



Province of the  
**EASTERN CAPE**  
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

**POLICY AND BUDGET SPEECH  
TABLED BY**

**HONOURABLE MEC FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT  
MS. B. FANTA**

**AT THE EASTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE**

**2025/26 FINANCIAL YEAR**

*Somlomo Obekekileyo*

*Nkulumbuso yephondo ehloniphekileyo*

*Amalungu Wendlu yoWiso-Mthetho ahloniphekileyo*

*Iinkokheli zendlu yeeNkosi*

*Abefundisi beemvaba ngeemvaba*

*Zidwesha ne Zidwangube, Uluntu lweMpuma Kapa luphela*

*Molweni! Good morning! Goeie more! Dumelang!*

**Honourable speaker** I am honoured to address this house as I deliver the department's first policy speech of the new term of government. The dawn of the seventh administration brings about a new opportunity to accelerate the delivery of comprehensive services aimed at bettering lives of the poor and vulnerable members of society. Additionally, the term offers us a chance to renew our commitment as a caring government in a concerted effort to improve the quality of life of all people through facilitating enabling conditions for their development and protection.

Biblically, the number 7 represents sacrifice, there is no sacrifice without commitment and as government we ought to go above and beyond in ensuring that the promise for a better life for all is realized. Our service delivery must be entrenched in the spirit of selflessness and eagerness to serve our communities. Naturally, our services are designed to intervene at different stages of a person's life cycle, it therefore becomes mandatory for us to ensure our operations are better suited to respond to the needs of our communities.

**Honourable Members**, the recent poll outcomes are a stark reminder of the fact that, the will of the people will always prevail. The outcomes are a clear indication that communities are not happy and therefore we have to properly respond to their needs through innovative approaches and comprehensive strategies. Institutions of a democratic state such as ours must be made to deliver socio- economic empowerment and an improved state of living for the poor and the vulnerable.

As part of the integrated services delivery approach which is at the centre of the district development model, the department will continue to solidify strategic partnerships which are vital to the realization of our mandate. Our seamless relationships with various stakeholders including Non-Profit Organisations extends our reach and improves access to our services. In addressing prevailing social ills, we need to work together inspired by a common patriotism that recognizes the reality that no section of our population can achieve its objectives working in isolation.

**Sihlalo wendlu yowisomthetho**, the ANC led government has a proven track record in changing the lives of our people for the better, improving access to services and has always been at the forefront of inclusive development of the people of the Eastern Cape. That track record has become our cross to bear, it spurs us on to do better and

deliver on the promise for a better life for all. The service delivery outlook I am about to deliver in this house seeks to advance our mission of building a caring society for the benefit of all people of this province particularly the poor, marginalised and vulnerable members of society.

Substance abuse has become a pervasive issue and cuts across social, racial, cultural, religious, language and gender barriers; hence it is referred to as a silent killer. It therefore needs to be confronted with a sense of urgency and decisiveness by all members of our society. This overindulgence in substances further creates a society that is riddled with crime and poverty since people spend all the resources they have on drugs and substances. To turn things around, our focus is on young people by empowering them through skills development and provision of life skills to deal with peer pressure, how to assert themselves, decision making and other pertinent issues in their lives, so that we can create a drug free society.

In accordance with the National Social Sector Lekgotla resolution and the Medium-Term Development Plan for the 7<sup>th</sup> administration, we have adopted the new priorities which are intrinsic to the mandate of social protection: reducing poverty and tackling high cost of living, driving growth and job creation as well as building a capable and ethical state. These priorities will set the foundation for implementing developmental social welfare services. I will now outline our contribution to these priorities.

### **PRIORITY 1 INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND JOB CREATION**

As a department we will continue implementing initiatives aimed at creating and optimizing employment opportunities that are state driven, focusing on unemployed young people, women and Persons with disabilities.

