



## A long and healthy life for South Africans

**“A healthy workforce is vital to a country's competitiveness and productivity,”**

World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Index Report 2011/12

### Moving towards a healthier country

The provision to, and improvement of healthcare to all South Africans is one of the Government's key priorities. In this newsletter the views and perceptions of various segments of the South African society and the media on this priority area are explored.

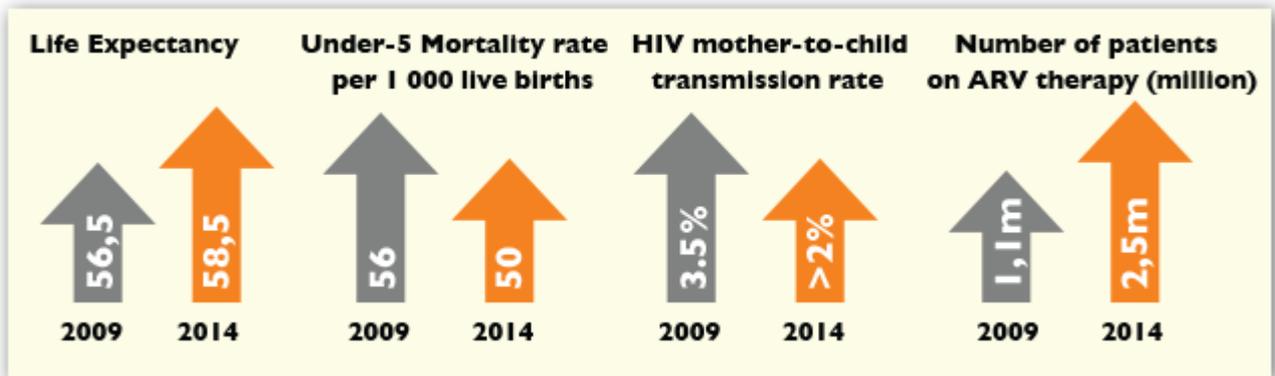
According to the Mid-Term Review of the Priorities of Government March 2012, democratic South Africa has inherited a fragmented and inequitable health system organised along racial lines. To transform the health system, numerous reforms have been introduced. **By 2009, South Africa was spending an estimated 8,5% of the gross domestic product (GDP) on health**, but outcomes were inadequate. The causes for this were identified as being the result of the high burden of disease; management challenges; intergovernmental coordination, financial and human resource management; and a **shortage of 80 000 health professionals**.



Life expectancy in South Africa has increased to 60 years, an achievement surpassing the 2014 target of 58,5 years!

To achieve long and healthy lives for all South Africans, **government has set objectives to be reached by 2014**. Firstly, the country's life expectancy should increase from 56,5 years in 2009 to 58,5 years in 2014. Government has made a commitment to reduce the under-5 mortality rate from 56 per 1 000 live births in 2009 to 50 in 2014; infant mortality rates from 40 per 1 000 live births in 2009 to 36 in 2014; and reducing the maternal mortality ratio from 310 per 100 000 live births in 2008 to 270 in 2014. Combating TB, HIV and AIDS is vital to achieving 2014 objectives, and government has committed itself to a downward trend in the rate of new infections, reducing the HIV mother-to-child transmission rate from 3,5% in 2010 to less than 2%. Moreover, government aims to increase the total number of patients on antiretroviral therapy (ARV) from **1,1 million in 2009 to 2,5 million by 2014**, and improving the **TB cure rate to 85% by 2014**.

## Government Priorities: Outcome 2



To strengthen the effectiveness of the health system, a commitment has been made to put in place the building blocks for the **National Health Insurance (NHI)**; and increase the percentage of users of public health services who are highly satisfied with the services received, from 54% in 2009 to 70% in 2014. Since 2009, great strides have been made in improving healthcare. The Medical Research Council of South Africa's 2011 Rapid Mortality Surveillance Report shows that the country's life expectancy has increased from 56,5 years in 2009 to 60 years in 2011.



Currently South Africa has the largest HIV counselling and testing programme in the world with nearly **1,9 million patients on ARVs**. This programme has caused a remarkable reduction in mother-to-child transmission of HIV from about 8% in 2008 to 2,7% in 2012. Between 2011 and 2012, the percentage of HIV-infected women receiving anti-retroviral therapy leapt from 87,3% to 99%. TB control and management has also improved with millions of South Africans being screened through the HIV Counselling and Testing Campaign. Since 2009, the number of people who default on their TB treatment has significantly declined and the national TB cure rate has improved from 67,5% in 2008 to 75,9% in 2012.

**“Increased life expectancy is a key to the country’s development. The family structure is increasingly stable and parents live longer and are able to take care of their children.”**

– President Jacob Zuma

### **Child and maternal mortality still remains a cause for concern.**

However, the turnaround in the management of HIV has also yielded positive results for child survival. In 2012 almost all (99%) of infants born to HIV-infected women in South Africa received prophylactic anti-retroviral medication to reduce the risk of early mother-to-child HIV transmission in the first six weeks. In order to address vaccine-preventable diseases among children, a new immunisation programme for diarrhoea and pneumonia was introduced in 2009, which has now reached approximately



**Over 1.9 million adults and children are receiving ARVs nationwide!**

70% of children and contributed to a decline in child mortality. While the combined immunisation coverage for polio, measles, TB, hepatitis B and diphtheria was at 89.4% in 2011, it will be just below the target of 95% by 2014.

## Have the post-2009 healthcare strategies improved perceptions?

The GCIS National Tracker Research (2008-2012) shows that 2010 was a turning point in the changing of South Africans' attitudes towards healthcare issues. Since then, ratings on health initiatives have increased positively with each quarter. Government programmes on HIV, TB and vaccination of children receive the highest positive ratings. More respondents also rate government positively for expanding healthcare access to the poor and providing primary healthcare services. Media analysis indicates that healthcare featured as the third highest issue covered by the media in 2012, with education and job creation occupying the top two spots respectively. The tone of coverage was generally balanced, with the National Health Insurance (NHI) in particular generating mostly positive coverage.

82% of citizens believe government is doing well in dealing with HIV/AIDS

77% of citizens are happy with government initiatives towards improving children's health through vaccines

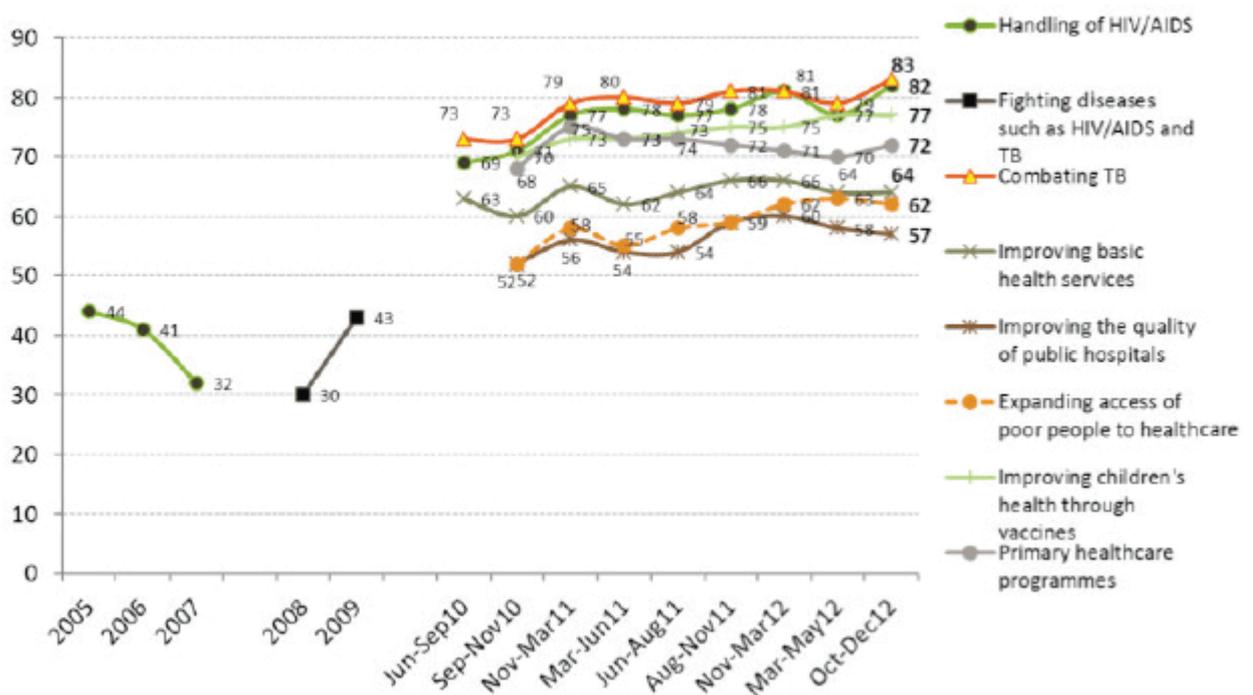
However the Gauteng and Eastern Cape Health Departments both received high volumes of negative coverage due to administrative problems. Negative reportage was also received by the National Health Department on 'healthcare quality', health services and sanitation in public hospitals. Despite some challenges, government's strategies in health have yielded a positive effect on the media and South Africans' perceptions regarding healthcare in the country. In 2012, media neither treated healthcare as the most critical issue nor portrayed it extremely negatively, while South Africans have shown above average satisfactory rates for most government health programmes.

## Research perspectives

According to the GCIS National Tracker Research (2008-2012), the percentage (graph 1) of respondents rating government's performance as "well/very well" on improving the quality of public hospitals; and services in hospitals and clinics have increased from 26% in 2008 to 57% in 2012. In October to December 2012, government's initiatives on HIV/AIDS (82%), TB (83%) and vaccination of children (77%) were rated highly signifying that the public has noticed government's efforts in these areas. More respondents have also rated government positively for expanding healthcare access to the poor (62%) and providing primary healthcare services (72%).

62% of citizens are positive of government efforts to expand healthcare access

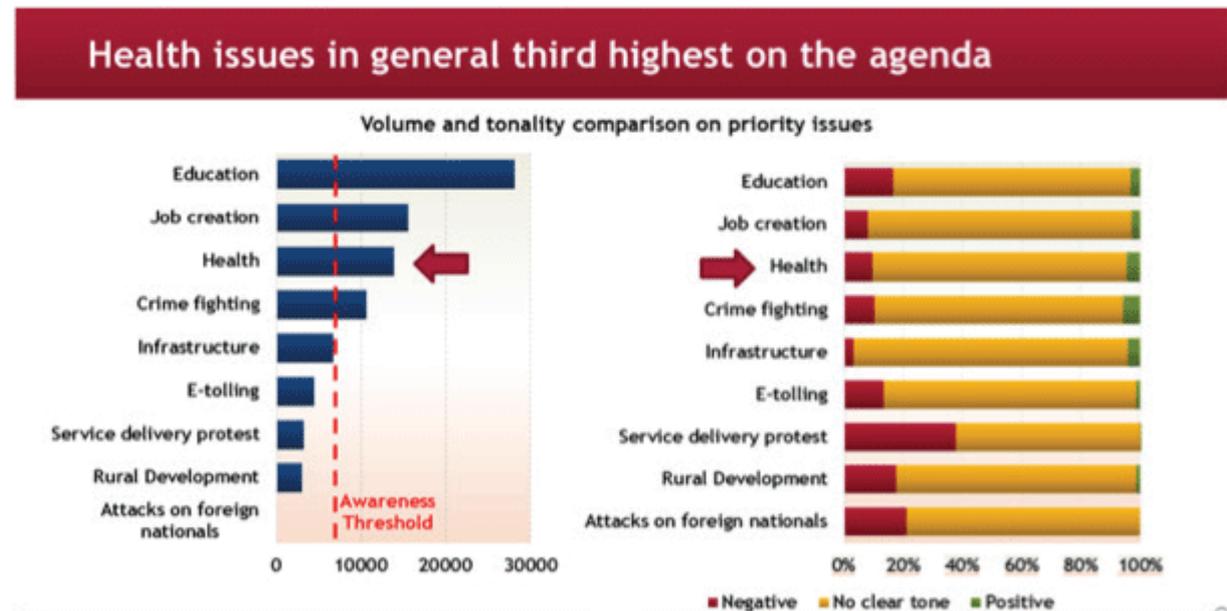
Graph 1:



