

# KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo commits to his Majesty to circumcise more than a million men by April

MEC Dhlomo made this undertaking yesterday at the Homecoming ceremony for Initiates (Ulwaluko) who had undergone traditional circumcision rites at the Harry Gwala district during the summer holidays.

The homecoming ceremony was attended by Isilo Samabandla Onke; Inkosi Chiliza, the Chair of House of Traditional Leaders; COGTA MEC – Ms Nomsa Dube Ncube; MEC for Arts, Culture, Sport and Recreation – Ms Bongzi Sithole Moloi; MEC for Social Development – Ms Weziwe Thusi and the Traditional Surgeon – Mr Khomo, amongst others.

MEC Dhlomo also used the opportunity to brief Isilo on the progress made ever since His Majesty made His clarion call in 2010 to have all men in the Kingdom circumcised.

He explained that initially there were concerns that Harry Gwala district appeared to be lagging behind in terms of the uptake of circumcision compared to other districts, saying: *This concern led to a conscious decision to investigate the reasons for the poor uptake and to also market and popularise the programme in this community. Indeed, what came out was the fact that there was circumcision taking place within the Kokstad community and that it was done in the traditional way as part of initiation process for all the males. We then got to interface with the Indlondlo and Traditional Leadership in the area and were appraised that initiation is a broader concept than just MMC, that to this community it also focuses on the moral regeneration aimed at transforming an individual from boyhood to manhood. We also learnt that the transition from boyhood to manhood is a responsibility not only of the individual but also the family, the community leadership (traditional, religious, political) and all significant others.*

Dhlomo says this realisation made the Department to forge partnership with the Traditional committee where it was agreed that:

- The Department through EG Usher Memorial Hospital will participate in the initiation process by providing services such as HIV Counselling and Testing to the initiates that would be going for initiation.
- The hospital would also sterilize the pre- packed the equipment (traditionally used and other surgical sundries), that are used during the initiation.
- The hospital would also allocate male nurses that focus on infection prevention and control as well as observe initiates throughout the process.



Indeed the cooperation has produced remarkable results with MEC Dhlomo reporting that:

- A total of 1820 initiates have been safely circumcised through the Indlondlo Traditional Circumcision since 2011
- A total of 41 276 MMC performed in Harry Gwala District

He also gave an account that an overall total of 935 141 circumcision has since been performed in the Kingdom since 2010; with no single death and amputation recorded.

In welcoming the initiates; MEC Dhlomo reiterated that Medical Male Circumcision does indeed reduce the risk of men acquiring HIV infection by 60 percent. In the same vein, he emphasised that this protective effort against HIV is only partial, that the medical male circumcision is an additional preventive measure and is not a substitute for other proven HIV prevention methods. He appealed on the youth to hold steadfast on all the teachings that they received from both the elders and their peers during the initiation and ensure that they remain HIV negative for the rest of their lives by religiously holding on to the following:

- Delay primary sexual debut
- Do not get involved in the reckless practice of having multiple partners
- Promote the correct and consistent use of condoms
- Refrain from alcohol and substance abuse, and
- Respect and project women

Lastly, he thanked Mr Khomo for his role as the Traditional Surgeon for all the success that is being witnessed in the performance of circumcision initiatives taking place in the Greater Kokstad Regions.