

MEDIA RELEASE

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KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, calls for more action from the SAPS on Anti-Illegal Abortions

KwaZulu-Natal Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, has taken the fight against illegal abortions to Ulundi and Nongoma (Zululand District), in ULundi Municipality Offices where he handed over a memorandum to the South African Police Services (SAPS) the calling for support and action against the scourge.

Speaking outside the Ulundi Municipality Offices after leading a march through the central business district from the taxi Rank, Dr Dhlomo implored SAPS to ensure that:

1. They fulfill their constitutional mandate by identifying areas where illegal termination of pregnancies are taking place, investigate, arrest and prosecute perpetrators to the full might of the law;
2. The so called “abortion clinics” are identified, their owners are prosecuted and the buildings shut down;
3. Posters, pamphlets and materials advertising illegal termination of pregnancies should be removed by their placers as they murky municipal spaces;
4. The police investigate all fraudulent healthcare practitioners as they are breaking the law and endangering the lives of citizens;
5. All women presenting to health institutions (hospitals and clinics) with complications following illegal termination of pregnancy, should be assisted to open cases against the perpetrator; and
6. The SAPS and Department of Health commit to working together in removing these rogue elements from unsuspecting citizens so as to eradicate the scourge of illegal termination of pregnancies.

Dr Dhlomo also said that it had been brought to his attention that some health care professionals passed moral judgment on young people when they sought reproductive health services. This, he said, was a contributing factor to the rate of illegal abortions. However, to mitigate this, the Department would be promoting a Youth User-Friendly approach to health care provision, he said.

“Data from the Department of Health Information Service reflects that in 2014/15 alone, 20 013 patients were admitted in various KwaZulu-Natal health institutions due to incomplete abortions; while a further 1455 abortions were septic. We are trying to remind our health care professionals about the importance of upholding professional ethics at all times. This includes creating a conducive environment for everyone who seeks health care, regardless of their age. The Hippocratic Oath and Nurses’ pledge compel doctors and nurses to keep patient information private and confidential at all times. It is very important.”

Dr Dhlomo said it was a matter of great concern that despite South Africa having one of the most progressive abortion laws in the world – and while the Department provides free termination of pregnancy services to qualifying mothers at all district hospitals – some women were still turning to unscrupulous backstreet abortion practitioners.

“It is actually disappointing that 18 years after the promulgation of The Choice of Termination of Pregnancy Act that was introduced in 1996, we still have women being maimed and dying as a result of illegal and unsafe abortions.

“What is alarming is that we see these illegal abortion providers on the street corners distributing the illegal abortion pamphlets.

“We also see these adverts plastered on nearly all the street walls and lamp posts

The adverts are professing ‘safe’, ‘pain free’, ‘quick and ‘cheap’ abortions.

“The proliferation of this advertising, and the fact that it is posted in public spaces such as taxi ranks and shopping centres make many women believe they are accessing a legitimate service, when they are not. In fact, these people who do backstreet abortions are health murderers.”

Statistics show that:

- In the past Financial Year alone, 12 031 patients were admitted in various health facilities in the Province due to incomplete abortions and 1 455 septic abortions.
- Also, according to the 2012 Saving Mothers report, in South Africa 186 women died of a septic miscarriage in public health facilities; 23% of which were caused by unsafe or illegal abortions;
- A study by the South African Medical Research Council in 2010 also reported that 49 % of abortions are undergone by young people between the ages of 13 and 19 years and that these take place outside a hospital or clinic.

The dangers of illegal abortion include:

- Death
- Severe bleeding
- Uterine perforation;
- Tearing of the cervix;
- Severe damage to the genitals and abdomen;
- Internal infection of the abdomen and blood poisoning, and
- Increased risk of infertility.

Dr Dhlomo is expected to lead Anti-illegal abortion march at Vryheid (Ebaqulusini) tomorrow.

ENDS





<<<<Caption>>>> KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, led a march through the streets of Ulundi and Nongoma today, creating awareness about the dangers of illegal abortions and calling for more action against practitioners of this scourge.