vulnerable individuals affected.

Honourable Speaker

In our recognition of the invaluable contributions of our elderly citizens whose wisdom and experience form the cornerstone of our society, we have dedicated ourselves to ensuring they receive the care, protection and support they so richly deserve. This commitment is vividly reflected in our ongoing efforts to expand both residential and community-based care facilities, creating spaces where our elders can live with comfort, respect and purpose.

For the financial year 2026/2027, we have allocated a robust R188.5 million to support older people across seven private residential facilities and numerous community-based care and support centres. This budget also includes funding for a dedicated government-

run residential facility, which serves 120 of our cherished elders, offering them a haven of safety and specialized care.

Honourable Speaker

To date, more than 531 older persons have found refuge and dignity within our residential facilities, each one receiving the tailored care they require to live with comfort and respect. Beyond these institutions, over 14,700 elders benefit from our vibrant community-based centres hubs of hope, health and social engagement. These centres deliver essential services such as prevention programmes, active aging initiatives, therapeutic interventions, rehabilitation and after-care services ensuring our elders remain active, valued and connected.

We are committed to intensifying our registration drive, expanding access and uplifting the standards of care. To date, we have registered 27 new community-based centres, broadening the reach of our support within communities and ensuring that no elder person is left behind. Furthermore, to guarantee the sustainability and effectiveness of these vital services, we are currently funding eight residential facilities, 183 community-based care centres and two provincial councils.

Honourable Speaker,

Our commitment to enhancing care and support for our esteemed older persons remains at the heart of our vision. We are dedicated to building a society where dignity, safety and fulfilment are not just ideals but lived realities for our elders. To this end, we will continue to implement and expand capacity-building programmes on the Older Persons Abuse Register (OPAR), having already capacitated seventy-five officials (75) who are now better equipped to protect and advocate for our seniors. In line with our steadfast goal of promoting active aging, we launched the vibrant Golden Games in June and July of 2025 an inspiring initiative that traversed all local municipalities, culminating at the district and provincial levels. Over a thousand older persons, alongside key stakeholders and community leaders, participated in these festivities, celebrating vitality, camaraderie and com-

A Caring and Self-Reliant Society

munity spirit.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The Department of Social Development remains resolutely committed to upholding the rights, dignity and well-being of persons with disabilities. We recognize that every individual, regardless of their physical or cognitive challenges, deserves access to care, protection and opportunities to thrive. As of the end of the third quarter of the 2025/26 financial year, we have proudly supported 284 persons with disabilities in accessing residential facilities sanctuaries of safety and specialized care. Furthermore, nearly 4,000 individuals have participated in protective workshops, inclusive environments designed to foster skills development, independence and economic empowerment.

Honourable Speaker

Thanks to sustained advocacy and targeted initiatives, there has been a remarkable increase in the number of persons with disabilities accessing a broader spectrum of social development services. This progress signifies a vital step toward an inclusive society that values diversity and promotes equal opportunity. To support this vital work, we have allocated over R245.9 million funding to sustain 111 protective workshops, six provincial councils, three residential facilities and 29 stimulation centres. These centres are specialized hubs dedicated to children with developmental or cognitive impairments, providing a comprehensive array of activities and therapies to enhance sensory, motor, cognitive and social skills.

Honourable Speaker

To further strengthen services in our residential facilities, additional R8 million has been allocated for Shiluvana Frail Care Centre for the planning phase of the new building. Over the years the Department has been grappling with the conditions at this facility. The current allocations of funds is a demonstration of the will of this government to protect the rights of the frail people of our province and country.

The services provided at Shiluvana are so critical that we had to work twice as hard to arrive at this phase of addressing the difficulties permanently. This is another indication of the Department of Social development which is indeed on the rise. The Department of Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure has already been engaged to provide technical support and related administrative assistance.


Honourable Speaker

To raise awareness and foster inclusion, we hosted a series of vibrant Disability Fun Day events during the Disability Rights Awareness Month in November last year where over 500 beneficiaries engaged in activities that celebrated their resilience and potential. Building on this momentum, the Provincial Fun Day held in December 2025 reached over 250 persons with disabilities, together with key stakeholders, further strengthening community bonds and understanding.

