

'Taking full ownership of healthcare facilities includes having your children working in them' - MEC Dhlomo

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"Mothers who have just delivered a baby require at least six hour observation by a Professional Nurse in the clinic or hospital where they delivered before being sent home. This is to ensure that there are no complications that may compromise the life of the mother after delivery," said the MEC for Health Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo when officially opening a clinic in Nhlwathi, Hlabisa, in the northern parts of the province.

Dr Dhlomo was accompanied by the MEC for Education, Mr. Senzo Mchunu, as well as the Head of the Department of Transport who were part of the government entourage to deliver services to the poverty stricken community of Nhlwathi in Hlabisa. The MEC for education, earlier, opened a school which will assist to improve the very low level of formal education in the community. It is said that 44% of the population has never been to school at all, while 16% having attended up to primary level, 12% have completed matriculation and only 3% have enrolled for post matric studies.

Also present was the Head of the Department of Transport, Mr. Chris Hlabisa on behalf of the MEC Mr. Willies Mchunu, who unveiled the construction of the P451 road which connect the economically marginalized community to Nongoma and the main route (N2) to Durban and Richards Bay.

Dr Dhlomo addressed the clinic committee that was there to witness the opening of their clinic and said;" I hope that you are encouraging your children to study towards nursing and medical professions because we will no longer afford to pay people from other areas to come and work in communities that also has children. This year alone we provided bursaries to 755 students at the cost of around R36 million for students who are studying, in the main, towards nursing and medicine."

The clinic has been improved to include a bigger maternity and post-delivery unit to ensure that no women and/or child die because of poor infrastructure or shortage of personnel. The post-delivery unit is now having three beds to admit mothers after they deliver so that they are monitored before they are sent home. New houses to accommodate staff were also built in the clinic.

He emphasized that communities need to take ownership of the services brought to them by government and the one of the steps is to ensure that locals man them. This, he said, will ensure that communities do not expect people from Head Office to solve their problems bu they can do so themselves as a community.

The community is largely (58%) of less than 20 years of age which is under the 'economically active group'. The 'economically active group' between the ages of 20 – 50 years, accounts for only 35% of the population.

According to the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), unemployment rate in Hlabisa has increased from 62.1% in 1994 to 72.9%% in 1996. Women are mostly unemployed (65, 3%) due to illiteracy. The majority of school children (94%) need to walk great distances to school. 50% walk more than 30km.

It is also one of the communities with a high HIV prevalence. It is highest in the age group of 25-29 years, followed by the age category of 30-34 which accounts for 30.8% of people who are HIV positive.

The MEC for Health commented and said; "Coming to find people with so much ubuntu (humility) while living under such conditions is touching. We are here, as government, to bring hope and call on the people to work with us in taking South Africa forward."

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