

29/6/10 (49)

**ERADICATION OF ABSOLUTE POVERTY PROGRAMME – CHILDREN – SCHOOL MATERIALS**

(No. 1B/170) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Eradication of Absolute Poverty Programme, he will state –

- (a) if all the children aged between three to five years identified under the programme have received their school materials and, if so, when, and
- (b) whether their school fees are being paid on a monthly basis regularly.

**The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment (Mr X. L. Duval):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the National Empowerment Foundation (NEF) that one of the objectives of the Eradication of Absolute Poverty (EAP) Programme is to ensure, with the collaboration of relevant stakeholders, that pre-primary school aged children not attending schools are provided appropriate support so that they can attend school regularly. The EAP offers a package of incentives to children between three and five years of age as follows –

- A meal on each school day
- Refund of transport costs to those children who need it
- Payment of school fees for children attending private schools
- Provision for school material
- Provision for pedagogical materials
- *Accompagnement scolaire.*

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that out of 291 cases referred to NEF in January 2010, some 163 pre-primary school children under the EAP Project have received their school materials during the period January to March 2010. However, in addition

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to the above, about 660 new cases have been referred to the EAP Project thereby raising the number of children to be covered as at 24 June 2010 to 823.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, clearly there has been an unfortunate delay in the provision of school materials. However, every other service mentioned above, such as meals, transport and *accompagnement* have been provided on a timely basis. I have nevertheless given clear instructions that this issue be fast-tracked and that all outstanding cases be processed within a period of two weeks.

With regard to part (b) of the question, I am informed that the EAP pays school fees in respect of those children who attend private schools and that as at 24 June 2010, there were 537 children covered by EAP and going to private pre-primary schools.

As per records of the NEF, as at 25 June 2010, school fees amounting to some Rs500,650 have been paid for all zones up to the month of May 2010. Those for the month of June 2010 are being processed for payment.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that those children who have not received school materials, have been under the programme since last year? They are not new cases. I would like the hon. Minister to confirm that those who have not received, are not new cases only, that is, newly identified.

**Mr Duval:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Member for bringing this to my attention. I will also take up this matter to know whether there are some who long ago have not received the school material.

**Mrs Labelle:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether there is a proper record which is kept by the National Empowerment Foundation on a regular basis regarding the distribution or payment effected? Do we have a proper record?

**Mr Duval:** We should hope so, but I will check.

**Mrs Labelle:** Can I ask the hon. Minister whether – according to my information - social facilitators, field workers were convened on Saturday last from 09.00 to noon to provide materials in reply to this PQ. So, it is only on Saturday and they were convened from 09.00 to noon, half day to give information, which led to me to believe that records are not been being kept properly. I would like if the hon. Minister could confirm whether this information is correct?

**Mr Duval:** I will look into it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since there is a risk that information has been compiled in the way that I have just stated, may I ...

**The Deputy Speaker:** This has not been stated by the Minister. The hon. Minister has said that he is going to check.

**Mrs Labelle:** He will check the information that officers have been convened only on Saturday to prepare information for him. So I think we can doubt about the reliability of this information.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It is a question of opinion.

**Mrs Labelle:** May I ask the hon. Minister whether he will check to what extent this information is correct since the information has been collected in such a hasty manner?

**Mr Duval:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think that this information has been done in good faith by the Civil Servants who were doing it. I do not think they would have said that, especially as they are admitting themselves that there has been a big delay, but I will look into the matter.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Table has further been advised that Parliamentary Questions 1B/198, 1B/199, 1B/200 and 1B/201 have also been withdrawn. Now we move to next question, hon. Obeegadoo.

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9/11/10 52

**BEAU BASSIN, CITE BARKLY - KOLEKTIF DRWA POU ENN BON LECOL-  
PETITION**

(No. 1A/125) Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he has taken cognizance of a petition addressed by the *Kolektif Drwa Pou Enn Bon Lecol* of Cité Barkly, Beau Bassin, in respect of the Barkly Government School and if so, will he state the actions taken, if any.

