

Statement by KZN HEALTH MEC, Neliswa Nkonyeni on the occasion of Royal Festive celebration for orphans and vulnerable children in Nongoma

17 Dec 06

The KwaZulu Natal Department of Health has chosen Nongoma as a place to pass on Best Christmas Wishes to all the citizens of the province.

In the spirit of giving: we have again decided to come and back initiatives aimed at giving love and showing support to the orphans and vulnerable children of Nongoma under the auspices of Royal Festive Celebrations.

Last year we saw thousands of people gathered at Khangelamankengane Royal Palace joining in the festivities. Again here we thank Her Highness, Queen Mantombi who three years ago upon noticing the plight of thousands of destitute children in this area around this time of the year decided upon this initiative.

This year's Christmas party, is hosted by myself as the MEC for Health, Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini and Her Royal Highness Queen Mantfombi of Khangelamankengane Palace. We decry the absence of big conglomerates in giving support to these noble programs but fully appreciate and embrace the contributions of the East Coast Radio listeners who through the Toy Story initiative, have bought and donated thousands of toys that we are distributing today. In making this gesture we believe that efforts will make this festive season an extra special to this needy children.

According to The Demographic Impact of HIV and AIDS in South Africa, there is an estimate of 1.5 million orphans in the country, of whom about two thirds are due to AIDS. Our province accounts for nearly a third of all these orphans. The same study reveals that KwaZulu Natal accounts for the highest proportion of births in the country [21.6%] of which the highest proportion is infected by HIV and AIDS [8.6%]. The poorest areas, like Nongoma, as expected, are the hardest hit, hence our support.

In line with our commitment to provide a comprehensive package of care for HIV and AIDS for both the infected and affected, today we witness the distribution of **750 food and nutritional packs** that will without doubt make a difference to all the identified needy households. These are foodstuffs that are also intended to assist all those on TB and ART programmes to adhere to their prescriptions.

We are also distributing 1500 educational packs targeting both girls and boys according to their needs. This is part of our multi-pronged approach toward prevention which includes Information, Education, and Communication (IEC), Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT), treatment-related preventions e.g. treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STI's), the use of barrier methods and interventions to reduce the risk of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT).

In pursuance of the Healthy Lifestyle initiative and as means to keep most of the youth out of mischief during these holidays and beyond, we are giving out soccer and netball kits.

Preservation and promotion of quality life is our business. We know that during this time of the year, our services are put under pressure hence last month we released a new fleet of 150 brand new ambulances to deal with any medical emergency eventuality, from giving emergency care to car accident victims as well as rescue operations.

We are ready to offer help but at the same time we request our people to behave responsible and heed this years global theme, as it calls upon all of us to, STOP HIV AND AIDS. KEEP THE PROMISE. Accountability is the key here and it begins with knowing your status. People should come forward for voluntary counselling and testing.

Since there is no cure for AIDS yet, our message has not changed:

- If you are still young refrain from sex
- If you are sexually active, stay faithful to one partner who should also be faithful to you, and lastly
- Use a condom properly each time you have sex.

KEEP THE PROMISE.