

have already been discussed as part of ASGISA. The President also called attention to various other interventions in the education field. One of these is the provision of more classrooms through the infrastructure investment in the underdeveloped urban and rural areas. This means that education needs must also form part of Integrated Development Plans at local government level. Care must be taken, however, to ensure that the different departments responsible for ensuring that a school building is completed, that it is provided with water and sanitation and that it is electrified work together to ensure that resources allocated to the improvement of education facilities reach the children in poor communities.

An issue the President did not mention, is the upgrading of schools in especially rural and neglected urban areas, or steps to ensure that schools in such areas are adequately staffed. Corrective measures in this regard are critical, and Government must develop a human resource strategy that will not only retain qualified teachers in the education system, but also encourage the redistribution of teaching resources. The completion of the graduate register and Government's campaign to link graduates with prospective employers could reduce unemployment in the education sector.

The President further pointed to measures aimed at improving access to education for children from poor households in that the poorest quintile of schools has been targeted for school fees exemption. In addition, the focus on increasing the number of Mathematics and Science graduates addresses the issue of ensuring that people are equipped with the appropriate skills to drive a modern economy. President Mbeki announced that Government was targeting 529 schools to double Mathematics and Science graduate output to 50 000 by 2008. These measures must be seen in conjunction with the increase in the resource allocation to tertiary institutions in order to strengthen research and innovation development. In particular, attention will be paid to the re-equipment of Further Education and Training Colleges, a measure that indicates the importance Government attaches to ensuring that the growth of the South African economy must be underpinned by an appropriately skilled workforce.

3.2. Social Assistance

The State of the Nation Address acknowledges that while much of the focus of Government is on implementing programmes aimed at ensuring accelerated economic growth, attention will also be paid to the delivery of social services. One sector mentioned in this context was the delivery of social assistance as part of the social wage. The President pointed to the fact that out of the 10 million beneficiaries of the social assistance system, 7 million are children in receipt of the Child Support Grant. The drive to combat corruption in the social assistance system will be continued, and it is envisaged that the launch of the National Social Security Agency (SASSA) will further streamline the grant delivery system. Furthermore, social expenditure per person has increased by 60% between 1983 and 2003, and research has shown that government expenditure has consistently been shifted in favour of the poor.

The Minister of Social Development has announced that SASSA will be operational from 1 April 2006. Over the next six months, the full function of administering the grant system will be rolled out in 3 provinces, namely the Western Cape, Northern Cape and Gauteng. In these provinces, Members of the Executive Council (MECs) responsible for social development have taken steps to separate functions, and to ring-fence the allocation for social assistance. The process also includes a restructuring of staff in order to maximise capacity for the delivery of social services. One of the implications of the move to the Agency is that provinces will have to develop strategic plans for the reorientation of their staff and programmes for the delivery of social welfare services. It is likely that the demands on provinces will increase in light of the service implications contained in social development legislation due to be passed by Parliament over the medium term.

3.3. Health Care Services

Another area where significant improvement was reported in the State of the Nation Address is the area of health care services. The President noted that more than 1300 clinics have been upgraded, while the introduction of community service for a wider range of health professionals should ensure that the necessary capacity is available in the public health system. It is envisaged that further improvements will be effected to public hospitals through the hospital revitalisation programme and the refurbishment and re-equipment of existing hospitals and clinics.

The President further pointed out that more than 100 000 persons are now receiving antiretroviral treatment (ART). Given the number of people accessing such treatment through private health care services, the programme is deemed to compare favourably with many other countries in the world. In addition, the upgrading of hundreds of facilities has strengthened Government's ability to deliver on the Operational Plan for Comprehensive Prevention, Treatment and Care of HIV and AIDS for South Africa. It must be noted that the operational plan for rolling out ART "committed the state to treating about 50 000 people by the end of March 2004, an additional 135 000 by the end of March 2005, and another 215 000 by the end of March 2006". To date, the target for 2006 has not been achieved. Hence organisations such as the Treatment Action Campaign hold government to its own commitment in the operational plan by demanding that 200 000 people be on ARV treatment this year.¹⁵

Again, the President's speech has drawn criticism concerning the government's response to the HIV pandemic. Ngonyama argues that "(b)ecause of government's strict fiscal discipline, and Mbeki and Manto Tshabalala-Msimang's AIDS denial, the life saving anti retroviral drugs are only available to a fraction of infected persons-mostly women and youth-at government hospitals."¹⁶ What would be at issue is how Government aims to

¹⁵ Treatment Action Campaign online newsletter.

