

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FOR WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION NO. 3779

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(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 24)

Ms N H Mhlongo (IFP) to ask the Minister of Health:

- (1) With regard to the 2026 Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination campaign of his department and the commitment by the Republic to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health threat, what (a) total number of (i) girls aged 9 to 14 years were targeted for vaccination during the 2026 campaign and (ii) the targeted cohort had received at least one dose of the HPV vaccine as at 1 June 2026 and (b) measures have been implemented to increase the vaccine uptake in districts where coverage remains below the national target;
- (2) given that the national school-based HPV vaccination programme has been reported to reach approximately 75% of eligible girls and that cervical cancer remains a leading cause of cancer-related deaths among South African women, what (a) additional funding and resources have been allocated to expand HPV vaccine coverage and (b) progress has been made towards achieving his department's cervical cancer elimination objectives for the 2026-2030 period?

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REPLY:

- (1) (a) In line with current recommendations, one dose of HPV vaccination should be provided to all girls 9 – 15 years of age. The number of girls in public and special schools targeted to receive one dose of HPV vaccination during February and March 2026 is as follows:
 - (i) Target: 472 658
 - (ii) Vaccinated (with one dose): 428 395 (90.6%)

Catch-up doses to girls who were missed being vaccinated as well as vaccination of girls in private and independent schools will be offered during August and September 2026.

- (b) The Department has identified the provinces and districts with suboptimal coverage (below 80%) and is working with these districts to ensure that they develop and implement stakeholder engagement plans. Key stakeholders include educators, school-governing bodies and parents in order to ensure that consent forms are distributed timeously and that parents and caregivers sign and return the forms. This is critical as only girls with signed consent forms can be vaccinated.

Local engagement with stakeholders is being supported by national awareness, advocacy and social mobilisation campaigns. The Department is embarking on a renewed communication drive in collaboration with the Department of Education to ensure that educators, parents and others are aware of the benefits and support HPV vaccination.

- (2) (a) Funding provided through the current HPV Vaccination Conditional Grant is sufficient to reach all girls attending Grade 5 in public, private and independent schools. Detailed costing is being undertaken to ascertain whether additional funding will be needed to provide catch-up doses to all girls up to 15 years of age – these girls missed doses either because they did not have consent forms, were absent on the day of vaccination (or not attending school at all) or attended private and independent schools (where vaccination was not offered prior to 2024).
- (b) The Cervical Cancer Strategic and Implementation Framework 2026 – 2030 has been finalised and disseminated. Whilst there has not yet been an opportunity for the strategy to be formally launched, implementation of the framework and strengthening of the cervical cancer elimination programme is ongoing with particular focus on primary and secondary prevention (Pillars 1 and 2). All provinces have been given targets to achieve if South Africa is to reach the 90-70-90 cervical elimination targets by 2030, and are currently developing implementation plans aimed at achieving these targets.

Pillar 2A focuses on secondary prevention through expanding cervical screening using a high-quality screening test i.e. HPV DNA testing. During 2025/26, a total of 980 670 screening tests were conducted with 89 613 cervical screening tests being conducted during April 2026. However, screening will need to be significantly expanded if the target of screening 70% of women by 2030 is to be achieved.

Pillar 2B focuses on ensuring that women who screen positive receive treatment. This requires that all provinces and districts define and expand their service delivery platforms including clearly defined referral pathways. Expansion and decentralisation of treatment services is being supported through a donation of equipment (Large Loop Excision of the Transformation Zone (LLETZ) machines and thermal ablaters). Eight provinces will benefit from donation of equipment – readiness assessments have been conducted and it is expected that the equipment will arrive during the second quarter of 2026/27.

END.