

The impact of corruption, poor management and incompetence in public healthcare violate the Constitutional right to healthcare

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Health is a fundamental human right, guaranteed by the Constitution, and is indispensable for the exercise of other human rights.

Unfortunately, the country's health services have been severely hampered by incompetence and irregularities. To add insult to injury, South Africa has failed to protect the men and women who bravely expose these irregularities and corruption at great risk to themselves.

Babita Deokaran paid with her life when she exposed millions upon millions of rands of corruption in Gauteng. While working as a senior financial officer at the Gauteng Department of Health, she discovered suspicious payments amounting to R850 million. Despite the great personnel risk, she alerted her superiors and the Department and requested the auditing of invoices before payment. Her requests were reportedly ignored and payments continued to flow to suspicious companies. She later told colleagues that she feared for her life, yet reports show that nothing was done to guarantee her safety.

Dr Tim de Maayer faced disciplinary action for his open letter decrying not only the horrific conditions at the Rahima Moosa hospital in Gauteng, but also the failure of the Department and his superiors to act on years of reports of declining infrastructure and equipment that endangered patients' lives. If not for public intervention, Dr De Maayer might well have lost his job.

Graft and impunity run deep in South Africa's public health-care sector, and even a worldwide pandemic did not stem the tide of corruption and mismanagement of PPE and other funds – the multimillion Digital Vibes scandal being one of several examples.

In fact, Chief Justice Raymond Zondo's Report on State Capture has shown how extensive the rot of corruption is.

According to a report by Corruption Watch, between 2012 and 2019, 670 whistleblower reports were filed regarding corruption in the South African healthcare.

And despite this report, the Zondo Report and multiple instances of corruption exposed in the media, the Department's strategy to protect whistleblowers remain opaque.

The Department is scant on details regarding its collaboration with the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to establish a policy or plan to protect whistleblower and assess and mitigate risks in the public health sector procurement systems.

The AG has highlighted fruitless and wasteful expenditure of R1.5 million and irregular expenditure totalled R16.6 million. Yet there are no serious efforts regarding consequence management.

Despite a significant portion of the budget allocated towards health care, the ANC's only investment seems to be in the deployment of cadres and the development of policies that they have neither the will nor the skill to fully implement and manage. Brave individuals like Babita Deokaran have died to expose the deep systemic failures, yet more than a year later whistleblowers remain as exposed as they were the day she was brutally murdered.

The ANC government has lost the plot - The people of this country deserve better!