

**Press statement by KZN HEALTH MEC Neliswa Nkonyeni upon the VCT Partnership Campaign with UKHOZI FM at Inkandla**

**2 March 07**

ANC Deputy President Jacob Zuma and KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Health Ms Neliswa Nkonyeni led by example today when they publicly undergone HIV test. Amakhosi and other community leaders in the area also joined them.

Zuma, on taking this bold step, called on all the people to come forward and test saying this will assist them to get whatever help the government is offering.

Nkonyeni said:

“In partnership with Ukhozi FM we will try and reach out to all the people of this Province and beyond emphasising the importance of **KNOWING YOUR STATUS**.

Our concern stem from the figures that tell us that nationally, only **1,7 million** people made use of the Government’s Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) programme between **April 2005 and March 2006**.

Now, out of a population of more than 10 million that we have, KwaZulu Natal accounted for only **310 215** of those who came forward for Voluntary Counseling and Testing under the period in question.

Through the partnership that we have forged and cemented with UKHOZI FM we want to change all that. We have worked together launching our

campaign at **Wentworth Hospital** and we have been to **Bhekuzulu, Vryheid** and today we are here at **Inkandla**. Today our focus is the rural areas where we want to again forge a partnership with **AMAKHOSI** so that they can work with us in curbing the spread of HIV and AIDS, TB as well as Sexually Transmitted Infections. The overall population of the area under the jurisdiction of Inkosi Shange where we are is above 36 000 but less than 250 people made use of our VCT last year.

*The VCT programme must be understood as the entry point for prevention, treatment and care interventions.*

With few people coming forward for Voluntary Counselling and Testing we thus have enrolled very few people in our ARV programme in this area. The situation currently is not looking good.

The partnership that we are here to nurture with the Traditional Leadership is very crucial, we want them to assist in fighting off the **STIGMA** that make our people afraid to test and get medication.

KwaZulu Natal department of Health is about **Fighting disease, Fighting poverty and Giving hope.**'