Honourable Speaker

In our ongoing fight against HIV and AIDS, our department continues to collaborate effectively with funded Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs) to implement critical social and behaviour change programs aimed at preventing the spread of HIV, STIs and tuberculosis (TB). By the end of the third quarter of 2025/26, we had trained a total of 722 implementers who delivered these vital programs to over 100,000 (100 067) beneficiaries.

Furthermore, almost 18,000 (17, 999) individuals received psychosocial support, underscoring our holistic approach to care and community resilience. To support our most vulnerable children, we allocated R135.4 million, channeled through 13 NPOs providing social and behaviour change initiatives, as well as funding 56 Home and Community-Based Care (HCBC) organizations. These resources have enabled us to procure food parcels, school uniforms and other essentials for vulnerable families, reaffirming our dedication to improving their quality of life.



In addition, we are investing in the future of our youth. Through partnerships with SANAC and ARCH, we have launched comprehensive skills development programs across five Community Care Centres in the province. These programs expose children and young adults to diverse career paths, further education opportunities and vital life skills.

To date, 638 young people have received certificates, 30 in hard skills such as property maintenance and sustainable farming and 608 in soft skills like career guidance, life coaching and entrepreneurship. Currently, 75 youths are undergoing a cell phone repair training program in our centres, equipping them with practical skills to enter the workforce confidently.

Honourable Speaker

During the previous financial year, our department, in collaboration with the National Department of Social Development and Health and Welfare Sector Education and Training Authority (HWSETA), embarked on a vital partnership to recruit and develop caregivers dedicated to strengthening children's services within our Non-Profit Organizations. This collaborative effort has borne fruit and I am proud to announce that 106 learners graduated with their Child and Youth Care Diploma at a ceremony held in February this year.

Looking ahead, the department is committed to recruiting a new group of learners in the current financial year. Our ultimate goal is to enhance their employability and ensure they are fully equipped to serve as qualified Child and Youth Care Workers, agents of hope, healing and positive change in the lives of our children.

Honourable Speaker,

The school uniform programme, which I had the distinct privilege of leading, remains a cornerstone initiative in our efforts to restore dignity and confidence among learners, especially those from economically challenged backgrounds. It is a simple yet profoundly powerful intervention one that allows children to focus on their education without the burden of disparities in appearance caused by financial hardship. One of the most valuable



A Caring and Self-Reliant Society

lessons we have learned from this programme is the transformative power of collaboration. Our partnership with the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) has been instrumental in reaching vulnerable communities across all five districts.

Their extensive outreach experience, combined with our collective dedication, ensured the successful rollout of the programme, reaffirming our shared commitment to fostering equity and opportunity for every child.

Honourable Speaker

SOCIAL RELIEF OF DISTRESS

Our department has continued to respond swiftly and effectively to the emergency needs arising from disasters and other adverse social conditions, which often result in undue hardship for our citizens. The recent devastating floods which ravaged our province and among others left families destitute and vulnerable taught us key lessons. Chief among the lessons is that we need to be prepared at all times and respond swiftly to the affected areas and rescue our people.

I must, however, express that we doubled our efforts in responding to the affected areas during the recent disasters and have significantly increased the number of people who benefited from social relief of distress. To date, 11 020 beneficiaries accessed the Department's social relief programmes. Other stakeholders and NPOs partnered with government in providing material assistance required. To this effect for the financial year 2026/2027 we have allocated R1.6 million to assist 9 400 vulnerable families for social relief of distress in this regard.

Honourable Speaker

CARE AND SERVICES TO FAMILIES

Families form the very fabric of our society, a foundation built on love, trust and mutual support. Yet, in our rapidly changing socio-economic landscape, families face a myriad of

A Caring and Self-Reliant Society

challenges that threaten their stability and well-being. These challenges often leave families struggling to provide the nurturing environment and care that every member deserves. Recognising this, our department has championed a paradigm shift in family support services moving away from rescue and deficit-based approaches towards a strengths-based model that empowers families to be resilient, self-reliant, and cohesive. Family preservation services are at the forefront of this transformative approach. They are designed to strengthen the bonds that hold families together, promote healthy relationships and facilitate the healing necessary for families to function optimally.

