

TO: ALL MEDIA  
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## **Media Statement: 'Family planning must be a tool for person development rather than the number of pills administered - KZN Premier**

Today, the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal challenged the health professionals meeting at the launch of a Five Point Contraceptive Strategy at Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central Hospital to move away from seeing themselves as nurses and doctors but as agents for person development.

"You must be agents who are carrying the tool for person development as opposed to technical experts on the distribution of contraceptive injections or pills," said Premier Zweli Mkhize.

The meeting was attended by health practitioners from all districts, the Department of Social Development (DSD), United Nations Population Fund (UNFP) and the Maternal, Teenage and Child Health (Match). The UNFPA funded the development of the strategy.

Presenting the strategy, Mrs. Valerie Makatini of the Department of Health said that the success of the strategy will require; training and retraining of healthcare providers, mobilizing communities to demystify family planning and removal of the belief, especially by men, that family planning is a 'misbehavior' and also to rally the involvement of men in family planning, as some of the key areas to be addressed for the strengthening and revival of family planning services.

Mrs. Makatini said: "In every service where we offer reproductive health programmes we should include family planning. This also means that our services must be user-friendly to all women especially young girls. Some of the people we spoke to raised concerns that these services are usually not available on week-ends and after work when they have the time to visit their clinics for all reproductive health services including family planning."

The strategy was developed to guide the KZN Department of Health in revitalizing interest in the utilization of the contraceptive programme to increase awareness about and use of contraceptive services. Five Key priority strategies have been identified to achieve the aims of the KZN Provincial Contraceptive Strategy:

- Promote Healthy Timing and Spacing of pregnancies by improving contraceptive Awareness and access at health facilities and the in the community
- Improve Contraceptive method mix;
- Promote integration of contraceptive services with other primary healthcare services;
- Improve health care provider training and mentoring on contraception; and
- Improve record keeping and monitoring and evaluation.

Speaking on behalf of the MEC for Health, the General Manager in the Department of Health Dr Mandla Mhlongo said that the KZN Provincial 5-Point Contraceptive Strategy confirms the Department of Health's commitment to promoting a long and healthy life for the people of KwaZulu-Natal. "Many sexually active young people who want to avoid pregnancy are not using modern contraceptive methods for various reasons, including a lack of access to services or disapproval by health providers.

Dr Mhlongo said: "Evidence of this 'unmet need' for family planning services is often indirect, particularly for unmarried adolescents, making it difficult to quantify. The strategy therefore serves as a call to action to KZN health care providers to assist women and youth to time and space their pregnancies and reduce teenage pregnancies and unplanned and unwanted pregnancies, including among HIV positive women." It is estimated that already there are about 17 000 teenagers who are pregnant in the province.

Premier Mkhize concluded by saying as health workers engage each other on family planning they need to separate policy issues such as which medications are suitable for which person to a point where communities see family planning as part of social education which they use in educating younger members of the community. "Go out there and speak to young people about family planning as a tool of planning their future. The focus must be on building people and not as mechanical

distribution of pills and condoms.

“Until we have succeeded in bringing the information to the household level in a manner that people see it as knowledge to help change their lives. That must be the focus. It must be information and practice to be used by families in the upbringing of their children.”

The Premier challenged the meeting to ensure that information on family planning is available at ward level and for the rallying of support from non-governmental organisations, churches, men’s forums, intermediaries and all organisations that are present in all communities. He said government has a cadre of young people, called Youth Ambassadors, who must play a key role in the promotion of family planning among their peers.

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