

MEDIA RELEASE **Health-system collapse: PSA calls for urgent interventions**

DATE 12 December 2022

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is shocked that the Minister of Health only now seems to realise that the Department of Health is failing to execute its constitutional mandate and is failing South Africans.

The PSA has consistently been calling for the capacitation of the public service to ensure service delivery, particularly the most vulnerable citizens who totally depend on these services. Vulnerable people, including the unemployed, elderly, children, and the masses without medical aid, depend on public health institutions and are worst hit by the near paralysis of the country's health system.

The recent comment by the Minister of Health that South Africa faces a shortage of staff and ambulances, with several provinces struggling to operate their full fleets of ambulances, is thus not a surprise to the PSA. It is, however, shocking that the Minister is only now becoming aware of the severe challenges faced by his Department and the limited resources to serve citizens. It is unacceptable that most provinces are only operating at half capacity, whilst the PSA has long identified these challenges and also warned government.

The Department of Health is experiencing a massive shortage of medical and non-medical staff. There is insufficient support staff, including porters, gardeners, kitchen staff, and cleaners in most hospitals. Some clinics have no cleaners, leaving this task to nurses. The shortage of doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and other professions has made it impossible for the Department of Health to achieve its constitutional mandate of providing affordable and quality healthcare to South Africans.

Health officials are continuously attacked and accused of being lazy and failing to provide much-needed services, despite them being failed by the Department. Most hospitals and clinics experience long queues, making it difficult for over-burdened employees faced with malfunctioning equipment and a lack of resources. It is further expected that by now, all public health facilities should have been equipped with backup electrical power as loadshedding is a daily occurrence and that contributes to service delays and criminals utilising these opportunities to attack health facilities, with employees being robbed, raped, and killed.

The PSA calls upon the Minister of Health to conduct an urgent, full audit of resources required by the Department to meet its constitutional mandate to prevent an imminent total collapse of services. The Department must fill vacancies, maintain ambulances and medical equipment, renovate dilapidated buildings, and improve the appalling security that threatens the health and safety of employees and communities relying on such services.

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