

Survey: the ECD Stimulus Relief Fund Application Process

Feedback from the ECD Workforce

On the 26th of March, the Centre for Early Childhood Development sent out a survey to the early childhood development (ECD) sector, asking for feedback on the ECD Stimulus Relief Fund's application process. This was targeted at ECD managers and principals who had tried to apply for the Relief Fund, whether they had completed the process or not.

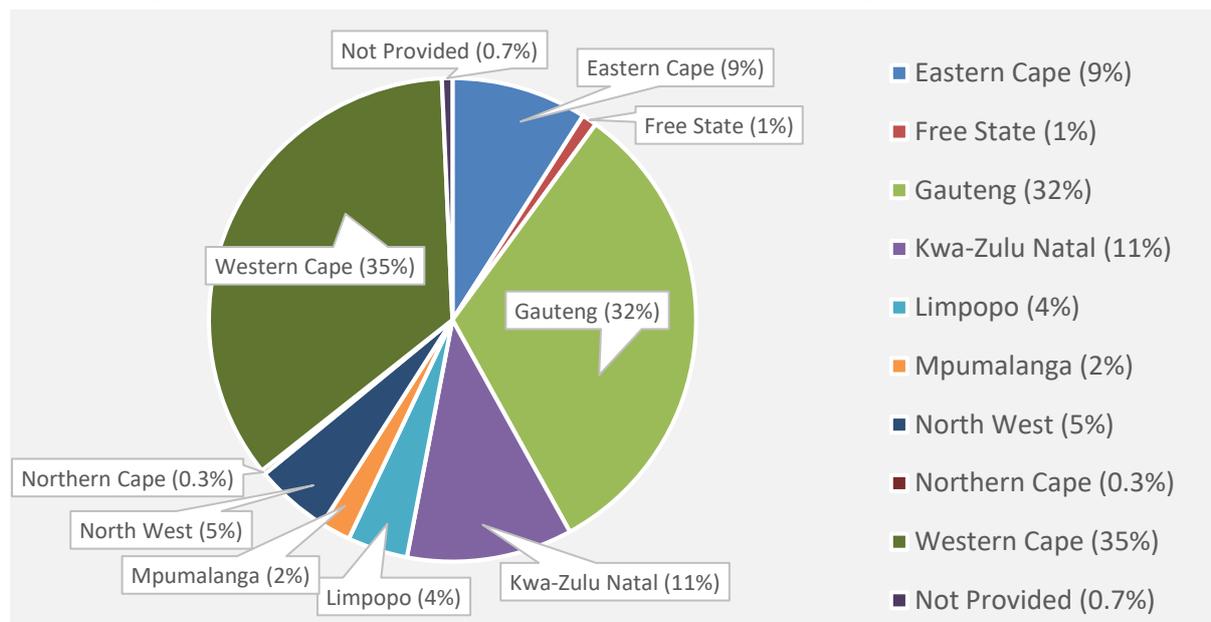
This was a seven-question survey, and took 3 to 5 minutes to complete. We incorporated the feedback received into an Open Letter we sent to the Minister of Social Development, detailing the significant challenges surrounding the ECD Stimulus Relief Fund. We hoped that by providing feedback to government they would rectify certain issues, ensure future applications such as this would be more effective and efficient, and lastly to ensure payment of the fund was distributed timeously.

As of the 30th of March 2021 (at 16:00pm) a total of 1085 respondents had completed the survey¹. The results of their feedback are presented here.

Sample

The 1085 respondents came from across all nine provinces in South Africa. Figure 1 provides the breakdown of where all ECD centres and programmes were based.

