

Message from President Jacob Zuma to all Public Servants

To All Staff

In today's global and competitive world, a country's success is determined by many things.

Key amongst these is a patriotic, effective and efficient cadre of public servants that translates government policies and programmes into tangible benefits.

On 14 February I delivered the State of the Nation Address in which I outlined our government priorities for 2013. This being the last year of the fourth administration, the State of the Nation Address took the form of a progress report to the nation. The Minister of Finance presented the Budget on the 27th of February. Both the SONA and the Budget emphasised our resolve to continue tackling poverty, unemployment and inequality. We have the resources. We have the time. We must now further improve the way we work and get better results.

Already, a lot of work has been done to speed up the delivery of services and such work is continuing. But importantly, we have to work harder to improve people's experience of government services.

As we begin the new financial year, we urge public servants to work even harder to build a caring and efficient public service. Many meaningful achievements of government in the past year can be attributed to our hard working public servants. For example, in the health sector, life expectancy is now firmly on an upward trend. Infant and under-5 mortality rates have improved significantly and the maternal mortality ratio has started to decrease.

Mother to child transmission of HIV has declined sharply and there has been a huge increase in the number of people living with HIV-AIDS who are receiving anti-retroviral treatment. Similarly, there has been a significant decrease in overall serious crime, due to hard working police officials who risk their lives at times, to make our communities safer.

In basic education there has been a huge increase in the number of children attending Grade R and there have been improvements in the matric pass rate. The introduction of Annual National Assessments (ANA) post-2009 enabled the objective measurement of literacy and numeracy levels at lower grades for the first time. The first ANA results in 2011 supported our diagnosis that things needed to change in the basic education sector in order to produce better results.

The basic education delivery agreement identified a number of required changes, including the introduction of workbooks, which have since been implemented. The 2012 ANA results indicate that these changes are starting to bear fruit at the lower grades.

Targets are also being achieved in other key education areas such as the training of artisans and increasing enrolments in Further Education and Training Colleges.

Further, we have put in place a number of initiatives since 2009 to monitor citizens' experience when they obtain services from government.

By November 2012, citizens had logged more than 140 000 cases with the Presidential Hotline, of which 87% had been resolved. Since September 2012, monthly satisfaction testing is being conducted. Of 1205 citizens surveyed, 65% rated their satisfaction with the resolution of their hotline case as high or average.

We have also introduced a front-line service delivery monitoring programme through which officials from the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) in the Presidency and the Offices of the Premiers carry out unannounced visits to service delivery sites in order to monitor indicators such as queue management and waiting times, dignified treatment, cleanliness and comfort. The focus is on facilities where the public is directly served - Home Affairs Offices, South African Social Security Agency offices, police stations, health facilities, drivers' license centres, municipal customer care centres, schools and courts. Over 300 sites were visited over the past year. The Presidency and the Offices of the Premiers have engaged with the relevant line function departments to ensure that both site-specific and more systemic problems that are identified are addressed. Repeat visits to the sites indicate that, in many cases, this monitoring has resulted in improvements. These unannounced visits will continue this year.

The monitoring of management practices is also starting to bear fruit in a number of areas. For example, the average time taken to fill a funded vacancy in national and provincial departments improved from nine months in 2010 to four months in 2012.

Turn-around times have also improved in some areas of service delivery. For example, the average time taken to issue an identity book has been reduced from about 150 days to about 30 days. The average time taken to process an application for a social grant decreased from 30 days in 2010 to 21 days in 2012.

There has also been an improvement in the average time taken by the police to respond to calls for assistance.

However, there is still much room for improvement in departments, particularly in areas such as payment of suppliers within 30 days and the setting and monitoring of service delivery standards. The Presidency, through the DPME, will continue to closely monitor these issues to ensure that they improve.

In addition, the DPME has put in place a national evaluation system and also produces an annual set of development indicators which provide a broad picture of the state of development of our country.

Over the past three years, we have succeeded in laying a firm foundation for a more performance-oriented government. The performance and delivery agreements, the Presidential *Siyahlola* Monitoring Programme and frontline service delivery visits, the Presidential Hotline and the management performance assessments are elements of a new system of government that we have introduced to change the way government works so that it produces better results.

There is still a long way to go before we reach our destination of a fully effective developmental state outlined in the National Development Plan. However, there is evidence that the changes are bearing fruit.

We thank all our hard working public servants. Keep up the good work and let us continue building a responsive, effective and caring government.

Issued by the Presidency

Pretoria