

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 1242.

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1242. Ms A M Siwisa (Northern Cape: EFF) to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

Rivoni Special School project

(a) Why there are delays in the completion of the Rivoni Special School project in Limpopo, (b) what time frames are in place for its completion, including the eye clinic, (c) what is the exact status of each delayed building component such as (i) buildings without doors and windows and (ii) eye clinic foundation, (d) how much is the remaining total budget in this regard, (e) what specific plans are in place for the handover of each completed building to the school and (f) when is the handover taking place?

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Response

In terms of the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996), read together with the Government Immovable Asset Management Act (GIAMA), 2007 (Act No. 19 of 2007), the responsibility for the planning, provisioning, management and maintenance of public school infrastructure lies with provinces.

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) is responsible for:

- Setting norms and standards for public school infrastructure;
- Providing oversight and support to Provincial Education Departments (PEDs); and
- Implementing select nationally prioritised projects through initiatives such as the Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative (ASIDI) and the Sanitation Appropriate for Education (SAFE) initiative.

As Members of the Executive Councils (MECs) for Education and their respective PEDs are accountable for public school infrastructure delivery in their provinces but do not report directly to the Minister or Deputy Minister of Basic Education, heightened collaboration and intergovernmental oversight is essential to ensure the realisation of national infrastructure priorities. It remains concerning when PEDs return unspent infrastructure allocations to the National Treasury while learners continue to attend overcrowded schools or schools with inadequate facilities.

The Regulations Relating to Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure require PEDs to:

- Submit annual progress reports;
- Identify infrastructure backlogs; and
- Outline strategies to address these challenges in line with available budgets.

PEDs are currently finalising their infrastructure plans, which include strategies to address outstanding backlogs. Infrastructure improvement projects are prioritised based on urgency and available funding, with implementation timelines determined by the provinces.

The Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement (MTBPS) has introduced the integration of several conditional grants, including the Education Infrastructure Grant (EIG) and the School Infrastructure Backlogs Grant (SIBG). While this reform aims to streamline

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resource allocation and improve financial efficiency, it also shifts greater implementation responsibility to provinces, thereby reducing the DBE's direct influence on project execution.

Under the EIG, PEDs have submitted infrastructure plans that cover:

- New and replacement schools;
- Upgrades and additions to existing facilities; and
- Maintenance, repairs, renovations and rehabilitation.

These plans also take into account factors such as population growth, urbanisation and the distance learners travel to school. The DBE is in the process of submitting a budget bid to the Budget Facility for Infrastructure (BFI) to supplement the EIG and assist provinces in eliminating backlogs related to overcrowding, infrastructure deficiencies and classroom shortages.

Despite notable progress, several persistent challenges continue to hinder infrastructure delivery under both the New and Replacement Schools Programme and the Upgrades and Additions Programme. These include:

- Inclement weather conditions, which impact construction timelines;
- Disruptions by business forums, particularly in certain provinces where local demands and unrest have delayed site access and project execution; and
- Delays in the appointment of replacement contractors, often due to contract terminations arising from poor performance or non-compliance.

To prevent further delays and improve budget utilisation by PEDs, the following measures have been adopted:

- Provinces have intensified the implementation of social facilitation programmes to prevent community-related disruptions and foster constructive partnerships with local forums; and
- The sector has adopted a 10-Point Strategy to Fast-Track School Infrastructure Planning, Delivery, Maintenance, and Monitoring, which includes:
 - Use of the Education Facilities Management System (EFMS) as a centralised data platform;
 - Adoption of standardised concept designs and framework contracts to accelerate procurement;

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- Use of management contractors and fit-for-purpose delivery models;
- Enhanced lifecycle monitoring of infrastructure projects; and
- Stronger enforcement mechanisms to address underperforming contractors.

As part of this strategy, the DBE has proposed the establishment of a Maintenance Directorate within each PED to improve oversight and preventative maintenance practices. Workshops on the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Maintenance have been rolled out with PEDs and are being cascaded to education districts and schools.

The DBE remains committed to working closely with PEDs, the private sector and other partners to ensure that all learners, particularly those in vulnerable and under-resourced environments, benefit from safe, functional and quality learning spaces.

Given the above, the specific details requested regarding the Rivoni Special School project in Limpopo, including completion timelines, building component status, budget allocations and handover arrangements, fall under the executive authority of the MEC for Education in Limpopo Province.

The Honourable Member is therefore kindly requested to refer this question to the MEC for Education in Limpopo, in accordance with Section 92(3)(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, and Rule 134(5)(b) of the Rules of the National Assembly.