



NATIONAL CATHOLIC BOARD OF EDUCATION STATEMENT ON 2025 EDUCATION BUDGET

The National Catholic Board of Education welcomes the passing of the 2025 budget and commends the government for increasing the Basic Education allocation from R325 billion to R347 billion – a 6.7% nominal increase, representing a 2.6% real increase after inflation. While this marks the most substantial basic education increase in recent years, it follows a decade of underfunding during which per-learner expenditure has declined in real terms. It is important to note that per-learner government expenditure will increase from R24,230.58 in 2024/25 to R25,669.53 in 2025/26. However, when adjusted for inflation, this actually represents a reduction to R23,755.34 in 2025/26 – showing continued erosion of real investment.

The problem of infrastructure backlog in Basic Education needs attention and we are happy that the government has prioritized this problem. The direct infrastructure allocations to provinces receive a 4.9% real increase, totaling R15.2 billion for 2025/26 – a vital investment for renovating and expanding educational facilities. It is however concerning that, while the Education Infrastructure Grant (EIG) receives R15.29 billion in 2025/26 (a 9.2% nominal increase), the underperforming School Infrastructure Backlogs Grant (SIBG) continues to decline and will be incorporated into the EIG after 2025/26.

Our concerns persist regarding classroom overcrowding and staff shortages caused by the freezing of vacant positions. The budget allocation for staff and teacher development remains insufficient to achieve meaningful change.

The challenge in the government's commitment to Basic Education extends beyond budget allocation to ensuring that funds actually reach schools on the ground. We are particularly concerned about corruption, incompetence, and inefficiencies in certain provincial education departments that contribute to chronic underspending and the delays in the disbursement of funds to schools. No-fee and low-fee educational institutions suffer most from these inefficiencies.

We urge the government to strengthen provincial capacity and accountability by addressing chronic underspending and corruption through improved planning, procurement, and implementation support, while enforcing consequence management and accountability for incompetence and corruption.

What we need in our country is integral human development, and this begins with government, private sector and the church investing more resources to an integral quality education, an education that develops the whole person and benefits all citizens. It is in this regard that we shall continue to provide our support to the Department of Basic Education in making quality education accessible to everyone, advancing the common good and human dignity.

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