

New-born twins 'wipe Pongola mother's tears' as KZN welcomes 66 New Year 's Day babies

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THABISILE Hlatshwayo was distraught when she lost her prematurely-born twins a year ago. The 30 year-old unemployed woman from Pongola soon fell pregnant again, but, unbeknown to her, she was carrying another set of twins who would be born healthy, at full term - on New Year's Day - proverbially wiping away her tears.

Ms Hlatshwayo's twins were born this morning at Itshelejuba Hospital, in Pongola, on the north coast of KZN. Sibanesihle arrived at 03h30, followed by her brother Senzelwe at 03h45. Both weighed in at 1,5kg.

Ms Hlatshwayo, who hails from Kwakhiphunyawo, and her twins, have been given a clean bill of health. She was in high spirits just hours after the delivery, and said: "I'm very happy, from the bottom of my heart. I have also informed them at home about the arrival of my babies and they are elated. When I lost my other babies, who were my first, it was a very difficult time. Now at home they are saying that these babies are here to wipe away the family's tears."



Ms Hlatshwayo's twins were part of 66 babies (35 boys and 31 girls) who were born on New Year's Day at KwaZulu-Natal public healthcare facilities.

KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, accompanied by provincial Head: Health, Dr Sifiso Mtshali and the mayor of Ray Nkonyeni (Hibiscus Coast) Municipality Cllr Nomusa Mqwebu, visited Murchison Hospital, in Port Shepstone today and handed out gifts to two mothers who delivered their New Year's babies there.

However, MEC Dhlomo expressed concern that among the expectant mothers in the hospital's gynaecology ward was a 14 year-old girl. MEC Dhlomo said that teenaged mothers, by sheer virtue of their age, are neither physiologically nor psychologically ready to bear children. This often leads to serious health complications which may result in the death of the mother, her baby or both.

"A ward such as this one is normally not for teenagers, certainly not a 14 year-old. Therefore, once again, I wish to register our deep concern about teenage pregnancy in the province. It is very unsafe when young people fall pregnant at such a young age. If you're a young person under the age of 18 chances of delivering safely are



slim. It actually places the mother's own life and the baby's in danger. Such things push us back as country from improving in one of our key indicators, which is to minimise the rate of maternal and child mortality."

He said that out of nearly 1 million women who give birth in the country each year, 8% are women. But out of that number (85), 45% of those who die while giving birth are women aged under 18.

Noting that Murchison Hospital has registered no maternal death during the current financial year, out of an average of 2800 deliveries each year, MEC Dhlomo encouraged healthcare workers across the province to identify complicated pregnancies early and then refer them to higher level institutions. MEC Dhlomo called on young people to either abstain from sex or use Dual Protection (a combination of condoms and female contraceptive methods) in order to avoid unplanned or unwanted pregnancies.

He urged healthcare workers to ensure that young people feel welcome to seek assistance from public healthcare facilities.

"Health workers need to understand that if the youth is not treated in a manner that makes them feel welcome to seek health services; they then rely on uninformed advice or the help of their peers – usually with disastrous consequences. We do not want that," he said.

MEC Dhlomo emphasized the need for all mothers to follow the immunization schedule as set out in the "Road to Health" chart that all new mothers receive from public health facilities.

"It's very important for babies to be immunized, as this gives them protection against many diseases. We must not only celebrate the arrival of these babies, but also ensure that they are nurtured and protected," he said.

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Pic 1:

Thabisile Hlatshwayo and her twin babies who were born on New Year's Day at Itshelejuba Hospital

Pic 2: KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo hands Nick Himsworth her baby boy, while her husband Thomas Samuel; KZN Head: Health Dr Sifiso Mtshali and Ray Nkonyeni mayor Cllr Nomusa Mqwebu look on.



Pic 2: Mother Nokulunga Msibi accepts a gift for her New Year's Day baby from KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo and Ray Nkonyeni (Hibiscus Coast) Municipal mayor Cllr Nomusa Mqwebu, at Murchison Hospital today

Photo credit: Mondli Mwandla/KZN Department of Health
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