



ANC TODAY

ONLINE VOICE OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Taking forward the fight against crime



When we were campaigning for the 2009 general elections we stated clearly and with conviction that we would go all out to win the war against crime. We want South Africans to be safe and to feel safe.

Crime situation in our country is bad, but we are not saying it is way beyond other countries in the world. It is much safer to walk in our streets than of many other countries in the world. However, we do not want to tolerate any crime, even if our levels are lower than of other countries.

In our 2009 election Manifesto we placed crime alongside other priority areas, such as health, education, rural development and land reform, as well as creating decent work. We made an undertaking that we would actively combat serious and violent crimes by being tougher on criminals and organised syndicates.

We said we would increase the capacity of the South African Police Service through recruitment, rigorous training, equipping and increasing the capacity of the detective services, improve forensics, prosecution, judicial services and crime intelligence. We have begun to implement our election undertakings.

The police personnel will be increased from 180 182 to 204 860 over the next three years. This year alone, the number of detectives will increase by more than 19%. A programme is already underway to train more than 12 000 police personnel in detective related matters. As part of our strategy to address organised crime and corruption, the Hawks unit was launched on 6 July 2009 and the impact is already being felt.

We stated in our election Manifesto that we would provide greater support to the police, especially to combat the attacks on the members of the police force. This support, we stated, would include introducing legislative measures to protect law-enforcement officials in the execution of their duties. Therefore, when we say that we are going to strengthen the hand of the police through amending Section 49 of the Criminal Procedure Act, we are basing that on a mandate that an overwhelming majority of South Africans gave the ANC.

This week we lost a dedicated police officer, Captain Carl Scheepers, who was shot dead by a suspect who ignored the policeman's command to drop his weapon. He was shot dead as he tried to reason with the suspect. Any criminal who finds it so easy to kill a police officer has no respect whatsoever for the law and law enforcement of any kind. This is the type of behaviour we and our policeman and women find ourselves having to deal with. We extend our deepest condolences to the Scheepers family, relatives and colleagues.

WEEK IN REVIEW

Minister Naledi Pandor acts as President | The Minister of Science and Technology Naledi Pandor was sworn in as the Acting President of the Republic until the 10 October 2009 while the President and Deputy President are out of the country on official working visits.

President Zuma visits Brazil | President Jacob Zuma embarked on a two-day state visit to Brazil to consolidate South-South cooperation, strengthen the existing bilateral ties and regional partnership and further deepening cooperation on the trilateral and multilateral levels between South Africa and Brazil. He is expected to hold formal discussions with Brazilian President, Lula da Silva.

Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe travels to Sweden | Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe departed South Africa for Sweden on an official working visit from 9th - 11th October 2009. During this working visit he will hold BNC meetings with the government of Sweden and later attend the Olof Palme Day Conference, to be held in Stockholm.

President Zuma nominates Constitutional Court judges | President Jacob Zuma nominated four judges to fill the vacancies at the Constitutional Court. He named Eastern Cape Judge Johann Froneman, Supreme Court of Appeal Judge Chris Jafta, North West Judge President Mogoeng wa Mogoeng and Johannesburg High Court Judge Sisi Khamepe as his preferred choices for the vacant posts.

As it stands Section 49 does allow the police to use even deadly force in order to effect an arrest or to protect themselves or others, or to prevent the commission of a crime. In practice, however, the lack of a clear directive compels policemen to err on the side of caution. This is what happened in the case of Captain Scheepers. Given the violent nature of crime in our country we need the law to err on the side of the police and not criminals. That is why we are proposing an amendment to Section 49 of the Criminal Procedure Act.

Let me emphasize again that by amending Section 49, we are not encouraging a culture of trigger-happy police officers. Our country respects the right to life of all citizens. We expect our police officers to observe the law and respect the rights of innocent citizens, at all times. What we are saying is that police officers should place their own lives and those of innocent citizens first when confronted with situations of life and death. We are invoking Section 49 to deal specifically with serious violent crime and dangerous criminals. It is the duty of the police to protect all people against injury or loss of life.

