

**Opening Address by KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo and introduction of the Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi on the occasion of introduction of the Mam Connect Initiative for the Province**

**12 August 2014**

Programme Director – Dr Sibongile Zungu

Minister of Health – Hon Dr Motsoaledi

Senior Managers – Department of Health

All Media present

Ladies and gentlemen

It is indeed an honour for us to have our Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi choosing the Province of KwaZulu Natal as a site to introduce yet another innovative plan aimed at saving mothers and babies.

The ***mam-connect*** initiative aiming at registering each pregnancy in South Africa and sending each mother stage-based SMS messages to support her and her baby will surely have a positive impact on our objectives of reducing child mortality as well as improving maternal health ratios.

As a Province, we embrace this initiative especially in the light of a recent review by the Wits University which shows that South Africa has made insufficient progress on the MDGs for child and maternal mortality.

Programme Director; we are certain that once this initiative is in place, a lot of lives will be saved because our Department already has a lot programmes that are geared towards ensuring that mothers and their babies are protected from preventable diseases; cared for when ill-health beseech them and provided with a continuum of care for chronic diseases.

We already see a lot of improvements brought about by our ART and PMTCT programmes. We are comfortable that structures are in place as evidenced by the success implementation of the Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal and Child Mortality [**CARMMA**] for South Africa which was launched by the Minister at Osindisweni Hospital on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2012. We have complied with its requirements by providing Maternity Waiting Homes that cater for women who experience transport challenges when their time of Labour has come.

We have also introduced 38 Specialized Obstetric Ambulances dedicated to the transportation of pregnant women – a first for the country!

Kangaroo Mother Care [KMC] is also vigorously practised for normal low birth weight babies. With this regard we have designated two institutions; namely; Lower Umfolozi War Memorial and Newcastle hospitals, as mother and child health care facilities.

We have also gone all out to promote the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) as a way of making breastfeeding the universally accepted best method of feeding babies. Our Department working together with the University of KwaZulu Natal has embarked on a three year project aimed at improving exclusive breastfeeding rates in the Province.

This R32 million valued project titled, 'KwaZulu-Natal Initiative for Breastfeeding Support (KIBS)' generously funded by our Department and the Elma Foundation was launched during the International Breastfeeding week at UKZN on the 7<sup>th</sup> of this month. Here we aim at setting up human milk banks in eleven regional hospitals as means to increase access of human milk for sick and small neonates by 2017.

In all this, our priority is to ensure that all babies born in this Province are healthy and HIV negative.

Our Province has also embarked on Community Based Child Health Programme to prevent severe acute malnutrition and diarrhoea through **Phila Mntwana Programme**. These Phila Mntwana sites, which are now 755 in total are linked to the War Rooms (OSS) and since September last year to date have had 52 301 children screened as means to:

- Reduce morbidity and mortality from preventable conditions: Pneumonia, Diarrhoea , Malnutrition, HIV related conditions and TB
- Make use of Growth Monitoring: Mid Upper Arm Circumference Measurements (MUAC) to detect acute malnutrition in children 6-59 months. This also helps in equipping 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.
- Provide comprehensive prevention and health promotion package for children at community level.

- To monitor the Nutritional and Health Status of all Children under - 5 years weekly and monthly.

We thus welcome another added innovation that will enhance the programmes we have in place.

My task today is also to introduce our Hon Minister of Health; Dr Aaron Motsoaledi

**Aaron Motsoaledi** was born on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August 1958. Before his appointment as the Minister of Health of South Africa, he was formerly an MEC in the Limpopo province for Transport; Agriculture and environment, as well as for Education.

Dr Motsoaledi is a medical doctor by training. He holds a Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery from the then University of Natal.

He also ran a successful surgery in the small rural town of Jane Furse prior to his appointment in government.

He has also served as a community leader in the area he comes from in different capacities that included being a Chairperson of the Sekhukhune Advice Office from 1986 to 1994; a Chairperson of Hlahlolanang Health and Nutrition Education Project in 1989; a Deputy Chairperson of the African National Congress (ANC) in the then Northern Transvaal from 1991 to 1992; as Head of the ANC Elections Commission for Limpopo Province in 1994; as Head of the ANC Economic and Infrastructure Desk and as Head of the ANC Research and Briefing of election Task Team in Limpopo in 1994.

Motsoaledi has also served as a member of the Limpopo Provincial Legislature from 1994 to 2009; as a member of the Limpopo Provincial Executive Council (MEC) for Education from 1994 to 1997; MEC for Transport from 1998 to 1999 and MEC for Agriculture, Land and Environment in 1999.

A son of the struggle icon; Baba Elias Motsoaledi