## Media perspectives

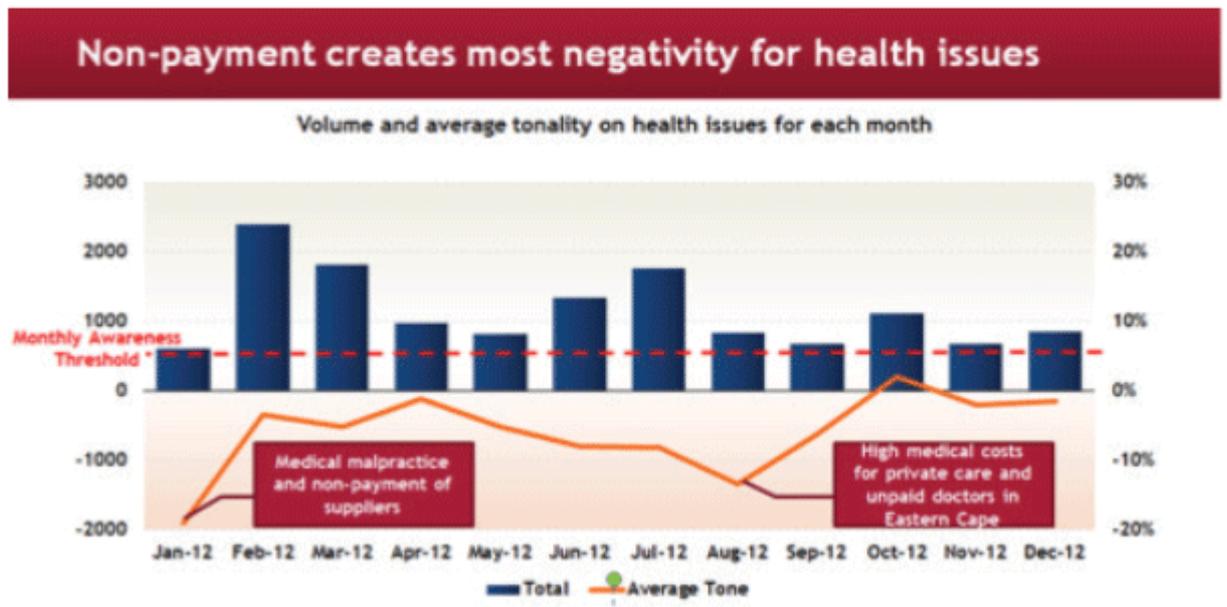
Media analysis indicates that healthcare featured prominently on the media agenda during 2012 (graph 2). Health was also one of the least negative issues when compared to other priority issues for the year.

Graph 2:



Health issues remained topical for most of 2012 with negative coverage peaking during the non-payment of medical suppliers in January 2012 and the non-payment of doctors in the Eastern Cape in August 2012 (graph 3).

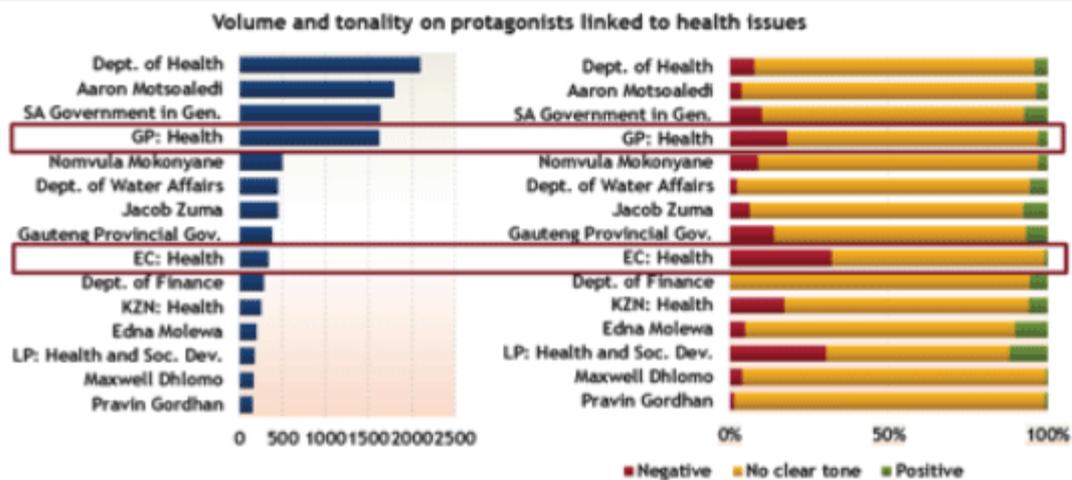
Graph 3:



Media analysis (graph 4) indicates that when it comes to health issues, the Department of Health and Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi had the strongest share of voice in media. The tone of the media coverage generated by the Health Minister was mostly balanced. However, both the Gauteng and Eastern Cape Health Departments received high volumes of negative coverage due to poor administration issues.