**Reply:** On 25 October 2010, the Directorate of Zone 2 of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources received a petition from the *Kolektif Drwa Pou Enn Bon Lecol* regarding the performance of Barkly Government School which is a ZEP school.

The Zone Director met a delegation of the *Kolektif* on the same date when it called at the school to hand over the petition to the Head Master.

Representatives of the *Kolektif* were convened to a meeting with the Director, Zone 2 on 28 October 2010. Following discussions, the representatives of the *Kolektif* informed that they would be submitting a series of recommendations to the Ministry in due course. It was also proposed that the Ministry and the *Kolektif* would work in close collaboration to improve the school's performance and image.

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|----------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|---------------|
| <b>Overall CPE pass rate (%)</b> | 30.9 | 31.4 | 32.8 | 36.5 | 36.0 | 35.9 | 35.3 | Not available |
|----------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|---------------|

**Best performing ZEP schools (above 50 %) -**

|   | <b>2007</b> | <b>2008</b> | <b>2009</b> |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|   | % pass      | % pass      | % pass      |
| Ste. Thérèse de l'Enfant Jésus RC (Rod) | 58.5        | 63.2        | 62.1        |
| Bois des Amourettes GS                  | 58.3        | 69.6        | 61.1        |
| Stanley GS                              | 51.0        | 49.5        | 60.7        |
| Espitalier Noël GS                      | 37.8        | 47.9        | 53.8        |
| Nuckchady GS                            | 29.4        | 16.7        | 51.5        |
| Cascavelle GS                           | 28.9        | 48.0        | 50.0        |

There are also many individual good performances where the pupils secure admission to National Colleges and become the pride of both the parents and the school community.

**Least performing ZEP schools (below 20 %) -**

|                    | <b>2007</b> | <b>2008</b> | <b>2009</b> |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                    | % pass      | % pass      | % pass      |
| Barkly GS          | 20.8        | 24.1        | 9.3         |
| La Briquetterie GS | 22.6        | 9.6         | 13.5        |
| Serge Coutet GS    | 17.9        | 13.7        | 16.1        |
| Guy Rozemont GS    | 37.5        | 19.0        | 17.2        |
| Marcel Cabon GS    | 37.8        | 25.0        | 19.6        |

**Case of Barkly GS**

The case of Barkly GS is unique. The school's catchment area is Cité Barkly. Because of stigmatisation, many parents prefer to send their children to other schools: Phillippe Rivalland RCA, Vel Govinden GS and Andre Glover GS. Furthermore, there are acute staffing problems. Educators do not wish to be posted at Barkly GS because of perceived insecurity in the region. Existing educators regularly request for transfer out of the school. Since 2004, the school's Head

Master has changed seven times. This results in an unstable staffing situation which impacts negatively on the school performance.

All the above conditions have led to the CPE results dropping significantly from 24.1% in 2008 to 9.3% in 2009.

Further, there is low parental involvement in school activities. Parents are generally absent from the school for working sessions but regularly show up with an aggressive attitude when a perceived problem arises.

There is constant monitoring of the situation at Barkly Government School.

After seven years of existence of the current ZEP project, my Ministry is currently reviewing the whole situation pertaining to the strategy adopted so far. Whilst it has been observed that the strategy has worked positively for some schools which have significantly improved their performance, others have stagnated and some have deteriorated.

Some of the weaknesses identified within the overall ZEP Project are as follows -

- (i) the ZEP Mission is not yet well understood and shared by all stakeholders involved in the ZEP Project.
- (ii) ZEP schools in general suffer from a lack of interest and involvement from the immediate school community. Despite the good work being done by the Parent Mediators and liaison officers supplied by the private sector, mobilising the school community and parents still remains a challenge.
- (iii) Working in a ZEP school with its difficulties requires that the Head Masters possess specific skills to deal with such specific and complex problems which unfortunately not all Head Masters possess.
- (iv) Educators represent the first point of contact with students. The stigma and difficulty associated with working in ZEP schools instigate a negative attitude on the part of some educators when they are posted to ZEP schools. In addition, Educators have to deal with aggressive parents at times. Some Educators have been physically and verbally assaulted by parents. The ZEP sector therefore does not attract the best adapted teachers despite the eligibility to draw an allowance when working in ZEP schools.