We do realize that giving too much power to the law enforcement agencies needs to be guarded. That is why we in the process of strengthening the Independent Complaints Directorate, which monitors the police, to ensure that the changes to Section 49 are not abused.

We must emphasize that our anti-crime strategy is multi-pronged. The media reports, which unwittingly or deliberately give an impression that our anti-crime strategy is only the Section 49 of the Criminal Procedure Act, are mischievous! The sensational headlines declaring the strengthening of Section 49 as the so-called "shoot to kill" policy are very misleading, as they do not explain the context of our arguments.

The police alone will not win the fight against crime. Communities must be actively involved. In the 2008 January 8 statement we called for the establishment of street committees to fight crime. We continue to urge communities to take this measure seriously as the combination of street committees and community police forums go a long way in closing all hiding spaces for criminals.

We welcome the launch of the File programme When Duty Calls which would be aired on Mondays at 6pm on SABC 2. The revamped police file programme serves as further testimony that we are looking at new ways of fighting crime and we will leave no stone unturned in our efforts to work with communities to expose criminals and to capture them.

We call on the communities to watch this programme and volunteer information to help police track wanted and missing persons. The programme will also provide the public with crime prevention hints.

We also need to close markets for stolen goods as this fuels crime. We continue to urge all our people to assist us by voluntarily refraining from this practice. The Second Hand Goods Act was promulgated in April 2009. The finalization and proclamation of the regulations that will accompany this Act has been prioritised.

When we met with police station commanders recently, we also discussed the need to reinforce the message that the SAPS are actually an armed police force and not just a soft police service. Criminals would be more fearful of a police force than a police service. They would normally find a Police General more menacing than a Police Commissioner, the same applies to the difference between a Director and a Brigadier-General, a Colonel and a Superintendent, a Station Commissioner and a Station Commander. We have started a conversation with the Ministry and SAPS in this regard.

CONTINUED

Struggle heroes given a proper and befitting farewell | The Pebco 3 - Siphon Hashe, Champion Galela, and Qaqawuli Godolozzi as well as the Cosas 2: Siphon Mthimkhulu and Topsy Madaka were given solemn official farewell in, Missionvale Campus Arena, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth. They were abducted and brutally tortured and killed by security police on a farm near Cradock. Their families, comrades and friends waited for 25-27 years, to be able to say Lalani ngoxolo.

To meet our goals, we have to cultivate a new culture amongst our police officers. We must develop a police officer who is committed to ensuring that our streets and communities are safer.

We instructed the station commissioners to eradicate absenteeism, laziness and tardiness in the discharge of duties by our policemen and women. We must also seriously eradicate corruption within the police service. They were told that the legendary loss of dockets, leading to botched cases, should end.

We have definitely entered a whole new phase in the fight against crime. We are satisfied with the approach that the police ministry and SAPS have taken. We cannot succeed if we are soft on crime.

Working together we can do more!

Jacob G. Zuma

LATEST STATEMENTS

Statement of the ANC Caster Semenya Support Team,
5 October 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=ancdocs/pr/2009/pr1005.html>

ANC welcomes key appointments in the intelligence, 2 October 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=ancdocs/pr/2009/pr1002a.html>

VIEW POINT | BY JEFF RADEBE

The unity of our movement is our strength



As we approach the centenary of the ANC in 2012 we need to ask ourselves if our organisation has any resemblance to the organisation that was formed nearly a 100 years ago, and if not, what are the changes and lessons that can be derived from such developments.

Reading through various works around the formation of the ANC there is no doubt that Pixely ka Isaka Seme was the originator of the idea to found the ANC and he tirelessly worked to ensure its fruition, arguably more than anyone else. Speaking of the "African" in his award winning speech simply entitled "The Regeneration of Africa", Pixely ka Isaka Seme said:

"The ancestral greatness, the unimpaired genius, and the recuperative power of the race, its irrepressibility, which assures its permanence, constitute the African's greatest source of inspiration. He has refused to camp forever on the borders of the industrial world; having learned that knowledge is power, he is educating his children. You find them in Edinburgh, in Cambridge, and in the great schools of Germany. These return to their country like arrows, to drive darkness from the land. I hold that his industrial and educational initiative, and his untiring devotion to these activities, must be regarded as positive evidences of this process of his regeneration."