¹⁶ Ngonyama P, The State of the Nation, Centre for Civil Society, University of Kwazulu-Natal.

reach the targets it set itself with regard to increasing the number of people receiving ART,¹⁷ as well as the longer-term strategy for ensuring that the target of providing close to 1 million people who require ART with equitable access to such treatment by 2009.¹⁸

It must further be noted that the President did not make any reference to other aspects of Government's response to the pandemic. This includes the issue of access to disability grants for people who are too sick to work, as well as the HIV and AIDS home- and community-based care programme. The State of the Nation Address also did not speak to the issue of whether the Khomanani programme, aimed at raising consciousness about the virus and reducing the rate of new infections. This is an area of concern, because although there are indications that the rate of new infections has started to stabilise, South Africa is still one of the countries with the highest infection rates, and is estimated to have more HIV-positive people than any other country.¹⁹ It must also be noted that the Government's Programme of Action Report states that South Africa did not receive any funding from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria during the current round. The issue that arises is whether the work aimed at integrating HIV and AIDS issues throughout government departments will be affected by this loss of funding, and to what extent.

3.4. Housing

In the area of housing, the President indicated that during the course of 2006, government would take concrete steps to ensure that housing development contributes to "eliminating the duality of living spaces inherited from apartheid."

One of the ways in which this will be done is through the agreement reached between the Department of Housing and the South African Local Government Association on the sale of land for housing development. The agreement will enable municipalities to allocate land for lower and middle-income housing development close to economic centres. The President's other comments on land reform and restitution will also have an impact on Government's programme of providing housing to the poor, especially in rural areas.

In addition, President Mbeki pointed out that the public sector will accelerate infrastructure investment in the underdeveloped urban and rural areas to improve service delivery in the areas of the Second Economy. Such infrastructure will include housing and the question of access routes to and from settlements. The emphasis on labour intensive projects and the training of workers to acquire skills will produce positive spin offs in terms of the potential for the creation of jobs, which in turn will reduce unemployment and poverty.

¹⁷ Government Programme of Action 2005.

¹⁸ Department of Health. HIV/AIDS/STD Strategic Plan for South Africa: 2000 – 2005; see also the *South African Health Review 2005*, Chapter 5.

¹⁹ Department of Health. 2003. Operational Plan for Comprehensive HIV and AIDS Care, Management and Treatment for South Africa.

The President further announced that the National Housing Finance Corporation, the body tasked with providing housing finance to poor communities, would be transformed into a Housing Corporation. In addition, Government envisages that the Minister of Housing will seek to reach agreement with other financial institutions on the utilisation of the R42 billion set aside for housing development for poor and middle-income groups. In this context, the Minister of Housing and leadership of the financial institutions are expected to soon reach final agreement on the modalities for utilising the R42 billion set aside by the financial institutions for housing development for poor and middle-income groups. All of these efforts should contribute to achieving the goal of a society free of informal "shack settlements".²⁰

The Government also committed itself in the State of the Nation Address to completely eradicate the bucket toilet system in the established settlements by the end of 2007. The eradication of the bucket toilet system by the end of 2007 will contribute to a reduction in illnesses such as diarrhoea, poliomyelitis, typhoid, malaria and cholera that might result from poor sanitation and unhygienic practices.²¹

3.5. Land

The integrated interventions offered within the ASGISA development framework, also factor in the land and housing issue, which needs addressing, as it is a contributory constraint on economic growth in this country. The process of land restitution and redistribution has not progressed without challenges. According to the 2004/05 annual report of the Land Claims Commission, the Government has only managed to achieve less than 6% of the 30% land intended for restitution. The South African Communist Party estimated that the land that was distributed is just 3% of the total arable land. In addition, it strongly suggests that for the past ten years since the 1994 elections, "only three per cent of land in white ownership was transferred to previously disadvantaged people"²². In as much as progress has been made on land reforms, the Government has acknowledged that the past ten years has demonstrated that the market led reform strategy was unable to redress the inequalities and restitution instead, this created new challenges which led some people to invade unused land for housing settlement.

The second, and most central problem that contributed to the slow pace of land restitution is the market led and reform strategy pinned on the willing-seller, willing-buyer principle. The weakness of the willing-seller, willing-buyer principle, has the delay resulting in the strategy, as well as the involvement of third parties to determine the price value of the property. This usually took the form of private valuers without involving state valuers, thus posing an additional challenge where prices exorbitantly pushed up. The third problem

²⁰ State of the Nation Address, 3 February 2006.

²¹ Manona, W. 2004. Impact of Health, Water and Sanitation Services on Improving the Quality of life of Poor Communities

²² www.sacp.org.za

of the process is its inadequacy towards addressing issues of agrarian reform for sustainable livelihood.