Figure 1. Province in which Respondents' ECD Centres and Programmes are Based



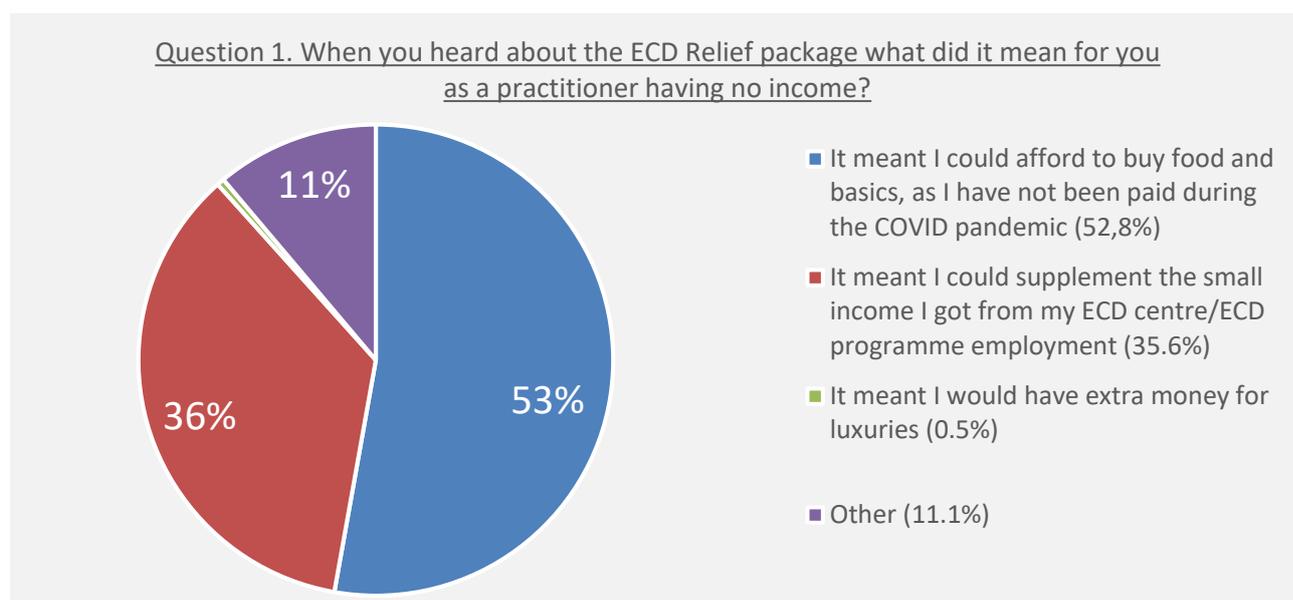
¹ A total of 1291 responses were received by 06 April 2021 at 16:00pm, after data analysis for the Open Letter was completed.

Results from Survey

Question 1

The first question in the survey asked the respondents to indicate how the relief money could help them. A majority of the respondents (53%) reported that the relief funds would mean they could “afford to buy food and basics” as they had not been paid during the COVID-19 pandemic. Only 5 of the 1085 respondents indicated that the relief funds would mean they would have “extra money for luxuries”. Figure 2 presents the percentage of respondents who reported the following answers.

Figure 2. Respondents’ Main Uses for Relief Money



This data can also be viewed as raw data, presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Respondents’ Main Uses for Relief Money

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
It meant I could afford to buy food and basics, as I have not been paid during the COVID pandemic.	573	52,8%
It meant I could supplement the small income I got from my ECD centre/ECD programme employment.	386	35,6%
It meant I would have extra money for luxuries.	5	0,5%
Other	120	11,1%

A total of 120 respondents selected ‘Other’. These respondents were asked to specify what they meant. Some of their responses were as follows:

