

Welcome Reception of Community Service Officers

By Minister Peggy Nkonyeni

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All protocol observed.

In whatever corner you are plying your services in this beautiful province, know that *Both the Constitution of the Republic as well as the National Health Act, Number 61 of 2003, mandate the Department of Health to ensure delivery of health services to the South African society.*

We are here today, to welcome and thank you for joining us in our fight against disease, against poverty and against hopelessness.

You are in the Department that is about *Giving Hope.*

As Health professionals, be appraised on the task at hand, that of giving expression to the *Primary Health Care Approach*, which requires of us to make basic health care accessible to all.

On behalf of the people of our country, both the sick and the healthy, I am here today to say to you, congratulations for having successfully passed after a lot of hard work and sacrifices, to be where you are now.

On behalf of all the professionals, serving within the fold of the Public Sector domain, a warm embrace is also extended to you.

We rejoice with you, with your parents and your significant others on your accomplishments.

Ladies and gentlemen, you have already seen and experienced it yourselves that the aspect of Giving hope to our people is not going to be an easy.

It will always require revolutionary and human rights sensitive cadres who know that in the African continent the output in the production of health professionals is not yet able to keep up with the demands of the complexity of diseases it is faced with.

In our small corner here as a province, we are saying with the people of your calibre we will eventually see the attainment of our *vision*, which is, 'To provide optimal health status to all persons in the province of KwaZulu Natal.'

We deem it appropriate that from this very early stage we apprise you of the priorities that have been discussed and approved by our National Health Minister and all the Health MEC's in the land. We do so with anticipation that you will also contribute in the attainment thereof. Amongst other aspects, here we are called upon to:

- Improve management of communicable diseases and non-communicable illnesses.
- Promote healthy lifestyles.
- Contribute towards human dignity by improving quality of care, and
- Strengthen primary health care, EMS and hospital delivery systems

The government of the people has laid legislative foundation to give mandate for us to deliver on the above, for instance:

Constitution, Act No 108 of 1996
National Health Act No 61 of 2003
KwaZulu-Natal Health Act No 4 of 2004
Tobacco Products Amendment Act
Medicines and Related Substances Amendment Act of 2002
Mental Health Care Act

We have to highlight all these aspects because we want you to embrace the World Health Organisation's approach of looking at health as it is defined as "*state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not just an absence of disease or infirmity.*"

Key word is to be effective wherever you are posted. Become comfortable working with people from diverse backgrounds. Only you as health professionals are armed with knowledge and skills to alleviate or cure illnesses and disease. Without exception, you are required to work with people from around the world, from all socio-economic backgrounds and with a wide variety of belief systems. Our advice is to encourage you to get involved with the communities you serve and behave responsibly. Always have sympathy, empathy and respect.

Without compromising your constitutional right to choose where you are eventually going to work, we will plead with you to never forsake the people of this province in the hour when we are grappling with this burden of disease.

We will continue appealing to your spirit of patriotism. That you regard our sick and frail as a priority before you even consider tendering your healing capabilities to the frail and **sick of Saudi Arabia, Britain and other developed countries.**

My personal delight stems from the solemn covenant you have made with the Department of Health, that you are available to tend and cater for the sick, the frail and the traumatised where ever they are. Our people in the rural areas, where most of us come from, are bound to be the biggest beneficiaries of your commitment and generosity.

Values and ethical conduct are also vital qualities that you must possess - to ensure high quality health care

As a department, we commit to improving the physical and management of your work environment so that its conducive for you to maximise your potentials. We are already making headways in the improvement of improving your living conditions.

- to break isolation and boredom,

we are installing computers and emails for

your use.
- the equipment that is in dire

need in your areas is being replenished.

- those equipments and diagnostic gadgets imperative in the diagnoses of medical emergencies are being made available.

I personally commit myself to look after your interest.

Over and above, be assured that you are with the department that is for the promotion of life-long learning and research-based knowledge. In that regard we have adopted the Human Resources for Health Strategic Plan.

We request you to share health information easily, knowing that our objective is that of restoration of human dignity to our people as pronounced by the Constitution, the **Patient's Rights Charter as well as the Citizen's Charter**.

Know that we do not expect you to limit yourselves in curing illnesses, but to also participate in preventive health programmes.

In turn, make use of this exposure as an opportunity:

- to grow;
- to enrich yourselves;
- to develop skills; and
- to acquire knowledge.

You remain the backbone of our comprehensive health plan.

You are the ones in the coalface of anguish and despair, who experience, see, and treat the diseases that continue to ravage our communities.

We need you and our people need us.

In Dr Manto Shabalala Msimang's words,

'we all have to go out to lend a helping hand to

those in need of care and support.'

Let it be incumbent upon us to always develop and improve those we come into contact with.

Lets impress all the time the notion of a Healthy lifestyle, as means to decrease the burden of disease.

- Let them believe in **antenatal classes**
- Let them embrace our campaign of
'Know your status' and come
forward for **Voluntary testing and
counselling.**
- Let them be persuaded to **stop smoking**,
for their own sake.
- Let it be us who **give guidance** in
instances where the young feel the ideas
of their parents are old fashioned and
ridiculous.
- Let it be us who highlight dangers of
risky behaviour such as:
 - i. **Early sexual intercourse**
 - ii. **Multiple sexual partners**

Sexually Transmitted Infections.

Each one a Teacher, as the Cuban Slogan goes.

Lastly, explore and enjoy this beautiful province.

Travel around.

Get on one, with nature and visit the nature and game reserves.

Agree with **Grenville Kleiser**, as he says:

*'The world needs all the help you can give
By way of cheerful, optimistic, inspiring thought
and personal example.'*

Trust, rely on, and defend the communities you serve.

I thank you.