

Government asked South Africans what they think about the NHI – here's what they said – Business Tech 31 January 2020

Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Health has embarked on a national roadshow taking inputs on how ordinary South Africans feel about the proposed National health insurance (NHI).

At the first meeting in the Free State on Tuesday (28 January), the committee said that the majority of those present expressed support for the Bill, but emphasised the importance of a well-functioning healthcare system, especially at primary healthcare level.

“Many people highlighted daily challenges when they visit healthcare facilities,” said chairperson of the Committee, Dr Sibogniseni Dhlomo.

“The people highlighted that the challenges they face with primary healthcare facilities are the things that will enable the NHI. These things must be urgently resolved if the insurance is going to be a success.”

These challenges include human resource shortages, especially of doctors and nurses, long queues at clinics, infrastructure development and maintenance backlogs, the cost of healthcare which limits access and insufficient ambulances.

Concerns

A number of citizens also expressed opposition to the Bill.

Chief among their concerns is the **endemic corruption** within state-run institutions, as well as the fear that **staff shortages** might be exacerbated by emigration, which could result from the implementation of NHI.

There was also uncertainty about **where funding for the Bill will come from**, due to South Africa's high unemployment rate and associated small tax revenue base.

The South African Medical Association (Sama) has previously warned that just under 40% of their member **doctors plan to emigrate** if a universal health-care system is implemented.

A recent report by trade union Solidarity has also warned that the incoming National Health Insurance (NHI) will have an impact on the healthcare industry.

“The findings indicate that there is distrust towards the government regarding the way they want to implement and manage the NHI. 80% of respondents are negative or sceptical about the NHI,” said Nicolien Welthagen, a research psychologist at the Solidarity Research Institute.