

**Opening remarks by MEC Neliswa Nkonyeni on the
opening of the PRO's workshop**

29 July 2005

Greetings and welcome.

I regard this encounter today as a most significant one, because you are the people entrusted with dealing directly with the communities we serve

What we all must understand and agree to is that we are a department that is striving to achieve optimal health status for all persons in the Province of KwaZulu Natal.

In our capacity as Public Relations Officers as well as Communication's officials, our primary responsibility then, would be to contribute towards the vision as well as the mission of the department. This being to develop a sustainable coordinated and comprehensive health system at all levels based on the Primary health Care approach through the District Health System.

To achieve the above we are expected to embrace the core values as specified, namely:

Trust built on integrity and reconciliation
Open communication, transparency and consultation
Commitment to performance, and
Courage to learn, change and innovate.

The aspect of learning becomes crucial as there are many policy documents that you as public faces have to familiarize yourselves

with. Of uppermost importance would be the acceptance of the fact that we are implementing the policies of the ruling party, which is the African National Congress. As such we need to read and understand its policy statements pertaining health. As a start we need to have read

the Freedom Charter
the resolutions of the Mafikeng Congress
NGC resolutions in Stellebosch
The National Health Act, as well as
Pieces of legislation pertaining Health, ie,
Mental Health Act

All the above will necessitate that we work hand in glove with the GCIS.

As a government, we all need to know that our outlook is global, hence we have spearheaded the creation of **NEPAD**. We wont be able to articulate the policies of the government of the day if we are not privy to those documents. It is also crucial for all of us to understand that our government participates in world organs like the United Nations, World Health Organisation which stipulated and agreed on **Millennium. Development Goals**.

As a Department we are also expected to act on the implementation of those goals, especially because in the year 2015 our government will be tabling a report specifying on the measures taken. The MDG's are as follows:

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- To achieve universal primary education
- Promote gender equality and empower women
- Reduce child mortality and improve maternal health

- Combat HIV and AIDS, Malaria and other diseases.
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Develop a global partnership for development.

If we look at the Freedom Charter specifically we can understand that there are aspects thereof expected from our department namely:

A preventative Health scheme shall be run by the State
 Free medical care and hospitalization shall be provided for all with special care for mothers and young children
 The aged, orphans, the disabled and the sick shall be cared for by the state.
 All people shall be entitled to participate in the administration of the country
 The rights of the people shall be the same regardless of race, colour or gender.

On practical level, we are expected to see to the compliance of the:

Patience Rights Charter, and
 Batho Pele Principles

We are also expected to fully understand, observe and act upon the Calendar dates relevant to our department, ie

The World Aids Day
 The STI week
 Mental Health month
 Women's moth

Our task should be to promote, protect and guarantee that all our Health institutions assist in the

The emancipation of women
Free our people from poverty
Uplift the youth
Eradication of illiteracy
The reversal of cultural underdevelopment

We need to come up with innovative ways that will contribute to the spiritual fulfillment of the sick and the frail, this being the prerogative of all human beings. Here we are expected to act upon suggestions and grievances that are put in the **Complain boxes** in our institutions.

We need to have a way of liaising with the office of the **Ombudsperson** so that queries are attended to within the limits of the times specified.

It will help you a lot if you can make it a point that you have and read the following documents:

The Budget Speech
The Strategic Plan 2005—2009
The ten point plan
The NATIONAL health Act
Draft of the National Health Charter

Understanding the critical nature of the tasks at hand, it thus become imperative that we empower you as our public face, as people who have to articulate our policies, positions and programme. Are will all conversant with the **Comprehensive Plan on the Management of HIV and AIDS** which was launched in April last year. Its crucial to understand that the provision of this service is directed to the entire population, that is;

- The uninfected
- The exposed
- People living with HIV

- People living with AIDS, and
- The terminally ill.

The Comprehensive Approach entails:

A. Voluntary Counselling and Testing [VCT]

B. Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission Programme

C. Antiretroviral Therapy Programme

D. Home based/ Palliative Care

E. Prevention

Here the general population is targeted with special emphasis on Youth, Women and other vulnerable

F. Post Exposure Prophylaxis

G. Management of opportunistic and related illnesses

- ❖ I now want to take this opportunity to invite you to use my office for whatever assistance you may require. I want to emphasize on the fact that we don't not take kindly to being surprised by the Media of things that happen in your institutions but never reported to the Head Office.

Example here would be the RAPE of the patient at Dundee Hospital.

As professionals you need to assess if our programmes assist you to develop and enhance your distinctive genius and stimulate your

self determination. What is your reaction when the patients Rights are violated?

Surely we are not here to perpetuate the practices of the racist and colonial regimes of denying the Black people and Africans in particular their political rights by being rendered voteless and voiceless with the consequence that people had been reduced to hopelessness, powerlessness and defencelessness -a condition of deepest humiliation and absolute dependency

How then do we restore their humanity, integrity and self determination ?

Let us use this workshop to agree on ways in which the department can be better served. This workshop has a task of coming up with better ways in which our publication which is Unwele Olude can be best structured to serve the interest of both the employees as well as the public at large. How do we improve it? What about your own publications in the hospitals? is concerned

How then do you relate to our Social partners eg.

- Organised labour
- Hospital boards
- Hospital Review boards
- Clinic committees
- NGO's as well as CBO's , and
- Portfolio committees

I want to make use of this workshop to remind you that our Manifesto as the government says ' Better life for all' and that

we have a Peoples Contract to create work and to fight poverty

As communicators, let all the tools you need for your own empowerment be made available to you, and let all the problems you encounter in the execution of your duties be known to my office. Do also assist one another about how best you use the High Tech equipment that our institutions are providing you.

I wish you good luck in your deliberations.

❖ I thank You