# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 2744**

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**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 47)**

**Ms N N Chirwa (EFF) to ask the Minister of Health:**

(a) What programmes is his department running to ensure that children with learning disabilities in rural and/or township areas receive adequate health and/or medical services that are at the disposal of his department and (b) how does his department ensure that those who live far from hospitals with specialist facilities also receive assistance that is able to reach them at their point of need and with ease?

###### NW3515E

**REPLY:**

1. Health facilities throughout the country implement a number of programmes and strategies which aim to ensure that children remain healthy, and reach their full developmental potential. These services are all free of charge and include:

* Well Child/Early Childhood Development (ECD) services
* Expanded Programme in Immunisation (EPI)
* Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI) including provision of paediatric HIV services.
* Child nutrition services
* Specialist services: these include rehabilitation services such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech and language therapy, oral health, eye care and mental health
* Adolescent and Youth Health services
* Mass media campaigns especially the Side-by-Side campaign which aims to support parents and other caregivers to provide all aspects of care that children require.

The Integrated School Health Programme (ISHP) is implemented jointly with the Department of Basic Education (DBE). The ISHP provides onsite screening services to school-going children once during each of the four educational phases, (foundation phase (Gr R-3), intermediate phase (Gr 4-6), senior phase (Gr 7-9) and Further Education and Training (FET) (Gr 10-12). This focuses primarily on identifying health barriers to learning, as well as identifying children who have or are at risk for long-term health, psychosocial or other problems. Additional individual assessments, offered by a professional nurse, should also be offered to all learners who are repeating grades or at the request of an educator, parent or at the request of the learner/self-referral.

The Department of Health also works with the Department of Social Development to ensure that eligible children receive social grants, and are able to access other social services.

1. Whilst some specialist services are only provided at hospital levels, efforts have been made to expand provision of services at primary health care levels. Such efforts include appointment of District Clinical Specialist Teams, ensuring that all primary health care facilities are visited by doctors and allocating therapists who are completing their community service to primary health care facilities.

Where learners are identified as requiring health and other services that cannot be provided on-site through routine school health services, outreach services are provided through specialised school health mobiles.

In areas where specialised mobiles are not operating, learners are referred to fixed facilities including PHC clinics, community health centres (CHCs) and hospitals. Plans are in place to ensure that learners are seen at appropriate times (i.e. in the afternoon or during the school holidays). These arrangements must be made with the facility prior to the screening of learners.

Services may also be provided using existing mobile services, both PHC mobiles and specialised mobiles (such as dental mobiles or optometric mobiles). These services may be provided by DOH employees or by other providers on a regular or intermittent basis (e.g. services provided by NGOs or by professional societies on a voluntary basis). The Department of Social Development (DSD) is responsible for assisting learners to access services, particularly providing transport to accessing services where financial barriers exist.

Data and indicators regarding screening of learners is available at all levels of care, however DBE has data on learners with learning disabilities per grade, gender and type of disability as the custodian of providing learning and teaching to all learners. This is provided in line with the 2014 Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) policy, which provides a standardised programme for all learners who require additional support to enhance inclusion in schools.

END.