Official reply: 06 June 2016

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION 1226/2016**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

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**1226. Ms H H Malgas (ANC) to ask the Minister of Social Development:**

(1) What progress has her department made thus far with the draft policy on early childhood development;

(2) whether a comprehensive programme is in place for early childhood development; if so, was the specified programme gazetted for public comment? NW1365E

**Reply:**

1. The ECD policy was approved by cabinet on 09 December 2015 after an extensive consultation process with the ECD stakeholders (government and non-government). It highlights 15 policy positions. It seeks to ensure integrated services by all partner departments, universal equitable access of the comprehensive age and stage appropriate quality services by 2030, empower and enable parents, ensure the alignment and harmonisation of inter-sectoral policies, legislation and programmes across the different sectors and ensure adequate and effective leadership, coordinated planning, funding, implementation, monitoring of progress and on-going quality improvements.

The **short term (2017)**, covers establishment of the necessary legal framework, organisational structures and institutional arrangements, planning, financing mechanisms necessary to support and realise its commitments. The **medium term (2024)** includes the availability of age and developmental stage appropriate essential components of the comprehensive package of quality ECD services, accessible to all infants and young children and their caregivers. The **long term (2030)** covers availability of a full comprehensive age and development stage appropriate package of quality early childhood development services and accessible to all infants and young children and their caregivers.

Implementation thereof, is preceded by capacity building on the ECD policy and the National Comprehensive Programme in provinces which has commenced now in May 2016 until November 2016.

(2) The National Comprehensive ECD Programme has been developed which includes the essential components addressing nutrition, health, social protection, inclusion of children with disabilities and special needs, stimulation and early learning to ensure the best possible start in life. The programme puts emphasis on early detection of any disease or developmental delays from conception throughout the 1st thousand days. It was sanctioned in the ECD Policy as Chapter 5 which is the core of the National Integrated ECD policy and it has been aligned to the approved National Integrated ECD policy.