

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

SOCIAL CASH TRANSFER

Madam Speaker thank very much for granting me this opportunity to give a ministerial statement on the major programmes that my ministry is implementing in order to address poverty and vulnerability among our citizens, which is the Social Cash Transfer (SCT).

Madam, the SCT Programme is a key social protection intervention. The programme targets the vulnerable, incapacitated people in the community in order to alleviate suffering and deprivation. This programme has, overtime, grown both in size and scale. There are currently 973,323 beneficiary households, which translates into 5,061,280 Zambians on the programme in all 116 districts.

Madam Speaker, I inform this august House that in the recent past, the programme had faced a number of challenges which ranged from withdrawal of funding by the donors in 2018 to inadequate systems to meet the dictates of the changing times. I am, however, happy to report that today; the co-operating partners are supporting the implementation of the programme. The Government, through my ministry, has taken a number of steps to strengthen the delivery system of the programme in order to enhance accountability, transparency as well as cement support and beneficiary acceptability. It is expected that the systems put in place will enhance programme credibility and sustainability.

Madam Speaker, in order to strengthen and streamline the management of the SCT Programme, my ministry is putting in place the following measures:

Digitalisation of the Payment Process

Madam Speaker, since inception, the SCT Programme has been making payments to beneficiaries using a manual system. This has been done through pay point managers (PPMs) who are Government employees who have been given an extra responsibility to disburse funds to SCT beneficiaries. With the advancement in technology, my ministry is deploying a payment

system that will see payments to beneficiaries made through two modalities. These are urban payments and rural payments. Urban payments will be done through payment service providers while rural payments will continue to be done through PPM.

Payment Service Providers (PSPs)

Madam Speaker, the Payment Service Providers (PSP) approach is the disbursement of funds to beneficiaries by directly crediting the beneficiary's bank or mobile account.

Pay Point Managers (PPMs)

Madam Speaker, the PPMs approach are payments made manually to beneficiaries that are unbanked and have no access to telephone communication. This process will progressively be automated in consultation with the Zambia Information and Communication Technology Authority (ZICTA) Smart Zambia Institute and other stakeholders. The PPMs are linked to the Zambia Integrated Social Protection Information System (ZISPIS) and all transactions are automated using both online and offline mode applications of the system.

Targeting of Beneficiaries

Madam Speaker, the selection and identification process of beneficiary households to be enrolled on the SCT Programme has been improved to ensure programme credibility with the right people being on the programme as per guidelines. To this effect, the programme engages the services of public service workers to undertake this important exercise instead of Community Welfare Assistant Committee (CWAC) members who were being used before. This represents a major shift in the targeting process of ensuring that only deserving households are listed as beneficiaries.

The Zambia Integrated Social Protection Information System (ZISPIS)

Madam Speaker, in order to enhance transparency and accountability in the administration of the SCT Programme, priority has been placed on the implementation of the ZISPIS. So far, all beneficiary data management functions of ZISPIS have been completed and are being used. Consequently, all beneficiaries who were eligible, including those not meeting the right requirement and criteria have since been cleaned out and removed from the programme.

Madam Speaker, additionally, the system is now capable of detecting duplicate beneficiary records, including multiple registrations across districts and provinces. Inadequate tracking capabilities resulting into inability to detect duplicates and multiple registrations were noticeable weaknesses on the old SCT management information system.

Madam Speaker, Smart Zambia Institute has since given a technical clearance of the ZISPIS for piloting in Kitwe and Namwala districts. The ministry now awaits approval, by the Secretary to the Treasury to commence piloting earmarked for January/February, 2022.

Grievance Redress Mechanism

Madam Speaker, the ministry has put in place a Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) as a platform to provide timely feedback to community members and stakeholders over any concerns or complaints that they may have relating to the SCT Programme. This is of paramount importance. There are three channels for beneficiaries and other stakeholders to register their complaints. These are:

- (a) website platform - the online form is accessible on the ministerial website. Stakeholders have this option to lodge their complaints which once entered, are immediately uploaded onto the ZISPIS GRM module;
- (b) mobile application (those using smart phones) - under this channel, the GRM form is accessed on a Smartphone application of District Social Welfare Officers and pay point managers within villages and communities. Complaints are entered through this channel are immediately uploaded into the MIS GRM module;

- (c) community boxes - Through this option, paper grievance forms are made available at different places such as schools, health centres, chiefs' palaces, headmen's homes, churches and other public places within respective communities. Once a form is filled in, it is dropped into the community boxes which are later transferred to the district social welfare offices.

The grievances received through any of the above channels are responded to in a systematic manner. Provision of this platform is therefore imperative in making the SCT Programme more responsive to the needs of the most poor and vulnerable citizens as well as other stakeholders and provides a medium for feedback and further programme improvement.

Strengthening, Monitoring and Evaluation

Madam Speaker, the ministry has embarked on strengthening and evaluation functions of the SCT Programme by developing an electronic website monitoring evaluation system to track any performance indicators. This will enable the Government to record changes that take place within the household at different intervals. These records will better inform programming including graduation and linkages of beneficiaries to other interventions.

Scaling Up of the Social Cash Transfer

Madam Speaker, as I have already informed this august House, the SCT Programme has continued to grow in scope and coverage since its inception in Kalomo District in 2003. The programme, to date, has been scaled up to almost 30 per cent of the Zambian population and about 50 per cent of the extremely poor in the country. In 2021, the programme caseload was scaled up to 973,323 beneficiary households. By the end of 2022, the programme is targeting to reach 1.1 million vulnerable and incapacitated households in all the 116 districts. 8.9 per cent of the programme caseload are households with persons with disabilities.

Madam Speaker, in terms of the transfer value, households without members with disabilities receive K200 per month per household paid every two months at K400 while households with a

member with severe disability receive k400 per month per household paid every two months at K800.

Madam Speaker, as I conclude, I submit that SCT is an important intervention and tool for reducing poverty and vulnerability. I, therefore, urge my fellow hon. Members of Parliament to take keen interest in this programme and sensitise their people on the availability of benefits and guidelines of this programme. The guidelines may be obtained from both the provincial and district administration. Furthermore, these guidelines can be accessed online on the ministerial website and copies will be placed in the pigeon holes of individual hon. Members of Parliament.

I thank you and may God bless you all.