Graph 4:

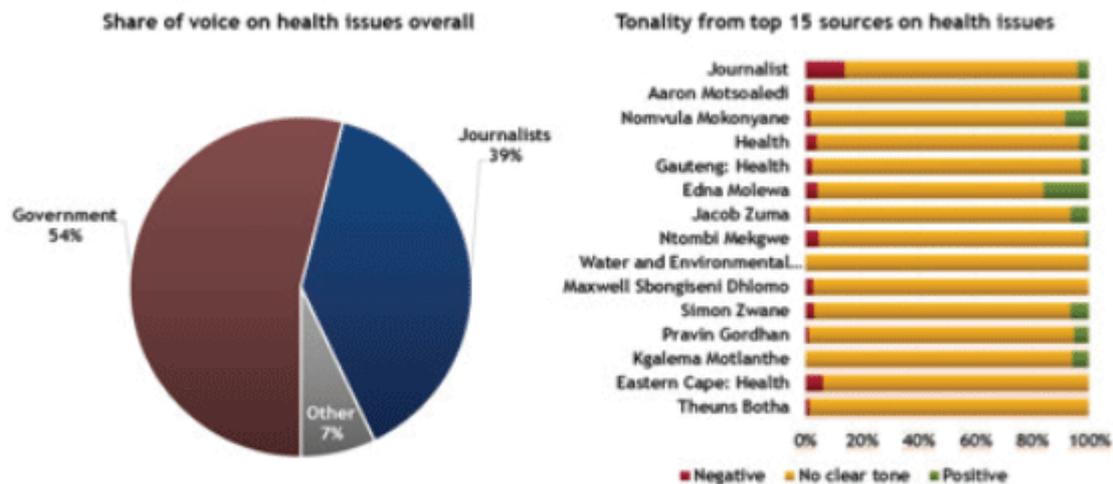
## GP & EC Health Departments in 'hot water' over health issues



Journalists (graph 5) writing on health issues were mostly neutral, but at the same time generated the most negative coverage as compared to other sources of health issues.

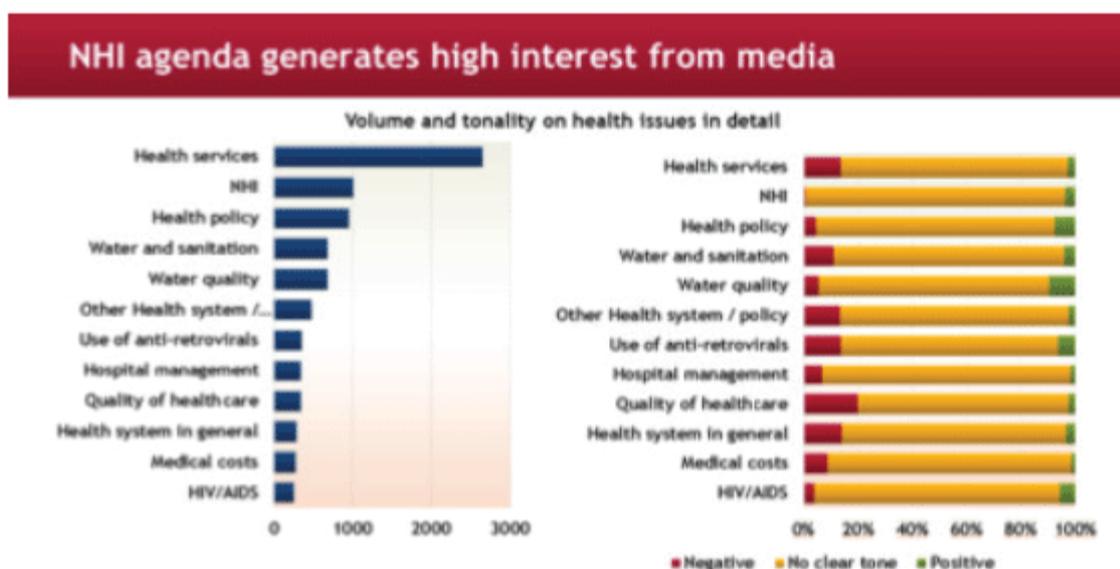
Graph 5:

## Vocal minister and MECs were key to managing media image



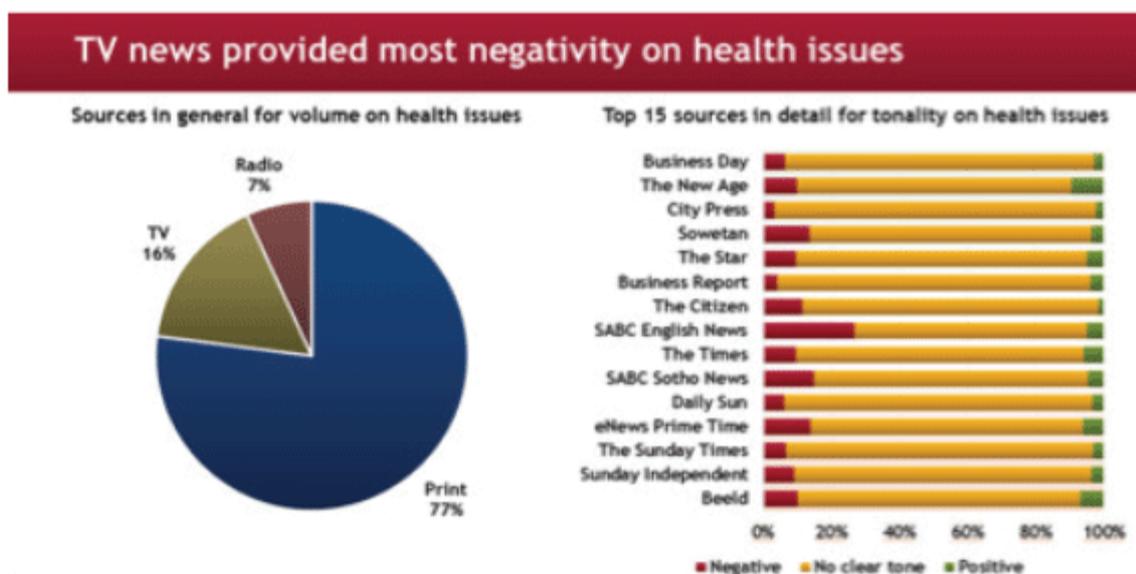
Analysis (graph 6) indicates that there was great media interest in the implementation of the National Health Insurance (NHI) and health policy. However, reporting on 'healthcare quality', health services and sanitation in public hospitals received negative coverage.

Graph 6:



More than three quarters of the health coverage was generated by print media (graph 7). SABCTV News ; eTV and Sowetan were the most critical on issues relating to health. Furthermore, SABCTV News and eTV were the most instrumental in highlighting the poor administrative processes followed by provincial health departments.

Graph 7:



### Health facts and figures

- The 2013/14 Health Budget is R133.6 billion.
- The National Health Insurance will be implemented between 2012 to 2026.
- Since April 2010 over 20 million people had been tested for HIV.
- Nearly 1,9 million HIV positive patients in South Africa are on ARVs.
- Today 3 540 health facilities provide ARVs.
- Since April 2010 more than 10 million had been screened for TB.



## Revamping of Hospital Infrastructure

Government has prioritised the upgrading of our health infrastructure through Strategic Infrastructure Project (SIP) 12. This project focusses on the revamping of nursing colleges; and building or refurbishing of public hospitals and other health facilities. SIP 12 will also help prepare the public healthcare system to meet the requirements of the National Health Insurance (NHI) system.

## 2030 Vision for Health

The National Development Plan (NDP) which is government's 2030 vision for South Africa aims to have a health system that works for everyone. It sets the following targets:

- raise the life expectancy of South Africans to at least 70 years;
- ensure that the generation of under-20s is largely free of HIV;
- significantly reduce the burden of disease; and
- achieve an infant mortality rate of less than 20 deaths per thousand live births, including an under-5 mortality rate of less than 30 per thousand.

## The Way Forward:

### When communicating:



Messaging should include successes to reinforce positive perceptions. Messaging should also reflect a human interest angle, to ensure that the positive ratings have a human face. This can be done through profiling case studies where improvements significantly benefitted a particular community. Language should be easy to comprehend and where possible spokespeople and communication products should be multi lingual.

### Information drive:



Communication plans are required for public hospitals and basic healthcare facilities to ensure that there is a continuous information flow with regards to government's work in these areas.

### Talking to media:



SIP 12 successes and health initiatives which have been turned around should be showcased to media. Furthermore, a targeted approach is required towards SABC News, eTV and Sowetan to ensure balanced and fair reporting on health issues.



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Insight newsletter is produced by the GCIS Chief Directorate: Policy and Research. This newsletter provides a snapshot of important research results and media reporting on a range of government's programmes, initiatives and policies. Each issue is devoted to a single theme, which generally corresponds to key national milestones, events and priorities. It provides unique insight into the perceptions of South Africans and the media, as well as an understanding of government's implementation of policies and programmes.