

**Speech by KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo on the occasion of the Graduation on trained CCG's as Nurses at the Royal Showground, Pietermaritzburg**

**12 September 2013**

Programme Director

It gives me a great pleasure today to witness a realization of a dream which I had when I assumed my responsibilities as MEC for Health; that you deserve to be rewarded for all the good work and sacrifices you have been making for our frail and terminal patients out there.

Programme Director; this is indeed history in the making, I must point out that initially when we suggested that Onompilo should be considered for Nurse Training, the idea was met with resistance and skepticism from different quarters including the Management of the College of Nursing.

My motivation for this step was the realization and appreciation of your compassion; patience and zeal that you displayed over the years; visiting sick people in their homes and even using your stipends to buy them bread and soap when you found them destitute beyond.

I am aware that most people look down upon the work performed by Onompilo; this is because they do not know that the gains we

continue making in the realization of the Millennium Developmental Goals 4 and 5 that pertain to Child Mortality as well as Maternal Mortality rest on them.

Onompilo have also gone a long way in ensuring that every pregnant woman attends the Antenatal care. Through their good work we are sure to realise our objective of *reducing the risk of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV to less than 1.4% by 2016*, building on progress made by your selves when we reduced transmission from 22% in 2005 to 2.8% in 2011.

We are proud to indicate that even the progress that is and will be recorded on our **Phila Mntwana Project** rests on the good work of the CCG's who all over the Province:

- Provide comprehensive prevention and health promotion package for children at community level.
- Provide the community leadership and war room members with a simple diagnosis of the status of the children in the community, so that corrective measures may be taken when necessary.
- Monitor the Nutritional and Health Status of all Children less than 5 years at community level on a monthly basis.
- Ensure early identification of children with malnutrition, diarrhoea, TB and other health conditions as early as possible and to refer for health care.
- Identify children who require referral for government

- Improve access to preventative health services: **G**rowth Monitoring; **O**ral rehydration, **B**reastfeeding and **I**mmunization.

Programme director; we sat down and thought of a way to reward and recognise our CCGs and we came up with a career pathing programme for the long servicing CCGs. I am glad that these hard working people did not disappoint when given the opportunity.

The training of Community Care Givers (CCG's) commenced at the KwaZulu College of Nursing Campuses and Sub Campuses on 01 October 2010. Our thoughts and trust has not been betrayed as today we have 155 nurses graduating here in Pietermaritzburg and 173 that will be doing the same in Newcastle on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October.

I am also thrilled to announce that all of these nurse graduates are now fully employed by our Department of Health as per their respective categories.

I really appreciate what has been accomplished here considering the fact that most of you had not been to class for a number of years.

I now trust that this new crop of nurses will assist us in achieving remarkable progress in as far as the National Core Standards are

concerned. These, here in our Province, we have termed them as “Make Me Look like a Hospital” and they entail the following:

- Make hospitals clean
- Reduce waiting times both at OPD and dispensaries
- Make medicine available
- Change staff attitude
- Make hospitals safe and secure for both staff and patients
- Managers to walk about to identify problems and promptly address them where and when they occur

I must indicate that when measured; our Province has been found to be doing better compared to other Provinces in these Core Standards. There is only one exception; the issue of **STAFF ATTITUDE**.

Programme Director, bad staff attitude has seen us grappling with a meander of medico legal cases; bad press coverage and a litany of complaints from members of the community.

It is my wish that the experience and compassion that has been the feature of the Community Care Givers nature of work will alter this situation and allow our people to be treated with the dignity and respect they deserve. From these nurses, we are expecting the good approach and attitude they were expressing when they entered into the homes of patients now to shine in the Wards of our hospitals and clinics.

My message to you is: You know your background; you know where you come from; we appreciate that when given an opportunity to uplift yourself career wise and you grabbed it with both hands now it is time to put in practise what you've been learning.

As our brand new nurses, I also want you to fully understand that the **2013 Nurses Day Theme** is **Closing the Gap: The Millennium Development Goals**

My reference to the theme emanates from the concern that despite spending 8.7% of its GDP, and spending more on health than any other African country, South Africa has poor health indicators and outcomes.

Dear nurses; we have been warned that if the current trends are maintained, South Africa is unlikely to meet the health related MDGs, particularly:

- MDG 4: Reduce child mortality
- MDG 5: Improve maternal health
- MDG 6: combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

We need to do everything in our power to change things.

I have always been haunted by what was said by Mama Graca Machel during the launch of the Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal and Child Mortality in Africa (CARMMA) at

Osindisweni Hospital. The slogan for the campaign is; ***“Africa Cares: No Woman Should Die While Giving Life!”***

Mama Machel reminded us that forty (40%) percent of all maternal deaths are avoidable and went on to say the sad thing is that women die in the hands of other women whilst giving birth. She concluded by saying South Africans need to look deep into themselves as they appear to be waging war against each other.

Go out there and learn good practices from the experienced nurses and always remember that at all times you are regarded and seen as:

- The patient’s advocate
- The patient’s physical care giver
- The one that deals with the mental, physical, social and emotional needs of the patients as well as their families, a counselor to those in distress so to say

Your scope of involvement as nurses, truly gives meaning to the **World Health Organisation’s** approach of looking at health ***“as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not just an absence of disease or infirmity.”***

As part and parcel of the communities that we work and live in, you are not immune to societal problems encountered and experienced by members of those communities. It is against that background that I appeal to you to make use of all the **Employee Assistance and Wellness Programmes** made available by your

respective institutions. As part of the team, never suffer alone; bring forth everything that may inhibit your productivity.

Lastly, make use of the opportunities offered to grow as Nursing is a dynamic vocation that has to keep up with the changes in nursing science, communication, information and technology.

Strive to become the best you can be in this field and hold steadfast to the line in your Nurse's Pledge that says:

*'The total health of my patients will be my first consideration'*

I THANK YOU!