



**PARLIAMENTARY
MONITORING GROUP**

MONITOR

A monthly briefing sheet to keep CBOs informed about what is happening in Parliament

Did you know?	Our lead story
<p>Business Unity South Africa & SABCOHA (SA Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS) have new initiatives to actively engage businesses in the national response to HIV. They are aiming for a broader approach, linking physical, mental and social wellness, with specially-targeted focus areas in the different business sectors. These include peer education, trucking wellness, and tavern intervention programmes, BizAIDS, and small enterprise capacity development. These programmes are aligned to the Departments of Health and Social Development.</p> <p>SABCOHA has a toll-free line for support to peer educators:</p> <p>0800 212 712</p>	<p>Departments are still presenting their responses to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Although South Africa, in its report to the United Nations in September 2010, predicted that it was likely to comply with most MDGs, it has now identified ongoing concerns with HIV/AIDS, adult literacy rates, the Gini Coefficient, purchasing power parity and food security.</p> <p>Extreme poverty and hunger is still apparent in South Africa and the Anti-Poverty War Room of the Presidency is conducting surveys to determine their extent. The African Continent generally faces challenges around the lack of electronic statistical databases. Good governance, adherence to the rule of law, anti-corruption, and promotion of accountability, transparency and democracy are fundamental to ensuring a continued flow of investment, which will help to achieve the MDGs. South Africa has also been called upon to develop policy to assist its neighbouring states to achieve their commitments.</p> <p>The Department of Basic Education reported that it is measuring the targets for provision of universal primary education by 2015 by enrolment figures. These were at 98.6% in 2009. It also measures retention of pupils and the literacy rate of those aged 15 to 24. Slightly more girls than boys are enrolled at all levels of education. Poor quality of education and poor learner performance are still of concern.</p> <p>The Department of Labour contributes, in particular, to the MDGs around eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, promotion of gender equality, women's empowerment and development of global partnerships. It is targeting vulnerable workers in specific sectors and setting minimum employment conditions. It has reported disappointing progress in promotion of gender equity, despite carrying out inspections and having guidelines to implement the Employment Equity Act. It has 125 job centres, which refer job seekers for career guidance, work placements, advise on compensation, or refer applicants to skills development programmes in the Department of Education. Companies can register opportunities on the Employment Services for South Africa database. However, the actual employment figures from these are still low.</p> <p>The Department of International Relations and Cooperation reported that South Africa's strengths included a sophisticated infrastructure, a well-developed private sector, and a stable macro-economy. However, it agreed that there continue to be weaknesses in education, access to quality health care and the high prevalence of HIV and AIDS, and agreed also that South Africa had not reached some targets for MDGs related to employment, income levels and life expectancy.</p> <p>The Department of Social Development said that figures on HIV and AIDS seemed to have decreased recently amongst youth, partially because of HIV Prevention Programmes. However, only 31.8% of men were tested in 2009, as compared to many more women tested, probably because of automatic testing of pregnant women. The increase in male circumcision in those aged 15 to 24 was said to have contributed to the decreased HIV rate. Parliamentarians have urged that the male circumcision campaign and male testing campaigns should be promoted by the Department and non-governmental organisations.</p> <p>The Minister of Health, in a hard-hitting presentation to the Portfolio Committee on Health, said that the whole of sub-Saharan South Africa would have trouble in</p>
<p>The rules governing the R9 billion Jobs Fund are soon to be finalised and published.</p> <p>An Education Task Team must report back to the Minister of Higher Education, by the end of July 2011, with recommendations to improve the performance of Sector Education and Training Authorities. MPs have stressed the need to ensure employment for final-year students at universities and FET Colleges.</p>	

The Department of Trade and Industry, recognising that it is difficult and expensive for rural communities to attend public hearings, is negotiating for structures to reach more rural communities, including providing telephone lines for public comment.

Certain areas of the Northern Cape have now been declared as astronomy advantage areas, to protect their specific astronomy and scientific endeavours.

Cabinet has set up a task team to probe the impact of fracking in the Karoo areas. This team involves the Department of Mineral Resources and Department of Science & Technology, and also includes other experts such as geo-scientists. A final report is expected by end July 2011.

meeting the MDG health commitments. Although South Africa was winning the war against malaria, partially through some cross-border initiatives, it faced “the quadruple burden” of HIV and Aids, maternal deaths, child mortality and high death rates caused by violence and road accidents. Non-communicable disease factors like smoking, alcohol consumption, diet and exercise also needed attention. South Africa ranked highest in the world for annual TB infections. A three-pronged approach to this would include, over the next 24 months, use of the new Gene Xpert technology, which could produce results within two hours. Family visits would be made to all 407 000 families of TB contacts and high-tech multi-drug resistant TB hospitals would be established in each province.

