

**ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR HEALTH, DR SIBONGISENI DHLOMO, AT THE
GALA DINNER FOR MATRICULANTS.**

18 JANUARY 2011

Ladies and gentlemen;

I first would like to recognise and thank the parents and grandparents for having supported and stood by their children in order for them to get to this level. We know that from their meagre salaries and pensions most of them have struggled with life and yet continued to sustain the education requirements of their children, hence we are here tonight. Dear parents, you have been a testimony to what African values of respecting people and life, of sharing, of loving and caring; resilience and fortitude; steadfastness and focusing can do for both your families and the whole community. This is what we have come to celebrate today. We are now appealing to the Almighty God to take over and guide all these hard working students as they venture into the life of Tertiary Education to actualize their potentials and live up dreams to succeed in their chosen careers to come back and uplift this Amajuba District community.

We are very privileged that the MEC for Education, Honourable Senzo Mchunu is here with us tonight as He has worked tirelessly to ensure that quality education and the environment conducive for learning is fostered in our schools. We wish him strength in his endeavours of providing safe and protective schools that are adequately staffed with

trained teachers, equipped with adequate resources and graced with appropriate conditions for learning.

We also thank and appreciate all the dedication and hard work selflessly and indiscriminately given by all the committed Education Circuit Managers; Ward Managers; Managers of Schools; Educators at different levels; Administration Staff; and School Governing Body members who have been nurturing and mentoring these children from the first day they put on their uniforms at Grade 1 up to the last class.

Dear students, we are all assembled here to applaud you for the good work well done. Through your hard work and achievements as the 2010 class you have succeeded in doing exactly what our Honourable President Jacob Zuma said in the 2010 State of the Nation Address:

'We want learners and teachers to be in school, in class, on time, learning and teaching for seven hours a day. The results speak for themselves.

Tonight I also wish to remind you of a historic decision that was made on 20 November 1989, when world leaders adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the UN General Assembly. That it was common understanding among nations and communities that children have the right to survive and develop; to be protected from violence, abuse and exploitation; and for their views to be respected and actions concerning them to be taken in their best interests. There it was

agreed that meeting children's rights is not only fundamental for their development and well-being, but it is also pivotal to creating the world envisioned by the Millennium Declaration – a world of peace, equity, security, respect for the environment and shared responsibility – in short, a world fit for children.

After ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 16 July 1995, the architects of the new South Africa, the African National Congress government embedded precepts into the constitution. Section 28 of Bill of Rights guarantees children's right to an identity, basic services, education and protection within the legal system. As a country we went further to introduce key legislation to protect the rights of children including the Films and Publications Act, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, the Domestic Violence Act, the Child Justice Act and the Sexual Offences Act.

We are here because we want to talk with you about your education and what's expected of all of you after your school years. We also want to talk to those who did not do well.

But firstly I wish to share a quote by **Karen Ravin**; *“Only as high as I reach can I grow, only as far as I seek can I go; only as deep as I look can I see, only as much as I dream can I be.”*

And that's what I want to focus on today: the responsibility each of you has for your education. I want to start with the responsibility you have to yourself.

Every single one of you has something you're good at. Every single one of you has something to offer. And you have a responsibility to yourself to discover what that is. That's the opportunity an education can provide.

And this isn't just important for your own life and your own future. What you make of your education will decide nothing less than the future of this country. What you're learning in school today will determine whether we as a nation can meet our greatest challenges in the future.

That's why today, I'm calling on each of you to set your own goals for your future – and to do everything you can to meet them.

Whatever you resolve to do, I want you to commit to it. I want you to really work at it.

Some of the most successful people in the world are the ones who've had the most failures. JK Rowling's first Harry Potter book was rejected twelve times before it was finally published. Michael Jordan was cut from his high school basketball team, and he lost hundreds of games

and missed thousands of shots during his career. But he once said, *"I have failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."*

We want to utilize this platform to encourage even those who didn't live up to their expectations as we do not want their failures to define them as a people but to let them teach you. You have to let them show you what to do differently next time. If you get in trouble, that doesn't mean you're a troublemaker, it means you need to try harder to behave. If you get a bad grade, that doesn't mean you're stupid, it just means you need to spend more time studying. Our advice is that even when you're struggling, even when you're discouraged, and you feel like other people have given up on you – don't ever give up on yourself. When you give up on yourself, you give up on your country.