The above three problems, resulted in the government making land use and management an issue outside of policy and legislation, thus creating a policy gap for land distribution processes. Therefore, in identifying the above weaknesses/challenges, a mechanism or instrument to manage and control the prices of land had to be explored given that the present system of willing-buyer- willing- seller pushed up land prices. The government recognised the fact that there is a need to review the market based land reform programme, most prominently the willing-buyer willing-seller principle. This therefore required the government to introduce a regulatory mechanism to propel the land redistribution and restitution process as a first step towards reforming the market based land reform strategy. It is for all the above reasons, among others, that led the President to announce, during the State of the Nation Address, that the government will consider a new land reform strategy to expedite the process of land transformation. This new land reform strategy, considers among other issues, the following issues which were identified by the President:

- The government will review the willing-buyer willing-seller policy, which informed the government process of land restitution.
- The government will also review the land acquisition models and the possible manipulation of land prices.
- The conditions under which foreigners buy land will be regulated, in line with international norms and practices.

The State of the Nation Address placed an emphasis on the role that local government would play in land for human settlement and economic development, particularly for rural economic development, which will also create jobs and employment for local people. It will also have implications for foreigners that buy land in the country, since more focus will be on South Africans as opposed to non-South Africans, who were not dispossessed.

The 2006 State of the Nation Address, on land reform and land restitution, highlighted the following:

- The Agriculture and Land Affairs Minister will review the willing-buyer, willing-seller policy.
- Review land acquisition models and possible manipulation of land prices, and regulate conditions under which foreigners buy land.
- The Minister and the Department will also ensure that the land redistribution programme is aligned to the Provincial Growth and Development Strategies (PGDS), as well as attend to the proper use of the funds that have been made available for the productive utilisation of the land.

The government proposes that this must be aligned to the Provincial Growth and Development Strategies (PGDS) as well as the Integrated Development Plans (IDP) of municipalities, for the productive utilisation of the land. This is a shift from the previous focus on land as a national competency, to a competency of all spheres of government. It also addresses the disjuncture that has existed between national and local development plans.

While the government reviews the process, this is by implication, a suggestion that the government may consider a moratorium on the sale of land to provide for a plan which will allow the government to conduct an audit of land that is available, for both restitution and development purposes. This suggestion may involve an audit on land owned by foreigners, a policy gap which will be receiving considerable attention. All these land reform measures are all targeted at meeting the objectives of ASGISA, in the main the halving of poverty and unemployment. This means that, how land is redistributed and managed would have to consider small and medium enterprises in the agriculture, fishing, mining, and food processing sectors. It will increasingly become crucial that the government plays a central role in driving the land redistribution process.

4. International Relations

The Government foreign policy in war torn countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Sudan, Côte D'Ivoire, Somalia and the Middle East has been that of negotiated peaceful engagements involving the government and "rebel forces".

The government intends involving itself through a process of political persuasion and diplomatic interventions. The South African Government would, when a settlement has been reached, monitor the situation to ensure that it achieves the purpose of reconciliation and democratisation of the countries faced by civil strife. This objective is part of the government's commitment to restoring peace on the African Continent. This emphasis, in 2005 and 2006, reflects the commitment of Government to peaceful resolution of conflicts in the continent and the world.

The government has also continuously emphasised the role that South Africa must play in strengthening the African Union and the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) programmes. While this may be both for long and short term object of the government, more focus has tended to be on peace keeping missions and engagement in multi-lateral forums to strengthen the position of South Africa in world politics and in trade negotiations. It has also prioritised the transformation of the Security Council of the United Nations, consulting with other countries. The strengthening of bilateral relations between South Africa and China seems to be one strategy to bond and consult other countries.

In spite of these initiatives, there seems to be a major shift of focus from strengthening continental bodies towards a focus on peacekeeping missions

and involvement in multi-lateral structures outside of Africa. This shift of focus has also led to a shift from NEPAD initiatives and programmes. This shift of focus from NEPAD and the strengthening of the African Union (AU) show that the government has committed itself to focus on international issues. These foci on international as opposed to continental, places South Africa in a better position globally and shifts the international balance of forces in favour of developing Third World countries. This, however, still requires South Africa as one of the member countries of the AU, to participate in NEPAD and AU programmes such as the African Peer Review Mechanism, which South Africa is about to conclude. Since the focus and responsibility has shifted from South Africa, this affords the country an opportunity to involve the civil society and to bring the government closer to the people

5. Integrated Justice System

With regard to the criminal justice system, the State of the Nation Address noted that the focus would be on integrated law enforcement operations in priority areas, addressing crimes relating to drugs and substance abuse, as well as implementing measures aimed at reducing social crime. The President indicated that Government would be considering the recommendations of the Khampepe Commission regarding the functioning of the different law enforcement agencies in the country. Furthermore, attention will be paid to improving the management of caseloads at courts as well as the rationalisation of the court system. In addition, attention will also be paid to reducing the number of children in prisons, the provision of additional correctional facilities to combat overcrowding, and the improvement of conditions and anti-corruption measures in existing correctional centres.

