

HEALTH AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT BUDGET VOTE 2010/2011

20 MAY 2010

SIPHO MFUNDISI

(UCDP)

Health is one of the basic human rights citizens of a country should enjoy yet we still have communities where clinics operate from sunrise to late afternoon only. One wonders whether those people are immune from or are not supposed to get sick at night or over weekends or public holidays. This is a real indictment on the delivery of service taking into account that health is one of the five priorities the government has identified as one of the five key priorities for the period under review.

A challenge facing health the health department in general is nutrition. If people are not well fed from infancy to adulthood chances of them living longer are slim hence the reduced life expectancy as foreseen by Statistics South Africa. The situation is exacerbated by the failure to take personal responsibility by individuals in curbing the spread of tuberculosis and HIV and Aids.

There is an acute shortage of health workers in the public sector apparently because of the inadequate remuneration and unsatisfactory conditions of service. This however falls in the face of the ANC government to teach them that the swan of Avon was right when he said: "Talkers are not good doers". After all it is the same ANC in their quest to ascend to ascend to government made all sorts of promises among which were all sorts of improvements even in free supply of uniform to nurses and they are failing dismally in this regard.

There are of course some issues worth writing home about on the department such as the signage to clinics even in the remotest of villages. We need to commend the department on this and encourage them to do so even to those not attended to yet.

The shortage of social workers has to be addressed as urgently as possible. Social problems tend to rise by the day and there is need for people with specialist knowledge. The behavioral problems in schools have to be arrested at an early stage by having such professionals appointed at schools.

An issue of great concern is that which is found at pay points for social grants. These places are turned into flea markets of sorts and they are a security risk.

While there is need for entrepreneurs and SMME's social pay point centres are surely not the ideal places for that. The recipients of these grants, some of whom are advanced in age, should be allowed to take their money home and think on how to spend it. These businesses at pay points are tantamount to pick pocketing these senior citizens and have to be discouraged with all our might.

The line of accountability of the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) has to be clarified before it explodes in the face of provincial authorities. It is cause for concern and has to be managed well and clear lines of accountability and delineation drawn.

The UCDP will support the budget votes on Health and Social Development.