23/11/10 (53)

### SCHOOLS - PHYSICALLY DISABLED PUPILS - ADMISSION

(No. 1B/657) Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the physically disabled pupils, he will state the number thereof who are presently admitted in the primary and secondary schools, indicating if he is aware of the difficulties that these pupils face to –

- (a) move around the school compound, and
- (b) participate actively in the academic programme and if so, indicate the remedial measures that will be taken, if any.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that, in 2010, 39 children with physical disabilities were admitted in primary schools and 74 such children were in secondary schools, both public and private grant-aided.



Mr Speaker, Sir, let me inform the House that it is Government's moral obligation to provide equal opportunities and quality education to all, so that no child of the Republic is left behind. In this regard, my Ministry had in the year 2006 come up with a National Policy and Strategy Paper for the Special Education Needs (SEN) Sector, which outlines the general policy guidelines regarding the provision of quality educational services and care to the children so as to facilitate their integration in the mainstream and society as well.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would also like to highlight that most of the children suffering from severe disabilities attend specialised schools operated by registered NGOs which benefit from grants-in-aid from Government. Those with mild disabilities or suffering from physical impairments are normally admitted in our schools.

My Ministry being fully conscious of the difficulties that pupils with physical disabilities usually face has since a couple of years ago introduced several measures to both facilitate access to education for these children as well as their movement around the school compound. These are, *inter alia*, -

- a) schools are being equipped with ramps to facilitate access to the classrooms. As of now, 148 schools (out of over 400 schools) have already been retrofitted accordingly;
- b) all new secondary schools constructed (more than 30) have already been provided with toilets for the disabled. Moreover, links between building blocks have been made to facilitate access, using wheelchairs to the first floor where specialist rooms are usually located;
- c) a flexible approach is adopted towards parents who wish to call at school during the day to provide assistance to their physically disabled pupils;
- d) facilities like music room, library, science laboratory, computer room are available on the ground floor where necessary. In primary schools, Head Teachers/Head Masters usually make arrangements to move the whole class to the ground floor wherever necessary;
- e) students with disabilities are released earlier than the other students so that they do not face any movement difficulties, and

- f) school attendants usually help students on wheelchair to move around the school compound.

The same facilities are available in Private Grant Aided secondary schools to enable children with disabilities to move around the school compound and participate actively in academic activities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, insofar as the academic programme is concerned, I am informed that educators are encouraged to provide individual extra assistance to children with disabilities so as to allow them to keep pace with their classmates.

As a caring and responsible Government, we are leaving no stone unturned to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her rights to education. However, I must concede that, in spite of the affirmative actions taken so far, regarding the Special Education Needs Sector, there is still much to be done. In this regard, my Ministry is already carrying out discussions with various stakeholders, including friendly countries as well as Development Partners for expert assistance to build the local capacity in this domain.

Furthermore, as from January this year 2010, my Ministry has reviewed the registration procedures for Special Education Needs children. An intensive campaign to persuade and encourage parents to register their wards in the nearest primary schools for subsequent admission to the best appropriate school or institution has been carried out. In addition, prior to allocating the appropriate schools, a team led by the Special Education Needs Unit of my Ministry, duly supported by the School Psychologist, Speech Therapist, Occupational Therapist as well as officers working in Specialised Schools (School for the Deaf and School for the Blind) has been to different regions of the country, so as to undertake a scrutiny of the case of each child. The adoption of such an integrated approach as well as the service provided at grass root level has indeed been very well received especially by parents.