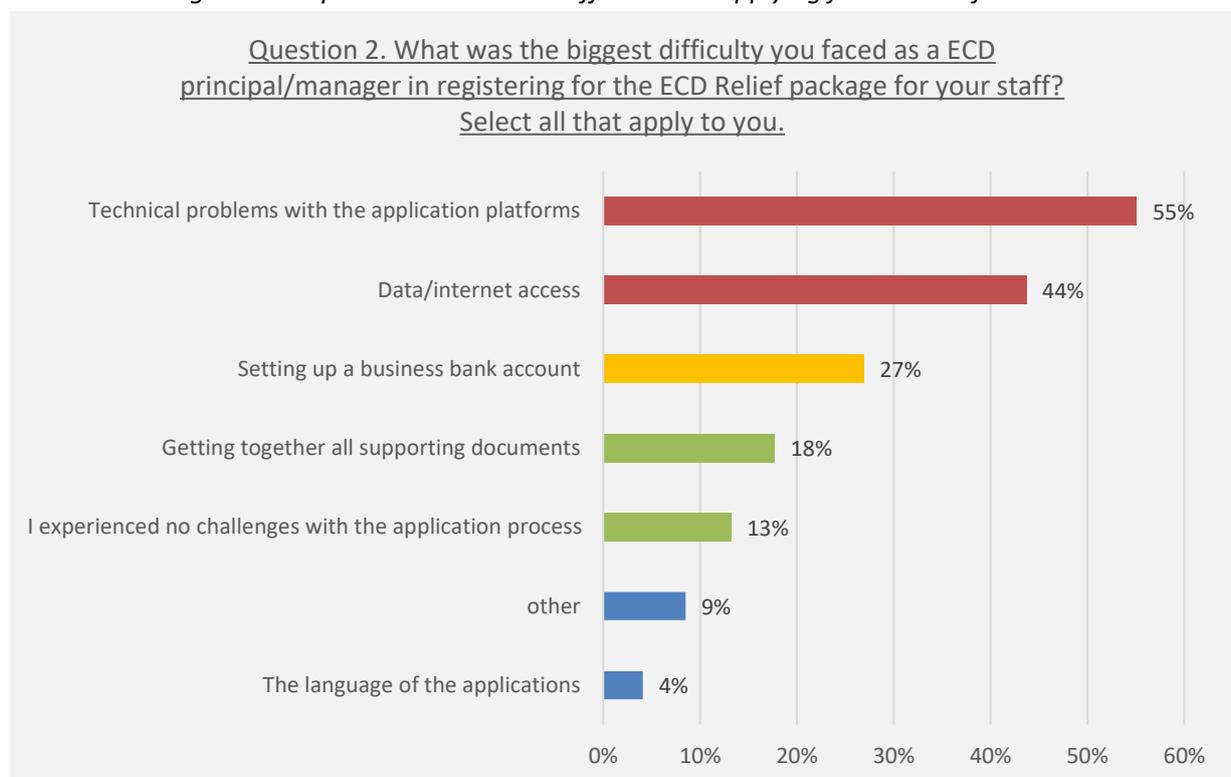
- “Pay my teachers.”
- “Help vir betaling van salarisse vir personeel van ons se creche.”
- “Can pay my accounts that is in arrears.”
- “I could help my staff who have worked with reduced income for the last 11 months.”

- "I could at least pay my staff a salary as i had to cut salaries."
- "Means I could pay hospital, was in 3 months Covid19 in ICU. Will pay hospital."
- "My staff members were demanding it."
- "Would pay instalment, policy and rent where we are operating at."

Question 2

Question 2 in the survey asked the respondents to indicate the greatest challenges they faced in trying to apply for the ECD Relief Fund. It was found that the majority of respondents (55%) found that "technical problems with the application platforms" was the greatest challenge in applying for the funds. Only 13% of the respondents indicated that they experienced no challenges with the application process. Figure 3 presents the percentage of respondents who selected the following answers.

Figure 3. Respondents' Greatest Difficulties in Applying for the Relief Funds



This data can also be viewed as raw data, presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Respondents' Greatest Difficulties in Applying for the Relief Funds

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Data/internet access	474	43,7%
Technical problems with the application platforms	598	55,1%
Setting up a business bank account	292	26,9%
Getting together all supporting documents	192	17,7%
The language of the applications	45	4,1%
I experienced no challenges with the application process	143	13,2%
Other	92	8,5%

