



President Jacob Zuma

Writer: Xoliswa Zulu

Photo: GCIS

I welcome this opportunity to engage with public servants through *Public Sector Manager* magazine, which was established this year to facilitate dialogue among public servants and to build prestige and pride in our work.

We have reached the end of an important and industrious year in our development as a nation. We declared 2011 as the year of job creation and we've already recorded a range of successes in this area, in spite of the difficulties that have confronted our economy as part of the global economic setback.

We are implementing our plans in a difficult economic climate at the moment, but nonetheless a number of job projects are being implemented to tackle the country's high unemployment rate. These include large-scale developments such as electric-

ity plants, rail and road upgrades and water management, which will sustain between 50 000 and 100 000 jobs in construction up to 2015.

Other initiatives that we have put in place include:

- a R9-billion Jobs Fund to encourage new initiatives both inside and outside of government
- over 300 cooperatives established under the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme
- the Expanded Public Works Programme created new employment opportunities for an additional 34 000 people compared to the previous year, providing opportunities and income for of 280 000 persons
- the Community Work Programme which pro-

vided job opportunities for more than 80 000 people

- a ground-breaking Skills Accord that was finalised, committing business and the State to enrol at least 30 000 artisan trainees over the next 12 months in training programmes.

This has also been a year in which we undertook a 10-year Census designed to deepen our understanding of how we configure as a society and economy and where we should place emphasis in the delivery of public services.

The year 2011 also saw the National Planning Commission in The Presidency releasing the draft *National Development Plan*.

It is in the spirit of "Working Together" that we will, by the time you read this, have presided over the COP17 Climate Change Conference in Durban, where the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs was responsible for putting forward South Africa's position, while the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation led this global event.

Hosting this event not only enhanced South Africa's stature and profile globally but also presented us with an opportunity to debate the complexities faced by developing societies and economies and the challenge of balancing competing interests and choices.

As always, South Africa participated in these deliberations from the premise of consolidating the African Agenda and securing peace, stability and growth on our own continent as a matter of priority and principle.

South Africa's growing importance in the world led us this year to make public our *White Paper on Foreign Policy* with the theme *Building a Better World: the Diplomacy of Ubuntu*.

This theme elevates our national culture of Ubuntu to the international system where we are calling for tolerance, justice and compassion in the many situations around the world where the international community is called upon to assist or intervene in various ways.

Internationally, we grew even closer this year to our friends and counterparts in the African Union, the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA)

bloc and we were proud witnesses to the birth of South Sudan as a new African nation.

We've been able to reflect with pride on the various sectors of South African society that flew our flag around the world in 2011, ranging from Gift of the Givers in Somalia, to the Springboks in New Zealand.

Government's Programme of Action is fundamentally an exercise in our founding President's call on the nation to ensure that we unleash the potential of each and every one of us.

The year 2011 presented us with a range of challenges that we have been able to meet with fortitude and innovation.

Those that set us back, or challenged us in one way or another, simply redirected us to the drawing board where we often found new ways to do things that would take our country forward.

At the heart of our forward momentum stands the public servants of more than a million South Africans whose every action – or inaction – attracts often harsh and hurtful scrutiny, but can also make government and the nation proud.

Those who let us down are dealt with severely, as they should be, and we do so to ensure that the reputation and inspiration among the majority of public servants remain intact.

We have taken leave of many who have served the nation well and have welcomed new public servants to our ranks to maintain continuity and impact. We are three years away from marking 20 years of democracy and from our fifth general election, both of which will invite a great deal of reflection and assessment of how we have done since 1994.

Let's use the New Year, 2012, to build on the good record we've established and ensure that our key anniversaries are a source of pride and hope, rather than a time of shame and despair.

At the end of the year, such as the one we have journeyed together, I remain proud and confident of the ability and commitment of our Public Service.

On behalf of Cabinet, I wish all of you a safe and enjoyable time at home with friends and family and we thank those in essential services for remaining on duty during this time.

Your energy and enthusiasm after this break will help us achieve even greater things in 2012.

Thank you. 🇷🇺

A plan for change

A common thread characterising the current administration is the emphasis on doing things differently and changing the manner in which government conducts its business. It was against this background that the National Planning Commission (NPC) recently presented its draft *National Development Plan: Vision for 2030* to President Jacob Zuma and released this "architect's impression" of a future South Africa for public comment, writes **Mbulelo Baloyi**.

The twin challenges of unemployment, particularly among the youth, and education continue to hinder South Africa's stability and prosperity as the country makes significant strides to improve the lives of the majority of South Africans, according to the NPC's draft *National Development Plan* (NDP).

In addition to these two, seven other challenges have been identified for action in the next two decades for South Africa to achieve the job-creation targets of the New Growth Path (NGP) and other job-creation programmes.

Other challenges include infrastructure, development, using renewable and other alternative energy, transforming rural and urban spaces, quality and equitable healthcare, fighting corruption, building safer communities and social cohesion.

The NDP derives its prognosis of South Africa's future from the NPC's *Diagnostic Overview* released earlier this year.

The report looked at the problems faced by South Africans and possible solutions.

The NDP encourages citizens and communities to be part of their own development instead of passively relying on handouts from government.

On job creation, the NDP says South Africa needs an economy that is more inclusive, more dynamic and in which the fruits of growth are shared more equitably. The plan envisages an economy that serves the needs of all South Africans – rich and poor, black and white, skilled and unskilled, those with capital and those without, urban and rural, women and men.

To achieve job-creation targets, eliminate poverty and reduce inequality, the economy must attend to the twin imperatives of becoming more inclusive and growing faster.

The NDP's 11-million jobs target is in line with the five-million jobs target in the NGP. The NGP's target for job creation is 2020 while the NDP takes it further by another 10 years.

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President Jacob Zuma and Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe officially receive the draft National Development Plan: Vision 2030 from National Planning Commission Chairperson Minister Trevor Manuel and Deputy Chair Cyril Ramaphosa.

The draft plan also proposes that labour laws be revisited to make it easy for people to be dismissed for offences that relate to serious misconduct without such cases being referred to the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA).

In addition, the plan recommends that people in management positions earning more than R300 000 a year should not have their cases heard in the CCMA.

The plan proposes decreasing the number of people living on less than a poverty line of R418 a month each from the present 39% to 0%.

In brief, some of the elements proposed by the plan include the following:

Job creation

- Expanding the public works programme.
- Lowering the cost of doing business and costs for households.
- Matching unemployed workers to jobs.
- Providing a tax subsidy to businesses to reduce the cost of hiring young people.
- Helping employers and unions agree on starting salaries.
- Making it possible for very skilled immigrants to work in South Africa.
- Ensuring that probationary periods are managed properly.
- Simplifying dismissal procedures for performance or misconduct.
- Rewarding the setting up of new businesses, including partnering with companies.
- Increasing value-for-money for tourists by selling regional packages that meet all pocket sizes.
- Considering a single visa for Southern African Development Community visitors.

Infrastructure development

- Investing in a new heavy-haul rail corridor to the Waterberg coal field and upgrading the central basin coal network.
- Enabling exploratory drilling to see whether there are viable coal seam and shale gas reserves, while investigations continue to make sure that operations do not damage the environment.
- Moving Eskom’s system operator, planning, power procurement, power purchasing and power-contracting functions to the independent system and market operator.
- Closely regulating the electricity maintenance plans of large cities.
- Setting up an investment programme for water-resource development, bulk water supply and wastewater management.
- Fixing and building transport links in these key areas:
 - upgrading the Durban-Gauteng freight corridor and building a new port at the old Durban airport site
 - expanding the coal, iron ore and manganese lines
 - building the N2 road through the Eastern Cape

- upgrading the Sishen-Saldanha iron ore line and expanding capacity on the manganese line (including port capacity).
- Improving and cutting the cost of Internet broadband by changing the regulatory framework.

Using renewable and other alternative forms of energy

- Speeding up and expanding renewable energy and waste recycling, and ensuring that buildings meet energy-efficient standards.
- Setting a target of five million solar water heaters installed by 2030.
- Introducing a carbon tax.