These services are designed not only to help keep families together whenever possible but also to function as a crucial support system that fosters the growth of children, youth and communities in harmony and resilience. In the past year alone, we successfully reunited 147 family members, reaffirming our commitment to restoring wholeness and stability within families. These efforts are made possible through strong partnerships with 26 Designated Child Protection Organisations, working hand-in-hand to safeguard our most vulnerable.

Honourable Speaker

We recognise that parenting is the cornerstone of resilient families and responsible citizenship. Our budget this year prioritizes the expansion and strengthening of parenting programmes, equipping caregivers with the skills, knowledge, and support they need to raise children in safe, nurturing and stimulating environments. Through these initiatives, we are promoting positive parenting practices, reducing neglect and abuse and fostering stronger family bonds. By investing in family support and parenting development, we are addressing immediate social challenges while laying a solid foundation for a healthier, more cohesive society, one where every family can thrive and every child can reach their full potential.

During the 2025/26 financial year, 26,182 parents benefited from these vital parenting skills programmes, reinforcing our commitment to nurturing resilient families across our province. Looking ahead, to strengthen family preservation services during the 2026/27

A Caring and Self-Reliant Society

financial year, R108.9 million has been allocated to provide 61,200 family members with family preservation services and 30,700 family members with parenting services, further demonstrating our dedication to supporting families and ensuring a brighter future for all.

Honourable Speaker

South Africa's Constitution enshrines the fundamental rights of children, affirming their right to survival, protection and development. It guarantees children's rights to nurturing parental and family care, safeguarding them from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. In this province, we remain steadfast in upholding these rights. Over the past year, a total of 807 vulnerable children in need of care and protection were placed in Child and Youth Care Centres, where they received developmental, therapeutic and recreational services designed to nurture their growth and resilience.

We are also appreciative of the commitment made by FNB to refurbish the Children's (0yrs - 3yrs) facility at the Polokwane Child and Youth care Centre. We are also proud to share that 177 of these children have been successfully reunited with their families as a testament to our dedication to restoring families and ensuring children grow up in safe and loving environments. To protect our children as mandated by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, and the Children's Act 38 of 2005, the Department has budgeted R130.5 million for Child Care and Protection programmes in the 2026/2027 financial year.

Our province currently has 14 registered Child and Youth Care Centres, five operated by the government and nine by private entities, which provide vital residential care to children who are abandoned, orphaned, abused, unaccompanied, separated, or victims of trafficking. These centres serve as safe havens, offering stability and support to the most vulnerable among us. The allocation for the programme in 2026/2027 is R193.2 million. We will, through this allocation, continue to provide care and protection for our children in the 14 Child and Youth Care Centres, ensuring their safety, well-being, and development.

Honourable Speaker

The Partial Care Programme continues to play a crucial role in safeguarding the well-being of our children, especially those with disabilities. It provides structured care, early learning opportunities, and psychosocial support to young children whose parents or guardians are unable to provide full-time supervision due to work or other commitments. Through our targeted budget allocations, we are strengthening the capacity of these facilities to deliver quality nutrition, early education and developmental support, ensuring every child has a nurturing environment in which to thrive.

This year, we are prioritising the registration and compliance of partial care centres across the province. To date, 24 centres have been registered, marking a significant step forward in formalising and elevating the standards of care. By investing in these initiatives, we are not only protecting our children but also empowering families and communities to flourish. Our broader vision is clear: to build a province where every child's right to safety, education, and holistic development is fully respected and realized. Through these concerted efforts, we reaffirm our commitment to safeguarding the future of our children and ensuring that they grow up in environments that nurture their full potential. It is for these reasons that, as a department, we have allocated a total budget of R127.5 million for the Partial Care Programme in the 2026/2027 financial year.

Honourable Speaker,

Community-based prevention and early intervention services lie at the very heart of our strategy to break the cycle of vulnerability before it escalates into crisis. These services bring vital support directly into families and individuals within their own communities, accessible, timely and responsive. Their focus is on strengthening protective factors, promoting resilience, and addressing risks at their earliest stages, thereby creating a foundation for healthier, safer, and more cohesive communities. This year, our budget makes a significant investment in expanding outreach programmes, empowering local organizations, and deepening collaboration with social partners.

These efforts ensure that interventions are tailored to the unique needs of each community, making them more effective and impactful. Through the operation of 397 registered

drop-in centres, we have reached over 41,000 children with a comprehensive range of services, including psychosocial support, child protection, educational assistance, food and nutrition, economic strengthening and HIV/AIDS programmes. These initiatives are vital in preventing the escalation of social issues and fostering a resilient, empowered generation.

For the 2026/2027 financial year, the Department has budgeted R147.5 million to provide community-based prevention and early intervention services to 40,300 orphaned and vulnerable children, reaffirming our commitment to safeguarding their future and strengthening our communities.

Honourable Speaker,

In the realm of crime prevention, our budget prioritizes community-driven strategies that empower citizens to take an active role in safeguarding their neighborhoods. We are expanding youth development programmes, enhancing school safety initiatives and strengthening partnerships with civil society organizations.

By focusing on prevention, we aim to address the root causes of criminal behaviour, reduce the burden on our criminal justice system, and cultivate environments where opportunities for crime are minimized. Social crime prevention remains a cornerstone of our efforts to build safer communities. In 2025/26 financial year we have reached 22,797 individuals through various crime prevention initiatives, each one contributing to a culture of safety and responsibility.

Additionally, young offenders in conflict with the law have access to Secure Care Centres, where 558 individuals have completed diversion programmes focused on rehabilitation and successful reintegration into society. The plan is to reach 28 300 people in 2026/27, with the total budget of R125.6m which includes the running of the two Secure Care Centres. These measures underscore our unwavering commitment to creating a society where safety, opportunity and hope thrive side by side.

Honourable Speaker,

VICTIM EMPOWERMENT

Victim empowerment remains at the heart of our vision for a safer and more compassionate society. Our allocated funding of R98.7 million continues to support trauma support centers, awareness campaigns, and comprehensive training for frontline workers. These initiatives ensure that responses to victims of crime, violence, and abuse are delivered with compassion, professionalism, and efficiency. The department plans to reach 11,420 beneficiaries with psychosocial support services, providing them with essential assistance. Additionally, ninety victims of gender-based violence and other forms of violence will have access to shelter in the 2026/27 financial year. Our Victim Empowerment Programme plays a crucial role in providing psychological, legal, and social support to individuals affected by gender-based violence, domestic violence, human trafficking, and child abuse.

Honourable Speaker,

In his State of the Nation Address (SONA), President Cyril Ramaphosa reaffirmed that Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) is a national crisis requiring urgent, coordinated action across all sectors. He emphasized the need for stronger law enforcement, community mobilisation and expanded support services for survivors, an urgent call to action that echoes across the nation.

Similarly, in her State of the Province Address (SOPA), Limpopo Premier Dr. Phophi Ramathuba declared GBVF a provincial emergency. She committed to strengthening community-based interventions, enhancing survivor support services and fostering tighter collaboration with law enforcement to ensure accountability and justice. These declarations underscore our shared commitment to tackling GBVF head-on.

The challenge now lies in effective implementation ensuring that survivors, whether in rural villages or urban centres, see tangible improvements in protection, justice and sup-

port. Currently, by the end of the third quarter, over 8,120 victims of crime and violence have accessed psychosocial support, with 89 of them receiving shelter a testament to our ongoing efforts to restore hope, dignity and safety to those most vulnerable.

Honourable Speaker

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Substance abuse remains one of the most urgent and complex challenges facing our communities today, undermining health, tearing families apart and threatening the social fabric of our society. Recognizing the profound impact of this issue, R91.8 million is allocated to intensify public education campaigns aimed at raising awareness and fostering prevention. We are also strengthening aftercare programmes to support individuals in their recovery journey and prevent relapse, ensuring that healing is sustainable.

Moreover, we are forging collaborative partnerships with schools, faith-based organisations and healthcare providers to address substance abuse holistically. The department has planned to reach 76,300 people through substance abuse prevention programmes and provide access to substance use disorder treatment services for 550 service users in 2026/27.

By tackling its root causes and providing comprehensive, ongoing support, we are not only saving lives but also restoring hope, productivity and stability within families and communities across our province. In the past year alone, we reached 71 000 individuals through substance abuse prevention programmes, and 287 service users accessed treatment services for substance use disorders. These figures reflect our unwavering commitment to building a society where e

very person has the opportunity for recovery, resilience and a brighter future. In the upcoming year, our Seshego Treatment Centre will introduce outpatient detoxification services. This initiative will enable beneficiaries to receive essential detox support while remaining with their families, thereby fostering a supportive environment for recovery and addressing the challenges associated with substance abuse.

Honourable Speaker

We are pleased to report a significant milestone in our efforts to combat hunger and promote community health. The Community Nutrition Development Centres (CNDCs), which had been temporarily closed during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, have now been successfully reactivated.

In the 2025/2026 financial year, we restored operations in the Waterberg, Mopani and Capricorn Districts. Currently, 10 CNDCs are actively operational across the province, providing vital nutrition and community support services.

Furthermore, by the end of March this year, we successfully restored the remaining eight CNDCs in the Sekhukhune and Vhembe districts. As a result, a total of 18 CNDCs are now fully operational across the province. This achievement marks a significant milestone in our ongoing efforts to combat poverty and improve nutrition. To bolster this vital initiative, the Department has allocated R8,818 million, demonstrating our unwavering commitment to strengthening community-based nutrition programs and fostering sustainable development.

This programme is set to create 108 sustainable jobs over the next three years, empowering local communities through meaningful employment. Additionally, approximately 3,800 community members will participate in the CNDCs, not merely as beneficiaries of nutritious meals but as active participants in life skills and empowerment initiatives. These programmes will equip participants with essential knowledge and competencies, enabling them to sustainably exit the programme and improve their livelihoods.

HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMME

To effect meaningful change, we are targeting the most vulnerable households, those in dire need of support to produce their own food and generate income for sustenance. For this purpose, we have allocated R6 million to empower change agents, community champions who support local food security initiatives and create employment opportunities

within their communities.

In 2026/2027, we plan to mobilize and train 3,150 change agents. These dedicated individuals will serve as catalysts for community-driven development, fostering resilience and self-sufficiency. To ensure no household goes hungry, we will continue providing critical support through the procurement of agricultural inputs and food production equipment. Our vision is that, where feasible, every household across the province should have a backyard garden, transforming small spaces into sources of fresh, nutritious food. To realize this vision, R5.836 million has been allocated to support 7,250 households in establishing and maintaining food gardens, thus enhancing household food security and income generation.

SUPPORT FOR COOPERATIVES AND JOB CREATION

Recognizing that cooperatives are powerful engines for economic participation beyond mere subsistence, the Department remains committed to nurturing these collective enterprises. Cooperatives serve as vital platforms for community engagement, employment and local economic development. In the 2026/27 financial year, we plan to provide both financial and non-monetary support to 30 cooperatives that have previously been funded, linking them to new economic opportunities.

A dedicated budget of R2.806 million has been set aside for cooperative support, reinforcing our commitment to fostering vibrant, self-sustaining cooperatives that can contribute meaningfully to the local economy and most importantly to the realization of a developmental state typically characterized by its active, planned intervention in the economy towards industrialization and social development, as envisaged in the national development plan.

LINKING SOCIAL PROTECTION BENEFICIARIES TO ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

In our pursuit of a caring and self-reliant society, we recognize the importance of integrating social protection initiatives with economic empowerment. The Child Support Grant, a

cornerstone of our social safety net, will now serve as a steppingstone toward sustainable livelihoods. In 2026/2027 financial year, we plan to engage 1,040 Child Support Grant beneficiaries in skills development and empowerment programmes. By equipping these vulnerable individuals with entrepreneurial skills, work readiness, and access to economic opportunities, we aim to facilitate their transition from dependency to self-sufficiency, fostering resilience within their communities.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

The socio-economic landscape demands a proactive approach to youth development. To this end, the Department has already delivered 846 accredited skills development programmes exceeding our annual target of 650 covering critical sectors such as cybersecurity, agriculture, automotive engineering, climate-smart farming, beauty therapy, and welding. These initiatives are designed to address escalating unemployment, poverty and socio-economic challenges faced by our youth. Building on this momentum, the Department remains committed to training at least seven hundred youth during the 2026/2027 financial year, equipping them with market-ready skills and expanding their employment and entrepreneurial prospects.

