

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**MOTIVATION OF THE MOTION ON EXPANDING MEDICAL CLINICS
TO ALL TERTIARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE COUNTRY IN
ORDER TO ENSURE THAT STUDENTS ENROLLED AT TERTIARY
EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS HAVE ACCESS TO QUALITY MEDICAL
CARE AT ALL TIMES.**

By: Hon. Nico Smit, MP

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Honourable Speaker

Honourable Members

I rise today in support of the motion tabled by Honourable Dienda in this August House on the expansion of medical clinics to all tertiary institutions in the country. Honourable Dienda has raised an important issue as it relates to the development of the Namibian youth.

The much cited potential and role of the youth in driving Namibia forward towards the realisation of our national developmental plan, namely Vision 2030, points to the significance of this portion of the population. By fulfilling their potential the youth of Namibia will be

able to assume their role in the development of our country and the socio-economic upliftment of the Namibian people. However, it is questionable how we as national leaders expect the youth of our country to live up to the very high expectations we have set ^{FOR} ~~of~~ them if we do not ensure that they have access to things like medical facilities and professional medical care at places of higher learning.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members,

Access to adequate health services and professional health practitioners ensures that any individual has at his/her disposal the information, and knowledge to make the best decision whatever situation is faced. Namibia has a ~~tragically~~ high incidence of baby dumping, a social ill that is a likely consequence of unprotected and/or risky sexual behaviour, teenage and/or unplanned pregnancies. Ensuring access to the above services and professionals for individuals studying at tertiary education institutions in Namibia will go a long way towards reducing the incidence and prevalence of the above social problems.

By providing access to medical services and professionals one also provides young people enrolled at tertiary education institutions in Namibia with the tools to make informed and educated decisions about their lives. Whenever national leaders speak of the potential and role of the youth to lead our country to prosperity there is always a call for the youth to take action, realise their potential and drive our

country forward. Yet for some reason we have been very slow to ensure that the youth have at their disposal the tools needed to fulfil the task set out for them. It is high time that we as leaders ensure that the young people of Namibia are adequately equipped. Medical clinics at tertiary education institutions throughout Namibia will ensure that access to medical services and professionals do not become a burden to those who should be spending their time preparing and educating themselves in order to realise our national vision.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members,

On the 15th of August this year the *Namibian Sun* newspaper carried an article under the heading “*Closed Unam Clinic Haunts Students*” in which it reported that the clinic at the University of Namibia (UNAM) Main Campus in Windhoek has been closed down and provides no services to any of the institution’s students. Considering the essential service dispensed by a medical clinic, it is alarming to note that students at one of Namibia’s foremost public institutions of higher education cannot access medical services and professionals on campus.

One must commend the Government for the expansion of service provision in key areas such as education and healthcare over the past twenty-five years. Yet it is worrisome that students undergoing tuition at the main campus of a public institution of higher learning in the capital city of our country have for the past two years no access to

medical services at their place of study. Considering the location of the Unam campus on the outskirts of Windhoek in relation to where public health facilities are located, it is reasonable to expect that a student at that institution will have some difficulty in gaining access to the necessary services should an emergency occur at an untoward hour.

Healthcare is an essential service, and access thereto is enshrined in the Right to Health. Bearing in mind the considerable responsibility we have placed on the youth of our country it is only fitting that we ensure that they are able to make the best of themselves and our country without the challenge of limited and/or poor access to healthcare. Furthermore, allowing a situation to develop and linger in which students enrolled at tertiary institutions cannot easily and free of hassle access medical services, paints a picture of a national leadership that is not responsive to the needs of those affected.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members,

The Polytechnic of Namibia recently held its HIV/Aids Awareness Campaign on its campus in Windhoek, where the aim of the event was to raise awareness on the devastating disease. Apart from that the Institution's Department of Student Services regularly conducts workshops for its students on sexual and reproductive health, and drug and alcohol abuse. Ensuring that students at tertiary education institutions have access to information and knowledge about health-

related issues are key ingredients needed to effect positive behaviour change. I have alluded to ensuring that young people have the tools at their disposal to make good decisions about how they live their lives. By providing access to information and knowledge about health related issues, one ensures that students are empowered to make decisions that will lead away from risky sexual behaviour.

Not only do we need to expand medical clinics to all tertiary institutions in Namibia but it is also imperative that all institutions undertake proactive campaigns to raise awareness and share information amongst their students on health-related matters. We have a responsibility to ensure that the youth of our country, our children, are able to access medical services and obtain professional medical help easily and without any undue obstacles. The absence thereof places a burden on young Namibians and unnecessarily detracts from their education.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members,

As we develop further it is reasonable to expect that tertiary education enrolment will increase, meaning that more and more people will study at our local institutions of higher learning. In turn the demand for medical services and professional will increase at these institutions and as such it should not really be a question of “are we going” to expand medical clinics to all tertiary institutions in the country” but rather, “when are we going to expand medical clinics to

all tertiary institutions in the country". This question is of great significance. We have placed a huge responsibility on the youth of our country, and rightly so, yet is equally our responsibility to ensure that they have the best possible chance of realising our collective dream.

I hereby support the Motion.