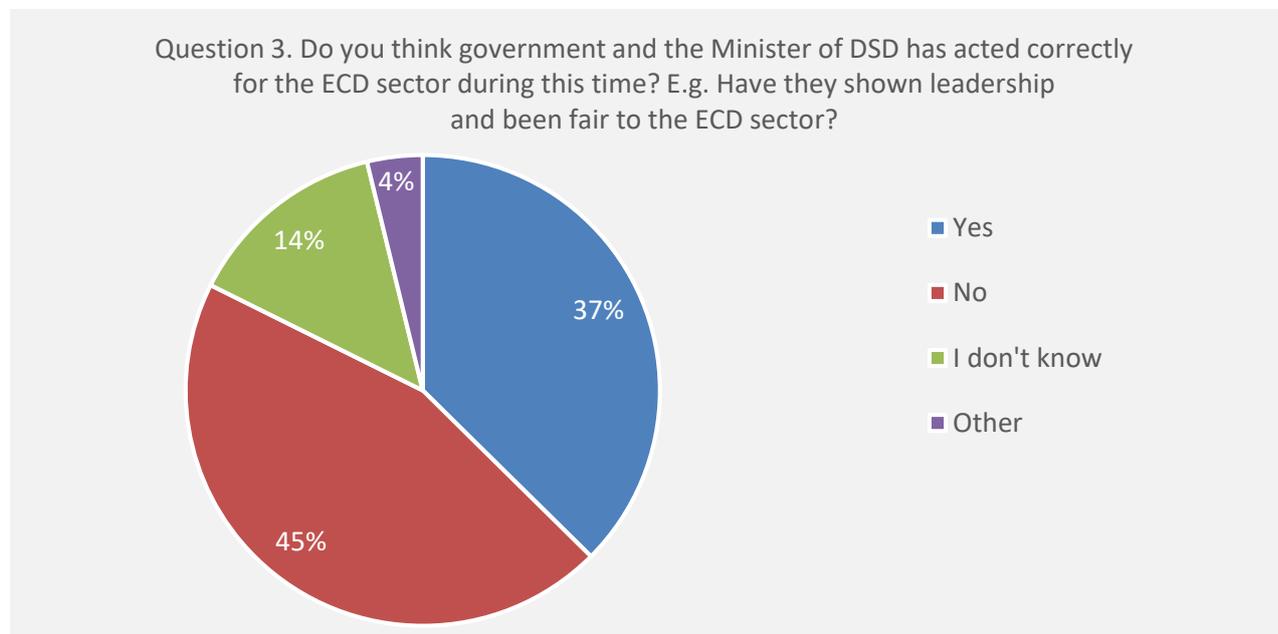
A total of 92 respondents selected 'Other'. These respondents were asked to specify what they meant. Many of these responses explained specific technical problems the applicants had encountered. Some of the responses were as follows:

- "Couldn't do it on my own"
- "Going to the bank for the same things"
- "Had to wait long for assistance from the call centre or could not get through"
- "It said we don't qualify to register"
- "My name or surname can't not be verified"
- "Providing my correct staff member information"
- "Registration issues"
- "The way you struggle to complete the forms...very frustrating...as time was limited in a box giving us so much pressure... and financial give out while yet we don't really have a money lying around"
- "When they said some documents are not clear and not easy for us to mend those problem"

Question 3

Question 3 in the survey asked the respondents to indicate their thoughts on government's action and leadership during this time. It was found that 45% of respondents thought that the government and minister of Department of Social Development (DSD) did not "act correctly" and have not "shown leadership and been fair to the ECD sector." Figure 4 presents the percentage of respondents who selected the following answers.

