

**Statement by KZN Premier, Hon Sbu Ndebele
and HEALTH MEC Ms Neliswa Nkonyeni on the
occasion of the TB Blitz at Uthungulu District.**

3 October 2006

Our visit to this District today must be seen and understood to be part and parcel of serious efforts that have both National as well as continental agenda of ridding our lands the malady of Tuberculosis.

Both the SADC Health Ministers and the World Health Organisation have declared Tuberculosis an emergency.

In our province, we already have in place strategies aimed at its total eradication.

As such we have declared a TB Crises Plan to four of our Districts, namely:

- Ethekwini
- Mzinyathi
- Uthungulu, and
- UThukela

It must be noted that out of eleven Provinces, ours is the most populous one, with a total number of plus minus Ten million [10] people.

This District alone has close to a million inhabitants.

In as far as TB is concerned, our health records show that we currently have a caseload of **703** people.

On top of that we have **290** new smear positive. Though the death rate is less than **2%**, we are still not happy with the **13,7%** defaulter rate hence we are here.

We have decided to raise levels of awareness and social mobilization, focusing on our people on the ground, informing them that, yes, indeed TB is curable, manageable and that it can be defeated.

The crux of the matter is that with early treatment, TB can be cured, but without treatment TB can kill.

We are saying seek help in our clinics and hospitals if you have the following symptoms:

- A cough of longer than two weeks
- Chest pains
- Tiredness and weakness of the body
- Loss of appetite and weight
- Night sweats, even if its cold, and
- The coughing of blood.

The good thing is that TB testing and treatment is free of charge.

Even though TB can be cured with little or no complications, we are emphasising that:

- Medication must be started as soon as possible and be taken according to instructions
- It takes 6 months for TB to be cured completely
- It's a mistake to stop taking medicines when a person feels better
- If treatment is missed, the risk of a drug resistant strain TB is possible.

We are ready to deal with this malady. We have put aside a sum of **R53million** to deal with it.

- For this area, we already have a TB Crises Plan in place.
- TB supervisors, TB nurses and TB assistants are in the process of being employed
- Casual field workers have already been employed
- Have in place tracing teams of all family and household contacts of confirmed TB cases, and
- Have already decided on a pilot project of giving stipends to DOT supporters

We are also working to overcome the challenges of the shortage of vehicles designated for the collection of sputa.

For seriously affected areas like Umsinga, we have already assembled a team comprising of the

Provincial TB Unit, UKZN Medical School, MDR unit, District and Hospital management.

We are saying we will do everything possible to rid this beautiful land of the TB malady.

We not want it.