**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 1310 – Branch D (a) and C (b)**

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**1310. Ms J F Terblanche (DA) to ask the Minister of Basic Education:**

With regard to the Cabinet statement issued on 11 May 2017 (details furnished), what interventions has her department undertaken in Vuwani, Limpopo, to ensure that learners are (a) back in class and (b) able to catch up on missed teaching time? NW1452E

**RESPONSE**

1. The Department of Basic Education (DBE), working with the Limpopo Department of Education, has held numerous engagement meetings with key stakeholders to ensure that normality is restored for learners to be back in classes in Vuwani, Vhembe District. The intention of these engagements has primarily been to enlist support to advocate for the upholding and respect of the right to a basic education. The stakeholders that have been involved include the following: teacher unions operating in the areas: National Professional Teachers Organisation South Africa (NAPTOSA), Professional Educators Union (PEU) and South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU); Principals of schools; Chairpersons of School Governing Bodies (SGBs); Department of Social Development; Department of Health; the Education Forum; the Pastors’ Forum; the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT); and the Business Forum. The stakeholders have worked tirelessly to engage communities in assisting the DBE to restore normality. The Education Forum, Pastors’ Forum, school governing body formations, the NECT, traditional leaders and teacher unions took a unanimous decision to support all efforts aimed at restoring education services in Vuwani. The LP DoE has been tracking the attendance of both teachers and learners, and attendance rates have been improving, which suggests that learners and teachers are responding to the call.

During the 2016 disruptions:

* Parolees as well as Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) workers were utilised for the cleaning of the schools, rubble removal and clearing of ground for mobile classes. Parents and SGBs of affected schools formed part of the cleaning team.
* Donations were received from various donors. Donations received included textbooks, stationery, photocopiers, data projectors and laptops, sanitary towels and toiletries, eating utensils, brooms and mops, Science Kits and desks and these are being put to good use. All these collectively came from the following donors: NECT, Game and Massmart, Mvula Trust, Stats SA, Letaba Estate, Leda and KLM.

In reality, the Department of Basic Education does not have the capacity and means to take measures to prevent and control organised and co-ordinated disruptions of learning and teaching processes, considering the reasons for the Vuwani crisis. However, the Department has taken measures to mitigate the impact of the disruptions, including the provision of mobile classrooms, school furniture, textbooks and stationery as well as feeding for learners where necessary.

1. The LDoE has developed a catch-up plan for Vuwani to ensure that learners can return to the normal routine as far as the school calendar is concerned. According to the catch-up plan, recovery teaching and learning will run (in the morning and afternoon from Monday to Thursday; and on Saturdays) until learners write the May/June Examinations. For Grades 1 to 11, the programme includes chunking of the content to ensure that the work is covered over the available period. Pace setters are being used to identify any backlog in curriculum coverage per school, per subject, with the view of implementing an accelerated programme to catch up. E-learning solutions (from Vodacom) are being used particularly for Grade 12. Enrichment camping sessions have also been organised for Grade 12 learners, where targeted content in designated subjects will be offered by District Lead Teachers. Learners will also be exposed to examination guidelines and coached on answering difficult questions in order to ensure adequate preparation.

The implementation of the catch-up plan in schools is being monitored and supported by multidisciplinary teams. The aim is to ensure that the plan is effective and adequate as a mechanism for ensuring that learners and teachers can cover work lost during disruptions. Teacher unions, in particular, have been very supportive in supporting the catch-up plan by encouraging their members to volunteer their services, even after normal working hours.

Counselling services have been made available for affected learners, teachers and parents to make sure effective teaching and learning in schools take place. These counselling support sessions will be available for teachers, learners and affected parents until the May/June examinations. These sessions are provided by the Pastors’ Forum, Department of Health and Department of Social Development.