Figure 4. Respondents' Views on Government and DSD's Actions



This data can also be viewed as raw data, presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Respondents' Views on Government and DSD's Actions

Do you think government and the Minister of DSD has acted correctly for the ECD sector during this time? E.g. Have they shown leadership and been fair to the ECD sector?	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	406	37,4%
No	487	44,9%
I don't know	150	13,8%
Other	41	3,8%

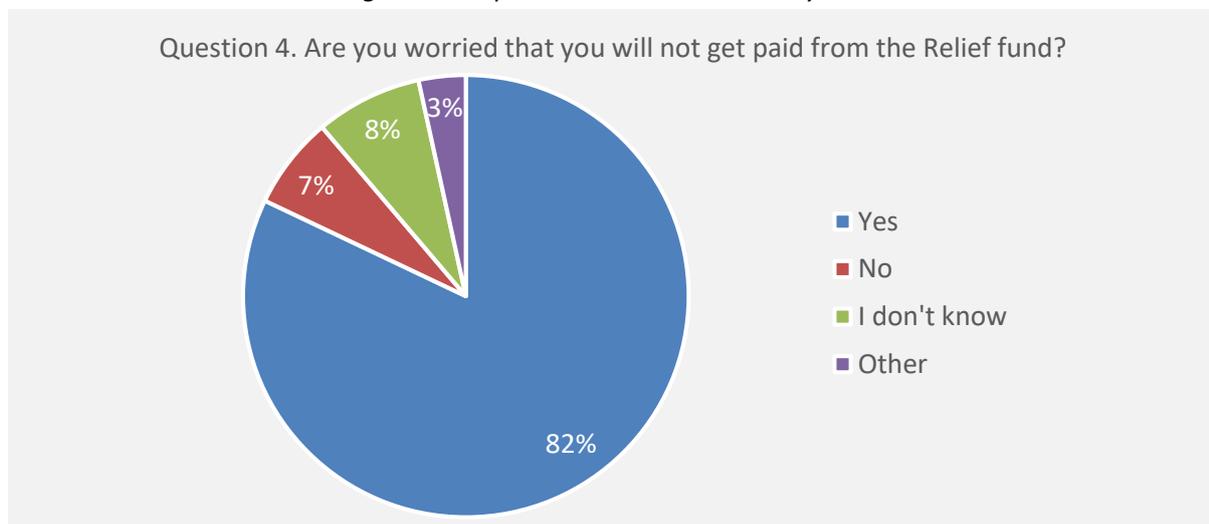
A total of 41 respondents selected 'Other'. These respondents were asked to specify what they meant. Some of the responses were as follows:

- "Not enough has been done"
- "It was a struggle"
- "No leadership because they promise all the small businesses to help them. Even the food parcels, it is unfair"
- "We are not sure because no way forward as yet"
- "I don't think enough money was made available for the sector which isn't fair at all."
- "I would say yes and no....a bit late... and time frames this application needed to be in at first very pressuring on us... as we need to run around.. you are emotionally drain... because we all need this money but now... the stress of things not being right and in on time... then verifications again... and not really knowing about it and who comes to you... so many scams...."
- "But we received no money and DSD may be too late because some of us have to pay staff and face eviction as just don't have enough kids yet for all expenses."
- "They could've act faster for the ECD"

Question 4

Question 4 in the survey asked the respondents to indicate if they were concerned that they would not get paid by the Relief Fund. It was found that 82% of respondents were worried about this. Figure 5 presents the percentage of respondents who selected the following answers.

Figure 5. Respondents Worries Over Payment



This data can also be viewed as raw data, presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Percentage of Respondents Worried Over Payment

Are you worried that you will not get paid from the Relief fund?	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	890	82,0%
No	73	6,7%
I don't know	84	7,7%
Other	37	3,4%

