

Speech by KZN Health MEC Neliswa Neliswa Nkonyeni on the occasion of the celebration of the World sight day at Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hospital

12 October 07

Programme Director

Dr Lungi Ndlovu –Hospital CEO

ICEE Global Programs Director-Prof Kovin Naidoo –
congratulation for your World Optometrist of the Year
2007 Award

ICEE Africa Director – Mrs Palesa Dube

Standard Chartered Bank CEO- Mr Chris Low

Standard Chartered Bank Corporate Affairs Manager, - Ms Lauren Callie.

Hospital Board Members

Senior Department of Health managers

Invited guests

Mphakathi ohloniphekile

It is always a pleasure for all of us to come to this institution that has put in place mechanisms aimed at improving the lot of both its patients as well as its personnel. We are grateful to you, Dr Lungi Ndlovu and your management.

Today the whole world is focusing on what the World Health Organisation recommended as a means to effectively prevent blindness and restore sight wherever and whenever possible.

Ladies and gentlemen as you are all aware Mahathma Gandhi hospital is located within the Rural Node zone, as depicted by our President. This area, known as INK, does not have among other things, appropriate services for eye care. We are thus very thankful that the *International Centre for Eyecare Education* has chosen this institution to pilot **Giving Sight to KZN**.

The communities of Inanda, Kwamashu, Ntuzuma, Ndwedwe will for the first time have a facility that will attend to their eye care needs.

We are more elated by the commitment of ICEE that by the year 2010 they have set themselves a target of 1 million people who they would have attended to.

We are also very appreciative of ICEE's endeavors towards Human Resource Development, as they have committed to provide training and equipment to eye care personnel.

We also recognize their role in focusing to infrastructure development that pertains to Eye Clinics.

We also recognize the special role played by **Standard Chartered Bank** as a partner and we wish them strength as they continue fundraising for their ***Seeing is Believing*** initiative.

With the partnerships we have forged, we are more geared to achieve the norms set by the world Health Organisation's theme mobilizing us to attend to: **Vision screening and refractive error for children.**

What we seek to achieve here, especially pertaining to children are the following:

- Providing screening services
- Provide refractive services
- Providing cost-effective correction devices e.g. glasses
- Establishing the appropriate referral channels

We are saying *visual disability has a potential for far-reaching social, economic and quality of life implications for the affected individuals, their families and communities.*

Correctly summed up; *visual disability is a barrier to development.*

We also have to enlighten our communities about what causes blindness in this country. Here we refer to:

- *cataract* , ungwengwezi noma ulwebu (50%),
- *glaucoma*, umfutho wamehlo ophezulu (15%),
- *corneal opacities* ulwebu olumhlophe esweni (10%),
- *childhood blindness* (5.3%)
- *refractive error*, ukungaboni okulungiseka ngezibuko

Zonke lezizimo ezilandelayo sithi akhona amaqhinga okuzilungisa, zishabalale ngempela.

SinguMnyango nazi izeluleko esizikhiphayo:

As a caring Department of Health we have to caution that blindness can be prevented by attending to the following:

- All people with chronic diseases such as **Diabetes and hypertension** should have their eyes tested every six months
- **All people above the age of forty** must have their eyes examined for near vision.
- **Avoid trauma to your eyes, izingozi, nokulwa kanye nangokudlala**—they cannot be replaced.
- **Eat a lot of fruits and vegetable** especially carrots
- Children must be taken for check-up when complaining of eye problem.

We are also appealing to our people to make use of the **Sight Saver Centers** we are operating in all Districts, currently we have 19 and six in Durban in these institutions:

- Prince Mshiyeni hospital
- St Aidans hospital
- Addington hospital
- Mc Cord hospital
- Inkosi Albert Luthuli hospital, and
- St Marys hospital

What we do in these Sight Saver Sights are the following:

- Cataract surgeries
- Eye Trauma
- Corrective /Therapeutic surgery
- Refractive Error corrections
- Refractions (eye screening, primary eye care)
- Community Eye Care Outreach (awareness events)

Achievements since beginning of January:

- *Cataract surgeries* now stands at **2 800** and bound to increase as all the Sight Saver Centres are currently doing operations this week.
- *Refractive errors conducted* stands at **67 954**, these are people screened for eye problems.
- *Refractive errors corrected* on **10 970**, these are people supplied with glasses

Masiqikelele ukuphepha kwamehlo ethu, abazali bafunele abantwana usizo uma bekhalaza ngamehlo. Masazi ukuthi amehlo ayisitho esibucayi.

I thank you.