

MALE CIRCUMCISION CAMP PROCEEDS WITHOUT HASSLE

TO: ALL MEDIA

DATE: 12 JUNE 2010

EMBARGO: NONE

The medical male circumcision camp started in earnest yesterday with 202 initiates circumcised and the camp will continue until Sunday with a closing ceremony to be addressed by a traditional leader and an MEC.

The camp was announced by the Premier during his 365 days speech at the KwaZulu-Natal legislature and is part of the campaign to scale up male circumcision in the province announced by His Majesty, King Goodwill Zwelithini ka Bhekuzulu. The campaign was officially launched on the 11th of April in Nongoma. Since the launch around 1000 men and boys have been circumcised in the province.

It is implemented by the Department of Health in collaboration with other government departments including the Office of the Premier, Social Development, Education, Arts and Culture, the non governmental organization called MatCH (Maternal Adolescent and Child Health which is funded by the US Presidential Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)) and traditional leaders. A team of 12 doctors from the Orange Farm, KwaZulu-Natal (uThungulu District), Africa Centre and the National Department of Health worked throughout the day on Friday circumcising the initiates.

The initiates were recruited through the primary health centers where they were screened, counseled and tested for pre-existing conditions including HIV. This package (the camp) is implemented in an out of hospital setting for male circumcision and it aims to provide safe circumcision with no risk compensation regarding attitudes and behaviours, including condom use.

Speaking this morning, Inkosi Zulu, said; "You are a very lucky generation to have the King bring back the custom of circumcision after many decades since King Shaka had stopped it. However; you must note that His Majesty has given you a responsibility. Being circumcised does not mean you have to sleep around in the false belief that you will not get infected. As a regimen – izinyosi (bees) – you are the mirror of the Zulu nation. It is in you that the King will derive pride in his regimens. You are at the cold face of the King's struggle against HIV scourge."

The second day speakers covered areas such as teachings on family values, gender based violence including rape as a taboo and patriotism including ownership of community property by Proff. Langa Mathenjwa and Prof. Zama Khumalo of University of Zululand who spoke on roles and responsibilities of a men in a family and society, respect and caring for one another.

A feature of the camp is a major teaching component following circumcision (usually education on health, life skills and cultural issues). The transmission of cultural knowledge, skills is deemed necessary for the development of the initiates' personality, and education on sexual issues are all part of the teaching in this camp, an educational component on sexual and reproductive health issues is also included. This is done in keeping with the traditionally context and expectations of behavioral change at the time of circumcision, and the desire of the adolescent boys to be taught.

On the second day, all initiates are checked for post-operation complications especially bleeding, pain and haematoma. The department has provided nurses (15) throughout the camp who are also available in the evening to attend to the initiates.

The camp will conclude tomorrow with a send off ceremony to be addressed by an MEC and traditional leader. The send off ceremony will symbolize reintegration into society. Among the various communities, once at home the process of reintegration may consists of activities such as ritual baths and/or being given a new name. In order to demonstrate their newly learnt resistance to sexual attraction and to allow healing of the wound, they are encouraged not to have sex with their partners during the first six weeks.

Journalists are invited to the closing ceremony.

ENDS

ISSUED BY:
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH: KWAZULU-NATAL
CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS