

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 5669.

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5669. Mr V Pambo (EFF) to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

What (a) are the details of the plans that she has in place to improve her department's oversight over provinces to ensure that provinces not only meet minimum infrastructure standards regarding water, sanitation and electricity, but also advance in providing critical resources such as libraries, laboratories and computer centres and (b) measures can strengthen intergovernmental collaboration to address infrastructure backlogs more effectively, especially in provinces lagging in delivery such as Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and Mpumalanga?

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Response

(a) In terms of the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996), read with the Government Immovable Asset Management Act, 2007 (Act No. 19 of 2007), Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) are responsible for the provisioning, management and maintenance of public school infrastructure. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) sets the national policy and regulatory framework, including the Regulations Relating to Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure; provides technical support; and exercises sector oversight to ensure that all provinces meet the required standards for safe, dignified and fully resourced learning environments.

To strengthen this oversight role, the Minister has requested the DBE to review and update the Regulations Relating to Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure, with the aim of clarifying compliance obligations, improving accountability mechanisms and ensuring continued progress towards equity in public school infrastructure delivery. This process is currently underway.

To address infrastructure backlogs and improve delivery, the DBE has implemented several key interventions:

- Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative (ASIDI): Targeted the eradication of identified public schools built entirely of inappropriate materials and those without basic services.
- Sanitation Appropriate for Education (SAFE) Initiative (2018): Focused on replacing unsafe and basic pit toilets with appropriate sanitation facilities in public schools.
- 10-Point Infrastructure Strategy: A sector-wide strategy to accelerate infrastructure delivery, strengthen accountability and improve planning, execution and oversight. Key components include:
 - Implementation of standardised designs and cost-optimisation models to improve efficiency and value for money;
 - Revised infrastructure maintenance guidelines, with training of provincial officials, school principals and SGBs;
 - Expanded consequence management mechanisms for underperforming implementing agents and service providers;
 - Strengthened capacity-building, mentoring and technical oversight of provincial infrastructure units;

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- Streamlined procurement processes to fast-track project implementation; and
- Enhanced project lifecycle monitoring and gateway reviews to ensure timely completion and quality assurance.

These measures are complemented by strengthened national monitoring through the Education Facilities Management System (EFMS), Division of Revenue Act (DoRA) performance reports, and monthly infrastructure oversight forums with provinces to track expenditure, milestones and compliance with the Regulations Relating to Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure.

(b) To strengthen intergovernmental collaboration and improve the alignment of national and provincial infrastructure delivery efforts, the following measures are being implemented:

- Intergovernmental forums to discuss progress, challenges and solutions;
- Coordinated planning that aligns national and provincial priorities to ensure a cohesive approach;
- Regular communication among stakeholders to share information, progress and challenges; and
- Defining clear responsibilities among national and provincial spheres to avoid confusion and duplication of effort.

Through these combined oversight, planning and collaborative mechanisms, the DBE continues to strengthen its oversight of provincial delivery against minimum public school infrastructure norms and standards. The DBE remains committed to ensuring that all learners are taught and supported in safe, modern and well-equipped school environments, regardless of location or socio-economic context.