

SCRIPT: Here's how e-cigarettes turn juice into clouds

Mohale Moloi, VO 00:54

Tembisa, 40 kilometres northeast of the Joburg CBD has been around since the 1950s.

Xolani Mnisi 01:03

I was born here, I grew up here. I did my high school, and my primary school here.

Mohale Moloi, VO 01:09

Xolani Mnisi is from the Tembisa Community Forum, a youth-led movement to improve service delivery in the township. Apart from wanting to clean up the streets of Tembisa, making sure people get the health services they need is a top priority.

SUPER: Xolani Mnisi, Tembisa Community Forum

Xolani Mnisi 01:27

Other Tembisans do share the same sentiments that we are not entirely happy. That's the reason why last year we marched to the Tembisa Hospital to send a memorandum of grievances from Tembisans.

Mohale Moloi, VO 01:40

Tembisa Hospital is an 840-bed facility that serves about 2 million people. It's a tertiary or specialist hospital, which means patients are referred here from Ekurhuleni, Joburg, Tshwane and surrounding informal settlements.

Xolani Mnisi 01:57

We know that Tembisa Hospital is quite under-capacitated. It is not only rendering services to Tembisans but also other surrounding areas including areas like Diepsloot. You will find doctors that are dealing with a high number of patients, really much affecting how service is given to the patients.

Mohale Moloi, VO 02:20

People dread having to go there.

Sound-up from video clip

This is not on. Guys I'm in Tembisa Hospital right now as we speak, look how our human beings are been stored. I may call it stored.

Xolani Mnisi 02:36

Residents will go there, and when they come back, they'll be having appalling comments about how they were treated, from casualty even in wards.

Mohale Moloi, VO 02:48

Videos like this one published by News24 have earned the hospital a poor reputation.

Xolani Mnisi 02:56

It is precisely this video that prompted us to stand up as the Forum and as the community to go and protest at the hospital. And I was there was very much aggrieved because I've been in that hospital casualty. On the weekend, it would be very much scary.

Mohale Moloi, VO 03:15

Last year, a new ward with 36 more beds was built and the Gauteng province has plans for a 300-bed Mother and Child facility.

Xolani Mnisi 03:25

So we do acknowledge that the staff that side are trying their best, and they are under-capacitated. And government is aware of that. We expect government to do something about it.

Mohale Moloi, VO 03:35

In September 2023, the President gave [the government's Special Investigating Unit](#) permission to delve into maladministration at Tembisa Hospital. This after News24 investigative journalist Jeff Wicks reported on how crime syndicates extracted up to a billion Rand from Tembisa Hospital with the help of hospital staff.

SUPER: JEFF WICKS – INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALIST, NEWS24

Jeff Wicks 04:05

People receive perilous treatment in public hospitals because of resource constraints, and this is [the same hospital where a man starved to death because the nurses forgot to feed him](#). It speaks to systemic issues.

Mohale Moloi, VO 04:17

[His investigation into the murder of Babita Deokaran](#), a Gauteng Health Department accountant turned whistleblower, uncovered the graft she died trying to expose.

Jeff Wicks 04:29

She found that companies that had no public presence and had very strange names. Were getting 10s of millions of Rands worth of business in very quick succession. And

she also found that the pricing of the contracts was very strange. And, we saw 1000s of transactions being processed by Tembisa Hospital in a matter of months, and for incredible items like children's skinny jeans, for bonded leather wingback chairs, for arts and crafts supplies – millions upon millions of Rands were just being channelled out of that hospital.

Mohale Moloi, VO 05:03

This unchecked spending can only hurt healthcare for ordinary citizens.

Jeff Wicks 05:08

And also it gives us a window into perhaps this is happening elsewhere. What about other government hospitals and clinics because also, what we found was that these same companies that were doing a roaring trade at Tembisa, were also getting contracts from at least five other health facilities in this province. So this is not an issue surrounding a single hospital. This is an issue that really underpins public health procurement in South Africa.

Mohale Moloi, VO 05:34

The SIU has confirmed that Tembisa Hospital contracted suppliers who intended to cash in on deals without providing services and that there were irregularities in the bid documents. Although six men pleaded guilty to Deokaran's murder, there's been no action against those who ordered her killing.

Mohale Moloi, VO 05:57

Alex van den Heever, from the Wits School of Governance, says corruption in the health system can happen when individuals exploit gaps and take a chance. But it's the corruption that comes from the top, that's the most difficult to deal with.

SUPER: Alex van den Heever – WITS SCHOOL OF GOVERNANCE

Alex van den Heever 06:10

Top-down corruption is when it's organised from leadership level. And that is really the one that has a systemic impact on the performance of the health sector or any facility because it's from the leadership level enables, and allows them to essentially establish networks of corruption, which make it much more difficult for the accountability structures to operate. And, therefore they're making decisions about procurement and what gets delivered in their own private interests, not in the public interest, because it effectively collapses the effective delivery of healthcare services across the board, quite aside from the money that gets lost.

SUPER: Mohale Moloi – HEALTH BEAT PRODUCER

Mohale Moloji 06:50

We have this thing called the Health Sector Anti-Corruption Forum that's headed up by the Special Investigating Unit. So they're tasked with fast-tracking fraud and corruption cases in this sector, and that also includes the NHI Fund. In your view, how will this actually protect the Fund against abuse in the future?

Alex van den Heever 07:09

It's not a protection at all. You know, one thing that one's got to be wary of, is the establishment of what I call 'fake accountability structures' or 'weak accountability structures' that are easily evaded. A bit like the ANC's you know, integrity Committee. It creates the impression that there's some kind of accountability structure in place. But when you see the ultimate effect, it's really there to whitewash.

The key vulnerability is we allow political appointments into the administration that allow basically criminal syndicates to be set up in our public structures.

Mohale Moloji 07:41

We've tried to get people from this Forum and these law enforcement bodies to talk to us about the progress they've made. And all we've really found out from them from a written statement is that several cases have been handed over to the Hawks. Are you of the opinion that this isn't enough to deter fraud and corruption?

Alex van den Heever 07:58

It's inexplicable, that with the levels of evidence that we have against this very serious top-down corruption in South Africa, they're unable to prosecute anybody. So this is my concern, the NPA quite clearly isn't doing its job, and the Hawks are not doing their job. And all of those structures are failing. So the SIU might do certain things and look like it's an accountability structure. But what happened to Digital Vibes, what happened to all these cases? You know, people that get implicated in them are still running around, despite the fact that SIU provided the evidence, so quite clearly, somebody is perfectly happy for that information to go out. But when it gets to the actual rubber hitting the road in terms of investigation and prosecution, it all just goes into a black hole.

Mohale Moloji 08:47

Is it even possible for something like the NHI to work? And if so, how?

Alex van den Heever 08:52

From the very outset, they don't make sense from the perspective of an improved health system. My concern with the NHI proposals and, which render it basically unworkable is that it is designed for patronage. It's not designed for public health.

Mohale Moloi, VO 09:08

Back in Tembisa, Xolani says they just want decent health services.

SUPER: Xolan Mnisi, Tembisa Community Forum

Xolani Mnisi 09:15

The honest truth is that normal people don't care about tenders and stuff. The only thing that they care about is the services that they receive. But unfortunately, such issues of corruption, they do have a bad effect in terms of service delivery, which we cannot run away from, and we're hoping that the law enforcement will take its course. However, we will also continue doing what we do on our side of civil movements to say while the law is taking its course, the government the provincial government and officials must ensure that people are not affected.