**Mr Ramano:** M. le président, je crois que le problème est grave dans les collèges où les élèves doivent se déplacer dans les différentes classes pour les différentes matières, où, aucun membre du personnel ne veut assumer cette responsabilité. Est-ce que je peux suggérer que cela puisse être pris à votre niveau, peut-être en collaboration avec le ministère de la Sécurité Sociale, pour trouver le moyen pour que ces enfants-là ne soient pas pénalisés et qu'il y ait un personnel spécialement dédié pour déplacer ces enfants-là ?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Bien sûr, on est en train de faire le maximum. S'il y a des cas spécifiques, j'aimerais bien en être informé, mais on est en train d'aller dans une très bonne direction.

**Mr Obegadoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, would the hon. Minister indicate whether there has been recently a survey to establish how many physically disabled children, between the ages of 5 and 16 - compulsory education age - who are actually attending schools and how many are not?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** *How many are not?* Ce n'est pas facile à dire. Un travail a été fait, mais je ne suis pas satisfait du résultat. Comme je l'ai dit dans ma réponse, en ce qui concerne le primaire, on a demandé aux parents de venir inscrire leurs enfants à l'école de leur localité. Et là, on a vu qu'il y a eu une grande amélioration. Mais je suis convaincu qu'il y a quelques enfants qui ne sont pas dans le système encore.

**Ms Deerpalsing:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the policy measures are all very good. But in practice, for example, in my constituency there is a school girl who goes to SSS Quatre Bornes and she is on a wheelchair and cannot walk. She has to go to the second or third floor and when *la récréation arrive*, none of the school personnel, as hon. Ramano has said, will come and take her down. So, she is just by herself there, when all the children are down playing or talking. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether the personnel/attendants are first of all, physically fit to partake in that duty and are there supervisors or zone inspectors who go and see that these very noble policies are applied in practice?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** In most cases I must say that we do not have major problems, but there could be certain specific cases where more has to be done. We are trying to avoid children from moving around or to such stairs where they cannot reach. This is why I said that most of the laboratories, be it music classes, science or computer labs are put on the first floor where there is access through ramps. As I said, quite a number of schools have already been provided with ramps and we are trying to extend this facility to all schools. But, wherever there are handicapped children, we look into the cases individually.

**Mrs Ribot:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether there is going to be a policy for those schools where the specialist rooms are not on the ground floor, but which are most willing to admit those handicapped children?



**Dr. Bunwaree:** C'est ce que je viens de dire. Il faut avoir les cas précis pour voir ce qu'on peut faire. On va faire le maximum pour que ces enfants n'aient pas de difficulté.

**Mr Hossen:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in consideration of the intention of Government to review its policy of scholarships as announced in the Budget speech, can we know from the hon. Minister whether it would be possible to consider the award of special scholarships to children who are in special needs?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Yes, this is a good idea. It is already being taken care of.

**Mr Obeegadoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask two in one since there are many supplementary questions? Firstly, beyond the anecdotal evidence, will the hon. Minister agree to urgently work with the Ministry of Social Security and hon. Bappoo's Ministry - I do not know the exact appellation dealing with children's rights - to conduct this enquiry, to establish how many children benefit from social allowances but do not go to school? This is my first question. We can do it.

Secondly, the previous Government had worked on the per capita spending by the State on children comparing disabled to fully abled. Will the hon. Minister agree to undertake yet another survey and come to the House and make a statement on per capita spending by the State on all children be they fully abled or disabled?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** As regards the first question that has been put, I've said that the survey has already been conducted, but I am not satisfied with the results. So, we are looking into that. *Mais je ne vois pas pourquoi on me pose la même question encore une fois à moins qu'on n'ait pas compris.*

Deuxièmement, *per capita compared between a normal child and those who are in case of special needs*, je peux dire que d'après les actions qui ont déjà étaient prises, surtout depuis 2008, on a nettement dépassé ce que l'honorable membre est en train de dire. Je viendrai à la Chambre pour donner des détails encore plus avec les chiffres pour voir ce qui se fait maintenant et ce qui se ferait dans les années à venir. C'est nettement pas comparable du tout avec ce qu'il faisait lui quand il était là.



