Twitter Thread by Lukhona



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There's a R1000 maintenance tweet doing the rounds. It's not it per se I want to talk about but the conversation on it does trigger a lot of things in me& life in SA generally. The issue of low or nonexistent incomes in many households tends to escape us.

We tend to view life only with our lenses of privilege or bias depending on our station in life. The reality for many rural &township households is extremely brutal in this country. There are still people who earn R1000 or less as a month's wage. They often do heavy manual labour

It took time for my grandparents to be convinced to go over R1000 in paying their live-in helper. That was some years ago. My grandfather had pension from eThekwini municipality &my grandmother is on SASSA.They were lucky to accumulate some savings, they run their household fully

But we are a very lucky few to have grandparents in their late 80s who are still this financially independent. Sure we do things at home but not the basics, including not having to build a house for them etc. This is almost out of the norm experience.

A lot of people in our country have salaries below R10 000 pm. They have to divide this between their needs (food&transport), some dependents and sending remittances back home so that their parents and other loved ones can put some bread on the table &complement some grants.

Then there are other problems in the system. Some people fail to register their children within the 30 days. It causes massive problems, no CSG access& eventually no schooling for some bcoz the schools can't claim subsidies for learners who aren't on the population register.

In a country like ours, we will barely solve the issue of low incomes in our lifetime. The structural forces that reproduce it are too vast& with such high unemployment, wages are likely to take a knock further as people resort to having some income than none at all.

It is for this reason that we must fight even harder for access to QUALITY public goods and services. It is our only saving grace because it will ordinarily drive down the cost of living for many poor households that are struggling. E.g. look at the health system in these areas.

If one member of the household has to go see a General Practitioner in town for whatever ailment, that home loses significant money to its income. Public health services are congested & unreliable at times, so people sacrifice for what appears a better choice, a GP.

But if we made sure that we build state of the art public facilities, we would be in a far better position. Yeah yeah NHI talk is here but the facilities are poor in many communities & so NHI will still be a struggle. Referral hospitals are fewer in the more rural provinces...

.rehabilitation facilities are even more scarce here. So life is a form of condemnation and only those in more urban settings can talk about some chance of quality healthcare. But even in Durban, the backlogs on things like a colonoscopy in the public system is high& unacceptable

The point I am making is a simple one. Life is very difficult in SA with poor public goods& services in communities that need them the most - rural and peri-urban communities. Wages are extremely low in SA, thus people's affordability is tight& affects people's quality of life.