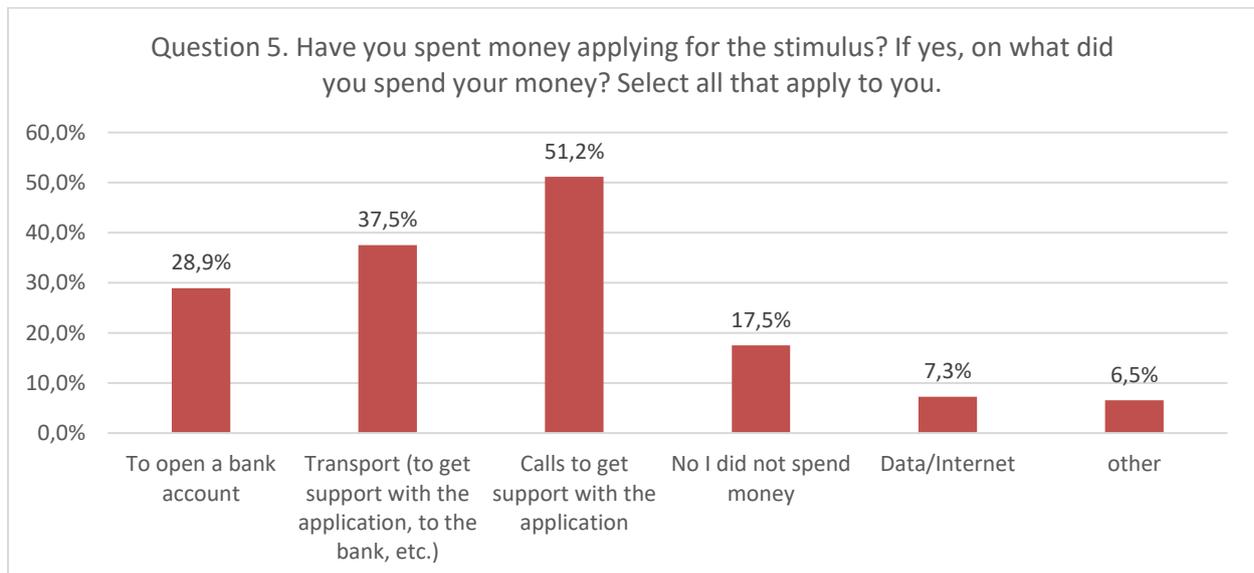
A total of 37 respondents selected 'Other'. These respondents were asked to specify what they meant. Some of the responses were as follows:

- "Still don't know whether we will get it or not and which criteria do they use to pay us"
- "We are far from the offered support, in a very rural area"
- "Don't expect so- bank account issues"
- "Very worried because I don't get feedback"
- "Might not have all supporting documents"
- "I'm a bit worried"
- "Won't be in time to save us"
- "I believe that I will get paid as this money will help with some basics for the centre"

Question 5

Question 5 in the survey asked the respondents to indicate whether they had spent money applying for the ECD Stimulus Fund, and if they had what they spent money on? A staggering 82.5% of respondents reported that they had spent money on the application process, the majority of which was on calls to get support with the process. Figure 6 presents the percentage of respondents who selected the following answers.

Figure 6. Money Spent on Application Process



This data can also be viewed as raw data, presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Money Spent on Application Process

Have you spent money applying for the ECD Stimulus Fund? If yes, on what did you spend your money?	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
No, I did not spend money	190	17,5%
To open a bank account	314	28,9%
Transport (to get support with the application, to the bank, etc.)	407	37,5%
Calls to get support with the application	555	51,2%
Data/Internet	79	7,3%
Other	71	6,5%