Isaac Seme, later to be popularly known as Pixely Ka Isaka Seme, was in the US as student in 1906 when he presented this speech. This was the same year as the famous defeat of the Bambatha Rebellion, yet Pixely Ka Isaka Seme had such great hope for the African continent.

The general background to the formation of the ANC was the defeat of the Africans militarily, their subjugation to colonial rule and their gross marginalisation from the mainstream social, economic and political development of our country. The Bambatha Rebellion marked the last of such defeats, and reinforced the calls for unity amongst the African people throughout Southern Africa against the colonial onslaught.

That is why the conference to found the ANC in 1912 was attended by royalties from as far as Swaziland, Lesotho, Botswana, Zambia and those of tribes and kingdoms from within South Africa, and included Kings, Princes, Paramount Chiefs and Chiefs. It is for this reason that unity is the foundation stone of the ANC throughout all its existence. As national conference burst into Enoch Sontonga's "Nkosi Sikelela I Afrika", that alone amplified the message and call for unity across the continent in the struggle against colonial oppression by the oldest liberation movement in the African continent.

Africans continued to work towards self emancipation, and Seme led the African Farmers' Association which bought farms to benefit Africans. However, these efforts and the general dependence of Africans on subsistence farming was dealt a blow by the promulgation of the 1913 Land Act, whose effect was to curtail Africans' rights to land ownership.

On this matter the leading journalist, RV Selope Thema, wrote:

"Another enterprise undertaken by this man of vision was the establishment of an African Farmers' Association, and an African settlement at Daggakraal in the Eastern Transvaal. The association gave impetus to the purchasing of land by Africans in the Transvaal. The Daggakraal settlement caused consternation among neighbouring farmers, who declared that unless the buying of land by Natives was restricted South Africa would never be a white man's country. Indeed it was no exaggeration that it was the Daggakraal settlement which precipitated the enactment of the Natives Land Act in 1913."

What followed were petitions against the Union Government, which were met with non-responses. As a result, deputations to England were also made, as South Africa, though independent still pledged allegiance to the English Royal family until South Africa was granted the status of "Republic"

Even in their petitions, which when they failed were followed by deputations to England, were never meant in the strict Pan Africanist sense of Marcus Garvey of hailing the "white man into the sea". There can be a lot of debate as to why Pixely Ka Isaka Seme adopted the position of fighting what former President Nelson Mandela called "white domination".

A combination of missionary education and the social class of those behind the formation of the ANC in 1912 could have had an impact on the ideological orientation of the organisation. Pixely Ka Isaka Seme was born from a Christian family and so was his cousin the Rev John Langalibalele Dube, the latter who was elected first President of the ANC. This point about the influence of Christianity is further confirmed by a quote in Pixely Ka Isaka Seme's keynote speech on 8 January 1912 and it reads thus:

"There is to-day among all races and men a general desire for progress, and for co-operation, because co-operation will facilitate and secure that progress. This spirit is due no doubt to the great triumph of Christianity which teaches men everywhere that in this world they have a common duty to perform both towards God and towards one another."

No doubt, the ANC was formed by elite and educated African people who were partly inspired by their Christian faith, nonetheless whose main complaint was the disenfranchisement of the African notably due to the 1910 Union of South Africa dispensation. It was no coincidence that they sang "Lizalise Idinga Lakho, Thixo we Nyaniso!" as well as Enoch Sontonga's "Nkosi Sikelela I Afrika", the latter which became the ANC's national anthem and informed the composition of our country's national anthem.

According to the leading African journalist RV Selope Thema:

"When he (Pixely Ka Isaka Seme) was studying at Columbia and Oxford universities and eating his dinners at the Middle Temple, Pixley Seme's mind was wholly occupied with the idea of how to rebuild the broken Zulu nation. But when he saw what was happening to all Africans of all tribes, he changed his mind. Probably he remembered that the ultimate object of Tshaka in building the Zulu nation was to bring all the tribes under Zulu sway so as to eventually create a powerful nation of all the Africans.