6. Implications of the State of the Nation Address for Women and Persons with Disabilities

The State of the Nation Address raised a number of issues that deal with the position of women and persons with disabilities in South Africa. In the first instance, the President noted the need to include more women and disabled persons in decision-making processes in the public service. It could also be argued that there is a direct link between the advancement of marginalised sectors of society and improving access to education, as well as improving the quality of education available to the poorest communities. In this regard, the President made specific reference to interventions in the education field such as eliminating school fees for the poorest quintile of primary schools, which will impact on the opportunities that girl children from poor families have to attend school. The focus on increasing the number of Maths and Science graduates addresses the issue of ensuring that people are equipped with the appropriate skills to drive a modern economy. In addition, the President announced an increase in the resource allocation to tertiary institutions in order to strengthen research and innovation development. These will again impact on women and persons with disabilities, as Government has committed itself repeatedly to ensuring that the admission of girls and women to these institutions must be promoted.

Envisaged interventions in the education field form part of a broader strategy to ensure that skills development in South Africa is accelerated. Training and skills development are essential elements of the Expanded Public Works Programme, which is aimed at bridging the gap between the two economies, and which forms an important part of the government's poverty alleviation programme. In addition, Government is set to focus, as part of ASGISA, on access to finance, the development of co-operatives, supporting the development of woman artisans and ensuring that women receive an equitable share of government procurement programmes. While the address was not explicit about the impact of these initiatives on persons with disabilities, it must be assumed that skills development programmes, employment programmes and programmes aimed at redress in terms of access to economic opportunities will also pay attention to persons with disabilities.

With regard to access to land, the President stated that Government would attempt to speed up its land redistribution programme by reviewing the "willing-buyer willing-seller" approach. This is linked directly to efforts aimed at reducing poverty and facilitating greater access to agricultural land for persons who have in the past been denied access to such opportunities. Given the fact that poverty has a gendered nature in South Africa, ensuring women's access to land is critical.

Similarly, improved access to housing close to economic centres will have an impact on women's ability to assert themselves in the economic sphere. It is critical that plans to restructure housing programmes pay specific attention to the needs of women and persons with disabilities, as social marginalisation often means lower access to government services. It is further critical that house structures take into consideration questions of physical accessibility for people with disabilities. The President announced that Government intended to eradicate the bucket system of sanitation in established residential areas, which will contribute to improved child health, thus reducing the burden of disease on women in poor communities.

7. Implications for Parliament

The State of the Nation Address sets out the priorities for government for the year ahead. It has been noted that the President has not, for the past few years, introduced any new policy imperatives during the State of the Nation Address. Rather, it is argued, the President reports back on the progress made with his government's programme of action, and sets new targets for the continuation of the policy already decided on. The State of the Nation Address can therefore be a useful tool for Parliament in carrying out both its legislative and oversight functions. When the President points out areas of concern in the national life, parliamentary committees must ascertain whether these concerns are due, in whole or in part, to shortcomings in legislation. At the same time, the Address outlines the priorities for all government departments, which means that it could be used as a matrix for Parliament's oversight work. This oversight work should not only be retrospective and focus on achievements of shortcomings of the past year. It should actively

monitor the implementation of programmes outlined in the State of the Nation Address, and call government departments to account during the course of the year between the openings of Parliament.

Some areas of government endeavour over the medium term merit mentioning for attention by parliamentary committees:

- The implementation of interventions aimed at promoting economic growth.
- The development of strategies to ensure that growth is shared and that it reduces unemployment.
- The implementation of skills development programmes, with measurable objectives clearly set out.
- The effective implementation of infrastructure programmes.
- The development of an industrial policy to underpin economic growth.
- The improvement of capacity at all levels of government, but especially at local government level.
- The acceleration of the redistribution of land.
- The implementation of the school fees exemption for the poorest quintile of schools.
- The improved implementation of the *Operational Plan for Comprehensive HIV and AIDS Care, Management and Treatment for South Africa*.
- The availability of land for housing development, and improved implementation of the government's housing programme.
- A reduction in violent and organised crime.
- South Africa's role in democratic process in Africa and the Middle East

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