

**NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES**

**ORAL REPLY**

**QUESTION 120.**

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**120..Ms D C Christians (Northern Cape: DA) to ask the Minister of Basic Education: to ask the Minister of Basic Education:**

***Increase in substance abuse in schools***

As a result of the significant increase in substance abuse in schools (details furnished), (a) why schools are finding it difficult to implement (i) legislation, (ii) policies and (iii) programmes that are aimed at eradication and education of drug use and (b) what are her department's plans to revitalise such programmes in light of escalating problem?

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#### QUESTION Ê120.

#### Response

**(a) Why schools are finding it difficult to implement (i) legislation, (ii) policies and (iii) programmes that are aimed at eradication and education of drug use**

Drugs and substance abuse amongst the youth is a nationwide problem affecting a number of schools and communities in the country. Schools are required to implement the **National School Safety Framework** (NSSF) which is a guiding framework that empowers schools to identify security issues and threats such as drug abuse; establish mechanisms such as school safety committees; and reporting channels, which includes the province as well as the police where necessary. In this way schools are capacitated to respond promptly and proactively to any threats or security issues. In addition, schools are also required to implement the **National Strategy for the Prevention and Management of Alcohol and Drug Use Amongst Learners in Schools** which empowers them to establish school based support teams, establish referral systems for learners addicted to drugs and implement drug testing. Moreover, schools are also required to implement the **Protocol between the Department of Basic Education and the South African Police Services**, which allows all schools to be linked to their local police stations, delegated cops to form part of the school safety committees, school-based searches and seizures of illegal drugs and weapons can be undertaken by the police regularly. These programmes are informed by the following legislation; the South African Schools Act of 1996, the Regulations for Safety Measures at Public Schools (2001), and the Policy Framework for the Management of Drug Abuse by Learners in Schools and in Public Further Training Institutions (2002) to address drug and substance abuse by learners.

Functional school safety committees are central towards the implementation of the above school safety measures. Some schools struggle with effective implementation of the above programmes due to non- functional school safety committees, lack of effective monitoring of school safety committees by Districts, lack of resources to procure drug testing devices, as well as a lack of reliable referral systems and insufficient parental support and community involvement in consequence management that can effectively address the scourge of drugs and substance abuse in schools.

**b) What are the department's plans to revitalise such programmes in light of escalating problem?**

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The Department conducts annual monitoring of 75 Districts on the implementation of school safety programmes. In the monitoring sessions, the Department always encourages Districts to conduct physical monitoring of school safety committees, in order to determine their levels of functionality. In the financial year of 2022-23, the Department has thus far monitored 30 districts nationwide and will monitor the outstanding districts before the end of the financial year.

Furthermore, through the Central Drug Authority, the Department strengthens the Provincial Substance Abuse Forums, which enable provinces to work with local stakeholders to address the scourge of drugs and substance abuse in communities, and be aware of reliable referral systems for learners addicted to drugs (e.g rehabilitation centres).

The Department through the inter-provincial meetings encourage provinces to seek funding from other stakeholders such as multi-lateral institutions to assist with the procurement of drug testing devices. Other provinces such as the North West and Mpumalanga have managed to procure drug testing devices and to conduct training of official in districts and schools; these efforts are ongoing.

Moreover, the Department and its partner Departments: Social Development, Justice and Constitutional Development, Correctional Services, Health, Social Development, Communications and Digital Technologies and the South African Police Service are rolling out an Inter-Departmental Campaign on the Prevention of Violence, Bullying, Corporal Punishment, Gender Based Violence, Teenage Pregnancy and Drugs and Substance Abuse in schools. The Campaign raises awareness of these social ills and mobilises learners, teachers, parents and the broader community to participate in the fight against violence and drugs and substance abuse. The Campaign is championed by the Deputy Minister of Basic Education and is supported by Deputy Ministers from partner departments. Thus far, the Campaign has been implemented in four provinces: Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North West.

The Department and its Partner Departments: Health, Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), SAPS and The City of Johannesburg also convened the School Safety Imbizo in Ivory Park on the 10th of September 2022. The Imbizo raised awareness about Violence Prevention, including the prevention of drug and substance abuse with learners in Ivory Park schools, and mobilised the community of Ivory Park to fight against drugs and substance abuse. The Imbizo was Championed by the Minister of Basic Education and the MEC of the Gauteng Department of Education. The Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign Committee comprising of key stakeholders from school safety, sports and enrichment, governance and infrastructure, as well as relevant partner departments and civil society organisations

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is tasked to implement plans that address social ills including violence and substance abuse that speak to the challenges identified by the community in Ivory Park.

The Department also supports Community Imbizos spearheaded by SAPS. Thus far, the Department has supported Imbizos which were held in the North West, Gauteng and Kwa-Zulu Natal. The SAPS-led Imbizos always highlight the latest trends of criminal activities done by the youth. This empowers the Department to always be aware of the latest criminal activities and provide adequate support to schools in these hot spots.