

Media statement issued by the KZN Department of Health on the occasion of MEC Dhlomo's visit to the Indaka Municipality where extended working hours to the eKuvukeni Clinic were announced

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Immediate release

'No baby should be born with HIV in KZN anymore'

This is the message delivered by KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo when he announced the extension of working time to 24 hours a day for the eKuvukeni Clinic in the rural part of Ladysmith.

eKuvukeni is under the Indaka Municipality and is regarded as the poorest at uThukela District. MEC Dhlomo visited the area last year to handover a clinic in another part of the municipality and was requested by the local leadership to allow one of the health facilities to operate on a 24 basis. The rationale here was that Indaka Municipality is situated 49 kilometres away from the Escort Hospital and people find it difficult to access health requirements after hours.

Dhlomo cited crime as one of the factors why the staff is not keen to serve the community after hours and requested the local leadership to ensure that both the clinic and staff are protected.

He also implored the Councillors; the Clergy and the School Principals to partake in dealing with social ills that are the feature in this community. He informed them that he is alarmed by the high number of teenage pregnancy, stating that at Indaka Local Municipality alone, between the periods April – December 2012; the Health Care Facilities assisted 61 Teenage mothers in delivery; of which 33 happened at the eKuvukeni Clinic where he was. The biggest problem highlighted here is that teenagers hide their pregnancy and do not present themselves to clinics until it's time to deliver.

In his address to the community, Dhlomo informed them that according to the World Health Organization any girl under the age of 18 falling pregnant runs a risk of dying or losing the baby she is bearing as her body is not yet ready for that task.

Dhlomo says the issue of teenage pregnancy will surely reverse the gains made by the Province in the reduction of mother to child transmission that were announced by the Medical Research Council in 2011 which revealed that the transmission rate in KZN now stands at 2.1%. This is a noteworthy achievement indeed considering that in 2005 KwaZulu-Natal displayed a concerning high rate of mother to child transmission which was at 20% then.

The leadership and the community at large were asked to get involved in up surging the momentum and to intensify all efforts to make it possible for KwaZulu-Natal Province to ultimately reach an era where no child born of an HIV positive mother is infected as well. He pointed out that this is a social problem that calls on everybody to do everything possible to:

- Promote abstinence amongst both young girls and boys
- Encourage the men and women to practice safe sexual practices as means to curb unplanned pregnancies
- To freely talk about and promote Family Planning, as well as,
- To marshal every pregnant woman to the nearest clinic where assistance to the mother and her unborn baby would be derived.