**REPORT TO THE SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT ON THE DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE (DA) PETITION TO THE LIMPOPO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ON THE NATIONAL SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMME**

**Purpose:**

The Minister of Basic Education to present a report to the Speaker of Parliament in response to the Democratic Alliance Petition on the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) in the Limpopo Province.

**Background:**

1. In the 2014/15 financial year, schools in the Sekhukhune district in the Limpopo Province were affected by widespread food contamination; thus drawing negative publicity in the media and communities. There were also reports of learners who died after alleged food poisoning in schools around the Sekhukhune district.
2. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) received a petition from the Democratic Alliance that was delivered on 16 March 2015, at the Limpopo Department of Education, on the NSNP in the province.
3. The following submissions were made in the petition:

*3.1.* In October 2014, two learners passed away after allegedly ingesting contaminated food provided by the NSNP in the Sekhukhune district.

***Response***:

In November 2014, the Department of Basic Education, in collaboration with the Limpopo Department of Education, immediately intervened by deploying a team of ten (10) officials to conduct monitoring and support visits to 45 schools in the Sekhukhune district. In addition, thirteen (13) warehouses of all retailers delivering food items to schools were visited.

In relation to allegations of a learner who died at Kwena Chuene Primary, this was found to be untrue, as confirmed by the district NSNP Manager, who visited the school. In addition, on 10 November 2014, the School Principal confirmed that 4 learners were hospitalised, but no death occurred.

A media report also alleged that a learner at Makgane Primary school in the Sekhukhune district died of food poisoning linked to the NSNP. The DBE intervened by visiting the school. During a parents/community meeting organised by the School Governing Body (SGB) to discuss the non-feeding, some parents and community members put the blame for food poisoning on the feeding programme. However, this was corrected by the deceased learner’s parent present at this meeting, indicating that the child’s death had nothing to do with the programme. The Department extended this investigation to other schools in the district and was satisfied that the cause of death was not related to the school nutrition programme as alleged.

*3.2* 1600 learners took ill after consuming contaminated school food since October 2014. This happened in six separate reported incidents, at Makhabeni Primary, Mashegoanyane Primary, Makeke Primary, Kwena Chuene Primary and Makgane Primary.

***Response:***

All learners in the affected schools were taken to the local hospital and clinic for special medical examination. They were all treated and released without any serious consequences. The local nursing staff indicated that some learners were cleared of ill-health and only reacted out of panic. A team that comprised the Department of Basic Education, Provincial Department of Education and the Department of Health, visited all affected schools to assess the situation. The School Management Team was advised to immediately stop feeding and to remove all contaminated food products. The Department of Basic Education assimilated the services of the Department of Health to address the gaps in food safety; the Department of Health conducted training workshops for all volunteer food handlers in the Sekhukhune district. The intervention by the Departments of Basic Education and Health assisted the programme to resume in most schools.

*3.3* Between October 2014 and December 2014, in Vhembe and Mopani district, 38034 learners did not receive their food due to the non-delivery of food stuffs by Department suppliers.

**Response:**

The DBE is not aware of non-delivery of food stuffs by suppliers during the said period. In addition, the NSNP District Managers have also indicated that there were no reports of non-feeding due to non-delivery of food stuffs by suppliers during that period. During the Section 100 (1) (a) intervention, thirteen (13) wholesalers were engaged to deliver food stuff directly to schools, based on their capacity and willingness to extend supplies on credit (i.e with strong financial position). Prior to their engagement, the Department also monitored their warehouses to ensure compliance with food specifications and standards. It was also intended to address past incidents of non-delivery by defaulting service providers. During monitoring, it was observed that the delivery of their services was consistent, ensuring that feeding continues with no interruptions. It was only after thorough investigations on the alleged food contamination in October 2014 in Sekhukhune, that the services of two of the thirteen wholesalers were terminated, following sub-standard food products found at some schools. The other 11 were requested to extend their services to these affected schools so as not to disrupt feeding.

3.4 From January 2014 to March 2014, in Capricorn and Sekhukhune, 14006 learners did not benefit from the NSNP, while the Department underspent on the NSNP by R59 264 000 in 2013-14.

***Response***:

The Department is aware of the under-expenditure by the province due to delays in submission of invoices by some service providers and challenges with the BAS system .