Transforming urban and rural spaces

- Shifting more resources to upgrading informal settlements, provided that they are in areas close to jobs, and ensuring that housing development programmes are not undertaken in poorly located land.
- Improving public transport.
- Giving businesses incentives to move jobs to townships.
- Fixing the gap in the housing market by combining what banks have to offer with subsidies as well as employer housing schemes.
- Giving communal farmers, especially women, security of tenure.
- Investing money in irrigation in the Makhathini Flats and Umzimvubu River Basin.

Education and training

- Ensuring that all children go through two years of pre-school.
- Eliminating union and political interference in appointments.
- Expanding “Funza Lushaka” to attract learners into teaching, especially those with good passes in Mathematics, Science and Languages.
- Regularly testing teachers in the subjects they teach to determine their level of knowledge and competence.
- Linking teacher pay to learner performance improvements.
- Paying close attention to schools that perform very poorly.
- Changing the process of appointing principals and setting





minimum qualifications.

- Gradually giving principals more powers to run schools, including with regards to financial management, procurement of textbooks and other educational material, as well as human resources.
- Increasing the number of university graduates and the number of people doing their doctorates.
- Building two new universities in Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape.
- Building a new medical school in Limpopo and a number of new academic hospitals.
- Extending the length of first degrees to four years on a voluntary basis.
- Providing full funding assistance covering tuition, books, accommodation and living allowance (in the form of loans and bursaries) to deserving students.
- Granting seven-year work permits to all foreigners who graduate from a registered South African university.

Provision of quality healthcare

- Broadening coverage of antiretroviral treatment to all HIV-positive people.
- Speeding up the training of community specialists in medicine, including surgery, anaesthetics, obstetrics, paediatrics and psychiatry.
- Recruiting, training and deploying between 700 000 and 1,3 million community health workers to implement community-based healthcare.
- Setting minimum qualifications for hospital managers and ensuring that all managers have the necessary qualifications.
- Implementing the National Health Insurance in a phased manner. There are four prerequisites to its success: public healthcare, lowering the relative cost of private care, recruiting more professionals in both the public and private sectors, and developing a health information system that spans public and private health-providers.
- Promoting active lifestyles and balanced diets, controlling alcohol abuse and creating health awareness to reduce non-communicable diseases.

These reforms will take time and will require cooperation between the public and private sectors while at the same time demand significant resources.

Building safer communities

- Strengthening the Criminal Justice System.
- Making the police service professional. The NDP proposes link-

ing the police code of conduct and a code of professionalism to promotion and discipline in the service. Recruitment should attract competent, skilled professionals through a two-track system; one for commissioned officers and one for non-commissioned officers.

- Demilitarising the police service.
- Building safety using an integrated approach: achieving long-term, sustainable safety requires an integrated approach focused on tackling the fundamental causes of criminality. This requires mobilising a wider range of state and community resources.
- Building participation in community safety: civil-society organisations and civic participation are critical elements of a safe and secure society. Local government legislation provides for establishing community safety centres to enable safe and healthy communities. The plan proposes that the establishment of these centres should be considered.

Reforming the Public Service

- Heads of departments should report to a head of the civil service on administrative matters.
- A hybrid system of appointing heads of departments should be introduced, incorporating both political and administrative elements.
- A graduate recruitment programme and a local government skills development strategy should be introduced to attract high-quality candidates.
- The Public Service Commission should be given the power to develop and monitor norms and standards for appointments at each level.
- A purely administrative approach should be adopted for lower-level appointments, with senior officials given full authority to appoint staff in their departments.

Fighting corruption

- The NDP proposes the establishment of specialised teams of prosecutors and special courts to handle corruption cases.
- The plan also proposes centralising large and long-term tenders, making it illegal for public servants to operate certain types of business, and making individuals liable for losses in proven cases of corruption.

The draft NDP may be just that at this point – a draft, but already the 26 commissioners chaired by the Minister for Planning in the Presidency, Trevor Manuel, envision a boldly different future for our country.

The plan is out for public comment and the President has urged all South Africans – and that would include more than a million of us in the Public Service – to make their voices heard over the next four months.

This is, as the President has said, a plan for the whole nation, not just for government.

As with so many other policy initiatives, public participation will again play a key role in the continuing process of reshaping South Africa. 



President Jacob Zuma shares a light moment as he is being enumerated by Census official Keitumetse Ditsebe.

SA's future can count on Census 2011

Despite initial misgivings, uncertainty and lack of enthusiasm from the public about Census 2011, South Africans participated in their numbers in the recent survey, as nobody wanted to be left out, writes **Mbulelo Baloyi**.

The massive R2,2 billion campaign saw more than 156 000 census workers comprising 120 000 enumerators, 25 000 supervisors and 5 000 fieldwork coordinators criss-cross the length and breadth of South Africa between 10 and 31 October, attempting to reach 14 million dwellings.

By the end of October, this army of census workers had covered almost 98,8% of the targeted dwellings for counting and data collection, according to Pali Lehohla, Statistician-General and head of Statistics South Africa (Stats SA).

"The count has really gone very well, and has exceeded our expectations," says Lehohla.

"The public cooperation has been immense. Our call centres have been flooded with calls from people wanting to be counted."

However, it has not been plain sailing for Stats SA and its census workers, with many challenges encountered during the 21-day counting period.

These included eight enumerators losing their lives in motor-vehicle accidents, 10 being assaulted, 15 robbed while seven were intimidated. Incidents of attempted rape of female enumerators



Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe accompanied by Limpopo Premier Cassel Mathale on a visit to Ga-kgatla village during the campaign.



The Limpopo community were enthusiastic to be counted.

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Community members voiced their concerns to the Government delegation led by Deputy President Motlanthe.

were also reported. In addition, there were also problems involving enumerators being linked to criminal activities. Lehohla added that in all cases the South African Police Service was very helpful.

From 1 to 14 November, about 30 000 supervisors commenced a national mop-up operation to count people who did not participate during the October period.

The mop-up operation is being followed by a Post-Enumeration Survey (PES), whereby 120 000 homes in 600 enumeration areas are being visited to check if the process went well. This is a form of quality assurance. The PES was scheduled for 15 November to 15 December and is being conducted by an independent team. The independent surveyors wear blue bibs and carry blue bags.

"They are testing the quality of the information gathered and estimating the level of undercounting for the Census 2011 period. This will be followed by processing the 14 million questionnaires with 14 pages each; after which the collated data will be fed into 13 high-speed scanners to extract information," says Lehohla.

The 14-day mop-up operation targets homes which had not been counted, either because their inhabitants refused to cooperate with enumerators or were not home during the Census.

"Some of these are people who refused to be counted. I had to serve papers to some people, but they are now cooperating. We are dealing with that until everyone is counted."

The Minister in The Presidency responsible for the National Planning Commission, Trevor Manuel, said by the close of Census 2011, a negligible 16 000 refusals to participate had been noted, but this number was too minuscule to be of statistical significance.

