

**Speech by KZN Health MEC Neliswa Nkonyeni on the occasion of the International Baby Friendly Award ceremony at Grey's hospital**

25 January 2008

The District Officials

Senior Management

Representatives from UNICEF and the National Directorate:

Nutrition

We are here to applaud and congratulate the institutions that have made us proud by attaining the International Baby Friendly Award Status.

Last year we know that 10 of our institution were recognized as having satisfied all the requirements and as such we say well done to:

- Grey's Hospital – BFHI award certificate
- Vryheid Hospital – BFHI award certificate
- Addington Hospital – BFHI award certificate
- Wentworth Hospital – Certificate of Commitment to BFHI
- Manguzi Hospital – Certificate for maintaining the BFHI status
- Nkonjeni Hospital – Certificate for maintaining the BFHI status

- Murchison Hospital – Certificate for maintaining the BFHI status
- St. Andrews Hospital – Certificate for maintaining the BFHI status
- Appelsbosch Hospital – Certificate for maintaining the BFHI status
- Unit A Clinic (Ulundi) – Certificate for maintaining the BFHI status

Fellow compatriots, this International Baby Friendly Status that is being bestowed to the deserving facilities is an accolade that we should strive to attain for all our institutions. This is more pressing considering the meander of diseases that continue to afflict our populace, particularly the young ones.

We thus fully endorse this joint venture effort by UNICEF and World Health Organisation as they seek to Protect, Promote and Support Breastfeeding.

I must also point out that we are equally pleased with the performance of some of our institutions that have worked very hard to maintain and sustain their status when they were re-assessed after two years. We are saying to them: Well done! Our people are the victors and winners in this regard.

Breast feeding –even in the midst of poverty – is one natural phenomenon that is practiced by all mammals and does not cost a cent.

As a department let us all work together to send out clear, uniform and concise messages that say there is no greater joy for a mother than to hold and feed her baby for the first time immediately after delivery.

Let us not hide it from them that breastfeeding also offers a benefit that cannot be measured: a network opportunity to communicate love and bonding at the very beginning of a child's life

Let us inform mothers about what benefits their babies derive from breastfeeding, that:

- It stimulates their immune systems and responses to vaccinations as it contains hundreds of health-enhancing antibodies and enzymes.

Let us also emphasize the societal benefits of breastfeeding and agree that this practice fosters and promotes bonding between the mother and the baby and thus inculcate feeling of love, care and security to the young one. A loved child is hardly prone to be a molester, a thug and a torturer.

It is in this regard that I say: Let it be incumbent upon all of us among other things to:

- Inform all pregnant women about the benefits and management of breastfeeding

- Show mothers how to breastfeed and how to maintain lactation even if they should be separated from their infants
- Give no artificial teats or pacifiers (also called dummies or soothers) to breast feeding infants
- Give new born infants no food or drink other than breast milk, unless medically indicated
- Foster the establishment of breastfeeding support groups and refer mothers to them on discharge from the hospital or clinic

If all of us can adhere to the above mentioned values surely we will be bringing into fruition our 2007 budget speech theme of 'investing in mothers and children secures a healthy nation'.

I am thus appealing to our District Managers and all heads of our institutions to utilize our out-reach programmes for the furtherance of the following objectives:

- Creating awareness to all women with special emphasis on those residing in rural areas about the Maternity Services available for them;
- Empowering the youth on issues pertaining to reproductive health.
- Conscientizing the public at large on issues connected to sexual abuse.
- Sharing information on Nutrition for babies;

I am saying if we succeed on the above mentioned, as a province we will be putting our country in good stead for the

ultimate attainment of Health-related Millennium Development Goals especially those that call for:

- Improvement of maternal health, as well as
- Reducing child mortality

Let us ensure that our focus is not compromised by myopic distractions that do not add value to the people who we serve. Conversely, let us hold on tight to our vision and mission and serve our mothers and babies within our communities with diligence, commitment and dedication!

AMANDLA!

I THANK YOU!