'Why should he not undertake this idea of Tshaka to fruition?' he asked himself as he paced to and fro in his office at the corner of Rissik and Marshall Streets. He turned over the idea in his mind and finally came to the conclusion that the scheme was worth while attempting."

From this short passage it is clear that Pixely Ka Isaka Seme's preoccupation was with the unity of Africans as basic weapon in resisting their own racial discrimination and confronting colonial oppression. As he went about to make consultations amongst fellow Africans, he discovered that his sentiments were echoed by various chiefs, church leaders and other leading personalities amongst the African people.

LATEST SPEECHES

Address by President Jacob Zuma, at the World Trade Centre Business Club in Sao Paulo, 8 October 2009
<http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/show.asp?include=president/sp/2009/sp10082036.htm&ID=2003&type=sp>

Address by President Jacob Zuma during the official launch of The Presidency Public Liaison and Hotline Service, 7 October 2009
<http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/show.asp?include=president/sp/2009/sp10071054.htm&ID=2002&type=sp>

Address by President Jacob Zuma at the reburial of the Pebco 3 and Cosas 2 at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, 3 October 2009
<http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/show.asp?include=president/sp/2009/sp10031239.htm&ID=2001&type=sp>

So there was fertile ground for cooperation, and this alone probably owed itself from the defeat of these African kingdoms by the colonial powers and the realisation of the age old wisdom that "unity is strength".

The purpose of the ANC is explained by Seme:

"The South African Native National Congress is the voice in the wilderness bidding all the dark races of this sub-continent to come together once or twice a year in order to review the past and reject therein all those things which have retarded our progress; the things which poison the springs of our national life and virtue; to label and distinguish the sins of civilisation, and as members of one house-hold to talk and think loudly on our home problems and the solution of them."

Again, the purpose of the ANC is well captured in the 1919 preamble of constitution initially adopted in 1914. This succinctly give the indication that the ANC was meant to be the "Parliament of the People":

AND WHEREAS there met at Bloemfontein O.F.S. on the 8th day of January 1912, certain Chiefs, delegates and other leading men in all representing the said Territories, Protectorates, the Provinces and also the aforesaid bodies throughout South Africa; AND the said meeting, there and then, resolved that it was expedient and desirable that a well-digested and accepted native opinion should be ascertainable by the Government and other constituted Authorities with respect to the Native problem in all its various phases and ramifications. And it was then further resolved to invite all aforementioned Associations, Organisations or Vigilant Committees and Councils to unite together and form as affiliated bodies, a Federation of one Pan African Association the name thereof to be "THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS" (hereinafter in these recitals called the "National Congress") and to be composed and consist of two sections or Houses - to wit, one section then to be known as the Upper House and the other the Lower House;

Clearly what showed was the influence of education in America and England on the masterminds behind the formation of the ANC such as Pixely Ka Isaka Seme, Sol Plaatjijie who became the first Secretary General and John Langalibalele Dube, who was elected President. They modelled the ANC on the conservative plane of the British parliamentary system, with "Lower" and "Upper houses" fully fledged with "Speakers". The dominant role of Chiefs was well covered in the constitution adopted in 1919.

They were afforded certain priviledges such specially designated sitting arrangements during national conferences as well as the handling of disputes involving them or amongst them. All these were spelt out in the constitution. Therefore the conservative culture of the early ANC was sculptured through the influence of its dominant leaders who were themselves conservative and opposed to violent protests.

It could be said that the 1912 conference was a convergence of conservatives. They preferred peaceful petitioning and deputations, and by these tactics hoped to appeal to the conscience of their oppressors by proving that they too are civilised beings worth equal treatment as citizens. It can be argued that this was pure idealism as opposed to a dialectical disposition against the observed evidence of the contending forces between the coloniser and the colonised.