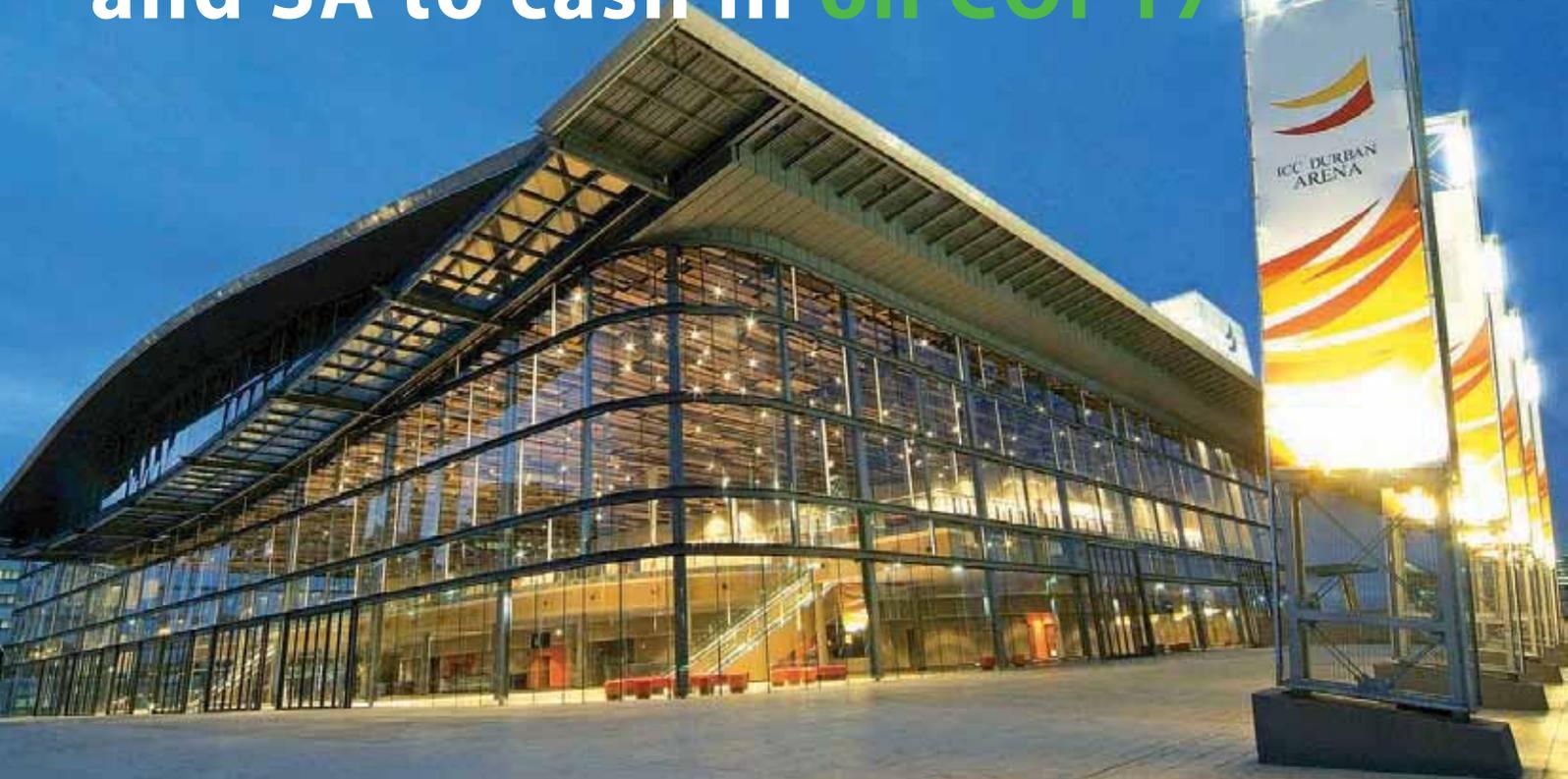
The task of extracting data will take about 10 months. Thereafter, the results will be submitted to the Statistics Council, which will present it to President Jacob Zuma. The President will announce the results of the Census 2011 in November 2012.

"This has been a daunting operation," says Lehohla. "I think South Africans will be waiting with bated breath to find out what has been happening in the country in the last 10 years. Migration is likely to be the biggest topic, as will the number of children that women gave birth to; how many people died; and the education levels. We included agriculture in the questionnaire, as we want to go into an agricultural census in 2012 so that we can understand issues of food security.

"The census questionnaire containing the 75 questions is rich with information and we will process it so that we can deliver it at the level of a village, at the level of a suburb, at the level of a city, at the level of the province and at the level of a nation. The power of this is that it comes at those very small levels."

The data collated from the Census will be used to influence policies on migration, education, health and service delivery in communities. In addition, the information will be used to gauge the country's response to meeting some of the 2015 millennium development goals. 

The climate's right for Durban and SA to cash in on COP17



Writer: Chris Bathembu

Photos: GCIS

As the large contingent of who's who in the world of environmental matters and other interested parties wrapped up their stay in sunny Durban, South Africa will be looking to see how we have scored in the deal.

The 17th Conference of Parties (COP17) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNCCC), currently attracting hot debate in the already humid city, where its promised the sun never sets, is not only expected to generate millions of rands for the local economy but is also set to boost green economy skills in the country.

Just how much investors are committing to invest in alternative sources of energy in the country will likely become clearer after the conference on the eastern seaboard ends on 9 December, as world leaders decide on new strategies to combat global warming. Some have compared the benefits of the conference to those enjoyed during the hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup™.

In the period leading to the 2010 spectacle, South Africa managed to maintain aggressive economic stability in the face of financial stress suffered by world markets owing to the 2009 global economic crisis. The soccer event is said to have injected more than R9 billion into the local economy while gaining the

country an extra 200 000 foreign visitors.

And, in what is billed as being the second-largest event to be hosted in the country after the World Cup, between 15 and 20 000 people were expected to have visited Durban by the end of the two-week long COP17. As was the case with previous COPs, the conference has the potential to shift the focus to more sustainable, cleaner forms of energy – something the local economy desperately needs.

Government has made a conscious effort to move towards a green economy as part of the country's long-term plan to grow the economy while mitigating the effects of climate change. The country is committed to a low-carbon growth path over the long term with the renewable energy industry expected to create about 300 000 jobs over 10 years with more than half of the jobs in the next two years.

Meanwhile, host city Durban is tallying up its tourism windfall – forecast to reach R100 million.

According to the eThekweni Municipality, all accommodation types were fully booked for the event

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period in the vibrant city – where a blend of local cultures is reflected in a mosaic of architectural styles, a melting pot of traditions and colourful cuisine – dispelling what officials said would have otherwise been a quiet period before the December peak holiday season.

Food, entertainment and leisure industries are enjoying an increase in patronage and there is an expected increase in visits to tourist attractions. More than 50 000 curios were expected to be sold during the conference while 50 000 metered taxi trips were expected to be undertaken for ferrying some of the delegates to the venue daily.

Hayes says Durban has always been “innovative” in its responses to environmental challenges and will work to ensure that COP17-related projects have long-term legacy value for the city.

The summit also provided a critical opportunity for Durban to demonstrate its approach to the environment through the COP17 Greening Programme, local government engagement and by showcasing the city’s climate projects.

Over the crucial two-week period of the event, the world will watch to see whether Durban and South Africa could deliver yet another successful “mega event”.

Speaking ahead of the conference, eThekweni Mayor, James Nxumalo, was adamant that it was not by chance that Durban, also seen as one of the leading conference destinations in Africa, was selected to host the event.

“The city is involved in a number of commendable greening and energy initiatives that will help ensure Durban’s place among the most sustainable cities in the world and that will also drastically minimise the carbon footprint of the COP17 event itself, as well as all international and local conferences that follow,” he said.

For the country, government viewed COP17 as an opportunity to showcase South Africa’s response to climate change while simultaneously attracting the much-needed investment in the country’s green economy.

South Africa has committed itself to ensuring a peak in 2020 for greenhouse gas emissions, which drive climate change, followed by a plateau period and then decline from 2036. It says the global move into a low-carbon, resource-efficient and sustainable economy has the potential to create a large number of jobs across the economy.

Should the country be able to capture 2% of the estimated global green economy in the next five years, the number of jobs can rise to 400 000 in the energy, manufacturing, agriculture and mining sectors. ²⁰



Making good on

the promises of 2011

Writer: Xoliswa Zulu

Photos: GCIS

The 2012 State of the Nation Address (SoNA) “show” is well and truly on the road, with departments, provinces and public entities preparing reports on past performance and outlines of future developments – all of which is to be crammed into a one-hour, informative and inspirational address by the President.

But while government has started to look ahead to the 2012 Address, we remain responsible for implementing the undertakings given by President Jacob Zuma 10 months ago in the 2011 Address.