#### **National Youth Service Programme**

Our mandate is inclusive of youth development. therefore, we play a vital role in bringing young people together to take responsibility, foster social cohesion, increase citizen participation, foster respect for equality, encourage diversity, develop skills, and create collective voices in order to address the problems of youth unemployment, inequality, and poverty.

As a sign of commitment to youth development and empowerment, we will appoint **110** National Youth Service Participants.

**The budget set aside is R3. 1 million.**

### **Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and Sustainable Livelihoods**

The Expanded Public Works Programme through the Social Sector and Public Bodies remains an important vehicle for creating a safety net for the poor and vulnerable to curb unemployment and alleviation of poverty. A total of **3,678** work opportunities will be created biased towards the youth, women and Persons with Disabilities.

**The budget set aside is R7. 7 million.**

### **Internship and Learnership Programmes**

Our internship programme is designed to equip unemployed youth with the requisite skills for job preparedness. In the current financial year, we will offer learnerships, internships and work integrated learning opportunities to **110** beneficiaries.

**The budget set aside is R9. 9 million**

## **PRIORITY 2 REDUCE POVERTY AND TACKLE THE HIGH COST OF LIVING**

**Honourable Members:** Children in the Eastern Cape, especially those between the age cohort of 0-18 years face many challenges that have a significant impact on their growth and development. These challenges include, but are not limited to, child poverty, poor nutrition, child abuse, and neglect. This therefore, sounds a clarion call to our government and stakeholders to implement an effective system of developmental childcare and protection, that addresses challenges which impact on families' ability to raise and protect children.

### **Community Based prevention and Early Intervention for Children.**

In promoting the well-being of children against the scourge of abuse, the department in collaboration with NPOs will ensure provision of community-based prevention and early intervention services for **22 545** vulnerable children through funded RISIHA (Tsonga word meaning Resilience) sites. This programme is a first-line response to child protection aimed at creating a safe environment for children on a community scale.

**The budget set aside is R29 011 million.**

### **Family Preservation services**

The Children's Act, 38 of 2005 emphasizes parental responsibilities as central to child welfare services, with reunification services as a key component. In strengthening families, during 2025/26 financial year our focus is to increase interventions by providing a range of family preservation services to **54 244** families. Our interventions for family preservation are anchored on enhancing the capacity of families to take care of their children and family members. This approach will have positive spin offs on improving the moral fibre of our society.

In response to children in need of care and protection requiring residential care programmes, **28** child and youth care centres will be supported, making provision to care for **1 373** children. Key interventions in alternative care for vulnerable children include temporary safe care (lindlezana), foster care, residential care, and adoption.

**The budget set aside is R65. 9 million.**

### **Integrated partial care services for children with disabilities**

In addition, we will collaborate with NPOs to provide partial care services, offering respite care for **870** children with disabilities in funded special day care centers. The Department will further ensure capacity building and support to parents of children with disabilities. This will harness the strengths and capabilities of parents to actively participate in improving the quality of their lives of their children.

**The budget set aside is R 5 million**

**Honourable Members**, in order to maximise and maintain individuals' levels of social functioning, we will render comprehensive restorative services to promote their ability to adapt and adjust to living safely and independently within communities.

### **Substance Abuse Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation**

In line with Goal 1, (Reduce demand through prevention and treatment of substance use) of the Provincial Drug Master Plan, the roll out of prevention and awareness programme on drug abuse will be intensified. Demand reduction interventions will target schools and Institutions of Higher Learning. These programmes will be implemented in partnership with the department of Education and Higher Health. A total of **37** Non-Profit Organizations will be funded to implement prevention and awareness programmes. In addition, to reach more young people the department will use social media platforms to raise awareness on the negative effects of drug abuse.

We will improve access to substance use disorder treatment services by subsidizing indigent service users to access inpatient and outpatient treatment services in private treatment centres.