*3.5* The Auditor General management report highlighted failings in NSNP, including:

1. Rotten fruit and vegetables that was unfit for human consumption;
2. Potentially expired food items were delivered to schools in that expiry dates were not visible on food products; and
3. No proof of monitoring of food handlers were found.

***Response***:

The DBE addressed the audit finding during the inter-provincial meetings in the 2014/15 financial year with all NSNP provincial managers. Work is in progress with the Limpopo Department of Education to address findings of the Auditor General’s Report.

1. **The current status of the programme in Limpopo**

(Addressing the demands of the Petition)

* 1. On 10 – 14 September 2015, officials from the DBE conducted monitoring and support visits to five (5) districts in the Limpopo province namely: Sekhukhune, Capricorn, Mopani, Waterberg and Vhembe. In all the 21 schools visited, the school feeding programme was implemented with success. The Department **will ensure that all qualifying schools receive meals on daily basis.**

* 1. In 2015, the province has advertised a new tender for the NSNP that closed on 02 July 2015. The contracts for the current wholesalers were extended to 31 December 2015, as a transitional measure. The process of awarding new tenders is underway. The Department will investigate and monitor whether all due processes were followed in terms of the supply chain management. Furthermore, in conjunction with the Provincial Treasury, the DBE will ensure **that all prospective bidders are vetted before being awarded the tender.**
  2. Currently, the Office of the Presidency (i.e the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation) in collaboration with the DBE has commissioned the Joint Education Trust to assess the implementation of the entire NSNP in all provinces. The outcome of the research report will be useful in validating the status of the programme in Limpopo and other provinces, while recommendations will be used to develop an Implementation Plan to improve quality and efficiencies in the programme.

1. **Strengthened capacity to monitor the programme** 
   1. The Department has strengthened collaboration with the Department of Health to source support from Environment Health Practitioners at Local Municipalities to monitor preparation areas and further assist with training of role-players, to ensure meals served to learners comply with health and safety standards. Plans are underway to establish Food Safety Management Teams at provincial and district/circuit level. Amongst others, this will facilitate the training of **volunteer food handlers towards monitoring their health standards**. A step-by-step Guide on how to respond to emergencies in food contamination and/or poisoning in schools has been forwarded to all the provincial Heads of Department to further disseminate and empower schools in handling food.
   2. The Department is currently piloting a monitoring solution using technology with sponsorship from Vodacom in 27 schools in the Masemola circuit, Sekhukhune district from 20 August until October 2015. The lessons learned from this pilot will inform a roll-out monitoring solution in other districts. This will provide real-time data and in response, the Department will ensure that **food is delivered fresh and food with no expiry dates is not accepted.** This will further compel schools **to adhere to** **the approved menu options.**
   3. The Department is in partnership with Feed Uplift Educate Love “FUEL”, a non-profit organisation, to strengthen monitoring and reporting systems to improve efficiencies in implementing the NSNP. FUEL has initiated a monitoring system, viz. Monitoring, Reporting and Response (MRR) which “provides NSNP officials with a “mirror” to see how well schools are implementing the NSNP and opportunity to respond in order to improve programme delivery”. The MRR is implemented in all districts to ensure the most effective way of assessing if “nutritious meals are served to learners (on time)’. In collaboration with the Provincial Department, FUEL has conducted training workshops in the Mopani district and will progressively extend it to all districts in Limpopo in 2015. This will strengthen monitoring which will also benefit the **provincial menus as issues on quality and quantity will be addressed**.
   4. The Department will continue to monitor the programme and support the Provincial Department towards improving the quality of the programme **in the interest of all learners in the Limpopo province.**

**PETITION TO PARLIAMENT**

**Letter from Mrs D van der Walt, LP/MP dated 02 September 2015**

“Tenders awarded to alleged friends/family of the previous ANCYL, Mr Julius Malema”.

**Response from the LP Acting Head of Department, Ms NB Mutheiwana letter dated 6 November 2015**

“Amongst the questions that related to allegations of fraudulent awarding of the NSNP tender that we responded to are listed (referred to above in NA 942). The one relating Mr Julius Malema came in a way of requesting directors of two given companies; to which we also responded based on the information sourced from our Supply Chain Management unit. The Department could not establish from the information on head as to whether these directors are related to Mr Malema or not”.