Descending in what is today Mangaung on the 8th January 1912 were throngs of various tribal leaders, the clergy, clerks, journalists and others who constituted the elite of African society, dressed in their colourful regalia consistent with the cultural heritages of the various tribes of our people. They had answered the call for unity amongst the African people, and the importance of this point alone cannot be overemphasised. And how would the ANC go about achieving these ideals? Again Seme gives the answer to that question:

"Such National Conferences of the people are bound to give a wide publication of the Natives' own views on the questions which primarily concern him tomorrow and today. Through this Congress the Native Senators in the Union House of Parliament will be able to live in close touch with the Natives of the whole country whose interest each Senator is supposed to represent. The Government also will find a direct and independent channel of informing itself as to the things uppermost in Natives' mind from time to time, and this will make it easier for the Union Government to deal with the Natives of the whole of South Africa. If we wish to convince the Government that it is possible to have a uniform Native policy for the whole of South Africa then let us form this Congress."

UPCOMING EVENTS

ANC National Chairperson Baleka Mbete visits Northern Cape, John Taolo Gaetsewe Region

Sunday, 11 October 2009.

12h00 – 12h30: Opening of the Mothibistad T-junction Road Project (site visit)

13h00 – 13h30: Opening of the Tsineng Road Project (site visit).

14h30 – 16h00: Addressing the Siyabonga rally at Batlharos Close Ground

From this perspective, it explains why the ANC believed in changing the political and economic systems of the day such that it does not discriminate against any race as opposed to fundamental revolutionary change. In other words, racial domination was the key challenge that was to be eradicated. The ANC was to be the parliament of the “natives”, and through this platform feed into the broader national discourse influencing development in favour of the Africans.

In his Keynote Speech in 1912, Pixely Ka Isaka Seme spoke elaborately about unity amongst the oppressed and marginalised Africans. He said;

“Again, it is conclusively urgent that this Congress should meet this year, because a matter which is so vitally important to our progress and welfare should not be unnecessarily postponed by reason of personal differences and selfishness of our leaders. The demon of racialism, the aberrations of the Xhosa-Fingo feud, the animosity that exists between the Zulus and the Tongaas, between the Basutos and every other Native must be buried and forgotten; it has shed among us sufficient blood! We are one people. These divisions, these jealousies, are the cause of all our woes and of all our backwardness and ignorance today. A great Paramount Chief accepting that his name be included in the honourable list of Native princes who endorse and support this movement, writes that “He however wishes to point out that whilst the objects and the aims of a Congress appear to be good and reasonable, much of the success depends upon the attitude of the members. There should be among other things a firm resolve on the part of every member to eliminate factors which have in the past proved fatal to the continued existence of such Societies.”

Not only was Pixely Ka Isaka Seme calling for unity, but he was also making a case that this was the view of the people he had consulted prior to the convening of the meeting on January 8 in 1912. Amongst these he specifically quoted a chief whom he did not call by name. What that means, as argued by Pixely Ka Isaka Seme, is that even traditional leaders such as Chiefs were behind the thrust towards the unity of Africans in confronting the challenges of sweeping discrimination against the African natives.

There are several policy issues relevant for us today that we learn from the founding of the ANC in 1912.

Firstly, that the defeat of the Africans required their unity, hence the unity of the ANC is the golden thread for the past nearly 100 years. This required the embrace of the attitude of non tribalism amongst the African people, as argued by the Chief that Seme referred to in his Keynote Address.

Secondly, that non racialism is the broad policy framework within which the ANC aimed to emancipate the disenfranchised African masses.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, was the primary objective of liberating Africans from colonial oppression. Linked to the objective of liberation was the principle of self determination.

Fourthly and also captured in Pixely Ka Isaka Seme’s famous speech “The Regeneration of Africa”, where he introduced his oratory by proclaiming that:

“I am an African, and I set my pride in my race over against a hostile public opinion.”

It was this overwhelming hostility that Pixely Ka Isaka Seme observed while growing up in rural what today constitutes KwaZulu Natal, and that he also encountered as a student while studying in the US, that prompted Pixely Ka Isaka Seme to thrive for the self determination of the African people. For this reason, the Native’s Union, or in Seme’s words, “the so called African Native National Congress”, was to represent the views and interests of African people within the Union of South Africa’s establishment.

