

Speech by KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo on the occasion of the launch of SAPREF sponsored community projects in eThekweni District.

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Programme Director

Mr. Bart Voet - SAPREF's MD

Ms. Lindiwe Khuzwayo – Sustainable Development Manager

Ms Thandeka Cele - Engen Public Affairs Manager

Officials from the Provincial Department of Health

Mr Richard Hughes - Community Representative and all the members of the Community Liaison Forum

Invited guests

All protocol observed

We want to thank SAPREF for their commitment to join hands with the City Health as well as the Provincial Department of Health to improve the lives of the people residing in the eThekweni Municipality.

We are particularly pleased that you chose primary health care as the focus of your contribution as this is in tangent with the ALMA–ATA DECLARATION which reaffirms that primary health care must address the main health problems in our communities - providing promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative services accordingly.

Allow me to give a reality piece. We are a nation whose health system is under extra pressure from a quadruple health burden, which requires extraordinary effort. On the other hand, as you are demonstrating today, South Africa has many of the essential ingredients in place to save hundreds of thousands of lives – will we act in time?

The Lancet series advises us that: we have a problem of colliding epidemics: 15 years after our first democratic election and liberation from apartheid, South Africa faces colliding epidemics – explosive HIV and TB epidemics, a high burden of chronic illness, mental health disorders, injury and violence-related deaths as well as a silent epidemic of maternal, neonatal, and child mortality.

South Africa's per capita health burden is the highest of any middle-income country in the world. The brunt of all these disease burdens is still carried by the poorest families.

Paradox of supportive policies with high spending on health, yet worsening health outcomes. The extra health burden means more investment in health systems, at least in the medium term, and more effective implementation and effective management at all levels is needed.

Pressure on the health system, especially at district level to cope with the heavy burden of disease. There is also a disconnect between the public and private sectors. The priorities are:

- prevention - whether for infections (notably HIV and TB), non-communicable diseases, injury, or for maternal, neonatal and child health (especially prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission [PMTCT] and improved newborn health).
- primary health care that is integrated and effective with strong management and capable use of data.
- practising widespread scale up of successful innovations and relevant and rigorous clinical research.

We are further advised of a potential for change: South Africa could be on track for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and reduce other epidemics with strategic investment, implementation, leadership and accountability for public and private sectors.

We are very pleased that big business in this city is playing a meaningful role in the realization of the World Health Organisation's approach that health, which is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, is a fundamental human right and that the attainment of the highest possible level of health is a most important world-wide social goal whose realization requires the action of many other social and economic sectors in addition to the health sector.

Ladies and gentlemen; you are major contributors to the private healthcare in the country. Our country is currently engaging in a very important debate that will charge a way forward for the country's health system. In that regard we believe that it is very important for you, in the private sector, to support the introduction of the National Health Insurance (NHI). It is imperative for all of us to find the common-ground on the NHI debate. The NHI debate extends beyond the issues of economics and political ideology. It is about us, all of us.

While knowing that the concept of universal coverage enjoys the support of most people, I am also aware that finding a model which will suit the South African environment will not be an easy task. We should all be aware of the fact that the policy of government and the ANC, as the ruling party, is that the private sector is an important and treasured component of the South African health sector.

I am reminded that Queen Elizabeth, during her tour to the London School of Economics, asked the economists; *"why did no one see it coming?"* referring to the global economic crisis. We should not wait for a day like that. We have sufficient evidence to change the course of our health system in the country. We should embark on activities that are aimed at changing the current health system for the better. The NHI is one of those interventions.

It would be helpful for the private sector to come up with proposals on how to make the NHI work in South Africa, how we can make it affordable, and how we can preserve what is good in the current system and discard what is bad.

On behalf of the communities that will be recipients of your R1 million worth of generous sponsorship we are thus very thankful of the following projects:

- 20 new state of the art maternity ward beds for McCord Hospital
- Renovations to an ablution block of the OPD section at Wentworth Hospital
- A Mercedes Vito which has been converted to a Mobile Clinic for Isipingo Clinic
- A Mercedes Vito vehicle donated for the use of a Merebank organization that assist with job creation projects for people with disabilities
- A Toyota Avanza vehicle for an Umlazi based NGO, Sizanodumo that runs a home based care programme
- Installation of air conditioning units at Isipingo Clinic
- Donation of equipment and a carport to Bluff clinic, as well as,
- Equipping a Victim Friendly Centre at the Wentworth Police Station

We are very glad to embrace partners like SAPREF because as Government we have a responsibility may be limited to minimum basic service on what we offer but through partnerships with business our communities definitely get more than what we have budgeted for.

We are also fully cognizant of the fact that SAPREF has long been involved in Corporate Social Investment initiatives especially with communities based south of eThekweni. We do recall that before you have taken an initiative to provide basic necessities to the clinics and have been involved in the promotion of health education programmes for the community. In 2009 we got to know that you provided our clinics with:

- 12 x 42 inch flat screen TV sets;
- 12 x DVD players;
- DVDs;
- 50 antenatal rubber mats;
- 6 hydro coolers;
- 2 baby scales;
- 2 BMI Scales and
- 1 urn

We also remember that you have before furnished our facilities with items like benches and air conditioners that are geared to ensure

comfort to those in pain and we did not get an opportunity to say thank you to you then.

Today we do have the platform to say thank you. We thank you for ensuring that clinic visits in Durban South are becoming both therapeutic and educational. We thank you for being pioneers in this regard, hoping that your peers and competitors will also invite us and declare what they have decided to do for communities within which they operate.

As government, we also want to thank all the members of the Engen Community Liaison Forum consisting mainly of Non Governmental Organisations to continue serving as a link between Engen and the surrounding communities, ensuring that the concerns of the people on the ground are heard.

As the Department of Health, we commit to work with SAPREF as she continues to unveil and support initiatives aimed at:

- Promoting community education on everyday health care that entails healthy eating and living habits
- Promoting community skills development to address job creation
- Creating awareness on social issues by debating topics such as substance abuse and teenage pregnancy

This approach that fosters cooperation is also inline with His Excellency Honorable President Jacob Zuma's thinking that all key sectors in our society should work together through a social compact to continue to transform the health care to provide the right of all to access quality health care.

Continue with the good progressive work

I thank you