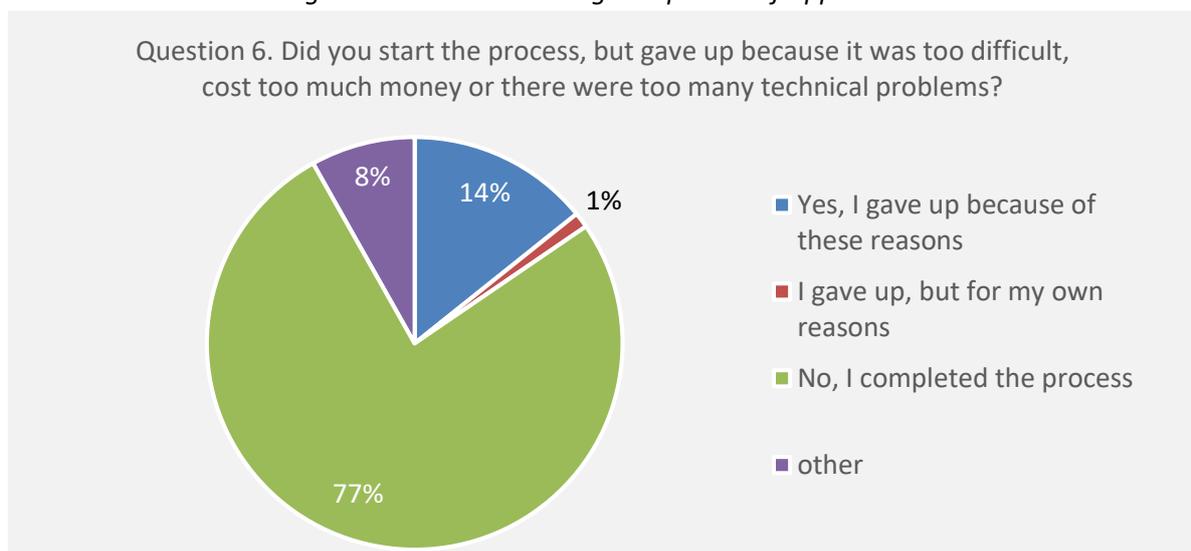
A total of 71 respondents selected 'Other'. These respondents were asked to specify what they meant. Some of the responses were as follows:

- "Less than R1000"
- "Registering for CSD"
- "Spent hours on application to no avail."
- "Yes I spend money to ask someone to help me to do the application"
- "At first as I was trying by ourselves"
- "Call centre"
- "Data costs, I had to use my cell-phone eventually, because the document was only partially visible on the ECD's computer screen"

Question 6

Question 6 in the survey asked the respondents to indicate whether they had started the process, but gave up for any reasons. A total of 14% of respondents reported that they had given up on completing the application process because it was too difficult, cost too much money or there were too many technical problems. Figure 7 presents the percentage of respondents who selected the following answers.

Figure 7. Factors Hindering Completion of Application



This data can also be viewed as raw data, presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Factors Hindering Completion of Application

Did you start the process, but gave up because it was too difficult, cost too much money or there were too many technical problems?	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Yes, I gave up because of these reasons	154	14,2%
I gave up, but for my own reasons	13	1,2%
No, I completed the process	829	76,4%
Other	88	8,1%

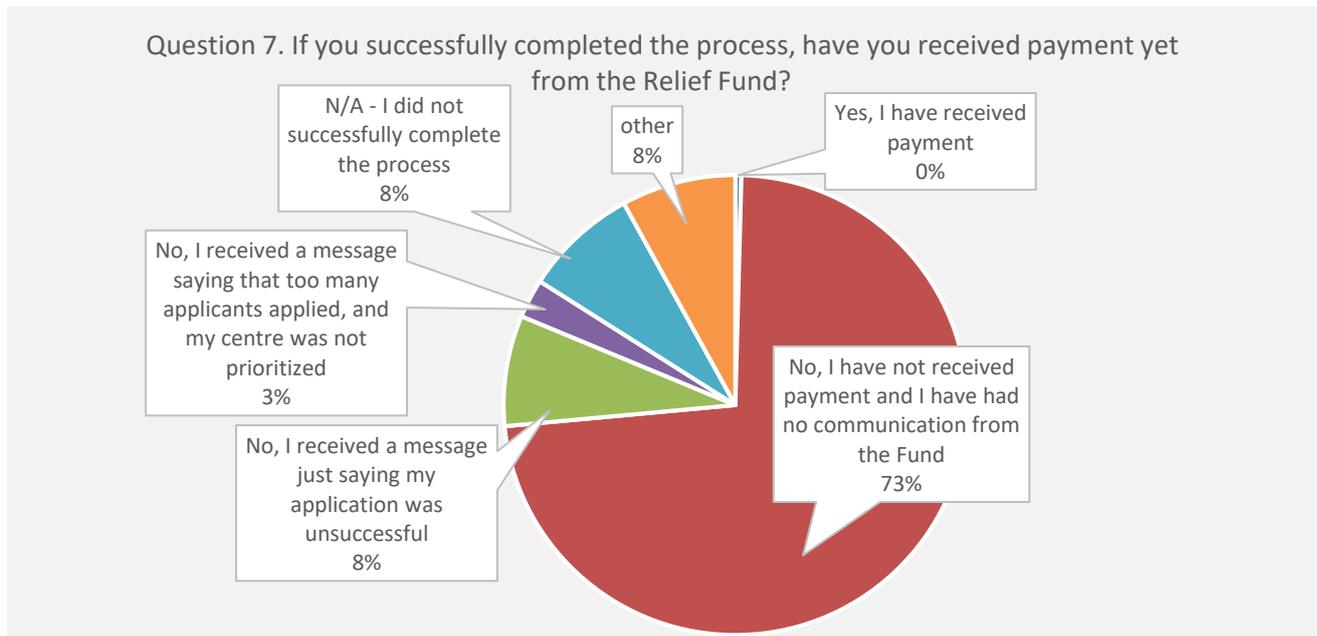
A total of 88 respondents selected 'Other'. These respondents were asked to specify what they meant. Some of the responses were as follows:

