

**Speech by KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo on the occasion of the March by Women from King Dinuzulu Stature to Gugu Dlamini Park**

21 July 2016

KZN Provincial Council on AIDS Womens Sector

South African Positive Women Ambassadors

International Community of Women Living with HIV

Fellow marchers

We enthusiastically partake in this march because we know that all the things raised indeed require attention.

We are also happy that these women's issues are raised in the country where these matters are being attended to. Our Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi in his Budget Speech this year acknowledged that in this country, some significant progress made in the fight against the spread of HIV but emphasised that the successes are largely due to Biomedical Interventions. He decried the fact that we still see an unabated rate of new infections, saying:

*'When it comes to the area of socio-behavioral interventions, it is an uphill battle – especially in the age group 15-24 year old girls and young women. In this age cohort, there are 5 000 new infections per week in 14 Southern and Eastern African countries – but half of these occur in South Africa alone.'*

The Minister went on to table tangible and concrete plans on how South Africa intend going about saving and protecting the lives of our womenfolk with great emphasis on on girls and young women, in the age group 15-24 years.

As promised, the Minister accompanied by Deputy President, Hon Cyril Ramaphosa; members of the Cabinet as well as Civil Society descended on Pietermaritzburg and launched a 3-year campaign whose objectives are:

- Decreasing infections in girls and young women;
- Decreasing teenage pregnancy;
- Decreasing sexual and gender-based violence;
- Keeping girls in school until matric; and
- Increasing economic opportunities for young women to try and wean them away from sugar-daddies.

Another remarkable development undertaken by this country was that as of last month, we are now providing **PrEP (Pre Exposure Prophylaxis)** to sex workers in 10 sex worker programmes. The lessons learnt here will provide a guide on how best to continue to expand it to all vulnerable young women.

As we were marching to this Park, I saw and heard about the cry on **the Inaccessibility and Non-Availability of Female Condoms.**

I fully agree with you that currently, female Condoms remain the only prevention **tool that is available for women in which they can have total control of their sexual lives.**

In this Province, please be rest assured that we are doing all we can to address this problem. This financial year **we have allocated R60 million just for female condoms. Already we have distributed 5, 3 million for which we have spent R5 million** in the first quarter of the financial year.

For our youth, we are also implementing the **Adolescent and Youth Friendly Services (AYFS)** whereby we have called upon our facilities to implement the “Happy Hour” initiative. This is a quality improvement strategy utilised to provide services during hours that are convenient for young people to access healthcare services.

As means to also deal with both patient congestions in our facilities and the stigma associated with certain illnesses, we are now implementing the **Central Chronic Medicine Dispensing and Distribution (CCMD) Programme**. Patients who no longer regularly require to be seen by Doctors now collect their medication at Mosques; Temples; Community Halls and Churches – with no one knowing for what illness the package is for.

As a Department we remain open to suggestions and recommendations on how to further improve on the *Comprehensive Package of Interventions* we are already implementing. We commit to work with the civil society to scale up current barriers experienced by women and young girls.

Our country also **reaffirms our commitment to** the equal rights and inherent human dignity of women and men and other purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human

rights instruments, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the Declaration on the Right.

We are partners.

I thank you