

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION NO. 2152

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2152. Ms L L van der Merwe (IFP) to ask the Minister of Home Affairs:

- 1) What is the current total number (a) of children who are undocumented in the Republic and (b) of the specified children are born to (i) South African parents and (ii) foreign nationals;
 - (2) what does his department intend to do to address the problem of children being rendered vulnerable due to being undocumented;
 - (3) on what date is his department anticipated to have completed the project of collecting the biometrics of children (details furnished);
 - (4) (a) what are the relevant details of the project on identity management and the biometrics associated with identity management that his department has embarked on with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, (b) how is it envisaged that these biometrics will help with cases involving missing children and (c) on what date is the policy set to be implemented if it is only due to be approved in 2023;
 - (5) whether it will be possible to add the biometrics of children who were born before the date on which the project was implemented; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?
- NW2442E

Reply:

- (1)(a-b) The Department does not have the records of undocumented children as the records at its disposal are of those who are documented; as such it is difficult to ascertain the number of the undocumented children being those born to South African parents or foreign nationals. Undocumented persons have to present themselves for registration on the National Population Register by the Department to achieve such.

Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) is the national statistics agency of South Africa established under the Statistics Act (Act No. 6 of 1999) with the aim to produce timely, accurate and accessible official statistics from the civil registration system. Within this system, the Department of Health is responsible for registration of births occurring in health facilities. The aim of government is to ensure that babies are registered and

issued with birth certificates shortly after birth at health facilities, for collection of vital statistics which are important for planning and service delivery.

- (2) The Department operates within the legislative framework that prescribes registration of birth within thirty (30) days. The Department continues to conduct outreach programmes led by the Deputy Minister encouraging parents to register births of their children.

The Department of Home Affairs is in collaboration with International Social Services (ISS), which is a unit within the Department of Social Development that render inter-country social assistance, paying particular attention to destitute and vulnerable children who might have experienced social problems as a result of international migration.

The Department in its cooperation in ensuring the best interest of the child and safeguarding the smooth facilitation process during the child's repatriation in collaboration with DSD. In the past three years the Department in co-operation with Department of Social Development facilitated repatriation of undocumented foreign children who are born to foreign nationals back to their countries of origin as follows;

Countries where foreign undocumented children repatriated to	2019	2020	2021	Total
Lesotho	1	8	6	15
Zimbabwe			28	28
Angola		1		1
Botswana	1		3	4
Nigeria			2	2
Mozambique			2	2
	2	9	41	52

- (3) Further modernisation and integration of systems mean the DHA will introduce the Automated Biometric identification system (ABIS) which will enable capturing of more biometrics. The current Home Affairs National Identity System (HANIS) only records two (2) biometrics; that is, photos and finger prints. The ABIS will record at least five (5) biometrics; that is, fingerprints, palm print, facial, iris and photo recognition.
- (4) The Department had requested the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) to look into a possible use/ introduction of biometrics associated with identity management for children. The DHA is still researching on the options such as foot/palm

print, iris, DNA and fingerprint for children. However, the Official Identity Management policy which was approved by Cabinet for public consultation in the last financial year recommends that a combination of different biometric data for children should be considered with options such as the fingerprints, palm-prints and footprints. This will depend on the availability of proven technology. The policy will be submitted to Cabinet for approval by 31 March 2022. Once approved by Cabinet, the policy will be translated into a new Identification Act that will regulate capturing of personal information (biographic and biometric data) for all children born in South Africa.

- (5) The new legislation and ABIS will make it possible to capture biometrics of children born before the inception of the new approach to birth registration. It is envisaged that once the biometrics solution is in place, missing but found children could be easily identified through their fingerprints, and linked to their parents.

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