The Minister said there was a significant impact of AIDS on the death rate since 1997, with a noticeable swing for young people, with more females up to the age of 34 being infected than men. The death rate had doubled between 1997 and 2006, and the Minister was sure that AIDS was a determining factor. Many still-births were also driven by HIV and AIDS. The continuing and unacceptably high number of maternal deaths created huge social problems for the families left behind. Although the 2015 MDG target was 38 maternal deaths per 100 000 live births, South Africa recorded 625 deaths per 100 000 live births in 2007. The figure for infant and child deaths was still far above the required targets. South Africans’ life expectancy was 13 years below what it would be without HIV. The HIV prevention strategy covered nine aspects, but South Africa could only claim success in providing safe blood transfusions.

The Department would also be introducing Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission at 14 weeks of pregnancy, instead of 28 weeks, and would increase provision of antiretroviral therapy to pregnant women. The numbers of facilities offering antenatal care, postnatal care and Choice on Termination of Pregnancy facilities would be increased. All babies born HIV positive, currently at around 70 000 newborns a year) would be treated on diagnosis, regardless of their CD4 count.

Legislation pending in Parliament:

The Intellectual Property Laws Amendment Bill was debated during 2010, but it has now been decided to undertake a comprehensive redraft of the Bill. The Bill aims to give copyright protection to indigenous knowledge, and the best possible mechanism must be introduced to ensure that communities whose knowledge is commercially exploited will receive royalties for the use of that indigenous knowledge.

The Cooperatives Amendment Draft Bill has been issued for public comment, by the Department of Trade and Industry, and should be tabled in Parliament by the end of September 2011.

Amendments to the Estate Agency Act have been submitted to Cabinet for approval.

The Criminal Procedure Act is to be amended, following several problems with Section 49, which deals with the powers and duties of those making arrests. There had been confusion between the use of force for arrest, and the use of force for self-defence. A revised section 49 will try to bring the Bill in line with the Constitutional Court’s decision in the *Walters* case of 2002. The Department of Justice and Constitutional Development has already called for comment from the public, and the Portfolio Committee on Justice will also be calling for written submissions on the amendments.

An amendment to the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment legislation is presently with an Advisory Committee, and a Bill may be tabled around August 2011. This Bill will try to align growth and increased production, and will strengthen the scorecards dealing with preferential procurement and enterprise development.

The Veterinary and Para-Veterinary Professions Bill will be introduced by the Department of Agriculture, to introduce a period of compulsory community service for veterinarians. Community service should provide a minimum of 100 jobs each year.

For Bills, go to: www.pmg.org.za/bill or email info@pmg.org.za

More news from Departments

The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has allocated R57 million of the budget to land care projects, R1 billion to the Comprehensive Agriculture Support programme (CASP) and R400 million to the Ilima / Letsema Campaign. R50 million will be spent on revitalising colleges of agriculture, and R672 million on farm infrastructure. The Department will appoint agricultural extension officers, and wants to establish 50 000 commercially-oriented smallholder farmers, particularly in the former homelands. A “Zero Hunger Plan”, modelled on a Brazilian programme, will use government’s procurement systems to purchase food from smallholders and make it available for free, or at subsidised rates, to the poor. The Forestry Charter is now legally binding. The Agriculture Charter will soon be gazetted. The Fisheries Sector Charter is being developed to ensure transformation in the fishing sector. The Small-Scale Fisheries Policy will implement extension services in this sector. The Department is urging greater involvement of the private sector, particularly large supermarket chains, banks, marketing and agricultural bodies and commercial farmers.

The Department of Basic Education notes that all schools should appoint School Safety Committees and contact South African Police Services to have a policeman assigned to them. In Eastern Cape, the Department is meeting with police and principals to ensure that these committees are functional. Another focus of this Department is Early Childhood Development (ECD), as it has received €35 million in European Union funding to assist with ECD Teacher Training.

The Department of Cooperative Governance is using three paths for job creation. The first is by way of ward-based cooperatives, where young people – particularly in the rural areas – will be assisted to form cooperatives, which will then be linked to other existing community works projects - such as one cooperative sewing protective clothing for another brick-making project. Secondly, it has called on big businesses to “Adopt-a-Municipality” and give assistance. The third project, “Clean Cities and Towns” has been introduced in Eastern Cape and aims to address physical and environmental cleanliness, with the associated carbon credits, and to help municipalities in recycling.

The Economic Development Department (EDD) aims to create 5 million jobs by 2020. It hopes to identify new opportunities in the economy, developing the green economy, stimulating manufacturing and identifying areas for South African investment and trade, particularly on the Continent. It hopes to improve the links between different sectors and public institutions, tackle price-fixing, support small business and cooperatives and lower the cost of doing business. It must address the problem that many black youth do not have the networks to help them access economic opportunities and cannot pay the costs involved with seeking work continuously.

The Department of Mineral Resources continues to try to promote investment and employment in the industry, particularly for women. The Mining Charter has been amended, and new scorecards are now being used. Legislation is being reviewed to assist in transformation. This Department will also focus on linking small scale mining projects with financial institutions. African Exploration Mining and Financing (Pty) Ltd will be the nucleus for the establishment of the State owned mining company. Work on acid mine drainage, and improvement of health and safety, are priorities in the coming year.

