



EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

28 October 2025

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS – SCHOOL ENROLLMENT – STUDY/SURVEY ON CHALLENGES 54

(No. B/930) Dr. Ms R. Daureeawo (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resource whether, in regard to children with special needs, including those suffering from epilepsy and autism, he will state the number thereof enrolled in schools, indicating –

(a) whether a study/survey has been carried out to better understand the challenges faced by the latter and, incidentally, by their families in relation to their schooling/provision thereto of their educational needs, and

(b) the specialized help provided thereto in schools.

Dr. Gungapersad: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there are about 3000 children with special education needs, including around 649 suffering from autism and 140 from epilepsy, enrolled in SEN schools.

Furthermore, 57 learners with autism and 53 with epilepsy are enrolled in mainstream primary and secondary schools.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that no formal study of survey has been carried out of far. However, following continuous interaction with stakeholders including the families of the SEN children and, subsequently, during the session dedicated to SEN sector during *Les Assises de l'Éducation*, the challenges in relation to the schools and educational needs have been identified as follows –

(a) Inadequate provision for physical accessibility in buildings;

(b) Unavailability of specialised vehicles for the transport of children with disabilities;

(c) Lack of SEN professionals on the market such as speech therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and even SEN educators;

- (d) Inadequate specialised training to the existing educators, and
- (e) Absence of an effective early diagnosis mechanism for disabilities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regard part (b) of the question, despite the existing financial constraints, my Ministry is doing its utmost to ensure that these children are not left behind.

We are, therefore, providing the following services to SEN schools –

1. Payment of grant-in-aid to NGOs and SeDEC schools registered with the Special Education Needs Authority to cover salaries of staffs, hot meals and a special support services, occupational speech and physiotherapy.
2. Transport facilities for pick-up and drop-up of the children and free bus pass are provided by my Ministry for those attending public schools;
3. Adapted furniture provided to SEN learners;
4. Adapted textbooks including large prints and drawing;
5. Services of teacher assistants to help in academic challenges and of carers for daily living challenges such as eating and toileting, and
6. Implementation of Barrier-free Project is ongoing in primary and secondary schools to make way for adapted toilets, infrastructure and accommodations to welcome and provide a conducive environment for SEN learners.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in addition, I am informed by the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity that the following facilities are provided namely, –

1. Refund of travelling expenses to children with disabilities attending daycare, specialised, integrated and mainstream schools;
2. Refund of taxi fares to students with severe disabilities. As a new budgetary measure, the refund of taxi fares has an extended to children with autism spectrum disorder and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder and 100% duty-free facilities to parents of children with disabilities for the purchase of adapted cars.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, however, as a caring government we want to do more for our children with disabilities to make them feel at par with others. This is why my Ministry is collaborating with other stakeholders with a view to coming up with a continuum of care for all children with disabilities. The objective is to adopt a holistic approach to build a more inclusive society and positively support the children and their families. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Dr. Daureeawo.

Dr. Ms Daureeawo: Dr. the hon. Minister mentioned continuum of care. So, I am thinking maybe if you could clarify whether the hon. Minister is thinking of carrying out regular assessments with a view to monitor progress and adapt approaches to address the unique needs of each and every child? Is that correct?

Dr. Gungapersad: Obviously, education is a dynamic sector and definitely, officials from the Ministry and other ministries collaborate in order to look after the welfare of our kids, especially those kids with especial education needs.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Ms Thannoo!

Dr. Ms Thannoo: Can the hon. Minister ensure that these facilities are accessible to the early childhood sector as well? Thank you.

Dr. Gungapersad: Now, I do not know if when you are talking about early childhood, you are talking from 3-5 and we also have an issue, those who are above 20 – according to the Special Education Needs Authority (SENA), there are clear guidelines and definitely, that part is taken care of by the Ministry of Gender.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhummun!

Mr Jhummun: Is there any plan to cater for these students once they reach the age of 20?

Dr. Gungapersad: That is an interesting question. As we said, as a caring Government, this has not been taken care of so far. Definitely, like last week, officials from my Ministry met officials from other ministries in order to look deeper into that issue to provide the proper *cadre* for these children to be taken care of, below five and after 20 so that we provide this continuum of care as I mentioned earlier. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, hon. Dr. Prayag!

Dr. Prayag: Regarding the transport facilities for disabled children to these schools, is the Ministry planning to implement more vehicles or to change rules in the near future?

Dr. Gungapersad: I think one important thing that this budget brought is about the refund of taxi fares which was not there and it is up to parents and institutions to avail themselves of these facilities which are provided along with the 100% duty-free facilities for parents who can afford it for their kids.