

MEDIA RELEASE:  
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## **KZN Nurses' gallant Aids fight immortalised in a new book**

The gallant, selfless and life-saving efforts of scores of KwaZulu-Natal nurses trained in the management of antiretroviral treatment have been immortalized in a 68-page book which was launched today, at the 21st World Aids Conference which is taking place in Durban.

The Nurse Initiated Management of Antiretroviral Treatment (NIMART) programme, introduced in 2010, has been developed for nurses working in the field of HIV and TB, as a response to the call to action by the South African Government to strengthen the response to these two epidemics.

NIMART-trained nurses are able to perform tasks which were previously the preserve of doctors; including the interpretation of laboratory investigation test results and taking decisions on appropriate treatment regimen for patients.

The book, titled *Improving Access to Antiretroviral: A KZN Success Story from the Heart of Nimart Nurses*, chronicles the crucial role played by KwaZulu-Natal's more than 1700 NIMART-trained nurses in helping the province initiate and managed 1,1 million people on ART.

Stories of NIMART heroism from around the province that are included in the book include those of, among others:

- A nurse who convinced an HIV-positive man and his four wives to start using ARVs – thus prolonging the lives of all concerned; and
- A nurse who encouraged an HIV-positive man to begin taking ARVs and overcome his fears that his young wife would leave him if he divulged his HIV status. He did, and she was willing to support him. She said she would ensure that he takes his treatment correctly, and that they have protected sex at all times.

Speaking at the launch event, Honourable Premier of KwaZulu-Natal Willies Mchunu said the book would ensure that the contribution of the NIMART-trained nurses would live on forever.

“This book is very important as it documents the work of our nurses. We must use this book to ensure that the lessons learned over the years are passed on to a young generation of nurses and other healthcare workers including the general public.”

Premier Mchunu said the launch of the book event is not only symbolic but provides the opportunity to pause and reflect on nursing as a profession.

“We are being reminded that despite challenges caused by burden of diseases on the healthcare system in this country, the nursing profession has withstood the test of time for many centuries. Critically, today's event is not only comforting to me, personally but to millions of our people who rely on the public healthcare system.”

Premier Mchunu also paid tribute to former President Nelson Mandela for launching a

struggle aimed at eradicating the inequalities in the provision of health wherein delivery was organized according apartheid ideologies of racial division.

He hailed nurses for being the cornerstone of the delivery of world-class healthcare in public hospitals.

“When we celebrate the provision of quality healthcare it is because of our nurses. We continue to record progress in making a shift from the earlier hospital-based curative approach to preventative approach. It is because of the nurses who are involved in health education, thereby creating a healthy conscious nation.

“Critically, because of our nurses we are step closer to ensuring universal access to our healthcare services. I am saying this because in the country as a whole, access to primary healthcare services, measured in terms of visits per year, increased from 67 million in 1998 to 129 million by the end of March 2013.

The proportion of households who reported using public-sector clinics has increased consistently from 44, 5 % in 2004 to more than 59.6% in 2016.

KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo said: “With this book, we want to leave a legacy... if nurses thought they were not important, we want to leave a legacy and assure them that they are, indeed, important.”

Copies of the book are available free of charge from the exhibition hall at the Global Village, at the conference.



*KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, with Honourable KZN Premier Willies Mchunu and UNAIDS Country Director in South Africa, Dr Erasmus Morah at the book launch*

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