The Department of Public Works intends to train local people to deal with maintenance, through the Extended Public Works Programme, and to create 868 000 short and longer term work opportunities, especially in rural areas, to deliver public and community services. At least 35% of this Department’s infrastructure capital projects will be subcontracted to emerging contractors. This Department is also considering asking retired engineers to assist with underperforming municipalities. Pilot projects pairing retired professionals and needy candidates would run in Limpopo and Pretoria Regional Office. It intends to ask military veterans to help with security on projects in the Eastern Cape.

The Department of Transport plans to increase investment in the maintenance of arterial roads to support the rural economy, and to create opportunities for emerging contractors and local labour. It recognises the need to improve access to schools, clinics and other public facilities. It will also supplement provincial road investments and support preventative, routine and emergency maintenance. During 2011/12 it aims to roll out Integrated Rapid Public Transport Networks in five cities and in rural districts. By 2014 it will have developed 300 km of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) routes, which will also use cooperatives. The National Transport Regulator will see to effective regulation of transport operations. It has acknowledged that the Taxi Recapitalisation Programme is lagging behind, and there is currently no set date for its completion.

The Department of Water Affairs says that water security remains a priority with water supplies being placed at risk through climate change, pollution and natural disasters. This Department will be setting specific targets for water conservation, including fixing leaking pipes and damaged water towers, which should benefit all sectors. Catchment Management Agencies are being established in addition to the water utilities. The Department has also initiated a programme to increase the access to water by 1 000 poor farmers, through the provision of 6 000 rain-harvesting tanks. This project will be extended if the Department is able to get additional funding.

Reports to Parliament....

Parliamentary Committees are busy adopting their reports on the Department's budgets and strategic plans. Find these reports at www.pmg.org.za/programmes/comreports

Land Bank has recently reported positive developments, saying that it is now able to deliver on its developmental mandate, including accelerating rural development. Land Bank, founded in 1912, ran into difficulties and received adverse audit findings, until a turnaround programme was instituted in 2008, to try to improve systems and processes. It hopes to have become fully sustainable again, and to normalise its operations, by March 2012. The forensic investigations resulted in arrests being made. Land Bank will try to increase its technical efficiency and delivery, and improve its Business and Corporate Banking Unit. It will establish the Retail Emerging Markets (REM) Unit and Emerging Farmers' Support Facility, which will assist emerging farmers to become established retail farmers, by offering tailored financing solutions. Although Land Bank cannot offer skills support services, it will give referrals to agricultural cooperatives and intermediaries.

A report on Gambling has just been provided by the Department of Trade and Industry to the Portfolio Committee, outlining some of the problems highlighted, and this should be considered over the next few months.

The Department of Trade and Industry has also been asked to give a status update on preferential procurement.

The North West Housing Corporation Board

is in the process of being wound up, having experienced severe cash flow problems since 2005. There are, however, legal problems around the failure to list some provincial residential properties transferred, as well as with properties inherited from the former Bophuthatswana. Parliament has called for a comprehensive report covering the position in the four provinces where this entity had operated prior to March 2010.

The Department for Women, Children and Persons with Disability plans to introduce a Green Paper in the lead up to the Gender Equality Bill and gender responsive budgeting. It also plans to introduce a National Disability Policy and Bill. It is working on the Continental Plan of Action for the African Decade for Disabled 2009-2019.

The Department has R1 million UN funding to host a National Women's Conference. It is working on a strategy for rural women's development, including small scale women farmers, women's cooperatives, ICT technologies and renewable energy for rural women. The Department keeps a provincial database of women-owned companies and cooperatives, including one on women in the construction industry.

This Department also plans to host a National Children's Rights Summit, Children's Rights Machinery Meetings, and Sanitary Dignity Campaigns for women and girls, as well as participating in campaigns on maternal and child mortality and diseases, an advocacy campaign for reduction of birth defects, and education campaigns.

New initiatives....

The Department of Human Settlements has prepared the "HS 2030 Vision", which aims to deracialise residential communities in South Africa.

A new Urban Settlements Development Grant (USDG) will be introduced, in some metros, instead of the Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG), although other municipalities will still qualify for the MIG. The USDG will respond to the need for cities to proactively manage urban pressures whilst ensuring economic growth. It recognises that many towns are dependent on their outlying rural areas, particularly for agricultural produce. It also aims to address the poor legacies of insufficient roads, sanitation, storm water and other services. From 2012, the Integrated National Energy Programme will be integrated with this grant. Consolidation of funding is seen as key to realising sustainable human settlements. Cities will be encouraged to proactively develop infrastructure on well-located land, improve development planning and adopt a pro-poor bias, trying to lower the costs of accessing serviced urban land, or reducing the costs of rental of well-located units. Cities are also encouraged to increase average density per hectare, improve security of tenure and address the needs of working families. The Spatial Planning and Land Use Management legislation should help the process. National Treasury will also be engaging with the World Bank for grant assistance for a 'Large Cities and Towns Programme'.

The National Development Agency will be offering targeted support to NGOs who are either working to ensure security, or raising funds against Gender Based Violence. A further R86,8 million will be made available through short-term social grants, to fund civil society communities who are trying to establish long-term economic activities. Qualifying criteria will include the number of job opportunities created, long-term sustainability of projects and impact in the community.