**The budget set aside is R12. 4 million.**

### **Crime Prevention and Support**

The alarming crime rate in our communities is a cause for concern and fight against crime has become a societal matter. In contributing to the overall government's war on crime, we will implement anti-gang and social crime prevention programs in crime hot spot areas targeting children at-risk and their families. In addition, access to diversion services by children in conflict with the law through implementation of block diversion program (which involves spending five days away from home and overnight) during school holidays will be increased. Diversion programs are designed to empower children and make them accountable for their actions.

Furthermore, therapeutic and vocational skills training to children in conflict with the law awaiting trial and sentenced in child and youth care centers, will be provided. Through this initiative, children in conflict with the law will acquire skills to compete in the open labour market.

**The budget set aside is R2. 9 million.**

### **Victim Empowerment**

As a department we are mandated through the Victim Support Services Policy (November 2019) to lead and coordinate the victim empowerment programme. As such, we will continue to lead Pillar no 4 of the National Strategic Plan on Gender Based Violence and Femicide (NSP GBVF) 2020-2030 (Response, Care, Support and Healing) to ensure that all victims of crime and violence access psychosocial support services aimed at restoring their dignity and preventing secondary victimization. Support services including sheltering, therapeutic services and skills development will be provided to ensure that victims are able to stand on their own instead of depending on abusive partners.

In 2025/26 the department will provide financial support to **161** Non-Profit Organizations to implement gender-based violence prevention programmes as well as care and support services to victims of crime and violence. Support services include safe homes; white door centers of hope; mentorship programmes; advice center.

In addition, we have established three one stop and outreach centers i.e. Kwa-Nobuhle in Nelson Mandela: Maletswai in Joe Gqabi and Ezibeleni in Chris Hani District. The centers provide services to victims of sexual offences, domestic violence, gender-based violence, trafficking in persons and child sexual abuse with special focus on psychosocial support, and trauma counselling.

We will partner with private and business sectors to enhance skills development programmes aimed at gender-based violence survivors to ensure they are economically independent.

**The budget set aside is R36. 1 million.**

### **Social Behaviour Change Programme**

The Social Behaviour Change strategy that we have adopted serves as a mechanism to address complex issues of poverty, inequality and health. In an endeavor to deal with the high incidence of teenage pregnancy in the province, we will implement social behavior change programmes (You only live once (YOLO), Chommy, Community Capacity Enhancement, Men Championing change, Boys Championing Change and Families Matter Programme, Traditional Leader Programme). These programmes will be facilitated by social workers, employed by **22** Non-Profit Organizations. The initiative will be conducted in collaboration with Traditional Leaders, department of Health and Education. The programme will benefit **80 523** girl children by raising awareness on risky behaviours.

### **HIV & AIDS Prevention Programmes**

As part of a concerted effort to encourage community-based interventions in reducing the risk of HIV & Aids, the department will collaborate with non-profit organizations to reach out to rural areas and deliver Home Community Based Care Services (HCBC) as well as psychosocial support services, with a target population of **54 292** beneficiaries. These services will also be extended to LGBTQIA+ and sex workers to promote their rights and their capacity empowerment. We will also provide care and support services for persons infected and affected by HIV and AIDS.

**The budget set aside is R18 million.**

### **Services to Older Persons**

The Older Persons Act No.13 of 2006 mandate us to provide care, support, and protection for Older Persons. We will monitor compliance with the Act's norms and regulations for residential institutions (Old Age Homes) and community-based care centres (Service Centres).

The department will use **553** caregivers as an extension arm to carry out programmes within these centers. Awareness campaigns on the brutal killings and mistreatment of elderly people will be carried out in conjunction with crime prevention and gender-based violence interventions.

### **Services to Ex-Mine Workers and Military Veterans**

**Honourable Members**, we will continue with the tracing of Ex-mineworkers as well as Military Veterans and facilitate access to government services. Ex-mineworkers and Military Veterans will be identified and assessed for social services. Psychosocial support will be provided including linking them to other government services through a referral system.

