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## **TAC Manifesto for Health and Accountable Local Government**

*February 2006*

***Vote for People's Health Services!***

***Vote for HIV prevention and treatment services!***

***Be an activist: Campaign for running water, housing, electricity, better education, social grants, jobs, flush toilets, refuse collection and food security in your community!***

*"There shall be houses, security and comfort!"*

*"Free medical care and hospitalisation shall be provided for all ..."*

-- Freedom Charter, 1955

*"Everyone has the right to have access to ... health care services, including reproductive health care; ... sufficient food and water; and ... social security, including ... social assistance."*

*"Everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing."*

*"Everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health ..."*

*"Everyone has the right to freedom and security of the person which includes the right ... to be free from all forms of violence from either public or private sources ..."*

-- The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996



## **1. TAC's Position on the Local Government Elections**

TAC encourages everyone to vote in the local elections on 1 March 2006. We have fought and shed blood for democracy in South Africa. The vote is our right and we should exercise it. Many of our communities are disillusioned with our local government and ward councillors. Many councillors are corrupt and do little for our communities. But the vote and activism can change that. It is our opportunity to make local government accountable.

*TAC is not endorsing any political parties in this election. Who you vote for is your choice.*

In key districts TAC will challenge local government candidates to explain how they will be held accountable for health services. We will ask candidates to affirm that HIV causes AIDS and that people with AIDS should have access to antiretroviral treatment.

*We will actively campaign against candidates who are AIDS denialists.*

*We need **People's Health Services**: This means having access to healthy living conditions including food, running water, flush toilets, electricity, decent housing, social security, decent education, freedom from violence and proper medical care.*

## **2. Your health rights and local government**

### **Decent Health-care**

We all have the right to decent health-care. This is promised by the Freedom Charter and our Constitution. Decent health-care means having access to clinics and hospitals where we are treated with dignity by health-workers and receive the care and medicines we need. Decent health-care goes beyond our clinics though: it means having adequate housing, electricity, sanitation, clean water, food, education, jobs and social security. It also means being safe from violence. Without these rights, our health is compromised.

### **HIV services**

HIV is the biggest health challenge in our communities. Over 5 million people are living with HIV. About half-a-million people who need treatment do not have access to antiretrovirals. Many of us with HIV also do not have access to medicines for opportunistic infections or money to buy enough food. We also have a crisis of prevention: over 1,000 people are infected daily.<sup>1</sup>

HIV makes poverty worse: it causes us to be sick from work, harms our families, takes away our breadwinners and increases our medical costs. Yet there is still no national co-ordination of the HIV epidemic. Government needs a new plan to address the effect of HIV on our households.

The HIV epidemic creates special challenges for health-care. Communities have the right to accurate information campaigns on HIV prevention, treatment and care. Schools students and all people attending community institutions have the right to access condoms. School students also have the right to sex-education. We all have the right to access HIV facilities at a nearby local health facility. At least one clinic in every community should offer a full range of HIV-services including counselling, testing, mother-to-child transmission prevention, nutritional support, TB treatment, medicines for opportunistic infections, medicines to treat sexually transmitted infections, and highly active antiretroviral treatment (HAART).

### **The role of local government**

Local government has the responsibility to provide municipal health services.

<sup>1</sup> ASSA2003

Municipalities must each year prepare district health and human resource plans. They have to sign and implement service agreements with provincial government. These documents must be made public. Local government is also responsible for our environmental health: refuse collection, sanitation, water supply, child care facilities and electricity provision in our communities.

However, the role of a ward councillor is more than the above. The councillor has to be an advocate for his or her community. She must monitor the state of hospitals and clinics, housing, electricity, sanitation, social grants and roads. If there are problems, the councillor must contact the municipality or provincial government to correct the problem. The councillor is the community's representative to local government and if demands cannot be resolved at local government level they should be taken to provincial government. It is the councillor who must be held accountable for delivery in our wards.

### **Government's targets**

Here are some important government targets we should be aware of:

**Water:** Government has pledged that everyone will have access to clean running water by 2009. The percentage of houses without piped water in 2001 (the latest year for which we have this statistic) was 27% (2.9 million households)<sup>2</sup>.

**Sanitation:** Government has said that everyone will have access to flush toilets by 2010. The percentage of households without flush toilets was 38% in 2002 (4.6m households).<sup>3</sup>

**Electricity:** Government has pledged that every household will have electricity by 2012. In 2002, 2.8 million households were without electricity service.<sup>4</sup>

**HIV services:** Government committed to providing comprehensive HIV services to all who require them in every municipal area by 2008. As of 2006, about 500,000 people do not have access to HAART and this number is growing quickly.<sup>5</sup>

### **What happens when there's no clean water: The Delmas story**

Delmas is a small town in Mpumalanga. Last year, an outbreak of typhoid and diarrhoea killed dozens of people. This was a result of the failure of local government to make sure people had access to clean running water and proper refuse collection.

## **3. Questions to Ask Our Ward Candidates**

TAC members should challenge the candidates in their wards by asking them to answer the following questions:

- Will you run a campaign to encourage people to get tested for HIV?
- Will you make sure people who need HAART in the community can access it at a clinic in the community?
- Will you declare this district an HIV prevention area?
- Will you ensure all our clinics offer testing for HIV?
- Will you support sex education and condom distribution in schools?
- What will you do to make sure we have enough nurses and doctors in our clinics?
- What will you do to make sure that all households in the community have access to clean running water, electricity, flush toilet and refuse collection?

<sup>2</sup> HSRC State of the Nation 2005-2006, p. 19-20.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Operational Plan for Comprehensive HIV and AIDS Care, Management and Treatment for South Africa, 19 November 2003.

*Vote for councillors who will fight for all households to have electricity, water and toilets!*

- What will you do to assist people who need grants but cannot access them?
- What will you do to reduce violence against women and children?
- Will you ensure that at least one clinic in our community offers post-exposure prophylaxis for rape survivors?

#### **4. Our Role After the Elections**

After 1 March, we must monitor service delivery in our communities and hold our ward councillors accountable. We expect our councillors to live in their communities so they can properly understand our challenges. We will ask our councillors to report back regularly on what they have done to implement their promises.

Government has passed legislation called the National Health Act. This act created a District Health System. This encourages community members to have a say in decisions affecting our clinics and hospitals. Community members have a right to sit on district committees, hospital boards and clinic committees. We must encourage communities to have a say in their own health by joining these boards and committees.

We will participate in the district growth and development summits planned by the ANC to take place within one year of the elections. We will also organise regular community meetings where we will raise our concerns about health and government accountability.

Our effort to hold local government accountable for better health in our communities is an ongoing campaign that will continue after the local government elections.

**Forward to accountable local government!**  
**Forward to a people's health service!**

