

MEC Dhlomo decries pregnancy of children in their early teens, 16 year-old girls is the youngest of mothers of 45 KZN babies on Christmas day so far

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KwaZulu-Natal Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo has once again bemoaned the pregnancy of children in their early teens, saying that society needs to do more to promote abstinence from sex and encourage family planning among young people.

MEC Dhlomo was speaking at Prince Mshiyeni Memorial and RK Khan Hospitals this morning, where he joined Home Affairs Minister Dr Siyabonga Cwele to welcome 45 babies who have been born on Christmas Day.

Also present were eThekweni mayor Cllr Zandile Gumede and acting KZN Health HOD Dr Musa Gumede.

By 9am, 24 boys and 21 girls had been born at healthcare facilities throughout the province. The first Christmas babies to arrive were born at midnight, at PMMH and at Northdale Hospital in Pietermaritzburg.

The youngest mother of the Christmas Day babies is aged 16, and gave birth to a baby boy at Queen Nandi Memorial Hospital in Empangeni. Two 17 year-old mothers gave birth to a boy and a girl at PMMH and at St Apollinaris in Harry Gwala District, respectively. Eshowe Hospital welcomed Balungisa Nzuza's twins, a boy and a girl.

Joyful scenes, marked by spirited song and dance, ululation and tears of joy; played out at PMMH and RK Khan during the visit. The occasion also served to showcase the Department of Home Affairs' highly efficient early birth registration programme.

Reflecting on proceedings of the day, MEC Dhlomo said: *"We've recorded three teenage mothers of the Christmas babies so far. One of them we've just seen at PMMH, a 17 year-old. The other one who is 16 years old, gave birth at Queen Nandi Memorial Hospital. This means she fell pregnant when she was 15 years old. Now, that worries us because a significant number of maternal deaths come from teenagers, because at that age you're simply just not ready to become a mother. We are also worried because some of these girls fear coming to hospital early. They hide the pregnancy until it is too late. We really want to encourage teenagers that please, if you have started engaging in sex, you must have precautions to delay the pregnancy by other means. Family planning is one of them."*



We are happy to record that almost all our hospitals in the province have Home Affairs offices – depending whether they have IDs or not, by the time they leave our facilities, these mothers would have registered the birth of their babies. We want to encourage our nursing sisters to keep on reminding mothers that when their day comes for them to deliver, they must please carry along their ID, and that of their husband or boyfriend. That will go a long way to ensure early birth registration because, for everybody, a birth certificate and later the ID, becomes part of your life.

Minister Cwele thanked KZN Health and the eThekweni Municipality for working together to ensure that the early birth registration programme is a success. >We are very grateful for the partnership that we have. We use days like these to remind South Africans that for them it is important for their children to be properly registered. The birth certificate will give you access to all services. Whether it's health, education, social services and other private personal affairs.

Minister Cwele also encouraged fathers to accompany mothers who are due to deliver because it ensures moral support, while also making it possible to incorporate their details in their children's birth certificates. Cllr Gumede congratulated the mothers of Christmas Day babies and wished them well.