- "It is very difficult to complete the application because there is many things that I don't know how to do"
- "I gave up because it refused all the information... it's says incorrect while I know its correct"
- "I did try to complete the process but technically, I couldn't finish or be sure it was successful"
- "They gave me the wrong reference number so I didn't get a chance to add practitioners on the application"
- "I'm not giving up because I need the money for my staff"
- "I still can't get feedback from FNB after 4 weeks. Spent 100s of Rands trying to force them to activate my business account with no luck."
- "The application did not allow me to add all my 28 staff as it froze after no 12"
- "I kept on trying but still bank verification is on pending"
- "No I did complete the application but when I went back to check if the information was correct I was unable to do that"
- "I didn't meet requirements for BEE"
- "I did not know what to do"
- "I got someone to complete on my behalf as I am not good in technology"
- "I was giving up it was endless to and fro. It should have been done like the Vangasali form"
- "Didn't have enough time because we struggled to get registered with the CSD"
- "I give up because Corona got me, but I started again for the best of the kids."
- "I am still waiting for someone to phone me regarding my problem."
- "The agent from Harambe messed up our application"
- "I gave up because they said am not qualified"
- "I gave up because deadline arrived and I could still not access the relevant pages to add staff details."
- "Because many people say those who get funds DSD will not be funded"

Question 7

Question 7 in the survey asked the respondents to indicate whether they had received payment yet. This question was added to the survey at a later point therefore only 476 individuals responded to it. Only three respondents out of the 476 respondents indicated that they had received payment, however on further investigation (and following up via email) it was clear that these three cases were reported in error. Figure 8 presents the percentage of respondents who selected the following answers.

Figure 8. Percentage of Respondents who had Received Payment



This data can also be viewed as raw data, presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Respondents who had Received Payment

Did you start the process, but gave up because it was too difficult, cost too much money or there were too many technical problems?	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Yes, I have received payment	2	0,4%
No, I have not received payment and I have had no communication from the Fund	348	73,1%
No, I received a message just saying my application was unsuccessful	37	7,8%
No, I received a message saying that too many applicants applied, and my centre was not prioritized	13	2,7%
N/A - I did not successfully complete the process	38	8,0%
Other	38	8,0%

A total of 38 respondents selected 'Other'. These respondents were asked to specify what they meant. Some of the responses were as follows:

- "I received an sms stating my application had been received."
- "I have not received payment, but had communication from the fund"
- "Field workers for DSD came out to verify your centre... And didn't heard anything after that"
- "They send message to tell me some of the information is incomplete"
- "No, they came to verify"
- "Dsd staff came to my centre to assess but I don't know what is going on now"
- "I have not received a payment and I completed the application process... I didn't get message informing me about payment after I completed the application."
- "Many regrets because of bank verifications even after opening another business account"
- "Something is wrong with my address"