

# Transforming the Civil Service Relevant to the Health Sector

The commission identified some serious problems with the structure, functioning, and management practices of the present civil service as it relates to the health sector. Many of the issues highlighted the cumbersome, bureaucratic and undemocratic practices of the civil service which impedes effective health service delivery in this country.

## Causes

### Structural:

- Gross fragmentation and duplication of the civil service with the numerous different authorities responsible for health delivery.
- Unrepresentativeness in civil service with regard to gender, race, ethnicity, geographic basis, and religion.
- Non-accountability and the lack of any requirement that the civil service serve the needs of social and distributive justice, and of development needs.

The current process of unilateral restructuring was seen as intended to perpetuate these imbalances as well as to limit the options of a future democratic government.

### Managerial:

- Training of personnel was inappropriate to the demands of management of an accountable health system.
- The system is not transparent, not allowing scrutiny and use by the users.
- A management style that is uncaring, undemocratic, top-down, and impervious to external influences.
- A system that is bedeviled by growing and system-wide corruption.
- Chronic inefficiency

This has led to a cycle of demoralisation and uncertainty in the civil service.

These problems militate against the eradication of poverty, illiteracy, and the promotion of the PHC vision and approach, the construction of democracy and social stability in our country, and against the formation and carrying out of relevant policies.

## We call on government to:

- immediately stop unilateral restructuring of the public sector health service.
- immediately freeze promotions in senior posts in all government structures, related parastatals and statutory professional boards and councils, until a new constitution is in place.
- where replacements are needed, prior to democratic government, to make these on short term contracts with guarantees for continuation.
- ensure the passage of legislation providing for a Freedom of Information Act, to

ensure that accessibility of public information is made a routine part of all functions and levels of government.

- ensure that the right of access by all individuals to all information relevant to them is included in a Bill of Rights.

### **We call on all political leaders to:**

- ensure that the transformation of the civil service, including the health sector, to be given priority in the current debates on the transition in South Africa.

### **We call on the NEC's of SAHSSO and NPPHCN to:**

set up a planned and coordinated affirmative action programme to develop a pool of people from within the democratic movement who share the vision of a national health service and of progressive primary health care, who could eventually occupy key posts within the public health service. Such key posts should be identified by their power to implement or to block policies.

The NEC's of SAHSSO and NPPHCN should investigate the feasibility of establishing a career structure in health service administration and training and other implications of this.

### **Action plan:**

#### **The government should:**

- immediately stop all unilateral restructuring of health services and of the relevant civil service structures;
- immediately freeze all promotions in senior posts in all government structures, related parastatals and professional boards and councils; and
- where replacements are needed, make them only on short term contracts with no guarantee of continuation.

#### **All political leaders are urged to:**

- ensure that the transformation of the civil service, including the health sector, be given higher priority in the current debates on the transition in South Africa.

#### **The Interim Government of National Unity should:**

- prepare a Freedom of Information Act with full consultation of all relevant groups and parties.
- ensure that individual's right of access to all information relevant to them is included in the Bill of Rights.

#### **The SAHSSO and NPPHCN NEC's should:**

- initiate the affirmative action programme described above within six months.
- investigate the feasibility of establishing a proper career structure in health service administration and the training/retraining/capacity building and other implications of this within six months.