

# US-SA partnership sets sights on an Aids-free future for young women

AARON MOTSOALEDI AND PATRICK GASPARD

WHEN the International Aids Conference opened in Durban 16 years ago, the challenge seemed insurmountable. Scientists were projecting that half of South Africa's young people would die of Aids.

At the closing of the conference, President Nelson Mandela's appeal to the delegates was: "Something must be done as a matter of the greatest urgency."

No country could have met the enormous challenge presented by the HIV epidemic alone.

As a result, more than 10 years ago, the South African and US governments forged an unprecedented partnership to address this scourge head-on.

Through incredible commitment and leadership on the side of the South African government, coupled with technical assistance and more than \$5 billion (R70bn) from the US President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief (Pepfar), South Africa now provides more than 3.4 million people with life-saving antiretroviral treatment

– the largest treatment programme in the world.

We have achieved tremendous success in reducing mother-to-child transmission of HIV, increasing HIV testing, and the voluntary male medical circumcision programme across the country.

From next year, the South African government – with Pepfar's support – will provide HIV counselling and testing to more than 13 million South Africans a year, cumulatively have 4.2 million people on HIV treatment, and reach 1.2 million people through prevention activities, including HIV awareness, prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, and voluntary medical male circumcision.

Our goal is to make the biggest difference in the shortest time.

Due to this remarkable collaboration, millions of lives have been saved.

An estimated 6.8 million South Africans are living with HIV. The minister of health has announced the government's commitment to launching a "test and treat" approach to all people living with HIV – an initiative the US endorses. Last week, as a result of the

highly effective partnership with the US, Pepfar committed funding of \$467m over the next year, exceeding the amounts projected in the 2012 Partnership Framework Implementation Plan.

The objective of achieving an Aids-free generation is in sight – but the story doesn't end there.

The next chapter in the struggle is unfolding.

Despite considerable progress, girls and young women remain highly vulnerable to HIV infection.

Adolescent girls are up to eight times more likely to be infected with HIV than their male contemporaries.

South Africa has the highest number – about 2 000 – of new HIV infections a week among young women.

It's hard to imagine that more than 100 000 young women become infected each year.

So instead let's imagine one girl. One girl who, through the highly effective partnership between Pepfar and the government, avoided HIV at birth because her mother had access to antiretroviral treatment.

This girl – who could be your neighbour, daughter, sister, or



PLAN: Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi is preparing to implement a 'test and treat' approach to HIV.

student – is trying to chart her course in the world. She has a one-in-five chance of becoming infected with HIV before she reaches the age of 25. Let's imagine she dreams of becoming a mother, a lawyer, or the

president. Would you do anything you could to give this one girl a chance of realising her dreams?

We would. That's why, on June 24, Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa launched a national

campaign that focuses on adolescent girls and young women and has five goals:

- Reducing the incidence of new HIV infections among young women.

- Decreasing teenage pregnancy.

- Decreasing sexual and gender-based violence.

- Keeping girls in school.
- Increasing economic opportunities for young people – especially for women.

The Pepfar programme Dreams – Determined, Resilient, Empowered, Aids-Free, Mentored, and Safe young women – is the linchpin of this campaign.

We have reached a pivotal point in the HIV/Aids fight. Reaching our shared goal will take the efforts of all sectors, working side by side: the government, Pepfar, the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the UN family, the private sector and civil society.

The US and South Africa are committed to facing the challenge together to give that one girl – and the tens of thousands just like her – a chance to realise her dream of an Aids-free future.

Will you join us in rewriting the future of South Africa?

- Motsoaledi is the minister of health and Gaspard is the US ambassador to South Africa.

# Malema's buffoonery rules him out

With a jester at the helm, the EFF has the media attention but the party isn't a real contender for power, writes **Imraan Buccus**

THERE are only really three parties in this election. The NFP has self-destructed, the UDM, Minority Front and IFP are all of minor regional interest, Cope and Agang are a complete mess and the parties of the far left – Sopa, the PAC, Wasp, Azapo and the abortive United Front are all irrelevant.

The three real players in this election are the ANC, the DA and the EFF.

The ANC will take the vast majority of the votes. But there are three big questions in this election:

The first is how much the president's ongoing debacle will cost the governing party.

The second is whether or not the DA will take Port Elizabeth and, as some pundits have suggested, perhaps Tshwane too.

The third big question is how well the EFF will do.

If many ANC supporters, appalled at the moral collapse of a once-great movement, stay at home and the DA and EFF are able to energise their supporters we could be in for an interesting election.

Some have suggested that a DA and EFF coalition could conceivably threaten the ANC in Joburg.

The EFF is a relatively small party in terms of the number of seats it holds in Parliament. Its actual support on the ground is relatively minor.

However, it is a huge party in terms of its media savvy and the amount of media attention it wins.

Again and again, the party has leveraged massive media attention from minor support.

But the EFF's major media asset – its leader Julius Malema – is also its major liability. This is a contradiction that cannot be resolved easily.

Malema's bombastic personality and quick wit mean that he can turn almost any situation to his short-term advantage when it comes to media attention.