**Mrs Labelle:** Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether there is an established protocol for the integration of a disabled child or student, whether we have such a protocol and, if so, whether the school personnel is aware of such protocol if ever we have one?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Absolument, il y en a un protocole, mais protocole que je suis en train d'affiner petit à petit encore. Mon but c'est de faire le maximum de ces enfants handicapés venir dans le *mainstream*, l'école normale.

**Mrs Ribot:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister if he is aware that one of the main reasons for which those physically handicapped children don't go to school is that they've got problem concerning the means of transport to reach school and what can be done accordingly?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Oui, mais déjà on a beaucoup avancé dans ce domaine. Je pense qu'il ne doit pas y avoir de problème maintenant. Dans ma propre circonscription, il y avait un enfant qui avait des problèmes pour aller à

l'université. D'ailleurs cela avait commencé ainsi. Parce que j'étais tellement sensible étant donné que l'enfant était dans ma circonscription et ne pouvait pas aller à l'université par manque de transport. Et maintenant le gouvernement est en train de dépenser gros là-dessus. S'il y a des cas spécifiques, faites nous savoir. En principe il ne doit pas y avoir de problème.

**Mrs Ribot:** Mr Speaker, Sir, does the hon. Minister mean that if ever a case is referred to him of a child who cannot go to school because of the problem of means of transport, the case is going to be referred to.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Moi, je n'accepte pas cela. Je suis tout à fait d'accord à faire tout ce qu'il faut pour donner à l'enfant ce qu'il faut pour qu'il continue son éducation.

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← 8/11/12  
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### RODRIGUES – ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME

(No. 1B/658) Mr J. F. François (Third Member for Rodrigues) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, he is aware of the difficulties encountered for the implementation of the Enhancement Programme in Rodrigues and if so, will he state if his Ministry proposes to bring changes thereto for the academic year 2011.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, the Enhancement Programme which is an innovative pedagogical cum extracurricular programme for pupils of Standard IV was launched on 17 February 2010. It has been successfully implemented in 287 Government and aided primary schools of the Republic of Mauritius including Rodrigues and Agalega. In Rodrigues, the Enhancement Programme was widely acclaimed with a participation rate above 80 per cent which exceeds the national average of 72 per cent.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised by the Rodrigues Education Commission that Heads of schools in Rodrigues have affirmed they did not encounter major problems in the implementation of the programme, specially on its academic component.

However, the schools in Rodrigues were constrained by a lack of qualified resource persons for servicing the component of the programme relating to extra-curricular activities, namely slam, drama and music. This issue is being addressed and MIE resource persons and trainers in their respective fields will be deputed to Rodrigues to train a pool of Rodriguan educators and persons who will act as resource persons for the Programme. The persons to be trained in Rodrigues are being identified presently in consultation with the Education Commission for Rodrigues.

In view of the interest generated in this programme and the benefits derived, my Ministry will provide all necessary support to Rodrigues to ensure that the Enhancement Programme is implemented under the best possible conditions in 2011, the more so that it will be extended, as announced in the Budget Speech, to cover pupils of Standard III as well.

**Mr Francois:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister. With regard to the introduction of extra-curriculum activities like there is proposal for introducing traditional music and dance, but there is a problem that there is no qualified person as to established criteria and I would like to ask the hon. Minister what does he intend to do in that sense.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** We will either train other people or we will take care of that matter as per people who can afford to give education in the fields they are aware of. There can be a *modus operandi* worked out for that.

**Mr Francois:** I have another supplementary question, Mr Speaker, Sir. There will be extension of the programme to Std III as announced in the Budget Speech. Will the hon. Minister of Education and Human Resources inform us whether he will have discussions through a large forum with all stakeholders in Rodrigues beforehand and not sort of imposing this programme to Std III despite what the Commission for Education has said through his reply?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Extending to Std III is the policy of Government. So, we are going to extend it. I don't know what is the problem of the hon. Member, but he can meet and tell me about the difficulties that he is envisaging.

**Mr. Obegadoo:** Is the hon. Minister convinced that the Enhancement Programme has been a major success? Will he agree to an independent audit by people from both the private sector and the public sector in education to feed information to the Ministry in order to improve this programme?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Certainly yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.