

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

# QUESTION NO. 3794

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## INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER 44 OF 2017

**3794. Mr A M Figlan (DA) to ask the Minister of Home Affairs:**

(a) Why has the reliability of the information regarding the verification of the performance on the outreach programmes of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) remained a challenge for several years and (b) what plans are in place to realistically address the specified issue given the complexity of the IEC’s operations? NW4292E

**REPLY:**

The Electoral Commission responded as follows:

1. The Electoral Commission’s Outreach Programme has received a qualified audit from the Auditor General of South Africa for 3 consecutive financial years: 2014/2015, 2015/2016 and 2016/2017. The common reason for qualification in all three instances has been the reliability of information regarding the verification on Outreach Targets. The source of this has largely centred on the verification of performance against the target for Civic & Democracy Education (CDE) Events. “Events” in this instance refer to an activity with an educational objective targeting a specific audience of least 20 people as defined year on year in the Technical Indicator Descriptions that accompany the Annual Performance Plan. This is one target out of several that measures the performance of the Outreach Programme.

An event has to be supported by auditable evidence to demonstrate the minimum number of attendees per event and – for purposes of usefulness – educational substance.

The system on which CDE events are captured is known as the Outreach Management System (OMS). Before its advent, events were captured on Excel Spreadsheets and supporting evidence stored manually. This was labour-intensive, cumbersome and an inefficient way of collecting and collating management data. Thus the OMS was designed to – amongst other things:

* Avail management information and statistical data;
* Monitor performance indicators and targets at various levels of the organisation; and
* Facilitate quality and risk assurance;

The OMS came into use in April 2015. All the performance data for CDE events for the 2015-2016 financial year audits was stored in, generated by, and drawn from the OMS.

Reliability has been a challenge due to the following factors:

* 1. From the outset, there were repeated shortcomings in the capturing and uploading of auditable evidence;
  2. Most events take place in provincial and local offices of the Electoral Commission. During non-election years the responsibility for capturing the events and the supporting documentation on the OMS falls on Electoral Project Coordinators (EPCs). During election years, added contract capacity takes on this responsibility. The events and the supporting documentation are supposed to be reviewed and approved by Regional Supervisors. Provincial staff has supervisory duties to ensure this happens. This scheme has proved fraught and has resulted in events not being captured on time and those that are captured being approved without the requisite supporting documents. In turn has resulted in three consecutive qualifications;
  3. Poor quality of auditable data was in evidence. Audit findings showed that incorrect evidence was uploaded, or that the educational substance could not be determined rendering the target inadequate for purposes of usefulness; and
  4. Inadequate and ineffective internal controls to ensure proper record keeping in a timely manner which in turn compromised completeness, relevance and accuracy of the information captured.

1. The remedial measures that have been taken include:
   1. Revision of the Technical Indicator Description that makes it compulsory to upload both a register with a minimum of 20 attendees and evidence of educational substance;
   2. National Office monthly quality assurance which is effected before an event is approved and thus recorded on the OMS;
   3. Enhancement of the OMS to improve the adequacy and effectiveness of internal controls such as segregation of approval duties; and
   4. Improved communication throughout the value chain and re-training of end-users.