Public attention – and the attention of government’s own monitoring and evaluation discipline – remains focused on the progress government and the country have made since the President declared 2011 as the year of job creation.

A cursory assessment shows that amid difficult economic conditions major milestones have been reached in various sectors of our society and economy.

Speaking at a recent business breakfast hosted by *The New Age* newspaper and the SABC, the President updated the country on the progress his administration has made, saying: “We are implementing our plans in a difficult economic

climate. As labour, business, government and community sectors, we need to work harder and more creatively to alleviate the impact of the current climate.”

The President said that while the global slowdown had affected key economic sectors such as manufacturing and had caused job losses, a number of employment projects were being implemented to tackle the country’s high unemployment rate. These included the Expanded Public Works Programme, new cooperatives and projects in the construction sector.

Current estimates are that large-scale projects such as electricity plants, rail and road upgrades, and water management will sustain between 50 000 and 100 000 jobs in construction up to 2015.

“With regard to employment creation, we established the R9-billion Jobs Fund to encourage new initiatives, both inside and outside of government. A programme to provide R20 billion in tax incentives for large businesses was implemented as undertaken,” the President said.

Over 300 cooperatives have been established under the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme, while the Department of Trade and

President Jacob Zuma and Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Tina Joemat-Pettersson visit a community at Nkandla, KwaZulu-Natal, as part of the President Jacob Zuma Masibambisane Rural Development Initiative.



Industry's cooperative incentive scheme had generated more than 1 000 direct permanent jobs.

The President pointed out that the public sector continued to be a stabiliser in employment, as it had increased jobs from the end of 2008 despite sharp declines in private employment.

The Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission, chaired by the President, and the Short-Term Job Creation Commission, chaired by the Deputy President, have been established to unblock obstacles to the delivery of infrastructure and short-term jobs.

Recently, government, business, labour and community organisations signed a Skills Accord aimed at improving skills development and quality education. Business and the Government committed to enrolling at least 30 000 artisan trainees in training programmes over the next 12 months.

"Business agreed to make at least 17 000 internship places available for young persons who need work experience as part of obtaining their

formal qualifications, while government has also set a target of 3% of employment for internships," said President Zuma.

Providing access to land

With regards to land reform, 33 560 ha of agricultural land were acquired to provide emerging farmers with access to land.

"To enhance the productivity of farms transferred to beneficiaries, 116 farms have been recapitalised through the provision of funds for, among other things, infrastructure, mechanisation, seeds, livestock and the transfer of skills by commercial farmers. We urge communities to support the land reform programme and not to resell their land or farms back to previous owners, as has happened in some instances," he added.

Better health for all

The President also pointed to substantial progress in the fight against HIV and AIDS. Empirical evidence suggests that mother-to-child HIV-transmission

Powered up – more homes have been connected to receive electricity.



rates have significantly declined from 8% to 3,5% nationally.

A total of 14,7 million people have been tested for HIV, as part of the HIV and AIDS Counselling and Testing Campaign launched in April 2010."

On the proposed National Health Insurance (NHI), President Zuma said: "We remain confident that once implemented, the NHI will make healthcare a right for all rather than just a privilege for a few."

Quality services

In another sphere of delivery, municipalities completed 54 500 new electrical connections from February to the end of August 2011, while Eskom complete 34 045 new connections. The target is 150 000 connections a year.

"In addition, 120 000 households were supplied with access to water between January and September this year. The Informal Settlements Upgrading Programme exceeded its target by providing services in 52 383 sites, against a target of 27 054 sites. Clearly, we are steadily making progress in various areas." ☺



President Jacob Zuma tours a Volkswagen paint shop with manager, Nico Serfontein.

Stimulating growth

During his Medium Term Budget Policy Statement, the Minister of Finance, Pravin Gordhan, revealed plans to provide R25 billion over the next six years to stimulate industrial development zones (IDZs), boost investment in enterprises and job creation, support green initiatives and get the private sector to partner with the public sector to invest in infrastructure.

The package will include temporary mechanisms to bolster productivity and innovation in industries that have demonstrated long-term competitive potential.

Government is considering incentives to attract businesses from employment-intensive industries and services to IDZs, which have the potential to export, and become part of global supply chains and competitive logistics hubs.

Government will place more emphasis on funding long-term infrastructure.

Public-sector investment in infrastructure – which increased from 4,3% of gross domestic product in 2005 to 7,5% in the first half of 2011 – remains central to government's economic development plans.

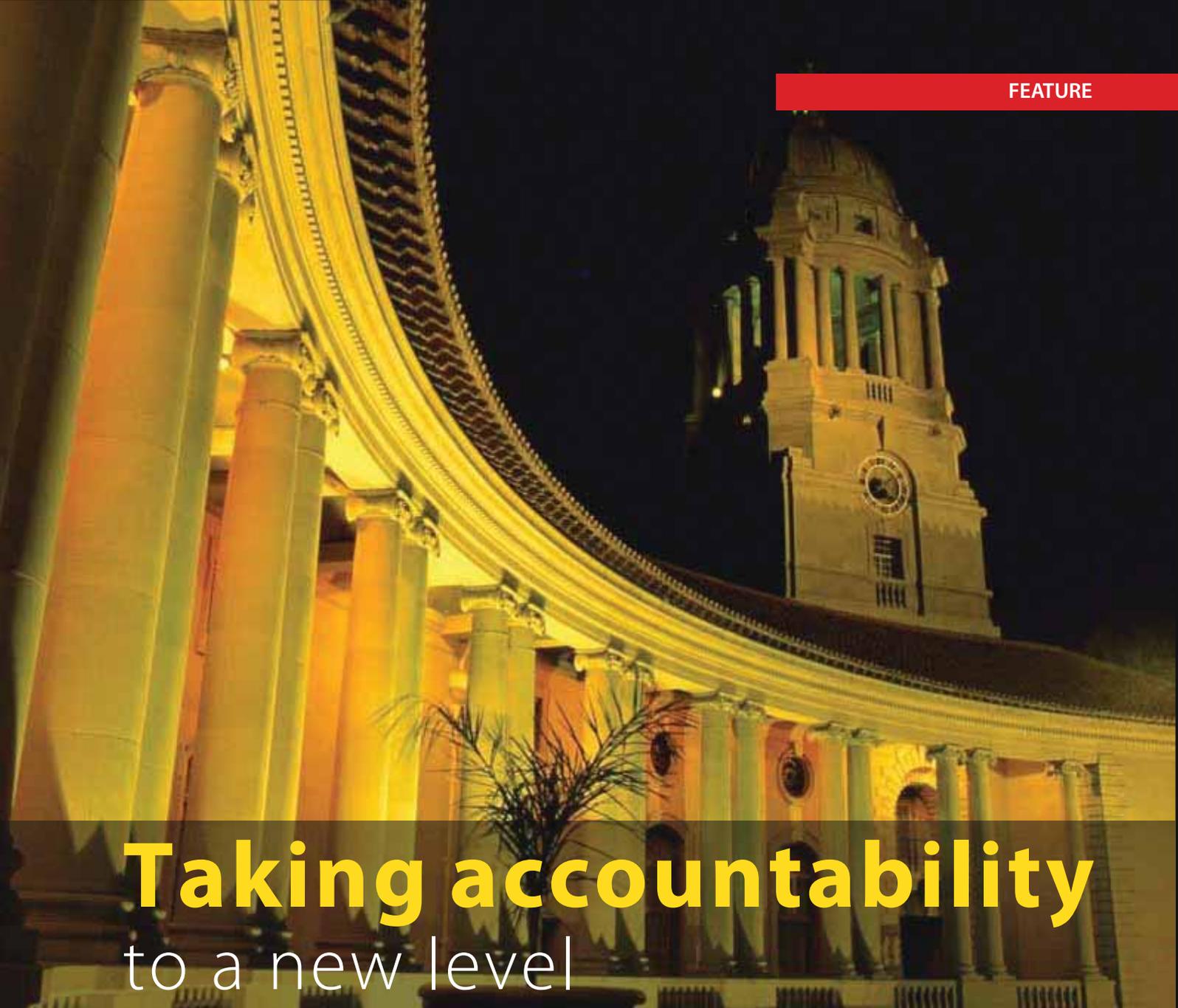
"Over the next three years, government plans to spend R802 billion on infrastructure – the lion's share in the areas of energy, transport and logistics, and water and sanitation," Minister Gordhan said.

