

Minister Aaron Motsoaledi and the department of health are deliberately sabotaging the NHI

1 November 2016

The Congress of South African Trade Union is deeply disappointed by the Minister of Health, Aaron Motsolaedi and the entire government's desertion of the National Health Insurance {NHI}. Minister Aaron Motsolaedi has sold out on the NHI and has outsourced the NHI to private interests and is doing everything to move it away from the framework that was developed by the Alliance, through the ANC Education and Health Subcommittee, Alliance Summits, and the 2009 and 2014 manifestos.

The federation is angered to discover that over 170 doctors, who are employed in the NHI program will be unemployed by January 2017 because of retrenchments. These retrenchments are a clear sign that the NHI is being sabotaged by the department of health. This follows the department's decision to divert funds that were allocated to the 11 NHI pilot sites away from the project and spend them on routine departmental projects.

The department is also failing the health professionals. There are doctors in five {5} provinces that have not been paid their full salaries. The DG and the Minister of Health are only treating the plight of these doctors as a public relations exercise. They are making unfulfilled promises, while workers are struggling.

The federation has met with Minister Motsoaledi and have raised some of these issues with him and he assured us that all was well. We are now shocked to discover that the situation is actually getting worse.

We are deeply worried by the lack of intervention and leadership from government in the implementation NHI. This lack of political will has resulted in this deterioration and the deviation from the initial conceptual framework that the NHI was founded on.

The department of health is continuing to sideline and dismiss the supporters of NHI inside the department and replace them with American consultants with no clue about the South African health system. COSATU is calling on the African National Congress {ANC} to defend its policies and stop them from being watered down or reviewed by government departments. The movement cannot afford to sit idle and watch this ANC policy being watered down and handed over to big business interests by its own government departments.

The NHI is the only programme of the ANC government, since 1994 that proposes to radically redistribute resources on a mass scale to the poor, directly from the rich, ensuring access to all and also breaking down class differentiation in the quality of access.

Reviewing and abandoning the NHI is tantamount to the ANC abandoning its election manifesto that was endorsed by the 62% of the South African electorate. What is currently taking place goes against the ANC's electoral mandate to pool all health resources into a single publicly administered NHI Fund.

The federation feels that government is deliberately undermining the NHI because there is enough money in the Treasury to fund NHI. We already spending over 8.5 % of our gross domestic product on health care in both the private and public sectors. Currently, the cost of private health care in South Africa is ranked as the most expensive in the world, even higher than in the USA. In addition to the influence of the profit motive this is also caused by the structural issues in the absence of a public mechanism of setting tariffs or prices on private hospital groups.

Issued by Sizwe Pamla, National Spokesperson, COSATU, 1 November 2016