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'The rights to life and good health lies at the root of improving access to healthcare services' - MEC Dhlomo

"Providing good-quality care at the lowest level is one of the most effective ways of ensuring that maternal health services are used, and that women's lives are saved." Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo MEC for Health in KwaZulu-Natal said during the site hand over for the construction of a clinic in Ezimwini, Mkhambathini.

The rural community of Ezimwini will no longer have to travel more than 50 kilometers to reach the nearest healthcare facility at Edendale and/or Northdale Hospitals, thanks to the provision of a primary healthcare center by the MEC for Health today. The Primary Healthcare Centre (PHC) will provide much needed services to the more than 70 000 population of the area which is very rural and where poverty is high.

Most pregnant women do not attend ante natal care as there are no clinics in the surrounding communities. The nearest clinic, in uMbumbulu, reports that 48,9% of pregnant woman attend ante-natal care within the required 20 weeks. "This puts the lives of both the mother and child at risk," says the MEC Dhlomo.

Construction of the R13, 1 million clinic is to resume immediately and expected to last fifteen months. The Independent Development Trust (IDT) has been appointed to oversee the construction and has been awarded to a women's construction company. It is expected that there will be more than 50 jobs created during the construction period.

The MEC said: "Improving access to the care of women helps us to meet the Millennium Development Goal 5, which is about universal health, is key to reducing maternal mortality, preventing unwanted pregnancies, curbing the spread of sexually transmitted infections, empowering women and girls, and contributing to a sustainable and healthy communities,"

MEC added that government's commitment to ensure the rights to life and good health lies at the root of improving access to healthcare services. "Maternal health reflects the level of social justice and the degree of respect for women's rights in a democratic society."

He concluded by stating that a woman's right to receive good-quality health services is guaranteed when their basic human rights to education, nutrition, to a safe environment, to economic resources and to participation in decision-making are met. "In the broader context of reproductive health and access to healthcare are critical components of the efforts to help women realise their full potential not only as mothers, but also as contributing members of our communities."

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