We must grapple with the relevance of the “hostility” that Pixely Ka Isaka Seme spoke of, and make determination of exactly what are the current forces “hostile” to our agenda for change. My perspective is that where idealism prevailed leading to the popular embrace of non racialism as socio-political ethos by the South African and international community, the underlying dialectical dispositions of hostility along race, class and gender lines still persist and must be confronted and defeated.

Very importantly, we must also grapple with the assertion that he made, in the African “has refused to camp forever on the borders of the industrial world; having learned that knowledge is power, he is educating his children.”

Are we not found wanting in as far as educating our children? Do we really believe that the future of our country rest on the younger generation? What about teaching our children patriotism, so that after graduating as doctors, as nurses, as engineers etc, they contribute to the “regeneration of Africa” instead of heading overseas? Have we not undermined Seme’s assertion that “These (meaning Africa’s children sent to study abroad like himself) return to their country like arrows, to drive darkness from the land? Looking at our skills strategy and its implementation, can we truly share Seme’s sentiments when he declared that:

“I hold that his industrial and educational initiative, and his untiring devotion to these activities, must be regarded as positive evidences of this process of his regeneration”?

Of course as the ANC was confronted with other challenges in decades to follow, more policy postures were debated and adopted, but as I have hinted at the beginning, those are beyond the scope of mandate of which I have been requested to make this presentation.

Today’s policy challenges is better illuminated by the mindset and works of Pixely Ka Isaka Seme, arguably the founder of the ANC. History tells of other heroes and heroines of our struggle, but here it suffices to say Pixely Ka Isaka Seme was indeed the foremost leading founder of the ANC, of course working together with other genius of his generation. From his life, we learn that we too can, as individuals working in collectives, contribute into shaping the history of our movement and that of the struggle of our people going into the future.

>> Jeff Radebe is an ANC NEC member and Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development

HEALTH

2008 National Antenatal Sentinel HIV and Syphilis Prevalence Survey



This week the Department of Health presented the results of the 2008 National Antenatal Sentinel HIV and Syphilis Prevalence Survey and trends in HIV and syphilis over the years. The results provide basis for the projection, estimation of the epidemic and measurement of HIV and AIDS impact in the general population.

The antenatal sentinel surveillance programme remains a good indicator of prevalence in the total population and one of the most robust/appropriate HIV surveillance methods to monitor the HIV epidemic trends in countries with a generalized epidemic.

The result from the 2008 report on antenatal HIV and syphilis prevalence survey, can be used to observe trends, to reinforce or increase the commitment for policy development, provide feed back to health workers, local and international groups and all sectors involved in AIDS prevention and care programs.

We all know that HIV and AIDS continues to be one of the biggest challenge facing us. Over the years government, civil society, business and other sectors have launched individual and joint programmes geared at responding to this challenge.

There are an estimated 33 million people living with the HI virus worldwide. Of these, two-thirds live in countries south of the Sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, out of the estimated 2.5 million new infections occurring globally, two thirds are also in sub-Saharan Africa (UNAIDS, 2007).

It is estimated that our country is one of the countries with the largest number of HIV infections in the world. In 2008, UNAIDS estimated that there were 5.3 million (4.7 million–5.7 million) people living with HIV. The HIV prevalence data collected from the latest round of antenatal clinic surveillance suggests that HIV infection levels among the adult female population might be leveling off, with prevalences among pregnant women at 29.1% in 2006 and 29.4% in 2007.

2008 National Antenatal Sentinel and Syphilis Prevalence Survey

<http://www.doh.gov.za/docs/nassps-f.html>

It is for this reason, that the Department of Health's strategic focus to strengthen HIV prevention and AIDS related disease management and control remains one of the priorities of our government.

Our country has adopted a multi-sectoral strategic approach in dealing with the spread of HIV and mitigating the impact of AIDS related morbidity and mortality. This approach ensures that all relevant stakeholders play an active role in combating HIV and AIDS in their areas of comparative advantage, with the Department of Health providing a lead role.