**The budget set aside is R101.5 million**

### **Active Ageing Programme**

The department will optimize opportunities to maintain and improve physical, mental health, independence and quality of Older Persons throughout their life course. Physical and emotional efficacy will be enhanced. We upscale the participation of Older Persons in society and development matters affecting them through strengthening advocacy mechanisms, such as fora at the province, district, and municipal levels.

These structures would ensure that issues advanced during the consultation on the Older Persons Amendment Bill, are taken care of.

**The budget set aside is R 1 million**

### **Services to Persons with Disabilities**

In advancing the rights and interests of persons with disabilities, it remains our priority to advocate for the inclusion and mainstreaming of persons with disabilities, including children. We will provide skills development programmes within **26** protective workshops benefitting **833** persons with disabilities. These interventions will impact positively on integrating persons with disabilities to society, economic opportunities and employment, thus reducing vulnerability.

**Honourable Speaker**, we have committed to increase the current 2% of employment of persons with disabilities and we will continue conducting roadshows in partnership with the disability sector in all districts and external stakeholders to maximise our reach. As part of advancing economic empowerment and transformation, we will promote beneficiation of persons with disabilities in the preferential procurement



processes. In addition, we will vigorously drive the implementation of reasonable accommodation policy and universal access to promote inclusivity for departmental officials with disabilities.

### **The budget set aside is R32. 5 million**

### **Tackling Child Poverty, Malnutrition, and Teenage Pregnancy**

**Honourable Speaker**, we need to be more determined going forward to reduce poverty from spreading throughout families and communities. While attempts to improve cooperation at all levels between government departments, business, organized labour, and other civil society and non-profit groups are being strengthened, we will make sure that anti-poverty programs are a top priority for all departments. The **39** poorest wards will be the target of the poverty initiatives, which will concentrate mostly in rural areas within identified poorest local municipalities.

Food insecurity in Eastern Cape province has increased significantly, with grant-reliant households seeing an increase in moderate to severe food insecurity.

This underscores the mounting strain on disadvantaged groups especially children, women and persons with disabilities.

### **Integrated Mother and Child Development and Support Programme**

In response to the Human Rights Commission's recent findings on child poverty, we will ensure access and coverage for vulnerable mothers and children in the **39** poorest wards and child malnutrition hotspots areas through holistic services rendered in our Mother and Child Development and Support Programme.

We will maximise impact of this programme in our communities by engaging stakeholders including families and community leaders, national departments, private sector, Office of the Premier, Provincial Treasury as well as our social sector partners. This will guarantee integrated interventions on child poverty and Malnutrition are tailored to protect mothers' and children's health, nutrition, and development.

### **Integrated Social Mobilisation Programme**

The department will implement **138** household and **153** community profiling through integrated social mobilization programs, and in addition link social grant recipients to sustainable livelihoods initiatives to promote resilience, empowerment, and participation,

Furthermore, we will mobilize **202** integrated community mobilization structures targeting **36,776** people to coordinate their own development and enhance social

inclusion. This will contribute to the end goal of promoting self-reliance and sustainability within communities, ultimately “graduating communities out of poverty.”

### **Community-Based Feeding Initiatives**

The department remain committed to address food security in the province through implementing food security projects, community-based nutrition and development programmes supporting **38** community nutrition development centers and **345** household food gardens. The focus will be on the **39** poorest wards in identified municipalities targeting will be households, communities, youth, women and persons with disabilities.

In an effort to reduce poverty the department during this financial year will establish a Food Bank which will contribute to the Provincial Food and Nutrition Security Plan which is co-ordinated by department of agriculture and respond to disasters and food shortages.

**The budget set aside is R14. 4 million.**

### **Youth Development**

**Honourable Members**, the youth remain a priority for economic opportunities and skills development programmes. As part of our commitment to transforming the lives of young people in the province, we are pleased to announce that we will be rolling out the provisionally approved Youth Development Strategy in this financial year.

The strategy will enable us to co-ordinate and consolidate existing youth programmes while also realigning our efforts to improve youth outcomes as outlined in the National Youth Policy. Our strategy recognises the unique challenges and opportunities faced by young people and seeks to provide them with the tools, resources, support and opportunities needed to become active citizens and contribute to their own well-being and ongoing success.