While members of the public enjoy the spectacle of his larger-than-life character, they are not fools. We all remember that Malema was once Jacob Zuma's most militant supporter.

We all remember that he was once a tenderpreneur and tax dodger. We all remember that he was once an enthusiastic Bob Mugabe supporter.

Of course Malema was wise enough to jump ship when the tide of popular opinion turned against Zuma, the tenderpreneurs and now Mugabe.

He's a canny operator. But he's also an opportunist of the worst kind and opportunism always has real political costs in the long term. It is true that Donald Trump,



MEET AND GREET: President Jacob Zuma during a recent visit to Eldorado Park in Joburg's south. PICTURE: BHEKIKHAYA MABASO

a buffoon who delights in making outrageous statements, astounded the world by winning the Republican presidential nomination in the US.

The Republican Party created this mess for itself by pandering to right-wing populism in the form of the Tea Party.

But it has now created a situation in which it has a candidate who is simply not electable.

The EFF has put itself in a similar situation.

The party has encouraged buffoonery and cheap populism to garner media attention and create a stir.

This has worked very well indeed.

But every time Malema makes the kind of outrageous comment that pushes more reasonable voices out of the limelight he makes it harder for the public to consider him a serious contender for public office.

Playing the role of the Shakespearean fool is one thing. Assuming the gravitas of the king is another. Malema has typecast himself as the fool.

Like the Shakespearean fool, Malema very often says things that are true and which others don't dare say.



MAKING A POINT: Thembani Mathasi speaks to DA leader Mmusi Maimane in Marabastad, in Tshwane. PICTURE: PHILL MAGAKOE

This is not just entertaining. It is also sometimes valuable. When Malema depicts Zuma as a thief

or points out that we have not yet resolved the land question, he is saying things that we know to be

true. But the EFF's solutions to our crisis often come straight from the unreconstructed Stalinism of

the SACP. Eskom is a disaster. The SABC is a disaster. SA Airways is a disaster.

We all know this and yet the EFF continues to speak as if nationalisation is a panacea that will magically resolve all our problems and create work and wealth for all.

Malema often offers the right diagnosis.

He very seldom offers the right treatment for the disease, though.

If we were governed by the EFF and if the party actually tried to implement its programme we would, very quickly, end up where Zimbabwe is now.

Our economy would crash and there would be destitution on a far greater scale than we face.

It would take just a few months for the government to run out of money. Once grants and salaries could not be paid, there would be a real crisis.

The temptation to follow the Zimbabwean route and just print money would be overwhelming. But once a state goes down that road, hyper-inflation and further destitution are inevitable.

At that point austerity has to be confronted and once austerity is opposed there would be massive social conflict.

It wouldn't take long before our cities would look like much like Harare with desperate people confronting the police on the streets.

The EFF has substituted crude populism, often presented via Trump-like buffoonery, for the serious and painstaking work of building a credible left alternative from the ground up.

Of course Malema's gift for spin and spectacle have won the party a real base while the narrow dogmatism of parties like Sopa and Wasp have consigned them to permanent irrelevance.

Populism is a far better electoral prospect than narrow dogmatism. But it needs to be accompanied by the sort of serious political work that can articulate popular aspirations to viable political strategies for change.

Until the EFF is able to achieve this it will remain in the role of the Shakespearean fool, always poking fun at the king but with no chance of ever becoming the king.

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## HEADS UP

I AM now tasked with resolving the dispute over the designation of a nudist beach in KwaZulu-Natal. The participants must be fully clothed...The matter will be heard on August 22 and it is not open to the public. Last week the KwaZulu-Natal team was expected to conduct an inspection at the beach ahead of the hearing. – Deputy Public Protector Kevin Malunga after citizens approached the public protector's office claiming SA Naturists Association's application to declare the 250m sandy stretch near Mpenjati Nature Reserve a legal nudist beach was not handled properly.



WE ARE here to honour in particular black people who fell in this war, who were not accorded the respect and recognition they deserved, and which is equal to that of their white compatriots. The transformation of the Deville Wood Memorial will represent a powerful message of reconciliation and provide some redress that will further consolidate the diversity of our South African nation. – President Jacob Zuma speaking at the unveiling of the Wall of Remembrance at the Deville Wood Museum in France where about 3 000 South African soldiers died in 1916 during World War I.



DRUG dealers must start packing. Julle is vol, ek praat nie net, ek dala (You are fed up, I don't just talk, I do). We are taking back our streets. Any foreigner, including of European descent living in our communities, should show the Patriotic Alliance what is their business, what are they doing or where are they working in our area. – Patriotic Alliance leader Gayton McKenzie, who is a former convict himself, announcing one of the party's objectives on his personal Facebook account this week.



IN THE next few months, we have to collectively deliver another set of concrete results that will persuade the rating agencies that what we said in the first six months of this year is being delivered in the second half of this year. Of course, growth is not something you can click your fingers and deliver, but investors and ratings agencies want to see that we are doing enough. – Minister of Finance Pravin Gordhan, addressing members of the South African Chamber of Commerce.

