

Nolukhanyo Clinic Crisis Deepens

By Sinalo Peyi

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Bathurst's Nolukhanyo Clinic, located in the Eastern Cape under the jurisdiction of Ndlambe Municipality, is facing a worsening crisis that threatens the health and lives of its residents. As the only public health facility in the area, the clinic serves a large and vulnerable population, but mounting complaints suggest that it is failing to meet even the most basic healthcare standards.

Community members report that patients are dying before receiving medical attention, while others are being denied access to chronic medication. The clinic operates from 8:00 to 16:00, yet residents claim fewer than 20 patients are seen per day. Many, including the elderly and chronically ill, queue from as early as 4:00 in the morning, only to be turned away without treatment.

Concerns have also been raised about the conduct of clinic staff. Health workers, who are meant to support nurses amid a staffing shortage, are allegedly spending their time in the kitchen or entering consultation rooms without authorisation, raising serious questions about patient confidentiality. The clinic reportedly has only three nurses, but due to leave and study commitments, only one or two are typically on duty.

Despite repeated appeals, the Department of Health and the Community Clinic Committee, which includes members of the South African Police Service, have yet to take meaningful action. The community feels abandoned, with no intervention to address the staffing crisis or improve service delivery.

Lulama Peyi, a 54-year-old resident, shared her experience:

"I've been sent home without being seen by a nurse because the clinic was full or closed for days. I'm living without my treatment. It's heartbreaking, people go days without medication, and some are given the wrong pills due to the pressure. This can be fatal."

Siphosethu Ndabeni, a representative of local advocacy group Isikhalo, echoed the urgency:

"The community is fed up. Nurses are on their phones during consultations or sitting with health workers instead of helping patients. All stakeholders must meet urgently. This is about saving lives in a place meant to preserve them."

In response to the crisis, residents have called for a community action meeting to address the deteriorating conditions. Tensions have escalated to the point where a nurse reportedly took leave after being confronted by a patient, leaving the clinic in the hands of a single nurse.

Unless swift and decisive action is taken, the situation at Nolukhanyo Clinic may continue to endanger lives. The community is demanding accountability and a healthcare system that serves rather than fails them.

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