In addressing socio-economic participation, the department will provide funding to **14** youth-led initiatives across the province. These projects include support for youth-led co-operatives in agriculture, brick making, sewing, video/film production and hair salons. This strategic investment is not only about funding, but also about creating pathways for economic participation, skills development, and sustainable livelihoods for young people in every corner of our province

**The budget set aside is R 6. 9 million**

## Women Development

In relation to Women Development, we will conduct **282** women's rights advocacy capacity building. The department **21** women livelihood initiatives will be supported. These projects include support for women-led co-operatives in sewing, poultry, crop production, dairy production and bakery. During this financial year, **1997** Women will be participating in skills development for socio-economic empowerment including **60** women who are mothers of children diagnosed with child malnutrition from child malnutrition hotspots and poorest wards that will be trained in partnership with stakeholders on various technical skills.

**The budget set aside is R 3,5 million.**

## Support for NPOs and Cooperatives

Non –Profit Organisations rank among our key stakeholders as they play a significant role in expanding our footprint, accordingly this financial year we will increase access to services by funding **1306 NPOs** across the province. Furthermore, we will strengthen help desks in districts and local service points to increase access to services and mitigate deregistration due to non-compliance with the NPO Act 71 of 1997.

Helpdesks will be enhanced through collaboration with other stakeholders and departmental programs such as ICROP and Know your status (KYNS). Provision of support to the Eastern Cape NPO forum will continue to improve communication between government and the NPO Sector.

To heighten monitoring and evaluation services for funded NPOs we will approve and implement the monitoring and evaluation policy.

The department will strengthen capacity building of NPO's and Co-operatives targeting **443** NPOs and **199** Co-operatives to enable them to better manage their organisations and utilise the allocated funds for the intended purposes. Furthermore, this will ensure sustainability and self-reliance.

**The budget set aside is R2. 3 million.**

## Access to social protection services

**Honourable Members**, Provincial Integrated Anti-Poverty Strategy (PIAPS) will be utilised to direct most government services towards targeting of poorest communities and wards across the province.

In addition, a community-centric approach will be promoted allowing for the establishment of local development structures to promote direct participation by community members in their own development. In addition, to widen our partnership base, **10** new stakeholders will be mobilised to support the implementation of the PIAPS, ensuring fresh insights and resources contribute to our collective impact.

In 2025/26 a target of **52** Integrated Community Registration Outreach Programme (ICROP) events will be held in all **8** districts targeting different Local Municipalities and the most remote rural areas that are not easily accessible so as to bring services closer to the people especially Vulnerable Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities.

### **Social Relief of Distress**

In providing social protection to the poor and vulnerable groups, the department will continue providing Social Relief of Distress in the form of material aid, including food parcels, school uniform, blankets and mattresses targeting **4 626** people for 2025/26 financial year.

**The budget set aside is R 8. 9 million.**

### **Sanitary Dignity Project**

The services of social protection will be extended to the girl learners from Quintile 1 to 3 and other children in support, special and farm schools to ensure that they are kept at school as contained in the Integrated School Health Programme (ISHP). **138 794** girl-learners will be targeted for the distribution of Sanitary Dignitary Packs.

**The budget set aside is R 46. 3 million.**

## **PRIORITY 3 BUILDING A CAPABLE AND DEVELOPMENTAL STATE**

### **Capacity Building of employees for improved service delivery**

In line with the applicable Skills Development legislative and regulatory framework, we have set aside **R11.3 million** to rigorously implement education, training and development programmes.

Guided by the Leadership and Management Development Programme in the public service, we will expeditiously implement management development programmes for both Senior Management Services (SMS) members and non-SMS members.

The intention is to enhance the management capacity and competencies across all levels of management and supervisors in our workforce. To achieve this, we will fully utilise our existing Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the National School of Government to facilitate the implementation of these programmes.

