

**Speech by KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo on the occasion of a Graduate Luncheon for students sponsored by Umthombo Youth Development Foundation**

**15 November 2014**

Programme Director

Dr Andrew Ross – the pioneer of the Friends of Mosvold Scholarship Scheme

All the past and current Trustees - Mr ZV Gama (Mosvold Hospital);

Ms ND Ntsele - Mosvold Hospital; Mr AJ Mavimbela - Mosvold

Hospital; Dr AJ Ross - University KZN; Mrs ES Nsimbini - Mosvold

Hospital and Ms M Themba - uMkhanyakude District Manager

Hard working and committed Graduates who have benefited from the scheme

Parents of the graduates

Students currently being sponsored

Malunga omphakathi ahloniphekile

Programme Director, it gives me a great pleasure to once again come and thank the Trustees of Umthombo Youth Foundation on the sterling work they have committed themselves to.

We are very appreciative of the hand you are lending in assisting this Province in its quest to provide appropriately qualified healthcare professionals to all its citizens, especially in rural areas.

What has impressed us most about the Umthombo Youth Development Foundation is its approach of not only providing financial support for students, but also the comprehensive mentoring support that helps the students to deal with the academic and social challenges that may come their way. The results in terms of your pass rate, speak for themselves.

It is truly remarkable that today Umthombo accounts for 189 Graduates, benefitting the rural communities of Hlabisa; Mosvold; Manguzi; Mseleni; Bethesda; Christ the King; UThungulu and Zululand.

Programme Director, this luncheon happens in the same week that we dispatched yet another group of 96 KwaZulu Natal medical students, to go and study in Cuba.

Actually, they left yesterday and day before yesterday and their departure brings the total number of medical trainees in Cuba to **798**. They are coming back in 2019 to do their final year here in South Africa.

We are thus very positive and hopeful that come 2020 with this combined effort of both Umthombo Youth Development and the Cuban Programme; the health complexion of this Province will be drastically altered. Every corner of this beautiful Province will have a Doctor!

Indeed, working together, we will succeed in alleviating the chronic shortage of doctors for our Province and the country in general.

As colleagues and partners, I thought it prudent that I share with you the Government vision and what is expected of us as the Health sector. The key priority for us is to contribute to Government's vision of **"A Long and Healthy Life for All South Africans"**. To accomplish this vision government has identified four strategic outputs which the health sector must achieve. These are:

- Increasing Life Expectancy
- Decreasing Maternal and Child mortality
- Combating HIV and AIDS and decreasing the burden of diseases from Tuberculosis
- Strengthening Health System Effectiveness
- Reducing the burden of non-communicable diseases

Programme Director, these priorities place the health outcomes at the forefront of service delivery and require a concerted, robust drive to promote health care, healthy living and reduce the rate of mortality, especially amongst the most vulnerable (women, children, and youth).

Truth of the matter is that, these priorities will be difficult to attain if we do not have committed and qualified personnel on the ground, especially for our rural communities, hence we greatly appreciate your contribution and participation.

Umthombo Youth Development has been spot on in recognising that rural hospitals find it difficult to recruit and retain health care professionals. The emphasis made that graduates have to return to their

Districts to serve communities there is indeed a solution as you now have clinicians who are known by the community; who can communicate with patients in their mother tongue and who naturally treat patients with respect as he or she is the off-spring of that community. In this kind of a scenario, Programme Director, we are bound to see less and less of medico legal litigations, most of which come about as a result of negligence, attitude and lack of care.

Our graduates who are our special guests today should also be mindful of the fact that they are positive role models for the rural youth to emulate. Besides serving people as healthcare professionals they should also make themselves available to assist in local schools to promote careers in health sciences as well to inspire learners to dream about what can seem to be impossible for them as children growing up in deep rural areas.

As we celebrate the achievements of our Graduates this afternoon, I also do not want us to lose sight of the selfless efforts and dedication given to this Umthombo initiative by its founders and Trustees - past and present.

As Government we are thankful and appreciative of what Umthombo Youth Development Foundation initiated and continue doing as it reinforces our efforts aimed at:

- Addressing the scarcity of healthcare professionals in the country;
- Giving financial support to school leavers aspiring to pursue health sciences qualifications; as well as,

- Improving the socio-economic conditions of recipients and the communities they serve;

Now to all the past and current recipients of this scheme, I would like to say; your hard work and resilience has continued to inspire and encourage the Trustees to continue with this noble effort and in turn created and influenced other like-minded sponsors to come forward and help more students.

As a parting shot, please continue serving our people in the rural areas – you are irreplaceable. As a Department we will continue making efforts to improve your working conditions.

Again we say thank you to the Trustees and to all the Graduates for priorities the rural settings.

I wish all of you a peaceful festive season and a prosperous new year.

I thank you.