Honourable speaker

ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Supporting young entrepreneurs is at the core of our economic growth strategy. In the current financial year, we enrolled 6,578 youth in various entrepreneurship development programmes surpassing our target of 6,100. These programmes include bricklaying, business start-up and marketing, digital literacy, agro-processing and other vital skills. This focus on youth entrepreneurship not only reduces vulnerability and poverty but also cultivates sustainable livelihoods.

The department's investment of R14 million in youth development, channeled through partnerships with entities like the Vaal University of Technology and the National Youth

Development Agency (NYDA), has already yielded tangible results. For instance, 26 youth have been trained in cellphone repairs under MERSETA accreditation, with ongoing mentorship and business support to ensure their successful entry into the market. During 2026/2027 financial year, we plan to expand training opportunities further, especially in vocational skills such as nail therapy and make-up artistry skills that will empower youth to participate actively in the mainstream economy.

WOMEN DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

To empower women and address pockets of poverty, the Department has allocated R4 million towards women empowerment programmes. In the past year, 17,265 women participated in initiatives ranging from crop and livestock farming to marketing, pricing, financial management and production. These programmes aim to enhance women's skills, bolster their economic independence, and foster community resilience.

In this financial year, we intend to support an additional 17,200 women with empowerment initiatives designed to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to confront current challenges and seize economic opportunities.

Honourable Speaker

I therefore present the 2026/2027 budget allocations as follows:

Programme 1: Administration is allocated R501.717 million.

Programme 2: Social Welfare Services is allocated R635.472 million.

Programme 3: Children and Families is allocated R753.734 million.

Programme 4: Restorative Services is allocated R323.814 million.

Programme 5: Development Research is allocated R261.176 million.

These allocations therefore make the total budget of our department, R2, 475.913 billion


PROGRAMME	BUDGET	% OF TOTAL BUDGET
Programme 1: Administration	R501.717 million	20.26%
Programme 2: Social Welfare Services	R635.472million	25.67%
Programme 3: Children and Families	R753.734 million	30.44%
Programme 4: Restorative Services	R323.814 million	13.08%
Programme 5: Development Research	R261.176 million	10.55%
TOTAL	R2, 475.913 billion	100%

We have now entered a new era, an era defined by delivery and unwavering accountability. The fundamental objective of the Department of Social Development is to improve the lives of our most vulnerable members of society; these are the people we cannot afford to fail. Embracing accountability means that any failure to deliver on our core mandates should result in high-level consequences, so that we can maintain the trust and integrity that are the foundation of our department.

We are committed to diligently contributing to and delivering on the priorities outlined in our Medium-Term Strategic Framework that are crucial for improving the living conditions of the most vulnerable: building growth and job creation, reducing poverty and the high cost of living, and building a capable, ethical, and developmental state.

We are encouraged to lead our people towards the greater good, towards the renewal of pledges and affinity that affirm our humanity and dignity. Actions towards the greater good and solidarity are central to the mandate and the vision of the ANC electoral manifesto which endeavours to contribute to the strengthening of our comprehensive social security system to reduce poverty, vulnerability, social exclusion and inequality through social assistance as well as preventing vulnerability and destitution as a result of the loss of income through social insurance for workers.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the Head of the Department, Ms. Thembeni Elphie Mhlongo, for her shrewd and meticulous leadership in administration, who together with her staff contributed immensely to turning the tide in the department.



I also wish to extend my sincere gratitude to the Portfolio Committee of our department, headed by our Chairperson, Honourable Simon Mathe, for their consistent and robust engagement aimed at enforcing accountability for the resources entrusted to us in the service of our people.

I would be remiss not to extend my gratitude and appreciation to our Premier, Dr. Phophi Ramathuba, for her invaluable guidance, support, and wisdom, which have played a crucial role in transforming the department and steering us towards our current mode of operation. Additionally, I want to express my sincere gratitude to my colleagues in the provincial executive for their dedication and commitment.

Working together as a collective, guided by the spirit of unity and cooperation, we have been able to navigate challenges and pursue our shared objectives with resolve and purpose. Leading this department is a privilege we do not take for granted, and we recognize that we remain the last line of defense for the vulnerable members of our community. We will spare no effort in realizing their objectives, working tirelessly to achieve the African National Congress's fundamental goal of a better life for all. Our people deserve nothing less, and through this department, we will ensure that this objective becomes a reality,

I thank you