Official reply: 20 May 2016

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION 979/2016**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

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**979. Ms B S Masango (DA) to ask the Minister of Social Development:**

(1) Whether she is aware of the challenging conditions under which social workers in the Free State work; if not, why not; if so, what plans are in place to correct the situation;

(2) (a) in how many other provinces are social workers facing similar challenging conditions, (b) what are the relevant details in each case and (c) what plans, if any, have been put in place by her department to alleviate the plight of these social workers and ultimately their clients? NW1109E

**Reply:**

1. Yes, I am aware of the working conditions of social workers in the Free State. During 2014/15; I initiated district dialogues across the province where social workers identified and discussed issues pertaining to working conditions impacting on social work practice. This was in preparation for the National Social Work Indaba held in March 2015, where working conditions was identified as a theme for discussion. Feedback from Free State district dialogues was incorporated into a consolidated report on provincial dialogues, which was presented at the Indaba. Resolutions, inclusive of improvement of working conditions were adopted to guide the development of a National Action Plan to respond to the plight of social workers. Through the support of the department, the Provincial Department of Social Development in the Free State is developing a provincial Action Plan to respond to the situation.
2. (a) I am also aware of the situation in all other provinces.

 (b) There are similar challenges to working conditions of social workers in all provinces, and these include inadequate tools of trade, inadequate office accommodation and poor office infrastructure, limited support staff (e.g. receptionists) and inadequate transport for social workers.

 (c) Based on information collated from district and provincial dialogues I hosted a National Social Workers Indaba in March 2015 with the theme “Revitalising Social Work Practice in South Africa” providing a platform for further discussions and identification of solutions to alleviate poor working conditions of social workers. A consolidated report on working conditions was presented at the Indaba to inform discussions and resolutions. Based on resolutions adopted, a National Action Plan on the Social Work was developed to guide development of province specific plans. The Department is monitoring the implementation of the Action Plan in all provinces. Furthermore, implementation of the Action Plan is a standing agenda point of MINMEC to ensure monitoring thereof by senior managers within the department.