

Speech by KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo at the TAC PEOPLE'S HEALTH SUMMIT at the Royal Fire International Ministries, Pietermaritzburg

28 July 2015

TAC KwaZulu Natal Head - Mzamowenkosi Zondi

Representatives from Cosatu; Nehawu, KZNCC, Cosas, United Front and Gugu Dlamini Foundation

Representative from Caprisa - Hilton Humphries

Representatives of the KZN Department of Health

Colleagues,

Programme Director; allow me to start by thanking the Provincial TAC leadership for a very constructive partnership that has resulted in our Province making good strides in the fight against AIDS. Our Province is today cited as shining model on how to deal with AIDS as a result of this relationship that puts our people first.

This year September marks the end of the Millennium Development Goals and the beginning of the Sustainable Development Goals. It's been a long and treacherous journey. This is the year of stock-taking, on how we have done on the global arena, as a country and as a Province.

We are proud that South Africa has been in the forefront of the fight against HIV, rightly so because of the high burden of HIV and TB.

Many South Africans have lost their lives over the years. Research shows that 6.4 million South Africans are living with HIV and that more than 200 000 lost their lives through AIDS related illnesses.

What is disheartening is that the youth and young adults bear the biggest brunt this disease. It can never be forgotten that there was a time in this country when Saturdays were reserved for funerals. More often, it was a young person that was being buried. Children and grandparents were great numbers becoming carers and breadwinners. Our death rates even surpassed those of countries who are at war.

The life expectancy at birth with HIV reached its lowest point in 2005, at 52 years. This picture is much brighter now. South Africans live longer and healthier lives. The life expectancy has increased to 61 years in 2015.

We hail the concerted efforts and unwavering commitment of the Government of the day and the various partners in bringing this epidemic within control.

We have also been hailed as a model state in this fight. In January 2014, the Minister of Health, Dr A Motsoaledi together with the UNAIDS delivered the SA HIV country estimates from 2004 to 2012 at a special cabinet meeting where Operation Sukuma Sakhe was commended as a best practice model. The UNAIDS report showed that KZN has made significant achievements in the fight against TB, HIV and AIDS.

A noteworthy intervention was to expand the ARV access by increasing eligibility to CD4 count of 500, and all pregnant women. We can thus report that as at the end of June; we have **977 742** clients that are on ART treatment. Of these, 54 499 are children. This is an incredible achievement, and we look forward to hitting the one million mark this year, a pinnacle in our partnership that we should mark and celebrate!

Additional achievements and health outcomes in KwaZulu-Natal are as follows:

- A decline in HIV incidence from an estimated 3.8 % in 2005 to 2.3 % in 2008
- Reduction in reported HIV and AIDS related deaths from 90 000 in 2004 to 40 000 in 2013
- Reduction of Mother to Child transmission from 22 % in 2008 to 1, 2 % in 2015
- TB treatment success rate at 84%
- Establishment of 2482 High Transmission Areas which cater for taxi drivers and commuters, truck drivers, sex workers and other at risk communities.
- Getting the support of our citizens in caring to know their status, through the **HIV Counselling and Testing Campaign**.
- Initiated programmes of taking of Health Services to Taxi Ranks where screening of Minor Illnesses; Sexually Transmitted Diseases; Tuberculosis; HIV; Family Planning as well as Condom distribution is done
- Setting up of a total number of **302** public health facilities offering **Post Exposure Prophylaxis [PEP]** for sexual assault victims.
- Making great strides with the Medical Male Circumcision Programme that was initiated by His Majesty the King as means to curb the spread of HIV. To date we have close to **600 000 men and boys circumcised**, without a single death and amputations. All this due to practitioners getting

training at the Medical Male Circumcision Centre of Excellency in Northdale

As partners who sit together at the Provincial Council on AIDS, we have been given a task by our Premier; Honourable Senzo Mchunu to implement what he termed:

"The "Stepping Up the Efforts/ S'khuphula Umfutho" HIV Epidemic Response for Kwazulu-Natal Strategy'

The Premier called on all of us to focus on:

- The scaling up Medical Male Circumcision
- Ensuring that all citizens do approach health facilities for HIV counselling and testing
- Ensuring that all those eligible for ARV medication such as those with CD4 count under 500; the pregnant HIV mothers as well as all under 5 years HIV positive are enrolled
- Ensuring that on those in the programme adhere to treatment.
- Strengthening partnership with men's forum, to access older males that are reluctant to undergo Medical Male Circumcision
- Targeting male dominated areas, such as Ingula power stations; industrial areas as well as hostels
- Target religious groups such as the Nazareth Baptist Church
- Work in partnership with youth centers to generate interest of MMC to all the youth out of school
- Make use of Mobile Hospital Units for MMC initiatives to improve access on hard to reach areas

- Popularize and upscale distribution of the Coloured and Flavoured Condoms that have been made available since March 2015.

Colleagues, as the epicentre of HIV and Aids in the world, we are very central to the realisation of the quest to end AIDS as pronounced at the end of the 2014 Melbourne Aids Conference by **Michel Sidibe**, in the speech entitled; The Last Climb: Ending Aids, Leaving No One Behind, where he said:

'Today, I am calling for ending AIDS by 2030.

My vision for ending AIDS looks like this: voluntary testing and treatment reaching everyone; everywhere; each person living with HIV reaching viral suppression; no one dies from an AIDS related illness or is born with HIV; and people living with HIV live with dignity, protected by laws and free to move and live anywhere in the world.'

For all the progress made, we are clear that the Government alone could not have achieved these milestones.

Today we are able to speak of progress because of the partnership we cemented with the civil society.

I am extremely proud of the good and healthy relationship that has been forged with the Provincial leadership of the TAC. I agree, it has not initially been smooth sailing as the TAC has been challenging government to do better, to make difficult decisions.

Today, we are comfortable and can proudly say, we have found each other and South Africans are the victors. Your vigour, your passion, and

support for the government is greatly appreciated. In this Indaba, let us come up with the programme that will see us working together in the attainment of the new final, ambitious, but achievable target:

- By 2020, 90% of all people living with HIV will know their HIV status.
- By 2020, 90% of all people with diagnosed HIV infection will receive sustained antiretroviral therapy.
- By 2020, 90% of all people receiving antiretroviral therapy will have viral suppression.
- 90% of vulnerable groups/key populations screened for TB (PHC headcount; Inmates in correctional service facilities; Miners; People living in informal settlements/peri-mining communities)
- 90% of people with TB diagnosed & treated
- 90% treatment success for TB

In our hands, friends, rest the final success or failure of our course. Now the trumpet summons us again, to take up arms and struggle against the common enemies of the South Africans: TB, HIV and AIDS, maternal and child mortality and Non Communicable diseases. We are called to do so with commitment, with compassion and with determination to ensure a long and healthy life for all the people of KwaZulu Natal.

I THANK YOU