

**SPEECH BY THE KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR HEALTH, MS  
NELISWA NKONYENI ON THE OCCASION OF A LAUNCH OF  
KHANYA AFRICA AT ETHEKWINI DISTRICT**

**16 JANUARY 2009**

Revolutionary greetings to all our health care cadres operating in this Ethekwini district.

It is with a deep sense of pride and gratitude that I wish to initiate this initiative by paying tribute to all highly disciplined and committed pioneers of this very important volunteer organisation, KHANYA AFRICA. On behalf of the KwaZulu Natal populace I am honoured to place on record our sincere appreciation to Dr Bongane Nxumalo and all of the committed team,

Ladies and gentlemen, in welcoming the Ethekwini District health care volunteers, we have to say that this is one organisation with a difference. Here, you get a opportunity of actualising all your potential without any inhibitions as the people that we go out to visit, heal and tend to, are patients who because of their inaccessibility hardly have a contact with health care services amongst other things.

Being part of Khanya Africa is not only restricted to imparting what you are qualified in, but also entails being a guiding light; explaining and simplifying all the government sponsored programmes aimed at uplifting the marginalised in our society. For instance, you get into a household of people infected and affected with Tuberculosis, you do

not only dispense medication but you also explain the indigent policy of this progressive government; you inquire about the social grants; you explain the no fee school concept, making it easy for those less fortunate to access such benefits that are their right.

Here in Ethekewini District, we have a total population of more than 3,2 million people and for your information more than 2,8 million of them are uninsured and are solely dependent on our public health system for their survival and health upkeep

In the same vein I have to inform you that as a developing nation, we as a province, a country and as a continent suffer from the unethical poaching of professional health care practitioners. The best that we have or had is now attending to the aged and the sick in Saudi Arabia and Britain which is to the detriment of our nation.

Our current situation in this District is that we have only **857 Medical Officers and 264 Medical Specialists** for the 2,8 million uninsured citizens I alluded to earlier. There lies the answer for KHANYA AFRICA. Without your commitment and sacrifice it means that there will be people who will never be attended to.

I know that in your work stations you are understaffed as I have mentioned. By its very nature shortages, without exception, entail extra burden in terms of workload, entail operational mishaps as well as misgivings from both the operators and the recipients, who are our patients..

As KHANYA AFRICA volunteers tonight we are embracing our reality and looking at means and ways of servicing those people who cannot easily access the services offered by the Department

This District more or less is suffers the same fate as all the Districts we have in this province. Our task is to go out there and assist.

As a politician I must tell you that I have a tremendous respect and immense trust for this highly committed and dedicated voluntary team. It is also my fervent wish that all professionals in all different categories beside health can enlist and be members of this revolutionary organisation that is truly making an indelible mark in the quest to create a platform for a better health and a better life for all our people.

Our mission tonight is to solicit your support.

I stand before you with many heart-wrenching testimonies of communities who have been served with great diligence by Khanya Africa at Khombe; Nquthu; Dannhauser; Empangeni and Nkandla. I am deeply indebted to the rare breed of health professionals who have selflessly demonstrated the ethos Ubuntu without monetary rewards. We are now embarking on operational activities at Umbumbululu. KwaMakhutha, Molweni, other outlying areas.

Ladies and gentlemen, all those who are members of Khanya Africa, must be commended for their willingness to sacrifice quality time with their children and loved ones as the nature of work that we do here

entail long hours and travelling during weekends, Mr Nkomo from Charles James Hospital knows it.

The good thing about our efforts is that all those that we assist are always thankful.

*Bonke labo abasizwayo bayakukhombisa ukubonga.*

As young cadres who could not partake in the war against Apartheid I think this is an opportune hour to sacrifice some comforts and privileges to take the much-needed services to the deepest rural areas of our beautiful Province. The diligence, discipline, compassion, love and patriotism that you will give for the frail, weak and sickly people will be reflective of the spirit of Ubuntu that we all have.

When we started with this exercise 2 years ago, I made a commitment that my Department will do every thing possible and beyond to support and strengthen your efforts. That commitment is repeated here tonight.

The task of mobilizing and organizing all the health care professionals is paramount considering that in 2015 our country will have to account at the **United Nations General Assembly** on how far it has gone in meeting the **Millennium Developmental Goals**. Some being;

- *Between 1990 and 2015, we are expected to have halved the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.*

- *Between 1990 and 2015, we were given a target of reducing by two thirds the under-5 mortality ratio.*
- *We were also given a target of reducing by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio.*
- *We also have a target to begin the decrease of the spread of HIV and AIDS, Malaria and other diseases.*

Bad news in this regard is that HIV prevalence is still constant at 39.1%.

In closing, it is my wish that all of you and those that you will further recruit will join and assist in whatever best way you can. Our people deserve your magic touch. I know that your commitment to the people of this Province and your passion to fight against diseases in KZN and beyond will be the guiding force.

I thank you.