

MEDIA RELEASE
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KZN Health MEC thanks King Goodwill Zwelithini for his role in saving scores of lives through promoting male circumcision

KwaZulu-Natal Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo has expressed his gratitude at the strong leadership role played by King Goodwill Zwelithini in promoting male circumcision as a strategy to curb the spread of HIV and Aids.

Speaking in Kokstad, at an event to welcome 295 men and boys back to their communities after they have undergone initiation through circumcision today, Dr Dhlomo said he was “proud, happy and relieved” after the King made a call in 2009 for Government to circumcise as many men as possible.

“We will never tire to thank Ongangezwe Lakhe for His Wisdom and Leadership in calling for the revival of the UKUSOKA tradition as means to fight the spread of HIV and AIDS that has ravaged His people.

“Today the whole world is noticing and appreciating the change in health status of the South Africans. The HIV that was once so deadly and seemed untouchable is now like a boxer who is on the ropes and facing defeat.

“Today I can report that since 2010 after His Majesty made that clarion call at the UMKHOSI WOSELWA; we have circumcised more than 500 000 men and boys, without a single death and/or amputation.

MEC Dhlomo also thanked the Isilo for coming up with a long term strategy of creating a platform to ensure that all the circumcised become real and responsible men by grouping all initiates to IBUTHO LEZICHWE. Belonging to this REGIMENT has profound significance in that it helps even in RESEARCH to tell how many have retained that HIV-negative status even after 10 years.

Dr Dhlomo indicated that the KwaZulu Natal Department of Health now treated Medical Male Circumcision as one of its programmes in the fight against the spread of HIV. The Department had established the Medical Male Circumcision Centre for Excellence, based at Northdale Hospital in Pietermaritzburg, where scores of MMC practitioners were trained, ensuring that the number of adverse incidents is kept to a minimum.

Dr Dhlomo also praised the co-operation with the Traditional Leadership indicating that in the Harry Gwala District alone – which is where greater Kokstad falls – close to 23 000 circumcisions had been conducted since 2010/11, as follows:

- 2010/11 – 1091 circumcisions were performed
- 2011/12 - 2600
- 2012/13 -- 6268
- 2013/14 ---8729
- 2014/2015 – first and second quarters, 4124 circumcisions were done.

The above figures do not include the 295 initiates being welcomed back to their communities today. Dr Dhlomo said the Department’s interaction with the Indlondlo [Head of the Region’s Initiation Schools] has helped foster an understanding of a number of issues especially the fact that Circumcision within the Kokstad community was preferably done in the traditional way.

“Through our interaction we got to be involved as a Department offering the following services:

- Training on infection prevention and control in the Traditional camps
- Sterilizations of Surgical Packs

- Allocation of Professional Male Nurses to monitor infection prevention and control measures in the Camps
- HIV Counselling and Testing before going to Camps and overall Medical Screening, as well as;
- Post procedure care if required.

Through this association, the Department also learnt of the values and impact of the tradition on the men going to Camps especially the fact that initiation is considered in a broader sense aiming at a holistic way of grooming male leaders of tomorrow.

Dr Dhlomo praised all involved, saying:

“Medical Male Circumcision has the potential to not only curb the spread of HIV and AIDS, but also to make a meaningful change in our society; to the extent that one day we may not even need to have campaigns such as 16 Days of Activism of No Violence Against Women and Children, because through it we have an opportunity to produce great these leaders of tomorrow; men with integrity.”



KwaZulu-Natal Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo shares a light moment with King Goodwill Zwelithi, at an event to welcome back 295 circumcision initiates at greater Kokstad.