Dear students, at this juncture I want to reveal to you that as Government in general and as the KwaZulu Natal Department of Health we do recognise excellence and hard work. We go all out to offer assistance to those that demonstrate willingness to work harder for the benefit of the whole community. I will now call upon all those that we gave BURSARIES to and who made use of the opportunity given by enrolling in Universities across the country and came back to serve this very community in which they were born:

NAME	RESIDENTIAL	OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY
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1. Ndlovu S.	Madadeni	Medical Officer
2. Ndebele L.	Madadeni	Medical Officer
3. Gina NB	Madadeni	Medical Officer
4. Nkabinde SSS	Madadeni	Medical Officer/Psych
5. Thusi M.	Madadeni	Medical Officer
6. Gina NA	Madadeni	Speech & Audio
7. Khumalo Z	Utrecht	Speech & Audio
8. Masondo SZ	Madadeni	Physiotherapist
9. Lindokuhle Gumede	Madadeni	Medical Officer
10. Mathebula N.	Osizweni	Optometrist
11. Mngomezulu	Osizweni	Optometrist
12. Gambu	Madadeni	Optometrist
13. Shabalala ZL	Newcastle	Dentist
14. Khan	Newcastle	Dentist
15. Thusi NP	Madadeni	Medical Officer
16. Oudith K	Newcastle	Radiographer
17. Kheswa N	Newcastle	Pharmacist
18. Qwabe KM	Madadeni	Physiotherapist
19. Dube Z	Madadeni	Dietician
20. Kubheka MT	Madadeni	Pharmacist

To all of you I want to say thank you for making us proud and for unwittingly becoming a beacon of hope for the people you serve and an inspiration to all these bright eyed students ready to undertake the journey you have travelled.

Programme Director, I now want to give special attention to the Business community present here and to those that we are still going to further engage.

I will start by stating that the Government does provide for qualifying needy tertiary students through the NATIONAL STUDENTS FINANCIAL AID SCHEME [NSFAS]. Over and above this aid, the KwaZulu Department of Health also initiated its own bursary scheme assisting those pursuing health oriented disciplines. Last year over 700 students selected from all the KwaZulu Natal Health Districts were sponsored to the total value of R42.8 million.

This has never been enough considering the needs versus numbers. Tonight I said to myself this is an opportune moment to tell of the good story and progressive initiative of a less known entity operating in the far North of our Province called **Umthombo Youth Development Foundation**.

This Foundation, Programme Director gives support to rural youth to become qualified health care professionals in order to address the human resource shortages in rural hospitals which in turn improves the health status of the rural communities. Over the past 10 years they have produced 73 health science graduates across 14 different health disciplines, including 23 doctors. Last year in 2010, they were providing support to 110 youth enrolled at different Universities whom they selected from rural areas mainly in Northern KwaZulu-Natal.

An added benefit to the targeted communities is that the Umthombo Alumni become role models in the communities and encourage the

rural youth to work hard and stay HIV negative in order to achieve their dreams.

In essence we are saying the **Umthombo Youth Development Foundation** assist in:

- Addressing the scarcity of health clinicians;
- Topping up the Department of Health Bursary scheme;
- Giving financial support to school leavers aspiring to pursue health sciences qualifications; and in
- Improving the socio-economic conditions of the recipients and the communities they serve;

We thus appeal to the Business Community to emulate what the **Umthombo Youth Development Foundation** does especially in the under mentioned spheres as identified through the Amajuba District Flagship priorities.

INTERVENTION	TARGET AREA	TARGET GROUP	RESOURCES
Transport for learners from home to school	All Sub districts.	Learners special focus on grade 12	Bicycles
Improving IT access to learners	Most deprived schools in each sub district	Grade 11 and 12	Computers Telephones Televisions DVD's + Monitors
Mobile teaching unit	All sub Districts	Grade 12	To improve mathematics/ Physical Sciences/ accounting
Infra- structure development	Most deprived schools	learners	Sports fields+ equipment

			Flushing Toilets Laboratories + School halls
Support material for teaching and learning	Most deprived schools	learners	Resource books Teaching and learning aids
School uniforms	Most deprived schools	learners	Uniforms/ shoes/ jerseys/ school bags
Health services at schools	Most deprived schools in each sub-district	learners	Nurse: screening, counselling, mentoring and health advocacy
Financial support to learners who have achieved against adversity	All sub districts	Grade 12	Financial support to study in tertiary institutions.
Added support to feeding scheme	Most deprived schools	learners	food

To all the Business people here we are saying the abovementioned is attainable and that the 2010 Class struggled and succeeded on its own; let things be better for the Class of 2011 for the sake of Amajuba District as a whole.

Dear students, once again, congratulations for your efforts in the class of 2010 and wish you all the best in your chosen career paths.

I thank you.