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Social development to step up feeding projects

Herald Reporter

The Eastern Cape social development department will spend millions of rand on malnutrition, children and community-based feeding initiatives while appointing 200 unemployed social workers to bolster its ranks.

Social development MEC Bukiwe Fanta announced this during her 2025/2026 budget and policy speech in the Bhisho legislature yesterday.

She said 3,678 work opportunities would be created through the Expanded Public

Works Programme, primarily targeting the youth, women and people with disabilities, with a budget allocation of R7.7m.

The department, in partnership with NPOs, will deliver community-based prevention and early intervention services to 22,545 vulnerable children through funded Risiha sites, with R29m allocated. The Risiha programme protects orphans and vulnerable children.

"Children in the Eastern Cape, especially those between the age cohort of 0 to 18 years, face many challenges that have

a significant impact on their growth and development.

"This sounds a clarion call to our government and stakeholders to implement an effective system of developmental child care and protection, that addresses challenges which impact on families' ability to raise and protect children."

Fanta said 1,997 women would participate in skills development for socioeconomic empowerment, including 60 women who were mothers of children diagnosed with child malnutrition from hotspots and the poorest wards.

They would be trained in partnership with stakeholders, with R3.5m set aside.

"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," she said.

The budget was R65.9m.

A total of 37 NPOs would be funded to implement prevention and awareness programmes for substance abuse prevention, treatment and rehabilitation. The budget set aside for this was R12.4m.