"Of the R185,3 billion spent on public-sector infrastructure in the last financial year, over a third (R69,1 billion) was invested in transport and logistics, and R52,5 billion in energy, while water and sanitation made up R14,4 billion.

"Also included in these investments was R6,7 billion in hospitals and clinics, R6 billion in schools and R3,8 billion in courts."

About R500 million is to be set aside in the 2012 Budget to fund National Health Insurance (NHI) pilot sites. The pilots will launch a 14-year programme to introduce the NHI. Part of the first phase also involves revitalising hospitals, improving nursing and getting the public health system to provide a more caring environment.





Taking accountability to a new level

**Writer: Harold Maloka*

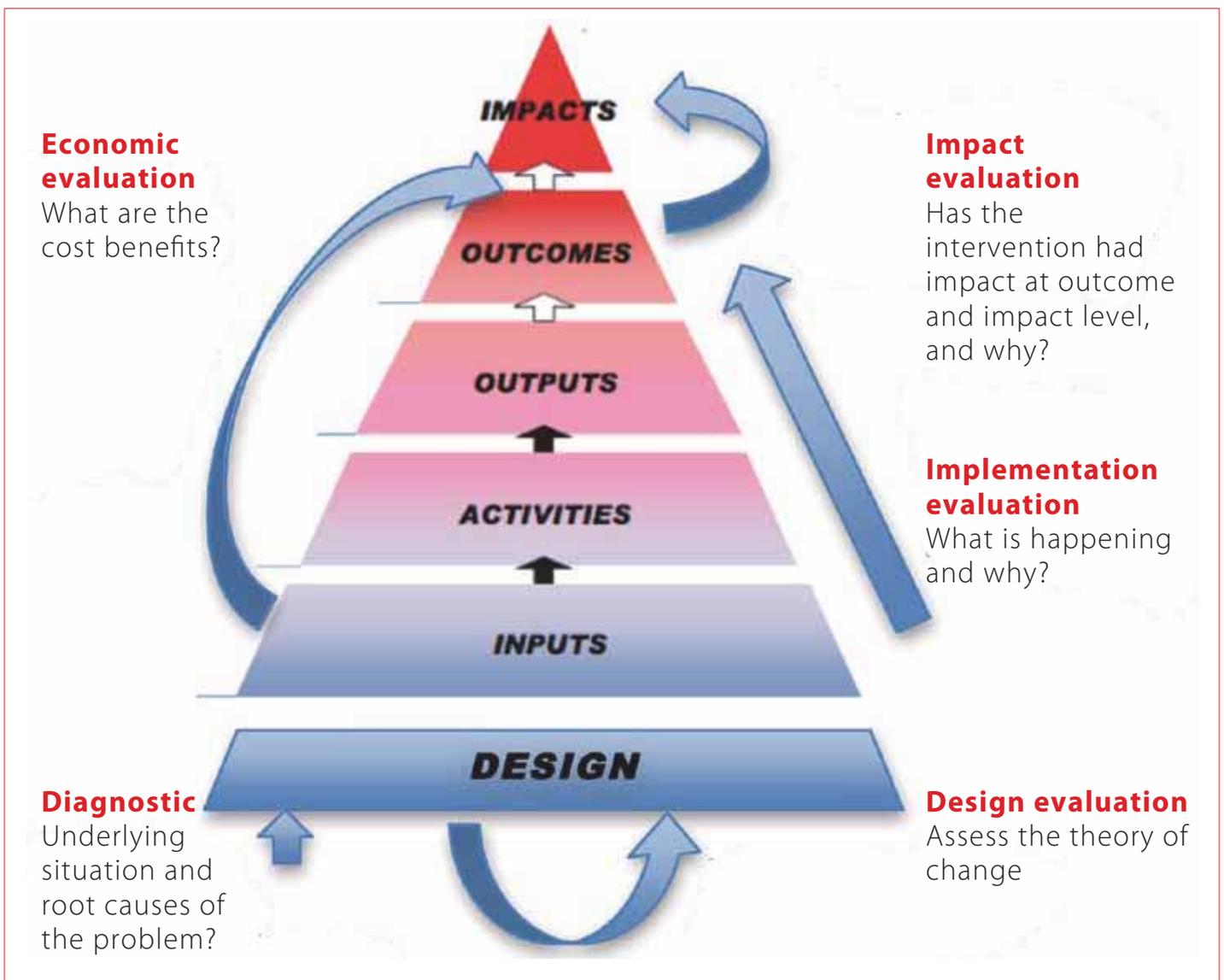
In 2009, the administration of incoming President Jacob Zuma established monitoring and evaluation (M&E) as a tool for improving government performance, with the focus on 12 priority outcomes. Since then, great progress has been recorded, with plans for the 12 priority outcomes developed, and quarterly monitoring reports on these outcomes provided to Cabinet. These reports allow the President and Cabinet the opportunity to assess progress and introduce interventions where necessary. Other areas developed have been systems for the monitoring of front-line services, and for assessing the management performance of government departments.

The latest element to be developed in the M&E toolkit is the evaluation component of the system.

The National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF) has been drafted by a group of stakeholders coordinated by the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME). It was approved by Cabinet on 23 November 2011. The framework draws from the experience of a number of countries, and in particular from a study tour to Mexico, Colombia and South America undertaken in June/July 2011. Some of the key lessons to emerge from this study tour were the:

- need for a system with standardised components
- importance to link to the planning system
- need for a common language around evaluation
- need for a champion with technical expertise to drive the system
- need for a suite of types of evaluations
- need for evaluations to be independent and credible
- need to ensure follow-up, so that the results of the evaluations are used.

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Why is evaluation important?

Evaluations provide evidence-based assessments of the relevance and performance of programmes, policies or plans, and can inform ongoing implementation, as well as planning and budgeting processes. Evaluations also serve to strengthen accountability by providing reliable information on progress in the achievement of public objectives to stakeholders, often identifying the key factors driving success or failure. In applying its evaluation system across government, Chile found that 51% of programmes needed substantial revision. Failure to identify and address such problems will result in impaired implementation and effectiveness.

Evaluation is currently applied sporadically in government and is not informing planning, policy-making

and budgeting sufficiently, so we are missing the opportunity to learn from experience to improve government's effectiveness, efficiency and impact.

What approach are we taking?

We are undertaking evaluation for four reasons – to improve performance, to improve accountability, to improve decision-making and to increase knowledge about the area.

One of the key important things learnt from the study tour was that we need to see evaluation not only as something which happens at the end of an intervention, but as a series of activities at different stages of our management cycle, starting before a policy or programme is designed. Figure One shows the main types of evaluation and the key questions these answer.

These different types of evaluation should be undertaken at different stages of an intervention, with the diagnostic exercise

before an intervention, design evaluation after the plan has been done, implementation either during or at the end, and impact evaluation at the end or at key milestones.

Some of the evaluations are quick and cheap to do (particularly design), while others are more complex, take longer and are likely to be more expensive (implementation, diagnosis and particularly impact evaluation). Therefore, these need to be programmed, and provinces and departments will be expected to produce their own annual and three-year evaluation plans. Nationally, an annual and three-year evaluation plan will be produced, focusing in particular on large, strategic or innovative programmes. These will be undertaken by departments with support from the DPME.

Ensuring use

Undertaking evaluations requires resources and all programmes will be expected to allocate 0,1% to 5% of their budgets for this, depending on the size of the programme. The justification for the resources is that the lessons drawn from the evaluations are used to improve performance, and savings will be made from the improvements that evaluations enable. For this to happen, the evaluations need to be of good quality and credible, but also there must be ownership of the results by commissioning departments.

