

SECTION 2



Performance against objectives

Introduction

The central structure for this section is the Department's Strategic Framework for the period 1999 - 2004. This distils the most significant goals and objectives, imparting a sense of logic to the year's activities and a measure of how much progress there has been.

The Framework comprises 10 points that vary in terms of scope and complexity. They are:

- Decreasing morbidity and mortality rates through strategic interventions.
- Revitalising hospital services.
- Accelerating delivery of an essential package of primary care services.
- Improving quality of care.
- Reorganising support services.
- Improving mobilisation and management of resources.
- Improving human resource development and management.
- Initiating and implementing legislative reform.
- Improving communication and consultation with stakeholders.
- Strengthening co-operation with international partners.

While activities related to these goals (and the objectives each gives rise to) certainly form a solid core of the Department's mandate, there are major additional areas of work. These may not be as critical to transformation and setting the Department's direction, but they ensure the maintenance and development of established health programmes.

The nature of the work of the Department is essentially directed by the fact that health services are defined in the Constitution as a concurrent provincial and national function, with municipal health services the business of local authorities.

In terms of the White Paper on Health, the three spheres of government are jointly responsible for the operation of a single National Health System. The principle of co-operative government that underpins this joint endeavour is spelled out in the Constitution.

In the light of the above, this report attempts to situate the activities of the national Department during the year 2000/1 against the health challenges that confront the system as a whole. However, the reader should be clear that this Department does not run hospitals, clinics and community health services. These services are managed by provincial administrations and local authorities, accountable to their respective legislatures and councils.

The basic business of the national Department is the development of national legislation, policy and guidelines to ensure that all the people of this country have access to basic health services of good quality and that this access improves over time. The Department of Health shares with other departments the responsibility to protect and promote health. And it also runs certain specialised bodies – such as the National Institute for Virology and the National Centre for Occupational Health – whose role is intrinsically national.

Government's responsibility in relation to health care is not confined to the public sector. The state has a critical influence on private health service provision. This is exercised most obviously through the power to legislate on aspects of private health care. These laws are often regulatory and relate to the protection of the public. However, there is also scope for enabling legislation to shape private services and for indirect forms of influence, through channels such as the training of health professionals.