Furthermore, to enhance the skills of personnel for improved quality service, we will implement Social Service Professionals (SSPs) occupation specific and cross-functional skills programmes. A total **1500** staff members will be trained on these training programmes in the 2025/26 financial year.

Awarding bursaries is a key intervention we utilise to equip employees with necessary skills for effective service delivery. Our bursary scheme addresses both scarce and critical skills that are needed in the department, A total of **150** deserving employees will benefit from the scheme during the current financial year.

**The budget set aside is R3. 2 million.**

### **Wellness programme**

As part of providing quality support to our communities the department will intensify the rollout of wellness programmes with a particular focus on debriefing sessions of social work service practitioners as well as conducting mental health sessions so that our practitioners remain in a sound mental state. The roll out of these sessions will be carried out in all districts in 2025/26 financial year.

**The budget set aside is R988 000.00**

### **Employment of Social Workers**

The national sector strategy on appointment of Social Service Practitioners which was approved in 2024 by Cabinet strives to resolve the imbalance between the high demand for social services and the limited supply of Social Service Practitioners by including all levels of government in recruiting and deployment efforts. The Eastern Cape department of Social Development is participating in the National Committee for the implementation of this strategy, this will ensure that we consolidate integrated interventions to address this nationwide challenge.

**Malungu endlu yowiso mthetho**, we remain committed on recruiting unemployed social workers thus, **200** social workers will be appointed this financial year.

### **Infrastructure development to promote access to social development services**

In an endeavor to promote access to our services by the poor and vulnerable communities, we have earmarked a budget of **R 37. 2 million** for construction projects to improve office accommodation through rehabilitation, renovation, and refurbishment for the existing service offices: Seymour service office, Engcobo office, Humansdorp service office for 2025/26 financial Year.

In addition, we will be completing **2** projects in Butterworth and Emalahleni service offices rehabilitation, renovation and refurbishment projects are near completion and these offices will be handed over in the 2025/26 financial year. New construction will be for the Middleburg service office which will be a multi – year project planned for 2025/26 and 2026/27 financial years.

### **Information Communication technology to enhance service delivery**

We will increase office network connectivity by cabling the following offices: Adelaide, Cradock, Motherwell, Willowmore, and Steytlerville in order to meet the demands of the digital world and the automation of services. Over and above this, we will also implement new internet telephone technologies in ten offices: Mlungisi, Cradock Spring Groove, Tsomo, Cofimvaba, Bizana, Ntbankulu, Barkly East, Lady Grey, and Sterkspruit to improve service delivery. The department will put its business continuity and digital transformation strategies into action in order to improve business efficiency, integration, transformation, and modernization of services.

**The budget set aside is R4. 3 million**

## CONCLUSION

Xandingqibezela, as government, we envisage an ideal situation of having every citizen of this country living a dignified life and it is therefore very important that, we remain mindful of the fact that, our success depends entirely on how well we serve our people. Nothing takes precedence over our people's continuing needs for effective, insightful and responsive developmental social services and sustainable community development programmes.

We will continue to work towards the dramatic reduction of prevailing social ills in a manner that does not seek to speedily attain short term wins for a few, but one that provides long term benefits for all and a more equal society.

The department of Social Development remains resolute in its mission to strengthen social protection, advance economic empowerment, and enhance community development. Through strategic interventions, capacity-building initiatives, and multi-sectoral partnerships, the department will drive sustainable development, reduce poverty, and promote inclusive economic growth in the Eastern Cape.

**Ndiyabulela!**

**BUDGET VOTE 4: DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Sub-programmes	Medium-term expenditure estimate		
(R'000)	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Administration	604 655	634 926	654 764
Social Welfare Services	934 986	965 809	1 001 807
Children and Families	724 705	751 680	785 521
Restorative Services	534 815	555 057	562 931
Development and Research	316 487	320 635	335 073
<b>Total</b>	<b>3 115 648</b>	<b>3 228 107</b>	<b>3 340 096</b>