# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 765**

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**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 09)**

**Dr H C Volmink (DA) to ask the Minister of Health:**

(1) What steps has he taken to protect the public from the health risks associated with the drought that is currently affecting the country;

(2) does the Government health sector currently have sufficient (a) financial and (b) human resources to address the health risks associated with the drought; if not, what steps will he take to ensure that there are sufficient resources to deal with the health risks associated with the drought; if so,

(3) has a specific (a) strategy and/or (b) operational plan been developed; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?

###### NW884E

**REPLY:**

1. Drought conditions may lead to numerous short and long term human health impacts, ranging from the risks of the spread of waterborne diseases due to compromised quantity and quality of drinking water and poor sanitation and hygiene, to hunger and malnutrition due to food unavailability and security issues.

With drought conditions, it is required that integrated solutions be employed to control the threat of drought on environmental and human health. Therefore a collaborated, intergovernmental response is required to protect the public from health risks associated with the drought. The Department of Health, however, continues to employ a holistic approach to health interventions by providing preventative, promotive and curative health care services to the public for protection on human health, including the mitigation of drought conditions on human health. These services include:

* Strengthening and maintaining disease surveillance, and maintain capacity to respond to communicable diseases;
* Monitoring and activating disease outbreaks and preparedness team where outbreaks are reported;
* Health-related water quality monitoring to detect changes in water quality in collaboration with municipality and water services authorities;
* Strengthening health promotion and public education on water conservation, hygiene and emergency treatment of water and the impacts of drought on human health;
* Monitoring of infectious diseases in young children, including diarrhoea and malnutrition through the District Health Information System;
* Provision of emergency medical services;
* Increased surveillance of imported goods, especially agricultural consignments in points of entry;
* Monitor nutrition of vulnerable populations; and
* Strengthening monitoring and surveillance of environmental conditions that may constitute health hazards or risks, as a result of the drought, dust conditions, sanitation, food control, etc.
1. (a) Yes, the health sector does receive financial resources from Government to provide health services to South Africans. This includes resources for disaster preparedness.

(b) The health sector continues to ensure that adequate and skilled human resources are available in the health sector in line with the National Development Plan (NDP) priorities.

1. To ensure health sector readiness to deal with climate change impacts, the Department has developed a climate change and health adaptation plan. The plan provides a broad framework for health sector action towards climate change impacts, such as drought, and effectively guide the management of climate change impacts on health through interventions and emergency response capacity.

The health sector, in implementing the plan, continues to engage and negotiate across sectors in the interest of public health. The aim is to ensure that human health is central to planning across all sectors to improve public health and reduce vulnerability to climate change.

END.