

Speech on behalf of the KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo on the occasion of the Nursing Conference in Durban

7 October 2013

All protocol observed

Programme Director, our former Premier, Dr Zweli Mkhize upon delivering his 2013 State of the Province Address heaped praise on the good work performed by the Department of Health in the execution of its mandate of giving a better health to all the citizens of this beautiful province.

Prior to that, in his 2011 State of the Province Address, he had called on us to do things differently if our country had to be saved, saying:

It is important to acknowledge that the burden of disease that is affecting South Africa has its epicentre in this province. Similarly, to improve the overall health outcomes in South Africa, KwaZulu-Natal must first improve.

In recognising strides made to effectively deal with our situation, this year, he said:

For the first time in recent history, HIV and AIDS are showing signs of retreat. The number of AIDS-related deaths is declining. Since we took office in 2009 we have stabilized HIV prevalence in our Province from 39.5% to 37.4% as a direct result of our integrated approach through the Provincial Council on Aids working together with all sectors of our society to ensure that our initiatives on prevention and to make antiretroviral available are successful. Utilizing a special roving team of dedicated health professionals to initiate therapy to all 550 000

deserving individuals, we can now declare that for a few years now the waiting list for anti-retroviral treatment no longer exists. It has been cleared for good.

Mkhize also highlighted another important development which gives us hope that indeed an AIDS free generation quest is attainable when he intoned:

Compatriots, our Province has already received international acclaim for the remarkable reduction of mother-to-child transmission from 19% in 2007 to 10.3% in 2009 and to 2.2% currently - indeed a dramatic achievement in such a short space of time!

Programme Director; these successes and advancements in the fight against AIDS could not have happened without the involvement and participation of our nurses.

We are definitely pleased with what our Roving teams and our nurses under the NIMAART programme have attained. Today vociferous organisations the TAC call upon other Provinces to take a cue from us as they realize that not a single patient who is eligible to get ARV's is on the waiting list. Thank you.

Today as we meet, we need to all agree that nurses are the driving force towards the attainment of the country's national vision of a Long and Healthy Life for all South Africans. Key five [5] outputs here are as follows:

- **Increasing Life Expectancy**

- **Decreasing Maternal and Child Mortality**
- **Combating HIV, AIDS and reducing the burden of disease from TB**
- **Strengthening Health System Effectiveness**
- **The reduction of non-communicable diseases.**

It will be very significant that we all agree that the nursing profession plays a key role in each of the five output areas.

This conference must assist in developing strategies and programmes that focus at the primary prevention of non-communicable and chronic diseases through educating individuals, households and communities on the benefits of healthy lifestyles.

It must also assist in coming up with a programme of community mobilization through a re-engineered and integrated Primary Health Care system that encourages health promotion and prevention at the household and community levels.

As means to curb the initiation and spread of diseases, it is crucial that in this conference we discuss and agree on means that will ensure improvement of safe hygiene practices that can be appropriately enforced in all health care institutions and adhered to at the household and community levels.

This conference should also recommend synergies between nurses and Community Care Givers in as far as venturing out to communities for disease prevention; referrals and expansion of School Health

Programmes at all levels including institutions of higher learning where unplanned pregnancy and unprotected sex have hot beds.

Our outreached teams must find ways of collaborating with traditional; religious and political leadership on the ground to ensure that men in particular present themselves for HCT; do undertake MMC and fully understand and support their women when they do screening like Pap smear aimed at curbing and managing cervical cancer.

Programme Director; conferences like these must assist in the development and promotion of a different cadre of a nurse! Indeed a nurse that can arm people with the knowledge to help them make the critical lifestyle changes.

A nurse who understands that we are progressively focusing our services towards prevention programmes - out of hospitals and clinics into communities – a nurse who can take the time to counsel and educate.

A nurse that understands that he or she is the solid rock on which any progress in achieving the country's health related Millennium Development Goals rest with the profession.

Our situation as a country requires that we ask ourselves as to why with all the budget thrown into health but still have poor health outcomes.

I challenge that we put aside time to study what is happening in Mozambique in as far as their efforts in combating the high maternal death rates which is a feature for all the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Suffering from an acute shortage of doctors, Mozambique launched a bold grassroots initiative aimed at combating its high maternal death rate. It focused on training its midwives in **surgical delivery-related techniques** like Caesareans and hysterectomies.

In Mozambique midwives are trained to counter attack life-threatening complications of labour such as eclampsia, acute bleeding, and ruptures of the uterus. Such a small and poor country, today Mozambique's surgical training programs are being hailed as a model solution in confronting the maternal health crisis; we can learn from them. This Province is expected to perform better in this regard as it was selected as a platform to launch the Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal and Child Mortality in Africa [CARMMA] under the theme: ***"South Africa Cares: No Women Should Die While Giving Birth"***.

Coming closer to our health care institutions, be it hospitals; clinics or mobiles; we need to do things differently. This conference must indeed assist in the revival of professional standards and ethics that require nurses to provide services competently and professionally, and to treat patients with dignity and respect. The picture presented by the media on the way we treat our patients is really gloomy and is supported by the ever increasing number of medico legal cases the Department is faced with. What can assist is the intense discussion on National Core Standards and on means on how best and fast we can implement them.

We all need to understand that the over-riding goal of the standards is to assist in improving the quality of care and are designed to be used by all managers and supervisors as a guide that assist in planning; delivery and monitoring.

I must point out that it is not all gloom and doom as nurses of this Province have been consistently recognised to be doing a sterling job as evidenced by Awards bestowed on them. Nurses from uMkhanyakude District in particular deserve to be singled out because for seven consecutive years now from 2003 they have been honoured with the Cecilia Makiwane Awards prestigious Award.

We were also elated that a nurse from uMgungundlovu and one from Ugu Districts were chosen for Cecilia Makiwane Awards which are given to nurses who excel in their duties and selected by their colleagues as being outstanding.

Programme Director, the issue of the Awards clearly shows that it is practical and possible for nurses to adhere to the Patients' Rights Charter; Nurses Pledge; Batho Pele and the Code of Conduct.

Professionals in this noble discipline need to revive their commitments as nurses to serve the people with dignity and respect. We just need to remove the artificial barriers that impede access to quality health care for our poor citizens.

Indeed all of must strive to promote and maintain a high standard and quality of nursing and midwifery practices; enhance and maintain professionalism and professional ethos all the time allow the nurses' pledge to be our guide:

'.....the total health of my patients will be my first consideration"

I wish you wisdom in your deliberations.