NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

# QUESTION NO. 187

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## INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER 2 OF 2020

**187. Ms S J Graham (DA) to ask the Minister of Home Affairs:**

Whether there is an official rural strategy document for his department to address the needs of rural communities situated far away from Home Affairs offices; if not, (a) why not and (b) will such a document be developed to address the issues; if so, what are the standard operating procedures for his department when visiting smaller towns and communities in terms of (i) notifying ward councillors of times and dates for visits, (ii) ensuring that staff have all the necessary tools of trade to render a comprehensive service to communities that cannot reach the main centres, (iii) providing a schedule to the local municipality of planned visits for the year, (iv) the prescribed minimum number of visits to each smaller town in each year and (v) the processing and addressing of complaints when departmental officials do not meet their obligations in terms of rendering the required services? NW208E

**REPLY:**

* The Department of Home Affairs has a constitutional obligation to provide equitable and quality service to the population of the Republic of South Africa residing in both rural and urban areas. The Department through its footprint development and optimisation strategy adopted a multi-channel strategy to deliver its services and this strategy utilizes the combination of traditional distribution channels (Physical Infrastructure), non-traditional channels (Mobile Units), partnerships with Public and Private organizations and the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) to deliver on its services as well as to improve Geographic access to its service and quality of services the department delivers. The department established its distribution channels through the utilization of a scientific method to assess the provision and location of its services which includes the Geographic information system that assist the department to determine the optimal number and locations of traditional channels it requires to meet the service delivery needs of the population residing in both rural and urban areas.
* The provision of the Department’s distribution channels is determined by the Accessibility models that the department utilises in order to determine optimal locations to establish its facilities.
* The Department is currently conducting a geographical accessibility study which commenced in April 2019, to assess the provision and geographic locations of its service points in relation to where people live and work with the ultimate goal of improving geographic access to its services. The findings of the project are used to develop the department’s access model which will clearly outline the geographical areas which are under-served, poorly served and well-served by the department’s available footprint.
* Furthermore, the DHA Access Model will provide the number of service points that are required to provide optimum levels of services and access to beneficiaries, potential optimum, sites for new facilities and areas that should be given priority. The Department of Home Affairs will utilise the DHA Access Model to:
* Set targets for reducing distances that people travel to access our services
* Assess what is affordable for fixed offices and what can be done by mobile or other means to extend access and affordability
* Consult with provincial and local authorities on their spatial development frameworks to identify sites that are suitable for DHA facilities, coordinating planning and investment in new facilities.
* The implementation of the Department’s Access Model will commence during 2020/21 financial year. The department utilises geographic information system software to also assess the provision of its service points as well as the total population that are covered by its service points. The preliminary DHA Access Model shows that the department requires approximately 261 front offices and 183 mobile visiting points to deliver optimal services to the population as depicted in the table below.
* The Department has dedicated offices, in the form of mobile units, which are used to visit communities to render services. These mobile offices are managed by Mobile Office Managers and all tools of trade required are kept in those mobile offices.
* Furthermore, Stakeholder Forum platforms enable the Department to reach out to far flung communities by having community leaders in the persons of the Ward Councilors, Ward Committees, Community Development Workers (CDWs) to bring us needy, undocumented community members, who would require documentation in all its forms, by informing them of the documentation requirements for them to know what to bring when requiring Home Affairs services. The regular Stakeholder Forum meetings, in conjunction with the Departmental officials, that are held bi-monthly, craft Itineraries for different Wards, or localities with dates, and times, stating the requirements, or supporting documents that must be brought along by the clients.
* Programs are distributed to our stakeholders, including Speakers and ward Councillors, during Stakeholder Forums before the actual day of rendering services to a particular area to allow communities to prepare themselves in advance. Our Mobile Offices also play a meaningful role by visiting such communities to sensitize them about our visits and also place our programs at prominent areas for public consumption.
* The Department does not have a prescribed set of visits. Visits are normally informed by the volume of clients who require services at a particular place. Ward councilors normally accumulate the information on the services required by their communities; this will then inform the Department when developing community visit programs with regard to the number of visits to a particular area.
* The Department has put in place the Service Delivery Charter that provides the turnaround times for services it delivers in all its offices. The Service Charter also provides the redress mechanisms that are put in place in order to address the services that are not delivered within turnaround times as stipulated in the Service Delivery Charter.
* These mechanisms including the Department’s contact centre and the complaints and suggestion boxes that are placed within all front offices of the department of home affairs. The details of the contact centre is provided on the Service Charters that are displayed in all front offices where clients are able to call the contact centre and enquire about their applications. The contact centre of the Department of Home Affairs, given the status of the application has the capacity to resolve complaints and cases to the finalisation of the application.
* Furthermore, queries and complaints that are logged through the complaints and suggestion boxes in all front offices of the Department are attended by District Managers: Operations, and they implement appropriate remedial actions to address the situation. Premier/ Ministerial complaints are attended at Head Office through Provincial Manager’s office.

**END**