The general objective of the 2008 National HIV and Syphilis Prevalence Survey is to monitor the epidemic and provide HIV prevalence data for planning, monitoring and evaluation of HIV and AIDS response activities.

The specific objectives are:

1. To determine the National HIV and Syphilis prevalence among the female population of 15–49 years in the country using pregnant women attending antenatal clinics in public health institutions as proxy.
2. To determine the distribution of HIV and syphilis infection among pregnant women attending antenatal clinics by province, district and age.
3. To monitor the trend of HIV and syphilis infection in the country over time.
4. To project and extrapolate HIV prevalence in the 15–49 year old female to the general population e.g. children, men and those who need treatment.
5. To make information available for policy-planning, focused strategic programmes, advocacy, and evaluation of impact of ongoing interventions.

For the first time, in the result we are able to observe the transmission potential of the virus at district level whereas it was previously limited to provincial level.

Conclusions that can be drawn from the 2008 findings are as follows:

1. South Africa has an established generalized HIV epidemic with an estimated 17.5% prevalence in the general population and an estimated prevalence of 29.3% in the antenatal population.
2. The HIV prevalence has remained stable among women aged 25 years and above, although the 15-24 Millennium Development Goal 6, Target 7, indicator 18 states that countries should aim to half the HIV prevalence among pregnant women in the 15-24 year age group. The HIV prevalence in this age group has decrease by 0.4% from 2007 to 2008.
3. It is crucial that the department conduct pilot analytical (in-depth), epidemiological surveys in high prevalence (>40%) and low prevalence districts (below 10%), in order to investigate potential risk factors that drive the epidemic and determine the type of HIV strains (sub types) that could be circulating in these districts.
4. A regression analysis of determinants of HIV positive status in the survey participants using the demographic and laboratory information showed that the most significant determinant factor was age. Women less or equal to 21 years have HIV prevalence of 16.8% compared the 34.8% of women 22 years and older. In the older age group the next split was on race. An African subgroup (37.6%) is identified versus the rest (6.8%) of White, Asian and Coloured women.
5. One important observation from the regression analysis was that having a syphilis co-infection is not a strong predictor for HIV status.
6. An in-depth analysis of the 2008 data for the Western Cape confirms the differential in HIV prevalence by race. The overall HIV prevalence in this province is 16.1% with the distribution of participants as follow: 50.8% (1896) Africans; 48.6% (1817); 0.6 (21) Whites and one Asian. The HIV results in this province show that 29.4% of Africans and only 3.0% of Coloureds were infected.

The following recommendations can be made from the implications of the findings:

- Further research and triangulation of other HIV surveillance data within the public health sector is needed to further understand the potential risk factors for high risk groups in this country and to improve the department-focused targeted interventions in its attempt to mitigate the burden of the disease.
- To report on HIV prevalence distribution by geotype (rural vs. semi-rural vs. urban), because in generalized heterosexual epidemics the standard practise is to categorise populations by geographic subdivisions.
- To publish a separate scientific paper on the risk factors associated with HIV status of pregnant women, and to do multiple regression analysis of the relationship between risk factors and HIV outcome.
- To capture the marital status of the participants so that it could be estimated how many orphans will have a single parent or no parents.
- To find out if the pregnant woman ever participated in the PMTCT; are aware of their HIV status, or have participated in this survey before.
- To establish an ART (Anti Retroviral Treatment Site) Surveillance System within the ARV Sites Information System. This will assist to track measures such as AIDS-related mortality by age, sex, genotype, district, province, monitor loss to follow-up, number of patients on different regimes, pharmacovigilance, drug resistance patterns, AIDS incidence rate etc.

The ANC government's commitment is to continue to work together with all sectors of our society to continue the fight against HIV and AIDS. We encourage the ANC Today readers to examine the results of the 2008 National Antenatal Sentinel HIV and Syphilis Prevalence Survey and provide feedback to our democratic government in order to ensure that the next survey will even be more encouraging.

All of us should take very seriously some of the key points that are raised in the survey. Working together we can do more.