In most cases, departments will undertake or commission the evaluation e.g. from universities or other service-providers.

The evaluations in the national evaluation plan will be a partnership between the department and the DPME, led by the respective department. Following each evaluation, an improvement plan will be developed drawing from the recommendations of the evaluation, which will be monitored. The reports of the evaluations will be made available to the public, posted on the department's website and also the DPME's website.

A challenge for planning

The system requires minimum standards for planning so that effective M&E can be undertaken. Key for this evaluation policy framework are sectoral and cross-sectoral plans (such as delivery agreements for outcomes), programmes and project plans. The plans require effective diagnosis, standardised and good-quality theories of change (how the outcomes will be achieved) and good-quality measurable indicators. An immediate priority for evaluation is agreeing on minimum standards for programme plans, and work is underway to define this.

Work on evaluations

We have already initiated some evaluations. The ECD diagnostic evaluation began in October 2011, terms of reference are being finalised with the Department of Human Settlements and discussions are underway with other departments. Some initial results will be fed back to the Cabinet Lekgotla in January 2012. The national evaluation plan will be drafted by March 2012 for implementation from April 2012. Departments now need to be looking at how to include evaluation in their programme budgets. The DPME will co-fund some evaluations in the national evaluation plan, and also seek external funding for some of these.

How will this be taken forward?

The DPME is the custodian of the government-wide M&E system and has established the Outcomes Evaluation and Research Unit as a centre of expertise in government on evaluation, with the role of supporting other departments and assuring quality. The Evaluation Technical Working Group (ETWG) is being established to draw together expertise in government to support the evaluation system. The ETWG includes national government departments and agencies and some premiers' offices. The DPME is providing the secretariat.

Conclusions

South Africa is moving rapidly to implement an evaluation system. This has the potential to provide major lessons on how to improve our interventions, and so to improve the outcomes and impacts we seek. We will be evaluating the impact of our outcomes approach and we remain optimistic that they will help us sharpen the approach. ☺

****Harold Maloka is the Spokesperson for the Ministry for Performance Monitoring, Evaluation and Administration in The Presidency***

To follow up on the evaluation system contact Dr Ian Goldman, Deputy Director-General: Evaluation and Research, DPME, at ian@po.gov.za

Giving HIV a voice

Dr Nono Simelela



*Writer: Xoliswa Zulu
Photographer: Kopano Tlape*

He gave HIV and AIDS a face during a time when many South Africans living with HIV/AIDS faced immense stigma. Upon hearing of his death, former President Nelson Mandela called him "exemplary in showing how one should handle a disaster of this nature."

When 12-year-old Nkosi Johnson died in 2001, the entire world mourned with those who loved him. He was, after all, the boy who had become an icon and had given those living with HIV/AIDS a voice.

Statistics South Africa estimates that nearly 5,38 million South Africans are infected with the virus, which has taken the lives of thousands of mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters, and left thousands of children orphaned.

Johnson's courage also saw the emergence of thousands of activists, infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS, who fought for the millions of South Africans who could not fight for themselves.

One such person who has fought tirelessly and become a voice of the voiceless is Dr Nono Simelela, Adviser to Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe on HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB) and other health matters.

Simelela has occupied various positions in the public and private sectors, nationally and internationally, dealing with HIV and AIDS. She spearheaded early national programmes in the prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission, increased access to voluntary counselling and testing and antiretroviral (ARV) regimens in the country. That is no small feat.

When she was appointed in her latest role in June 2011, which involves supporting the Deputy President in his role as Chair of the South African National AIDS Council (Sanac), she hit the ground running.

One of the major tasks she faced was coordinating

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Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, during the HIV Campaign with SANDF members.

and overseeing the writing of the National Strategic Plan (NSP) on HIV and AIDS 2012 to 2016.

Immense work goes into penning a strategy that will improve the lives of many and hopefully contribute to a lower infection rate in the years to come. "It was hard work. It was a huge commitment," she says.

"We had a bottom-up approach to the NSP, so that people could identify with the issues and raise their own. One of the gaps in the last strategy was that we didn't develop an implementation plan for each department and each province. That was a huge oversight. The plan just became a document."

For the next five years, four pillars will form the basis of the NSP that will inform the country's response to the pandemic, which will in turn provide the impetus towards achieving its 20-year vision. These include universal testing for HIV and screening

for TB; health and wellness; safety and dignity; and changing social norms and values.

The NSP 2012 to 2016 was launched on World AIDS Day, 1 December 2011.

"Between the first of December and the end of March next year, we'll be developing implementation plans, which is something we didn't do with the last strategy. Those plans will be launched just before the beginning of the 2012/13 financial year."

A simplified version of the plan, explains Simelela, will be produced and translated into all 11 languages, so that it becomes something that every South African understands. "We want people to have this information; know what is available; know what strategies are out there; and know what

services there are and how to access them.”

In the last two years, government has announced bold and life-changing plans for people living with HIV and AIDS, including reducing the rate of infection by 50% by 2011; providing ARV treatment to 80% of infected people; and launching the HIV Counselling and Testing (HCT) Campaign, which aims to test 15 million South Africans. By the end of June 2011, the campaign had reached over 14,7 million South Africans.

One of the key provisions of the NSP includes the development of a single integrated strategy for HIV, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and TB. This is primarily due to the high co-infection rate between HIV and TB, as well as HIV and STIs. Currently, the country faces one of the worst dual epidemics of HIV and TB in the world.

“We have a 73% co-infection rate between HIV and TB, which means that 73% of people who have TB are also HIV-positive. From a treatment perspective, it makes sense to bring the two strategies together and address this in a comprehensive way.

“We want to find people who have TB, screen them for HIV and then treat them as soon as possible because of this high rate of co-infection.

The council has a technical task team looking into this initiative. We have a research task team that brings all the experts and research together.”

While a lot has been done in raising awareness about HIV, AIDS and TB, Dr Simelela believes more can still be done.

“The area of HIV and TB has a lot of medical terminology that is difficult to understand. We need to communicate what is available in a way or a language that people understand.”

Simelela says the country has done well in terms of addressing STIs and adds that treating STIs effectively will add to the country’s ability to reduce new HIV infections.

“We need to also address behavioural issues as a country. We know that things like having multiple partners, unprotected sex and alcohol abuse place people at risk. There are a lot of societal norms and values that need to be addressed for us to move with our vision of an AIDS-free South Africa.

“Civil society has to be critical of government,

but it also needs to assist where it is appropriate and get the information out to communities. We need to work together.”

Simelela explains that on the issue of the National Health Insurance (NHI) scheme there has been constant debate in the public and private sector on whether the scheme will work, especially when one looks at the current burden of HIV and AIDS on the country’s health system. The pilot phase of the NHI will roll out in April 2012.

What causes the burden, she says, is when people access healthcare when they are seriously ill, instead of seeking treatment earlier.

“If people get treated early, as is happening under the new guidelines, there will be less people needing hospital care when they are very ill – which is what causes the burden. The NHI will ensure that people who have previously not been able to get care, get it quickly.

“We have to appreciate that, with the focus on HIV, a lot of resources have gone into the health system.

The challenge we need to grapple with is strengthening it to ensure that we have sufficient resources.”

There will also be a strong emphasis on primary care through a totally re-engineered primary healthcare (PHC) system, which will help shift healthcare from a predominantly curative to a preventative system. The re-engineering process will see the appointment of district clinical specialist support teams, school health services and municipal ward-based PHC agents.

“Once we get community systems going strong and use community health workers and field workers – going into the homes, screening people, identifying those who need care and need to go to hospital – we will have less of a burden on hospitals.”

Simelela’s passion for medicine and all things related to how the body works started when she was still in school. At the time, she realised that there were very few African doctors. She wanted to ensure that people, especially women and children, had access to decent healthcare. She later became the first black female gynaecologist to qualify in South Africa.

“I studied at a rural school in the North West; there was very little access to health services back then.

