

Our health system, write to your MP

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By Dr Brighton Chireka

Dr Parirenyatwa is reported in the Herald to have said that our health system needs 8000 nurses yet we have 3000 nurses unemployed. He went on to ask the Dr Bimha MP for the area where he was giving the speech, to support him in parliament.

This failure to employ our health professionals is not only affecting nurses. This year Zimbabwe has failed to absorb at least 50 doctors who completed internship. This figure is going to rise as more and more doctors qualify. I am reliably informed that we have at least 400 medical students doing 4th year at the university of Zimbabwe. Looking back during my days we had only 80 medical students per stream. This means we will have more doctors unemployed but the irony is that we need more doctors.

This reminds of 1999 when as a junior doctor we went on strike. We then invited the then Minister of Health Dr Timothy Stamps. He listened to all our grievances and said that he agreed with us but then said it was difficult for him alone to convince his colleagues in the cabinet to allocate more resources into the health system .

Many a times we blame the individual ministers as not performing but we need to understand that the situation is not that simple . There are several ministries that are competing for the meagre resources available. We all need to play our part to make sure that our health system does get a fair share of resources.

It is sad that we are relying on donor funds to run our health system . It is reported that in 2014 the government of Zimbabwe only allocated one million dollars for the management of malaria whilst the donor community paid over 17 million dollars.

Something has to be done to lobby our government. Instead of the war veterans only asking for more personal benefits , they should be asking for more resources to be allocated to the Ministry of Health. Very few of us can afford private health care so we have to rely on the public health system.

I call upon each individual to write to their local Member of Parliament (MP)and ask them to support Dr Parirenyatwa in having more resources allocated to his ministry . If all MPs support the call for more resources in our health system, maybe we will have more funding. There is power in numbers and the government will listen to the voice of the crowd. If the war veterans as a group are managing to have their needs looked into, then we should also do the same . The same war veterans use the same public hospitals as us so they must join us in our call for more funding for our health system.

The first call is to ask for the 3000 unemployed nurses and 50 unemployed doctors to be urgently employed as our health system needs them badly. This call to action must be channelled through various avenues . This includes MPs , Cabinet Ministers , Ministry of health officials etc .

I welcome the efforts by Zimbabwe Medical Association (ZIMA) and Ministry of Health and Medical and Dental Practitioners Council of Zimbabwe (MDPCZ) in trying to address the issue of unemployed doctors. These are desperate times and calls for new ways of practicing that involves innovation and thinking outside the box. Accepting the status quo is not an option as we will continue to lose lives from avoidable deaths.

Here is the suggested letter to send to your MP

Dear[Hon MP's name]

I am writing to express my deepest concern about the current situation of our health system in Zimbabwe. Dr Parirenyatwa is reported in the Herald to have said that our health system needs 8000 nurses yet we have 3000 nurses unemployed. This year Zimbabwe has failed to absorb at least 50 doctors who completed internship. This figure is going to rise as more and more doctors qualify.

As your constituent, I request that you support the call for more funding to the Ministry of Health and the immediate employment of these desperately needed health professionals. The government and the public used their meagre resources to train these health professionals so that they can work in our hospitals. In addition to setting a dangerous precedent for our country , the status quo if left unchanged , would send the highly undesirable message that we do not care about our investments in our health system.

I look forward to your response and thank you in advance for your support in this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

[Your Name]

If you want to meet your MP to discuss in person you can add the following;

I would also very much like to meet you to discuss this matter further . Please could you contact me to arrange a meeting suitable time?

You can contact me at [Email] or [Telephone]. Thank you for your help with this matter, I look

foreword to your response.

Yours sincerely

[Your Name]

This article was compiled by Dr Brighton Chireka, who is a GP and a Health Commissioner in South Kent Coast in the United Kingdom. You can contact him at: info@docbeecee.co.uk and can read more of his work on his blog at [DR CHIREKA'S BLOG](#)

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