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PRIORITY 2: EDUCATION, SKILLS AND HEALTH.

National Health Insurance Bill public consultation

By Jacob Mkhize and Mthunzi Mkhungo: GCIS, KwaZulu-Natal

To address the imbalances in the health sector, government is introducing the National Health Insurance (NHI), which is a health financing system that will bridge the gap between the rich and the poor when it comes to accessing health facilities (universal healthcare services). It will provide access to quality health services for all South Africans based on their health needs irrespective of their socio-economic status. The Bill requires public support for it to become an Act.

On 22 and 24 November 2019, the National Health Portfolio Committee, led by its chairperson, Sibongiseni Dhlomo, visited uMkhanyakude and Harry Gwala municipalities to engage with community members and allow them to air their views on the bill and also learn how NHI would assist communities, should it be passed into law.

Community members requested the committee to consider improving the quality of public health facilities in municipalities. Dhlomo explained to residents that government is working to improve the health system in the country and NHI is part of such innovation in the health sector. He further outlined how NHI would be implemented.



Community members of uMkhanyakude who attended the hearing.



Harry Gwala community member making a submission during the consultation.



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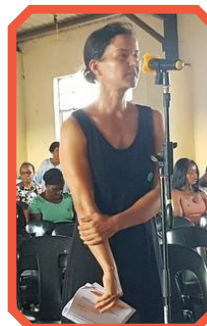
John Zikhali, a traditional healer, stated that they have gone through the NHI Bill, and noted that it is silent about the registration of traditional healers as service providers. He recommended that the committee should consider including traditional healers in their planning, as they are recognised by government.

The public consultation process on the proposed NHI Bill, is a statutory mandate prior to the adoption of the Bill in Parliament.



Liza Mzimba said:

"This NHI programme is in the news and I am well aware of it. I think everyone will benefit from it and it will also address the issues of minimum access to healthcare services. The health sector is suffering from shortages that range from human personnel to medication and infrastructure. I am fully behind the NHI and my wish is to see it being implemented as a matter of urgency."



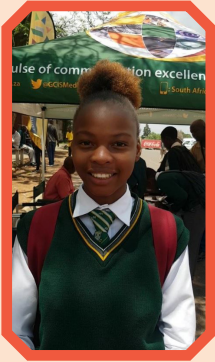
Maria Bezenhout said:

"People with disabilities are concerned that there is a long waiting period and receiving assistance devices. When the NHI is piloted, people with disabilities must benefit. The issue of transport provision to health points is still a concern. There must be enough budget to accommodate them in getting services."



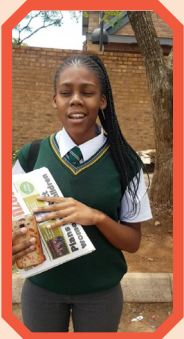
Nonhlanhla Makhanya said:

"As a government employee, I know a lot about the NHI because there are internal engagement and discussions within the government system. Government is moving towards the right direction through the NHI programme, this is due to inequality in terms of access to health care in the country. South Africans will benefit greatly if the NHI becomes a law because people will be able to access equal services with less restrictions. Yes, I fully support the NHI."



Thabang Zulu said:

“The plight of violence against women and children should stop. As a child growing into a young woman I would love to see this social ill dealt with. I do not want to experience the painful thing that countless women experience. I am glad that government has brought us the information to equip ourselves in dealing with violence.”



Phuluwani Ramadi said:

“It is through these efforts that we are able to see that our government is taking women’s issues seriously and that it is prioritising tackling abuse and femicide. It makes me happy to see that you are educating men on how not to abuse women, and that you are educating women on which steps to take should they be abused or know someone being abused. Through these efforts, we will reach a stage where GBV will be a thing of the past.”

PRIORITY 5: SOCIAL COHESION AND SAFE COMMUNITIES.

Awareness campaign to tackle violence

By Robbie Senoelo and Boipelo Ramotse: GCIS, Gauteng

The Government Communication and Information System held a gender-based violence (GBV) awareness campaign at Onverwacht Taxi Rank in Cullinan, east of the City of Tshwane on 14 November 2019. The campaign was focused on exhibition, face-to-face interaction and distribution of publications where members of the community were educated and empowered on how to deal or respond to the scourge of GBV and femicide, and violence against women and children.

On his weekly newsletter, *From the desk of the President*, dated 18 November 2019, President Cyril Ramaphosa said, “We remain firm in our resolve that a life sentence must mean life. Those who commit crimes against women and children must know that they will be caught and tried, and that our courts will act firmly against those found guilty.”

Government and the private sector have come together to create a call centre as part of addressing this social ill, which includes the establishment of ‘safe haven’ for victims and survivors of GBV. The Gender-Based Violence Command Centre provides counselling, police services, medical treatment and more. Victims can call 0800 428 428 or dial *120*7867# to speak to a social worker. Both lines are free.



Government official George Moeketsi engaging with community members.



Community members receiving information about GBV and femicide.



Mphuthi Khomotso said:

"I am very much impressed by the efforts of government of ensuring that community members are tested for free so that they can know their health status. I also appreciate the information we received at this event."



Tumelo Mogotlane (right) said:

"I think it is important that all people get tested every time as diseases do not discriminate."

PRIORITY 2: EDUCATION, SKILLS AND HEALTH.

Campaign gets people tested

By Nkopodi Mokgoma: GCIS, Limpopo

The Department of Health in the Sekhukhune District in partnership with Ephraim Mogale Local Municipality organised the Cheka Impilo programme at Regae Community Hall on 22 November 2019 to give the community the opportunity to check their health status.

Cheka Impilo was initiated by the Department of Health, which intends to intensify awareness campaign whereby the community members are tested and counselled for various diseases such as HIV and AIDS, blood pressure, sugar level, tuberculosis and sexually transmitted infections. "It is the right of each and every citizen of this country to know his or her health status," said the Mayor of Ephraim Mogale Local Municipality, Councillor Molaudi Mothogwane.

Community members were divided into commissions whereby the youth, women and men were given a chance to discuss health issues that affect them every day. Some of the issues raised were that some people were afraid to get tested because they fear that should they test positive, they might be divorced by their partners or discriminated by families. Community members were urged to check their health status at their nearest clinics.



Mayor Molaudi Mothogwane getting tested.



Community members who were in attendance.

PRIORITY I: ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION AND JOB CREATION.

Women's dialogue on economic opportunities

By Reki Skosana: GCIS, Mpumalanga

The Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) partnered with the Nkangala District Municipality, Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA), National Youth Development Agency, Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, and other stakeholders to conduct an information session that sought to empower women entrepreneurs, Small, Medium and Micro-sized Enterprises (SMMEs) and cooperatives with information on financial assistance and incentives available in government and private sector for their economic development and growth. The session was held on 15 November 2019 at Banquet hall, Steve Tshwete Local Municipality.

The event also focused on the launch of the women enterprise coaching programme by SEDA, which aims at affording women an opportunity to transfer skills, share experience and conduct networking to improve on their competency in entrepreneurship to support and develop SMMEs.

The initiative is a mentorship programme similar to the one explored in Belgium in 2012, intended to run for 10 months and it has been implemented nationwide. During that period, the programme's impact would be measured by the number of jobs created, profitability and competitiveness of all the SMMEs who participated in the programme.

The GCIS distributed information material on gender-based violence to create awareness on the scourge facing the country. The National Student Financial Aid Scheme website was also marketed for 2020 applications.



Women who attended the session.



A stakeholder addressing the audience.