



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ARTS, AND CULTURE

RESPONSE TO PARLIAMENT QUESTIONS

BY

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MINISTER

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

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Hon. Speaker, Hon. Members,

I rise to respond to the questions asked by **Hon. Jennifer Van Den Heever of PDM**, in relation to the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) to accelerate the emergency construction of classrooms country wide through the engagement of August Twenty-Six Construction (Pty) Ltd.

Firstly, let me express our appreciation for the expression of concern and interest by the Honourable member and other members of this August house, to the course of our mandate, as the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture.

The Ministry is frequently faced with queries on various matters concerning Basic Education, Arts and Culture. This continuous engagement and show of interest by our valued stakeholders is a clear sign of the nation's hope and trust in our ability as the Ministry, and in particular, the government, to provide accessible, equitable and quality inclusive education to our children for the betterment of this nation's future.

We therefore, as a Ministry, wholeheartedly welcome any queries from any of our stakeholders, because through their frequent engagement, we are provided with opportunities for self-assessment and consequently, an improvement on our service delivery to our customers and the Nation at large.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable members

Let me delve into the concerns raised by Hon. Jennifer Van den Heever. I will not address each question individually as some questions raised are not relevant to our mandate. Hence, I cordially would like to advise the Honourable member to direct such questions directly to the management of August Twenty-Six Holding Company, to answer for themselves, through Ministry of Defence and Veteran Affairs.

From the onset, let me remind the Hon. Member about the recently concluded National Conference on Education, which passed several recommendations geared towards the improvement of education delivery in the country. Among others, the recommendations highlighted the perpetual inadequacy of educational infrastructure, mainly, the lack of classrooms and the aging school infrastructure as being among the main attributes for the weak performance of learners and the overcrowding in most schools across the country.

Year in, year out, the citizens are confronted with ill-intended disparaging video and audio clips on social media about the poor state of some of our education physical facilities, with some of our learners being shown attending school in some makeshift structures, and in some cases, apparently under trees, as classrooms.

Honourable Speaker, Hon. Members

It should be pointed out that, since the advent of COVID-19, the Ministry has been collaborating with some public entities notably; the

Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform (MAWLR), Namibia Correctional Services, August 26 Construction Company, and the Namibia Training Authority (NTA), concerning the provision of water supply infrastructure to schools, construction of ablution facilities and classrooms in schools, in various regions, countrywide.

These collaborations have been initiated and made possible using the relevant provisions of the Public Procurement Act, 2015 (Act No. 15 of 2015) as amended. In particular, section 34 of this Act which allows for Execution by Public Entities (EPE). It should be noted that, through this initiative, the Ministry has made great strides in its endeavour to address the urgency of classroom shortage in the country. In the same vein, the engagement of these public entities has provided the Ministry with significant time and cost advantages which are difficult to attain through an open market approach.

While the Ministry fully embraces the objective of the Public Procurement Act in its totality, it is a fact that the huge education infrastructure backlog that we are faced with in this country cannot be addressed through an open market approach alone. It requires deliberate and purposeful diversification of procurement approaches as provided for in the said statute, to ensure full address.

It is public knowledge that at the inception of each school year, the Ministry is often besieged with complaints about children in some regions who are unable to secure placement in a school. The main reason is usually due to classroom shortages. Given this reality, the

Ministry opted for EPE procurement method (as provided for in the Public Procurement Act) which was pursued to secure a short-term agreement for the emergency construction of additional classrooms and ablution facilities by August Twenty-Six Construction (Pty) Ltd.

This deliberate, but purposeful intervention was decided upon, bearing in mind the current dire need of additional classrooms, country wide, persuaded by the fact that, classrooms are considered special infrastructure which should be delivered timely, affordably and in the required quantity and quality for immediate deployment towards the educational development of the Namibian child.

Therefore, the use of the aforementioned public entities and in particular, August Twenty-Six Construction Company was a well-considered choice for the Ministry to procure works for the emergency construction of classrooms and related infrastructure, speedily, at affordable rates and with zero risk of project abandonment.

Through this particular engagement, a total of 510 classrooms (out of the 1248 which we envisage to construct in this financial year) and 74 ablution facilities were granted to the said company for a total amount of N\$ 255 million, with an agreement to construct and handover these facilities within a period of four months, commencing the month of June 2023. Currently, 90% of these facilities have been completed without any single one being at risk of non-completion.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable members

The Ministry is contented to report its full satisfaction with the work of August Twenty-Six Construction Company and its responsiveness to deliver within the agreed time-frame and within the Ministry's financial means. Given this achievement, the Ministry considers the Execution by Public Entities, as an ideal procurement option which it would like to pursue further in the short to medium term, in order to contain the current infrastructure backlog, while at the same time, employing the Open National Bidding (ONB) procurement approach for the long-term needs.

In light of the above, we wish to further highlight that, the MoEAC is one of the several public entities which have steadily been procuring through the Central Procurement Board of Namibia (CPBN) using the open market approach. To date, twelve (12) capital projects for the construction of schools and school hostels with the total value of **N\$936 million** have been procured or is in the process of being procured through the CPBN. Furthermore, the Ministry's procurement of food stuff for supply to all government school hostels, and also for the school feeding programme, mainly to primary schools, countrywide, which is valued at a combined total of **N\$2.7 billion** (multi-year for 36 months) has been procured and or is under the process to be procured through the CPBN.

Honourable Speaker

It is therefore evident from the above stated that, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and all other well established/ bigger construction companies in the private sector still remain with more than a fair share of public works and services from the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, to compete on the open market.

The Ministry would like to reiterate that all our bidding and tendering processes for works, goods and services are done in accordance with the provision of the Public Procurement Act, 2015, as amended.

Therefore, we wish to assure the public, in particular, Hon. Van Den Heever and those harbouring the same speculative views, to understand that there is nothing unbecoming with the manner in which the above stated works were awarded to August Twenty-Six Construction (Pty) Ltd or any other public entity for that matter.

I so submit.