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Media Statement: MEC Dhlomo reassures TB patients at Charles James TB Hospital as he observes Nelson Mandela Day

“The principal determinant of mortality for TB is nutrition. Mortality from TB increases considerably in people who do not have a good nutritional base.” Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo MEC for Health in KwaZulu-Natal said as he observed the Nelson Mandela International Day at Charles James TB Hospital in the south of Durban.

The MEC is spending his 67 minutes to observe the Nelson Mandela International Day Mandela Day was inaugurated in 2009 on Nelson Mandela’s birthday 18 July. It is a call to action for people everywhere to take responsibility for making the world A better place, one small step at a time, just as Nelson Mandela did. In November 2009 the United Nations declared 18 July as Nelson Mandela International Day and last year it was marked with acts of good works in communities throughout the world.

“I chose to observe this important day with TB patients at this hospital to inspire patients, and their families, that TB is curable. Nelson Mandela once had TB and by following the treatment programme and good nutrition anyone can beat TB,” said MEC Dhlomo.

Charles James TB Hospital is situated at Ezimbokodweni, near KwaMakhutha Township in Amanzimtoti. It was established in 1966 as a SANTA center and named after an anti-TB pioneer; Mr. Charles James. The hospital was taken over by the Department of Health in 2005 and it provides much needed services in the nearby community including the provision of antiretroviral treatment to those who need them.

The MEC said that the effect of under-nutrition on TB, HIV/AIDS and chronically ill patients is that it creates the added effect of wasting, and consequently, a further suppression of the immune system. Improving the general sense of well-being, maintaining health by putting back lost nutrients, stimulating the immune system for defence against infection and fighting weight loss, can be assured through a healthy nutritional diet.

The MEC’s activities will include gardening, painting and the feeding of patients. He believes that gardening is important for TB patients as it encourages them to start their home gardens when they are discharged. The MEC is joined by a group of more than 100 volunteers from the nearby community who have been working with the hospital over the years.

The MEC told the patients that in order for them to remain healthy they need to maintain the muscles in the bodies. “Keeping the muscles active and to do some work will ensure that you remain strong. Doing work around the house, planting a home garden and a regular exercise will help to keep you strong and healthy.”

The MEC will also visit a young girl who has cerebral palsy and made a request for a motorised wheelchair from the state President. The MEC will donate the wheelchair to the girls later today as well as visit a home for children with disabilities in Melmoth where he will also give wheel chairs.

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