I decided that I would go into the health field. But even within health, my passion was and still is women’s health and young people. I believe that if women get the best care possible, any country stands a better chance of achieving its development goals.”

Simelela has worked in the health field for more than 20 years, initially as a senior lecturer and clinician in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the Medical University of South Africa, and then as the head of the National HIV/AIDS and TB

“We want people to have this information; know what is available; know what strategies are out there; and know what services there are and how to access them.”

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programme at the Department of Health.

She comes into her current role with immense experience.

“Just the fact that I have worked for health in government has enabled me to hit the ground running.”

Over the years, government has received a lot of criticism for its response to fighting HIV and AIDS, and Simelela believes that her job has been made easier by the fact that people now “have absolute respect for the Office of the President and the Deputy President”.

“I have a clear mandate on what I need to do. It is easier to draw my roadmap and say, ‘by such and such a time, we will have a plan’.”

The demands on this petite, intelligent and



compassionate woman will be great over the next few years, but one can rest assured that the plight of those living with HIV and AIDS is in good hands.

“You need to commit to producing good work, and appreciate the honour of being able to work in such an environment with a government as committed to addressing the needs of the people. That is what keeps me going, and keeps a lot of the other teams and colleagues working.

“I would also like to see better collaboration, better integration of the plans going forward and a national AIDS council that functions smoothly and which actually empowers not only the Office of the Deputy President and The Presidency, but all the ministers responding to HIV as a development issue.” 

South Africa is taking responsibility

The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) is one of the government departments represented in both the Sanac plenary and sector coordinating committees.

As part of the third tier of Sanac, the DPSA has been tasked with coordinating government sectors’ HIV/AIDS response in line with the council’s procedural guidelines for sector coordinating committees.

The DPSA’s HIV/AIDS coordination role is further based on one of Cabinet’s 12 outcomes, namely Outcome 12, which seeks to ensure an efficient, effective and development-oriented public service. The Public Service, in response, addresses HIV/AIDS not only as a health issue, but also a development one.

More public servants are accessing treatment, care and support services through the effective Aid for AIDS (AFA) Programme managed by the Government Employee Medical Scheme (Gems).

Compliance with legal and policy frameworks is closely monitored and system monitoring tools are effectively used to conduct national analyses of the implementation of the HIV/AIDS and TB Management Policy within government departments.

Of the planned HIV/AIDS prevention activities in the Ministry of Public Service and Administration’s Operational Plan 2010/11, 91% were completed. The DPSA is currently developing guidelines on gender-sensitive and rights-based HIV/AIDS mainstreaming.

According to *Gems’ Key Health Trend 2010*, enrolment into the Gems HIV/AIDS Disease Management Programme increased for the 2010 baseline by 65% (from 32 243 in 2009/10 to 53 495 in 2010/11) as measured by AFA’s registration data.

This is an encouraging milestone; however, this enrolment does not occur early enough in the course of the HIV disease’s progression, before the CD4 count drops below 200 cell/ml. The findings show that 34% of beneficiaries are enrolled at the CD4 of below 200 cell/ml and a further 22% at a moderately severe level of immunosuppression. The majority of AFA-registered beneficiaries (76%) are principal members.

The challenge is for the DPSA and Gems to increase the number of employees accessing treatment before the CD4 drops below 350 cell/ml. The DPSA has undertaken to intensify the HCT Campaign in the Public Service through an innovative service model.

The programme, the Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV, is a call for people in the public sector who are living openly with HIV to be supported to become role models.

Sharon Phiri



On the right track

Writer: Xoliswa Zulu

Photographer: Kopano Tlape

When you handle a mean machine that can beat a Maserati, you know you're on the right track.

And when you're a woman handling one of the fastest trains in the world, moving at 160 km/hour, you know you can handle anything that life throws your way.

Gautrain driver Sharon Phiri thought she would wear pencil skirts, cute blouses and pretty heels to work. Today, she wears heavy work boots, unflattering navy slacks and a baggy shirt – not what women want to wear daily. But, when you're handling the Gautrain, you can't be dressed in slinky little heels.

"I have a diploma in Personal Assisting. I wanted to wear heels, pencil skirts and be cute at work," she says. "But I heard about the Gautrain and never did I think in a million years I would be where I am, minus the heels."

Phiri is one of a few women making waves in the transport industry, which has been heavily dominated by men for decades.

"The training took six months, including the practical side of things. The first day I got into the train and saw the controls, I was like 'no, I'm not driving this thing, maybe I'm at the wrong place', but I got used to it," she laughs. "I was excited though and that excitement made me want to work harder."

"When you're working in a male-dominated industry, you

always have to prove yourself, that as a woman, you can do better. You're always on your toes, you can't slip up. But for me to be able to stand up and do what I do, I had to get informed. I spent a lot of time in the train and after a few weeks, I knew exactly what I was doing."

The journey to becoming a train driver was not an easy one. Phiri fell pregnant straight after Matric and worked as a waiter for two years to raise money for her daughter and to enrol herself at a higher education institution. It was a long, hard road, but one she would not trade for anything.

"What motivated me to be where I am today is the experiences in life that I have had, the obstacles that I faced just after high school.

"The journey for me being a train driver has been fantastic though. I'm enjoying my job. I'm actually doing something I wasn't expecting to do. I'm always excited, I'm happy to wake up in the morning and go to work."

And waking up for work is not easy – well, not for the rest of us mere mortals. Phiri wakes up at 2:00, grabs breakfast, which never includes much, just a slice of toast, and by 3:30, she's at work getting ready for her morning shift.

"I'm used to waking up early, it's part of the job," she laughs. "The first train departs at 5:30. I'm always looking at my watch. I have to be vigilant of what's happening on the track.

"I have to make sure my passengers are safe and arrive at their destinations safely and on time. It's quite hectic. If there are problems, I have to sort out the problems. If the train is late, I have to explain to my passengers why the train is late. No matter what, you always have to rectify the problems and ensure that your passengers are safe."

The looks on the faces of passengers when they see a woman at the controls is priceless, she says. "The exciting part of the job is the expression on people's faces when they see that I was driving. I love it."

The most challenging part of her job is ensuring that the train departs and arrives on time and that her passengers are safe.

"Safety is of importance in our industry. People have to be safe.

The transport industry has always been seen as a male-dominated profession, but for Phiri, it's all about how hard one works.

For women to be recognised, she believes that all it takes is hard work, education, perseverance and determination.

"For all the young girls who want to get into the industry, get educated. "Get as much information about the railway industry so that you know exactly what you're getting yourself into. Information is key; the more informed you are, the better you are going to be able to handle whatever you're going to come across within this industry."

Taking it easy on a laid-back Sunday afternoon, though, is vital for this go-getter. She spends time with her daughters, who keep her fully occupied and entertained. "I spend my free time with my kids. I have two girls," she smiles. "I give them their time."

"When I got this job, I had to make my family understand the working hours. I had to sit down with them and tell them this is what is happening. They are very supportive of everything that I do and I appreciate all their support."

And what does the future hold for this ambitious young woman? "I see myself working as a route supervisor," she says. 📍



More about the Gautrain

The Gautrain started operations in time for the 2010 FIFA World Cup™. Since then, thousands of people have boarded the train and, according to Gautrain officials, the numbers show many locals have opted to use the train as their primary mode of transport.

The Sandton to OR Tambo International Airport line carries up to 90 000 passengers per day whereas the Rosebank to Pretoria route has carried more than 900 000 to date.

Creating employment

At the end of February 2011, Bombela increased its labour force targets and significantly exceeded its obligations. It has notched up the following achievements:

- 34 837 people were employed to work on the project
- 30 921 local people were employed, compared to an obligation of 17 712
- 26 720 previously disadvantaged persons were employed, compared to an obligation of 12 510
- 2 931 women were employed, compared to an obligation of 1 119
- 196 people with disabilities were employed, compared to an obligation of 155.





The MDGs:

shifting the focus from quantity to quality



*Writer: Stephen Timm
Photos: Courtesy GCIS

South Africa's serious health and education challenges may mean the country won't meet all eight millennium development goals (MDGs) by 2015, but experts are upbeat that things are already improving in these two areas, which together account for more than half of the national Budget.

The country is on track to achieve five of its MDGs, namely eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal access to primary education, empowering women, ensuring environmental sustainability and developing a global partnership for development.

South Africa is falling behind emerging countries such as Malaysia and Brazil, which have already achieved six and four of their MDGs respectively.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) says South Africa faces key challenges in health and education, which together with a high unemployment rate and high level of inequality may diminish gains made in poverty reduction and other areas.

On health, the country may have boosted child immunisation, lowered malaria deaths and provided more access to better drinking water, but child mortality rates remain high, maternal deaths have sky-rocketed and life expectancy has fallen.

Much of the high mortality rate is attributable to the prevalence of HIV and AIDS, which, despite

stabilising in recent years, remains high. This is despite condom use having increased and access to antiretrovirals (ARVs) having widened, according to the UNDP in a report last year on the country's achievements in meeting the MDGs.

The UNDP is so concerned about the country's massive increase in maternal deaths – from 150 to 625 deaths per 100 000 live births between 1998 and 2007 – that it has set up a national task team, comprising various officials, including Members of Parliament (MPs), to tackle this problem.

The UNDP believes that lowering the ratio of maternal deaths will also result in more children living beyond their fifth birthday and reduce the numbers of mothers who die from HIV/AIDS.

This is despite the fact that globally very few countries are expected to cut maternal deaths and meet MDG 5, according to Duane Blaauw and Loveday Penn-Kekanaï, of the University of the Witwatersrand's (Wits) Centre for Health Policy.

Writing in the *2010 South African Health Review*, they pointed out that the average global annual reduction in the Maternal Mortality Rate between 1990 and 2005 was less than one per cent.

But there are already signs that things are looking up

Eckhart Buchmann, Head of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital and Chair of the Priorities in Perinatal Care Association of South Africa, believes that the number of maternal deaths could come down, with recent developments.

Writing on the Public Health Association of South Africa's website in August, in an article called *Maternal mortality and morbidity – still*

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not right, Buchmann said the nationwide roll-out of ARV treatment and upscaling of a training programme targeting interns and junior doctors might show a decline in maternal deaths when the 2008 – 2010 *Saving Mothers* report is released.

Kathy Dennil of Kedibone Health System Consultants is also confident that things will improve, because of a new AIDS policy from the Government and funds from the United States through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (Pepfar) and USAid.

"The Government's HIV counselling and testing strategy had led to over 13 million people being tested for HIV over the last 18 months to two years," she says. However, she is concerned that testing and health policy changes haven't resulted in an increase in those with CD-4 counts above 350 attending HIV wellness clinics, as the average person only seeks help when they have a CD-4 count of 87.

Added to this, says Dennil, antenatal care and tuberculosis management have traditionally been nurse-led programmes, but that these have not been doing well.

Yet, she remains positive that the new public healthcare policy being driven by the Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, may address some of these problems with community-based health through the implementation of Brazil's successful district health model in South Africa. The model is based on teams of specialists, where available, in all parts of the country, supporting doctors.

Dr Motsoaledi went to great lengths in September to explain the model outlining the department's plans to re-engineer the country's Primary Health-care (PHC) System, at the core of which is the intention to strengthen partnerships with communities to improve health service delivery in the nodal areas.

It will switch the current system of delivery, which largely focuses on curative hospital-based services, to a decentralised community-based PHC system.

In a model that will "help us arrive at our MDGs"

the Minister explained that the re-engineering would take the shape of three main streams. A notable development will be a district-based model where a team of five specialists or clinicians will be deployed in each district.

"These teams will specifically focus on maternal and child mortality. This will help us arrive at our MDGs," said the Minister.

A UN report – *Levels and Trends in Child Mortality* – released in September, revealed that while globally the under-five mortality rate dropped between 1990 and 2010 by more than one-third,



Progress in health care for all is a vital component of South Africa's Millennium Development Goal status.

from 88 deaths per 1 000 live births to 57; in South Africa, the number of deaths per 1 000 live births among under-fives in South Africa in 1990 was 60. In 2010, it was 57. The country's MDG target for 2015 is 20. Last year, 58 000 children in South Africa died before their fifth birthday.

The UN Children's Fund and World Health Organisation said that in South Africa, progress in reducing childhood mortality had been hampered by HIV and AIDS, and poor implementation of healthcare. However, Heather Zar, Head of the Department of Paediatrics and Child Health at the University of Cape Town and Red Cross Children's Hospital, believes government has made important interventions in the past few years, which she expects will help South Africa to tackle its high child mortality rate.

Last year, the Department of Health mandated that ARV treatment be started in children as soon as they were diagnosed. Zar says the

introduction of two important childhood vaccines that will help to lower the onset of pneumonia and diarrhoea by 20% and 30% respectively is also important, as these are the leading causes of death in children younger than five.

Professor Haroon Saloojee, Head of the Division of Community Paediatrics at Wits, says there is already anecdotal evidence that the two vaccines are reducing pneumonia and diarrhoea in at least KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng.

He also backs the move to emulate Brazil's district health model, saying healthcare facilities are too focused on hospitals and not enough on outlying communities in South Africa: "I think it's the right priority – it's spot on."

Saloojee says that the district teams, along with government's bid to boost school health and train lay-community members to give simple health tips to fellow community members are a step forward. He also singles out the Children Problem Identification Programme. It is being

run in 100 of the country's 400 hospitals and has been effective in reducing child deaths by improving simple interventions at home or at hospitals or, for example, by improving transport to health facilities.

According to Saloojee, child deaths have started to fall again since 2006, which he attributes to the Government tackling HIV and AIDS more effectively. He says a recent costing exercise revealed that in Gauteng alone the use of R4 billion in existing and new funds over five years could help halve child deaths in the province.

Then there's the country's education system. In September, the Minister in The Presidency responsible for Planning, Trevor Manuel, referred to the state of South Africa's education as "abysmal", saying it was the root cause of many of the country's problems, including poor health, unemployment, crime and a tolerance for corrupt practices.

Briefing MPs at a meeting in Parliament on the MDGs in September, Minister Manuel said the country might have met the MDG goal for universal access to primary education, but that results from the 2011 Annual Na-

tional Assessments of Numeracy and Literacy Skills results, released in July, showed that South Africa had little to celebrate when it came to education.

The results showed, for example, that the average percentage score of Grade Three pupils in Literacy was 35% and in Numeracy 28%. Grade Six pupils scored an average of 28% for Languages and 30% for Mathematics.

Graeme Bloch, Professor Extraordinaire at Wits' Public and Development Management School, explains that while government has taken steps to improve the education system – by developing workbooks, improving teaching training and doing away with Outcomes-Based Education – it still lacks the necessary implementation.

But, all is not lost.

The Department of Basic Education hopes that its *Action Plan to 2014: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2025*, released last

year, which lists 27 goals to improve educational performance, will make a difference.

The department's Director of Research Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation, Hersheela Narsee, says it is the first time that the country has such a plan for the schooling sector and points out that the quality of learning outcomes is the country's biggest challenge when it comes to improving the education system.

African National Congress MP and editor of *New Agenda*, Ben Turok, says that while the MDGs are useful and have helped raise awareness of poverty, they are not that effective because they conceal structural problems.

Turok says officials have to be "more sophisticated" when tackling the country's problems and not just concentrate on meeting statistics.

He gives the example of the Government's focus on Reconstruction and Development Programme houses which, while leading to millions of homes being built, have resulted in many of these being unsound.

Similarly, Affirmative Action, Turok says, though well intentioned has many a time resulted in the appointment of staff who can't do the job.

Likewise, Joel Netshitenzhe, Executive Director of the Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection, believes government has the right calibre of civil servants needed to improve health and education, but that it needs better monitoring and evaluating systems: "We've done well in widening access, but now the challenge is to meet the quality." 

***Stephen Timm is a BuaNews correspondent based in Cape Town**